CCVC Interview: Hispanic Studies Department 3:30pm 10/27

Barb May and Jean Didier, interviewers

1. **What are the strengths of your department/program? What do you already do well?**

We do language well. We provide a cultural linguistic proficiency at the common curriculum level but also beyond that basic requirement.

We do interdisciplinary study well. We are a humanities discipline and many of our courses have humanities (HU), intercultural (IC), gender (GE) and Fine Arts (FA) designations. We offer courses in culture, history, civilization. Faculty outside the department may not be aware of this.

We play a big part of study abroad and direct a large proponent of these programs.

We improve the writing proficiency of the students. We help develop communication skills.

We provide a lot of intercultural courses as well as gender. Fine arts coursework is also offered when studying abroad.

Internship opportunities where they are able to contribute to the community. Prepare students to work in diverse communities in the US. Allowing students to connect the skills of the classroom with the experiences in the world.

We give our students access to the other important language in the Americas.

Language plays a role in a liberal arts setting. May think of it as a skill but also provides much more fundamental in understanding of the liberal arts: change our relationship with the world in which we engage. Students are “looking through someone else’s lenses” as they study people with another language. Free us from dogmatic thinking and allow us to more effectively interact with other people. Not only language but culture

We have a diverse body of faculty and provide a great opportunity to use our talents to serve in various departments. In order to do this, it comes at a cost to what we can offer to our own majors and within our department

1. **What do you wish you could do better, or do more of? What would it take for you to reach these goals?**

We have designed a change to our major so that there are three options: not only the traditional major but also concentrations in Peninsular (Iberian peninsula) or Latin American. The two concentrations would allow more specificity to course studies and a better major. We do it “defacto” but could do better with resources. Having more specificity to the coursework allows us to support students to be successful in a methodical way. Our current staffing resources limit our ability to carry-out the changes in the major we have designed. We need:

* A US/Latino scholar with specific training to talk about Latino aspect of the Americas.
* A Penninsularist (someone that focuses on Spain-literature, culture of Spain)
* We can’t run the two concentrations with the individuals present (with faculty going abroad)

There is only one instance in which co-teaching of a course has occurred across two disciplines. Options to team-teach are laborious. The current employment contract does not allow for the co-teaching of courses that are 1/6hths. We need to find a formula to make the logistics less difficult for interdisciplinarity among courses.

1. Leaving aside discipline specific knowledge, in what ways does your department /program best contribute to providing our students with a liberal education for their lives beyond college, as informed and engaged citizens, productive employees, ethical beings, etc?

“liberating arts”

Relationship of language and the context to which it is tied to is crucial.

We teach Spanish and has been historically one of the important languages of public and social life of the US. It is becoming even more a part of the US. It is a civic and business language. Allows our students to become more culturally aware, better partners in the business and social sense, better neighbors, better people.

Latino/Hispanic community/market economy is growing. Develop an empathy and understanding for the immigrant experience. Become more ethical.

Allows them to be more productive and more marketable with a background in language and everything else it provides.

The way we teach, we make a lot of connections with the real world in the classroom (from art to theater to politics, human rights). This is a part of the revision to the curriculum. Make the learning relevant to life.

One of the goals stressed: diversity in the cultures that we teach. Hispanic cultures cover many different countries but within each country discussing gender, race, class to better understand each individual culture and the complexity of culture.

Within our courses and the way we teach an experiential approach is already embedded. Students are developing a skill (language) and applying it to an intellectual conversation. It models and helps our students become lifelong learners. Use a skill and it apply it in context inside and outside of the classroom.

One example, Students write a children’s story in Spanish and they bind them and then send them to Guatamala. There is an end product that is used.

1. Are there ways in which you would like to see you department/program contribute to liberal education that so far it has not been able to?

Our areas of specialization are underexplored and underutilized. Would like a freer hand to teach outside of the department. For example, with Latin studies and literature in English, we could contribute to peace studies, gender that we can address in a unique way. Not being used as well as we could be. Students that have access to upper level coursework need to complete HISP312 which alienates the coursework that may benefit others. Language is where we are most obviously connected to the liberal arts learning.

Students look at a language coursework to “get it out of the way.” There is nowhere in the curriculum in which the language requirement is “cashed in” or required to use it. Has been tested in some English classes, have tested their equivalent Spanish levels to engage in a text and students have enjoyed it. Need an opportunity to keep practicing their Spanish/language.

Have asked whether students who completed Spanish abilities but have never thought to access Spanish literature within their other courses. Nothing structured in the curriculum that draws their attention to using these skills later.

Most of us here are PhDs and are committed to the Institutions. There is all this specialized training that could be tapped and is not currently being utilized.

We would like support to have continuing dialogue with other departments to help construct critical thinkers. If we just stay just within the department, it can only strengthen. We miss the administrative support and the chances and choices to interact with other departments, hire, and be creative in how we educate.

We can only be so creative as we can but if there are too many obstacles, we can’t do it. Team teaching encounters one of these obstacles with the current limitation of teaching to units of 1/6. Needs to be creativity on the administrative side to facilitate this to happen.

Ensuring that students understand the value of the language requirement really requires that it be applicable somewhere/somehow to the other component of the liberal arts education. There needs to be something built into the curriculum.

Need an integrative experience from language to history to politics, so they continue to integrate as they progress in their education

Think about what type of experience a student needs to be the individual they want to be five years from now. What else is necessary to be that person? If they have the opportunity, to be able to think about what else they would like? Choose a course that is an elective, not on the checklist. Have the opportunity to choose something freely with a little self reflection.

faculty have a conceptual perspective on liberal arts while students see themselves from a vocational perspective. Exploring the connections gets shorted.

Tie together 3 and 4:

Ethical beings: there is a change in demographics in the US that is reflected in the changes here on campus. People on campus are recognizing the needs to pay attention to questions on diversity. Gender conversations have started and need to continue. Questions on class and race are barely starting. There could be greater attentions to diversity of class, race and ethnicity. There are ways in Hispanic studies from professional perspectives to contribute to a vision of these social constructs. (My language here was “ The department has a lot to say about putting together productive social constructs on this issue. )