**August, 2009 Assessment Committee Feedback: Modern Languages**

**Assessment Committee Contact Person: Beth Lincoln**

**Plan also reviewed by: Melissa Mercer-Tachick**

Thank you for the hard work that went into your assessment plan. As we carefully reviewed your Steps, it became clear just how much thought and effort went into your work. There were some real strengths in your work, and we celebrate these with you!

In general, there were a few themes that the Assessment Committee noticed. First, it is most helpful when the progression from Step 2 to Step 3 and Step 3 to Step 4 are clear. That is, after you have articulated your learning goals, the clearest proposals are explicit in how the courses/experiences in Step 3 directly support the learning goals. And Step 4 should take full advantage of all of the places in Step 3 where data might be collected. Second, make strategic use of both direct and indirect measures[[1]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0AUaAHaCO2ORDZGh0bWJ0NXJfNWRieGJkcmdo&hl=en" \l "_ftn1" \o "), and think about whether data can be collected at the beginning, during the program of study, and at the end. This gives a richer sense of where and when your work contributes strongly to learning goals and where improvements might be made. Third, make your plan manageable! All data need not be collected annually; some can be done every other year. And you may choose not to measure for all of your learning goals right now. Make claims that you can (a) intellectually, ethically stand behind and (b) find resources to measure.

Please feel free to contact either of us with questions about your feedback. We want to help your assessment plan be successful in collecting relevant data to inform your work! We will be happy to work with you toward timely completion revisions to the first four steps, submission of preliminary findings, and/or completion of this iteration of data collection.

Comments specific to your plan:

Step 1, Mission, is thorough, detailed and specific.

Step 2, Learning Goals, begins with general outcomes that are never mentioned again.  Where are they assessed?  If there is no plan to assess them, they should be removed.  If the plan is to assess them, you will have to develop clear definitions for what terms such as understanding and appreciation mean, as at present they are fuzzy.

Specific outcomes 1-4 are all measurable.  Given the specificity of your mission, you should make the links from it to the student outcomes you list explicit.

Specific outcomes 5 and 6 are not student learning outcomes, and should be omitted.

Step 3 is well done, with the program components nicely linked to the outcomes.  A few minor comments:  The language referring to the International House needs revision to reflect the new living arrangements.  Can the off-campus experience also be used to assess Outcome 2 (the development of the ability to think and express themselves critically and creatively in the target language)?

In Step 4, Methods, many of the proposed measures are direct, which is excellent, but their relationship to the outcomes and program components described in earlier steps needs to be made explicit.  For example, which outcome does method 1 measure?

How will Method 2 be used for assessment?

The use of externally developed tools in method 3 is excellent.

Method 4 calls for evaluating an essay for which the department will need to develop a shared rubric. To make it easier on yourselves (and the students), would it be possible to use a class assignment for this purpose?  The final line in Method 4 mentions radically changing or reshaping a student’s outlook on life; if this is a desired learning outcome, it should be made explicit in Step 2.

You’ve noted that your data collection will be phased in.  This is fine; you should also remember that even after your program is fully implemented, you do not need to assess everything every year.  You may develop a timeline that indicates in which semester/year you plan to carry out each measure.

We look forward to reading how the data collection and analysis has gone, and to learning how you have used the data.

[[1]](https://docs.google.com/a/albion.edu/Doc?docid=0AUaAHaCO2ORDZGh0bWJ0NXJfNWRieGJkcmdo&hl=en" \l "_ftnref1" \o ") *In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).*

**Next Steps:**

 In coordination with your Assessment Committee reviewers and their written and verbal feedback, please observe the following deadlines for your assessment cycle:

* September 15:  Revisions to Steps 1-4 due (if necessary)
* October 1: Completion of Steps 5 & 6 using preliminary data
* November 2: Final Fall 2009 plans due

**Fall 2009 Modern Languages:**
I've finished reviewing your department's assessment report for fall 2009 on Google Docs, and want to commend you for your excellent work.  You responded to all the feedback on steps 1-4 in a thoughtful manner, and have begun to report comparative data to illustrate the impact of your program.  I look forward to reading the results of your future steps, such as portfolio assessment, and any curricular changes you make as a result of your assessment.

Overall, Modern Languages is well on its way to an exemplary assessment program.