TO: College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee
FROM: Manuel Fernández, Program Director
Latin American Studies (LAS) Program
DATE: 11/19/19
RE: Program Change

We request implementation of the following program changes with the next possible Catalog. The LAS Committee discussed and approved the change proposed at its meeting of November 15, 2019.

FROM:


Please change the language immersion requirement language for the LAS Language Emphasis major from:

Language Immersion Requirement: Liberal Arts majors must complete an appropriate period of language immersion in residence in an approved academic program in a Latin American country. Students facing extenuating circumstances may participate in an alternative domestic language immersion experience pre-approved and determined in conjunction with the LAS Committee from the following options: National Student Exchange, internship, or volunteer work. The minimum time period for meeting the residence/immersion requirement is six weeks. However, the Latin American Studies Program recommends that students spend at least one semester abroad.

TO:

Language Immersion Requirement: The immersion requirement for the Latin American Studies, Language Emphasis, Major can be fulfilled through a minimum six-week immersion in a Latin American country. Students who have completed an immersion requirement for a Spanish major or minor in Spain can fulfill the immersion requirement for the Latin American Studies Language Emphasis major with a three-week immersion in a Latin American country. However, the Latin American Studies Program recommends that students spend at least one semester in Latin America. Students facing extenuating circumstances may participate in an alternative domestic language immersion experience pre-approved and determined in conjunction with the LAS Committee from the following options: National Student Exchange, internship, or volunteer work.

Why: The change in the first sentence is simply to more clearly connect this requirement language to this particular major.

The second sentence, which creates an exception to the six-week immersion requirement, is an outgrowth of other changes we’ve made recently.

With the 2019-20 catalog we launched a newly named and revised Latin American Studies major (the Latin American Studies Culture and Society Emphasis major) with a three as opposed to a six week immersion requirement in a Latin American country due to the fact that said major (as well as the minor, the immersion requirement of which we lowered to three weeks) placed a lower emphasis on developing proficiency in Spanish than our Latin American Studies Language emphasis major.

During a discussion with Anne Hlas and Paul Hoff of the Spanish section of the Department of Languages, we discussed the possibility of allowing students who have been to Spain to fulfill their immersion requirement for a Latin American Studies Language Emphasis major with just a three week immersion in a Latin American country. Since by having spent time in Spain they’ve already worked on the proficiency part of what we would want students to get from their immersion experience, the LAS Steering Committee agreed that three weeks would suffice for exposure to the culture and society of Latin America, same as it does for our LAS Culture and Society Emphasis major (and our LAS minor).
This could be particularly useful for students who will be working with people from or with heritage in Latin America in the US, as most speakers of Spanish in the US would be. It will help give those students who’ve worked on their proficiency by going Spain a greater chance to learn about Latin America and its peoples, both there and here, without unduly affecting their ability to graduate within four years or incur the significantly greater expense that a second six week or longer stay might require.

Because this major is still a major that focuses on language, we do want to keep the recommendation to have as long an immersion as possible.