

Department of Modern Languages & Literatures

Chair's Response to the Program Performance Review External Review Team Report

March 15, 2018

I very much appreciate the thoughtful and helpful report prepared by MLL's External Review Team—Dr. Clorinda Donato (California State University, Long Beach), Dr. Darrell B. Lockhart (University of Nevada, Reno), and Dr. Franz Mueller (California State University, Fullerton). It was my pleasure to host these three outstanding colleagues for the February 20, 2018 site visit, during which they met with H&SS Dean Sheryl Fontaine, H&SS Associate Dean Lynn Sargeant, MLL tenure-track and adjunct faculty, undergraduate and graduate students, office staff, and me. I hope that I can return the favor by serving in a similar role for their respective programs in the future.

In addition to their gracious commendations and excellent suggestions, the External Review Team offered eight specific recommendations. I have shared these recommendations with MLL faculty, and will address each individually below:

1. I agree that consolidating advising duties by appointing a single advisor for majors and minors would be beneficial for many departments. Such an approach, however, is impractical for MLL, which offers three BA programs, an MA, an MS, six minors, three certificates, and instruction in five additional heritage languages. Beyond the daunting comprehensive knowledge of undergraduate and graduate programmatic and course offerings that such a position would require of a single advisor, s/he would need to be capable of assessing proficiency of incoming students in all 12 languages of instruction (including English for TESOL

students) in order to place those students at the appropriate levels. Moreover, reassigned time for an advisor would come at the expense of instructional units unless the Dean's Office were to provide additional funding.

As discussed in Section V of the Program Performance Review Self-Assessment Report, MLL has a systematic and consistent method for advisement in place.

The onboarding process for some faculty, however, has been an ongoing challenge. This spring, I will work with our Student Success Coordinator, André Zampaulo, to finalize MLL's advisement plan for rollout in Fall 2018 and oversee its consistent implementation.

2. The external reviewers correctly note that five-unit courses do not mesh seamlessly with standard university-wide course scheduling. Indeed, it has proven difficult at times to find available classrooms for our five-unit language courses, although that problem was alleviated by the recent renovation of our Media Center into a computer classroom with 35 seats. It does not appear that the higher unit count dissuades students from taking our lower-division courses, as even those offered as multiple sections enroll well, often filling to capacity and generating considerable FTES for the Department and College. Rather than transition to a three-unit model, MLL has prioritized the development of fully online and hybrid courses at the 100 level, as explained in Section I.C of the PPR Self-Assessment Report. To date, we have successfully run PORT 105, PORT 214, PORT 310, PERS 101, and PERS 102 as fully online, asynchronous courses, and online versions of CHIN 101, VIET 101, and VIET 102 are at various stages of curricular review.

3. The recommendation that Spanish faculty revamp the undergraduate curriculum is consistent with our ongoing efforts to develop courses in applied fields as well as our recent search requests for new hires with specializations in fields such as cultural studies and translation and interpretation. The examples of topical courses around contemporary themes and social phenomena provided in the External Review Team Report are particularly helpful and appreciated. The Spanish program is headed in the direction that the reviewers recommend, and the incoming Spanish program coordinator will take the lead on such changes during his two-year term.
4. Spanish faculty have begun discussion of potential changes to the MA program, including course offerings, comprehensive exams, the reading list, teaching opportunities, a thesis option, and required Portuguese proficiency. We will follow the excellent recommendation that we frame the discussion in terms of the kinds of employment (and, I will add, ongoing education) that students seek after graduation.
5. The External Review Team correctly notes the correlation between adding new academic tracks and future hires. Indeed, the goal of adding translation and interpretation courses into our programs' curricula has informed our recent requests for new searches and the drafting of job descriptions related to those searches.
6. I enthusiastically agree that MLL would greatly benefit from additional tenure-track hires in our programs. Currently, our greatest area of need is in Spanish-Peninsular. A search for a Peninsularist with a specialization in cultural studies was approved, and later canceled, in 2016. The H&SS Dean's Office declined to

fund MLL's request to run the search again in 2017. I expect to resubmit the request for fall 2018. We also anticipate requesting a tenure-track hire in Japanese in the near future, as one of our three permanent faculty in Japanese will begin FERP in fall 2018.

7. I agree that MLL should continue to pursue opportunities to work collaboratively with colleagues in other departments to create interdisciplinary courses and programs. The recommendation that we create upper-division courses that would contribute to general education requirements for majors/minors in other departments is a good one, although the issue of language of instruction presents a challenge in that upper-division (as well as lower-division) courses in MLL programs are taught primarily if not exclusively in the target language. Therefore, students would need to demonstrate the requisite language proficiency to enroll in such courses, unless the courses were taught in English—in which case they may not be as useful to MLL majors and minors.
8. I agree that MLL would great benefit from the opportunity to hire some of our excellent adjunct faculty as full-time lecturers, particularly if the Department's tenure-track search requests are not funded.

In sum, the External Review Team Reports contains astute observations and valuable suggestions that the Department will consider in both short-term and long-term planning. In order to accomplish many of the tasks that the External Review Team recommends, MLL will require support and resources from the H&SS Dean's Office. We look forward to working with the College and University to create a stronger Department of Modern Languages & Literatures.