Spanish for Students in the Health Professions

Report on the Development of an Interdisciplinary Distance Course in Spanish Language and Culture for Students in the Health Professions

Interdisciplinary Development Committee
The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
July 2000
Executive Summary

Spanish for Students in the Health Professions

An interdisciplinary course using distance education technologies

The Interdisciplinary Development Committee met regularly during the spring 2000 semester. The Committee's charge was to plan a for-credit distance learning course designed to increase the ability of students in the health professions with a basic background in Spanish to communicate with their Latino clients or patients.

A survey of over 500 distance degree and on-campus students conducted by the Committee revealed a high level of interest and need for learning to communicate with clients or patients in Spanish. About half of the students have had some previous Spanish education lending support to the development of an intermediate level course. Students expressed a willingness to try out learning in a variety of traditional (classroom) and innovative distance education technologies.

The Committee identified the four following objectives as the foundation of our initiative:

- Promote learners’ ability to use their existing knowledge of the Spanish language with an emphasis on the spoken language.
- Expand learners’ knowledge base of grammar, vocabulary, and idiomatic expressions.
- Extend the learners’ knowledge of Latino culture.
- Develop lifelong habits for language learning.

The ultimate product of our efforts will be a cadre of health professionals with improved functional language skills that also demonstrate an understanding of the complexity of issues related to health status, barriers to health care access, and challenges to providing quality care to the Latino immigrant community. This course will impact health professionals from:

- Distance degree and on-campus students pursuing degrees in health
- Faculty
- Working Professionals
- Alumni of the Duke Endowment/AHEC Spanish for Health Care Professionals, La Charla, School of Medicine’s Medical Spanish Course, and School of Public Health’s FLAC course

The Committee recommends the following:

- The design and development of an intermediate-level Destinos-like course, to include content appropriate to the health professions, adaptable to a distance format
- The revision of two sections of the Romance Language Department’s Spanish III, to include content appropriate to the health professions, adaptable to a distance format