ASSESSMENT PROJECT PROGRESS REPORT
Spanish Program
Department of World Languages and Cultures

Submitted by:
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We thank the Program Review and Assessment Committee for their support for our project to improve and expand the assessment of language proficiency in Spanish by beginning and intermediate-level IUPUI students of Spanish.

As stated in our proposal, we wanted to create a **new computerized Spanish placement test** to be used both as a placement test for incoming students, and as an entry test to the Spanish Major. We currently use a placement test developed by the University of Iowa for first and second-year students. Upon reviewing the test and analyzing some data such as grades obtained by students in the courses they had placed in, etc., the Spanish faculty decided that it was best to develop a test tailored to our program. In addition, we thought that an in-house test could also serve the purpose of assessing our incoming Majors' level of readiness for the content courses that constitute the core of our Major Program. A test with such double purpose would necessarily have to be more complex than the current placement test.

We requested two grants for this project last summer. A PRAC Grant ($2,000) and a School of Liberal Arts Teaching Grant ($5,000) to provide funding for two of our lecturers to work on this project. Unfortunately, the School of Liberal Arts was not able to fund our project, which has caused a delay in our proposed schedule. However, we were pleased that Amy Bomke, Spanish lecturer, agreed to develop the new test, which is at this point complete.

What has been accomplished so far:

A new test has been developed. The tests is more comprehensive than the one we currently use.

It consists of:

-listening comprehension section (10 items)

-grammar and vocabulary section (63 items)

-reading comprehension section (12 items)

-writing section.

There are several features that make this test superior to the current test. For once, the new test

is designed to assess writing skills in an open-ended format. It also assesses reading skills both

in the areas of comprehension and linguistic awareness (word functions, selection of meaning

appropriate to content, etc. The current test does not include these areas. In addition, the

listening comprehension section includes two text types; a basic conversational text and a text

with academic content. It is hoped that in this way we will be able to discriminate among

students who are able to follow an academic lecture in Spanish (a necessary skill for Majors) and

those who are not.

The test has been piloted in paper and pencil format with five entry-level Spanish majors. The

results, when considered against other measures such as performance of students in Major

courses, suggest that the test is an adequate instrument to discriminate the language proficiency

level of Spanish Majors.

What is left to do:

The test will be given in paper and pencil format to entry-level Spanish Majors in gateway

courses to the Major (S311 and S313) as part of our regular assessment of new Majors. We plan

to pilot the test in paper and pencil format with first and second-year students in Fall 2004 and refine the test as needed.

Amy Bomke is researching available computer programs in order to identify the one that would work best for our purposes. She is planning to seek assistance from the Center for Teaching and Learning and the Testing Center. If we feel that the test serves its intended double purpose as placement test for first and second-year students, and as entry test for Spanish Majors, Amy Bomke will computerize the test during Spring and Summer 2005.

This is an exciting project for our program involving collaboration among several faculty and graduate students. One of our graduate students in the MAT program is writing her M.A. Thesis on the topic of assessment, and plans to include data from our test for entry-level Majors. We view the project as an opportunity for program improvement and as a topic for research to be shared with the larger academic community.