

Annual Academic Assessment Report

(Dependent Major & Minor/Latin American & Latino Studies)

(21 May 2025)

Report annually to the Dean of the college/school the following:

A. Results of analysis of assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

The LALS program currently does not have an Academic Assessment Plan but will begin the process of developing one immediately. To do so, however, I awaited the results of various course surveys conducted by the program's instructor that were only recently provided. I intend to develop Student Learning Outcomes and program goals utilizing university resources in tandem with some of the data and responses provided by those surveys. I will then forward to the program's advisory committee for feedback and then to the program's joint and affiliate faculty for further feedback.

Nevertheless, some of the more pressing highlights offered by students in those surveys included the need for a wider catalogue of courses, both undergraduate and if possible, graduate (discussed further below), and a far better effort at recruitment and advertising. Indeed, the data shows that students are first encountering the LALS program in their junior and senior years rather than their freshman or sophomore years. This, despite repeated efforts by the program director and select affiliate faculty to promote the program broadly. On a brighter note, the Introductory Course (LALS 20103) is clearly operating as a "Gateway" course for the program. Indeed, when asked whether the Intro course has increased student interest in the LALS minor or dependent major, 7 of 27 respondents (26%) indicated yes. Please keep in mind that the Intro course is currently not a requirement. Rather, the colloquia and the language requirement (Spanish or Portuguese) are the two prerequisites.

Lastly, a revisiting of those surveys is warranted to better gauge student learning outcomes and overall curricular assessment, to be discussed further below.

B. Any changes to degree/certificate planned or made on the basis of the assessment and analysis

The data gleaned from various surveys associated with LALS 20103 (Introductory Course), LALS 40003 (Colloquia), LALS 30103 (Special Topics), and a senior year exit survey for graduating dependent majors and minors certainly play a role in overall program and curricular assessment. Such data, however, is but one element in a larger strategic vision that includes an online minor, a graduate micro-certificate, and curricular reform. The first officially launched in the fall of 2024 with eight online courses drawn from History, World Languages, and AAST. The development of an online version of LALS 40003 is complete and will be offered in the fall of 2025 and the development of an online version of LALS 20103 is roughly two-thirds complete and will be offered in the spring of 2026, bringing the online LALS catalogue to ten courses.

An initial declaration toward the micro-certificate has begun and every endeavor will be made to develop that proposal into reality to better provide students with a wider range of undergraduate and graduate courses. About the latter, an increasing pool of Latinx graduate students, some of them former LALS undergraduates, has played a role in the quest for a graduate micro-certificate for the program. Also, such institutional growth has been supplemented by a concerted effort to cross-list courses with a multitude of departments within Fulbright College over the last three years that will hopefully begin to bear fruit.

And lastly, curricular reform of the program into two separate “tracks”, one for Latin America and one for the U.S. Latina/o community will be introduced to joint and affiliate faculty this upcoming fall semester, including the possible elimination of the language requirement, or at a minimum, relegating that requirement to the Latin American track. Such proposals have stirred a lively debate in the past, which I anticipate will occur once again, especially on the part of the program’s Latin Americanists for whom the language requirement is imperative. But if the program’s number of dependent majors and minors is to increase, especially with non-Latinas/os, then some type of curricular reform is needed.

c. Any changes to the assessment process made or planned.

Soon after assuming the duties of program director of LALS on July 1st, 2023, I updated the program’s exit survey, and the survey associated with the colloquia. Moreover, using those two as a template, I developed new surveys for the Introductory and Special Topics courses, respectively. The questions asked, however, are geared more toward general information and that, quite frankly, elicit minimal responses from students. The last question in all four surveys, where students are asked to highlight the program’s strengths and weakness in an open ended format, and which could theoretically elicit valuable information, is often left unanswered or is answered with brief two or three sentence responses that speak to the need for more classes and better advertising discussed above, and not necessarily student learning outcomes and program goals. Thus, the current questions will be pared down and new questions posed that will better align with the university’s notion of academic assessment and that will be the basis for future program surveys and other forms of appraisal.