Date: May 25, 2010

To: E. Nicole Meyer, Acting Chair Modern Languages

From: Scott Furlong, Dean of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Re: Report on the Modern Languages Program Review

The Modern Language program at the University of Wisconsin-Green Bay consists of three disciplinary language programs (majors/minors) in French, German and Spanish as well as courses in Italian, Arabic, and Japanese (through St. Norbert College). The three major programs share many common academic goals which are aligned with the American Council for Teaching of Foreign Language (ACTFL). The French program currently has one full time faculty member. German has two full time faculty. Spanish has four full time positions (three faculty, and one lecturer). Ad hoc funding is used particularly in French as well as Italian and Arabic. All of the programs are very committed to a high level of instruction for their students. In addition, they are very involved in meeting the needs of NW Wisconsin through a variety of community activities. They are actively involved with the Education program for those students planning to teach foreign language. They are also very involved in international activities through travel courses, student exchanges, and other activities. All of the faculty reside within Humanistic Studies.

Enrollment Trends/Resource Issues:
Majors within the three majors have remained somewhat steady the past five years. French majors have been between 20-25; German between 25-35; and Spanish between 80-85. French and Spanish have at least that many minors, where as the German minors are fewer. The Spanish program teaches about 500 students a year. Among the three programs there are seven full time faculty/lecturers. All three programs noted that the “coordinator” position that is part of each major program carries no administrative release time, and yet there can be a significant load associated with the position. The AAC notes in their recommendations that the Modern Language faculty work together more. I would encourage this to the extent possible and where it makes sense. But it is also important to note that there are three distinct majors and some consolidation would not be possible.

There are different types of resource issues depending on major program. Within French, there is only one full time faculty member. As such, this person is providing a large proportion of the program (particularly at the upper level) to the students, doing all of the advising and coordinating various community and co-curricular activities for the students. German has two
faculty, but one has been the Humanistic Studies chair since 2005 so has a reduced teaching load. Spanish has the largest number of faculty, but has had retention issues with their untenured faculty. Only one person has pursued promotion to Associate Professor in fifteen years. Reasons for not retaining faculty have varied. UW-Green Bay salaries are not as competitive as other institutions. This lack of continuity has created some challenges for the program.

Assessment:
The AAC notes that the assessment plan is good and the programs have the ACTFL standards in which to base their assessments. The programs are able to have effective one-on-one interactions with the students to ensure students, particularly at the upper level, have the skills necessary. Much of this is done through embedded assessment. Students wanting to be student-teachers must pass an Oral Proficiency Exam at the advance-mid or advance-high level. The programs also periodically conduct exit interviews. A related issue is the mechanism used to place our freshman into our language classes. Currently student take the Wisconsin Placement test for language, and we also use a “rule of thumb” related to the number of years a student has had a language in high school. All three programs noted some concerns with this and plan to reevaluate how placement is done.

Curriculum:
All three major programs have been involved in the development of the International Business minor on campus. They have all also been strong promoters of study abroad and student travel courses. The AAC noted that the administration might think about adding a language requirement to the UW-Green Bay graduation requirement. I will note that this would actually be a faculty decision in terms of the curriculum, and the administration would need to determine what the resource implications would be. An issue I would like the Modern Language faculty to think a bit about relates to how the language courses relate to the World Culture general education requirement. Currently, if students take four college level classes (101/102, 201/202), they meet the World Culture requirement. Is it possible that the learning outcome requirement for World Culture might be met before taking all four classes? Is the curriculum taught in such a way within these courses now that it may already be infusing “an understanding of contemporary global issues?” If not, could it be?

I will address each of the three program curriculums separately.

French: As noted in the self-study as well as AAC review, the fact that the French program currently has only one full time faculty member is a concern both in terms of the diversity of courses offered as well as the student interaction with only one faculty member. There are no specific plans at this time to make major changes in the curriculum by French. I wonder if given the current resource situation if the curriculum should be “tightened” up a bit. The goal would be to provide a clear path for the majors (and minors) and perhaps reduce the number of preparations for the faculty. The program should be commended for its work with the local community.
German: I will make a similar comment regarding the German curriculum. There actually are quite a few electives that students can choose from and given the number of faculty in the program you may want to consider tightening the curriculum a bit to help with workload issues. The program should be commended particularly with its work with the community for its “German Days” program.

Spanish: The Spanish program has made a number of changes/ modification since the last review based on assessment of student learning including the addition of a course on the study of Latinos in the U.S., and a variable content course. It has also introduced a summer intensive Spanish 101/102 class. The Spanish program has also worked with the Office of Outreach in the development and offering of a “Spanish in the Professions” (SIP) certificate that has been very successful and a good collaboration that has served the community. The Spanish program is exploring the development of a Masters program in Spanish proposal where there has been some community interest expressed particularly with high school teachers.

In summary, the Modern Language program provides a strong learning environment for their students particularly in the area of communication, global understanding, and critical thinking. The program serves the NE Wisconsin community in a number of ways and provides a number of international opportunities to our students.

Cc: Chris Style, Academic Affairs Council
Tim Sewall, Associate Provost