

**Department of Romance Languages and Literatures Assessment Report
AY 2008-2009: Oral proficiency**

Executive Summary

The Committee for the Study of Romance Languages and Cultures (CSRLC) undertook and completed during AY 2008-2009 a project to improve oral proficiency of students in relation to program/department learning goals that were established by the Department in AY 2007-2008:

<http://romancelanguages.nd.edu/undergraduate/goals/>

The specific goals of this project, under direction of Co-PIs, Virginie Askildson and Shauna Williams, were:

1. to establish oral proficiency best practices and assessment criteria for all programs, and for both the lower and upper division of the curriculum;
2. to test and implement technological tools (WIMBA software in Concourse) designed to support the collection, review, and storing of oral practice and assessment data across the curriculum;
3. to propose protocols for regular program level assessment.

This report is to be provided to the faculty of the Department, and shared with the College officials and other interested groups as appropriate. It will also be used by the CSRLC to make recommendations to the Department that will lead to improvements in the curriculum and teaching practices.

The CSRLC members were Virginie Askildson (College pedagogue, French), Kevin Barry (Kaneb Center), Alessia Blad (Italian), Ted Cachey (department chairperson, Italian) Maria Coloma (Spanish), Marie-Christine Escoda-Risto (French), Janet Fisher-McPeak (Spanish), Mary O'Donnell (Spanish), Maria-Rosa Olivera Williams (Spanish), Alison Rice (French), Karolina Serafin (Italian), Sandra Teixeira (Portuguese), Patrick Vivirito (Italian), and Shauna Williams (committee chairperson, Spanish).

The major recommendations are:

1. Formal assessment of oral proficiency should take place every semester in all courses across the curriculum. The CSRLC recommends 3-6 formal assessment activities to be built into every course. Formal and informal oral assessment activities should be included in course syllabi. The grade distribution should reflect 20%-30% of the final grade be given to oral proficiency practice and assessment.
2. Oral practice and assessment can take place in and/or out of class time. The use of a voice tool, like Wimba, is strongly recommended. This tool can aid faculty in collecting, reviewing and storing of oral student data from these activities. Its judicious use can significantly enhance the quantity and quality of student

opportunities for oral practice. Faculty from the CSRLC and the Kaneb Center are willing and able to provide the minimal training necessary for the use of Wimba software, which is supported within Concourse.

3. Rubrics developed by the CSRLC for all levels of the curriculum (see <http://romancelanguages.nd.edu/undergraduate/goals/>) should be used regularly to provide a guideline of expectation and forms of feedback from instructor to student. Rubrics should be distributed prior to each formal oral practice/assessment activity. Feedback should be given to students as soon as possible following oral practice/assessment activities to allow students optimal time to respond and improve.

4. Every other year, beginning in 2009-2010, the oral proficiency of graduating majors, supplementary majors and minors should be assessed in each program through the use of on-line tools that allow for ACTFL sponsored certification of levels (novice, intermediate low, mid and high, advanced low, advanced, advanced high, superior). Such tests can also allow for certification of students and can be funded by a combination of student payment and College or Department support. For example a significant sample of graduating seniors in each program would be funded through the College. In addition, all graduating seniors would be invited to take the exam for certification at cost (approx. \$50). In the spring of 2009, a pilot group took part in such certification process. Testing is still ongoing.

5. Additional benchmarking should be considered at key points in each program such as after language requirement (20201/20202), at introduction to literature courses for majors (30310), before and/or after study abroad, and for seniors completing major/minor requirements. For example, the recent review of the Rome and Bologna study abroad programs has recommended that pre and post study abroad assessments of oral proficiency be developed and implemented.

6. The CSRLC recommends that the Department organize and host on-site oral proficiency training for faculty through organizations like ACTFL. Such events can be in cooperation with other language departments and the Center for the Study of Language and Cultures.