

Annual Assessment Report of Student Learning Outcomes

Spanish Program

Wells College

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I. Program Assessment Meetings:

Due to the fact that I am the only person in the Spanish program, there were no meetings for the 2017-2018 academic year.

II. Closing the Loop:

1. Since I did not see last year's Assessment Report until recently, I was not aware of any of the changes that the professors who preceded me had in mind. These are four changes that they (Dr. Gerardo T. Cummings and Dr. Elizabeth Juarez-Cummings) had discussed prior to my arrival (my comments will appear in parentheses after each planned change):

i. **"Eliminating the workbook requirement from SPAN 101 & 102.** There is no more workbook requirement for these courses. Our students are able to save approximately \$55 dollars (depending on whether the workbook was purchased online, at our bookstore, on Amazon, or in other retailers). We now use a number of online sources to substitute for the workbook, such as Conjuguemos.com, Studyspanish.com, the Duolingo app etc." (I understand that foreign language materials are expensive and I have experienced the affordability issues of certain students. It became clear to me in Spring 2018. I appreciate this effort on behalf of the previous professors. I find this to be a very troubling issue. I plan [or planned] on ordering completely new textbooks for both the elementary and intermediate Spanish courses. Now I am starting to second-guess this idea as the issue of materials affordability seems to be a real trend, specifically for students coming from the inner-city. This is an issue that I believe needs to be addressed appropriately.)

ii. **"Offering an option for Spanish majors who are unable or unwilling to go abroad.** The departure of Dr. Gerardo T. Cummings made it impossible for such a topic to be explored, discussed, or presented to EPC during the 2016-2017 academic year." (I really believe in the idea of students studying abroad because it means a full immersion experience, both culturally and linguistically, which is priceless. This is an interesting idea, but I think students might choose this option instead of going abroad for the sake of convenience, the natural apprehension of going to a completely different country far from home, and, of course, because it would cost less. The local alternative would be for students to get the most authentic experience possible in the classroom at all levels.)

iii. **"New courses:** A new course (SPAN 128: Medical Spanish) had been introduced for Fall 2016, but the departure of Dr. Cummings forced the cancellation of said course." (I had one particular

student ask about this course more than once, but since I am the only Spanish professor –I have not been made aware of a new hire– I don't know when such a course could be offered.¹ I have never taught medical Spanish, but I have been a medical interpreter. With some preparation and the right materials, I could feasibly teach it in the future.)

iv. **“An active recruitment effort:** The Spanish Program faculty (namely, just myself, Dr. Elizabeth Juarez-Cummings) in conjunction with the Spanish Teaching Assistant and members of the Spanish Club, were present in all the Open Houses or Academic Fairs offered during the 2016-2017. Our Spanish Program saw the following number of students declare a Spanish major or minor: 2 declared a Spanish major, 2 declared a Spanish minor. Our intention was to change our recruitment approaches.” (I believe that in addition to Open Houses or Academic affairs, the Spanish program has to captivate students in the elementary courses in order to get them to consider majoring or minoring in Spanish. This is something I plan to carry out next semester with a new, more communicative, immersion style and culture-laden, approach.)

2. Reflection on the effectiveness of the changes.

I cannot reflect on the effectiveness of the changes proposed by Dr. Gerardo T. Cummings and Dr. Elizabeth Juarez-Cummings, but I can reflect on the changes I have made during the year.

i. It seemed to me that most students were able to purchase the textbook they were required to buy during the Fall semester of 2017. However, I wanted to implement a change which is the standard in most Spanish programs in the United States: doing homework and taking ownership of learning via electronic platforms that are designed for specific textbooks. The textbook which the previous professors were using (Anda, by Pearson) has such a platform, which I implemented in the Spring of 2018. I gave students the option of purchasing the physical textbook and the electronic platform (\$195.70) or the electronic platform alone (which comes with an electronic version of the textbook) (\$102.95). I was surprised, however, at the reticence of some students to even purchase the platform with the electronic textbook for \$102.95. Even though it is was a minority, I have come to know about textbook purchasing issues (and students completing courses without ever buying a textbook for them) at the college, which concerns me in general and because students in a foreign language program need to follow/have access to the assigned materials. The inability to access required materials makes it very difficult for individual students to follow along in a foreign language course and successfully fulfill the language requirement. I was going to switch from Pearson to Vista Higher Learning materials, but the latter, even though more suitable for Wells College students in my opinion, is more expensive. I am seriously considering sticking with Anda by Pearson.

III. Examination of data collected for this year's targeted learning outcomes:

My targeted learning outcomes were what was expected of the students as per the syllabi that I designed for SPAN 101, 123, and 204 (Fall 2017) and SPAN 102, 124, and 207 (Spring 2018). In both the elementary and intermediate level courses (101, 102, 123, 124), there was always a focus on the four modalities of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of the four

¹ In order for there to upper and lower-level offerings in Spanish, there needs to be at least two professors. I have students that are anxious to know about next year's upper-level course offerings, such as Ar Corsino, Aaliyah McNair, and Lauren Schraft.

modalities, the most prominent were listening, speaking, and writing. Students are exposed to listening during every class. I try to use comprehensible input which I interpret as contextualizing the target language when using it and saying relatively simple sentences and phrases that include cognates. This also includes a certain degree of histrionic accompaniment on my behalf as well as visual aids, be they projected or drawn on the chalkboard. Students also have listening sections on their exams and in the Spring semester, they had to do listening for their online homework. As a whole, student listening skills are fair. Students are required to speak among themselves in the target language in every class and they also have what is called an effective communication assessment which consists of students conversing in small groups freely the whole time in Spanish as well as oral exams, which they do in pairs. They have carried out this requirement fairly well thus far. Students have prompt-based writing activities (short compositions) which they do in class and they also have a longer composition assignment (which can range from one to two) that is written in class and is then handed in to me for me to correct and give back so that they may revise what was marked as wrong or problematic in a typed version of the composition that requires the corrections to be highlighted. They have also done a fair job of this. Student get exposed to reading passages from time to time during class and have reading sections in their exams. As far as exams go, the results have varied. They have been both relatively high and low.

The course averages for each course have been:

SPAN 101: 86.66

SPAN 123: 81.98

SPAN 204: 91.35

SPAN 102: 75.78

SPAN 124: 91.43

SPAN 207: 83.92

Although the averages are good, students had lots of opportunities to help them succeed in my courses. I plan to be more demanding in the coming academic year.

Also, as far as I know one student is pursuing Spanish as a major (Lauren Schraft) and the following students are pursuing it as a minor:

Mackenzie Porter

Jhorleny Familia de la Cruz

Aaliyah McNair

Ar Corsino Jr.

Yashaly Acosta Vázquez

Karlie May Maloney (?)

The amount of students majoring and minoring in Spanish is significantly low and this needs to change if the program is going to thrive. I hope to be able to shift the current trend.

IV. Program Changes for the Upcoming Year

I plan on making significant changes to the way I have taught SPAN 101-124. I want my courses to be completely communicative in nature and with a lot of cultural content.

The changes I am planning for 101-124 are:

1. Doing presentations that are more conscientious in how they incorporate/talk about cultural phenomena. I plan on getting students to not only do factual research for their presentations but also research regarding the meaning of what they present on.
2. I want students to dramatize chapter topics that are also culturally aware. For example, if students were to act out an emergency or hospital room situation, I would have them come up with a dialogue in which there is one Spanish-speaking patient and two doctors, one who does not know Spanish and one who does, demonstrating ultimately the importance of knowing this language in the United States.
3. I plan on getting students to use Spanish in more real-world type situations. If they go to a Hispanic restaurant, I would like them to record themselves ordering food in Spanish. I would like them to interview (and make, for example, a video recording of it) native Spanish-speakers. These Spanish speakers could be classmates, friends, friends of friends, etc. I also want to carry out group interviews with real-life professionals who are native Spanish-speakers. For instance, I know people who are professors of literature, anthropology, who work in NGOs, who are writers, etc., whom they can interview. The whole purpose of this is to bring them closer to the Spanish-speaking world, for them to have more direct contact with it, and to get them to hopefully major or minor in Spanish.
4. As I have already stated, I plan on being more demanding with students. This means that I will not be lenient with electronic device usage in class, that I will not tolerate lateness or absenteeism unless there is a justified and verifiable reason for them, and that they must only speak in Spanish in class. I will only speak Spanish to them and nothing else during class.

The changes I am planning for all courses are:

1. Add one new course which would be the Spanish version of the course I will be teaching in English entitled Understanding Latin American Society & Politics through its Rock Culture. This would be a 300-level culture course.
2. I would like to add a literature course which would be entitled Hispanic coming-of-age narratives.
3. I would like to add a course that is dedicated solely to the Latin American chronicle. The reason for this is that this genre, which I included in my Introduction to Hispanic Literature course, was very successful with my students. There is a level of literary language and tropes that is present in the genre, but it is not so literary that the students have a difficult time understanding. Also, it is an excellent way to expose students to current Latin American realities in a personalized way. I had very fruitful conversations with my students when we studied this genre and I would like to reproduce that for an entire course. The course could be categorized based on social issues such as drug-trafficking, human-trafficking, individual liberties, social and cultural changes brought

about by neoliberalism, intriguing or unusual cultural phenomena, etc. The chronicles would be accompanied by documentary and news footage. This would be higher 200-level course.

V. Action Plan for the Upcoming Year

As I have stated/suggested above, I want students to essentially be encircled by the Spanish language and culture. The activities and changes I plan on incorporating and would like to incorporate are geared specifically toward that. I want students to be successful in Spanish, but I also want to demand the most of them. I believe that my renewed communicative and cultural competency-building approach would ultimately result in having more students gravitate to Spanish as a major or minor and generate more interest in studying it abroad as well.