

## Program Assessment Report (PAR) on Completed Assessment

### Year 1 [2014/2015] ~ Program: Latin American Studies

1. Which set of PLOs was assessed this academic year (identify each PLO)?

1. Explain the historical, political, cultural, or economic development of Latin America.

2. Describe the assessment activities below. Please provide enough detail to convey the nature of the activities.

Assessment Method (Evidence)	Is the evidence direct or indirect
a. Student survey	Indirect
b. Exit survey	Indirect
c. Exit interview conducted by Drs. Penyak and Allison	Direct

a. **Student Surveys.** Latin American Studies members followed Dr. Lee Penyak's suggestions that students should be assessed throughout their entire time as members of LAS and not only in a senior exit survey, when it is too late to address student concerns and make necessary changes. All members prepared this survey. See attached surveys.

**b. Exit Survey**

Completed exit survey which measures the degree to which the graduates feel their training has prepared them for their intended career goals and plans. See attached document.

**c. Exit interview to graduating senior**

Interview conducted by professors with graduating senior with a major in Latin American Studies to assess Program Learning Outcome #1.

3. What were the results of the assessment activities?

**Results of Direct Evidence (Exit interview by Drs. Penyak and Allison with graduating senior Lindsay Daniels):**

On Wednesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>, Lee Penyak, Yamile Silva and Mike Allison met with Lindsay Daniels, a graduating senior from the class of 2015 with a major in Latin American Studies, to engage in a conversation to assess the Latin American Studies program's Program Learning Outcome #1. PLO #1 addresses students' command of the historical, political, cultural, or economic development of Latin America. We did not inform Lindsay in advance about what we intended to discuss at the meeting.

Lindsay identified several important characteristics associated with historical and contemporary Latin America including poverty and inequality. We were pleased that Lindsay did not solely address economic inequality, but

racial and social inequality as well. We were pleased with Lindsay's answers. For example, we did not specifically ask Lindsay to define "development," yet she was able to adequately define it in her answer.

In terms of answering why Latin America's development differed from that of the United States and varied within the region itself, Lindsay focused on certain characteristics of the colonial period – the role of the Catholic Church, the driving mission of the conquistadors, the relatively low numbers of indigenous found in North America compared to Mexico, Central, and South America. Lindsay also made sure to highlight the unique development of Brazil. In addition to Brazil, Lindsay also spoke specifically about Mexico and Argentina's historical and political processes.

In terms of how we might be able to provide a better educational experience for our majors, we identified several possible challenges:

First, we cover Mexico and Central America, Lee and Mike's areas of expertise, very well, but need to increase our coverage of South America. While Argentina, Brazil, and Chile are often covered in detail in the Survey of Latin American Politics course, the northern half of South America (Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru) receives little attention.

The LAS program could also do a better job helping our majors and concentrators to get to know each other. Students enrolled in the LAS program are not familiar with other students enrolled in the program even when they are in the same class. A monthly coffee or brown bag luncheon involving students and faculty might help create a better sense of community.

Given scheduling irregularities, Lindsay had a difficult time completing the Latin America requirements in Philosophy, Religion, and Science. Fortunately, her study abroad experience in Spain and Kevin Nordberg's reader helped her to complete the credits needed for the major. Lindsay did not think that the Spanish language requirements were onerous for a student interested in the concentration or major. However, the intensive nature of Portuguese at the course and the major level might be a deterrent to choosing that option.

Lindsay demonstrated adequate general historical and political knowledge and some evidence of cultural and economic knowledge of the region.

### **Results of Exit survey**

The survey asked our students (majors and students in the concentration) to assess their undergraduate experience and offer feedback for improvement. On May 2015, a total of 4 graduating students completed this exit survey (out of 6 graduating students). The satisfaction of graduates was gauged through items addressing specific aspects of the Latin American Students program. Students were asked to identify two or three things they like the best about the program. Students reported to like best the commitment of faculty, the interdisciplinary nature of the program, the ability to connect with faculty and the opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities during the semester. The survey also asked the students to mention two or three things students like least about the program. Three students commented that some courses were offered infrequently and the conflict with time slot of other courses was a problem to complete the Latin America requirements. Students would like to have more diversity of courses. Students suggested that LAS provide more career guidance and advertise the program more.

### **Results of Student survey**

The response to this survey was low (only 1 current student submitted her survey). Her only comments were to the question of what changes might be made at the course level or to the program as a whole to enhance student learning. Student suggested adding classes that may connect history with current events issues. For this student, PS 284 has connected the history of modern Latin America to the question of human rights and what is currently going on in this realm. The student also commented that SPAN 335 was a great way to learn the history of U.S. relations with Mexico and other countries and how this has affected immigration policies.

4. Where applicable, outline the steps you will take to make improvements to the program based on the results of assessment activities identified in #3.

As mentioned previously, the Latin American Studies Program needs to increase our coverage of South America and the Caribbean area. Also, LAS could also do a better job helping our majors and concentrators to get to know each other. A monthly coffee or brown bag luncheon involving students, alumni and faculty might help create a better sense of community and provide students with more career guidance. In order to get a better rate of response to the Student survey, Silva suggests inviting students to take this survey during the fall and not during the spring, when they should instead take the exit survey.

5. Are there any new resources needed to make program improvements? If so, please include the resources and provide justification for each in the Budget section of the Annual Report.

Latin American Studies' biggest problem is the stability of course staffing. We seek at least one full-time faculty member to serve as core faculty on tenured or tenure-track line located entirely within the Department of Latin American Studies and Women's Studies (LA/W/S). As mentioned previously, the department has identified needs for regular, dependable coverage of the following areas: South America and the Caribbean. Courses might focus on immigration (rural to urban, or South to North), human rights issues, impacts on indigenous peoples, and/or economic conditions and challenges.

\*Submit to Ms. Rebecca Haggerty ([Rebecca.haggerty@scranton.edu](mailto:Rebecca.haggerty@scranton.edu)) with a notation in your Annual Report that "Program Assessment Report(s) (PAR) has been submitted under separate cover."