

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Academic Program Review
College of Arts and Sciences**

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM

Latin American Studies Program

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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CAMPUS VISIT

March 8-10, 2017

The review team read the self-study written by the director and advisory board of USF's Latin American Studies program, reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, and other university materials.

1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.

The committee gave the Latin American Studies (LAS) program an overall rating of VERY GOOD. According to the review team, LAS is "currently at the level one would expect to find at a top-tier liberal arts institution," and "all faculty involved with the program" are doing an "outstanding job." The reviewers were "impressed" by the "academic rigor, interdisciplinary nature, and broad thematic coverage" of LAS, and felt that the LAS program is "a key component and contributor to" USF's vision, mission, and values.

2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?

- a. Faculty in the Latin American Studies program are "cohesive, generous, intellectually rigorous, and collegial." They contribute to LAS' "outstanding scholarly and creative production" and "high quality" curriculum design. However, the reviewers noted that "traditionally high levels of faculty satisfaction ... seem to be giving way to an unfortunate lack of morale," and that "ongoing contributions to [and demands from] multiple departments and programs" with "no provision made by home departments to lighten their loads" take a toll on these faculty.
- b. Reviewers were "surprised" that "despite [LAS'] wide-ranging contributions to the university's mission (ethical and intellectual), the program only costs the university one course release for the director and the salary of one assistant shared with CLS and CELASA." They felt that the program's success "is largely dependent on the substantial additional workload freely and generously assumed by LAS faculty," and suggested exploring ways to redistribute the program's "excessively high" workload (especially that of the director.)
- c. Students in LAS "love the program" and "only expressed the desire to be able to be more involved in it," while faculty are "committed" to LAS, but feel that "[the program] is hidden at USF."
- d. LAS' required immersion experience "compares favorably" with other institutions where "study

abroad might be encouraged but not required. However, the reviewers felt study abroad options were not always made “with meaningful input from [LAS] faculty” and urged administrators to consider “the appropriate expertise ... and lived knowledge” these faculty could provide before “suspending or terminating programs ... to the detriment of students.”

3. **What specific recommendations for improving the program’s quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?**

Departmental Structure and Workload

- Formalize interdisciplinary appointments for faculty affiliated with LAS, to ensure that “teaching, advising, and other service needs” of the program can be “reliably met,” and to reduce the “unrealistic administrative demands [currently imposed]” on the program’s director.
- Use the stability from interdisciplinary faculty appointments to establish LAS “as a department, rather than a program.”
- Hire future faculty with formal interdisciplinary appointments between LAS and other programs.
- Reallocate existing resources so that the LAS director receives two course releases per year while the CELASA director receives one, then utilize the CELASA director like “an assistant director or co-director of LAS,” to aid with advising and administrative needs of the program and “address the inadequate support provided to the program.”
- Increase student outreach.
- Grant “more autonomy and flexibility” to the LAS program assistant to adjust her work schedule for the “wide array of [evening time] co-curricular activities” sponsored by the program.

Curriculum and Program Requirements

- Revive and continue to support LAS study abroad programs and student immersion experiences.
- Consult LAS faculty with the “appropriate expertise, knowledge, and lived experience to assess safety and other issues” before suspending or terminating study abroad programs in Latin America.
- Consider a local immersion experience with Latin American/Latin@ communities as an approved alternative for study abroad programs, to alleviate the “financial challenges that inhibit the ability of some students to study abroad.”
- Establish a new required course for the major (“perhaps called ‘Latin American Perspectives II’”) to “heighten the visibility of the program to first-year students and potentially attract more students to the major.” Ideally this course should be 100-level and a Core course, taught by “different LAS faculty on a rotating basis.”
- Consider creating a new course, centered on guest lectures from a variety of LAS faculty, to highlight the wide range of course offerings and faculty research available in the LAS program.

Relationship with Other Programs at USF

- Pursue connections with related graduated programs, including the Master in Migration Studies (MIMS): an accelerated LAS + MIMS program “seems feasible,” and could utilize relevant undergraduate courses, including the required study abroad in Latin America.
- Retain close ties with the Minor in Chican@-Latin@ Studies: “it is essential that any program focusing on ... Latin America also include coverage of the experiences of Latin@s in the United States (and vice versa).”

- “If and when LAS is converted into a department,” combine LAS and Chican@-Latin@ Studies into a “Department of Latin@ American Studies.”

4. In the opinion of the external review committee, is the program following the University’s strategic initiatives?

a. *Recruiting and retaining a richly diverse mix of students and faculty (and) faculty from other countries, ensuring a breadth of experiences and views inform a campus culture which challenges students to think and act in a globally responsible manner.*

The review team felt that “the diversity of the LAS program in terms of faculty, students, staff, coursework, scholarship, and co-curricular activities cannot be overstated.” Overall, the LAS program is said to “provide a rich learning environment” that “helps prepare [students] to make real contributions to society.”

b. *Educating students to issues affecting the global community (and) challenging students to pursue a common good that transcends local and national boundaries.*

LAS’ curriculum draws from a wide range of faculty expertise, in areas “from history, literature, theater and performance, sociology, Brazilian studies, migration, environmental and sustainability studies, and development across Latin America.” The reviewers commended the program’s foreign language requirement (2 or more years of study) and immersion requirement (a study abroad program in Latin America) for “creating world citizens [fluent in] one and hopefully multiple languages” that are ready to “engage with pressing contemporary issues.”

5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?

Reviewers felt that the LAS program “provides a rich learning environment for students which helps prepare them to make real contributions to society,” and plays a “key role in creating an intellectually and culturally rich campus atmosphere” at USF. The reviewers noted that the program’s required immersion experience “forces LAS majors to broaden their worldviews and engage with pressing contemporary issues,” and after graduation, many alumni find jobs “focused on social justice issues.” Overall, the University of San Francisco “would be unthinkable without LAS’s teaching of first generation Latin@ students and its engagement with the Latin American community that is so central to the fabric of [San Francisco].”

6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee’s recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?

The next step is for the Dean and Associate Deans to meet with the program and discuss the action plan based on the self-study and reviewers’ report. Based on the reviewers’ suggestions, the Office of the Provost could assist the program by supporting: 1) structural and curricular changes decided by the program faculty and the Dean and 2) formal interdisciplinary appointments between programs, as enacted by the Dean.

7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?

No additional information is needed.