

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo History, BA, MA

The 2019-2020 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for History, BA and MA programs concluded with a culmination meeting on October 30, 2020.

The following people attended the meeting: Carolyn Thomas (Provost), Mark Filowitz (AVP for Academic Programs and Enrollment, AVPAPE), Sheryl Fontaine (Dean, HSS), Jessica Stern (Associate Dean, HSS), Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi (Chair), and Su Swarat (AVP for Institutional Effectiveness, AVPIE).

The Provost thanked the department for its excellent work, and praised the Chair for her collaborative approach to engage the faculty. She specifically highlighted the following accomplishments:

- Topped list in increasing four-year graduation rates for first-time freshmen and two-year graduation rates of transfers compared to fall 2014 and fall 2015 cohorts in college's 2019 report.
- Faculty are committed scholar/teachers engaged in creating and sustaining a high-quality academic program and department's long-term success.
- Department responded positively to dramatic fall in FTES, due to EO 1100r, by increasing faculty attention to its long-term planning and rethinking curriculum.
- Excellent curriculum redesign effort, including expanding lower division offerings with new 200-level courses expected to appeal to non-majors, reducing units required for history minor to help augment enrollment and increase department's visibility among undergraduates, performing intentional curriculum analysis to encourage students to explore the discipline of History, and aligning learning outcomes with the courses to strengthen the curriculum and to connect curriculum to career.
- Long-term plans prioritize areas of curriculum development, retention and expansion of majors and minors, and alumni outreach.
- Undergraduate advising structure changed from using two undergraduate advisors to an "all faculty" model.
- Center for Oral and Public History is a unique asset to the college and nationally recognized.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

1. Upper-division course availability:

- The external reviewers recommended the department to address scheduling of upper-division courses constrained by enrollment patterns by categorizing (e.g. Group A, B, and C), and requiring students to take a course from each. They also recommended the department to give students transparent plan of upcoming course schedules to reduce time to graduation.
- The Chair stated that the suggested categorization approach would not work, but the department is aware of this issue and has revised its "curriculum sheet" to address it. Specifically, the updated "curriculum sheet" groups courses by world areas, and notes the frequency of course offerings that is agreed upon by the faculty.

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2. Graduate program – MA thesis:
 - The external reviewers recommended the graduate program to change the culture around comprehensive exams and theses, given that the MA thesis is known to be a bottleneck to program completion.
 - The Chair reported that the program currently has three tracks – project, comprehensive exam, and thesis. The department is aware that the thesis option tends to stall student progress, and thus has spent concerted effort in the past several years to redirect students away from thesis. Faculty have also started to change the narrative within the discipline that thesis is preferred over exam, reached the consensus that the thesis option is reserved for students who meet certain criteria, and began to reframe thesis as a “journal article”.
 - The Provost commended the effort, and emphasized the importance of advising to help students determine when to pursue a thesis vs. a comprehensive exam.

3. Graduate program – Advising:
 - The external reviewers and the Dean recommended the department to consider whether graduate advising primarily performed by a graduate coordinator is better suited to faculty.
 - The Chair stated that the department has 2 dedicated faculty advisors for graduate students. The department has an ASCII that handles administrative issues for graduate students. Since she has more availability [M-F, 8am-5pm] and was a graduate student in the College of Education (she received her M.A. in Higher Education), graduate students tend to go to her for advising, which is inappropriate. The department has recognized this issue, and is working to amplify the role of faculty advisors.

4. Center for Oral History (COPH):
 - The external reviewers inquired about university and college financial support for COPH, and recommended the development of opportunities for the center to serve students and faculty beyond History.
 - The Dean commented that COPH is funded through philanthropy, and the Dean’s office provides assigned time for one faculty member for fundraising. The funding for the center relies upon fundraising success.
 - Both the Dean and the Chair reported that the new construction for COPH is nearly complete, which will serve as a “centerpiece” for the college and the university, as well as a venue to showcase the center’s work to attract funding.

5. Infrastructural updates and renovations to the Humanities Building’s 8th floor:
 - The Chair inquired about the process through which infrastructural renovations are prioritized on campus. The AVPAPE explained that the campus and the CO identify the areas of greatest need, and determine allocation based on available resources. For major constructions, sometimes bond issues are floated.
 - The Provost agreed that there needs to have a regular process to determine infrastructural renovation queue within Academic Affairs, and mentioned that an external review is being arranged to identify ways to improve the process.

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- The Dean added that the aforementioned renovation is included in the college strategic plan, and believe it will greatly help the college and university's philanthropic efforts.

The provost concluded the meeting by commending the department again for its collaborative work across campus. The Dean expressed appreciation for the Chair's leadership in navigating the EO1100 and AB1460 challenges. The AVPIE praised the department for its excellent work in student learning assessment. The Chair thanked the Dean's office for its continuous support, and especially for providing the resources to establish a renewable funding line for Digital Humanities technology and programming.