

Faculty Fellows Final Project Report 2022-23

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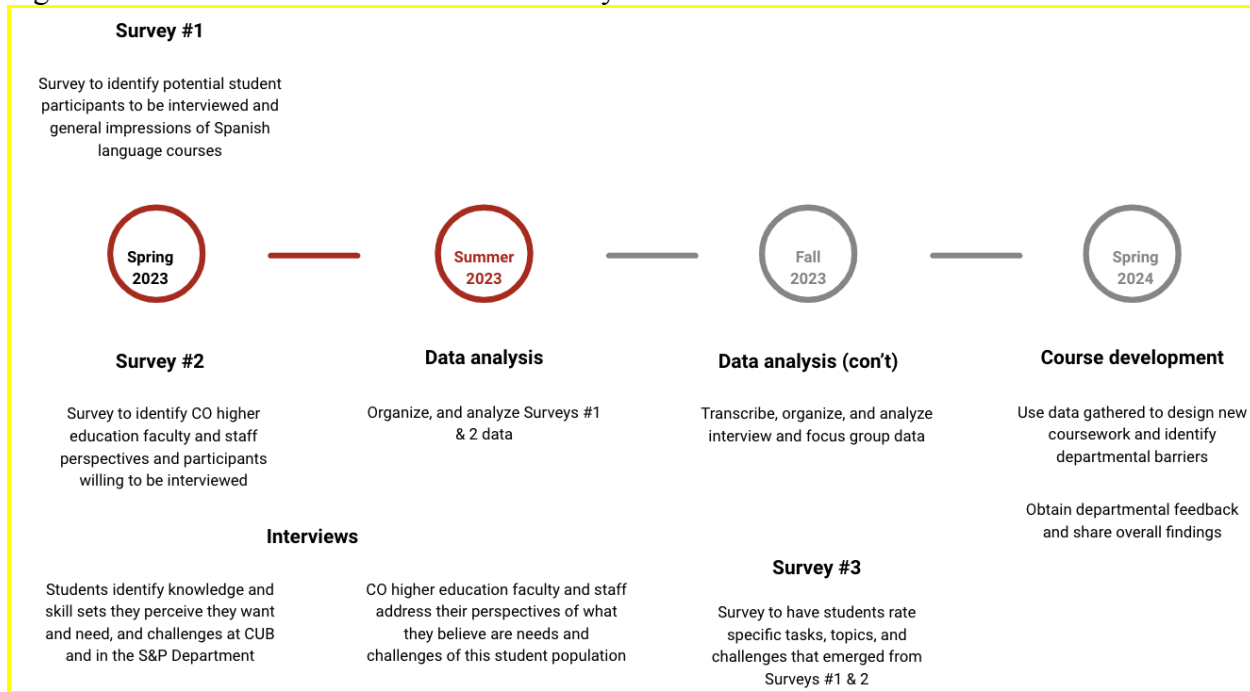
Project title: Needs analysis for the design of coursework for heritage/bilingual students of Spanish at CU Boulder

Project summary:

Currently, the Spanish and Portuguese Department does not offer any coursework that specifically attends to students who identify as Latinx and as Spanish heritage/bilingual speakers—broadly defined as individuals who grew up speaking or hearing Spanish at home and/or in their community. In an effort to support and celebrate the bilingual development and bicultural identities of this student population at CU Boulder and beyond, the current project aims to create linguistically- and culturally-sustaining courses and learning experiences housed within the Spanish & Portuguese Department and to identify challenges and barriers that these students may encounter.

In order to create coursework that is meaningful, personally-relevant, and locally-situated to Latinx and Spanish heritage students at CU Boulder, a needs analysis is being conducted to identify topics and skills of interest. The needs analysis consists of the following phases (see Figure 1). Phase one is a survey to: (a) CU Boulder students and alumni who identify as Spanish bilingual/heritage speakers to gauge general interest in Spanish courses, and (b) higher education faculty and staff throughout Colorado to understand their ideas and learning outcomes (Surveys #1, 2). Phase two consists of interviews with select participants from Phase one. These interviews aim to identify specific topics, skills, and content knowledge that students would like to see in coursework and other concerns they may have, as well as faculty and staff perspectives. Phase three consists of Survey #3, which will ask a larger set of Spanish heritage students at CU Boulder to give their input on the identified topics, skills, content knowledge, and challenges from Phase two. The needs analysis is critical in that it will provide empirically-driven findings based on student and alumni insight rather than relying solely on the decisions of faculty members or textbooks when making curricular decisions. All of the information gathered will then inform the curriculum development phase.

Figure 1. Timeline for data collection and analysis

**Challenges addressed:**

Of the approximately 36,000 students enrolled at CU Boulder in Fall 2022, only 12% are Latinx even though Latinxs constitute 22.3% of Colorado's population according to the U.S. Census. Due to these demographics, many Latinx students in Colorado often do not choose to enroll at CU Boulder. Many of these Latinx students may also identify as Spanish heritage speakers, or individuals who grew up speaking or hearing Spanish at home and/or in their community. While 31.5% of Spanish majors in CU Boulder's Spanish and Portuguese Department identify as Latinx/Hispanic as of Spring 2023, the department currently does not offer any coursework that specifically attends to this population's bi/multilingual background. Therefore, the current project aims to create courses and learning experiences housed within the Spanish & Portuguese Department to support and celebrate the bilingual development and bicultural identities of Latinx and Spanish heritage students at CU Boulder and beyond.

Desired results:

The desired long term results of this on-going project is the creation of linguistically- and culturally-sustaining coursework for heritage/bilingual students in the Spanish and Portuguese Department based on empirically-driven findings from this needs analysis, and greater departmental faculty awareness of the needs of and challenges faced by this student population.

Project activities: The following actions were completed during AY 2022-23:

1. Dissemination and analysis of [Survey #1](#)
 - a. Survey #1 was disseminated to students via the following avenues:
 - Latinx student organizations: United Mexican American Students y MECHA, Pi Lambda Chi, Hispanic Engineering Student Club
 - All students in the Department of Spanish & Portuguese
 - Campus-wide programs: Public Achievement Program, Miramontes Arts & Sciences Program (MASP), Multicultural Leadership Program, Center for Inclusion and Social Change, Bueno Center, TRIO Student Support Services, McNair Scholars Program, McNeill Academic Program
 - Faculty and staff in School of Education, Latin American and Latinx Studies Center, Ethnic Studies Department
2. Conducted and analyzed student interviews conducted in person and via Zoom.
 - a. Sample interview questions:
 - Demographic characteristics:
 1. What is your racial/ethnic background?
 2. What languages do you use at home and in your community?
 3. What is your background in language studies?
 - Are you currently taking Spanish classes? Or have you taken Spanish classes? Tell me about that experience.
 - Reasons for studying (or not) Spanish academically
 - Current or future personal, academic, and professional uses anticipated for Spanish
 - Specific *language* skills you expect to need for... [answers from Question #4]
 - Other *skills or knowledge* you expect to need for... [answers from Question #5]
 - For alumni, how have you used your Spanish professionally? And personally since graduation?
 - What are your perceptions of your current language abilities and needs as it relates to [answers mentioned in Questions #4-#7]?
 - Have you encountered any challenges with trying to develop...
 - What are some barriers or challenges you have faced thus far at CUB?
 - How would you feel about a course that was designed for Spanish heritage/bilingual speakers?
3. Informal discussions with colleagues in my department: full-time instructors, supervisors of first- and third-year Spanish
4. Gathered relevant online, scholarly, and textbook resources
5. Dissemination of [Survey #2](#) to CO higher education faculty and staff
 - a. Survey #2 was disseminated to the following departments and units:
 - Faculty at the following institutions and departments: CU Denver (Modern Languages, Ethnic Studies, School of Education), DU (Spanish Language, Literary and Cultural Studies, Ethnic studies, Sociology, School of Education), UNC (Chicanx & Latinx Studies), CSU (Anthropology, Spanish, Ethnic Studies, Linguistics), CU Colorado Springs (Languages &

- Cultures), Colorado College (Spanish & Portuguese), Regis University (Spanish), Metropolitan State University (Modern Languages),
- CUB Faculty and staff from the following departments and units: Bueno Center, Spanish & Portuguese, School of Education, Ethnic Studies, Center for Inclusion and Social Change
6. Collaborated with an undergraduate research assistant who identifies as a Spanish heritage/bilingual speaker to create surveys and disseminate them
 7. Worked with other departmental faculty to add a question on the placement exam that asks if students come from a Spanish-speaking household or community in an effort to provide better advising to these students

Project findings: The following are key findings from the data that I have collected thus far:

Student Survey #1 findings:

# of participants	# of students	# of alumni	Majors & minors represented	Key findings
60	53	7	Business, Communications, Ethnic Studies, Anthropology, Spanish, Dance, Neuroscience, Chemistry, Environment & Natural Resources Policy, Environmental Design, Engineering (Aerospace, Biomedical, and Civil), Biology, Linguistics, Theater, International Affairs, Education, Economics, English, Sociology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students from STEM find it difficult to fit SPAN courses into their schedules - Pre-requisites (e.g., completion of SPAN 3000, a 5-credit course, in order to be able to take upper division courses) and department policies (e.g., ‘native speakers’ are not allowed to take certain SPAN courses even though they may have tested into it or wanted to enroll in it for whatever reason) were barriers for students who wanted to register for certain SPAN courses - For the question, “From 0-100, how satisfied are or were you with your college/university’s Spanish classes?” <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mean score was 60.26. - Top 5 reasons: 1. Faculty and staff who teach the courses; 2. Types of courses offered; 3. Content taught in SPAN courses; 4. Classmates in SPAN classes; 5. Skills developed in SPAN classes

Student interviews (on-going): These participants were selected from Survey #1 based on Spanish background, ethnicity, major, and willingness to be interviewed.

# of participants	# of students	# of alumni	Majors & minors represented	Key findings
9	7	2	Engineering, Spanish, Theater,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bilingual or Spanish-specific skills that students identified as wanting to learn: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be able to read or listen to information and succinctly summarize it to a non-expert interlocutor - Be able to have informal discussions (via email, in person, online) about a professional task or activity - Discipline-specific jargon - Be able to give an informative presentation - Practice professional and informal translation and interpretation of written and spoken texts from one language to another - Barriers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of culturally-relevant content in current SPAN courses - Lack of community with students of similar backgrounds and mindsets - Culture shock of attending a PWI - Need better advising that will help navigate all the different SPAN courses and programs to encourage students to take these courses - Having instructors who don't share similar backgrounds with students or are not trained in DEI

Faculty and staff Survey #2 findings (on-going):

# of participants	# of faculty	# of staff	Universities & organizations represented	Departments & units represented	Key findings
6	6		CU Boulder	Spanish, School of Education	- Topics and themes that they believe are important for this student population:

					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Validating language varieties and practices - Acknowledge students' cultural and linguistic capital - Students are juggling lots of obligations while studying - Language and academic skills that they believe are important: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adapting Spanish language according to a given genre or register and learning additional varieties to help aid in that - Confidence in their bilingualism - General academic skills (study habits, time management) - Academic writing and speaking in Spanish - Important to create a sense of community and belonging for these students on campus
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Some challenges I faced while collecting this data are the following:

- Not as many students and alumni took Survey #1 despite two rounds of emails to the departments and units listed above. In particular, I had a lot of difficulty targeting alumni. I reached out to the Office of Advancement and the Alumni Association but none of those units were able to disseminate my survey for me because they cited that they had no straightforward way of emailing alumni. I was only able to reach alumni through colleagues' contacts with prior students, or if alumni happened to now work for CUB and received my original email as a staff member.
- Departmental faculty participation has remained limited to full-time instructors and even then, only 2-3 have engaged with me on this project due to time constraints. Many of them are teaching 3-4 courses along with other service commitments. This is a challenge because instructors tend to have the most direct contact with these students initially if they are in lower-level classes.

Take-aways and next steps:

- I plan to continue the timeline mapped in Figure 1 and recruit other faculty to collaborate with me on the curriculum development aspect.
- I will be hiring an additional undergraduate researcher who identifies as a Spanish

heritage/bilingual speaker, so I will have a total of two students collaborating with me as I carry this project forward.

- I plan to share the data I have gathered from this project with my department and organize professional development for interested faculty regarding Spanish bilingual/heritage language education.

Personal reflection on Faculty Fellows Program:

Being part of the Faculty Fellow Program has been an invaluable experience for a myriad of reasons. First, the fall semester workshops exposed me to various resources and teaching approaches that are important to keep in mind for my project but also for my role as a professor more broadly. In particular, I found the sessions on inclusive teaching (Quatez Scott) and accessibility (Karen Crouch) to be the most thought-provoking. Second, the cohort model was really helpful to get perspectives from other disciplines on teaching in general, and on my project, more specifically. It was through the cohort that I was able to learn that the Germanic and Slavic Studies Department have heritage courses for Russian speakers. Even though we are in the same building, cross-disciplinary interactions have been limited. Third, the fellowship legitimized this curricular project that I had been thinking about for a few years so that my department could see the value of what I/we were doing. Oftentimes I feel teaching-related endeavors are less valued compared to research-related projects but I think being a Faculty Fellow all year gave me an opportunity to carve out space to work on this project and feel supported/valued for this kind of pedagogical work. One of the primary reasons I became a professor was to interact with students and participate in their learning, so I really appreciated how I got to be a part of a learning community with other folks from around campus who shared similar interests about teaching and learning. Thank you, Amanda and Kirk and everyone else at CTL and ASSETT, for this program!