

Two-Year Progress Report

Spanish (BA, Minor), Latin American Literatures and Cultures (Minor), Spanish/English Translation (Minor, Diploma)

June 2022

Background

The Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies completed their most recent cyclical review in the Fall of 2019. A group of consultants visited with department members and several undergraduate students on campus November 14-15, 2019. The team of consultants included Dr. Ketty Zaffra, Ryerson University, Dr. Sophie Lavoie, University of New Brunswick, and Dr. Susan Elliot, Geography and Environmental Management, University of Waterloo.

During their visit the consultants were able to meet with all departmental members, Acting Dean, Dr. Linda Warley, and Associate Vice President, Academic, Dr. David DeVidi. The Review team also enjoyed a meeting over lunch with several students taking courses in the Department at the time.

The team of consultants found all programs “to be in good standing (especially the BA and the Minor in Spanish) but only due to the hard work of its few members. Waterloo’s goal of “advancing research for global impact” finds its *only* home for the study of Latin America in the SLAS department, where various researchers are advancing nationally and internationally recognized research agendas while actively trying to create cross-disciplinary ties to bring this expertise to other departments (one faculty member mentioned recently-found ties to Cultural Anthropology). The Reviewers find this lack of expertise on Latin America in other departments unexpected, given the proximity and strong ties to the continent. Thus, the importance of the work done in the SLAS is seen to be fundamental to the global breadth of the research and teaching done at Waterloo.

The Department was grateful to receive recommendations for action from the Review Team, and outline below some of the steps they have taken thus far.

Enrollment over the past two years

	Honours	Co-op	Minors	Number of Enrollments (UG)
2021-2022	8	3	15	911
2020-2021	7	0	20	944

Please note that the Latin American and Cultures Minor, as well as the Minor/Diploma in Spanish-English Translation have been deactivated.

Progress on Implementation Plan

Recommendations

1. ***SLAS urgently needs a tenure-track position to fulfil program requirements and solve an unsustainable situation in the department. Perhaps the Faculty of Arts could consider a renewal of the definite-term position with the possibility of conversion into a tenure-track position once the hiring freeze is over.***

Status: Incomplete

Details: The Definite Term Appointment was renewed in March of 2020, just before the COVID crisis, and this contract will end in July of 2023. The colleague currently holding this position teaches 7 courses a year and also carries out some service for the Department. Spanish and Latin American Studies would like to resume the conversation with the Dean of Arts Office and explore the option to open a Tenure Track position so as to search for a candidate whose work would be interdisciplinary and could contribute to a number of different initiatives.

The Department's struggles to divide service duties amongst 3 tenure stream members, while also participating in faculty-level programs, such as Arts First continue but all colleagues are determined to contribute in any way possible. Moreover, the Department is continuing to build new programming, such as the [Cultural Identities](#) (CI) program. The Department remains hopeful that the Faculty will soon be in a stronger financial situation and that the position lost to a retirement in 2017 will be reinstated.

2. ***Hire a full-time Administrative Assistant who is at the front lines of the Department.***

Status: Incomplete

Details:

The Department has always only had a .5 position in the Administrative Manager role. For many years they shared a person with Classical Studies, so although Spanish and Latin American Studies only had an assistant for half of the work week, there was a presence in the office 40 hours a week, and the time was split between the two units. When Classical Studies was awarded a 1.0 position in the role, the shared assistant took the spot and Spanish and Latin American Studies continued with the 0.5.

There has been a good deal of staff turnover in recent years, as people accept the position and then move on to full time work elsewhere in the University. The Department has lost 4 people since 2018, which has presented challenges for faculty and students alike. At the moment they have someone in the role who is covering for a colleague who left for a full-time secondment six months after she was hired in Spanish.

In truth, the workload seems manageable, particularly because colleagues are continuing to work from home. The challenges surface when people return to campus, and colleagues have access to an Administrative Manager only between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm. Colleagues and students seeking assistance outside of those hours are met with a closed door, and this creates a solemn atmosphere in the Department.

3. ***Solve the Conversation Class Issue.***

Status: Completed

Details: Over the last two years the Department has been able to hire a Sessional Instructor whose directive is to run the Conversation Classes from first to third year. Despite the challenges that COVID has introduced the Department has successfully offered synchronous online conversation classes on a weekly basis with all students studying in our program. The sessional hired is outstanding, is a native speaker of Spanish, and holds a PhD in Criminology. They meet and work with over 200 students every week and their evaluations speak to a dynamic, thoughtful, and creative teacher. The Department feels fortunate to have them on the team and look forward to the Faculty's ongoing support of this important position.

4. *Market programs in creative ways to attract students.*

Status: Completed

Details: The Department has an active presence on Twitter, Instagram and FaceBook, and they will continue to be active on these platforms. Faculty members have also contacted several alumni and have been working with Creative Services to create a [video highlighting what some of their alumni](#) have been doing since graduating with a degree from the Department.

With the help of our CTSAs (Course and Technical Support Assistants) the Department has also created videos to help promote activities and courses and have shared these widely across campus and on social media. Please visit these links to see some of the work done to promote two new offerings, [SPAN 329](#) and [SPAN 344](#).

Finally, in light of the remote reality, faculty members have also held departmental Town Hall meetings to give students currently enrolled in their courses and plans the opportunity to get their questions answered in real time with staff and faculty. These have been well attended and offer the students the chance to connect outside of a “remote” classroom setting.

Evidence of the Department’s activity on social media can be found here:

<https://twitter.com/UWaterlooSLAS>

<https://www.instagram.com/uwaterlooslas/>

<https://www.facebook.com/uwslas>

Address any significant developments or initiatives that have arisen since the program review process, or that were not contemplated during the review

The Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies was thrilled to learn that it had been selected to participate in the [PRAGDA Film Festival](#) in 2019-2020. The festival will be running again in Winter 2022 and the screenings will complement the cinema course, SPAN 329.

This is very much a community event, as the festival is run in collaboration with the Kitchener Public Library (KPL). Before the pandemic hit, the Department was able to screen the movies in their space where members of the K-W community came to enjoy the films and the follow-up discussion that was moderated by a faculty member. The challenges introduced by COVID were quickly resolved through online streaming offered by the staff at the KPL. The links to the movie

screenings have been shared across the world and the Department has been amazed to hear from people all over enjoy the movies and participate in the live chats that they have facilitated via Zoom on opening night. The Department is grateful to the Dean of Arts for their support of this initiative.

Please see [this promotional link](#) for this year's upcoming festival.

Report on anything else you believe is appropriate to bring to Senate concerning this program

1. Although the Review Team did not specifically recommend that the Department make substantive adjustments to the various academic plans, after much consultation Spanish and Latin American Studies introduced several fundamental changes. Faculty members understand that the Faculty is looking for all departments to streamline their plans with a view to making them more flexible for and more accessible to students. The Department also understands that students are keen to learn in interdisciplinary ways and that the language of instruction in upper-year courses can create a barrier to those who may want to learn more about the Hispanic world, but who may not have the linguistic sophistication to engage with lectures and assignments in Spanish. After a great deal of discussion, colleagues decided to move away from a program focused on traditional Literary Studies, offered mostly in Spanish, and have opted to teach content through a Cultural Studies lens. This change is also reflected in the language of instruction. While Spanish and Latin American Studies will continue to offer all levels of language courses to hundreds of students every term, senior content courses are now offered in English and will hopefully open the pathway for students across the Faculty of Arts, and perhaps beyond, to engage in all offerings. The hope is that SLAS courses can now also be “cross-listed” or “held with” other departments and that students can then choose to combine Spanish and Latin American Studies more easily with other majors.

In the way of curriculum streamlining, the Department also decided to deactivate their Latin American Literatures and Cultures Minor as well as all plans in the area of Spanish / English Translation (Specialization and Minor). There has been a significant drop in the number of students pursuing these Minors over the last several years and they no longer appear in the calendar.

2. An exciting development recently came to be in the way of a new partnership with colleagues launching the Black Studies program. The African diaspora has had a fundamental role in shaping contemporary Latin American societies and departmental members were very happy to propose a new SPAN course to cross-list with BLKST, representing this constitutive influence and introducing students to Afro Latin America.

The following course has been approved at the Undergraduate Affairs Group and will soon appear in the undergraduate calendar.

SPAN 317/BLKS 317 The African Diaspora in Latin America (Lec, 0.5)

The African Diaspora is central to understanding the historical development and contemporary expressions of Latin American cultures and identities. Today, the region is home to Afro-descendant populations totalling over 150 million, and their influence is visible in every facet of Latin American societies, including the economy, language, literature and the arts, music, religion, cuisine, and more. Through the study of historical events, cultural production, and current affairs, this course examines African cultural legacies in Latin America, and explains the economic, societal, and political challenges still faced by Afro-Latin Americans today.

3. The Department's commitment to expand its [Minor in Cultural Identities](#) into an Honours program also continues. The Minor was developed in a spirit of collaboration with colleagues in Germanic and Slavic Studies and has been garnering interest. A Statement of Interest has already been shared with the Dean of Arts and the Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies, and they have received the green light to move forward with consultations. The impetus for expanding the program into a Major area of concentration can be summarized as follows:
 - Cultural identity has emerged as one of the most significant features of human Existence, yet UW doesn't have a BA major program of study devoted to this complex and fascinating topic. Creating a BA in Cultural Identities would address this gap in UW's offerings.
 - While there are a number of courses in the Faculty of Arts that address the issue of cultural identities, there is no focused program that can serve as a central access point for the various courses and departments.
 - Expanding to a major will give the program an increased profile and encourage students who take CI courses to consider making it their major.
 - Cultural Identities is an interdisciplinary program that brings together colleagues from multiple departments eliminating the necessity for additional resources.
 - Spearheaded by departments with expertise in cultural studies, some of which have been undersubscribed in terms of enrolments, will ensure that existing faculty resources are utilized more fully and that more students are able to benefit and learn from academics who bring unique gifts of cultural interpretation and analysis to the table of

scholarly offerings at UW.

- The proposed Major in Cultural Identities complements existing programs through its interdisciplinary approach: departments with courses focused on identity can contribute courses to the program thus bringing new students to their courses and programs.
- The CI major provides a general framework that would support and complement existing programs with more tightly defined foci such as Foreign and Classical Language, Visual Culture, Gender and Social Justice, Indigenous Studies, Canadian Studies, and the new Black Studies Program. The CI program organizers are in the process of reaching out to these other programs to bring them into the planning process at the ground level.

The Department of Spanish and Latin American Studies looks forward to continuing their on-going consultations with our colleagues in French Studies and Classical Studies, and to also invite others to join the conversation and more deeply explore what might become of this proposed Major.


Updated Implementation Plan update table below to reflect timelines etc.


	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	The return of the Tenure Track position that was lost to retirement in 2017.	Ongoing	Dean of Arts	Unclear but ideally before 2023
2.	The development of the Honours in Cultural Identities	Ongoing consultation with departments and the AUO	Dean of Arts, AUO, Chairs of Spanish, Germanic and Slavic, French and Classical Studies	2-3 Years (2022-2025?)

The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

Date of next program review: 2026-27
Date

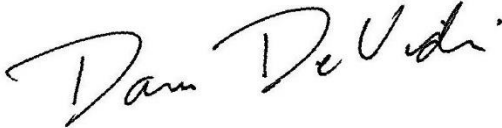
Signatures of Approval:


Chair/Director January 4 2023
Date

AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only) Date

5 February 2024

Faculty Dean Date

Note: AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.


June 10, 2022

Associate Vice-President, Academic Date
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)

Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs Date
(For graduate and augmented programs)
