

PROGRAM REVIEW 2008-2011

Division: INTERCULTURAL/INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

Department or Program: FRENCH

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I. Description and Mission of the Program

- ◆ The French Program considerably addresses: Transfer Basic Skills Career Other
- ◆ Elementary (first-year) French courses provide an introduction to the language and cultures of French-speaking world areas. Intermediate (second-year) courses focus on reading and discussion of texts dealing with the literature, arts, culture, history and geography of the French-speaking world. The two-year French Conversation curriculum offers students the opportunity to develop accuracy and fluency in oral communication and listening comprehension skills.
- ◆ The French Department's mission is reflected in the definition of objectives and expected outcomes described in the program's Course Outlines, which were written to reflect the program's concurrence with established ACTFL language proficiency and cultural literacy descriptions. The primary expected outcome of the program's mission is successful completion of French GE courses for transfer to 4-year institutions.

B. **Significant areas of strength.**

- ◆ **The curriculum addresses a range of language goals and interests.** The French program serves a diverse population with varying interests for acquiring language proficiency in French. Many students enrolled in GE classes, particularly in the evening schedule, are taking French courses to fulfill career objectives. The Beginning and Intermediate Conversation courses provide more extended practice for the development of oral communication skills.
- ◆ **Definition of instructional objectives and learning outcomes.** All French course outlines reflect the Department's commitment to instructional objectives that define expected language proficiency outcomes within the framework of language as an expression of culture. At each level of the language acquisition process, the study of language structures and development of language communication skills incorporates an exploration of the geographical diversity of French-speaking world areas in a variety of socioeconomic and cultural contexts, with an incremental examination of the diversity of cultural, historical and regional contexts of French-speaking peoples and cultures that promotes student engagement in critical analysis and comparison of diverse cultural perspectives that express themselves in a common language, rich in lexical and geographical variations.
- ◆ **Online Resources.** The Elementary French textbook that is used in the three-quarter first-year French sequence, incorporates a companion web site that is now an integral component of instruction and common access point for all students enrolled in first-year classes. It provides students with a portal containing a wide range of learning resources that current technology makes instantly available from any location beyond the classroom. The web site provides tutorial activities for language skills-building in advance of required homework activities, a complete range of homework activities in all language skills, and assessment activities for self-evaluation of individual progress.
- ◆ **Enrollment, retention, and success.** In the French Department there has been an overall increase in retention rates, from 86% in 2006-07 to 90% for fiscal year 2007-08. This increase

reflects a continuing demand for French to meet academic transfer requirements. Success rates of the French Department exceed those of the College average: the French Department saw an increase from 81% to 83% in 2006-07 and 2007-08 respectively, versus the College average success rate of 79% in each of those years. Of the targeted populations for increased growth and retention, Hispanic populations in the French Department show increased enrollment, success and retention rates (from 2006-07 to 2007-08, Hispanic enrollment in the program increased from 11% to 15%, success rose from 49% to 66%, and retention rose from 77% to 87%). The Black population in the French Department has seen an increased retention rate (from 2006-07 to 2007-08, retention rose from 84% to 87%). This same population shows decreased rates in enrollment and success during the same period (enrollment down by 1%, success rates down by 10 students).

- ◆ **Curriculum.** 100% of French Department courses are transferable and degree applicable; Beginning and Intermediate non-conversational French offerings are General Education courses.

C. The French Department identifies the following areas for improvement:

- ◆ The anticipated **Mediated Learning Center**, while still two years away from completion, will begin to meet the needs of all World Languages Programs for a language lab and classroom spaces that will provide the technology resources and space configuration flexibility to address our urgent need for direct classroom access to language learning resources that are not currently available in our classrooms. Full-time Spanish Instructor Cristina Moreno represents all World Languages in the IIS Division on the Mediated Learning Center Committee, which oversees the design and development of the MLC.
 - ◆ The department must address the need to incorporate **in-class instructional assistants**, particularly into French 1 and French 2 classes, to address in a more prompt and effective manner the needs of students at risk for non-success. It is anticipated that the consistent use of in-class tutors would significantly enhance success rates. Tutorial Services provide out-of-class individual assistance to at-risk students, but tutorial sessions are one or two hours a week, which may be insufficient to address in a timely fashion the particular challenges of at-risk students. In-class tutors, in this regard, would much more effectively provide immediate support and remediation under direct Instructor supervision, with no significant interruption or disruption of class activities.
- D. Expected learning outcomes** for GE classes focus on the applicability of language skills to transfer and degree requirements, and career objectives. The French program is fundamentally concerned with three aspects of the students' learning process: (1) facilitating the acquisition of the language skills needed to meet both short and long-term educational and occupational goals; (2) expanding students' appreciation of the French language as one of the most essential and commonly-used international languages, and (3) understanding the acquisition of language proficiency as a process commensurate with the acquisition of cultural awareness and literacy.

II. Retention and Growth

- A. During the academic year 2007-2008, while retention rates increased by 3% from 2006-07, there was a very slight decrease in overall enrollments, from 629 in fiscal year 2006-07, to 598 in 2007-08.
- B. Over the past three years, enrollments by Black students have gone up and down (21, 25 and 15 respectively for years 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2008-09, with comparable patterns for Filipino students, and a slightly higher increase for Pacific Islanders. Hispanic student enrollments have grown over the three-year period (69, 70, and 87, respectively).

- C. The language basic skills identified by the Statewide Basic Skills Initiative, while targeting English, reading, writing and ESL, are also addressed through the French curriculum in terms of developing essential language skills in all functions of communication: oral proficiency, listening comprehension, reading and writing competence, and cultural literacy. Students who come to French classes with strong English language skills are almost invariably highly successful in second-language acquisition.

III. Student Equity

The faculty of all World Languages in the IIS Division share the common concern that students enrolled in our classes who lack the basic skills stipulated as pre-requisites in our Course Outlines, significantly impact success rates for our programs, not only for those at-risk students with developing basic skills, but also for their classmates whose rate of progress is affected by the additional time and attention that at-risk students require during class activities. In the previous section, it was noted that there exists a need for in-class French-speaking assistants to support Instructors in the classroom, particularly at the beginning levels, notably French 1 and 2, where success is essential to maintaining a healthy continuity from one language level to the next. Students who at the lower course levels become discouraged regarding their ability to succeed, will tend to either drop the course, or continue on, but achieve limited success and begin the next level with significant challenges, or remain in the class but fail to meet the requirements for successful completion.

It is a shared view of the World Languages faculty that the gap between students who possess the expected basic skills for successful outcomes in our classes, and those students who are lacking such skills, is perhaps the most significant factor in non-success rates and should be regarded as a high priority for corrective measures at this time.

A challenge in reaching the goal of student equity is having at our disposal the instructional and technological supports that are needed to close the gap. In addition to in-class tutors, and as mentioned previously, it is anticipated that the current gap in student outcomes will be much better addressed when we are able to teach our classes in the Mediated Learning Center language classrooms, where technology access, and classroom designs and configurations, will strongly support instruction and produce significantly higher retention and success rates.

IV. Budget Limitations

- A. To be effective on a departmental level, the integration of in-class assistants requires funding that will guarantee instructors a continuity of support from quarter to quarter. Without a guarantee of tutor availability, sporadic assistance will yield inconsistent results and would in the long run prove to be a wasteful use of funds. The French Department, in consultation with the Division Dean and the District, needs to ascertain the level of funding that would be available initially for one academic year, the time that would be required to derive reliable statistics of success and expected outcomes.
- B. The French Department does not envision the elimination of its program. Our daytime classes enjoy robust enrollments, frequently with waiting lists, of students who take GE French courses to meet transfer and graduation goals. Our evening GE classes are also generally well-enrolled. Reducing French course offerings would significantly impact the WSCH in the IIS Division, and would most certainly impact student outcomes, as it would result in fewer class sections with too-large enrollments which in turn tend to generate lower retention and success rates. Many area professionals take evening classes to meet career and occupational goals; if deprived of the opportunity to study French at De Anza College, they would migrate to evening classes offered by other college districts, since the evening student population is for the most part unable to attend classes in the daytime.