

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Department of History  
Program Performance Review

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Dean's Summary Report and Recommendations  
March 2013

## **Overview**

The success of the Department of History is due in large part to the clear and consistent manner in which its mission informs the faculty's commitment to their undergraduate and graduate students, to their own scholarship, and to the College and University. Within the "rich, collaborative, and diverse learning community" of the department, the faculty share a desire to "cultivate among . . . students a broad and critical knowledge and understanding of past societies and civilizations" while providing them with "opportunities to critically engage issues of politics, culture, ethnicity, gender, and the environment in a historical context and . . . educational experiences that promote a global perspective." This mission provides a stable touchstone for all department decisions and plans. Under the careful guidance of Dr. Joe Burgtorf and with the assistance of the Vice Chair, Dr. Lynn Sergeant and an excellent administrative support staff, the History department is not just thriving, but flourishing.

## **Faculty and Student Success**

One of the most obvious ways that the department has sustained this commitment to their mission is through thoughtfully planned hiring practices and curricular decisions as well as their active support for faculty and student research. When faculty members have retired or left CSUF for other appointments, the department has made hiring choices that respond to well-established disciplinary expectations as well as developing intellectual trends. As the team of reviewers noted, there is "a desire by historians to shift away from thinking largely or exclusively in terms of the histories of nation-states . . . and also shifting from emphasizing only the histories of certain parts of the world . . ." Sharing this desire with their colleagues across the country, the Department of History provides the University with a first-rate department and provides students with access to professors and mentors who are participants in the making of disciplinary knowledge.

Since their last Program Performance Review, "appreciative of the importance and supportive of these [disciplinary] shifts" (External PPR, 1), the department has hired new faculty members to help meet the increasing student interest in Public and Oral History and World, Global, and Comparative History; also aware of the campus mission to promote a global perspective, the department has hired new historians of China, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and modern Mexico as well as those who specialize in U.S. Borderlands. The department plans for future hiring includes the addition of specialties in pre-1800 Latin America, the early modern British Isles, and New Media/Digital History. Such hiring decisions enrich the curricula for the B.A. and M.A. degrees as well as for General Education, the minor, and collateral requirements from other departments. It is worth noting that just recently the department, in collaboration with Modern Languages and Literatures, received University approval of a concentration in Chicano/Chicana Studies within the M.A. in History. Overall, the department serves as a model to the University, where diversity is as much about who is on the faculty as it is about what is in the curriculum.

I agree with the reviewers' conclusion that this is a "productive department." The faculty members are first-rate scholars who publish regularly and in a broad range of areas, receiving awards to acknowledge their work and intramural grants to support their research. Perhaps it is the faculty's dedication to excellent scholarship that has provided motivation to the History students who publish the *Welebaethan*, a student publication that has been awarded top prize from the National History Honor Society for twenty-six consecutive years. Not satisfied with promoting only the research and scholarship of their students, the History faculty have also promoted students' participation in internships, providing students with both "hands on learning" and an opportunity for "increasing awareness within the historical professional of the need to demonstrate the skills of History majors and enhance their employability" (PPR, 3).

### Graduation and Retention

The number of History undergraduate majors and M.A. students has varied over time (see Tables 1, 2, 3). Numbers decreased noticeably around 2009 and 2010, but have begun to inch upward; most recently 43 first-time freshmen and 118 transfers were enrolled in the major, and 53 new M.A. students were enrolled.

Table 1: First-Time Freshman Regular Admits

	Applied	Admitted	% Admitted	Enrolled	% Enrolled
<b>2004-2005</b>	257	163	63%	49	30%
<b>2005-2006</b>	350	222	63%	55	25%
<b>2006-2007</b>	380	208	55%	49	24%
<b>2007-2008</b>	458	271	59%	55	20%
<b>2008-2009</b>	530	306	58%	60	20%
<b>2009-2010</b>	427	219	51%	51	23%
<b>2010-2011</b>	420	198	47%	38	19%
<b>2011-2012</b>	437	209	48%	43	21%

Table 2: Upper-Division Transfers

	Applied	Admitted	% Admitted	Enrolled	% Enrolled
<b>2004-2005</b>	477	291	61%	181	62%
<b>2005-2006</b>	454	267	59%	169	63%
<b>2006-2007</b>	504	272	54%	163	60%
<b>2007-2008</b>	475	257	54%	179	70%
<b>2008-2009</b>	484	267	55%	173	65%
<b>2009-2010</b>	353	149	42%	89	60%
<b>2010-2011</b>	645	295	46%	149	51%
<b>2011-2012</b>	524	231	44%	118	51%

Table 3: Masters Program Admits

	<b>Applied</b>	<b>Admitted</b>	<b>% Admitted</b>	<b>Enrolled</b>	<b>% Enrolled</b>
<b>2004-2005</b>	110	91	83%	59	65%
<b>2005-2006</b>	86	58	67%	36	62%
<b>2006-2007</b>	82	59	72%	43	73%
<b>2007-2008</b>	63	39	62%	34	87%
<b>2008-2009</b>	65	34	52%	21	62%
<b>2009-2010</b>	52	36	69%	22	61%
<b>2010-2011</b>	99	69	70%	48	70%
<b>2011-2012</b>	105	70	67%	53	76%

While, as the chair reports, campus impaction and the state of the regional economy certainly have impacted these numbers, the department may want to consider ways to advertise the success of its faculty and alumni. I encourage them to expand their involvement in New Student Orientation for First-year students and for transfers, perhaps making presentations to the undeclared students or providing material about the major to our feeder community colleges. The efforts of the department to single-handedly maintain a GE category are considerable, but it must not sacrifice its attention to majors.

The number of transfer student History majors who complete their degree in six years or less began to increase in fall 2003 and was most recently at 72.8% (see Table 4). Unfortunately, the same improvement has not yet occurred for first time freshmen majors; barely half of these students complete the degree in six years or less.

Table 4: Six-Year Graduation Rates

<b>New Upper-Division Transfers</b>	<b>Initial Cohort</b>	<b>% graduated in 6yrs or less in major</b>	<b>% graduated in 6 yrs or less in other major</b>	<b>Total graduated in 6 yrs or less</b>	<b>% graduated in 6 yrs or less</b>
<b>Fall 2000</b>	71	47.9%	15.5%	45	63.4%
<b>Fall 2001</b>	89	51.7%	18.0%	62	69.7%
<b>Fall 2002</b>	63	46.0%	19.0%	41	65.1%
<b>Fall 2003</b>	89	42.7%	24.7%	60	67.4%
<b>Fall 2004</b>	94	50.0%	16.0%	62	66.0%
<b>Fall 2005</b>	103	53.4%	19.4%	75	72.8%

<b>First-Time Full-Time Freshmen</b>	<b>Initial Cohort</b>	<b>% graduated in 6yrs or less in major</b>	<b>% graduated in 6 yrs or less in other major</b>	<b>Total graduated in 6 yrs or less</b>	<b>% graduated in 6 yrs or less</b>
<b>Fall 2000</b>	27	18.5%	37.0%	15	55.6%
<b>Fall 2001</b>	30	20.0%	46.7%	20	66.7%
<b>Fall 2002</b>	50	24.0%	24.0%	24	48.0%
<b>Fall 2003</b>	50	16.0%	26.0%	21	42.0%
<b>Fall 2004</b>	48	18.8%	27.1%	22	45.8%
<b>Fall 2005</b>	57	31.6%	15.8%	27	47.4%

While the renumbering of the 400-level courses may have improved the progress toward the degree at that level, there may be other reasons why the native students' progress to the degree is not improving. For instance, students mentioned to the review team that it would be helpful if they could take courses from outside the major to fill out their study plans. They also note that there is not always adequate seating in the required HIST 490T course and that the variety of topics offered is limiting. I recommend the department consider ways of changing the scheduling rotation of this course. Also, course waitlists would let the chair know if there are other courses where demand exceeds availability.

I appreciate the modifications that the department has proposed to enhance student learning. That is, the department has plans to make HIST 300A a prerequisite for HIST 490T, creating a way a student mentoring program that will make available peer-tutorial assistance; to offer department-wide best-practices workshops; and to improve tracking of advising appointments. These modifications speak to the topic of retention and timely completion of the degree. I encourage the department to collect the retention and completion data each year as one way of monitoring the success of their plans.

### **Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment**

The History department, as indicated above, keeps at the forefront of its discussions, the curricular needs of students in relation to current and emerging fields within the discipline. The department was recognized with the *CSUF 2011 Advancement in Assessment Award* for creating a thorough and sustainable assessment plan for its undergraduate program. Faculty have identified a clear set of Student Learning Outcomes and, working with campus and visiting experts, have recently revised their plan in a way that best identifies the assessment strategies that measure these outcomes and identifies ways to use this measurement for making program improvements. So far, the results of their assessments have demonstrated both student and curricular success. Given their responsibility to the GE program, the department has also been handed the task of creating an assessment plan for the University.

The Assessment Committee has been very active, guiding the department in the creation of a robust assessment plan for the major and for the GE program as well as conducting best-practice workshops on pedagogical topics of importance to the faculty/students. Given that this year is a particularly burdensome one in terms of assessment (undergraduate, GE, and impending graduate assessment), the position of Assessment Coordinator makes sense for the short term. Once the assessment plans for undergraduate and graduate programs are complete and the rotation for assessing each learning outcome has begun, the chair might re-evaluate the need for allocating department resources to support this position and rely on an assessment committee instead.

Based on the information in the Program Performance Review, it appears that Student Learning Outcomes have yet to be created for the M.A. program. Like the B.A. program, the M.A. program must have set of defining its learning outcomes and an assessment plan that will allow the department to measure the success of its program and determine the need for curricular changes.

## **Budgets and Target**

The department conscientiously schedules courses and assigns faculty with attention to target and budget. Students have access to a well-balanced, interesting, and innovative curriculum, and faculty morale is strong. This is not an easy task—to balance the competing needs of a graduate program, an undergraduate major, GE requirements, a credential program, and the needs and interests of intellectually and scholarly active faculty.

The reviewers report that faculty members are interested in exploring alternate ways of meeting individual teaching targets. That is, some faculty would prefer semester assignments of one large section and two small ones in addition to the supervision that they each provide for students; other faculty members prefer to distribute their teaching responsibilities through four courses in addition to supervision. If the department chooses to provide these options to faculty, it will be imperative that the Chair and scheduling committee keep careful track of the need to meet target and stay within the boundaries of the CBA and the budget while also continuing to meet the competing needs of the degrees and programs to which they are responsible. It might be useful to identify a committee who will assist with scheduling or with making a recommendation to the department about how such differential schedules will be assigned and what the expectations will be for each faculty member should such a change occur.

## **Facilities**

The department and the review team both note the importance of its student clubs and the general camaraderie of the students and faculty and the need for a common space. I appreciate their willingness to think about the various ways in which space might help the department—that is, if it were to be found, this would be space that could be used not just for clubs, but also for one-on-one advising, small group workshops, and mentoring space. The College recognizes the importance that common space has for the intellectual ambiance of a department and has been researching available spaces in the hopes of providing this opportunity for all departments.

Recognizing the importance of the Center for Oral and Public History to the faculty and students in the department and the long-standing recognition the Center has had from the University and the Community, the College provides assign time at .6 AY for the Director, \$35K for a full time staff person, and no-cost IT technical support. In addition, since 2007 when we contributed funds to pay for digitalizing their data collection, we have paid approximately \$11,000 annually for its storage. With the help of University Advancement, the Center was awarded an NEH grant that, as explained in the PPR, contributes \$1 for every \$3 provided by the awardee. I encourage COPH to use the guidance of University Advancement as well as the College Director of Development for finding these matching funds and identifying other funding opportunities.

Similarly, we recognize the value that programs and events sponsored by the European Studies Program provide students, and I encourage the Program, like all H&SS programs, to continue to seek appropriate assistance through sources such as Miscellaneous Course

Fees. In an effort to provide a faculty member with time to coordinate the growth of FTES of the program, other than one year when the University faced both budget cuts and furlough, the College has consistently provided assigned time for the coordinator of the European Studies Program. A goal to achieve a target of 12-15 majors by 2014 and a target of 25-30 by 2017 was set in 2010 when the Program completed its own PPR. Unfortunately, movement in that direction has not been steady. At the present time, there are three EUST majors, only one of whom has identified this as a primary major. Until the numbers grow and justify a greater need, it seems reasonable that support for a coordinator shift from the College to the History department.

### **Summary of recommendations**

1. Consider ways to advertise the success of History faculty and alumni as a way to increase the number of majors. Expand the number or kind of presentations to the undeclared students at NSO or provide material about the department to our feeder community colleges.
2. Consider the best ways of scheduling of courses in order to meet student demand. Use course waitlists to determine in which courses demand exceeds availability.
3. As it implements plans to enhance student success, collect the retention and completion data each year as one way of monitoring and assess these plans.
4. As the department explores the possibility of offering faculty optional ways to distribute their individual teaching targets (mixing small and large courses along with supervision), keep careful track of the need to meet target and stay within the boundaries of the CBA and the budget while also continuing to meet the competing needs of the degrees and programs to whom they are responsible.
5. Identify the Student Learning Outcomes and an Assessment plan for the M.A. program.

### **Final thoughts**

I commend the excellent teaching, internationally-reputed research, and generously offered service that emanates from the History Department and adds to the significant role our College serves on campus. The well-crafted, clearly composed Program Performance Review itself is the perfect indication of the strength of the faculty and the promise of its students.