

Academic Audit Report

Pellissippi State Community College

Foreign Language Program

April 7, 2015

INTRODUCTION

On April 7, 2015, a three-member team conducted the site visit for the Academic Audit of the Foreign Language program at PSTCC, housed within the Liberal Arts Department. The team members were Ana Basoa-McMillan (CoSCC), Oscar Díaz (MTSU) and Marketta Laurila, team leader (TTU). This audit was the first Academic Audit for the program and this program is currently not being reviewed for performance funding. The team met with full-time faculty, who teach at the Hardin Valley campus, adjunct faculty who teach at one or more of the five campuses, students and administrators. The team determined through these interviews that all faculty, full-time and adjunct, collaborated in the program's Academic Audit report and participated enthusiastically in the interviews. The team, however, did not have an opportunity to meet with faculty teaching Chinese and American Sign Language. These courses are taught by part-time faculty who are not always at the main campus.

The foreign language program offers courses in French, German, Spanish, Chinese and American Sign Language, which contribute to the Associate of Arts degree and to the Department's overall objective of offering academic courses that "explore multiple facets of the human condition." The program offers courses at five campuses: Hardin Valley (main campus), Division Street, Magnolia Avenue, Strawberry Plains, and Blount County. Depending on the campus and the language, classes are delivered in a number of formats: conventional on-site, on-line, and TWAV (two-Way audio visual). Enrollments are higher in Spanish classes than the other languages and the Department is able to consistently offer Spanish 2020 and sometimes Spanish 2510. There are full-time faculty members only for Spanish and French. Some faculty members teach at more than one campus and, in some cases, at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. Courses at campuses other than Hardin Valley are taught solely by adjunct faculty. Although faculty are spread over five campuses, the program has maintained a strong sense of cohesiveness and collaboration. The audit team thought it was noteworthy that adjunct faculty and full-time faculty alike have a strong commitment to the program's success and contribute equally to program development and co-curricular activities.

Chinese courses are offered is affiliated with the Confucius Institute at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville. The Chinese instructor follows the program offered at UT-K.

TnCIS, the Tennessee Consortium for International Studies, is housed at PSTCC and foreign language students are strongly encouraged to participate in the program to Paris, Segovia, and/or Peru.

OVERALL PERFORMANCE

The faculty's dedication to student success is outstanding. Faculty has continually worked to improve instruction and student engagement through various means including the QEP to Improve Student Engagement and the QEP Mobilization project. In the small group session, students stated that faculty were always available and willing to help them. Furthermore, the program has effectively implemented service learning in Spanish classes on campus and in the TnCIS program in Spain to engage students in communities at home and abroad.

The Foreign Language program has processes in place to ensure collaboration among its faculty who are spread out among the five campuses. Meetings for all faculty at the beginning of each semester provide opportunities to review program goals, curriculum and co-curriculum, learning objectives, best practices, master syllabi and other important program matters. In addition, faculty meet informally and communicate via email throughout the semester. The audit team suggests that minutes of the formal meetings would serve to document changes in policy and other important action items. Full-time faculty also meet at the annual TFLTA (Tennessee Foreign Language Teachers Association) Conference to share ideas and keep abreast of best practices.

The department has created master syllabi to ensure that all instructors cover the same material and address the same student learning outcomes. This practice also ensures that courses follow a logical sequence, incorporate best practices and clearly communicate to students the learning objectives. The audit team affirms the proposed initiative to annually review goals and learning objectives as it will ensure that courses are in alignment with best practices and pedagogical innovations. The program currently uses classroom observations by the dean, program coordinator or other faculty member to further ensure that instructors progress as indicated on the master syllabi. While the program tracks student success through grade distributions and has made changes (elimination of on-line beginning Spanish classes) based on these results, the audit team recommends that additional assessment measures be added to track student success at different levels and at the end of the 2020 class. Spanish faculty currently assess students at the end of 2020 by means of a skit or video. The audit recommends a common rubric to standardize assessment in all 2020 classes and to track results. The committee also affirms the initiative to perform pre and post testing in Spanish 2010 to improve assessment.

Learning Objectives

The program has several processes in place to ensure that learning objectives are appropriate and clearly communicated to students.

- Course goals and objectives are clearly stated in each of the courses not only in the syllabi, but also in the classroom.
- Students commented that the department ensures objectives and goals are made known to students during class sessions.
- Full-time faculty work closely with part-time faculty to guarantee that outcomes are the same across the board in all sections on all campuses.
- Individual instructors are free to personalize the syllabi in accordance with their teaching styles, but must maintain the same learning objectives and goals throughout the department.
- Various assessment instruments are used to measure outcomes.
- A master final exam is used for all sections to ensure continuity across sections.
- QEP activities are used by most of the full- and part-time faculty

Curriculum and Co-Curriculum

Faculty collaborate to ensure that the curriculum follows a logical sequence and ensures seamless transition to 4-yr. institutions. A variety of co-curricular activities are offered to support student learning.

- Curriculum is a focal point of the department and provides students with the necessary knowledge to prepare them for the workplace and/or to enable them to seamlessly transfer to a four-year institution.
- The foreign language faculty frequently share ideas and classroom activities have been successful in achieving specific learning objectives.
- The faculty also communicate with the University of Tennessee and other institutions to align their program with that institution and ensure a seamless transition for students who transfer.
- Mississippi State hosts many events that promote interaction with the community at large
- Conversation tables for Spanish and French students provide opportunities for them to practice the language in a non-threatening environment.
- Students commented that they are aware of some of the cultural activities on campus, but often are too busy to participate. Faculty may want to seek ways to encourage students to attend.
- Service learning is another prospect offered to students on a voluntary basis. This gives them the opportunity to communicate with native speakers and allows them to give back to the community.

- Faculty attend several conferences per year in order to continue their own education and learn about best practices in their area.

Teaching and Learning

Faculty use various methodologies based on national standards for foreign language learning.

- The foreign language program is structured according to the National Standards of Foreign Language Learning and TBR guidelines.
- The program incorporates the ACTFL (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages) five Cs for language learning: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities.
- Class work is reinforced by practice on-line with the laboratory components offered by the textbook publishers.
- Conversation groups provide further opportunities to practice the target language outside the classroom; they are offered at different times to accommodate student schedules.
- Faculty have implemented active learning strategies such as a skit or a video for Spanish 2020.
- Faculty have improved student engagement through a QEP (Quality Enhancement Plan) and a Technology-Assisted Learning Activities project to address the learning styles of the digital generation of students. The program plans to continue these projects.
- The team commends the program for their service learning program in the community.
- Students commented that faculty were available for additional help and were dedicated to students' success.
- The TBR/TnCIS Study Abroad Programs in Spain, France and Peru provide additional opportunities to engage students with the cultures they are studying.

Student Learning Assessment

The program has limited processes in place for assessing student learning. Assessment of student success is primarily through course grades and grade distributions. The faculty needs more standardized student learning assessment.

- The faculty rely principally on course grades and grade distributions to measure student success. There does not appear to be standardized tests or embedded exercises to ensure that grading is comparable regardless of section or instructor.
- Spanish 2020 includes a capstone project to assess students' language level, but there is no standardized rubric nor are results not tracked semester by semester.

- The audit team recommends that the department incorporate similar capstone projects in all 2020 classes and create a standardized rubric.
- The faculty also rely on anecdotal indicators of success at 4-yr. institutions.
- The faculty have initiated appropriate assessment for Spanish 2010 classes by incorporating pre and post testing in some 2010 classes.
- The audit team finds that inadequate processes are currently in place to assess student learning. The audit team, therefore, recommends standardized rubrics and the adoption of additional methods of assessment to track student success in order to make continuous improvement.

Quality Assurance

The program has several processes in place to assure quality of teaching, learning, and placement. In some areas, the audit team recommends additional methods as noted below.

- Assessment of teaching includes several effective methods: a faculty self-evaluation instrument reviewed by the dean or vice president of Academic Affairs, class observations according to a standardized rubric, and the Student Perception Survey.
- Assessment of student learning includes: course grades, anecdotal indicators of success, capstone video/skit for Spanish 2020. The audit team finds that inadequate processes are currently in place to assess student learning. The audit team, therefore, recommends standardized rubrics and the adoption of additional methods of assessment to track student success in order to make continuous improvement.
- The Audit team affirms the program's initiative to give a pre- and post- test to determine placement and ensure quality.
- Service learning is effectively assessed by means of a reflection paper.
- Updating best practices and new pedagogies is assured by attendance/participation in TFLTA (Tennessee Foreign Language Teachers Association) annual conference and regular communication with UT-Knoxville to ensure best practices and transferability.

Academic Audit Visiting Team Report

Record of Commendations, Affirmations, and Recommendations Pellissippi State Community College Foreign Language Program

Commendations: (Total: 3)

1. Collegiality and collaboration among faculty, including adjuncts (for example in selecting textbooks, determining student outcomes, etc.)
2. Faculty dedication to student success
3. Incorporation of service learning into classes

Affirmations: (Total: 3)

1. Include pre and post testing in all intermediate 2010 classes
2. Continue to create QEPs to improve student engagement
3. Continue to use data to make continuous improvements

Recommendations: (Total: 2)

1. Develop additional assessment measures; for example, a common rubric for all 2020 classes for a capstone project assessing students' proficiency.
2. Track attendance at co-curricular activities and find ways to encourage students to participate more.