



Department of African Languages and Literature
Plan for Assessment of the Undergraduate Program
May, 1998

Introduction

The Department of African Languages and Literature is the only one in this country, one of the few outside of Africa. The Department was created in 1964 with a faculty of two. The faculty now numbers 7.25.

This assessment plan focuses on the undergraduate major in African Languages and Literature. There are seven majors this year. Issues which have arisen as a result of developing an assessment plan include reviewing the advisability of continuing the undergraduate program, its size, the curriculum, the honors curriculum, the interface between the undergraduate and graduate programs.

The Mission of the Department

The mission of the Department of African Languages and Literature is to provide research and teaching in the areas of African languages, linguistics, literature, and oral tradition. This includes work on both graduate and undergraduate levels, and emphasizes the development and application of analytical and methodological tools that will enable students to work effectively and imaginatively in the four areas.

The four areas are not considered mutually exclusive: the interconnections of these disciplines are studied closely and creatively. It is in the linkages among the disciplines that the Department makes its most significant and original contributions to knowledge.

The Department's mission is also to produce graduate students who are capable of conducting original research and of providing teaching of quality in African languages, linguistics, oral traditions, and literature; students who will assure the future strength and health of these fields, who will carry our work to other institutions and countries. Through our teaching and our publications, we regularly inform and define, develop and give richness to our several disciplines, and so have a shaping influence on the field generally.

As importantly, we seek to have an impact on the larger university community and beyond by our work with undergraduate students, as we cultivate their interests, give depth and breadth to their education, eliminate ruinous stereotypes, and foster understanding.

Educational Goals

The Mission Statement specifies the educational goals for the undergraduate program: to produce students with depth and breadth in their knowledge of African languages, linguistics, oral traditions and literature, and who can think imaginatively and sensitively in these areas.

Assessment Methods

- Language assessment

The undergraduate major requires the study of three years of an African language, or two years of one language and one of another. In addition to the continuous assessment in class, students are given pre and post tests, and proficiency testing.

- Senior thesis

The senior thesis is a requirement for honors in the major and is strongly encouraged for all students. This involves a six credit sequence of research, writing and revision. The theses are eligible for the African Studies Program Jordan Prize.

- Study Abroad

Study abroad is strongly encouraged for all our majors. We currently have programs in Morocco, Egypt, Senegal, and Tanzania. There will soon be programs in Cameroon, Uganda, and southern Africa. As part of the study abroad programs students must do a six credit independent project which is evaluated by faculty at the African institutions as well as in this Department.

- Faculty student research

Collaborative research between faculty and undergraduate majors is encouraged. Three students have received Hilldale awards for research in the years 1996, 1997, and 1998.