Dear Committee Members:

Upon request from the Department of Foreign Languages at Dixie State College, I have reviewed the proposal for a new Bachelor of Arts Degree in Spanish and a new Spanish Minor. After a detailed review of the documentation provided, I have the following commendations and recommendations.

Commendations:

1. I commend DSC for taking the necessary steps to implement what is clearly an indispensable option for its student population. As the proposal indicates, DSC is located in a geographical area whose linguistic makeup has changed significantly in the last decade. The proposed new programs will provide DSC graduates with the skills that will make them competitive in the marketplace. With a much larger number of Spanish speakers in Washington county, in Utah and across the United States, there is an increased need for advanced Spanish language proficiency. The new programs prepare DSC to meet that need.

   It is worth mentioning that Utah is currently at the forefront of bilingual education nationwide with its 58 dual immersion schools—32 of them in Spanish. This means not only increased job opportunities for those interested in teaching Spanish in Utah, but also an increasingly bilingual job market in the state; one in which competitiveness will require advance language skills.

2. The Department of Foreign Languages has done an excellent job of taking advantage of existing resources and collaborations to serve student needs. In a time of increased budget cuts, it is refreshing to see a proposal for a new program that requires almost no additional funding. By utilizing human resources and facilities already in place at DSC and creatively using collaboration with other USHE institutions, the Department will be able to implement a program equivalent in scope and sequence to those of other Utah institutions.

3. As the proposal indicates, this new major is not designed to compete with other similar programs in the state, but to harness DSC’s existing strengths and respond to the particular needs of its student population. Using the lessons learned from 4 years of a Spanish emphasis in Integrated Studies and responding to students’ expressed interest, the Department of Foreign Languages is proposing a program that expands on the traditional literary emphasis to include courses on contemporary issues, business Spanish, service learning and an increased focus on linguistics (with the new proposed hire). Without losing sight of its intellectual rigor, this more well-rounded program will prepare its graduates for a variety of professional paths and advanced degrees.
4. Finally, I want to commend the Spanish faculty for taking the necessary steps to consult with and enlist collaboration and input from faculty and administrators in the other USHE institutions that already offer similar programs. As chair of a languages department, I have welcomed the opportunity to participate in the design process with Professor Ceballos and Associate Dean Everett and I am looking forward to a fruitful collaboration between our institutions. This cooperative environment bodes well for the sustainability of the proposed programs.

Recommendations:

1. The current full-time faculty covers linguistics, pedagogy and Spanish peninsular literature. I strongly suggest that the department proceed with the proposed plan to hire a linguist (ideally with interest/expertise in language for the professions and/or integration of technology in language teaching) and a Latin-Americanist. These two hires would strengthen the program and guarantee its long-term sustainability.

2. Considering that existing faculty have advanced expertise in language proficiency assessment, I recommend increasing the amount and variety of modes of assessment included throughout the program in an effort to make assessment an ongoing formative practice rather than a summative intervention at the end of the program. The goal should be to increase the number and effectiveness of the mechanisms in place to guarantee that the stated learning outcomes are being achieved.

3. I recommend that the department consider either (a) offering a faculty-led study abroad program in Spanish, or (b) collaborating with other USHE institutions in order to give DSC students the opportunity to study Spanish abroad. Research shows that study abroad is often the most memorable experience of undergraduate students. In addition to the obvious linguistic and cultural benefits, studying abroad is also one of the most effective recruitment tools for a language program and a way to offer students exposure to other faculty and teaching approaches.

The proposed Bachelor of Arts and Minor programs will serve the interests of many students and will help realize the College’s mission to give its students a global perspective by enhancing their worldviews. I look forward to their approval.

Sincerely,

Fernando Rubio, Co-Chair