IUPUI Program Review and Assessment Committee
Final Report

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Project Title:
Preparing for Proficiency: Collaboration for NCATE Accreditation in World Language Education

Project Dates:
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We thank the Program Review and Assessment Committee for their support for our project to externally assess the language proficiency of IUPUI Spanish majors. As stated in our proposal, we wanted to utilize an external proficiency assessment to establish an external proficiency baseline of IUPUI students entering the Spanish major, and to use this data to inform curricular revisions and pedagogical shifts that could increase proficiency gains of IUPUI students of Spanish. The Spanish program currently uses an internally developed summative assessment, the Capstone, to assess Spanish majors at the end of their respective programs of study. However, as Spanish faculty collaborated with School of Education faculty in pursuit of ACTFL/CAEP national accreditation for Spanish education, collaborating faculty in both programs identified the need to utilize additional assessments for two reasons: 1) ACTFL/CAEP requires that 80 percent of program graduates achieve a proficiency level of Advanced-Low as determined by an official, externally validated proficiency examination; and 2) Spanish faculty would benefit from knowing the proficiency level of students at various points in the Spanish program in order to implement appropriate proficiency interventions if needed.

Project Activities

With approval of the PRAC Committee, we modified a few project activities to better fit within the scope of available funding while still maintaining commitment to project

outcomes.

In order to assess candidate's proficiency through an externally validated assessment, the project team utilized the Standards-based Assessment and Measurement of Proficiency, or STAMP test. This online proficiency examination assesses students' proficiency across four skill areas: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Proficiency results are reported using the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language's (ACTFL) proficiency descriptors, which are divided into five broad ranges: novice, intermediate, advanced, superior, and distinguished. For ACTFL/CAEP accreditation, 80 percent of program completers must score at the Advanced-Low sublevel across all skill areas. Given that the STAMP assessment is affordable, user-friendly, and an externally validated measure of proficiency sublevels across all four skill areas, the project team felt that the STAMP assessment was the most appropriate choice to meet the goals and outcomes of this PRAC-funded project.

Furthermore, the project team was intentional about which student groups would take the STAMP assessment and why. After reflecting on program goals, the project team assessed the following two groups of Spanish majors:

1) Assessment of S313 Students: S313 is the first required course in the Spanish major. Since one goal of the project was to establish a baseline of students' proficiency as they enter the major, the project team deemed it appropriate to assess all students enrolled in this course in the fall 2013 semester. In order to minimize interference with regularly scheduled course activities, the project team collaborated with instructors of S313 to schedule the online proficiency assessment at a mutually beneficial time. All assessments were offered in the last two weeks of October 2013, about halfway through the fall semester.

2) Assessment of Capstone Students: Since part of the ACTFL/CAEP accreditation process requires that 80 percent of graduating Spanish education majors can demonstrate Advanced-Low proficiency, the project team felt it appropriate to expand the originally proposed project scope to include the Capstone students. The Capstone is the final course in the Spanish major, and is also taken by Spanish education students in the semester preceding student teaching. By assessing the fall 2013 Capstone students with the same assessment, the project team would be able to also establish a baseline of proficiency level as students exit the Spanish major. The assessment of the Capstone students was also administered at the end of October 2013, about halfway through the fall semester.

<u>Results and Findings</u>

The results across classes are noted in the table below.

Class	Skill	N *(total assessed)*	% in Intermediate Range	% in Advanced Range
S313 (4 sections)	Reading	58	97%	64%
	Writing	57	100%	4%
	Listening	59	83%	39%
	Speaking	58	98%	4%
Capstone (1 section)	Reading	8		63% (5/8)
	Writing	8		13% (1/8)
	Listening	8		75% (6/8)
	Speaking	8		13% (1/8)

Overall, the outgoing proficiency of Capstone students across the four skill areas is generally lower than the ACTFL/CAEP required Advanced-Low level, particularly in the productive domains of writing and speaking. This may indicate a need to investigate course content throughout the major to ensure that students have ample opportunities to develop their productive language skills at sufficiently high levels, and that outside opportunities for proficiency development (e.g. service learning, study abroad) are encouraged. However, the majority of students entering the major are already scoring in the Intermediate range across the four skills, with a reasonable percentage scoring in the Advanced range for the receptive skills of reading and listening. Here, too, Spanish faculty may wish to examine pathways of study to ensure that students have sufficient opportunities to develop productive language skills. These results are consistent with findings at the national level, which show that university graduates typically reach Intermediate level of proficiency through their course of study in a language major, with only those that engage in additional experiences with the language such as study abroad, extensive contact with immigrant groups, and such, reaching Advanced level.

The members of the project team do have a few concerns about the validity of this data during the pilot assessment. First, the Spanish faculty experienced issues with timing the length of the test. While the project team had anticipated that the test could be finished in one full class session, students needed more time to fully attend to all components of the assessment. As a result, Spanish faculty dedicated part of the subsequent class meeting to

assessment completion. This lead the project team to concerns about the nature of student participation within these time constraints (e.g. whether some students may have rushed through the assessment in order to finish in the allotted time), which will impact future scheduling of this assessment.

Second, since this assessment was added as a pilot for the fall 2013 semester, there was no external accountability for students who took the assessment (e.g. the test is not yet in place as a licensure requirement for Spanish education students, nor was the test a requirement for completion of a particular course). The project team wonders if a level of external accountability might impact scores, and will work with Spanish faculty to determine if this is an appropriate consideration.

Future Directions

Despite the inevitable challenges associated with piloting a new assessment, the Spanish faculty and project team felt that this project was an overall positive experience for both faculty and students. Faculty report that students appreciated having external feedback on their proficiency growth, which may be particularly motivating to newly declared majors. Furthermore, the Department of World Languages and Cultures has committed to funding the STAMP assessment for all Spanish Capstone students in future semesters in order to collect longitudinal data to support systemic curricular and pedagogical decision-making for the Spanish program.