



# GLCA Shared Languages Program Review

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## Summary

In this report, we summarize the themes that we identified in our interviews with students and faculty from fall 2017 courses in the Great Lakes Colleges Association's (GLCA) Shared Languages Program (SLP). The goal of our interviews was to learn more about how students and faculty from residential liberal arts colleges experienced language courses in which the face-to-face interactions were mediated by technology.

Overall, we found that while the experiences of students and faculty in SLP courses differed in some ways from that of their experiences in face-to-face classrooms, the SLP courses were an effective means of creating a high-quality learning and teaching environment that is at least comparable to that of face-to-face classes.

SLP courses offered an important way of allowing students to continue their education in low enrollment languages that they might not otherwise have been able to pursue had they been limited to courses that were taught by faculty at their institutions. Moreover, even though most of the faculty we interviewed had only taught a small number of SLP classes, they'd already made progress on taking advantage of the technology to create classroom learning environments that offered advantages over face-to-face classes.

Overall, we found that SLP courses create high-quality learning environments that are perfectly reasonable alternatives to high-quality face-to-face classes.

## What we did

In the fall of 2017, we interviewed faculty and students in the following SLP courses:

- Hanada Al-Masri (Denison University)
  - Arabic 211 – Intermediate Arabic I
  - Six students from Denison and two from Earlham
- Kelly Tuttle (Earlham College)
  - Arabic 301 – Advanced Writing Skills
  - Four students from Earlham, two students from Denison, and one faculty member from Oberlin
- Lee Forester (Hope College)
  - German 362 – The German Language Yesterday and Today
  - Five students from Hope (one of which was a dual enrollment high school student), two students from Denison, and one student from DePauw
- Gabriele Dillmann (Denison University)
  - German 302 – Germany's Young Generation
  - Three students from Denison and one student from DePauw

We interviewed each faculty member twice, once at the beginning of the semester and again at the end of the semester. We interviewed students once, and we interviewed each class as a group. Student interviews took place in the last third of the semester. Finally, we also interviewed two recent graduates who'd taken an SLP course in spring 2017 during their final semester of college.

The purpose of the interviews was to develop an understanding of the student and faculty experience in SLP courses, and see how it was similar to and distinct from other courses at their institutions which are offered in the traditional face-to-face modality. We worked with Gabriele Dillmann (Denison University), the GLCA

Crossroads Shared Languages Director, and Simon Gray, the GLCA Program Officer for the Global Liberal Arts Alliance and the Crossroads Mellon Initiative, to identify areas they wanted us to explore in our interviews. As a whole, these areas focused on how faculty experienced creating and teaching an SLP course and how students experienced learning in an SLP course. The issue of student and faculty experience in teaching and learning environments is critical because much of what distinguishes residential liberal arts colleges, at their best, from other kinds of higher education institutions is their rich, supportive, and personal teaching and learning environment. We've included the questions that we used to guide our interviews in Appendices A-C of this report.

Our interviews take the form of conversations rather than formal, structured interviews, so we incorporated the questions from the appendices when they fit into the flow of the conversation. We used the same video conferencing software, Zoom, that was used in the SLP courses to conduct our interviews because we thought it was important for us to have the same experience talking with faculty and students that they had teaching/taking an SLP course.

We took extensive notes during the interviews, and we debriefed and reviewed the notes after each interview to fill in any gaps. These notes included extensive quotes. We also referred back to the recordings when we were unsure about what was said during the interviews. After we completed the interviews, we transcribed our notes and copied them into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, with each paragraph of the notes going into a single cell of the spreadsheet. We reviewed the notes in the spreadsheet and created codes that marked themes and patterns that we observed across the interviews. We each reviewed the notes and final themes separately to ensure that we agreed on the patterns that we observed.

We've organized the themes around four broad questions:

1. Why do an SLP course?
2. What was your experience in an SLP course like?
3. What were the downsides to, or obstacles in, an SLP course?
4. Overall, how different was the SLP course from other your classes?

In the next section of this report, we describe and expand upon these broad themes, providing a brief summary of our conclusions about the answer to each of these four questions. For each section, we include quotes that exemplified the themes.

## 1. Why do an SLP Course?

### Primary reason

#### *Students*

The main reason that students took an SLP course was because it was the only way take courses necessary to complete their major or minor. Some students also mentioned that they took the course to prepare for study abroad, but that was always secondary to continuing in the language and fulfilling requirements.

- “This was my only option to continue Arabic.”
- “I've taken Arabic every semester at Denison, and I took it for 2 years in high school. I've exhausted my options at Denison. There's no faculty member available to teach 2 students here. ...I wanted to continue taking Arabic.”

- “I studied abroad in Jordan last spring and I took Arabic there. I only had one semester of Arabic in college before that. A faculty member at Earlham advised me to take this class. It’s the only upper level option; the other classes were 200 level.”
- “I want to become fluent in Arabic. I’m thinking of a minor in this area.”
- “I’m a 5th year senior and I need to complete my major, but there are few German options at DePauw. I needed this course to complete my major.”
- “At Hope I didn’t have many German options, maybe film and one other course.”
- “It’s the last semester I need to do to complete my German minor.”
- “I’m also wrapping up my German minor. I was going to do study abroad in Germany, and the conversational skills I’m learning in this class would help.”
- “I’m a biology and German double major from DePauw, a senior. The only way to keep my double major in German was to take this class. Other German courses at DePauw conflicted with my schedule. So, my only other option was independent study.”
- “I didn’t take the class because it was SLP. I took the class because it was the next German class in the program.”

#### *Faculty*

The faculty taught SLP courses largely because they saw courses in this format as the only way, in the face of low student enrollment, to continue teaching the language in which they are scholars. For the faculty, the SLP is a possible bridge to the future for low enrollment languages at small colleges.

- “I’m looking at upper level classes with four students, and I realize that can’t work. When my colleague retires, it will be just me teaching German here, and how will that work?”
- “We can ask for more faculty lines, but that won’t get us anywhere. We need to do what’s best for students.”
- “My colleagues are still hanging on to students, but it’s not sustainable. CAOs don’t want to tell faculty that they can’t teach a course with 2 students, that will be unpopular, but the current situation is not sustainable. We’re moving towards a tipping point.”
- “There’s a small Arabic program at Oberlin. So, I’m exploring the SLP for students and administrators at Oberlin. Students at Oberlin will need to take SLP courses if they want to continue in the language.”
- “There’s the political nature of this work. Institutions want us to teach classes of 15 rather than 4. If we don’t take charge of the efficiencies someone else will.”
- “There are 8 potential German students at Denison in total. That’s the reason we created the SLP.”
- “I want to find a way where I can still do the liberal arts and provide a good education without colleges saying we need to get rid of German.”
- “We can expand language offerings across campuses to languages that one campus could not afford.”
- “We chose Arabic for SLP because it’s a language with great potential for GLCA institutions because institutions can’t offer many Arabic courses on their own.”

#### **Other reasons for participating in an SLP course**

##### *Students*

In general, students are more likely to take a class if they know and like the professor, or if other students have told them good things about the course. This was true of SLP classes as well. Knowing and liking the professor helped some students enroll despite their fear of taking a video conference course.

- “The fact that I knew the professor helped convince me to do this class. She’s been trying to convince me to do another online German course and I wasn’t very interested, but this class was a way to try it out, with lower stakes.”
- “I already knew the professor and was familiar with her, so it didn’t make it as awkward, and that helped me decide to do this class.”

Some students added that they had taken an SLP course previously and were comfortable with the format, which made them more likely to do another SLP course.

- “I’ve done an SLP class before and I’m comfortable with it. And I’ve heard great things about the professor.”
- “I took one SLP, and I know how this works now. The professor is amazing. And the class fits my schedule.”

So, even though SLP classes are taught in a different medium than other courses at liberal arts colleges, the teacher remains a key reason why students elect to take, or avoid, a class.

#### *Faculty*

For faculty in small departments, who might even be the only scholar in their discipline at their institution, an SLP course creates an opportunity to meet and collaborate with faculty from other institutions.

- “Initially I was very much into the collaboration. I wanted to get to know colleagues. At the workshop, I met people from other institutions.”
- “My collaboration with another SLP faculty member has been helpful. I have no colleagues in Arabic at my institution. It’s nice to have a colleague, finally, someone to collaborate with.”

Another faculty member said that teaching SLP courses could replace some of the independent studies that they create to provide upper level language courses to one or two students – “I’m also hoping that offering SLP courses will take away some of the independent studies that I’ve been doing because there are more options for upper level classes for students.”

#### **When considering an SLP course, was the technology a plus or a minus?**

##### *Students*

For students, the goal of taking an SLP course was not to experience a class that was taught in a different way; it was about meeting requirements and continuing to learn a language. A few students didn’t even know the class was an SLP course until the course started. For others, a synchronous, interactive, online course was initially a drawback. But the drawbacks were less important than their desire to take another course in that language.

- “I was hesitant to do an online class, but I like the professor and I like the class.”
- “I need to take two 200 level classes for my major. I didn’t know this would be in the SLP format.”
- “I was definitely hesitant at first, but this was my only option.”
- “It freaked me out a little at first. I feel like in-person learning is important for language, but I’ve been able to get past the technology and it’s been good.”
- “I didn’t realize it would be over webcams. We all walked into class the first day and were like, ‘Where’s the professor?’”
- “The technology part was incidental. I had no idea it was in that format.”

- “To be honest, I’m not sure I would have chosen the class if I’d known it was going to be in the SLP format. Talking with screens was weird. The first conversation helped me get used to it.”

### *Faculty*

For faculty, in the beginning at least, the goal of teaching an SLP course was not to experiment with technology. No one we spoke with said that they decided to teach an SLP course to experience teaching a synchronous, interactive, online course. As one faculty member said, “The technology aspect of SLP is a side piece.” Nonetheless, compared with liberal arts college faculty that we’ve interviewed on other projects, the SLP faculty were distinct. They were flexible and eager to experiment in their classes. They worked hard to exploit the technology to benefit their students and were undeterred by the increased workload that experimentation brings. On the GLCA website, they are described as “pioneering,” and this title is apt. But our sense is that these faculty bring these qualities to any course they teach, SLP or otherwise. It’s just who they are.

## 2. What was your experience in an SLP course like?

### **Impact of not being in the same physical space**

When we began our interviews of students and faculty on Zoom, we immediately noticed how group conversations in a video conference environment are different from and, initially at least, harder than face-to-face conversations. SLP faculty and students both noted the same thing. But many also noted that, over time, this feeling subsided as they got used to the different format and faculty adapted their techniques to take advantage of the new environment.

### *Students*

- “It was my first time being online, taking class via a computer. I hated class the first day. I was in a classroom at Denison for SLP last year, so this was really weird. At the beginning, the other Denison student and I would meet in a computer lab so we could get comfortable, sit next to each other, and get used to it. The physical contact is missing in SLP, and that’s kind of weird. ...There were a lot of new experiences and adjustments with this class.”
- “It’s kind of odd not being in class with other students. In this class you have to take turns in conversation. I miss the face-to-face with the professor, but my professor does a good job of reaching out. I can’t stay after class to talk with the professor.”
- “It’s a different feeling because we’re not in the same room. I can’t look over to the other people in class, hang out. It can be nice to be remote, but it can be isolating too.”
- “I was concerned going in that there would be a different feeling, but it didn’t feel as different as I thought it would. It was surprisingly comfortable. The video helps because we can all see each other.”
- “I find more of a disconnect with the professor even though another person said there’s more of a connection. I’m not interacting with her in person, but I’m used to being with her. She’s been my professor for two years.”
- “I like to bounce ideas off other students and have them check my work. That’s harder in this class. I have their emails and phone numbers, but it’s not the same as meeting people for a study group. That’s one of the negatives – relationships with peers don’t happen as well in this type of class. I’d be closer with other students if we were in a traditional classroom.”
- “One weakness is that it’s not quite as conversational as the classroom environment. It’s easier for me to talk in a traditional classroom because you can read the atmosphere, see if someone else is going to speak so I don’t cut people off when I start to speak. Here you miss the little cues but it’s okay, it works fine.”

- “I prefer regular classes, but this is a pretty good approximation. Although it’s not the same as being with students in a class – there’s a separation.”
- “My main concern was that in the past, I’ve always felt comfortable jumping in and asking questions, but that was good here too. We raise our hands on the video and the professor sees.”
- “It was really strange at first because I couldn’t tell when others were going to talk like I can in a classroom. I talked to my professor and we figured out how to work around it – we raise our hands on the screen or digitally. It takes flexibility to adapt to a different situation.”
- “It’s different. It worked out better than I thought. I expected it to be more awkward than it was. My professor did a good job helping us get to know each other. She opened the room before the start time for class, so we could chat like in a physical room.”

#### *Faculty*

- “Students were a little more intimidated at first with the online platform. One class per week was completely virtual. I gave students the option to do all the classes online, but students liked sitting in class, talking to each other. They liked the face-to-face interactions.”
- “It was a little odd to never see my students in person. I went out to dinner with a few for a different reason, and it was strange to see them in person.”
- “You miss some kind of chemistry without the in-person thing. It takes time to develop relationships.”
- “As a teacher, I feed off of response proximity. I get none of that nourishment with this class. Students have their mics muted so there’s no interference, so you’re talking to silence. You need to put energy out when you’re getting nothing back.”
- “I tried something last week. I felt like students weren’t talking and I wondered if it was because they couldn’t tell when other students wanted to say something. So, I started a policy of raising your hand to speak – either on screen or via the button. Now students are talking much more.”
- “I don’t feel like students get to know each other well in these courses. So I have an assignment that requires they work with students from the other school.”
- “I said it was okay for students to be in their pajamas in their rooms. I think that helped the rapport. It took longer to develop rapport with students in the SLP class than in a face-to-face classroom, but in the last 5 weeks I felt the rapport was really good.”

We did notice a difference in the quality of conversations when the students with whom we spoke were all participating via their laptops in Zoom versus when some of the students were in a classroom and the “remote” students were connected via the video conference software. The environment in which everyone was communicating via video conference was better. In a mixed setting, it was harder to see and read the faces of students who were sitting in the face-to-face classroom. Some faculty noted the same thing.

- “In my first SLP class, I only had one non-Denison student (from Earlham) and she felt estranged. I asked students in my class to bring in their laptops and use them so we all appeared on the screen. That helped.”
- “I think it’s important for everyone to have the same space. That’s why I moved my entire class to a virtual setting. This makes us equal – there’s no big head staring down at the others.”

#### **Student learning**

##### *Students*

Students reported that SLP courses were especially effective at strengthening their speaking and conversation skills in the target language.

- “The involvement is more than a standard classroom setting. It forces you to be involved and talk. My conversation skills have improved as a result.”
- “I think my conversation skills improved much more than in a regular course.”
- “Your conversational language skills will improve.”

Students, including the two graduates that we spoke with, also said that the courses strengthened their ability to use technology to work with people at remote locations.

- “It’s helpful to know how to use all the technology better, like Google Docs, Zoom. I applied for a Fulbright and mentioned using Zoom in my application because for my Fulbright work I’ll be connecting students abroad with students in the U.S.”
- (From a graduate) “It was very valuable. Not just language learning, but the exposure to technology too. I use the same kind of technology in my job now. Most of the people I work with are remote. I haven’t met any of them personally.”
- “It was good because I learned how to schedule meetings when people have different schedules. That’s a skill too.”
- (From a graduate) “It teaches really important skills, ones that my business requires. During my interview, they asked me how comfortable I’d be working remotely with executives, and I said I’d had this SLP class.”
- “You will learn to work remotely.”

But to get the most out of an SLP class, students also emphasized the importance of being flexible and taking the initiative to reach out to faculty.

- “Be prepared for all the mishaps. I tried to connect sometimes and couldn’t. I was working on the video project and my roommate was in the background.”
- “Prepare for the worst. [She went into a story about one class where she had problems downloading, hooking up to Wi-Fi, finding a quiet spot, etc. and then when she was finally connected to a hot spot the bells at the school kept going off.] It’s a little bit of a learning curve at first, and in the first few weeks it’s a struggle to get things organized. But then it’s smooth sailing after that.”
- “Make an effort to see the professor outside of class – go to their office hours in person or via Zoom. You need to make an extra effort, but the connection is important.”
- “Don’t be afraid to ask questions or interrupt. I feel like sometimes it’s frowned upon to interrupt a professor, but you have to over communicate in these classes – interrupt, send six emails, make sure to clarify that you understand. This will require more work than if the professor was at your institution.”

Overall, all of the students we spoke with were positive about their experience, including what they learned, in their SLP courses. Indeed, outside of specific comments about technology, their comments about the impact of the course and getting the most out of the experience were similar to what we’ve heard from students at liberal arts colleges who enjoyed face-to-face courses.

#### *Faculty*

Faculty also reported that the SLP format had a powerful impact on students’ speaking skills. One of the faculty thought that the SLP format was especially effective at helping students improve their typing skills with the Arabic alphabet. Overall faculty felt that students learned as much, or more, in SLP courses as in their face-to-face courses.

- “A few students speak much better German now. I think they speak more in this format – we’re in small groups half of the time.”
- “We focused on pronunciation and their pronunciation improved a lot. But there were also missed opportunities. I had ideas for other things to do to help with pronunciation, but we didn’t have time to do this particular exercise. And I think this exercise would work best in an SLP format vs. a face-to-face format.”
- “My students really improved their typing skills, and this doesn’t happen in a regular face-to-face class. This was a great side effect.”
- “Student learning was probably comparable to what they would have gotten in a face-to-face class, perhaps because we focused on writing. But their typing really improved.”
- “I think my students got as much out of the class as they would have if it had been face-to-face.”
- “There were some glitches on my end. But the students were pretty forgiving, and they felt that they learned a ton.”

### Higher level of engagement

One of the reasons that SLP courses may have had as much or more impact than traditional face-to-face courses was that the interactive, multi-pane display in Zoom highlighted each participant equally and made it more difficult for students to hide.

#### *Students*

- “My SLP professor reminds me of my language professor here who catches every little detail you could imagine, but the screens make it even more focused.”
- “I agree about a higher level of involvement. You must be more attentive. Everyone is looking at your face the whole time.”
- “You need to hold yourself accountable. You need to stay up-to-date with homework and assignments. The class is so contingent on conversation. It’s hard to fake it if you don’t do the work.”

#### *Faculty*

- “In this medium with its isolated screen context, you can focus on things more. You don’t filter things out when you watch the screen. You can tell that your pronunciation sucks.”
- “The group work in class went surprisingly well. I feel like it was even better than in a face-to-face class. I’m not sure why. Maybe because there was a thing, a document, in front of them without any distractions. There was nothing else to focus on.”
- “I never felt like class dragged. There were always things we didn’t have time to do.”
- “There’s a lot less dead time with this format.”

Our experience interviewing faculty and students using Zoom comports with these comments on engagement and focus. We have done hundreds of student, faculty, and staff interviews in face-to-face settings, and we noticed two things immediately in the Zoom interviews. First, it was far easier to ensure that everyone in the groups had a chance to address our questions. Second, we took far more notes for a one-hour Zoom-based focus group than we do for a one-hour face-to-face focus group. These interviews were intense and hand-cramp inducing.

### Using technology to full advantage

#### *Faculty*

Another reason for the effectiveness of SLP classes is that faculty took advantage of the technology to improve the classroom environment.



- “I just learned that the chat feature can be very useful. For example, to provide help (to students) on using a particular grammatical structure.”
- “For the first hour of class we played around in Zoom. I showed them how to look up a word they didn’t know in German while they were talking so they didn’t lose their train of thought or have to stop completely.”
- “I also started giving color-coded feedback on writing, which I could do because I had electronic documents. I think this went well.”

A common example of how faculty took advantage of the technology was their use of Zoom’s “breakout room” feature to quickly split students up for group work.

- “For group work, we use Zoom for breakouts, and it takes 15 seconds for students to jump right in. They like collaborating. I think it’s superior to a regular classroom because it’s more focused.”
- “A benefit is that students talk more. There’s no dead time forming groups with this format – boom, you’re right in someone’s face. Quieter students get their own time and their speaking really improves. I’m thinking of 2 students here in particular.”
- “The real question is does an online virtual format promote interactivity over what you can do in a traditional classroom? I say yes. I can quickly get students into small groups because you don’t have to physically move around, and I can do 6-7 small groups in one class session. Students can’t hide in an SLP class.”

Using Zoom breakout rooms presents a few unique challenges too; for example, faculty can only listen to and interact with one group at a time. As one faculty member reported, “If I’m in one room (in Zoom), I can’t hear what students in the other room are doing. In a physical class I’m used to listening to all the groups and jumping in to help when necessary.” Another faculty member said that, “It’s tricky because students didn’t know to ask questions when they were in their groups (in their breakout rooms). It didn’t occur to them that they could leave the breakout room to ask me. I’d have to keep checking in and then they’d have a lot of questions.” Despite these limitations, students thought that the breakout rooms encouraged conversation.

#### *Students*

- “The breakout rooms were really helpful. They were more conversational than when all of us were together.”
- “My professor has implemented break out groups really well. We go into breakout groups at least twice a class. It’s really helpful to get conversations going with other people. Opportunities to engage in discussion are key.”

A number of faculty also shared documents on screen during class to increase the level of collaboration.

#### *Students*

- “Using Google Drive with all the documents really helps. The screen shares make it feel like we’re sharing our work.”
- “It’s guaranteed that you’ll have a laptop for every class, so you can share documents back and forth. This is harder in a face-to-face class because everyone might not bring a computer. I get homework back with mistakes color coded, and this is very helpful.”
- “When we screen share, we bring up our homework and we can all see it. My professor highlights things or we can highlight things, and we can all see the same document.”

- “The technology enables fast and easy collaboration. You can see edits in real time. You can easily see where you’re wrong. This close collaboration is helpful. Color coding the mistakes on homework is also useful.”
- “When we all have the same document open on our computers and everyone has access to that document, there’s a level of closeness.”

Of course, students and faculty can share documents on screen in a face-to-face classroom too, but only if everyone has access to a computer. And that was the interesting turn for us in these conversations about SLP classes. Because everyone already has a laptop, the opportunity to use shared documents is always there just like a chalkboard or whiteboard in a traditional face-to-face classroom. Quickly forming and reforming groups to work on collaborative documents is “more natural” in SLP classes because the technology necessary for such work is a prerequisite for hosting the class. We wondered what other “built in” benefits will emerge as faculty continue to work in the SLP environment.

### **Other benefits of SLP classes**

Students and faculty identified two additional benefits of SLP classes. First, students appreciated being able to take the class from different locations and pick spaces that were comfortable for them.

#### *Students*

- “I get migraines easily, which can be triggered by light. Here I can stay in my room where it’s dark, and it makes it easier.”
- “I also like not having to go to a classroom because I can choose a space that’s comfortable for me.”
- “As a bonus, I get to stay at home with my pajamas on.”
- “I can take the class in lots of different locations – home, school, the library. I just need Wi-Fi to do the class.”
- “I love being able to do class from my bedroom.”
- “Overall, I like the freedom to do the class from anywhere – like in my bedroom.”
- “A strength is that it’s comfortable for me to speak, sitting in my apartment.”

One of the faculty expressed a similar sentiment saying, “I can teach from anywhere. Last semester was the first time I never missed a class because I can teach while I’m at a conference or in the airport.”

A second benefit was that both students and faculty enjoyed that SLP classes gave them an opportunity to interact with new colleagues at different campuses.

#### *Students*

- “For a harder language like Arabic, students drop out as you continue, and classes become smaller. It’s good to be able to connect with other students.”
- “The 2-on-1 class size [for a face-to-face class] was nice but there were also lots of things we couldn’t do because the class was so small. ...But it’s been really helpful to have a bigger, more functional class. We can break into groups, get different perspectives.”
- “It’s good for meeting new people. I’ve been in classes with three other people in this class for all three years at Hope. I have the same six people in my German classes. Now I’ve had a chance to meet new people, and that’s huge.”
- “Our speaking isn’t quite authentic if you’re in class with the same people because you get used to their errors and think that’s okay. But with new people you hear things and don’t understand. Then you can

talk about it and learn – learn that what you’ve always heard isn’t quite right. It’s neat not just being limited to your own campus.”

- “There are only two German professors at DePauw. I like them, but I got used to them. It’s nice to have new professors, refreshing.”
- “My professor at this school only has 6 students in German so this gave us more exposure.”
- “I don’t think it [the SLP format] diminishes anything either. It’s perfect for small colleges, especially with higher-level language courses because the number of students in these courses really drops off.”

#### *Faculty*

- “I wanted to see different students, and I wanted my students to see different instructors. If a student takes 3 years of Arabic, that’s 6 semesters with me. There’s more energy for the program with different people involved.”
- “It’s good for students to have exposure to another teacher. I’m the only Arabic professor here. Without SLP, students would only know me.”
- “I really like the SLP format for bringing together students from different schools. I think the students enjoyed this too.”

One of the selling points of liberal arts colleges is their small size and the close, personal interactions that this smallness confers. Yet, as we have heard many times from upper-class students at liberal arts colleges, the small size that is welcoming to first-year students can feel limiting to students as they near graduation. We got the sense from our conversations with SLP students that these feelings might be even stronger for students who are in small majors.

#### **Student mentors**

To ensure that students who are taking an SLP course from a teacher on another campus have support, the SLP program asks participating faculty at the remote campuses to serve as “student mentors” so that students have someone they can contact on their campus if they need help. All of the faculty who taught an SLP class served as student mentors on their campuses for students who were taking SLP courses from teachers at other campuses. However, the extent to which they actively offered or provided support to students on their campuses varied. While some students did not reach out to mentors on their campuses, those who did valued the support that the mentors provided.

Overall students’ conversations about their experience in SLP courses were positive, however we learned that a significant number of students were nervous about how to engage with a novel learning environment. The faculty who were more engaged as student mentors talked about instances where their involvement had prevented students from dropping the class and helped them overcome obstacles. For example, in their role as a student mentor, one faculty member encouraged two students who were worried about whether they could adapt to an online class to sit next to one another at their laptops when they logged in so that they could work together if they had issues. That turned out to be all those students needed to overcome their anxiety about the class.

In our view, until most students arrive at college having experienced this kind of course, it will be important to create support systems for the many students who came to a small, residential liberal arts college to avoid online courses. Moreover, the presence of engaged student mentors who are teaching SLP courses might help students at that campus get more comfortable with the idea of taking an SLP course from faculty at other institutions.

### 3. What were the downsides to, or obstacles in, an SLP course?

#### Different campus calendars

##### *Students*

One obstacle that we had not anticipated was the challenge of different campus calendars. It turns out that even small differences in schedules at different campuses have implications for SLP courses.

- “We have convocations at Earlham, speakers on campus. This is a really important part of campus life, but we [two students from Earlham in the SLP course] can’t go this year because this course conflicts with convocations. This course is scheduled during a ‘free time’ at Earlham when no classes are scheduled, so we miss things like films, talks, etc. I’ve skipped a few classes to go to convocation.”
- “Our fall break was a few days off from the other school. I couldn’t meet for the first few classes because I was still on summer break. I have the Earlham calendar bookmarked on my calendar just in case. I know I’m following Earlham’s calendar for this class.”
- “Our fall breaks were different, and I was in NY visiting relatives. With the SLP format you might be expected to go to class even if you’re not on campus, but my professor was understanding and didn’t ask me to join.”
- “One downside – schools don’t have the same schedule. Last year I had to go to class 2 times when I was on vacation with my family.”
- “Our finals week starts before Denison, one week before, but luckily my finals don’t conflict with class. That’s the only issue.”

#### Scheduling meetings

##### *Students*

Some students talked about the challenges of scheduling meetings with their professors or students at other campuses. Some of the difficulties were about finding common times across different schedules and time zones, while others mentioned needing to plan ahead more for office hours.

- “I like aspects of the online class, but it can be frustrating scheduling office hours and meetings – it’s harder to do that.”
- “A weakness is that to contact the professor I have to email her – I can’t go to her office. It’s a slower process so I have to be more prompt.”
- “I like that I’m in the class for most of the time, but on Fridays we all meet on Zoom and do group projects. It’s blended, the best of both worlds. Although figuring out Zoom and scheduling meetings can be hard.”
- “I can’t just pop in to ask my professor a question. I need to plan it out a little more. She has office hours on Zoom. But you need to know in advance when you need help.”
- “It’s definitely challenging to not be on the same campus, but my professor is really flexible and accommodating. She works with you to find a time to meet.”
- “The group projects last semester paired us with German students in Bulgaria. Scheduling things around all of our different schedules was really hard. There’s a limit to where you can do things geographically.”
- “Group work is definitely harder in this class. When you’re on the same campus you know the campus calendar—for example, there are no classes at 2:00—and you can schedule things easier.”
- “Our generation doesn’t like quiet. Group work requires us to pick a special place to meet – a quiet space where nothing else is going on. ...But when we got the scheduling worked out it was kind of cool to work with other students, and the final project was still good or maybe even better.”

But this was not a consensus view. For example, one student pushed back on the idea that going to office hours was harder in an SLP class, saying, “I think that for regular office hours you still need to plan in advance.” And another student found it easier to talk with her professor – “There are more opportunities to connect with the professor – you can Skype with the professor instead of visiting her office hours.” One faculty member also remarked that her interactions with students during office hours had changed for the better in SLP classes, saying “With the SLP format I now have students coming to office hours to talk, not just to get my signature. It’s a difference.”

Overall, our sense was that the scheduling issues didn’t seem dramatically different from the scheduling issues we often hear when we talk to students on a residential campus about going to office hours or scheduling group work with other students. Our sense is that the big change is a reduced opportunity for serendipitous encounters.

### **Length of class**

The intensity of SLP classes that we described earlier also had a downside. Most SLP classes were 80 minutes long and spending 80 minutes on a computer for class was sometimes challenging, both for students and faculty.

- “We spend one and a half hours in front of the computer. You can’t get up and move around. I need to think about and experiment with the technology.” [Faculty member]
- “Sometimes it can get so mind-numbing sitting in front of a laptop. It’s a challenge.” [Student]
- “Maybe make the classes a little shorter. My professor filled the time well mostly, but it’s hard to look at a screen for so long. I would have preferred meeting three times a week for 50 minutes classes.” [Student]

### **Issues with technology**

Finally, while video conferencing, high speed internet, web cams, laptops, and collaborative online documents made SLP courses possible and allowed for innovative teaching techniques, there is a learning curve to successfully combining these technologies smoothly, and sometimes technical issues occur that are beyond anyone’s control. SLP students and faculty worked around a number of intermittent technological problems throughout the semester, although people commented that problems were most likely to occur in the first week or two as everyone was getting used to the technology.

#### *Faculty*

- “When the course started, things happened that I didn’t expect. I needed to spend more time getting used to the technology before class started.”
- “We had technology problems at first. Denison students were trying to decide if they were going to take it online. We had to figure out how to arrange Google Docs. There was a lot of trial and error the first part of the semester, especially the first week. After that, students/everyone, got into a pattern.”

#### *Students*

- “We had issues with technology at the beginning of the year. Once that was worked out, it’s been fine.”
- “Be prepared to deal with technology issues, especially in the first week of class. Audio issues were a problem too.”
- “It’s important that the professor knows how to use technology to use the time effectively. The first few classes were a little rough.”
- “When I first started I had some technical problems. I couldn’t hear, see, but we all learned how to do it. I learned I couldn’t be in the basement to call in. The software is a cool tool.”
- “Connectivity is not an issue usually. It might have gone out for a second or two but not more.”

- “The technology can fail sometimes. The internet in my professor’s office failed, and she just froze on our screens.”
- “Sometimes Denison just has internet outages. Then it’s like, how do I get to class? I don’t have unlimited access, I can’t create a hotspot, I’m not going to drive to a coffee shop.”
- “Once another student’s webcam wouldn’t work and we shared my laptop. We had to sit next to each other, and it was kind of weird. Sometimes class starts late because of technical stuff.”

Faculty also had ongoing audio issues that limited some of what they were trying to do in class.

*Faculty*

- “This is an intermediate class and we can’t do the speaking part anymore because of feedback issues. I had to change the pedagogy. Now I’m using breakout rooms one day a week to only do speaking activities. I can do fewer activities because I need to go into each breakout room to give feedback.”
- “In my intermediate class I typically use songs for teaching, but I can’t do that with SLP because students who are connecting virtually can only hear the sound of the music, not the words. I’m still trying to work this out.”
- “I also need to figure out the audio/music/sound stuff because I’m teaching an audiovisual class next semester or next year. I know that another SLP faculty member has had some problems with sound in her class, when she plays audio or videos and people in the room can’t hear.”
- “I’m worried about next semester. It’s mostly listening comprehension and I’m not sure if we’ll be able to hear things from outside.”

Finally, faculty had to work through a technological issue that’s akin to the problem students faced with different campus calendars – wrangling the different course and file management systems across different institutions.

- “Earlham isn’t a Google campus, so I have to use my personal account. Students from other campuses can’t access our course management system.” [Faculty]
- “What is the container of the course? If you have an LMS, you can use that, but we all have different LMS’s so that doesn’t work. I create my own website and work with Google Drive.” [Faculty]
- “My main struggle was organizing assignments. There were lots of little assignments. I started with Google Drive and a PC grade thing, but I didn’t give good instructions. Then I moved to Moodle, and I’d start with Moodle now. There was a period of about 4 weeks when I felt out of control with grading. And students can’t come by my office to clarify things. So, a negative is my ability to stay on top of things.” [Faculty]
- “It’s not going to be perfect at first. The organization is different. The way we turned in assignments changed. We used Google first but it was too confusing, so now we use Moodle.” [Student]

Although we’ve listed a number of problems, we want to emphasize that none of these problems were “killer problems” that diminished faculty and student enthusiasm for SLP courses or outweighed their many benefits. Indeed, students and faculty alike talked about these problems with an impressive degree of equanimity and a we-made-it-work spirit. As one faculty member said, “I was hesitant about how much students would be willing to jump in and try things, but they were willing and rolled with the glitches, and that was nice.” Furthermore, our sense is that many of these problems are the kinds of things that would diminish with each new iteration of an SLP course.

#### 4. Overall, how different was the SLP course from your other classes?

One of the challenges in addressing this question is that “regular courses” are not all of one kind. Our guess is that if we sat and watched four different faculty teach a face-to-face, mid-level German or Arabic course, we’d see four approaches which, even if they were all categorized as “discussion based” or “interactive,” would be different from one another. Likewise, it’s not clear to us that the effort expended in converting a face-to-face class to an SLP format is all that different from the time and energy needed to flip a class or change a class from lecture to discussion format.

From the perspective of the students and faculty that we spoke with, our sense is that many of the things that at first made the courses seem different faded by the time the courses ended. As one faculty member said, “The SLP format became natural, an extension of teaching for me.” And a faculty member who was taking one of the SLP courses as a student commented, “Zoom functions like a classroom. We can do group work, and the professor can check in. We can do all the things I’d do if I were teaching French. It flows smoothly.” Another faculty member reported, “Students said it’s really not different from their other classes.” A student echoed this in his answer to our question about what students need to do to succeed in an SLP course saying, “Listen, respond, do the work – it’s pretty straightforward.”

According to one SLP faculty member, there’s a perception among some of their non-SLP colleagues that SLP courses require more work – “Some of my colleagues say SLP sounds interesting but they’re not willing to put in that much work.” However, while the faculty we interviewed were working hard on their SLP courses, it wasn’t clear to us that they were working any harder than engaged and innovative faculty who were teaching the first or second iteration of a new face-to-face course. As another SLP faculty member put it:

“It’s not that different in terms of the amount of time (the workload). I spend a lot of time thinking about what will make it interesting. I think people feel like it’s more work to teach an SLP course than it really is. ...They perceive that it takes extra time to do an SLP course. And the time coordinating with my colleague who is teaching the same language at another institution is extra, but it’s really not that much. It’s not extra work really; it’s different work. Spending time on your teaching is just what you do.”

A number of faculty talked about new and more time-consuming things that they were doing in their SLP classes, such as putting their comments directly into PDFs of student work in Google Docs, rather than grading printed versions of student work with pen or pencil. While this technique is more work and may be more effective for students, it is not unique to SLP classes. Faculty in many face-to-face classes are turning to grading student work directly “on screen,” and one of the challenges of this approach is figuring out how to easily input comments and how to work with the different document formats that students use.

#### *Faculty*

- “In terms of grading homework, we used Google Docs to submit assignments. I used to have to download the docs, grade them by hand, and then re-upload them. Now I got a pen to use on the computer screen and that has saved some time.”
- “It takes me significantly longer to mark homework because I do it on the screen. It’s still a headache.”
- “Grading was a big issue. Sometimes students sent PDF files, but I had to edit them in a Word document. If they sent an image (like a picture from their phone), I could use my pen to comment on them. I had to accommodate whatever format they used to send their materials in.”

Indeed, our experience talking with faculty about how they developed and revised their SLP courses sounded remarkably similar to our recent experience as evaluators for a multi-institution course redesign project for humanities faculty.<sup>1</sup> That is, the first iteration of a redesigned course is promising but challenging. The second iteration is better. Likewise, SLP faculty talked about how it was easier to teach an SLP course the second time because they were more familiar with the technology and ways to adjust their pedagogy to take advantage of the SLP format.

#### *Faculty*

- “I’m teaching the second part of the class now, with the same students, and it started much smoother. It’s getting better with time.”
- “I felt really strong in my second semester of SLP. In the first semester I had more questions, I wasn’t sure about individual things. I had more confidence the second time around with the technology. I was more creative. ...I was able to complicate it more [the second time], make it more complex. I was improving in terms of technology and pedagogy.”

It was also interesting to us that many of the beneficial teaching practices that students identified in SLP classes were similar to what we’ve heard from hundreds of students about what good faculty do in their face-to-face classes: communicating well, actively engaging students, being organized, having patience, and being passionate about the material.

#### *Students*

- “My professor has done a good job being communicative. She sent emails before the course started with links to the textbook and the course website. Correspondence with the professor is important. She’ll email us about what’s happening in the class, the homework. She keeps us in the loop and is available for questions.”
- “My professor responds to email quickly, within 2-3 hours. She did this when I had a question on my presentation. This is so important.”
- “Communication skills are especially important. Coordinating meetings with a professor in a different time zone is also important.”
- “The professor always engages every student in every class.”
- “My professor calls on everyone and makes sure that everyone participates. If someone gets something wrong, she works with them; she doesn’t just move on.”
- “My professor is good about encouraging natural conversation. Every Monday he asks us each to talk for a few minutes about our weekends. It helps to encourage a different kind of conversation, but the professor needs to be intentional about creating opportunities for this.”
- “The most helpful thing my professor does is that he asks for questions at the beginning, middle, and end of class. You can ask anything.”
- “Professors need to foster the community in the class. ...Our professor made us all feel like part of a group from the beginning. She also opens the room 10 minutes before class. And she asked us a lot of questions, like about our week, our weekend, more personal stuff.”
- “Our professor is very organized and diligent.”
- “It’s important to keep classes organized – what’s coming this week, next week – to help you stay on top of the work.”
- “You need to be organized and communicate well. Many faculty struggle with getting grades back and answering email. Those things are important for this type of class.”

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<sup>1</sup> <https://cte.ku.edu/chrp>



- “Our professor is very passionate about what he does, and he can get carried away, but I’d rather have someone who is passionate than someone who doesn’t care.”
- “My professor has a passion for teaching and Arabic. She’s super enthusiastic and eager to help. She’s very knowledgeable about Arabic.”
- “Other professors stick with language and grammar, but our professor brings in culture along with language. She’s accessible.”
- “She’s very patient. She never gets visibly frustrated, and she’s very happy when we get things right. It’s not just like we got it correct; it’s like we did something awesome. She motivates us to do well.”
- “It was a little more awkward for me at first because I joined the class a week late. It helped that our professor talks a lot and asks for people’s opinions. She has a good attitude and is constantly smiling. The involvement that is required makes it better.”
- [Advice for faculty teaching SLP courses] “Be patient with the process. It’s paid off a lot but at the beginning it was kind of discouraging. There’s a learning curve.”

Likewise, when we spoke with faculty, we heard them talk about the importance of being flexible and having a willingness to improvise and experiment. These too are things that we often hear from excellent faculty who are teaching face-to-face classes.

#### *Faculty*

- “I have to keep adjusting.” [Not said as a complaint, just as a matter of fact.]
- “I’m still trying. I have to think on the spot. It’s a good challenge, but sometimes it gets embarrassing too.”
- “For faculty, the cornerstone of this project is collaboration. You need faculty who will collaborate and act as mentors for their students. Faculty also need to be willing to learn; they need to be interested in learning something new and building on it.”
- “It’s about availability – you need to be there whenever they need you. It’s also about flexibility – you need to meet them when they need you. I had meetings in the evening, from my home because everyone is busy between 8-5.”
- “There haven’t been any real surprises so far. I feel like I prepare a bunch of things and nothing goes as I expect so I improvise, but that’s just teaching.”
- “I’m figuring it out as I go. It’s a whole new course, a new book. I knew I couldn’t figure it all out at the beginning.”
- “I’m worried that the course is succeeding because I’m using more English than usual. We’re going to read only German in the second half of this course. It’s a pretty easy book, but it’s still all in German. I’m worried about some of the weaker students, but I’ll figure it out.”
- “Overall it was a positive experience. I was revising on the fly. I was pitching this class to a lower level, and doing it all in a new format, so there were lots of changes all at once. I’m glad it still went well – feel like I got a B.”
- “Some students did struggle, so I flipped the class. I made lots of video recordings. This took a lot of time, but I needed to do this to help students.”

And like many of the excellent and innovative teachers that we’ve spoken with at other colleges, SLP faculty had a sense of how their attitudes about innovation differed from that of their colleagues. That sense was, perhaps, more acute among these faculty because they are in disciplines threatened by low enrollment and economic trends at their institutions.

*Faculty*

- “I’m interested in technology and I like innovating. . . .I’m astounded at how many people aren’t willing to try new things.”
- “Many of my colleagues are afraid. They don’t know how to teach. They’re insecure. They’re used to doing stuff on their own, relying on textbooks.”
- “Each institution needs to find a way of honoring and appreciating innovation. I’m like, ‘People, you need to wake up! The old way isn’t going to work anymore.’”
- “I got into this because I love the history of German, and if I’m lucky I get to talk about that once every three years, and I’m so fortunate to be able to do that. I’m underpaid if you look at my degrees, but I’m overpaid when you look at how much time I spend working for a boss. I’m privileged to have the job I have, but some of my colleagues don’t see it that way.”
- “We offered the other 300-level course this semester because my colleague wanted classroom experience. He doesn’t think that SLP works, thinks it siphons students away from the program. This is not an isolated view. Faculty in these programs are used to hanging on to students. SLP is based on reciprocity. But faculty don’t want to retool and offer their courses in this way.”
- “There’s a general resistance to retooling, not just because of the technology, but also in terms of making courses more engaging for today’s students.”

Given the concerns that some language faculty have expressed about the implications of the SLP program, we were surprised by how little most of the SLP faculty worried about whether teaching an SLP course had negative implications for their careers. One SLP faculty member was concerned for a junior colleague in SLP who was going up for tenure, and about whether teaching an SLP course affected her prospects for promotion. But others were less concerned. A tenured faculty member said, “I’ve not thought about that (career implications). It helps that I’m at a point where I don’t care, and I can do what I want.” And another SLP faculty member thought it had no implications for their future prospects in the job market saying, “It’s definitely developing my skill set, especially for hybrid courses. But trying to sell it to other schools...it doesn’t really fly. I mention it to other people and they ask, ‘Why are you doing that?’”

Although we did not detect a consistent sense of the overall positive or negative implications for faculty careers from our conversations, our sense is that relying too heavily on adjuncts to teach SLP courses would, in the long run, harm the effectiveness of the program. Teaching an SLP course effectively requires that faculty revise their pedagogy and their way of interacting with students as well as learn to work easily with new technologies. When people leave a GLCA institution after mastering those skills, their knowledge about teaching an SLP course effectively and the support they could provide to a colleague who might teach an SLP course leaves with them. This pedagogical capital will take time to recoup.

Finally, faculty talked about the importance of institutional support for their willingness to teach SLP courses, and the importance of faculty development and IT support so that they could teach the courses to their very high standards of quality.

*Faculty*

- “If I were a pre-tenured person, I’d need a supportive dean and chair, and to have an agreement in place that this work counts.”
- “Hope supports this and that helps. My department supports it too. We have a mix of traditional people and innovators, but at least they pay lip service to it.”
- “I got the provost’s support first. My colleagues like the innovative nature of the program.”

- “Staffing the SLP is hard. Faculty are often pre-tenured and/or not in tenure track positions, so their employment is precarious. One SLP professor is leaving her institution. I just learned that today. We don’t want to invest time and money training someone who will leave. We need institutional commitment to a language.”
- “Deans need to support SLP with more than money. They need to support it in terms of reviews, for promotion and tenure. It’s risky to do something different.”
- “Faculty development is important. If IT support at your institution isn’t great, a colleague who has done this could support you.”
- “The SLP director sets up workshops, usually before each semester. They’re useful because people share what they’ve learned.”
- “Most faculty who came to the workshop had done an SLP course before, but others joined because we offered two days of free technology training, and people are scared by what they don’t know.”
- “Collaboration is important, opening up chances for programs to get together. This course would not have been as successful without the GLCA course development workshops, which were face-to-face. Emails and video conferences would not have been enough. Physical, face-to-face collaboration is important at the beginning.”

## Conclusion

We asked students and faculty if, given their experiences, they would continue to participate in SLP courses. The answer across the board was “yes.” Students said that while they would be interested in taking another SLP course, they would want to take into account the topic, level, and size of the class, and the extent to which they needed the class to graduate. While they were pleased with the SLP courses they’d taken, they wondered whether the format would be as effective with, for example, a large introductory course, different faculty, or a lecture-focused teaching style. Based on what we heard and experienced in this project, these seemed to be reasonable considerations. When we asked students if they’d like all of their classes to be SLP style, they said no, but they were glad to have SLP classes as an option.

All of the faculty felt their SLP classes were good experiences, and they said they would be happy to offer another SLP course. Indeed, some of the faculty were teaching another SLP class in the spring semester, and others had plans to do one again in the future. One faculty member even said she’d do all her classes in this format if she could.

Our sense was that all of the SLP classes were good, well-taught, engaging classes that were comparable to the highest quality small classes that students experience at liberal arts colleges. This doesn’t mean that they were the same as the typical face-to-face classes, but that they were as likely to promote student learning and development as the good, face-to-face classes offered by small colleges. And, for the majority of students we spoke with, the SLP courses offered them an opportunity to continue learning a language that they would not have otherwise had.

But SLP classes are different. It’s different not being in the same room with students. For example, in our experience there is a small lag in a back-and-forth conversation similar to the lag in a cell phone call. So, if you respond too quickly, you can end up talking over another person. At the same time, the delay is helpful because it forces you to pause just a beat, and that gives you a chance to listen. It’s a difference to which we quickly adapted, and it had the beneficial side effect of forcing us to listen a little more carefully and make sure that the person we were talking with completed their thought before we asked the next question. Indeed, students were

remarkably good at listening to and not talking over one another in our interviews. This made the interviews more effective than some of our face-to-face interviews with students. So, SLP courses are good, effective, and, in our view worthwhile, but a little different.

As we've reflected on our conversations, we were struck by how good these courses were given how new they were. The four faculty we spoke with had created courses in an entirely new modality that were, even after at most a few iterations, remarkably effective. As we've pointed out, much of that was due to having committed and resourceful faculty and flexible students who were willing to give this new approach a chance. Although the technology still needs some work, it's good enough now to deliver a high-quality course that's a perfectly reasonable alternative to a face-to-face class.

We have a few of suggestions about things that could improve the quality and impact of SLP courses:

1. Our sense is that SLP classes worked best when all students, regardless of whether they were on the faculty member's campus, used laptops to join the course. Doing this, rather than having some students in a classroom at one location and others "dialing in" remotely, seems to create a more consistent experience for students.
2. As always, better and more consistent Wi-Fi on campuses would improve SLP courses.
3. SLP faculty and courses would benefit from continued faculty development support via the GLCA. It is important that the practical wisdom from faculty who have taught SLP courses is passed on to new faculty, and from what we heard, the GLCA workshops are an effective means of accomplishing this task. Faculty development activities also create a learning community that supports the small number of faculty at any given campus who are willing to experiment with an SLP course.
4. Based on some of the comments we highlighted previously and our experience with faculty at liberal arts colleges, it is possible that the faculty who are willing to try an SLP course will be outliers on their campuses, and they may also be perceived as "giving in" to the broader forces that are causing the decline of some disciplines. For that reason, explicit support for SLP-like courses from academic leaders will be important to expand the number of faculty who are interested in developing such courses.

We started this project with the question of whether SLP courses could deliver a high-quality learning environment to liberal arts college students. In our minds, the answer is a clear yes. We assumed, incorrectly, that the technology might be a limitation. And while there are still rough spots, we were surprised at the range of benefits technology confers for learning. We end this project realizing, once more, that when it comes to student learning, it always comes down to the quality, creativity, and effort of teachers. In our view, the main driver of the future success of SLP-like courses at liberal arts colleges is not advances in technology, but whether a sufficient number of good teachers are willing to try something new and perhaps very different than anything that they've experienced before. If they are, and if they receive support from academic and faculty development leaders, we are certain that SLP-like courses will be successful.

## Appendix A: Questions for faculty at the beginning of the SLP course

### Intro questions

- Tell us about yourself
  - How long have you been teaching?
  - How long have you been at your current institution?
  - Are you tenured, tenure track, visiting?
- Tell us about the course
  - How many students are in it?
  - Where are the students from?
  - Is this your first course in the Shared Languages Program?

### Motivation

Tell us about your thinking as you decided to participate in the Shared Languages Program.

- What was your motivation to participate?

### Experience - course development

We are interested in your experience developing a course for the Shared Languages Program. We would like to hear about such things as workload, working with technology, the level of support you received, any Aha! moments you had, and so on.

- What are the workload implications of an initial offering of a Shared Languages course?
- What did you have to do to prepare to teach this course? How was it different from preparing a traditionally-taught course?
- Will that preparation carry over to developing other Shared Languages courses?

### Experience - course offering

We want to know about your experience offering a Shared Languages course, including how class time was used, interacting with students in and out of class, interacting with the student mentors, assignments, grading, office hours, teaching effectiveness, and so on.

- A key aspect of our traditional teaching model is face-to-face interaction with students in the classroom. What is interaction with students like in the Shared Languages model?
- How is teaching an SLP environment different from teaching in a traditional classroom environment?
- How does student learning in this environment compare with a traditionally taught course? On what do you base this?
- We know it's early, but so far
  - Was the preparation you did to offer this course sufficient?
  - What surprises have there been? How did you handle them?
- How are you connecting with the student mentors?

### Career implications

We want to know about such things as professional development, impact on mobility (ability to move to another institution), research and scholarship, career trajectory, tenure and promotion, merit, and so on. Note: Knowing if the person is tenured or not will be useful.

- How do you see participating in the program affecting your career path?

**Reaction by department and administration**

Tell us how your department (colleagues and chair) and administration have reacted to your participation in the program.

- What conversations have there been in your department about the Shared Languages Program and its impact on your language program and students?

## Appendix B: Questions for faculty at the end of the SLP course

The last time we spoke it was the early part of the semester, and now the semester is over. So how did things go over the course of the semester?

We talked some about workload for SLP courses last time. What other thoughts do you have about workload implications for SLP courses now?

- How was it different from preparing a traditionally-taught course?
- Will that preparation carry over to developing other Shared Languages courses?
- Was the preparation you did to offer this course sufficient?
- What surprises have there been? How did you handle them?

Again, we talked some about this last time, but now that you've got this semester under your belt, we'd like to know how teaching in an SLP environment is different from teaching in a traditional classroom environment?

- For Kelly, Hanada, and Gabrielle who've taught more than one SLP – How has your previous experience teaching SLP courses helped you this semester? Do some things get easier? Or harder? How was this semester different from last time?

If there was one thing you could go back and do differently in this class this semester, what would it be?

How does student learning in this environment compare with a traditionally taught course? On what do you base this?

### Student mentors

- Was it helpful for your off-campus students to have a mentor at their institution? What is important about this interaction?
- How did you interact with the mentors?
- Were you a student mentor?
- What is your role as student mentor?
- What preparation did you receive to serve in this role? Was it sufficient?
- What kinds of interactions led to a positive experience for you and for the students you mentor?
- How would you like to interact with the course instructor? What is important about this interaction?

### Looking forward

- After your experience teaching/mentoring a Shared Languages course, are you interested in doing it again?
- If you had enough students to teach this course in person or in an SLP format, which format would you prefer, and why?
- Do you see participating becoming easier as you gain experience offering courses in this type of format?
- Have there been any conversations in your department or on your campus more broadly about the Shared Languages Program and its impact on your language program and students?

## Appendix C: Questions for students in SLP courses

### Overarching question

In what ways do students experience Shared Languages courses differently from a traditional classroom? Do those differences matter?

### Specific questions for students

Why did you take a Shared Languages course?

What were your expectations before you took the Shared Languages course? Did your experience match your expectations?

Each campus is a little different in terms of calendar (term start and end, holidays, exam schedule) and academic culture (workload, assignments, grading). How did differences between your campus and the campus where the course was taught affect your experience?

How does the classroom environment for a Shared Languages course compare with that of a traditional classroom with respect to such things as student and instructor interaction, asking questions, participating in conversations?

How does meeting outside of class with an instructor of a traditional course compare with that of a Shared Languages course?

What role does the student mentor play in your learning/course experience?

What prior experience have you had with the technology used for your Shared Languages course?

Would you take another Shared Languages course? If not, why not?

Can you see this kind of course environment being an effective way to take language courses?

Do you see any benefits to taking a Shared Languages course beyond the learning of a language?