QEP Impact Report — Modern Foreign Languages.
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The Department of Modern Foreign Languages prepares its students for success as it is defined by all five of the learning goals and outcomes specified in the QEP. Our primary contribution to these goals is a strong foundation for critical, effective, and responsible communication, both in the students’ target language(s) and in English. This ability will grant the students access to another culture, which will facilitate the integration of information from a variety of contexts. Both of these skills will allow the students to methodically synthesize and analyze literary texts as well as sociocultural documents. Because these skills will inform the students’ worldview, students will be better prepared to examine the values that influence their own decision making processes and to envision plans for their future, or to clarify and act on purpose and values. This skill set will make our students uniquely prepared to solve complex problems, since they will be able to access information that was previously locked away behind a code that they can now decipher. Lastly, our department has initiated a number of service learning programs that allow our students to practice civic engagement with individuals in the communities surrounding Western Carolina University. By instilling in students an awareness of the world around us, whether this means Jackson County of the Western Hemisphere, we encourage our students to become engaged citizens, to consider public policy, and to take steps to shape that policy.

Summary of implementation of our primary learning outcome: Communication

In order to ensure that MFL’s goals parallel those of the QEP, the faculty of the department established a complete restructuring of our programs, degrees, and curriculum. In order to evaluate students’ progress and focus our attention on any areas that may be identified as needing improvement, MFL uses criteria adapted from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages and the Common European Framework of Reference of Languages, Learning, Teaching, and Assessment to evaluate proficiency. Language learners are divided into three broad divisions, which are then subdivided into six levels, as follows: Novice (1, 2); Intermediate (1, 2); and Advanced (1, 2). Students in MFL are expected to have reached certain levels of proficiency upon completing certain courses, as described below:

- After 101-102 sequence, students will have reached Novice 1 level.
- After 231-232 sequence, students will have reached Novice 2 level.
- After 301-302 sequence, students will have reached Intermediate 1 level.
- After completing a minor (the 300-level core), students will have reached Intermediate 2 level.
- After completing a major (including immersion requirement), students will have reached at least Advanced 1 level.

(Each of these subdivisions has a discrete skill set that has been omitted from this document for purposes of brevity.)

With this in mind, students’ language skills are identified as emerging, developing, achieving, or exemplary, according to the ranking of their class sequence with their proficiency levels. By evaluating students thus, MFL can keep a constant eye on progress, which is measured largely by how well our students are able to communicate. At present, MFL does not use one standard assessment tool; rather, having a small number of majors allows us to evaluate students on an individual basis, comparing written work (in the form of compositions, final papers, and final projects) and final exams year to year. In Fall 2011, we proposed a date of Fall 2013 (four semesters, or approximately the length of time it takes most students to complete a minor in our programs) to compare students’ work and evaluate how well our restructured curricula are improving communication skills and target language proficiency. At that time we plan to collect the materials mentioned above, evaluate the students’ gains in proficiency, and use those
determinations to assess the quality of our new programs, making any adjustments deemed necessary with the new information.