

Response to the Unit Review of the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages (Sept. 30, 2007)

Overview

This is an executive summary response by the Department of Asian and Near Eastern Languages (DANEL) to the unit review conducted Winter Semester, 2007. Department challenges are listed below, with responses summarized in *italics*.

Volatile Demand Making Curricular Planning Difficult

- (1) Reallocating internal resources (e.g., shifting FTE from Korean to Chinese a few years ago);*
- (2) Adding part-time resources, within budget limits;*
- (3) Expanding use of a “productivity” model of team-teaching, with budgetary and pedagogical benefits;*
- (4) Utilizing “floating” FTE granted recently by College of Humanities for hiring visiting faculty on one-year appointments, to address enrollment impacts while providing needed opportunities for professional development;*
- (5) Needs remain in the area of Korean and in study abroad (see below).*

Gender Imbalance

- (1) Among students, imbalance resulting largely from mostly-male RM input to upper-level courses in three of five languages, a demographic over which DANEL has little control; With women well represented in lower-level courses, focusing on mainstreaming non-RM students (both male and female) into upper-level courses, with the help of study abroad, etc.;*
- (2) Among faculty, in spite of LDS-restricted, generally male-predominant hiring pool, about 50% of DANEL’s full-time hires over past few years have been women;*
- (3) “Job sharing,” suggested as a possibility by reviewers, probably not feasible with our demographics;*
- (4) Continuing to make significant use of “less than full time appointments,” also suggested by reviewers, to address gender imbalance (50% of PT faculty and 60% of TAs and SIs, female).*

Weakened Korean Unit

- (1) DANEL strongly concurs with reviewers’ finding of immediate need for additional FTE and/or other resources to bolster struggling Korean unit;*
- (2) Internal reallocation of an FTE from Korean to Chinese necessitated a few years ago in response to rapid expansion in Chinese and a series of untimely faculty deaths in Korean was a major factor leading to current struggles in the Korean unit;*
- (3) Nationally important program still holds significant future promise;*
- (4) Enrollments beginning to increase again in spite of limited resources, with graduates in Korean actually increasing over the past couple of years;*
- (5) Three full-time faculty seem minimally necessary in order to maintain, improve program while providing study abroad opportunities for students and professional development for faculty;*

(6) Addressing need for improved TA training by including Korean TAs and faculty in already-developed orientation and training sessions conducted by the Japanese section, and having the department Teacher Development Committee help with the implementation of a new team-teaching approach.

Study Abroad

- (1) “Modularizing” to move more functions to specialists, suggested by reviewers, being done to some extent, thanks to support from Kennedy Center, but institutional, logistic, and budgetary impediments remain, making establishment of specialized support functions overseas difficult;*
- (2) Making some progress in expanding access to study abroad for Korean, thanks to recent conclusion of agreement between BYU and Kyung-Hee University;*
- (3) Currently reviewing procedures for post-return debriefings to make them more systematic, effective, as recommended by reviewers;*
- (4) Leveraging study abroad as opportunity for research and assessment-related scholarship (as, e.g., in collaboration between Director of our Chinese Flagship Center and a colleague at the University of Pittsburgh, both co-Principal Investigators of a federal grant to study effectiveness of study abroad programs, and also in tracking assessment data from Japanese and Arabic study abroad programs for both scholarly and program review purposes);*
- (5) Coping with difficulty of finding qualified faculty directors by engaging trusted adjunct faculty where possible for temporary full-time assignments;*
- (6) Resources necessary to expand access of study abroad especially to non-RM students remain a challenge, although generous support from College and other sources has helped.*

Strengthening Professional Development, Scholarly Productivity, and Assessment

- (1) Continuing to track and strongly encourage regular professional development leaves, assuring accountability through annual stewardship review process (planning on two DANEL faculty on PDL each year);*
- (2) As recommended by reviewers, continuing to “build on an already admirable record of scholarship” in the areas of assessment, advanced-level language pedagogy, and teacher development (e.g., most recently, in Chinese Flagship-related publications, teacher training-related book manuscript produced by one of our Korean faculty, co-authored book on East Asian foreign language pedagogy by two faculty members in Chinese and Japanese, and publications by an Arabic faculty member related to teaching and learning of Middle Eastern languages);*
- (3) Encouraging collaboration with colleagues at BYU and elsewhere, as recommended;*
- (4) Attempting to make more systematic use of the Center for Language Studies at BYU, as recommended, by, for example, seeking CLS assistance in subsidizing and conducting ACTFL proficiency testing for graduating seniors majoring in Chinese, Japanese, and Korean.*
- (5) In the area of assessment, DANEL has, in the past few months, developed and begun implementing a ground-breaking new database system for tracking majors and minors in the department and assessment data related to program learning outcomes, a development which promises to contribute significantly to the quality of our ongoing program review process, while at the same time affording faculty the opportunity to conduct and publish assessment-related research.*

Full-time Faculty

- (1) Helping to provide adequate opportunities for research in spite of heavy teaching and administrative loads, thanks, in part, to use of recently awarded floating FTE and to budgetary support for teaching and research assistants;*
- (2) Trying to minimize impact of time-intensive study abroad and internship-related duties through course reductions, support for TAs, use of part-time and adjunct faculty where possible;*
- (3) Working to achieve more diverse faculty in gender and target-native language, by seeking and encouraging women and native-speaker applicants;*
- (4) Continuing efforts to develop high-quality part-time faculty to work closely with full-time faculty to achieve program and faculty development objectives (see below for more on PT faculty);*
- (5) With three of the four Arabic FTE “on loan” from outside the department and college, there is concern over the long term future of the Arabic program with its currently burgeoning enrollments and its clear national leadership role -- DANEL shares reviewers’ concern that a solution needs to be found to retain these slots in the department.*

Part-time Faculty

- (1) Concern expressed by PT faculty over limited benefits (a university-level issue) -- DANEL agrees that training in the use of BlackBoard and other instruction-related tools ought to be provided free of charge to PT faculty as it already is to FT faculty;*
- (2) External and internal reviewers agree that insurance options should be available to PT faculty (DANEL agrees, but this is beyond our purview), and that job security should be enhanced through yearly or even rolling contracts (DANEL currently supports a sort of “core PT faculty” designation with some de facto stability, but must continue to base all PT hiring decisions on needs that vary somewhat from semester to semester);*
- (3) Regarding PT faculty desire for more in-service training in language pedagogy, DANEL continues to encourage PT faculty participation in department and section meetings and in all orientation and training sessions -- DANEL also holds at least one separate meeting for PT faculty each semester -- will seek ways to improve communication with, and ensure broader participation of, PT faculty in these meetings and will encourage sections to address issues of language pedagogy in their regular meetings with both FT and PT faculty;*

Student Concerns

- (1) Desire for greater opportunity to speak target language in and out of class being addressed by DANEL on both fronts -- setting clear expectations for TL use in all skills courses, establishing advanced “conversation” course in Japanese in response to student demand and program need, encouraging participation in “study buddy” programs with TL native speakers, encouraging participation in foreign language residence, study abroad, internship, and other programs;*
- (2) Stepping up efforts to provide more frequent, more timely advisement to students, regarding financial support opportunities as well as program opportunities and expectations;*
- (3) TAs’ need for better training, especially in Korean, being aggressively addressed (as also noted above for Korean);*

Future Priorities

(1) DANEL concurs substantially with external reviewers' vision of the department's areas of greatest potential contribution on a national level: Highest priorities include (a) "developing, measuring, and researching advanced proficiency levels among students of the critical languages making up our department; (b) moving the field of foreign language acquisition and pedagogy forward especially in the area of assessment;

(2) A second-tier priority in the external reviewers' recommendations is that the department continue to develop its expertise in developing teachers of less commonly taught languages "as a hallmark of department excellence," and that its members "expand their professional dossiers by presenting and publishing in this area" (something, we believe, that is already being done to some extent, but with the relative importance of which we concur -- it must be noted, however, that in spite of the importance of this field, only about one-third of our full-time professorial faculty have disciplinary training or expertise specifically in this area, and most of those are among the most heavily impacted by study abroad, national language center, and other administrative duties);

(3) A third-tier priority for DANEL identified by the external reviewers is the development of K-12 teachers of the critical languages of our department, substantial involvement in which may have to await the development of further resources and infrastructure (as it stands, the department has furloughed its Japanese and Chinese Teaching Major programs due to internal resource constraints and inadequate opportunities for internships and student teaching externally in the public schools, although DANEL retains its Japanese and Chinese Teaching Minor programs and has interacted closely with the Utah State Department of Education to help develop K-12 teachers and offer immersive instruction to high school students in Arabic and Chinese, through the federally funded STARTALK programs administered by the Chinese Flagship Center and the National Middle East Language Resource Center, both directed by faculty in DANEL).

Conclusion

Overall, DANEL appreciates the professional and constructive approach taken by both the internal and external review teams to the evaluation of our department. On the whole, it has been a positive experience for our faculty and our programs, and we are committed to responding in meaningful ways over the next few years to the challenges identified in our self-study and by our reviewers.