Program Review Assessment Plan  
Department of Modern Languages  
January 2004  

Learning Goals for our Graduates  

As we think broadly about our discipline, our curriculum, and the students we educate, we have defined four key “Learning Goals,” or what we hope for our graduates (first articulated in our Self-Study, June 2001). Moreover, these departmental goals overlap nicely with the college-wide goals described in the six Student Learning Outcomes.

Graduates with a Westmont degree in Modern Languages are expected to be:

1) **Fluent in the Language**: Graduates attain near-native fluency in the foreign language (in all four skills: speaking, listening, reading, writing) and possess the tools necessary to interact gracefully with those of other cultures. Our graduates also write well in the target language, expressing themselves not only with grammatical accuracy, but also with clarity and elegance. (cf. Standard 4: Written and Oral Communication)

2) **Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinkers**: Our graduates are trained in how to read, interpret, contextualize, and analyze works of literature, and are knowledgeable in theories of literary analysis. They are familiar with the “great works” of their country of study, as well as the social, historical, and political context in which they were produced. Our graduates are capable of thinking critically, abstractly, and creatively. They also think broadly, making relevant connections between language and literature and other disciplines such as the arts, history, sociology, political science, and religious studies. (cf. Standard 2: Critical-Interdisciplinary Thinking)

3) **World Christians**: Our graduates know and live the Christian faith, and are prepared to share it graciously with peoples of other languages and cultures. They have the understanding and skills necessary to engage people unlike them in terms that affirm the other as another person created in God’s image. They are sensitive to those from other cultural and ethnic backgrounds, respect alternative viewpoints, and understand and appreciate the diversity of God’s rich creation. (cf. Standard 3: Diversity; Standard 1: Christian Orientation)

4) **Life-long Learners**: When our majors graduate, they realize that their education is just beginning. Our graduates possess not only a love of their discipline, but of learning in general, and are motivated to continue seeking opportunities for intellectual, social, and spiritual growth throughout their lives. They are informed citizens, ready and able to contribute to their community, their society, their world. (cf. Standard 5: Active Societal and Intellectual Engagement)

These broad learning goals serve as a point of departure for this plan. For this review cycle, we will focus on departmental Learning Goals #1 & 3 (cf. Standard 4 & 3). Currently, we employ many pedagogical and assessment strategies to ascertain student fulfillment of these goals, such
as exams and quizzes; compositions (with multiple rewrites) and portfolios; oral presentations; journals; and peer & self-evaluations. (These and others are described in detail in our Self-Study.) Although we will continue with these strategies, our objective now is to make assessment and documentation a more intentional activity. To this end, we propose to implement the following:
**Assessment Strategies for Learning Goal #1: Fluency in the Language (cf: Standard 4)**

- **Language Placement Test:** We will give all language students (in SP 1-4, FR 1-4, GS 1-4) the BYU Placement Exam during the first week of classes, and again during finals week. Students can take this on-line in the Stamps Lab with one of our lab assistants. A key aspect of the test is that students do not see the same questions twice; each time they take it the questions are different, generated according to their responses (thus making it impossible for students to become overly familiar with the instrument). Results are automatically emailed to the professor, and will be kept on file (electronically) on the chair’s computer and in the departmental portfolio (described below). By comparing the exam results before and after the course, we will have tangible evidence if students are indeed improving in their language abilities (specifically knowledge of the grammar and reading comprehension).

  We began implementation of this strategy in Spring 2004 and plan to continue each semester indefinitely. Each January and May we will tabulate the results in an Excel file and have a department meeting to discuss them and any curricular or pedagogical changes that might be needed, depending upon our findings.

- **Departmental Portfolio:** We will begin to create a departmental portfolio of student work (this strategy will also be applicable to Learning Goal #2 above). Specifically, students will be assigned a brief essay the first week of class (for example, an autobiography), to be turned in on paper and electronically. The professor (as always) will make comments and suggestions for improvement on the hard copy and return it to the student for multiple revisions; the electronic copy will be saved on the departmental file. At the end of the semester, students will be given a similar essay assignment. By comparing the two brief essays, we can assess if students are indeed improving in their ability to express themselves in writing (as well as their critical thinking, once implemented in upper-division literature courses). Moreover, students will be required to reexamine their first essay, compare it with the last, and write a self-assessment of their improvement (which will also be kept on file). Some of these could be excerpted (with permission) to use in our recruiting materials and on the web. Note that we already do much of this in our classes, and in SP 100 (Advanced Spanish/Composition) students keep a portfolio and reflect upon their progress throughout the semester. Nevertheless, our task now is to be more intentional about giving such assignments in all our courses and to save evidence of student growth and development in a departmental portfolio.

  Professor Docter began this as a pilot project in Spanish 2 & 4 this semester (Spring 2004). She will report back to the department in May and determine if some modification of the instrument is necessary. By Fall 2004 we hope to institute this in all language classes and in SP 100 (Advanced Spanish), each semester. In May 2005 we will meet to review and discuss the results. At that time we will decide if we wish to implement this strategy (or a modification of it) in some or all upper-division courses as well, beginning in Fall 2005.

- **Filming Oral Presentations:** In a similar fashion, we will assess student’s oral performance by filming (on digital video) students giving a brief oral presentation (perhaps an introduction of themselves or a peer) during the first week of the semester. The clips will be viewed and discussed by the professor and student, either in a private conference or in class. A similar
videotaping will occur at the end of the semester and students and professor will have an opportunity to view both clips (side by side) and assess growth in this area.

We plan to begin this in some classes (ideally French and Spanish 2) in Spring 2005 to see if it is feasible (much will depend upon available resources). A report will be made to the department after this pilot program, which we hope to implement department-wide in Spring 2006. One departmental meeting each year (in May or August) will be devoted to viewing selected clips, discussing the strategy itself, evaluating the results, and determining if curricular or pedagogical changes are necessary.

**Assessment Strategies for Learning Goal #3: World Christians (cf: Standard 3)**

Currently we employ a variety of strategies for assessing students’ understanding of diversity issues (classroom discussion, exams, essays, journals, and oral presentations). Additionally, conversations with students in our offices and homes allow us to assess student growth in a less formal way. (For example, the Study Abroad Reunion Dessert, hosted each semester in Professor Docter’s home, provides an opportunity to assess student growth during their semester abroad.) The written Study Abroad evaluation, a six-page document which assesses various aspects of the abroad experience, is another useful assessment tool in this area. While we plan to continue the strategies listed above (and outlined in our Self-Study), we want to be more intentional about documenting our findings. To this end, we propose the following:

- **Study Abroad Evaluation**: We will continue to use this form for Spanish majors and have begun using it for French students, this Fall 2004. We will meet as a department to discuss the instrument itself and the results, particularly the question that addresses “personal growth and development.” We plan to continue this each semester, indefinitely. We will incorporate selected quotes (with author permission) in our recruiting materials and on the web.

- **Integrating & Assessing the Study Abroad Experience**: Since the required semester abroad is a key component of our curriculum and a kind of capstone experience for our majors, we want to be more intentional about preparing our students for it, engaging them in guided reflection while away and upon their return to campus, and helping them with re-entry. This has been a major concern of our department for the last decade. We also plan to implement strategies to assess student growth as a result of the experience.

This is an enormous goal, which we would like to start in the current review cycle. Essentially we want to initiate a required 2-unit course for all Modern Language majors, tentatively titled “Christian Education in Cross-Cultural Living,” to be given once per semester. The pre-departure course would be very similar to Professor Docter’s current orientation course for WIM (IS 195). To assess growth, students will be given three assignments during this course and again upon their return (ideally during the senior capstone course): (1) Language Placement Test, to assess improvement in linguistic ability; (2) the Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI), to assess intercultural sensitivity; (3) an essay reflecting upon some aspect of the upcoming abroad experience (such as challenges they anticipate, for example). Students would then reflect in journals before, during, and after the experience, and assess their own growth and development, especially as they reread this initial essay.
results would be saved and stored in the departmental portfolio. (Note: a 2-unit capstone course/senior seminar would essentially be the second half of this course.)

In May 2004, Professor Docter will evaluate the orientation course (IS 195) she is currently teaching, to see what elements would work in the ML course and what would need changing; in the summer she will review student evaluations and report the results to the department. In Spring 2005, the department will draft a proposal for the Senate. If approved, the course would be given to all interested students planning to study abroad in the 2005/06 year (as an elective). It would then become a required course for students entering under the 2005/06 catalog, and be given once a year on a regular basis. (Note: depending on timing and Senate approval, the timeline may be delayed one year.)

One department meeting per year would be devoted to discussing the orientation curriculum, student evaluations, the professor’s impressions of the course, and assessment results, so that regular improvements could be made in the curriculum.

- **Exit Interviews:** We will conduct oral exit interviews with all graduating seniors to assess their overall experience in the major. We will begin Spring 2004 and continue annually. We will save the results in our departmental portfolio and discuss them each May in a department meeting. We will determine if we want to modify the instrument, and depending upon the results, determine what changes in our program might be necessary.

**On-going Conversations & Closing the Loop**

- As noted above, a minimum of 1-2 lengthy department meetings per year will be devoted to discussing the assessment strategies themselves (are the instruments effective?), the results (are we getting the results we hoped for?), and their implications for our majors (what does this mean for our program?).
- We will use our findings to develop concrete ways in which to improve our program, and engage in ongoing discussion and assessment.
- Minutes from all such meetings will be carefully recorded and saved, to document our growth in these matters and to hold us accountable.
- When some of the assessment strategies yield “success stories,” we will be more intentional about using them in departmental recruiting materials, alumni mailings, and on our web page.

**For Further Discussion**

As a department, we discussed several other assessment strategies we would eventually like to employ, but feel that these are realistic goals for this particular review cycle (present-2007).

One, however, deserves mention here (because we don’t want it to slip through the cracks indefinitely): we intend to develop a 2-unit capstone course for all graduating Modern Language majors (to be given each spring). Rather than focusing on the “great literary works,” the course will have an intentional practical component and help prepare students for life after Westmont. Students would engage in a variety of activities in which they reflect upon what
they have learned as a result of their major study, and begin to articulate more clearly the importance of the Christian liberal arts experience in general. This would be a time of guided reflection, sharing, and self-assessment. In this course, we also anticipate presenting to students their very first essay written for a language class (described above), the clip of their first oral presentation, and the pre-departure essay written in the orientation course. Students would also retake the language placement test and the IDI, and the results would be shared with the student (and saved in the department portfolio). They would also film another clip, and reflect upon their growth. Having all these tools in place would provide a wonderful way for students and professors to assess their growth and development over the course of their entire college career.

The development of the capstone course will be the focus of our next review cycle.