**2009 Modern Languages Report**

**Step 1 : Department/Program Mission (Any updates due September 15, 2009 )**

The primary goal of the Modern Languages and Cultures Department is to facilitate students’ learning of Spanish, French, and German, while also expanding their knowledge and understanding of cultural and linguistic diversity. As a Department, we:

1. Bring the world to the classroom and our students:

A. By emphasizing the relevance and importance of authentic learning materials. Students learn authentic language skills, cultural competence as well as the historical and geographical backgrounds of cultural realities.

B. Through our sequence of language instruction courses that expands and enhances language skills, as well as students’ understanding of, and knowledge about other cultures.

C. By engaging students with other cultures through regular cultural activities (lunch tables, cultural programs, cultural events each semester)

D. By having different native speaker teaching assistants join us every semester from the countries whose languages we teach.

E. By having students live in a designated International House, which brings those interested in a particular language together so that they may practice their language skills with each other as well as a Native Speaker Teaching Assistant.

2. Bring our students to the world:

A. Via short term travel-programs connected to specific courses led by departmental faculty. (Departmental faculty have taken students to France, Germany, Argentina, Cameroon, Spain and California).

B. By sending students to off-campus study programs that focus either on academic course work or international internships in different fields, or a mixture of both.

C. Through a successful program where Modern Language students are paired with Albion Elementary school classes to teach a foreign language once a week to Elementary school children.

D. By off-campus fieldwork, which is an important component of some of our off-campus programs.

E. By helping graduating seniors receive Fulbright scholarships. The Department has been the primary recipient at the College of these awards since 2003. These scholarships allow Albion grads the opportunity to apply and expand upon their recently acquired cultural and linguistic knowledge by funding a year of study and teaching in a country other than their own.

3. Prepare our students to be global citizens:

A. By allowing students to choose between different tracks for their studies:

i. a *Cultural Area Studies* track or

ii. Languages and Cultures for the Professions, which was specifically designed for those students who want to prepare themselves for professions with an international component or in an international setting. Both tracks emphasize language acquisition as well as cultural understanding. Students on the cultural areas track usually focus on academic studies during their time spent off-campus, while language and professions students focus primarily on an international internship in an area of their interest.

B. By providing further opportunities for our students to engage in a meaningful way with the world through a number of initiatives:

i. The Albion Sister-City relationship with Noisy-le-Roi, France. Nearly 200 Albion students have traveled to Noisy for internships or as part of their off-campus study.

ii. Entrepreneurial Exchange with ESCIA (French Business School in Cergy-Pontoise). Albion students travel for one-week France to work on creating a new business idea with a group of French students. The students continue to work on the project through advanced communication technology. The French students travel to Albion the same semester to finalize the project.

iii. The Nwagni Project, the goal of which is to enhance the educational opportunities of children in Batchingou, Cameroon. This program arose out of a student’s experience in Cameroon, during a FYE trip.

iii. We also have a connection with Paso Pacifíco, an environmental organization to reserve and conserve part of the Pacific coast in Nicaragua, with one of our faculty serving on the Board of Directors.

**Step 2: List goals/outcomes (Any updates due September 15, 2009 )**

Specific outcomes for which program components have been identified:

1. The increase of students’ linguistic competency in the target language so that more than half demonstrate an oral and written proficiency level of “advanced low” on the [actfl](http://www.sil.org/LinguaLinks/languagelearning/OtherResources/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines/ACTFLProficiencyGuidelines.htm) scale.

2. The development of the ability to think and express themselves critically and creatively in the target language.

3. The acquisition of an understanding of the target language culture(s), history, societies and civilizations.

4. The development of the ability to recognize, analyze and interpret cultural production (literature, film, painting, music etc.) in the target language.

**Step 3: Identify program components (Any updates due September 15, 2009 )**

**Outcome 1**. *The increase of students’ linguistic competency in the target language so that more than half demonstrate an oral and written proficiency level of “advanced low” on the actfl scale.*

a. All of our language proficiency courses, from 101 through to 303 (“For the professions”) and, in Spanish, 304 – Creative writing workshop, help students progress toward this fundamental goal.

b. Other components of our program that work towards this goal are:   
i. our requirement that students who major in one of our languages, study in an off-campus program where the target language is the native language.  
ii. a minimum of one-semester residence and participation in the cultural programming of the I-Space (international language and living). Programming in the I-Space is an important component of the program that provides students with opportunities to practice and improve their language skills.  
iii. the requirement for students in our language classes to attend and participate in the weekly Language Tables as well as weekly cultural activities.

**Outcome 2**. *The development of the ability to think and express themselves critically and creatively in the target language.*

All of our upper level course offerings, beyond 302 (and 304 for Spanish) help students develop higher level interpretive and analytical skills in the target language, as does living in the I-Space.

**Outcome 3**. *The acquisition of an understanding of the target language culture(s), history, societ(ies) and civilizations.*

a. Important cultural content is integrated into all of our language courses, including the language sequence (101-304). Each language section offers special courses that provide students with a cultural and historical context for the language and cultural artifacts that they study in the program. Furthermore, our advanced upper division courses all deal with cultural production and themes that help students achieve a more profound cultural understanding of certain places, groups and cultures of the non-English -speaking world.

b. Residence and participation in the International House programming is also key, since the meetings and activities are directed by Native Speaking Teaching Assistants from Latin America, Spain , France or the Franco-phone world, as well as Germany or Austria, who are encouraged to integrate their experiences in their home country into the programming.

c. Off-campus experience

**Outcome 4**. *The development of the ability to recognize, analyze and interpret cultural production (literature, film, painting, music etc.) in the target language.*

a. These skills are the focus of most of our upper level course offerings. Students read and learn to interpret literary works and movies. They specifically learn how to evaluate, analyze and interpret such cultural productions, by way of a variety of different assignments and projects. This learning is continued beyond the classroom in the different types of cultural programming and also through the opportunity to write and an honors or departmental thesis.

**Step 4: Select methods/data sources and instruments (Any updates due September 15, 2009)**

*Preliminary remarks:*

·          We should have some data regarding point **Number one** by the fall.

·          **Number 3** (“for the professions” capstone project) is an assessment tool already available to us.

·          The other data collecting ideas will be implemented by the whole department,on a regular basis beginning this fall. (Probably not all at once, e.g.the oral interviews may not happen until year 2).

**1**. Over the summer the Department of Modern Languages, in conjunction with the CIE, will begin to collect assessment data about where our students place on the various placement exams they must take at the beginning of their off-campus study. Most, if not all off-campus study-programs, in countries where English is not the native language, give placement tests to incoming students, in order to see what level of speaking, writing, listening and reading they have already attained in the target language, before they embark on their studies in the program. This data will indicate how our students have progressed since coming to Albion and enrolling in the language courses in our Department.

**2**. Beginning with the next academic year (09-10) the Department of Modern Languages and Cultures will implement two new methods of acquiring data about the linguistic proficiency of our students:

A. We have designed a linguistic proficiency assessment tool, which is based on ACTFL proficiency guidelines for writing. This assessment tool will be administered to all students registered in a 301 level course. This course has chosen because it is the first upper-division course that we offer and highlights the beginning stage for our majors. We will conduct this assessment tool again during the Spring semester of each year to a senior seminar in each of the respective languages. This will provide comparative data snapshot over the life of the majors and minors in our respective languages.

B. In order to assess the development of linguistic proficiency from a more gradual perspective we will require that all graduating students submit a writing portfolio that documents the development of their written skills in the target language. We will ask them to include a writing assignment in the target language from each year (or each semester) at Albion. This will provide us with an overview of their progression in the language across the 4 years they are here. Using the AP grading scale for written assignments will provide data documenting each student's proficiency development. It will require that we collect the portfolios of seniors, give each portfolio AP proficiency grades and enter the information into a data bank. We will also assess where each portfolio places the student within the ACTFL Proficiency guidelines for writing, which will help us document what percentage of our graduating students achieve the “Advanced low” level on that scale. We are also discussing the possibility of conducting oral interviews in the target language based on the Oral Proficiency Interviews conducted under the auspices of ACTFL. This will give us the data necessary to document where our students place on the ACTFL scale.

**3**. Since the new “for the professions” track has been offered, all graduating seniors are expected to perform individual research in their senior year in their particular field of interest, in order to demonstrate their expertise both in the target language, and also in the area they have chosen to work on. This track addresses outcomes 1 and 2 cited above because students must have attained adequate linguistic proficiency to complete the research project as well as the ability to conduct research in their chosen field of professional interest.

**4.** Because we feel that it is important to document our student’s progress in other areas, often less easily captured than proficiency in the language (however significant that part is) such as critical and creative thinking (in the target language), understanding cultural and societal norms in the geographical areas they have studied, especially in terms of how they compare to those they grew up with, we are going to have all our graduating seniors write a brief reflective essay (written in the target language) in which they describe the range of skills they think they have been able to develop or acquire in their capacity as Modern Language majors or minors at Albion College. We envision this essay being a forum in which students will be able to reflect upon where they are today in comparison to where they were four years ago, both in terms of proficiency as well as the areas described above. This will give as a clearer indication of how majoring or minoring in a Modern Language can radically change or reshape a student’s outlook on life.

**Step 5: Analyze and interpret the data (Due October 1, 2009 with preliminary data; due November 2, 2009 with final data for this assessment cycle)**

 For our first round of assessment we collected data from all 301 courses for French, German, and Spanish. Later this semester we will apply the same Assessment tool to a senior-seminar level class in each of the language sections for comparison. The scale below is based on the ACTFL Guidelines for language proficiency (Attached as separate document). The 301 course is in many ways a transtion course from lower-division language (more structure-based) to upper-division language (more content-based). This is the first upper-division course that our students take. In this course, though grammar is usually still present, there is a shift in this course toward content and theme-based course design. As the data indicates below most of our students at the 301 level are in the intermediate range, which is exactly what we would expect. Those students in 0+ range are the weaker students and are probably in need of remedial work (which could include study abroad)  to have continued success in the major or minor. No differences can be detected across the various categories below. Students seem able to adequately negotiate the required expectations for FL proficiency. Those students who have scored 2+ are most likely to be heritage speakers, i.e. have been speaking the language at home prior to coming to Albion College.  \*\*Japanese will be added once we are able to offer courses above the 301 level.

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| *MLAC Writing Proviciency Assessment Tool* ***DATA*** | | | | | |  | Fall 2009 | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Assessment Scale: | | |  |  | Bitmap   |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |
|  | 0 -- 0 | **}** | Novice |  | 3 - 3+ |  |  |  |
|  | 1 -- 1+ | **}** | Intermediate | | 4 - 4+ |  | Superior |  |
|  | 2 -- 2+ | **}** | Advanced | | 5 |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **1** | **Global Tasks / Functions** | | |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **0** | **0+** | **1** | **1+** | **2** | **2+** |
| French 301 | |  |  |  | 4 | 6 | 3 |  |
| German 301 | |  |  |  | 1 | 8 | 3 | 1 |
| Spanish 301.1 | |  |  |  | 4 | 6 | 2 |  |
| Spanish 301.2 | |  |  |  | 1 | 4 | 9 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **2** | **Context** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **0** | **0+** | **1** | **1+** | **2** | **2+** |
| French 301 | |  |  | 2 | 4 | 4 | 3 |  |
| German 301 | |  |  |  | 1 | 6 | 5 | 1 |
| Spanish 301.1 | |  |  |  | 4 | 6 | 2 |  |
| Spanish 301.2 | |  |  |  | 1 | 6 | 7 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **3** | **Content** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **0** | **0+** | **1** | **1+** | **2** | **2+** |
| French 301 | |  |  | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| German 301 | |  |  |  | 2 | 5 | 5 | 1 |
| Spanish 301.1 | |  |  |  | 5 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| Spanish 301.2 | |  |  |  |  | 3 | 11 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **4** | **Accuracy** | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **0** | **0+** | **1** | **1+** | **2** | **2+** |
| French 301 | |  |  | 4 | 2 | 2 | 4 |  |
| German 301 | |  |  |  | 2 | 4 | 6 | 1 |
| Spanish 301.1 | |  |  |  | 6 | 4 |  |  |
| Spanish 301.2 | |  |  | 2 | 7 | 4 | 1 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **5** | **Text Type** | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  | **0** | **0+** | **1** | **1+** | **2** | **2+** |
| French 301 | |  |  |  | 6 | 6 | 1 |  |
| German 301 | |  |  |  | 1 | 7 | 4 | 1 |
| Spanish 301.1 | |  |  |  | 2 | 7 | 3 |  |
| Spanish 301.2 | |  |  |  | 5 | 4 | 5 |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Step 6: How will the data collected be used for decision-making, strategic planning, etc. (Due October 1, 2009 with preliminary data; due November 2, 2009 with final data for this assessment cycle)**

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|  | Assessment Scale: | | | |  |  | Bitmap   |  | | --- | |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | | 0 -- 0+ | **}** | Novice |  | 3 - 3+ |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | | 1 -- 1+ | **}** | Intermediate | | 4 - 4+ |  | Superior |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | | 2 -- 2+ | **}** | Advanced | | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **5** | **Text Type** | | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  | | **0** | **0+** | **1** | **1+** | **2** | **2+** | **3** | **3+** | **4** | **4+** | **5** |
| French 301 | | |  |  | 6 | 6 | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **French 320** | | |  |  |  |  | 9 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| German 301 | | |  |  | 1 | 7 | 4 | 1 |  |  |  |  |  |
| **German 307** | | |  |  |  |  | 1 | 1 | 2 |  | 2 |  |  |
|  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Spanish 301.1 | | |  |  | 2 | 7 | 3 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Spanish 301.2 | | |  |  | 5 | 4 | 5 |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Spanish 402** | | |  |  |  |  |  |  | 2 | 2 | 7 |  |  |
|  | |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |

 As hoped our comparative survey data shows that students across all 3 languages show significant improvement in their proficiency. The one surprising feature is that there seem to be discrepancies in proficiency levels when one compares advanced students in French with those students in Spanish or German. The data does not provide any reasons for this but I would suspect several possibilities: 1) inconsistency in interpretation. While we are professional language instructors we are not adequately trained in oral proficiency testing. This training program would require a significant time committment and is expensive. The other option would be to require that all graduates take the oral proficiency exam which is administed by ADFL. The charge for this exam is also quite expensive. For each individual student approximately $150. Presently those students in MLAC who seek teaching certificates are required to take this exam; 2) Heritage speakers in German or Spanish. Even though we do not track this I know that there are at least 2 heritage speakers in German and several in Spanish as well. Because they are semi-/near-native speakers, they would skew the data for those particular languages. 3) Some of the advanced classes have either more or fewer students who have already been on study abroad. If one of the above classes is either over- or under-represented in those students this would also have a significant impact on the survey results

We are satisfied with the results of the data, which shows that our students are making substantial progress in their language proficiency while at Albion College.

Since our department is several departments in one, each of the language sections will be asked to compare their data between the 301 results and the senior seminar results. Each section will be asked to identify any trends, discrepancies or qualitative differences in student progression from the intermediate level to the senior level first at the language section level. Those reports will be first given to the chair and then a departmental meeting will be called for discussion of the overall results. An important outcome for us is that each language is similar in terms of student success. Traditionally we have managed the individual language sections as a department and we will continue to do this.  