**Departmental Mini-Grant Proposal**

The Department of Modern Languages, Literatures and Cultures is moving from a Communicative approach of language instruction towards embracing a Content-Based approach in our lower division curriculum.[[1]](#footnote-1) Though we have already began this change in the current academic year, we are requesting a mini-grant to hold a departmental workshop in order to understand the intricacies of this innovative approach, as well as its implementation throughout the lower division courses in a more intentional manner.

As of now, our department has scheduled a two-day workshop on Content-Based Instruction on May, 29-30 led by St. Olaf professors Gwen Barnes-Karol and Maggie Broner, who are known experts in this field of instruction. Both scholars are also familiar with our department, as they were in our external review committee several years ago. One of the committee’s suggestions, amongst others, was that our department should incorporate this methodology.

During the mini-grant period we will significantly redesign the first four classes of the language program at Gustavus. We will do so by deepening our knowledge of the Content-Based method of language instruction, and by ensuring that there is a holistic connection between classes.

The first day of the workshop on May 29 will be dedicated to the discussion of scholarly articles on the topic of CBI to better comprehend this pedagogical approach. The second day, on May 30 will be focused on appropriately incorporating this methodology to our lower-level courses (first four semesters of language instruction). We will begin this day with the fourth course, 200-level, and move backwards until we arrive at the first course taught, 100-level. This is done to ensure that students arrive at the level of expectation at the end of their four semesters. Workshop leaders will leave our department with specific tools and tasks to perform in order to ensure the success of CBI implementation.

As mentioned above, we have begun the move towards a CBI curriculum in lower division courses this academic year. Specifically, our 101 courses began incorporating this methodology in the fall of 2013 and continued in our 102 courses this spring of 2014. After reaping the benefits of this workshop, modifications would be made as necessary to those courses. Continuing on in the 2014-15 academic year we would offer 103 and 200 (or third and fourth semester courses) incorporating this methodology as well. In other words, by the spring of 2015 we would see the effects of four continuous semesters of CBI in our lower division. At this time we would reap the full benefits of assessment and SLO. Before then, we will measure the outcomes and impact on teaching and learning of our work through the following: 1) a poll answered by students during the middle and end of each semester, which provides us with both qualitative and quantitative feedback regarding this new approach; 2) writing assignments in which students are asked to reflect on their learning process in light of this new approach; and 3) faculty discussion in light of the above.

So far, the feedback received from students over the last two semesters has been quite positive. Briefly stated, as a result of the incorporation of CBI, the implicit connections between language and culture are made more evident.

We are hopeful that the Kendall Center, Faculty Development Committee and Provost’s Office will consider this proposal appropriate for funding.

1. Content-Based Language Instruction is designed to provide second-language learners instruction in both language, as well as culture. Content is used as the context in which the language is taught. So, instead of arranging a course according to grammatical concepts to be learned, the arrangement consists of topics of cultural interest that reveal the target language in context. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)