

REVIEW OF THE B.A. IN SPANISH

Classification of Instruction Programs (CIP) Code: 16.0905
Spanish Language and Literature

OVERVIEW

The **B.A. in Spanish** program at Illinois State University is housed in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures within the College of Arts and Sciences. The Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures houses four degree programs: a B.A. in French and Francophone Studies, B.A. in German, a B.A. in Spanish, and M.A. in Language, Literatures, and Cultures. In addition, the department offers minors in Classical Studies, East Asian Studies, French and Francophone Studies, German, Italian Studies, and Spanish and an Instructional Technology in World Languages graduate certificate. The last review of the B.A. in Spanish program occurred in 2013-2014.

The B.A. in Spanish program offers a dynamic interdisciplinary lens for exploring the diverse cultural productions of the Francophone world: language, literature, the arts, politics, philosophy, and other fields of human inquiry and creative expression. Students engage closely with faculty in small seminars and regularly study abroad. Graduates in Spanish studies demonstrate language proficiency, intercultural competencies, and analytical skills. Students enrolling in the B.A. in Spanish select from either the Spanish sequence or the Spanish Teacher Education sequence.

Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2014-2021

B.A. in Spanish, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Spanish sequence	41	7	36	36	29	21	24	20
Spanish Teacher Education sequence	55	51	50	41	46	54	64	43
No subplan		34		2		1		
Total	96	92	86	79	75	76	88	63

Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, 2014-2021

B.A. in Spanish, Illinois State University

First Majors Only

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Spanish sequence	18		20	17	22	12	13	9
Spanish Teacher Education sequence	16		8	9	5	6	6	15
Total	34	29	28	26	27	18	19	24

Table notes: Graduating Fiscal Year consists of summer, fall, and spring terms, in that order. For example, Graduating Fiscal Year 2018 consists of the following terms: summer 2017, fall 2017, and spring 2018.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The B.A. in Spanish provides students with advanced language skills and knowledge of Spanish culture, literature, linguistics, and pedagogy. These skills and knowledge will enable them to be intelligent and responsible citizens of a globalized world and to successfully pursue careers in teaching, business, government, or non-governmental organizations.

Student learning outcomes

The specific learning objectives of the B.A. in Spanish, including the Teacher Certification Sequence, are:

1. Competency in speaking, writing, listening, and reading the foreign language. Competency will include the ability to successfully communicate orally with a fluent speaker of the foreign language, read texts of an advanced level of difficulty written in a foreign language, and write the language grammatically;
2. Knowledge of the Hispanic cultures;
3. Competency in analyzing the linguistic structure of Spanish;
4. Competency in analyzing Hispanic literature;
5. in the case of teacher education majors, knowledge of current theories, methods and issues in foreign language education and professional journals and organizations/ sources; competency in critical thinking about those theories, methods, and issues; and successful practical application of their knowledge and skills in classes, clinical experiences and student teaching.

Program curriculum (2021-2022)

Graduation requirements (General Spanish sequence):

120 credit hours including 35 credit hours for the degree program and 39 credit hours for General Education. The 35 credit hours for the degree program include 35 credit hours of Spanish.

Graduation requirements (Spanish Teacher Education sequence):

120 credit hours including 67 credit hours for the degree program and 39 credit hours for General Education. The 67 credit hours for the degree program include 26 credit hours of Spanish courses, 6 credit hours of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures courses, 9 credit hours of Spanish elective courses, and 26 credit hours of professional education courses external to the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures.

Program delivery

The program is offered on the Normal campus.

The program is delivered primarily through face-to-face instruction, with a few courses available through online delivery.

Department faculty (Fall 2021)

16 tenure track faculty members (8 Professors, 7 Associate Professors, and 1 Assistant Professors)

13 non-tenure track faculty members (9 full-time, 4 part-time, totaling 11.4 FTE)

Undergraduate student to faculty ratio: 4 to 1

Undergraduate student to tenure-line faculty ratio: 7 to 1

Specialized accreditation

The Spanish Teacher Education sequence in the B.A. in Spanish program, as one of the teacher education programs at Illinois State University, is accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). The last accreditation review was conducted in October 2019, and the University successfully met all five of the national

standards for educator preparation. The Spanish teacher education sequence is also approved by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL), a specialized professional association affiliated with CAEP. The teacher education sequence is subject to annual review and approval by the Illinois State Board of Education. There is no specialized accreditation for the non-teaching sequence in the Spanish program.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

The greatest change in the field is less about the discipline than the historical moment: the steady decline in enrollments for Spanish at all institutions of higher education in the United States during the review period, as reported in the Modern Language Association's (MLA) twenty-fifth language enrollment census. This decline may be due to simple demographic issues. The MLA report questions whether the decline in enrollments may be attributable in part to the loss of government funding for international education. However, societal need for Spanish-speaking professionals continues to grow, driven by occupational opportunities to serve growing Spanish speaking populations in the United States as well as abroad. Illinois is home to the fifth-largest Latino population in the country, and Latinos constitute the fastest-growing segment of state and national population. In view of the growing Latino population in Illinois and the nation, the Spanish program is uniquely positioned to help "create the most supportive and productive community possible to serve the citizens of Illinois and beyond."

Responses to previous program review recommendations

The 2013-2014 program review resulted in four recommendations.

1. Continue to develop the student learning outcomes assessment plan, particularly articulation of learning outcomes and introduction of strategies for soliciting feedback from external stakeholders; implement the plan; utilize results to make program improvements; and document how this has been done. As part of the review process, the program faculty have updated the assessment plan to more clearly articulate processes and procedures for evaluating the effectiveness of the program and student success within it, and for adjusting and making changes as needed. As regards the question of stakeholders, the faculty must note that the general Spanish major prepares students for a wide array of professional careers, which is why the program does not have a fixed set of stakeholders the program can contact in the field. However, the program does keep track of alumni employment to the best of the faculty's abilities and follow studies on what sectors of the economy most need bilingual professionals at a national level (as noted in the report by the U.S. Department of Labor statistics and other reports). At a local level and considering the need for bilingual speakers in the future, the program intends to seek relations for future employment with outlets such as The Immigration Project, the Normal-Bloomington Police Departments, the Community Health Clinic and other local hospitals and health care facilities. Additionally, the nationally accredited teacher certification process imposes rigorous standards on students, and the program faculty fully trust the accreditation agencies for the Teacher Education program as a good marker of the program's qualities. This is confirmed by the fact that schools throughout the state—the main stakeholder for the Teacher Education program—regularly contact us when they seek to fill a vacancy.

2. Regularly monitor and adjust the curriculum to meet student needs and changes in the discipline; curricular changes to consider include, but are not limited to, modifications of course content and pedagogy to improve oral proficiency of students in the teacher education sequence. The program faculty responded with a number of successful initiatives to improve the students' proficiency (a challenge for students with limited exposure to Spanish outside the classroom). The faculty learned more about explicitly teaching oral skills at all levels by hosting a workshop led by a representative from ACTFL on the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and the ACTFL guidelines. Additionally, Sigma Delta Pi facilitated a workshop for students to teach them strategies to advance their oral proficiency. The Department now regularly holds orientations to the OPI and a faculty member offers individual coaching for struggling students. This has been a very successful endeavor, significantly increasing the pass rate to nearly all Teacher Education students achieving at least Advanced-low on the OPI. This is documented in the sections on assessment-based changes above.

3. Maintain varied and high-quality study abroad opportunities by replacing opportunities lost through State Department restrictions on travel to Mexico and by expanding study abroad options at institutions in Latin America.

This recommendation has been fully addressed during this review period. Because the program in Taxco, Mexico, was the only program in Latin America, faculty in Spanish created additional options for students so that they would have many opportunities to study in both Latin America and Spain. In addition to establishing a new program in Valparaiso, Chile, the Spanish program has established programs in San José, Costa Rica, and Querétaro, Mexico, articulating courses for these programs and advising students. Likewise, the faculty in Spanish has worked to pre-articulate courses and provide advisement for students who plan to study at the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija in Madrid, Spain. The programs in San José, Querétaro, and Madrid were already popular with students at Illinois State University in other departments; because many of those students sought to pursue a Spanish minor while abroad, the faculty agreed to pre-articulate courses to facilitate this and found that these programs also offered courses in Spanish on literary, cultural, and linguistic topics suitable for Spanish majors.

4. *Continue to explore access to digital humanities tools for both research and instruction.* Faculty members in the program have participated in faculty development opportunities through CTLT related to digital technology and digital humanities for research and for the incorporation of these tools into instruction to help learners.

Major findings

The program faculty find that the program is working well with opportunities for growth and expansion. During this program review period the program has observed a growth in the numbers of minors, and faculty are advocating for students to consider completing a double major, both by building on the growing number of minors and through initiatives such as the aforementioned “Internationalize Your Major.” The faculty have developed sample plans of study to show students how this can be done in four years, without adding time to graduation.

Analyzing who are double majors are, program faculty can see trends: most double majors are in the fields of education and health care. Responding to this, the faculty have already proposed a course in Spanish for the Health Professions—a course many universities are offering to respond to the strong demand for bilingual health care professionals. The program is also seeing a demand for hands-on learning opportunities putting language skills into practice. The program currently has several students doing interpreting on a volunteer basis for the local Community Health Care Clinic; faculty are discussing possibilities for academic internships and otherwise strengthening this relationship that fills a community need and benefits students. Finally, since the program has a growing number of heritage-speaking students in the Spanish major, due to the increased number of Latinx students in the program, the faculty need to continue to think about the curriculum and how best to meet the needs of this group of students, which has a different linguistic profile than second language students.

The Spanish section concludes that it continues to produce excellent scholarship in its field and that the teaching and service provided by its faculty is high quality. The program also concludes that, despite recent losses among tenure lines, faculty is responding to the new challenges in ways that preserve its commitment to internationalization through the promotion of second language acquisition, the development of critical thinking, research methods and community involvement. There are clear signs that these recent efforts and initiatives are taking root: the program has higher pass rates among Spanish teacher education majors on the Oral Proficiency Interview; faculty are seeing some growth in the numbers of minors; the program continues to have substantive numbers of second majors; and students remain highly active in Study Abroad programs and civic engagement. Program faculty hope to see greater fruits of the program faculty’s labors once the new courses that have been proposed are approved by the university processes.

Initiatives and plans

Plans for next review period:

- Assess the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on enrollments, recruitment efforts, teaching, collaborations, and language acquisition of students whose studies have been interrupted. For instance, in Spring 2020 students participating in the Granada (Spain) program had to return early to the U.S. without completing their time due to the COVID-19 health emergency. All study abroad programs at Illinois State University are currently on hold. Semester long programs are presumably expected to be open Fall 2022, depending on the state of the pandemic. Considering how many of the students study abroad, this may have some real impact

on students' language development as well as recruitment to the major. Program faculty will monitor the situation and adjust as needed.

The shift to online teaching during stay-at-home orders due to the pandemic pushed us to use technology in new ways in the program's classes. Program faculty will discuss the effects of this shift, what has been learned, and in what ways the faculty may wish to change moving forward.

- Explore avenues to promote languages with FTICs (First Time in College Students) and encourage them to pursue languages as part of their studies. Review enrollment strategies to ensure adequate levels of seating, within constraints of current staffing and space availability.
- Building on the work initiated with the "Internationalize Your Major" initiative, continue to cultivate partnerships and collaborations with other programs to promote language study as a means of internationalization. This may include identifying those programs with students most motivated to add language study and seeking to create opportunities for those students (such as opportunities for medical interpretation for Nursing students, tutoring bilingual school children for education majors, etc.). It may also include identifying programs with strong demand for bilingual professionals, such as bilingual speech pathology for students in the Communication Sciences and Disorders major.
- Hold discussion among faculty to enhance the program's ability to promote the study of languages by better conveying the transferable skills and other "soft skills" that are found in the study of linguistics, literature, and cultures. Explicitly show students how their B.A. prepares them for a range of career options. This may include developing talking points, organizing workshops on professional development, highlighting the experiences of alumni, etc.
- Discuss the place of civic engagement, community service, and internships in the curriculum, building upon the civic engagement initiatives that already form a vital part of several of courses, as detailed in this report. To send students into the community, it is imperative that they are prepared with sufficient language skills to be of value to the organization they serve, and hence with certain coursework completed at the 200-level. Additionally, the faculty must confront the challenge of organizing sustained internship or volunteer opportunities, which is labor intensive and requires relationships of trust built with local community organizations; the program will reach out to the Office of Civic Engagement for guidance, and consider any staffing or faculty needs in this area in future budget requests.
- Due to the increased number of Latinx students and heritage speakers in the program, faculty must continue to think about the curriculum and how to best meet the specific linguistic needs of this group of students. The program must also be sure faculty are training teacher education students on how to teach heritage speakers in their future classrooms. Schools in general and Spanish classes in particular can be hostile spaces for heritage speakers, and their language abilities are often treated as a deficit to be overcome rather than an asset to be cultivated. The program faculty hope to train a future generation of teachers who will actively promote bilingualism in inclusive classrooms.
- Continue promoting and providing opportunities for study abroad in both Spain and Latin America.
- As indicated by research by Pete Swanson and Shannon Mason, "*the National Center for Educational Statistics (2017, p. 1) reported that approximately 50.7 million K-12 students entered U.S. public elementary and secondary schools. An additional 5.2 million students were expected to matriculate into private schools. While the number of students is growing, 'enrollment in teacher education programs is down significantly—falling 35 percent nationwide in the last five years' (Long, 2016, p. 1). School districts are scrambling to find certified teachers, especially in world languages (WL) (Hanford, 2017; Koerting, 2017; Motoko, 2015).*" Regarding Illinois, the ISBE in Springfield collects data annually from all Illinois school districts through a survey each fall. Each school districts' reports the number of unfilled positions in October of the reporting year. For academic year 2021, the Board of Education reported that there were 45.8

unfilled positions in Foreign Languages: Spanish. It should be noted that some of these positions are listed as half-time or part-time. For this reason, the Board reports that *“it is expected that there will continue to be jobs available for students that pursue the major in Spanish for teacher education.”*

As a nationally recognized World Languages Teacher Education program, Illinois State University has a unique opportunity to address this teacher shortage. Many of the hindrances to attracting students to this major are beyond the program’s control (antipathy toward both language study and teachers in the general population), and yet the economy and our society need the bilingual and bicultural skills faculty teach and that we teach teachers to teach. The program faculty will continue to seek new ways to recruit students for this vital mission.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the B.A. in Spanish program in the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-report were accomplished during the time period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders including from an alumni advisory board.

The committee notes that while the program’s enrollments have declined slightly during the period covering the program review (from 96 in 2014 to 88 in 2020), the program remains the largest Spanish program among the state’s public universities. These declines in enrollments are consistent with other language programs nationally. However, the committee also notes that the program is also a very popular second major (typically adding 30-40 additional students) and minor (averaging in over 200 Spanish minors each Fall during the period of review). The program faculty see an opportunity for controlled growth of the program (with continued student interest and opportunities for graduates). The committee commends the program faculty for efforts that have led to high levels of gender and racial/ethnic diversity among its students. The percentage of students identifying as women has remained relatively constant during the period of review (fluctuating between 66 and 80 percent). The percentage of undergraduate students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline has consistently remained well above the University average (ranging between 44 and 54 percent for the program). The committee commends the department for their comprehensive recruitment plan that includes the use of personal interviews and letters with area high school students, and collaborations with other departments and schools across campus (e.g., internationalization of the curriculum of a major grant project).

The committee commends the program faculty for their efforts to support the success of their students. We commend the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in many of its courses following best practice guidelines established by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages (ADFL). This practice is in keeping with the University’s commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities. The committee commends the program for aligning their creative and varied co-curricular with their program learning objectives and assessment plan. These initiatives provide students with opportunities to participate in activities that allow them to engage with the community, to learn from experts in the field, and network with potential employers. These varied experiences include participating as simultaneous interpreters for Spanish-speaking parents at parent-teacher meetings, visits to the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago, and language tutoring at the UNITY Community Center in Normal. The program faculty also support a local chapter of the Honors Society in Spanish which sponsors a wide variety of civic and community events. We further commend the program faculty for their long-standing support of study abroad opportunities to visit diverse international cultures (e.g., summer, semester, and year-long programs in Spain and Latin America). These varied opportunities help the program prepare students for employment and build a strong student community in the program.

The committee commends the faculty for their ongoing review and revisions to the curriculum during the period of review based on feedback from multiple stakeholders. This work included the development of a proposal for two new courses (Spanish for the Health Professions and SPA 119 Introduction to Academic Spanish for Spanish Speakers), establishing an internal Oral Proficiency Exam to provide greater flexibility for heritage speaker students, the revision of prerequisites for 200-level courses, and the combination of two courses (SPA 213 and 223) to allow students to move through the curriculum more quickly. The program faculty are commended for their work to infuse issues of equity, diversity, and inclusion throughout the program curriculum. The committee further commends the program faculty for their support of and participation in institutional programs (e.g., General Education, and AMALI).

The committee commends the program faculty on the development, implementation, and revision of their plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes. During the current review cycle, faculty have collected and used the evidence gathered through the student learning outcomes assessment plan to inform program changes.

The committee recognizes the faculty members of the program for their scholarly contributions to the B.A. in Spanish. Faculty members are active researchers who publish peer-reviewed journals articles, and present at national and international professional conferences. Additionally, we recognize that every faculty in the program has been activity involved in advising and supporting professional student organizations demonstrating their commitment to facilitate learning and educational experiences of our students outside the classroom.

The committee appreciates the in-depth analysis of comparator and aspirational programs. As part of this analysis, the program faculty identified multiple institutions with similar programs that excel in ways that our program may aspire to. The committee also recognizes that faculty developed specific action plans to implement similar initiatives as those to improve the program at Illinois State.

The committee commends the program faculty for being accredited by both the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and the Council for Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Furthermore, we also commend the program faculty for maintaining program standards that meet the Illinois teacher licensure requirements set by the Illinois State Board of Education.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members of the Department of Languages, Literature, and Cultures for the opportunity to provide input regarding the B.A. in Spanish program at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with department faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2030, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan for controlled enrollment growth. The committee notes that demand for the program remains strong despite national declines in language programs. The committee acknowledges the work faculty have completed regarding their recruitment efforts and that this work has been successful in enrolling both first-time-in-college and external transfer as first and second majors in the program. Given the time and energy that must be devoted to such recruitment activities, the committee suggests that program faculty continue to identify external student populations for recruitment as well as internal programs with likely transfers in a strategic way (e.g., programs within the College of Business).

Continue to focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion. The committee recognizes the efforts that have resulted in the diversity of faculty and students within the program and encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. We encourage the program to continue refining and implementing their plans for recruiting students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. Furthermore, we encourage the program faculty to continue to examine ways to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into the curriculum.

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The committee recommends that the program faculty develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recognizes substantial work by former and current faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum. The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field and to maintain program retention and graduation rates (including the percentage of graduates completing the program within four years and trying to reduce the numbers of curricular exceptions needed). The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly of students from traditionally underrepresented groups. The committee suggests that faculty members investigate student interest and participation in the Honors program to ensure that students desiring to complete the program with honors have sufficient opportunities to do so.

Continue to review and revise the curriculum. The committee recognizes substantial work by faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum. The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure including assessing the impact of recent revisions (e.g., is there a relationship between student oral proficiency issues and the removal of the B or better pre-requisite for 200-level courses?). The committee asks program faculty to continue to develop and expand opportunities for student research and creative activities.

Continue monitoring comparator and aspirational programs. The committee recommends that the program faculty continue to monitor trends and initiatives at other institutions to develop strategic action plans to respond to changes in the discipline.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue its implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee noted that the majority of the assessment plan is focused on the teacher education sequence and recommends that the program faculty review the plan to ensure that data gathered from students in both sequences are being captured by the assessment activities. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection related to Spanish to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the Department and the Library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students. We also recommend that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to develop a tiered approach for information fluency learning outcomes for the Department, align those outcomes to the curricula, and integrate those outcomes into the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program.

Develop a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee encourages the faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking and engagement. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program’s alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni, employers, and other external stakeholders in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students and in providing employment opportunities for program graduates.