Data-based Decisions

Beginning in Summer 2018, two new co-directors began overseeing the MSLT program. During that summer, the incoming co-directors created a survey that was sent out to all current and former students of the MSLT program to better assess various aspects of the MSLT program from a student perspective. The data from the survey was shared and discussed with all MSLT-affiliated faculty and the Department Head in Fall 2018. In Spring 2019, the MSLT program began the process of implementing various curricular/programmatic changes after analyzing the student survey data and incorporating MSLT faculty input regarding required and elective coursework. Many of these changes took effect beginning in Fall 2019 and include the following:

1. The course requirements for the degree would remain at 30 credits. However, the required courses for the degree would be increased to 21 credits while elective course credits would be set at 9 credits. This shifted the foci of the program to required courses taught primarily by MSLT-affiliated faculty (i.e., housed in the Dept. of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies) which allows for more control of the content and quality of the required courses. In the past, MSLT students were able to take courses in the Teacher Education and Leadership (TEAL) program housed in the College of Education. This shift was motivated by the fact that (a) the MSLT program has less control over the content and quality of TEAL courses, and (b) many TEAL courses are more aimed at teachers hoping to teach only in K-12 contexts. (NOTE: students may still choose to take an elective graduate course in another College, such as through TEAL or ITLS, but with program and instructor approval).

2. Two courses were added to the required course list; a new course called LING 6900 Culture Teaching and Learning: Theory and Practice and the previously elective course LING 6520 Technology for Language Teaching. NOTE: A new course number (LING 6820) was created for the Second Language Pragmatics course which was/is a required course to differentiate it from the aforementioned LING 6900 course.

3. Several new elective MSLT courses were created and approved in 2019. These new courses allow for more variety for MSLT students (something students expressed in the survey data) and also better reflect the expertise of the MSLT faculty, some of which began working at USU after 2016. These courses include: LING 6100 Second Language Assessment: Theory and Practice; LING 6810 Issues in Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language; LING 6830 Sociolinguistics, Sociolinguistic Competence, and Second Language Acquisition; LING 6840 Second Language Writing: Theory and Practice; LING 6850 Second Language Reading: Theory and Practice; and LING 6950 Second Language Teaching Practicum. The MSLT program began offering some of these new courses in Fall 2019. Since then, others have been rotated in. Moving forward, all of these will be offered as possible elective courses.

4. The last major change involved changes to the Portfolio capstone project itself. Primary changes involved reducing the number of pages dedicated to some sections in order to allow students to more succinctly communicate their ideas about L2 teaching and learning. In addition, some of the primary components of the written project were reduced (i.e., moving from 3

research-related papers to 2), while others were expanded (i.e., increasing the page length requirements for the annotated bibliography paper/section of the Portfolio). These changes allow for a more in-depth exploration of topics vs. a less comprehensive analysis of more topics/components which was a feature of previous versions of the Portfolio project. It is important to note that no change was made to the supervisory structure of the committees for the Portfolio projects nor was the oral defense of the Portfolio project changed in any way.

NOTE: Given that the aforementioned curricular changes were implemented in Fall 2019, the first cohort of students completing the MSLT program with these new changes will begin defending their Portfolio projects in Spring 2021. As such, the MSLT program is currently (Spring 2021) in the process of assessing students' Portfolio projects based on the updated assessment plan which reflects the aforementioned curricular/programmatic changes. Data for this assessment will be archived by the MSLT co-directors each year and updated on the new Dept. of World Languages and Cultures website beginning in Fall 2021.