

2009-10 Assessment Grant Program: German Department

Final Report

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The Project

The goals of assessment efforts in the German program have been to improve both the mentoring of majors and the structure of the program of courses. The key to achieving these goals has been the effort to link assessment methods with the regular course of program evaluation.

The German department has two primary issues that it has been addressing in the last several years. First, low enrollment numbers in its upper-division literature classes held in German has led it to revise the structure of its program to accommodate the fewer students while also maintaining a rigorous course program. Second, the department has been working to maintain and increase interest in its programs by establishing links with other related units and by focusing more attention on the progress of its majors in the program and their long-term prospects after graduation. The Assessment Grant program has assisted these overall department efforts by linking new program-level evaluations of student learning in the German department to adjustments in its undergraduate program. These evaluations have taken the form of both a set of surveys of student perceptions about the program and their progress and a mentoring program that links majors with individual faculty advising.

To address the first aspect, the German department conducted a survey in its classes during fall 2009, in which students were asked to gauge their progress toward

different learning outcomes and to provide their ideas on improvements to the undergraduate program. The German faculty met on November 18 to discuss the results of the survey as well as the methods and implementation of the Assessment Program. With respect to the mentoring program, the department established a portfolio and mentorship system for the majors that began operating at the end of fall 2009. Each student was assigned a faculty advisor, who keeps a file of transcripts and writing samples from each quarter.

Accomplishments and Findings

The department conducted an undergraduate survey and established the mentoring program. The mentoring program led to the development of a set of award criteria that matched with student learning outcomes and could be used to gauge student progress in achieving these outcomes. By linking this assessment process to both advising and student awards, assessment of learning outcomes has become a more integrated part of departmental processes.

Some of the key findings of the surveys and the mentoring program were that a large proportion of the beginning language students were juniors and seniors who would not be able to continue in the German program and that, in spite of healthy interest in German literature and culture taught in English, the lack of language preparation in the early years means that students that discover the field often are too late in their studies to be able to pursue a major or minor.

After determining the student interest in linking German with other majors, the department is investigating several options for improving the undergraduate program.

First, the department is revising the requirements of the German major to better meet student interest in combining German with other fields such as European Studies, Global Cultures, and International Studies. Second, the department is investigating ways to partner with other universities to provide intensive summer language instruction to those students interested in accelerating their progress toward a major. Finally, the department is working on ways to better link its large-enrollment courses taught in English with its language program. The department has begun to offer General Education credit for departmental courses taught in English, thus encouraging students to enter the major at an earlier point in their studies when they could still learn the language and continue on to upper-division courses. In addition, the department is developing links to Humanities Core and academic counselors in order to encourage freshmen to enroll in language courses.

Sustaining Assessment Activities

The department is continuing with the mentoring and assessment activities established by the grant. In addition, the department is continuing to work on changes to its programs that reflect the results of the assessment. These changes include both the integration of the European Studies program more closely with the department and an attempt to create more links between the department and other programs in the School and the University.

Fall 2009 Undergraduate Student Survey, Dept. of German, UC Irvine

1. Which German department courses are you taking now?

1A 2A 103 (Film) 130 (Patriotism) 150 (Fall of Wall) 150 (Holocaust)

2. Which year is this for you at UCI?

1st 2nd 3rd 4th 5th or beyond

3. Are you a transfer student?

Yes No

4. What led you to enroll in this course? (Circle all that apply)

1. Fulfill University language requirement
2. Fulfill School of Humanities language requirement
3. Fulfill General Education requirement
4. Fulfill a major requirement
5. Learn/Improve German for business and professional uses
6. Prepare for graduate school in the humanities
7. Interest in the course topic
8. Interest in the instructor
9. Other (please specify):

5. How would you rate your writing and research skills?

A. Ability to write an essay with a clear and significant thesis

1 (minimal) 2 3 4 5 (outstanding)

B. Ability to write in standard written English

1 (minimal) 2 3 4 5 (outstanding)

C. Ability to use evidence in your writing to support your arguments.

1 (minimal) 2 3 4 5 (outstanding)

D. Ability to engage with relevant secondary literature with proper citation style.

1 (minimal) 2 3 4 5 (outstanding)

6. How interested are you in German culture?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

7. How helpful have your UCI German courses been for learning about German culture?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

8. How interested are you in German literature?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

9. How helpful have your UCI German courses been for learning about German literature?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

10. How likely would you be to enroll in a business German course if offered in the German Department?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

11. How likely would you be to enroll in an upper-division seminar on German grammar and linguistic issues if offered in the German Department?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

12. Importance to you of General Education requirements for choosing to take this course:

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

13. Importance of teaching quality for you in your decision to enroll in this course:

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

14. How would you rate the German department in regard to teaching quality?

1 (poor) 2 3 4 5 (oustanding)

15. How important is it for you to be able to interact with faculty in the department?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

16. How happy are you with your interaction with faculty in the German department?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

17. How interested are you in learning the German language?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

18. How helpful have your UCI German courses been for learning the language?

1 (not at all) 2 3 4 5 (Very)

19. Have you learned all of your German at UCI?

Yes No

20. If you answered No above, where did you learn German prior to coming to UCI? Please be specific. If you learned in high school or another college, please indicate the name of you teacher, the school, and the address:

21. How would you rate your German reading skills?

1. No knowledge of German 2. Ability to recognize some words 3. Ability to read easy texts
4. Ability to take a course in German 5. Fluent

22. How would you rate your German writing skills?

1. Inability to write 2. Can write some words and phrases 3. Can write a simple letter or other simple text
4. Can write a basic essay with errors 5. Can write an essay with few or no errors

23. How would you rate your German listening and speaking skills?

1. Inability to understand anything 2. Ability to understand and produce some words and phrases
3. Ability to have a basic conversation 4. Ability to function in a German classroom 5. Fluent

24. If you began learning the German language after your freshman year, why did you not take German as a freshman?

1. I was advised against it by academic counselors or department undergraduate advisors
2. I needed to take other courses that were required for my major.
3. I didn't want to learn German when I was a freshman.
4. Other (please specify):

25. Are you planning on taking a German course next quarter? If so, which one?

Yes No Don't Know Course: _____

26. Are you currently:

a German major a German minor Neither

27. Which factors led to your decision whether to pursue a German major or minor? (Circle all that apply)

1. German department course offerings 2. Difficulty of learning German
3. Desire to fulfill the requirements of another major or school 4. Interest in German language and/or literature
5. Other (please specify):

28. If you are a German major or minor and have an additional major, please list your other major:

29. What subject/course or subjects/courses not currently offered by the UCI German Department would you most like to see offered?:

30. Additional comments about the German department:

Thank you for providing this valuable feedback!