



# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Humanities and Social Sciences

*Department of History*

P.O. Box 6846, Fullerton, CA 92834-6846 / T 657-278-3474 / F 657-278-2101

June 4, 2020

To: Dean Sheryl Fontaine, College of the Humanities and Social Sciences

From: Chair Jasamin Rostam-Kolayi, Department of History

Re: Department of History's Response to the Dean's Summary and Evaluation of the History B.A. and M.A. Performance Program Review

On behalf of the Department of History, I thank the Dean for recognizing our progress and achievements in curricular development, advising, and graduation rates. We also appreciate the Dean's proposals on how the Department might strengthen recruitment and retention of majors and minors based on recent quantitative data. Given our fourth course structure, we will prioritize the recommendations that can best be carried out accordingly. As for an area of concern, the Department would like to express our disappointment that immediate infrastructural and fiscal needs were not seriously addressed in the Dean's report. I will respond to the Dean's Summary and Evaluation by outlining four key points below.

## 1. Public, Oral, Digital History Curriculum and the Center for Oral and Public History

The Department's curriculum in public, oral, and digital history and the Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History are among our chief distinctions. Though this curriculum concentrates at the 400 and 500-levels, in fact, we have recently ventured into lower division with HIST 202: "Discovering My Roots: Genealogy, Family, History." Reflecting and responding to the recent popularity of the PBS series "Finding Your Roots" and ancestry/genetic testing, this course will introduce Sophomores from across the College and University to oral, digital, and public history tools and technologies. In Spring 2019, the Department submitted HIST 202 to Curriculog where it was approved as a new course. In Fall 2020, it will move to General Education approval.

We appreciate the Dean acknowledging the technological and pedagogical needs of Digital Humanities, working to secure current and future MCF monies for it, and therefore recognizing its importance as a resource for the College and beyond. Like Digital Humanities, COPH serves much more than the Department of History every academic year. In addition to providing training in oral history methods to Humanities 100 students, archivist Natalie Navar has regularly worked with Modern Language and Literature's advanced Spanish language courses on the translation of oral histories. COPH Director and Associate Directors have frequently provided oral and public history training sessions to Communication Studies graduate students, Speech Therapy students, Ethnic Studies courses, and even Department of Philosophy courses. The Center has also provided oral history training to small business leaders through the Center for Family Business in the Mihaylo College of Business and Economics. Though COPH will continue to work across the

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY



# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Humanities and Social Sciences

*Department of History*

P.O. Box 6846, Fullerton, CA 92834-6846 / T 657-278-3474 / F 657-278-2101

University, its origins and status as an H&SS institution necessitate that the College holds on-going responsibility for its continued success.

## 2. Infrastructure and Renovations on the Humanities 8<sup>th</sup> Floor

Though the Department understands that the upcoming academic year may result in substantial budget reductions for the University and College, we would appreciate more guidance and direction on how to finance infrastructural renovations on the 8<sup>th</sup> Floor of the Humanities Building. Even in the best of times, a department's budget cannot support the considerable expense of renovating a single room at the estimated cost of \$100,000. Thus, the Department would welcome the support of the Dean's Office in staging a fundraising initiative that can succeed with our limited staff and budget resources and that might convince donors to fund infrastructure over programs. The Chair did, in fact, attempt private fundraising with a generous and sympathetic emeritus donor who adamantly insisted that infrastructure fell under the College's jurisdiction and responsibility. The Department considers infrastructure to be an urgent need that is tied to faculty, staff, and student morale with repercussions for recruitment and retention.

## 3. Recruitment/Retention/Advising

During the last two years, the Department has approached retention as cultivating community and belonging among majors both inside and outside the classroom. We have used a variety of methods (offering cohort sections, hosting welcome/open house events, instituting all-faculty advising, promoting a single student organization). We agree that we are now in a position to evaluate which of these strategies were most successful and sustainable.

The Dean's evaluation suggested that the loss of History Transfer students might be addressed by rethinking how and what we teach in our core courses, especially HIST 300A. As discussed in the Department's self-study and response to the External Review Team's report, we agree that revisiting our core courses (HIST 300A and 300B) should be a priority for a number of reasons. Because we take both curricular innovation and retention seriously, the Department's response to the External Review Team's report noted our intent to convene a HIST 300A/300B ad-hoc committee in the next academic year. Given that HIST 300A is one of the first courses History Transfer students take, it is essential that we make it a robust and worthwhile learning experience.

The wide-ranging equity gap data noted in the Dean's evaluation reveal an area of concern that the PPR guidelines did not ask the Department to address in the self-study. The Chair intends to investigate further what the data tell us and how we might address the gap.

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY



#### 4. Publicity/Marketing of the Major and Department

The Department anticipates success in raising its profile through marketing the major with a new website and printed and digital materials. The revamp of the website was a Department priority this past academic year and is set to be unveiled this summer. In the coming months and years, the Chair will continue to oversee its updating and maintenance, as well as develop new marketing materials, such as posters featuring our alumni, postcards promoting the major/minor, and departmental displays on the 8<sup>th</sup> Floor. This effort may likely involve the Department consulting with and calling upon the expertise of H&SS Communications specialists, a valuable resource for the College and its programs.

The Department's recent plunge into video and graphic production has proven to be a potentially useful recruitment, retention, and community-building tool. A video we produced and distributed in Spring 2020 to admitted students might have played a role in boosting the number of our incoming Transfers. Since these marketing/publicity/retention efforts are dependent on the Chair, Vice Chair, and Fourth Course positions, the ability to pursue them will depend on balancing and adjusting existing workload responsibilities.

In sum, the Department's primary areas of focus in the immediate future seek to increase the number of majors and minors, communicate the relevancy and value of a History degree, use quantitative and qualitative data to understand what students want and need, and create a department culture that is welcoming and engaging.