DePaul University Academic Program Review
Cycle 3: Spring 2000--Spring 2001

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT—JUNE 2001

Department of Modern Languages

As a result of the third cycle of DePaul University's Academic Program Review Process (Cycle 3), the participants in the process enter into the following agreements. The participants understand that this document will be available to be made public once all the signatures are in place.

Actions agreed upon for the coming academic year

1. Redefine minimum standards of language proficiency.

   A subcommittee examined this issue as part of program review and concluded that the current language requirements at DePaul were not rigorous enough. As a minimal, incremental step towards raising the language proficiency standards at DePaul, the committee proposes that all students at DePaul take a language proficiency exam as part of their incoming placement testing. As a next step, the committee should meet with the organizers of Premiere DePaul to see what can be done about adding additional placement exam opportunities to the schedule. The department wants their subcommittee to continue discussing this issue in the coming year.

2. Develop a proposal for a new M.A. in Spanish.

   The department will submit a proposal to the college curriculum committee in one year for the M.A. in Spanish. The degree will combine elements of a traditional language M.A. with the possibility of broader work in Latin American and Latino studies and cultural studies. The department will consider financial models when developing the proposal, and it will consider the potential constituencies, such as high-school language teachers or DePaul undergraduates who might want to stay for a fifth year to complete an M.A degree.

3. Explore creation of pilot program in language immersion and service learning.
The Spanish Section of the department is considering creating a pilot program which would combine language immersion and service learning with foreign and domestic study options in cooperation with the Latin American and Latino Studies Program. This pilot program is a very new idea for the section and needs more discussion and development. The Spanish section of the department will examine the possibilities and will start moving ahead with the idea next year.

4. Reconsider the current curriculum structure, especially the first-year language sequence (pilot program in the Italian Section).

The Italian Section is studying a redefinition of its program toward a more broadly-based cultural studies model, and the department will discuss this plan to revise the curriculum so that it is easier for students to finish the core requirements and to move more quickly into advanced courses, thus making the undertaking of a major in Italian more attractive. A revised curriculum would combine intermediate and advanced courses for more efficient instruction, especially regarding contact hours. The Italian Section and the department would need to more fully develop the proposal for curriculum revision and then propose it to the curriculum committee, since it would constitute a major change in the curriculum. The department agrees to develop this proposal within the next year.

5. Implement a comprehensive assessment plan.

As a first step in assessing student learning next year, the department will require each section to identify an assessment project for the coming academic year. While the section may choose its particular focus for assessment, the assessment projects will be approved by the chair. Initially, these assessment projects will focus on curriculum assessment, then more specifically on student learning in relation to department learning goals (the department also takes into consideration the ACTFL guidelines for what students should be able to do at the end of key courses/levels). The departmental assessment plan will include elementary, intermediate, and advanced sequences, majors, and non-majors.

6. Investigate the possibility of creating learning clusters.

The department has been in conversation with student life regarding the development of a possible language learning cluster, such as a living-learning community. In the coming year, the department will explore the possibilities with Student Life for creating a pilot cluster for the incoming class of 2002-03.

**Issues noted for further discussion**

The department has been in conversation with Commerce regarding specialized language instruction—intensive language courses for students who are visiting other countries, or who need language instruction to complete other coursework in International Business, for example. While Commerce indicated to the department that it was no longer interested in piloting an intensive language course, the dean and the AVP suggested that DePaul as a university needed to find ways to ‘jumpstart’ students in modern language instruction. The dean and AVP encouraged the department to consider alternative models of language instruction beyond the year-to-year sequences of 101-103 and 104-106. The EVP noted that in the next year or two, DePaul will be in an especially good position (financially, and with increasing enrollments) to experiment with alternative language instruction. The EVP encouraged the department to consider the different levels of language proficiency (writing, reading, speaking) needed for different types of students with various needs for foreign language instruction.

8. Career opportunities related to computer-based activities

The APRC subcommittee suggested that the department consider developing a special course sequence or even a minor to allow students to explore foreign language career opportunities related to the internet and other computer-based careers. While the department notes that this issue had only been mentioned as a preliminary idea, the department is open to these possibilities and can explore the idea further. One concern is the number of foreign language majors who would be interested in such a specialty.

9. Reduced class size.

The department has been in conversation with the dean to find ways to reduce class size, particularly in the 101-106 sections, while streamlining its current curriculum structure. In introductory sections (Spanish, especially), enrollment is particularly high, while in upper-level courses enrollment tends to be relatively low. The dean suggested that the department examine class size in the intro-level courses in the context of an overall staffing plan that considers the ratio of part-time/full-time instructors in light of program enrollments. The dean encouraged the department to develop a proposal and agreed to work with the department to find creative solutions to the problem of class size.

University-level Issues and Commitments
During Cycle 3, the unit program review self-studies raised several issues that have important university-wide implications. In subsequent conversations about these major issues, the units, the deans, the Academic Program Review Committee members, and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs all have recognized the need for university-level coordination in the following areas: a) developing appropriate staffing models to support growth; b) assisting units in the transition to the PeopleSoft student administrative system and in getting the maximum benefits from it, such as identifying and counting double majors, enforcing prerequisites, and securing better information and support for student advising; c) providing research assistance to units through university-level research offices; d) improving support for advising, especially in light of PeopleSoft; e) facilitating cross-college collaboration within DePaul with respect to new programs of study. To follow up on these common issues and determine the appropriate courses of action needed to address them at the university and unit level, the Academic Program Review Committee and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs agree to do the following:

1. The Academic Program Review Committee agrees to prepare a summary report on Cycle 3 to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs which discusses these and other issues that have important connections to other university-wide initiatives. That report will be made public, along with the Memoranda of Agreement.

2. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs agrees to direct the appropriate university-level offices to work with the units and their deans to determine how to effectively address these issues.

3. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs will require a progress report in June of 2002 from the appropriate university offices that will be shared with the Academic Program Review Committee.

Acknowledgements

The APRC thanks the unit’s review committee for its good work in this cycle. The EVP also thanks those involved in APR for making this process work. It is an important part of the university’s monitoring and maintaining academic quality.

***

A hard copy of this document was signed by:

Chair of the Unit Review Committee

Department Chair/Program Director

Chair of APRC Subcommittee

Chair of APRC

Dean of the College
Associate V.P. for Academic Affairs

Executive V.P. for Academic Affairs

*The hard copy with signatures is on file in the Office of the Associate V.P. for Academic Affairs and is available upon request.