

External Reviewer Report for the Academic Program Review of the Department of Languages, University of Hawaii—Hilo 2020-2021

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The following is my external reviewer report for the Academic Program Review of the Department of Languages at the University of Hawaii—Hilo. The last Program review was completed in 2006. It was not until 2016 that faculty interest in program self-study and assessment activities were rejuvenated, so that the self-study and review process could be conducted. The Department program underwent various changes between 2006 to 2016 that are no longer relevant. The Department of Languages consists of one B.A. degree program in Japanese Studies, and three Certificate programs in Chinese (Mandarin), Filipino (Tagalog), and Spanish. Program data are provided from the Fall semester 2015 to Spring semester 2020. Because the report provides clear and details data, I will not summarize that data.

Faculty motivation is needed to remain engaged in program sustainability, self-study data collection with reporting, and especially Student (course) Learning Outcomes/Program Learning Outcomes (SLO/PLO) assessment activities. What do the faculty want to know about student learning in their classes and overall, in the program? What does the administration want to know about student learning? The faculty should stimulate their interest in discovering what students can demonstrate regarding language acquisition and cultural knowledge to see if the faculty members' respective instructional environment, teaching, and pedagogy are in fact attaining their desired outcomes. How has the student academic success been explained in terms of their success in the community and job market?

Commendations

I commend the program faculty for maintaining accreditation standards. They have continued to produce scholarly publications, awarded grants, conference presentations, and academic broadcasts, while engaging in community service, and instruction.

The faculty members continue to be highly praised for continuing to maintain strong community ties by participating in various ethnic festival celebrations.

The faculty are commended for engaging in co-curricular assessment of student/community engagement at those public festival events. The UH-Hilo administration should continue to support and encourage such co-curricular events with student performances in the target languages and faculty support. The co-curricular assessment rubric should be promoted and used by the other languages.

Recommendations

- A. Motivation incentives: The Chair and Dean might consider awarding course load reductions to a couple of the professors on a rotating basis for them to actively engage in assessment training, data gathering activities (pre/mid/post test or student portfolio

analysis), maintaining the data, so the program faculty will be better able to make annual contributions to the accreditation reports.

1. Consider sending faculty to the WASC assessment 101 workshops.
2. Assist the program faculty to obtain assistance with conducting introductory language assessment, and upper-level cultural and language course assessment studies.
3. Assign a TA or RA to assist with SLO/PLO assessment.
4. Give part-time language instructors an incentive to assist with giving pre- and post-test assessment tools, build assessment into part-time contracts and expectations.
5. To address the issue of the costs of part-timer lecturers' salary being taken from the department budget (page 21) negotiate for 15-20% of the tuition revenue from the part-timer's course tuition revenue to be given to the program; pay part-timers out of tuition revenue or negotiate for both paying them from tuition revenue and obtaining a percentage of the tuition revenue from courses taught by lecturers, and also for full-time faculty overloads.
6. make SLO/PLO assessment an expectation for annual increments, and promotion for full-time professors.

- B. As the previous review recommended, the faculty should engage in SLO/PLO classroom assessment. The SLO/PLO assessments must be relatively simple, manageable, and faculty driven based on their interest to understand what the students are learning, and where they might be able to "close the loop" in instructional delivery and student learning. What do they want to understand about their students' learning ability regarding first- and second-year language acquisition? What do they want to know about the students' cultural knowledge ability, and the students' ability to apply it in context? How do they use their language and cultural knowledge after graduation?

The program's language learning outcomes should be unified around the four skills: comprehension in listening, and reading, and the ability to speak, and write.

Each language could agree to assess the same topics such as making one's personal introduction and other greetings; asking directions; and so on up to reading and translating a brief news article, responding appropriately to socio-linguistic use-in-situations, or provide evidence of cultural competency while using the target language for upper-level classes to assess mastery. If similar tools were developed in the different languages, then comparisons across languages could be examined.

At the very least, each language should have a unified assessment tool for the different course levels. For example, all section of JPNS101 should use the same assessment tool.

If the assessment tools were similar, then comparisons could be made across language learning. This is where having part-time instructors who can teach the introductory level courses is important, so that the full-time professors can focus on the assessment of student mastery in the upper-level courses.

As the ALO suggests in the report, the faculty are recommended to use the quizzes and exams already being used for grading be used as the assessment tools. Those tests can be

given in advance of the lessons as pre-tests, and at the end of the lessons as the post test (the graded test given at the end of the lesson can be re-examined as the assessment post-test).

A longitudinal study that assesses student growth over the years of their study in the program could also provide the faculty with meaningful data to improve the program over time.

C. The language faculty have unified their program learning objectives. As language professors they must be interested in what works well and what does not work well for the students' language acquisition regardless of the specific language being taught. I recommend that the Chair arrange some brown-bag lunch meetings between the program faculty and someone, usually an Education Professor or the ALO, who already does SLO/PLO assessment, so they can share ideas on how to do SLO/PLO assessment. Then, the program faculty members may continue to work together on their mutual goal of producing successful students.

I would suggest that the wording of the fourth PLO be made stronger in the sense of being more demonstrable or assessable. The fourth PLO states: "Students demonstrate understanding of writing systems (social context of language)." How is the "understanding" demonstrated? I suggest changing the wording to something like "Students distinguish specific principles and concepts of writing systems (social context of languages)."

D. Accurate data collection and maintenance is an ever-present issue in academia. The strongest way to guard one's data is to always keep a copy yourself. When the program faculty begin to collect SLO/PLO in their individual courses in each language, across the languages, and in the cultural background courses, they should maintain their data records while sharing them and posting them on the webpage. Maybe the office staff could also store data?

E. For future growth in the major, and the three certificate programs to stimulate student interest in language learning (noted on page 16) consider awarding badges or micro-credentials. For example, consider 3 courses or 9-12 credits per/micro-credential; take 101, 102, and 201 to earn a micro-credential in a language. The badges or micro-credentials may help motivate students to take a few classes to earn a badge, and they may end up majoring, or obtaining a full certificate.

Try to have the Registrar award the micro-credential when the credits are completed without student application paperwork.

Consider ways to promote the program's growth and enrollment, such as:

1. Try to advertise micro-credentials to the hotels, department of education, and other local business to attract employees and teachers who could advance in their professions with language training.

2. Consider developing a greater web-based presence, especially for offering formally approved online courses (not just remote teaching).

3. Consider net-working your students with email pen-pals at universities in Japan, China, Spain, and the Philippines.
 4. Consider video-recording your students' participation in community festivals and post them on YouTube and your webpage.
 5. Consider expanding the number of cultural festivals.
 6. Consider teaching students how best to use translation programs, such as Google Translate, and how to identify idiomatic expressions that the programs have not mastered.
 7. Consider a course on Japanese and tourism; a course to train hotel employees.
 8. Consider other ways to promote the program on social-media and YouTube such as was suggested in the conversation to post a brief teaching or tutorial lesson or information about faculty research.
 9. Consider benchmarking student success by using the internationally recognized tests in Japanese and Spanish.
- F. To gain a better idea of what students need after graduation, survey alumni, and ask them if they continue to use the language they studied. If they do use it, then how are they using their language, at home, at work, or both.
- G. Three recommendations from the previous review are still worthwhile namely:
- a. seeking external monies, such as Title VI and NEH—to help bolster operations;
 - b. creating post-doctoral fellowships in the department to recruit new faculty; and
 - c. creating advanced special topics in Japanese and Chinese for the upper division levels.
- H. Seek assistance from the Endowment to obtain donor sponsored Faculty Chairs in the program.
- I. Most importantly continue to support the faculty's community service, and their research, publication, and academic presentation opportunities.

Conclusion

The proposal to rename the program and expand the BA offerings under an umbrella program was not included in the self-study, but it was discussed in the conversations with the faculty members, Dean, and Vice Chancellor. The proposal is that to attract more students to major in Asian studies, and to preserve the Japanese Studies program that a new umbrella program be initiated that would offer BA degrees in Japanese Studies, and Chinese Studies tracks, while maintaining the present language certificates with the future possibility to add Philippine Studies and language classes in Korean.

Finding a great branding-name for the program was discussed with the faculty at length with different proposals being presented, such as 1. Asian Studies and Languages, 2. Global Studies, 3. Foreign Languages and Cultures. Some members are concerned that the new

program might washout the enrollment in Japanese Studies. They proposed to maintain Japanese Studies while expanding with a new and separate Chinese Studies program.

During the conversations, I related the University of Guam's experience with the umbrella program approach. Our East Asian Studies, and Japanese Studies programs were targeted for having a consistently low number of majors. While WASC was asking us to reduce programs, the President wanted to start a new CHamoru Studies program. So, we created an umbrella program called Pacific Asian Studies with tracks in East Asian Studies, Japanese Studies, and CHamoru Studies. For example, the diplomas read "Pacific Asian Studies: East Asian Studies" track. This move only protected those two programs for a few years. When the University engaged in a program prioritization process, East Asian Studies and Japanese Studies were cited for the sustained low number of majors, and they were put on a 4 year teach-out plan, and then removed. The multi-disciplinary classes that composed those programs are still offered. No positions were cut due to the prioritization process. There were no financial savings; we looked leaner.

I wish I had a great branding-name for a multi-disciplinary program that would attract majors, so I could use it myself.