

# Developing language teachers' oral proficiency: Applied Spanish Conversation and beyond

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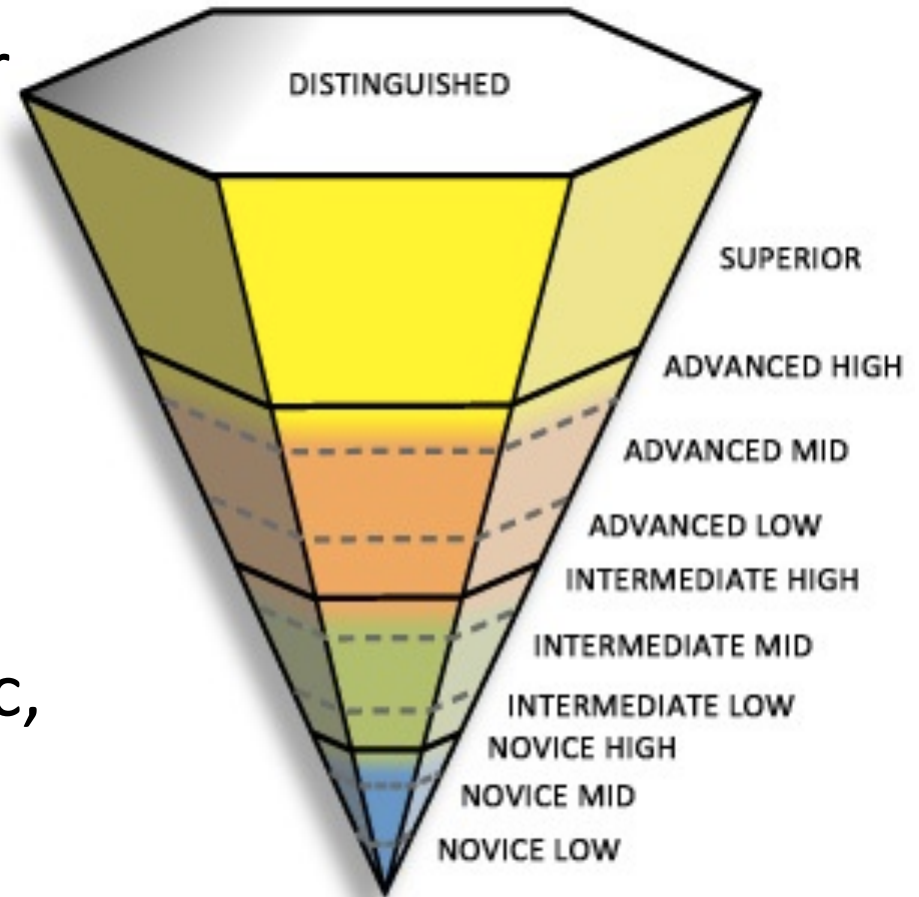


**Northern Illinois  
University**



# The problem

- 2002 ACTFL standards for NCATE/CAEP require official Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI)
- Target score is Advanced Low (commonly taught languages) or Intermediate High (Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Korean)

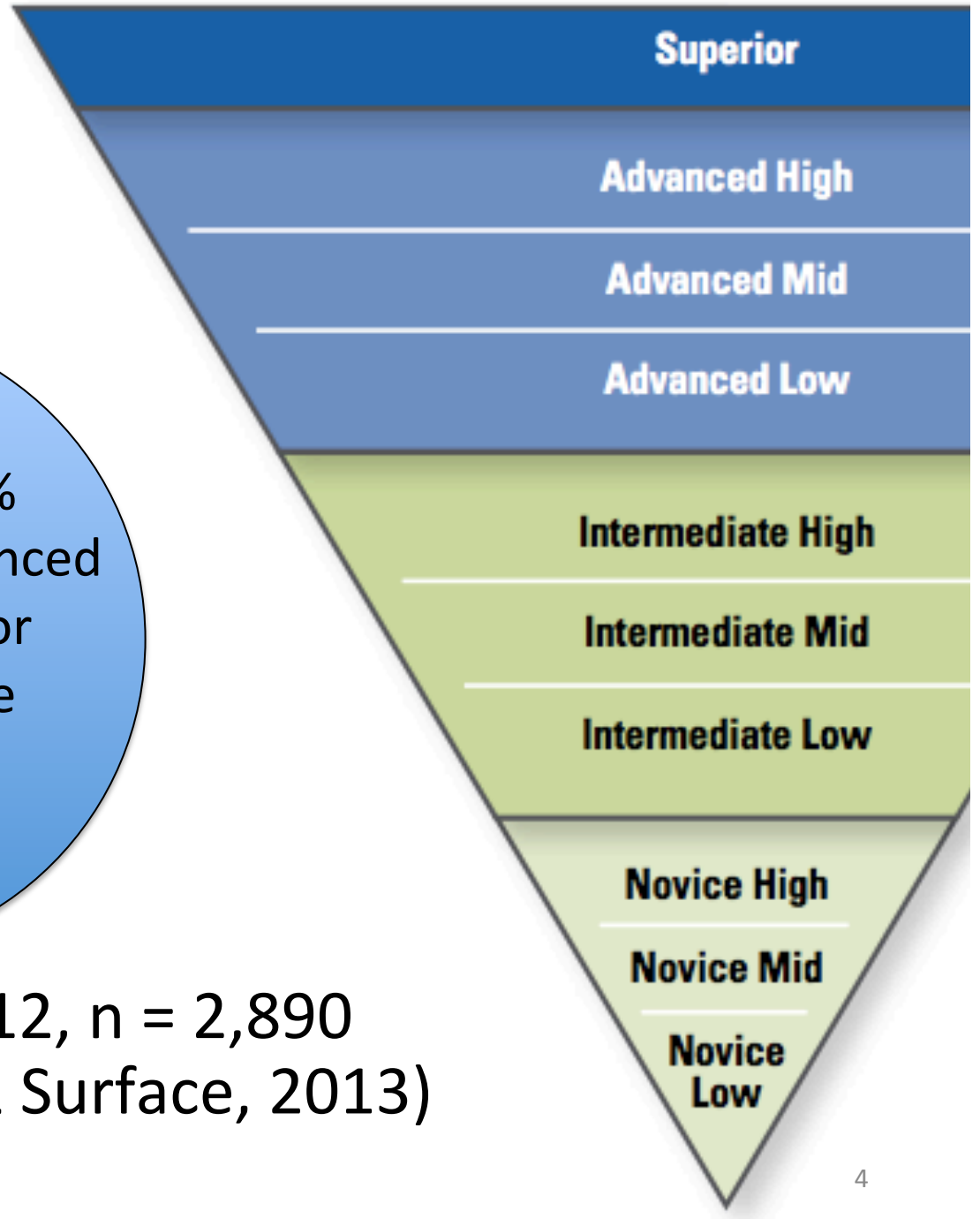
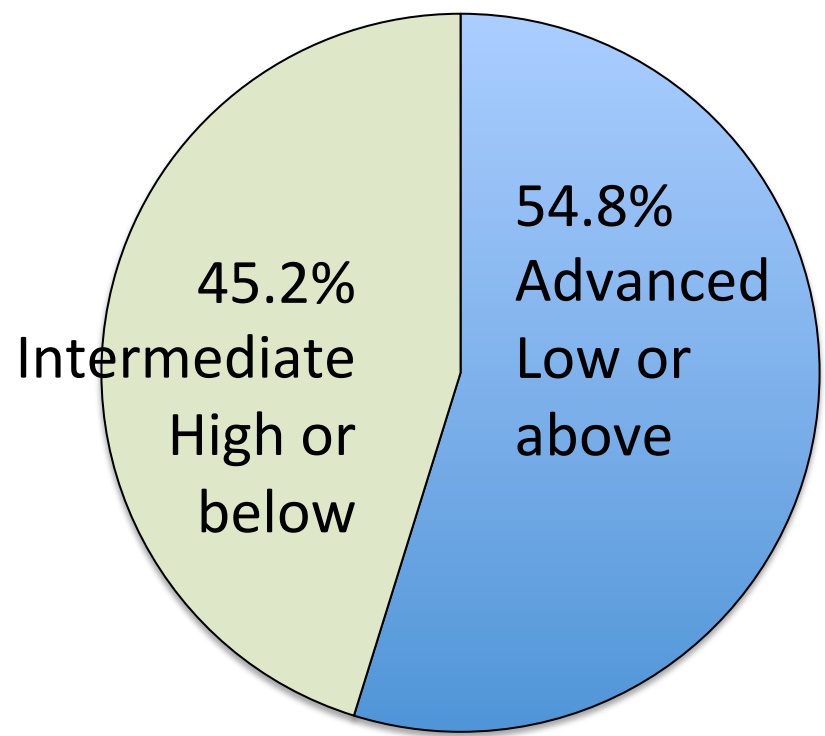


# Advanced Low

- Can narrate and describe in past, present and future time frames
- Can deal with a social situation with an unexpected complication
- Paragraph-length discourse
- Autobiographical topics & community, national, or international interest

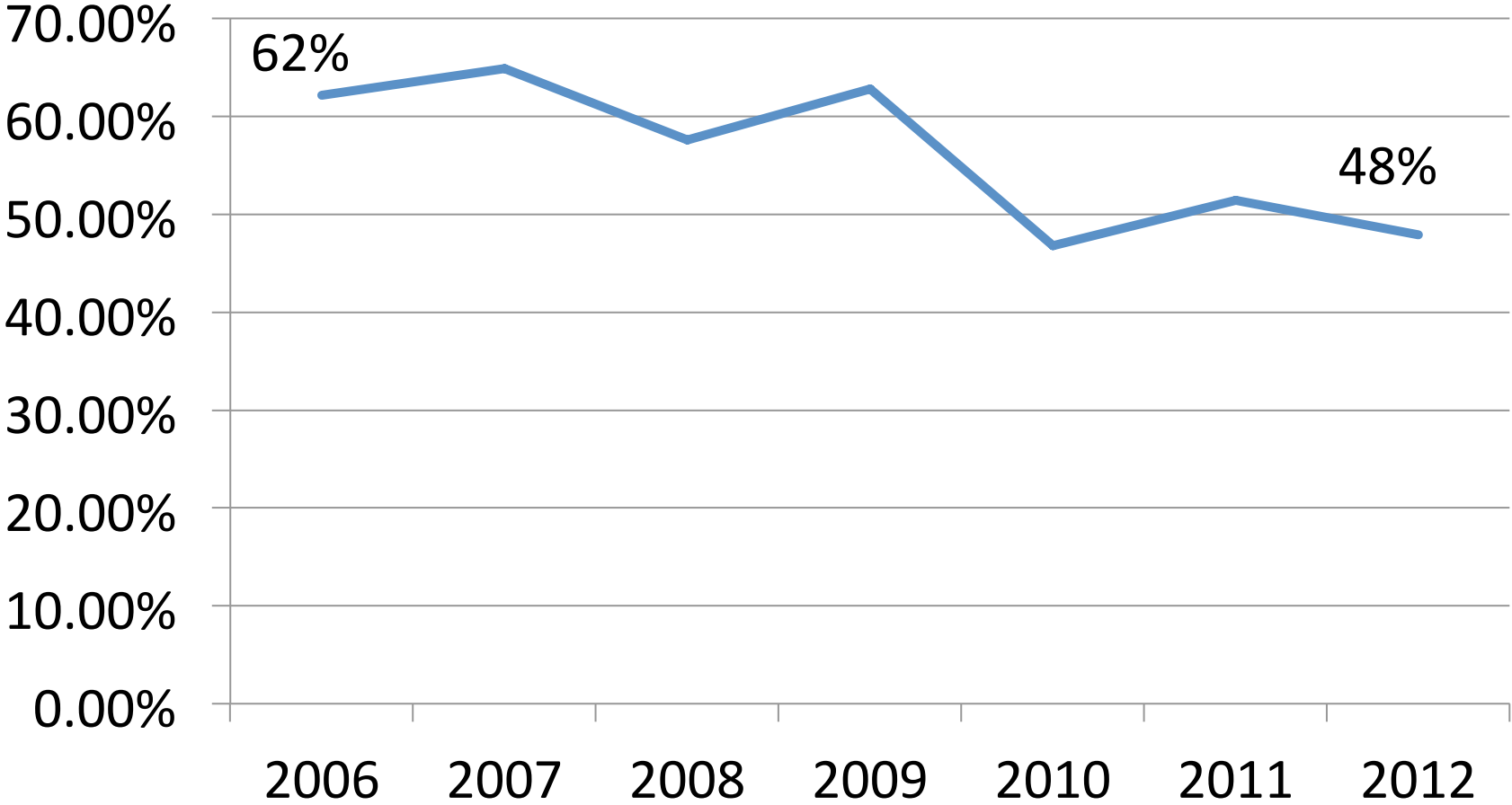
...most of the time

# Where are candidates now (nationally)?

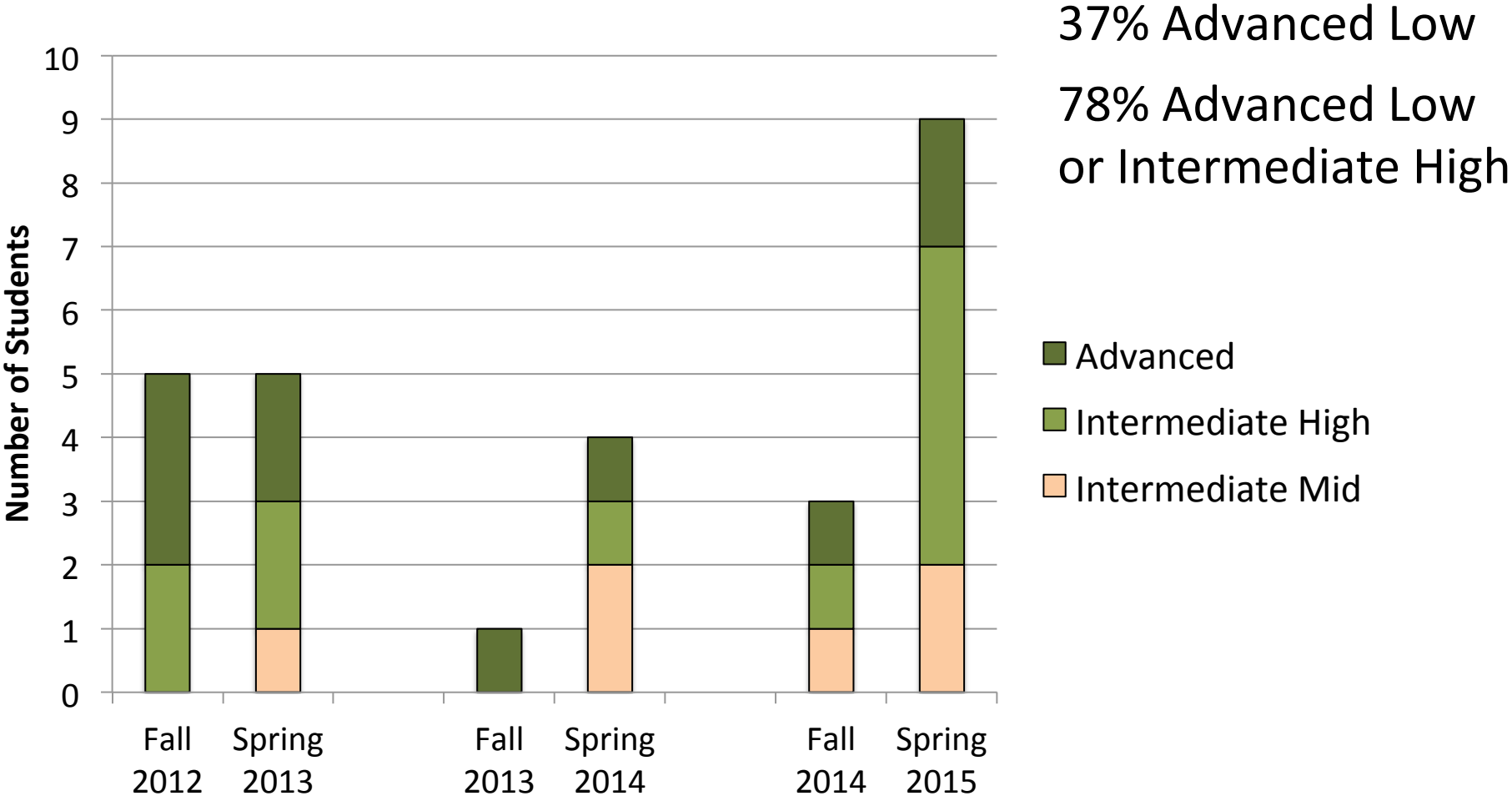


- Data from 2006-2012, n = 2,890 (Glisan, Swender, & Surface, 2013)

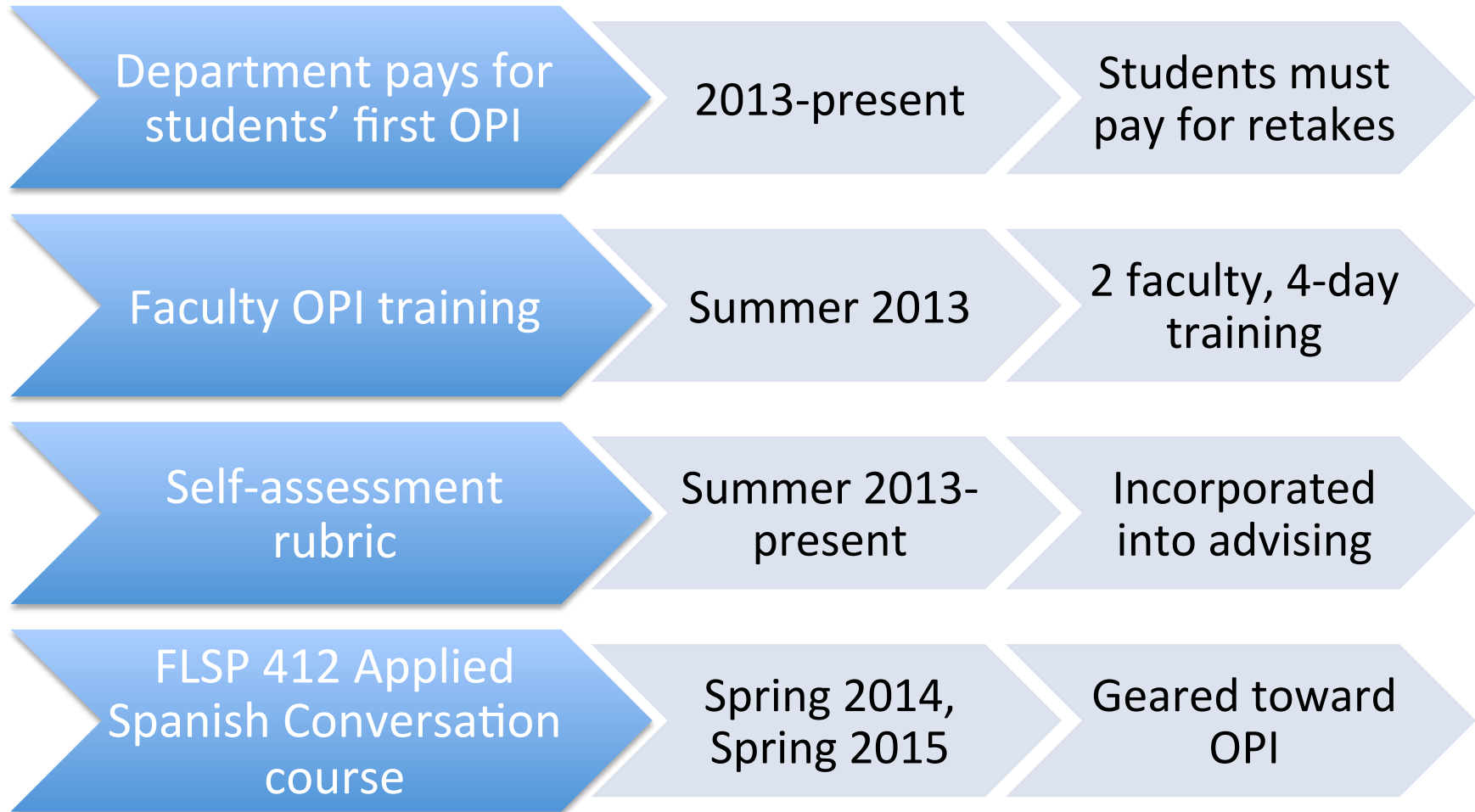
# Percentage reaching Advanced Low is declining



# Our graduates' scores



# What we did



# Faculty training

- 4-day ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview Assessment Workshop
  - Summer 2013 for both program faculty
- 1 faculty became a certified ACTFL OPI Tester and Rater
  - Rate 12 interviews (agree exactly or within a continuous sublevel on 9/12)
  - Conduct and submit 6 OPIs, one at each major level (novice, intermediate, advanced, superior) and two additional at a high sublevel; feedback given
  - Conduct and submit 4-6 more OPIs
  - Take OPI– Superior = full certification, Advanced High = limited certification
  - Can conduct and rate interviews up to Advanced Low, and advisory interviews



# Self-assessment rubric

(Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez-Sotelo, 2012)

<b>Oral Skills Self-Assessment Rubric (OSSAR)</b>					
<i>Can I do this in my target language?</i>	<i>Never</i>	<i>Occasionally</i>	<i>Sometimes</i>	<i>Most of the time</i>	<i>Always</i>
1. I can narrate in detail in the Future (e.g., plans after graduation, future vacations, preparation for a study abroad program...)					
2. I can participate in conversations about current and public interests (e.g., local, national and international events.)					
3. I can produce paragraph length discourse using appropriate vocabulary and grammar.					
4. I can participate in conversations about personal interests (e.g., hobbies, academic major, music, art, pets...)					
5. When I describe something, I can combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length.					
6. I can fully participate in formal conversations about school activities.					
7. I can participate in conversations about leisure activities (e.g., sports, parties...)					
8. When narrating in the past, I can express verbal aspects (i.e., Preterit vs. Imperfect.)					
9. I can be understood when speaking to native speakers (even if repetition or restatement is occasionally needed).					

# Self-assessment rubric

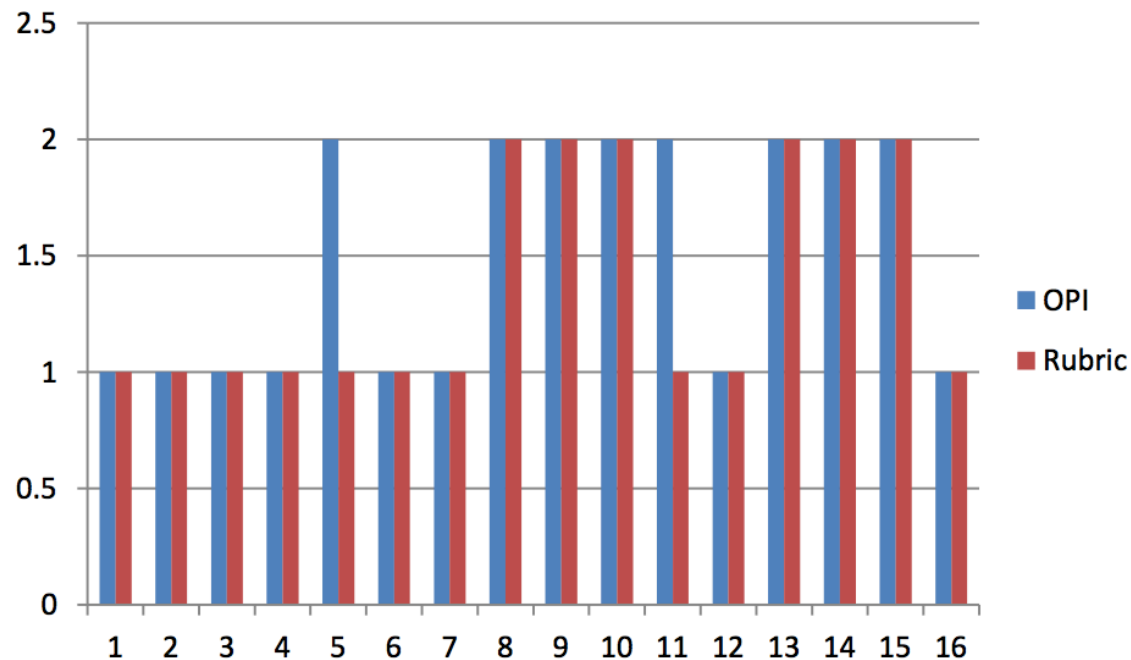
(Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez-Sotelo, 2012)

- “Programs should make teacher candidates more responsible for developing their own proficiency [...] When candidates have a clear expectation of what they should be able to do in the target language prior to completion of the program, they will usually rise to the occasion” (ACTFL, 2011).
- Developed from ACTFL Can-do statement language
- Used to predict whether student teachers will score Advanced Low on OPI
  - Rating of “Most of the time” or “All the time” on **ALL 25 ITEMS** predicts Advanced Low

# Self-assessment rubric

(Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez-Sotelo, 2012)

- Pilot study with 16 students
- 14 correctly predicted their scores (8 Intermediate High/6 Advanced Low); 2 rated themselves at Intermediate High but actually scored Advanced Low



# Self-assessment rubric

(Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez-Sotelo, 2012)

- Incorporated into program advising
  - At intake (end of sophomore year): give candidates a more realistic picture of how much work they have to do
    - Encourage study abroad
    - (OPI is taken by teacher candidates between junior and senior years)
  - (Planned) at point of admission to program (middle of junior year)
  - In Applied Spanish Conversation Class (beginning, midterm)

# Conversation classes

- FLSP 211: Intermediate Spanish Conversation
  - Native & heritage speakers take FLSP 215: Spanish Grammar for Spanish Speakers instead
- FLSP 311: Advanced Spanish Conversation
- FLSP 412: Applied Spanish Conversation



# FLSP 412– inherited version

- Class participation
- One 15-minute oral presentation
- Two 2-minute news article presentations
- Read & discuss *Como agua para chocolate* and *Ética para Amador*
- Watch movie and videos
- Written and oral midterm exam and written (?) final

# FLSP 412: Applied Spanish Conversation

## Class Activities

- Daily paired conversation practice (based on OPI questions & situations)
  - Intermediate, advanced, superior
- 4 applied vocabulary units
  - TL videos and readings
  - mini presentations
  - groupwork
  - circumlocution practice with vocabulary
  - combination of oral and written quizzes
- Individual Newscast Presentation
- Individual Phrase of the Day Presentation
- Individual Final Presentation

# FLSP 412: Applied Spanish Conversation

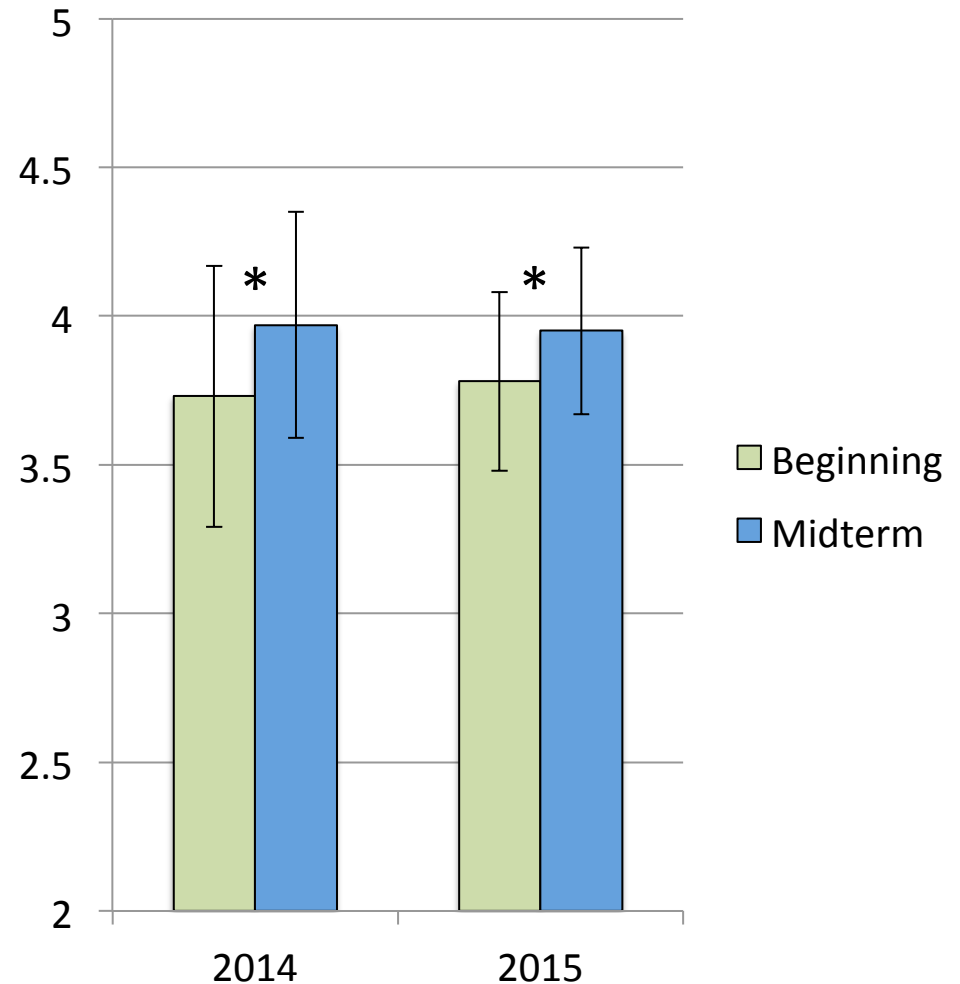
## Data collection

<b>Beginning of semester</b>	<b>Midterm</b>	<b>Final</b>
Self-assessment rubric	Self-assessment rubric	
Record self responding to OPI questions, transcribe, get advisory rating		Record self responding to OPI questions, transcribe, get advisory rating



# Results: self-assessment rubric

- Scoring
  - Never = 1
  - Occasionally = 2
  - Sometimes = 3
  - Most of the time = 4
  - All of the time = 5
- Significant increase in self-ratings
  - $p < .01$  (all students increased)
  - $p < .05$  (8 students increased, 4 decreased, 1 stayed the same)



# Questions with significant increases

- 2014
  - \* I can talk in detail about my work (e.g., how I got the job, job duties, typical work day...)
  - \* I can speak fluently without unnatural pauses or hesitations.
  - \* I can **narrate in detail in the Present** (e.g., relate a story from a movie or book.)
  - \* I can participate in conversations about home activities (e.g., explaining a recipe, how to play a game...)
- 2015
  - \* I can **narrate in detail in the Present** (e.g., relate a story from a movie or book.)

# Questions with marginally significant increases

- 2014
  - \* I can **fully participate in formal conversations about school activities.**
  - \* I can participate in situations with unanticipated complications (e.g., losing one's luggage, reporting a car accident, and the like.)
  - \* When I narrate an event, I can combine and link sentences into connected discourse of paragraph length.
- 2015
  - \* I can **fully participate in formal conversations about school activities.**

# Advisory rating on recording

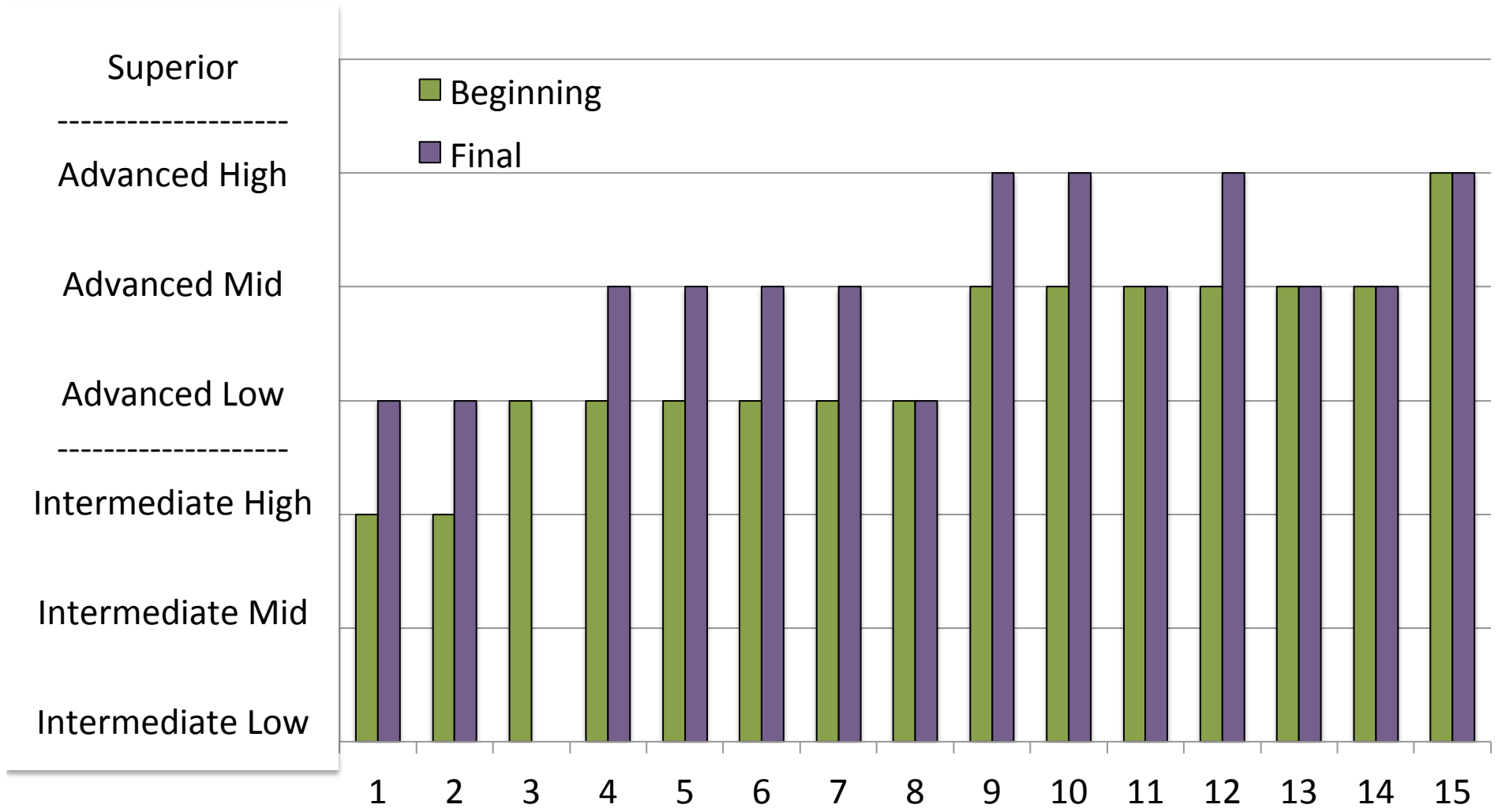
- Students record themselves answering a series of questions that mimic the OPI
- Scored with rubric to increase reliability

PREGUNTA	INTERMEDIATE HIGH	ADVANCED LOW	ADVANCED MID	ADVANCED HIGH
9 (Habla de algo raro que viste o que te ocurrió)	Narrates in past, but unable to carry out full narration or sustain paragraph length discourse	Narrates in past with some control of aspect. Paragraph length descriptions are not interwoven; some grammatical roughness; noticeable self-correction; able to rephrase or circumlocute instead of resort to English	Past narration provides a full account, with good control of aspect. Narration and description tends to be combined and interwoven. Vocabulary is fairly extensive although primarily generic in nature.	Able to consistently explain in detail and narrate fully and accurately in past tense. Uses precise vocabulary and intonation; often shows great fluency and ease of speech.

# Advisory rating on recording

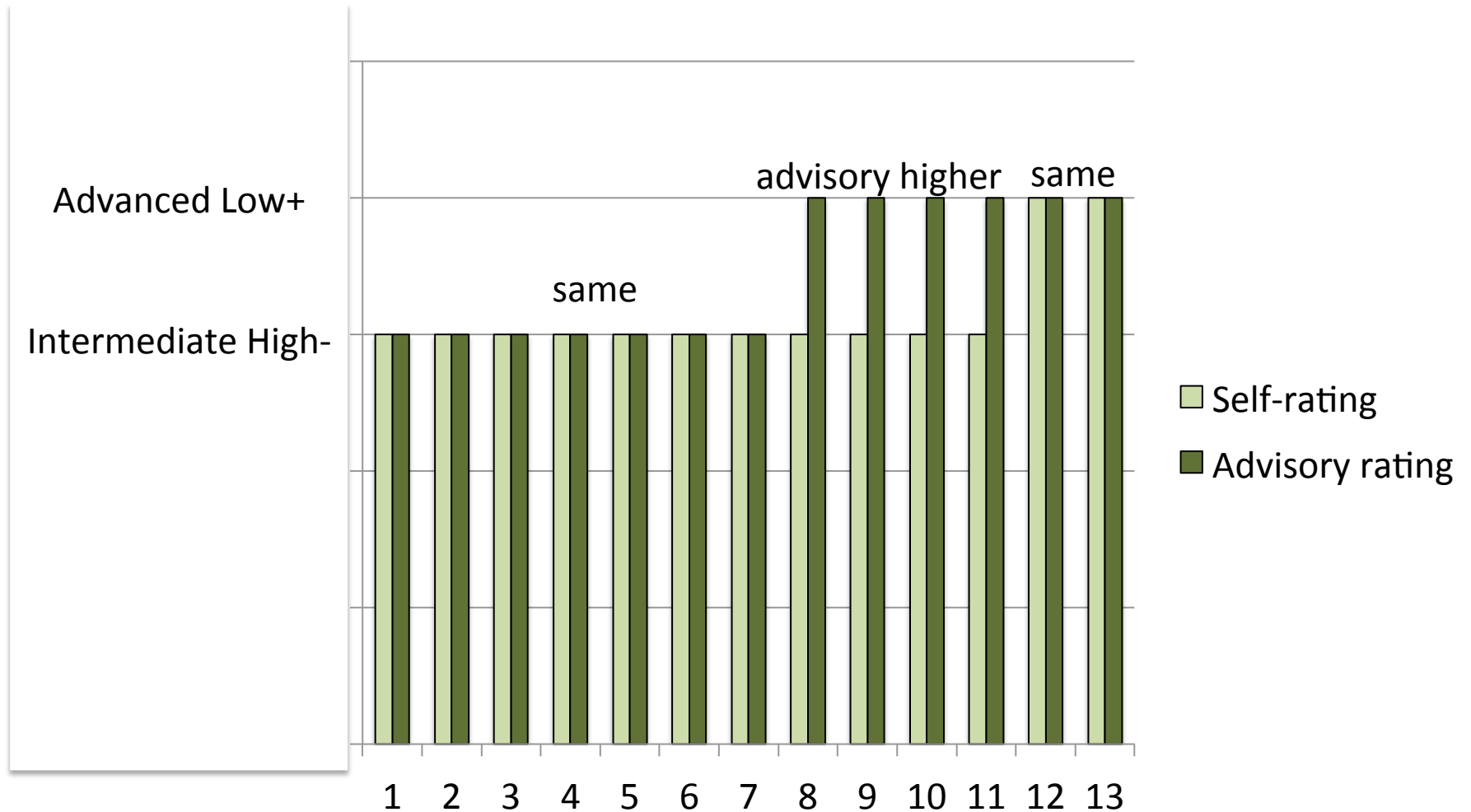
PREGUNTA	INTERMEDIATE HIGH	ADVANCED LOW	ADVANCED MID	ADVANCED HIGH	SUPERIOR
12 (Si ganaras un millón de dólares jugando la lotería, ¿qué harías con el dinero?)		Contributes to conversation with sufficient accuracy, clarity and precisión to convey the intended message without misrepresentation or confusión.	Participate in most informal and some formal exchanges on a variety of concrete topics as well as topics relating to current events and events of personal interest	May construct hypotheses; able to discuss concepts abstractly; Uses precise vocabulary and intonation; often shows great fluency and ease of speech	
14 (Trata de convencer a tus padres que te permitan ir a estudiar en el extranjero este verano. Diles por qué es tan importante estudiar en otro país y qué beneficio sacarás del viaje.)			When called upon to perform functions or handle topics associated with the superior level, (such as presenting an argument) quality or quantity of speech generally declines.	May provide a structured argument to support opinions, and may construct hypotheses, but patterns of error appear. May resort to simplification through the use of description or narration in place of argument or hypothesis	Able to provide a structured argument without linguistic breakdown. Able to separate main ideas from supporting information. Demonstrate NO pattern of errors in the use of basic structures, but may make sporadic errors, although these don't distract or interfere with communication

# Results: advisory rating on recording

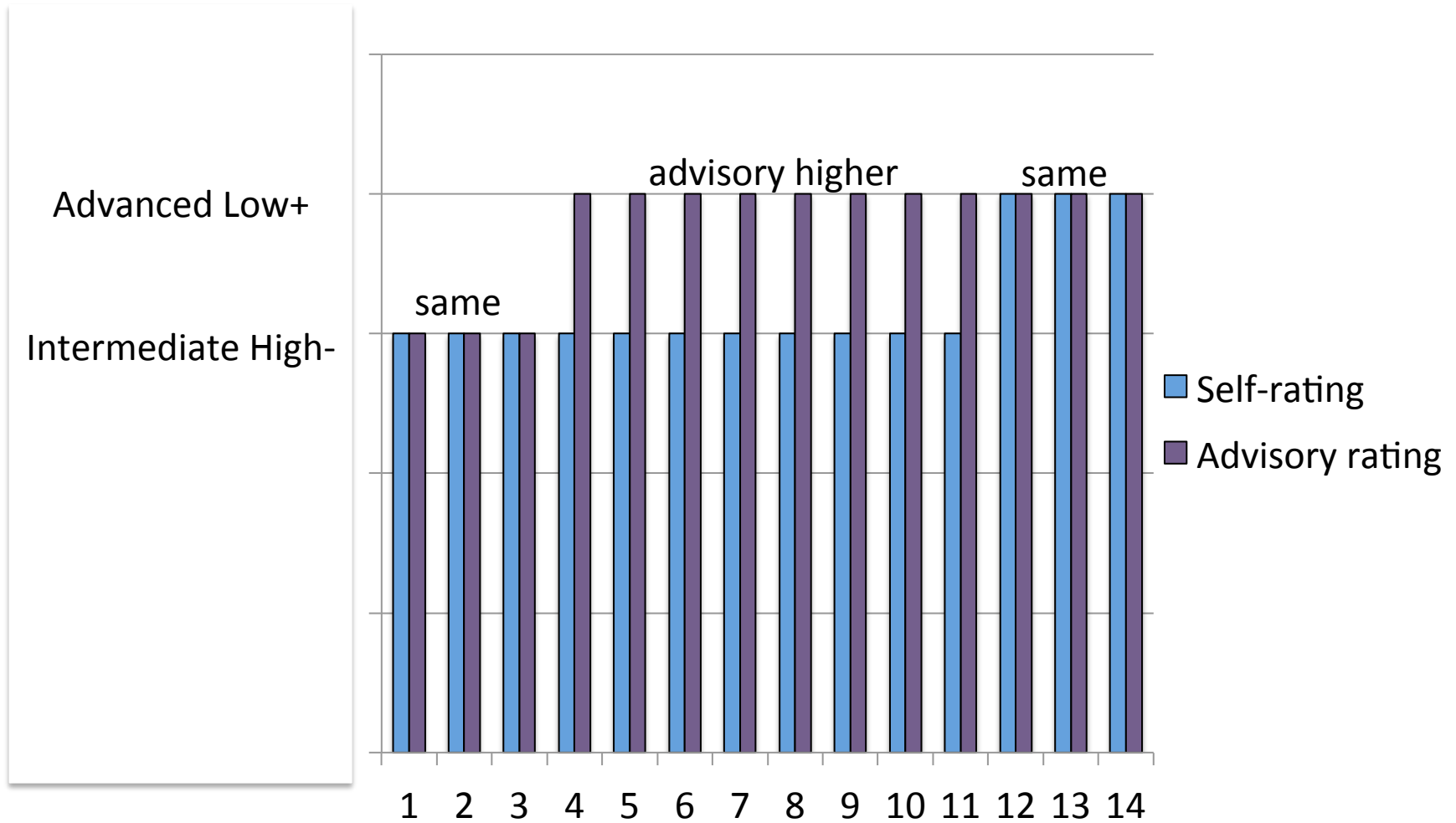


10 students increased 1 sublevel; 4 stayed at the same sublevel

# Correspondence between self-ratings and advisory rating: beginning



# Correspondence between self-ratings and advisory rating: midterm/final





# Self-assessment rubric scores that predict OPI ratings

Average self-assessment rubric rating 1 = never 2 = occasionally 3 = sometimes 4 = most of the time 5 = always	Advisory OPI rating
4.60	Advanced Mid
3.95	Advanced Low
3.64	Intermediate High
2.88	Intermediate Mid

# End of semester student reflections

- This time, I did a better job of working around things I didn't know how to say, instead of saying "I don't know" like I did in the first interview.
- I think the simulated situations we did all through the semester helped me to improve my speaking abilities.
- I'm more comfortable speaking and answering questions. My grammar, vocabulary and verb conjugations have improved.
- After this class, I am able to speak with more fluidity and confidence. I also make less errors and the language has become more second nature to me.
- You can tell from the amount of detail in the second OPI that I've gained confidence, because I've added to my vocabulary. My abilities with the past tense have also improved; I had some problems with the past tense at the beginning of the semester, and now I think it's one of my attributes.
- Before this class, I didn't think it was possible for me to speak in front of the class for 10 minutes in Spanish.

# End of semester student reflections

- This class taught me to be more confident with my Spanish. At the beginning of the semester, I didn't like to speak Spanish in front of people.
- When the semester began, I thought my Spanish was going to get worse because I didn't have anyone to speak it with, because my parents moved to Florida. It took me by surprise that my Spanish improved.
- I think I've improved a lot in this class. Although I still struggle with the past, present and future, speaking in class is a very useful practice.
- My proficiency has definitely improved. Now I have much more confidence in my Spanish speaking abilities.
- I learned words that don't exist in Spanish that I usually use but really they are said in a different way.
- The presentations, the conversation lines, and the vocabulary games helped me a lot.
- I think before I spoke with lots of hesitation, but now I speak with less hesitation.
- I think I did a better job of not using long pauses between my thoughts when answering the questions. I didn't say "um" or "uh" as often as before.

# Conclusions

- Investment in faculty training **increases quality of conversation course** -> increases OPI scores
- Two groups **significantly improved on self-assessment ratings**
  - Provides more fine-grained measure of progress than ACTFL sublevels
- 10/14 students **went up one OPI sublevel** through conversation course; 4/14 stayed at the same level

# Conclusions

- Connection between research, teaching, and service through self-assessment rubric
  - “Teaching to test” provides positive washback effects when the assessment is good
- **Adds to validity of self-assessment rubric** (Gonzalez-Bueno & Perez-Sotelo, 2012)
  - Predicted 68% of scores exactly; underestimated 31% (previous finding was 88% correct/12% underestimated)
  - **Does not overpredict scores**
  - Zero-cost, fast way for programs to assess students
  - Can be applied multiple times throughout program

# Future directions

- Look at more than just Intermediate High/Advanced Low divide
- Investigate connection between self-assessment rubric at program entry and OPI score before student teaching– possible screening measure
- Impact of study abroad on self-assessment ratings
- Examine self-assessment rubric scores for teacher candidates who get official (not advisory) OPI rating

