guage programs. English programs are eager to diversify their faculties in order to respond to the needs of an ever more multicultural student body. Neither English nor foreign language programs can afford to lose the alien wisdoms that are the source of their strength and intellectual renewal. Even though the pressure to domesticate these wisdoms into the dominant semiotic code is enormous, everyone stands to gain by engaging colleagues and students on the other side of the departmental Hellespont.

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Rethinking the Place of Spanish

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One of my favorite sayings—situated on the tenuous interface between humor and seriousness—is "Money isn't everything, but it's way ahead of whatever is in second place," which is cynical and materialistic but impossible to completely reject. In our profession, one could plug in the word *Spanish* and derive the same results. At colleges and universities across the country, enrollments in Spanish language courses are growing out of proportion, while programs in other languages often struggle to attract students; some small language offerings have in fact become endangered species, and comparisons to the laws of natural selection permeate the discourse. To the many acronyms that pepper the jargon of our profession has been added LOTS—that is, languages other than Spanish—a disclaimer used whenever language programs and language enrollments are being discussed. This acronym is troubling, since it categorically removes Spanish from the discussion of language programs as being too big to handle or—even more sinister—as somehow constituting an obstacle to the teaching and appreciation of the remaining languages, that is, of the LOTS. Even more troubling are the constant references to the "Spanish problem," heard among university administrators and language program directors, and the downright offensive comparisons between Spanish enrollments and gorillas of varying dimensions and body weight, depending on who is offering the simile. Why should one facet of the disciplines we hold most dear become a problem akin to a threatening beast escaped from the menagerie? I am aware of no global demonization of other trends found in the humanities (sarcastic and often politically incorrect backroom comments notwithstanding); we had no structuralist, deconstruction, feminist, Marxist, or postmodern problem, and the current attractiveness of such areas as applied linguistics, gender studies, and cultural studies is not seen as problematic except by a small group of professors whose own courses are perceived as losing enrollment to these upstart newcomer fields. Across universities no one speaks of the math problem, the science problem, the physical education problem, or even the English problem, despite the fact that all students are required to take courses in these areas and that staffing and resource issues often cause the shoe to pinch in many places simultaneously. To face these issues squarely, we need to examine facts and fantasies, pride and prejudice, public virtues and private

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vices, and reject the fratricidal vivisection of our profession in favor of a stance that is both ethically defensible and logistically realistic.

First, let's consider some representative data. At Penn State University, University Park (the main campus, not counting the other 23 commonwealth campuses), where the typical language requirement is for three semesters (and where the first three semesters do not count for majors and minors), for fall 2002 there are 99 sections of Spanish 1, 2, and 3, although if previous experience holds true, as many as 10 to 15 more sections will be added at the last minute with administrative contingency funds. This enrollment comes despite intensive efforts to encourage students to opt out of requirements through placement exams, and does not include classes for bilingual or heritage-language speakers, which are taught at a higher level. This compares with 30 sections of French, 22 of German, 16 of Italian, 10 of Japanese, 7 of Chinese, 4 each of Latin and Russian, 3 each of Hebrew and Korean, 2 each of Arabic and Portuguese, and 1 section of classical Greek. Moreover, all sections of the first three semesters of Spanish will be filled by the time classes begin, which is not true of most of the other languages. Attempts at social engineering—for example, choking off the number of sections of Spanish in hopes that students will opt for other languages—have met with resounding failure. Students and their parents barrage departments, deans, university presidents, and state legislators with such vehemence that more sections of Spanish miraculously appear (although the waiting lists never seem to disappear). In other words, Spanish sections outnumber their closest neighbor by some 3½ to 1, and represent over half of all basic languages sections taught at Penn State (over 99 sections of Spanish to 97 sections of the other languages). The figures are similar at other Big Ten universities. For purposes of comparison, at Penn State there are some 126 sections of the various flavors of obligatory freshman English (although to be fully accurate it must be acknowledged that many entering students place into higher English classes, in which an additional 50 or more sections are available). Basic English courses, however, are required of all Penn State students, usually more than one course, while not all colleges have a language requirement, and some college requirements entail fewer than three semesters.

Relative proportions vary widely at colleges and universities across the country, but the Penn State numbers are representative of national trends. In regions of the country where large Spanish-speaking communities are intermingled with universities, the proportion of students taking Spanish is even higher, while in colleges in rural inland regions far removed from hispanophone populations proportionately fewer students opt for Spanish, but Spanish is invariably "way ahead of whatever is in second place." Why do these students study Spanish? Not surprisingly, students come for a mixture of salutory and disappointing motives, and their performance in language classes spans an equally broad spectrum of dedication and achievement. College and university language requirements are the leading suspects for the majority of initial enrollments. Spanish is the foreign language most commonly taught in high schools throughout the country (in many schools it is the only foreign language available), and students will naturally wish to build on studies begun in high school. Alas, there is also the widespread belief—which has now attained the status of urban legend—that Spanish is the easiest foreign language to learn, although how much learning might be expected in the face of such attitudes is open to question. Japanese and Swahili are often touted as easy to pronounce by speakers of English, but anyone who has attempted the serious study of either language knows that this phonetic comfort zone is of little consolation. Mandarin Chinese has no verb conjugations, in fact no inflectional morphology of any sort, and yet few Americans would find it an easy language to master. It is possible that the legions of overworked and underappreciated Spanish teachers—in high schools and colleges—may

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aid and abet students in search of a self-fulfilling prophecy, but there is also a penumbra of shady social beliefs (redundancy intended) that Spanish can be acquired at the drop of a sombrero. Most of us older folks remember western movies in which even the most loutish cowboy could muster enough "lingo" to safely navigate the forbidding territories of Old Mexico, and perhaps parley with friendly and hostile Indians with equal facility (speaking "Indian lingo" of course). Nowadays all Americans are immersed in a morass of what the anthropologist Jane Hill has called "junk Spanish"—for example, the menu items at Tex-Mex restaurants, the jokes and stereotypes about Spanish speakers found in mass media (most recently the flap in Brazil about a recent episode of *The Simpsons* in which Brazilian bad guys spoke with an unmistakable Spanish accent), and the names of streets, buildings, and subdivisions, even in the least Hispanic parts of Middle America, that juxtapose real and invented Spanish words with total disregard for grammatical concord and semantic coherence, linguistic niceties implied to be as optional as the little packages of salsa that come with our ready-made tacos. When the most difficult situation can be shrugged off with a wink and a conspiratorial "no problemo," when one gets business done by talking to the "head honcho," bemoans a junky "el cheapo" product, and criticizes a teenager for "showing his macho," who can doubt that full command of Spanish is as much within reach as a margarita, a Corona, or a breakfast burrito? The Frito Bandito has been replaced by Taco Bell's talking lapdog; airline in-flight magazines sell boxes of tapes (whose price definitely is not el cheapo) enticing the reader to "speak Spanish like a diplomat"; prime-time television portrays Hispanics as hoodlums or tough cops but rarely as accomplished professionals; and the media rail against "Spanglish" as though cross-fertilization in bilingual communities were not the common patrimony of English, French, Latin, Hebrew, Chinese—indeed all the world's leading languages and most of the others as well. One does find—it is true—occasional parodies of other languages in American popular culture (although the most obvious examples are now unacceptable), but none even remotely approaches the torrent of gibberish that is tolerated as a gentleman's approximation to Spanish. It is all the more remarkable that so many students actually want to learn Spanish at all, rather than Klingon (whose speakers, after all, aren't pursued by the border patrol).

And the good news is that Spanish has risen above all the junk language and demeaning pseudobabble to become a high-demand course of study at American universities. Despite the frustratingly large number of negative stereotypes and accompanying bad karma surrounding the Spanish language and its speakers within the United States, many of our students—dare I hope more than half?—pick Spanish as the second language of choice for more encouraging reasons. Spanish is not only the de facto second language (when not the first language) of the United States, but its more than 400 million speakers worldwide have made Spanish one of the top languages of international trade and communication, ranking from fourth place to second depending on the criteria. Programs in business Spanish, translation, and international studies have burgeoned at many colleges and universities, and not just in the traditionally Spanish-speaking urban regions. Courses in the culture of Spain, of Latin America, and—increasingly—of Latino groups in the United States are also on the upswing. Surveys of students requesting Spanish courses—from entering freshmen satisfying language requirements to undergraduate majors and minors—put usefulness in first place as the reason for picking Spanish. And Spanish is useful, not just for reading the instructions on a box of frozen enchiladas but also for aspiring to a vast array of interesting and challenging job opportunities, for interacting effectively with millions of our neighbors both in this country and abroad, and for understanding and appreciating a very large, diverse, and significant portion of the world. Study-abroad programs in Spain, Mexico,

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and other Latin American countries are on the rise among United States colleges and universities, and an increasingly large number of participants are neither language majors nor just students hoping to add Spanish to their business portfolio, but rather champions of cross-cultural understanding and adversaries of xenophobia, isolationism, and intolerance.

To deal fully with the evolving role of Spanish language programs in United States colleges and universities, new modes of understanding must take root in at least the following places: university administrations, Spanish programs, and programs teaching other languages. University administrations need to acknowledge that for many—perhaps for most—college students, Spanish is well on the way to dropping its foreign status, to take its place among the knowledge and skills required by well-rounded university graduates. For all the reasons mentioned previously and many more besides, Spanish is here to stay, a fact some regard with optimism and others with alarm (to wit, the many English-only movements that reach their greatest virulence precisely in areas where Spanish is a major social force). A university that does not give its students the opportunity to study Spanish thoroughly and critically will be shortchanging future generations of educated Americans for whom Spanish will play an important role. Does this mean that Spanish should be required in general education curricula or that Spanish courses should not satisfy foreign language requirements? I would answer in the negative, although not without some wistfulness. Introducing Spanish in general education would be no more effective than the practice of requiring English at universities in Puerto Rico and some Latin American universities, where only a small number of students with means, motive, and opportunity actually acquire any usable competence in English, and they do so independently of any externally imposed requirement. Students need to select the curriculum best suited to their individual needs, aided by effective counseling and the availability of top-quality instruction. As for removing Spanish from the list of languages that satisfy foreign language requirements, this can be done legitimately only in the case of native or near-native speakers, even then at considerable political peril. The few universities that have tried to dislodge Spanish from the foreign language requirement have retreated in disarray following firestorms of protest, although partial measures, such as requiring students to begin a language not studied in high school, or allowing the language requirement to be satisfied with fewer hours of less commonly taught languages, are often effective. I would argue, however, that university administrations need to regard staffing of multiple sections of Spanish as part of the fundamental educational needs of the institution—much like basic writing courses—rather than as an elective component freely interchangeable with courses in other languages. As Spanish becomes not only the de facto second language of the United States but also a linguistic and social partner acknowledged by large numbers of non-Spanish speakers, American colleges and universities stand poised to join and even lead a paradigm reevaluation that takes its place alongside women's suffrage, desegregation and civil rights legislation, and the social revolution implicit in the Americans with Disabilities Act. For some two centuries the United States has been an aggressively and often xenophobically monolingual nation, whose melting pot cauterized and amputated every language and culture that refused to be melted. Now that another language and set of cultures are sharing the stage, universities are the ideal forum to embrace, enhance, and propagate this state of affairs.

If Spanish is to assume a new role in university curricula, Spanish departments and programs will need to reassess both the content and the methodology of basic Spanish courses. Spanish departments must acknowledge their mission as providing not only specific course content but also an entry into a broader worldview and an antidote to xenophobia. Spanish departments cannot ca-

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ter—even unconsciously—to the easy-language notion but must rather infuse their teaching of basic language courses with usable productive skills and those required to process more complex input. Finally, rather than seeing fundamental dichotomies among basic language students—those seeking only to satisfy a requirement versus those planning to major or minor in Spanish, or those seeking only language skills versus those interested in literature and most probably in graduate studies—departments need to embrace the mission of providing a well-delimited set of knowledge to all students, which meshes with the new role of Spanish in our society. This will not entail the abandonment of cherished literature and culture courses (or the growing number of specialized linguistics courses), since no one can seriously approach the language of 400 million people without knowledge of the literary and cultural artifacts produced by these people. Even the most cynically materialistic business student wishing to pursue a career with Spanish speakers will quickly discover that future business partners expect not only linguistic dexterity but also a knowledge and appreciation of literature and the arts as well as popular culture, information not contained in language classes stripped down to their pragmatic bare bones.

The remaining language departments and programs—the LOTS—cannot behave as competitors of Spanish, any more than they compete legitimately with biology, English, or physical education. Resources cannot be distributed among all language programs—including Spanish—based on simple formulas of student credit-hour generation, because in such a reckoning Spanish will always win and other languages will always lose, alleviating one disparity while creating a new one. The unique role of Spanish as providing a fundamental component of university education must be factored into the equation, but the equally important role of the other languages as offering windows into other peoples and worlds, essential in ensuring an education that staves off isolationism and intolerance, must also be factored in. Speaking or acknowledging more than one language is in itself not sufficient to guarantee against dangerous insularity (as world events show all too clearly), but, once more, it is "way ahead of whatever is in second place." Precisely as Spanish becomes part of the assumed background of American university education, the other languages enhance their role as vehicles of broader understanding, and their worth must not be calculated by the same bottom-line accounting used to tally the voracious demand for Spanish.

The thoughts just shared are admittedly idealistic and optimistic but are not totally outside the realm of possible implementation. The surge of enrollments in Spanish is neither a fad nor a territorial invasion. Spanish programs are not laying their eggs in others' nests, gorillas are not on the loose, and in fact the zoological metaphors are better replaced by the plain language of goodwill and common cause.

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