

Statement of the Departmental Philosophy of Teaching and Learning

The Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Speech Communication employs 30 permanent faculty to teach in no less than eight completely distinct, non-overlapping fields of study. We offer five majors (along with corresponding minors), plus five stand-alone minors. Given this astonishing diversity, it would be a miracle if the Department had a single philosophy of teaching and learning. And, indeed, a sampling of faculty members' attitudes reveals a number of philosophies, and there is something to be said on behalf of each one.

Many teachers see themselves merely as facilitators: they create a space in which the students can bring about their own learning. Faculty provide the interesting material, and invite students to share their enthusiasm. On this view, teaching "encourages continued dialogue between teacher and students"; teaching "involves people and relationships, knowing the needs and values of the students, and trying to adapt to them." Learning is a communal effort. As one teacher says, "If at the end of the class, the only interesting comment I remember is my own, I haven't taught well that day."

Other teachers see their role as more Socratic, urging students to consider difficult and sometimes even uncomfortable new ways of thinking. "Think critically, change the world!" urges one. Others add: "I want to challenge students in their current understanding of language and culture" and "get them to move beyond their comfort zone." And yet another: "The goal is to get myself and my students into a place where nobody knows anything!"

Still other faculty members hew to a more traditional approach. "I set and maintain rigorously high standards to facilitate and encourage learning in a competitive atmosphere," declares one. "Students will rise to the level of expectations placed upon them," says another. For these educators, learning requires real performance on the part of the students, not just a willingness to explore.

Who's right? Clearly there is something to be said for each approach. As a Department, we don't see the need to get everyone plowing behind the same mule. In fact, as educators we think there ought to be this difference in teaching philosophies; and as often as we can, we need to exchange ideas and argue respectfully with one another about teaching philosophies. If there is anything we do agree upon, it is that all of us -- faculty included! -- have something to learn, and that will happen only through an open exchange of ideas.

Our flexible approach is the only one possible, given the diversity of educational activities going on in our department. We have students learning Russian grammar, writing Japanese calligraphy, discussing medieval French literature (in French), analyzing cross-cultural differences, designing communication studies, reading Nietzsche, building straw-bale homes in Mexico, performing plays in German, thinking through ethical issues raised by biotechnology, giving public speeches, editing online journals in Spanish ... the list goes on, though we challenge anyone to imagine all the ways in which this list could be continued. (Give it a try ... did the list include "eating insects"? That's what some of our students did in a class on food taboos and entomophagy in literature.)

But perhaps more importantly: *whatever our philosophy is, it works*. Our students have gone on to graduate study at the most prestigious institutions in the world; they have

become presidents of international corporations, and they have gained high-profile jobs in government. Eight of our faculty have been recognized as the College's Teacher of the Year, two have given "Last Lectures," and three have received the Robins Award as the University's Teacher of the Year. Two faculty have been awarded Advisor of the Year by the College, and *both* went on to receive the Robins Award as the University's Advisor of the Year. Three have been named "Top Professor" by the Mortar Board, and a dozen have been honored for teaching excellence by various other campus organizations. Our teaching evaluations are consistently above the University average. But our students' unprompted acts of gratitude provide a more eloquent testimony to our excellence in teaching. Each faculty member has their own thick stash of letters, emails, and greeting cards from various students who tell us we have changed their lives, opened their minds, and provided welcome advice in difficult times.

In all likelihood, our students' enthusiasm comes from what we do *outside* of the classroom. There are Study Abroad programs at USU because they were initiated by our faculty, who still take summer students to France, Germany, Spain, and Latin America. We have taken students to the Mayan ruins in the Yucatan Peninsula, we have taken them sailing and cheese tasting in France, and we have taken them snowshoeing in northern Utah. We have asked them to interview local immigrants, help organize the Special Olympics, and participate in reading groups with high school students. There simply is no way to confine our activities to the classroom, since so much of what we do concerns places all over the world. So we take our students there. Along the way, they gain the experiences they will remember for the rest of their lives.

Our department's concern for excellence in teaching and learning also has made it the natural place for a Master's program in Second Language Teaching. In this program, students develop a portfolio representing all the angles and concerns in teaching someone another language in which to think and express those thoughts. While studying everything from internet technology to inter-cultural conflicts, these students are encouraged to develop their own philosophies of teaching and defend it before a committee. This is a relatively new program, and we are striving to improve it in several ways, but so far our students have met with outstanding success. Most recently, one of our MSLT graduates was hired by the Monterey Institute -- the nation's premier institution for international studies.

There can be no summary for this department, other than this: **we seek out heartfelt engagement and effective instruction with every student, and send them back out into a world that's bigger and more complex than any they had previously known.**

Section 1: Narrative on Departmental Excellence in Teaching and Learning

Before turning to our narrative, it may be helpful to have an overview of our department:

Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Speech Communication		
Languages	Chinese	1 adjunct faculty; 29 minors
	French	4 faculty; 30 majors; 58 minors
	German	3.5 faculty; 20 majors; 41 minors
	Japanese	1.5 lecturers; 26 minors
	Linguistics/Language Teaching/MSLT	2.25 faculty; 15 LING minors; 26 MSLT students
	Portuguese	1 faculty (in 06-07); 270 minors
	Russian	1.5 faculty; 54 minors
	Spanish	8.5 faculty; 157 majors; 440 minors
Philosophy		6 faculty; 42 majors; 21 minors
Speech Communication		3 faculty; 55 majors; 44 minors

Note that our department is nearly as complex as an entire college! This great diversity is stimulating, though it also presents some challenges since we all rely upon the same pool of resources. We manage by respecting one another's disciplines, encouraging broad consensus on departmental issues, and taking turns with the copy machine! And we are united by our pride in our record of sustained excellence in teaching and learning. Our foregoing Statement of the Departmental Philosophy of Teaching and Learning describes the array of our teaching philosophies; the next section ("Ongoing assessment") will explain in detail how we cash out those philosophies and measure our performance with respect to them. But first, in this section, we would like to describe some of the external indications of our department's excellence in teaching.

1.1 Awards & Grants

Our faculty have won 14 prestigious awards at the college level or above in teaching and advising:

University Teacher of the Year	Alfred Smith, Lynne Goodhart, John Seiter
University Advisor of the Year	Harold Kinzer, Isela Chiu. In 2001, Isela Chiu also received a Certificate of Merit for Advising from the National Association of Academic Advising.
College of HASS Undergraduate Research Mentor of the Year	John Seiter
College of HASS Teacher of the Year	Kent Robson, Jaime Cantarovici, Alfred Smith, Lynne Goodhart, Charles Johnson, Lynn Eliason, Richard Sherlock, John Seiter

In addition to these faculty awards, several of our students have been recognized at the college level with awards for their academic excellence:

HASS valedictorians	Sherry Ann Allman (1994) Greg Watts (1995) Greg Bair (1996) Kathryn Williams (2000) Stuart Gibby (2002)
HASS Undergraduate Researcher of the Year	Sarah (Hatch) Thompson (2006)
Robins Award for Achievement of the Year	USU Spanish Club (2002)

In addition to these awards, our faculty have been presented with awards by the Mortar Board, the Honors Program, the Disability Resource Center, and several student honor societies.

Our faculty have also been awarded many grants for developing courses or enhancing our curriculum. To date we have been awarded:

- **Seven** course development grants
- **Five** curricular enhancement grants
- **Two** grants from the Utah Humanities Council to bring in renowned scholars to provide public lectures and visit students in classes.

In addition to these grants, a philosophy faculty member was recently awarded a grant from UC-Berkeley's Center for Theology and Natural Sciences (funded by the Templeton Foundation) to develop a course on science and religion.

1.2 Textbooks

Our faculty have written or co-written several **textbooks** fundamental to their fields, often with accompanying workbooks or software. Two of these textbooks are now in their third editions. A sampling of this list includes:

- Mark Larsen, *Projimos: La cultura y civilizacion de Latinoamerica*. This textbook for Latin American civilization courses is now in its third edition, and is available in electronic format and is accompanied by software learning tools. Professor Larsen has also developed testing software for this course, and he has developed an automated assessment exam ("ExCEDE") for graduating Spanish majors and minors.
- John Seiter & R. H. Gass, *Persuasion, Social Influence, and Compliance Gaining*. Currently in its second edition and used at various universities throughout the nation.
- Richard Sherlock and John Morrey, *Ethical Issues in Biotechnology*. This is the first textbook ever to be dedicated to this topic.
- Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante, co-author, *A mi manera*. This Spanish workbook, aimed at heritage speakers of Spanish, is currently under contract with Houghton- Mifflin.

1.3 Professional publications and presentations on pedagogy, and teaching workshops

Our faculty have published widely on teaching and learning and have presented their studies at other universities and at professional conferences. These presentations include:

- Anne Carlson, “Scholars Producing Pedagogical Materials”
- Karin de Jonge-Kannan (with MSLT students Mark Brady and Harunori Miyagi), “The Constructivist Approach and Freirean Pedagogy”
- Sarah Gordon, “Teaching Images of Gastronomy, in French Cinema”
- Charlie Huenemann, “Teaching Metaphysics to Mormons”
- Jen Peeples, “Teachers on Teaching: The Teaching Legacy of Martha Cooper”

Our faculty regularly attend teaching workshops at professional conferences and often lead such workshops. We have identified **over 30 professional workshops** our faculty have either attended or led at regional, national, and international conferences, including several Seminars for University Teachers funded by the NEH.

Section 2. Ongoing assessment and improvement of teaching and learning quality

The Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Speech Communication takes assessment seriously. Because of the great differences among the varied programs included within the department, our on-going assessment is less of a single, unified approach than a set of multiple measures and strategies. These measures and strategies can be grouped under four headings: *learning objectives, programmatic assessments, teaching evaluations, and exit interviews and tracking.*

2.1 Learning Objectives

Each of our main divisions has a lucid, concise set of learning objectives. These objectives are consistently applied as courses are developed by faculty and reviewed by their sections. Individual faculty members are responsible for helping to create these objectives and constructing syllabi with the objectives in mind. The objectives can be revised if faculty members discover that there is a student need not being met. To do this, the faculty member presents the issue before the division, and the division strives to reach consensus before any changes are made.

Here are the learning objectives for each division in the department.

LANGUAGES LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To advance students' linguistic proficiency in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in their language of study;
2. To better students' skills at interpreting modern literatures;
3. To increase students' knowledge of how people come to understand themselves through their cultural and literary achievements;
4. To help students master methods of inquiry and research appropriate to the humanities;
5. To prepare modern language teaching majors and minors to make informed and professionally responsible decisions about the organization and implementation of second language instruction to secondary school students;

6. To better modern language teaching majors' and minors' understanding of theory and research about second language teaching and of the practice of current teaching methods which promote cultural, linguistic, and communicative competence;
7. To prepare students for a wide area of professional activities where knowledge of a foreign language is important.

PHILOSOPHY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To provide students with an understanding of an origin and nature of philosophical issues, of how these issues develop, and what their implications are for various fields of study;
2. To increase students' self-understanding while simultaneously increasing their understanding of the world;
3. To better students' ability at critically analyzing divergent ideas and issues;
4. To help students master methods of inquiry and research appropriate to the discipline;
5. To provide a rigorous foundation for students intending to pursue education in philosophy graduate, law, or other professional schools;
6. To provide a challenging and enriching education for all students taking courses in the program.

SPEECH COMMUNICATION LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To increase students' communicative competencies in a variety of speech situations;
2. To improve students' theoretical understanding of human communication behavior in a variety of speech situations;
3. To improve students' critical thinking skills;
4. To help students master methods of inquiry and research appropriate to the discipline;
5. To improve the methods and pedagogical skills of speech teaching minors, as well as these students' understanding of the relations between communication and culture.

As a department, we are careful to review our curricula to ensure that every course we offer meets at least one of the relevant learning objectives. To this end, we have constructed matrices which relate each division's learning objectives to each course offered in the curriculum. (These matrices are posted on our webpage.)

2.2 Programmatic assessments

Each program is responsible for determining whether students in that program are developing the skills outlined in the learning objectives. In the case of language programs, this determination is relatively straightforward in the lower division: students' abilities in reading, writing, speaking, and listening must be at a certain level before they can go on to the next course in the language sequence. Similarly, at the upper division, students face a sequence of courses aimed at providing them first with advanced skills in

composition and conversation, then with general literary and cultural literacy, before admitting them to senior-level seminars in advanced topics.

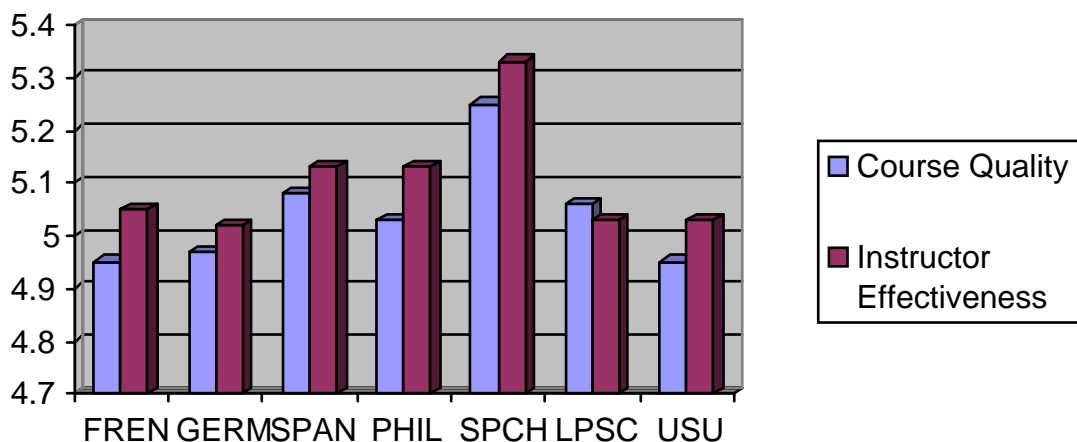
The Spanish section has developed an exit exam for its majors, in order to get precise feedback on how well our students are mastering the subject. This exam is currently being tested on graduating majors and minors.

In the cases of Philosophy and Speech Communication, programmatic assessments are not so straightforwardly built in to the curricula, and exit exams would be of very limited use, but there is a clear progression from introductory courses to mid-level courses covering broad topics to advanced courses which target highly specialized material. Advisors meet with students to help them chart a reasonable path through our course offerings so that each student's skills will be built in such a way that our learning objectives will have been met.

2.3 Teaching Evaluations

Quantitative student evaluations and on-going peer reviews, when used together, can provide effective ways to monitor teaching quality. Evaluation averages are used to identify trends in program performance and programs that need improvement. Of course, mere quantitative evaluations are only a very rough indication of the teaching quality of a department. Still, we are very proud of the high scores our department consistently attains. Here are our overall scores and our major programs' scores, in comparison to the University overall:

Student evaluation average scores, 2002-5



Throughout the department, faculty members are expected to receive no less than a 4.8 (that is, between “good” and “very good”) in their overall scores. In the event that a faculty member receives lower scores, the Department Head meets with the faculty member to determine why the scores were low and what (if anything) needs to be done in order to improve the situation. In the case of junior faculty, P & T Committees show the same concern. In other words: when our faculty appear to be just “good” rather than “very good” or “excellent”, we regard that as a problem demanding our attention.

2.4 Exit questionnaires and tracking

Exit questionnaires and exit interviews are used to assess our programs' effectiveness in fulfilling learning objectives. Summaries of these exit interviews, along with our responses to them, are available on our webpage at <http://www.usu.edu/langphil/assessment/plan.htm>.

We are working toward keeping better record of our students after they graduate, but in the meantime anecdotal data suggest that our graduates are flourishing in a wide variety of careers. Languages and speech communication students go on to graduate school, government, and the private sector; philosophy students go on to law school, graduate school, and the private sector. Faculty members frequently hear from former students who have done well. Some representative examples:

- **Rommel Orbe**, a French major, went on to graduate study at the Sorbonne, and then to law school at the University of Poitiers.
- **Blair Smith**, a German major, will be serving as an intern with BMW in Munich this spring.
- **Scott Wyatt**, a Philosophy major, became Cache County District Attorney and was recently elected to the Utah House of Representatives;
- **Janalee Johnson**, a Speech Communication major, became a Special Assistant and Speech writer for the U.S. Secretary of Education before becoming vice-president for communication at NYNEX.

Section 3. Faculty (and graduate student) development for teaching

When we interview candidates for positions in the department, we insist on observing them teach. We also, of course, insist on seeing evidence of their teaching quality drawn from previous experience. In short, we try to guarantee teaching excellence even before our colleagues come to campus.

But sometimes colleagues need further support for their development as teachers. To this end we employ several strategies:

- We pair faculty with more experienced teachers. Senior mentors can then share syllabi, strategies, and problem-solving techniques with faculty. Very often, faculty members in need of support really need only a person with whom to share ideas; they often overcome obstacles on their own.
- We support travel to local conferences on teaching. Recently, the Association of College Teachers of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) met in Salt Lake City, and the department provided travel support for any faculty member who wished to attend teaching workshops at that conference.
- We sponsor teaching workshops, taught by award-winning faculty members within the department (or recently retired).

Several of our teachers are **Graduate Instructors**. These students are paired with other faculty teaching different sections of the same course (e.g., German 1010). The faculty member meets regularly with the Graduate Instructor, and provides guidance regarding syllabi, tests, assignments, etc. With this year we have instituted a more intensive training experience for our graduate students and adjunct lecturers. Last fall we scheduled a two-day workshop, led by various faculty in the department, discussing basic pedagogic strategies, advice, and problem-solving. Then, during the term, faculty

members observed the GIs and adjuncts and met with them to discuss their teaching. This encourages our adjunct faculty to keep up with new strategies in teaching and helps to ensure that our undergraduates have a quality experience in the classroom. We will continue to implement these procedures in the future.

Section 4. Provision of Resources for Students

In our department we are very actively engaged in providing learning resources and opportunities for our students in ways that go beyond the confines of the traditional classroom.

4.1 Academic advising

One of the most evident resources that can help students is conscientious academic advising. We are proud that, unlike many departments on campus, our faculty members continue to fulfill that important role in addition to our teaching duties. We are consequently much more familiar with each individual's educational background, needs, strengths, and weaknesses, and can thus prescribe the most appropriate sequence of courses and extracurricular opportunities to help them reach their academic goals. This is not a duty to be taken lightly, especially for disciplines with an inordinate number of advisees such as Spanish, with over 150 majors and more than twice that number of minors.

It should come as no surprise, therefore, that in 2001 a faculty member from our department received not only the award for HASS Advisor of the Year, but also that of Robins Advisor of the Year, as well as a certificate of merit from the National Association of Academic Advising.

4.2 Study abroad programs

One would expect that, in a department that includes Languages, a crucial resource for students' success would be the opportunity to participate in study abroad programs. Yet here we do not merely point students to the Study Abroad Office: for literally decades, on a rotating basis, our faculty members have personally accompanied and supervised groups of participants in Russia, Germany, France, Spain, Mexico, Chile, and Costa Rica, where they can put classroom theory into real life practice 24 hours per day. (See photos in the accompanying pages.)

4.3 Language Lab

Another resource expected in practically any Language program is a language laboratory. Certainly we provide such facilities to incorporate into our curriculum the many learning tools available from textbook publishers, including video, audio, computer programs, and web sites, yet our faculty do not limit their use of such resources to prepackaged materials. Many have gathered supplemental film clips, authentic recordings, software packages, and electronic readings on a wide variety of subjects for students to use in the lab or at home. Several colleagues post these additional resources, along with their syllabi, on the internet. Some prefer to use Syllabase for their courses; others take advantage of WebCT; two faculty members even host their own web sites. One colleague is developing a CD-ROM on French art. Another has published a CD-ROM with a "trivia" game on Latin American culture. Several professors use "chatrooms" to

communicate with their students outside of class. A number of faculty members incorporate slideshow lectures into their courses using PowerPoint, Keynote, or Macromedia Director, and one even requires that students do the same when giving presentations in front of their classmates. Of course, we likewise provide on our departmental web page program information about requirements, prerequisites, and proper sequences of courses.

4.4 Online courses and extension

A likely result of developing such resources is that some of our faculty have ventured even further to create online courses, specifically in Philosophy and Spanish. One colleague has even published stand-alone “classes” for his course on CD-ROM and programmed his own testing software for the exams.

In our department we also have a strong tradition of expanding our teaching beyond the campus to students via Extension. Several colleagues taught over Com-Net for many years. When the university owned or leased a plane, a number of our faculty would travel to the centers in the Uintah Basin and Moab, for which they received “Flying Faculty” awards.

Our faculty have regularly given courses at the Brigham City and Tooele centers. Colleagues in each of our major programs with teaching emphases also train and supervise the teachers of concurrent enrollment classes in the local high schools.

4.5 Reaching across campus

Nor do our faculty limit their instructional activities to our own department. While one would expect them to be these directors and committee members for our MSLT program, a significant number have served as members of graduate committees for disciplines like American Studies, Political Science, Theater, Anthropology, Journalism, and even Instructional Technology. Other colleagues frequently supervise honors projects and it is not uncommon for our faculty to give summer workshops to help other instructors hone their own pedagogical skills. Our faculty have also provided guest lectures in Natural Resources, Art, and Music.

4.6 Clubs and honor societies

Like most departments, we have established chapters of honorary societies in our fields to recognize and honor students’ scholarly achievements: in Spanish, the Tau Eta chapter of Sigma Delta Pi; in French, the Epsilon Xi chapter of Phi Sigma Iota; in Speech, the Iota Mu chapter of Lambda Pi Eta. This year, the Philosophy program was awarded a chapter of Phi Sigma Tau, a national honor society in Philosophy. Our faculty are also very much involved in the activities of our student clubs, assisting them to plan activities to view films, sponsor dinners, celebrate holidays, hold dances, take excursions to see museums and galleries, and provide community service.

4.7 Reaching into the community

Our teachers spend much of their personal time with students in outreach to the community. For example, our French Club helped translate for the Special Olympics. Two faculty members have served as evaluators for the Praxis exams that will henceforth be required of all public school teachers. A colleague in Speech has helped train literacy

tutors at Bridgerland Vocational School and served as a volunteer to help pupils improve their reading skills at Summit Elementary. For a number of years, a faculty member has assisted the Spanish Club to help building sod houses for impoverished families in Sonora, Mexico, for which it received a Robins Award. Indeed, the Spanish faculty are currently processing course approval forms through EPC to henceforth offer upper-division credit to students interested in rendering service to the Hispanic community or in undertaking internships with Spanish-speaking businesses.

4.8 Guest speaker programs

Finally, many members of our department tap into the learning resource of inviting guest speakers to visit our classes and campus, including Francophones, medievalist scholars, and Muslim women (French), Latin American literary critics and authors (Spanish), business owners and managers via chat sessions (German), and renowned intellectuals (Philosophy). In point of fact, one of our philosophers has received a Templeton grant through UC-Berkeley's Center for Theology and Natural Science to provide financial support for developing a class on science and religion. This grant allowed us to bring five renowned intellectuals to campus to meet with the class and also provide broad, popular lectures to the community on this important topic.

Section 5. Linking discovery, creative activity, and engagement with teaching and learning for the benefit of students

Faculty members engage students as partners in the discovery and communication of knowledge both in class and in extensive out-of-class opportunities. Most of our programs have four or fewer faculty so the variety and significance of opportunities are testaments to faculty dedication. Although the department has a recently approved interdisciplinary Second Language Teaching masters program, most of our effort is directed to undergraduate students. The engagement and success of undergraduates are strengths of our department.

5.1 Undergraduate research

In the last few years, more than 30 undergraduate students in the Speech Communication program have either published research in journals or have presented papers at professional conferences. One of these students, Sarah (Hatch) Thompson, has been named HASS Undergraduate Researcher of the Year for 2006, and the department is proud to have supported her travel to a conference to present her research. To date, eleven have co-authored articles in communication or psychology journals with one of our faculty members. Most of the research was initiated and designed by students. Other students have papers under review or nearing completion for review. Research experience and success engages students in the intellectual activity of the discipline. Students interact with journal reviewers and members of the discipline at conferences.

Last year and this year, the department has sponsored an undergraduate research symposium in which students from all of the departmental programs present competitively-selected research. This invigorates student research in our courses and provides experience in presenting research to diverse audiences.

A few of our students are learning the “business” end of academic research. One of our faculty members is a founding member of *Decimononica*, an online journal, and he regularly employs at least one Spanish major each term to assist in maintaining contact with authors and reviewers and preparing the journal for posting on the web. Almost all of this work is carried out entirely in Spanish, providing these students with the chance to use their skills in an exciting intellectual context. Also, a faculty member in Philosophy is the editor of book reviews in the journal *Politics and the Life Sciences*, and he also regularly employs a student to assist him in keeping contact with contributors. These are chances for students to learn the practical end of scholarship, and help to inform their decision about whether they want to pursue graduate study.

5.2 Undergraduate teaching experience

We provide carefully supervised teaching experience for our best undergraduates. Many of our language students staff the language lab and assist with some classes. Philosophy students also serve as course assistants. Speech communication undergraduates, who complete a semester-length training program, serve as teaching assistants in the large-enrollment public speaking class. They conduct the breakout sections of the class. Each year the Department awards six Undergraduate Teaching Fellowships to outstanding majors who then assist with general education courses in the department. All of these students uniformly report that their experience teaching helped them to learn the material like no other activity can!

5.3 Graduate Research

We encourage students in our MSLT program to present their research at professional conferences and publish their findings in academic journals. So, for example, last fall student Jenny Wilmore presented at the Utah Foreign Language Association; four students have proposed presentations at the Languages and Linguistics Symposium at BYU this spring; and Tricia McElroy published a textbook review in the *French Review*, a premier academic journal.

5.4 Other linkages

- Students from all of the languages worked during the 2002 Olympics as translators and facilitators. In addition to enhancing language competencies, it was an invaluable networking opportunity for students.
- In its first year of existence, the Debate Club won the Northwest Forensic Association championship. And the team has taken the title again this year!