

**HISTORY DEPARTMENT
EXTERNAL PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

This report on the History Department was drafted after spending time reading all of the materials prepared for us, spending a full day on campus, and then comparing notes on our experiences via email. Our time at Cal State Fullerton was stimulating and eye opening, complementing in many ways the written materials, such as the unusually well-constructed self-study document, but also revealing things that allowed us to get a feel for interactions, strengths and challenges that cannot be captured in any way other than via face-to-face conversations—and in this case also attending a class, which allowed us to see one stellar faculty member teach and also interact very effectively with a room full of clearly engaged students. We learned a great deal from every activity, from touring parts of the campus and sitting in on that class to, even more importantly in terms of this report, talking with faculty, students, and administrators, as well as a staff member at the Center for Public and Oral History (COPH).

What we found was a Department that is doing extraordinarily well in difficult budgetary times. So much is going well that, in the sections that follow, you will find many specific comments but only rare expressions of concern—except one very large one, which is regarding the fate and future of COPH, something that concerns us enough, due to its importance for the visibility and integrity of the unit that we devote a final section to it alone. On other fronts, what it needed, we feel, is simply some basic things—from a student lounge to aid the cohesion of History majors and graduate students, to some continued hiring along the lines spelled out and well defended and explained in the self-study, so that the department can continue to do what it has been doing very skillfully of late, which is to build in new fields that have obvious potential, while maintaining traditional areas of strength as needed.

In the pages that follow we focus first on the unit's overall condition, especially its faculty research profile and internal morale, then turn to student and faculty concerns. We end with the complex and important issue of COPH.

FACULTY AND RESEARCH PROFILE AND MORALE

Fullerton's History Department has done an excellent job in moving in new directions, which keep it in step with important developments in the discipline as a

whole, without compromising traditional areas of significance or generating schisms among faculty—two things that sometimes create challenges for units that undergo transformations. As the self-assessment notes, one of the two major initiatives taken by the department in recent years has been to strengthen its already strong profile in Public and Oral History. The other has been to make a series of well thought through hires of scholars working in new geographical fields and/or tacking transnational topics, in order to give the department the ability to offer courses that provide a more global coverage of the past and also bolster its engagement with world history.

The public and oral history move fits in well with an increasing concern within the discipline in very recent years with finding new ways to connect study of the past to broad publics and local communities. It also makes sense given the special resources the campus has in oral history (e.g., COPH, discussed separately below), as well as the distinctive missions of Cal States generally to address the needs and interests of California residents in meaningful ways.

The world history moves, meanwhile, constitute a creative response to what is probably the most important shift in history as a discipline of the last two decades: namely, a desire by historians to shift away from thinking largely or exclusively in terms of the histories of nation-states (or certain empires when dealing with earlier period), and also shifting from emphasizing only the histories of certain parts of the world, which in the case of the United States has tended to mean North America and Western Europe.

Fullerton's department is now in a strong position when it comes to both of these areas just mentioned—and what is striking is that even faculty not in either area seem appreciative of the importance and supportive of these shifts. This, we want to stress, is a true accomplishment, as often there is at least some blowback from pushes that take departments in either of these important directions. One key to this success may be, as can sometimes be the case, strong leadership—and leadership by figures, such as the current chair (an energetic and productive specialist in medieval history), who do not have an obvious vested interest in moves in their new directions. All of this bodes well for the department's future, suggesting that it can continue to strengthen itself in traditional and new areas when there are opportunities for hires derived from retirements or possibilities for expansion. In meetings with various groups of faculty in different settings, individuals had widely varying opinions on many specific issues, showing a passionate concern with things like curriculum development and course loads and so forth, yet there was no criticism of these two emphases.

Looking forward, all California public universities face challenges in maintaining faculty strength in a changing budgetary situation, something that is often especially true in social science and humanities disciplines, but this should not stop departments from considering the need to keep moving in novel directions. Fullerton's History Department understands this, as the references in the self-study

to New Media/Digital History as an area in which to hire indicate. Here, again, there was no sign that this was a controversial decision, as many faculty seemed to feel that they could benefit from having someone with digital experience in their midst, just as they had benefitted, no matter their specific field, from the expansion of geographical coverage that has come with recent hires. The fact that other designated hiring priorities include an effort to make sure a standard field is not neglected (a position in early modern Britain) and that the momentum of building to strength in world history is maintained and the heavily Hispanic nature of the community kept in mind (a position in pre-1800 Latin America) shows an interest in balancing different needs that is important.

Difficult budget times can strain the morale and undermine the cohesion of departments, but there was little evidence of any strain of this sort on display during our visit. There seems, by contrast, to be considerable camaraderie, a sense of having made good hires and an effective generational transition in a difficult time. Helping this may be a good deal of overlapping and intersections, from faculty with many different specialties participating in the world civilizations survey to faculty with no obvious ties for Latin American or U.S. ethnic history taking part in the mentoring of Hispanic students (something relevant to the campus serving as one that is Hispanic-serving). Moving forward, it would be excellent to see the trend of more and more faculty having some connection to COPH continuing.

It was clear from looking at CVs that this is a productive department and clear from other materials that it is doing well in offering courses at many levels. It was good to discover through the visit that it is also cohesive and that there is general agreement as to what its strengths worth protecting are and how it might best development in future, should resources for new hires be available.

STUDENT AND FACULTY CONCERNS

STUDENT CONCERNS

During our time with them students expressed many of the concerns mentioned in the History department's PPR Self Study.

Echoing your desire "to build a stronger sense of community among current students" and faculty by creating a space in which they could meet and work on common projects (4, 26), for example, several students mentioned how important a student lounge would be for them. This should certainly be a priority in any planned use of space in the future. Related to this were several comments by students on the importance of student organizations. Some students wondered if their existence could be better publicized in order to encourage greater participation.

In line with the responses made in the student and alumni surveys recorded in your Self Study, which noted that the "department's dedicated faculty members are its

greatest strength,” (5) it was clear from the students we met with that they have a great deal of respect for History faculty. They expressed an appreciation for the time they spent with them as teachers and mentors. They consistently described your faculty as supportive and encouraging, dedicated to helping students develop fundamental critical thinking, reading, writing skills. Students also mentioned that the high standards modeled and maintained by your faculty encouraged them to do their best, to continually strive to measure up to their high expectations.

All of this was borne out by our visit to Professor Allison Varzally’s course on the History of California (HIST 481B). Her class was characterized by a high degree of interaction between students and the instructor. Professor Varzally effectively and admirably encouraged class participation. When addressing the questions she raised in class, her students were very articulate and demonstrated an analytical ability that was truly impressive. Equally important, she worked diligently to clarify students’ thoughts, as she provided a comprehensive recap of their ideas that tied them to the topic at hand. Her course clearly reflects the responses to your student and alumni survey, which revealed that “the close intellectual relationships fostered by a discussion-focused pedagogy constitute one of the most valuable characteristics of the History degree.” (5)

While they were uniformly enthusiastic about their experience as undergraduate and graduate History majors, the students we met with did have some suggestions for improvement.

Almost all the students we talked to noted that History 300B fundamentally helped them to become better historians, and they insisted that it prepared them for the work required in their other courses, especially in HIST 490T. While HIST 300A and 300B are already prerequisites for HIST 490T, one student, who took HIST 300B relatively late in his career at CSUF, wondered if the course could be made mandatory at an early stage in the coursework of the major.

Related to this, some students expressed frustration with History 300A, complaining that the quality as well as the content of the course significantly varied from instructor to instructor.

In addition, with regard to HIST 490T, some students asked if it would be possible to have more topics covered in HIST 490T each semester in each historical category (World/Comparative, United State History, European History, Non-Western History), specifically noting that the absence of variety created a bottleneck for majors, which hindered student progress to degree. This would be in line with your Assessment Committee’s recommendation that students should be encouraged to “take 490T in a field in which they would have already taken an introductory or seminar course (e.g. by taking HIST 471B, From Colony to Nation, before 490T, American Revolution).” (18)

Some students also mentioned that they would like to be able to include courses from outside the major in their undergraduate major study plans.

And finally, some students asked that more advisement be offered that is specifically geared toward the needs of transfer students and to those preparing to enter CSUF's teaching credential programs.

FACULTY CONCERNS

It was clear that faculty relations could best be described as respectful, cordial and collegial. Nonetheless the faculty we met with voiced a few concerns.

One issue they discussed was teaching load. Some faculty want to move to a 3/3 course load. Other faculty resisted this, however, because they are wary that this would mean larger classes. Those in favor of a 3/3 load were less concerned with large class sizes and argued for one possible solution to the problem. With a SFR of 27.8 each faculty member needs to teach approximately 140 students for the department to meet its target. Each faculty member should be allowed to reach this goal in distinct ways, either by teaching 3 or 4 classes. Those who want to teach small classes can continue to do so by teaching 4 classes. Those who are willing to teach larger classes, which would enable them to meet their individual target with fewer class sections, should be allowed to do this by teaching 3 classes. It is clear that the department needs to meet together to resolve this issue.

As reflected in their PPR Self-Study, History faculty also discussed the importance of creating a space, such as a student/faculty lounge, where they could interact informally with each other as well as with their students in order to work on common projects and encourage further student/faculty collaboration and community building.

Faculty also mentioned that the amount of time spent on assessment was inordinate, and expressed a concern that these efforts to assess their undergraduate and graduate programs as well as their GE offerings were a significant drain on faculty time and department resources. Without sufficient assigned time for those engaged in these multiple forms of assessment such tasks will become overwhelmingly burdensome.

Finally, faculty also expressed concern for the hardships that result from decreases in the amount of department money allocated for faculty travel for conferences and for professional development.

THE CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY (COPH)

COPH is a jewel in the crown of not only the History Department, but also the College of Humanities and Social Sciences and the University. With its founding as the Oral History Program in 1968, COPH subsequently became an HSS College-sponsored center in 2002. It houses and maintains the largest oral history archive in California, and connects those histories with the communities it serves through its engagement in public history. The Center has served as a unique hub for intra-college collaboration and activity as well as a vital point of CSUF's connection with Orange County, southern California, the nation, and the world. COPH is distinctive in that it is one of few academic centers nationwide that is dedicated to both oral and public history and that provides opportunities for undergraduates. The Center has been an invaluable contributor to student success in the History Department, College, and the University and is poised to expand its already considerable influence through its students and activities locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

With its "humanities-based mission of collecting the important, individual stories of southern California, educating its students and the community in oral and public history, and bringing these regional, national, and global stories to the public," COPH is a sterling example of the higher education community's recent emphasis on what has been termed "High-Impact Practices" (HIP's). As articulated by the American Association of Colleges and Universities and many other entities, high-impact practices are viewed as necessary to ensure that university students succeed not only in their university educations and graduate in a timely manner but also that their university experiences position them to succeed in an increasingly competitive job market through the development of skills and knowledge that are transferable and applicable. While the History major does an excellent job at integrating HIP's throughout its curriculum, COPH is a crucial point for that integration.

Most notably, COPH functions as a point of engagement between the university, the History Department, its students, and the diverse communities that CSUF serves. Since its inception, COPH and the students and faculty it serves have undertaken projects across Orange County and southern California, transforming the student historians, their subjects, and their communities. Few other programs in the university, much less other universities, have the ability to do this. COPH supports many aspects of the History Department's curriculum, including but not limited to thirteen different departmental courses that are offered on a regular basis. It also serves many other departments in HSS. It houses internships that allow students to gain "real-world" archival experience that prepares them for employment after graduation or graduate school. It also serves as a point of connection with the larger historical community; its full-time archivist fields inquiries from amateur and academic historians from across southern California, the nation, and the world (for example, in the fall semester, COPH archivist noted that she received over 800 such phone calls or emails seeking information related to COPH's unparalleled collections), supervises student interns, and meets regularly with historians and

other scholars who utilize its collections. Its director, Dr. Natalie Fousekis, and Associate Directors, Drs. Ben Cawthra and Cora Granata, conduct free oral history seminars throughout southern California under the auspices of the Center. In addition to the transformative nature of these relationships that COPH and its faculty and staff foster, COPH has achieved national recognition for its work. COPH's Relocation and Expansion Initiative was granted a rare National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) Challenge Grant to expand and relocate the current facilities (housed in Pollak Library), to include, among other things, a student oral and public history collaborative learning lab and a conference room/student exhibit space. The proposed new space would also feature climate-controlled archival storage to ensure the preservation of the collection. For this project, the NEH has agreed to give CSUF \$1 for every \$3 the university raises for the COPH expansion project; to that end, the university must raise \$1.3 million to receive the \$425,000 grant from the NEH. Also speaking to COPH's national profile, the Oral History Association approached COPH Director Natalie Fousekis about the feasibility of hosting the organization's national office at CSUF.

As seen in the 2012 Program Performance Review Self-Study and as evident in interviews with History Department faculty and COPH staff and faculty, COPH faces an uncertain future without a firm commitment to its funding from university administrators. Recent budget cuts and failure to meet past levels of funding have jeopardized COPH's ability to continue to operate at its present level, much less expand according to the proposal funded by the NEH. According to the director, despite having been identified by the Cal State Fullerton Philanthropic Foundation's Board of Governors in 2009 as one of the five priority initiatives for the foundation and university, funding of COPH Archivist, Stephanie George, in June of 2010, was eliminated by HSS. Fortunately, after requests from the COPH director, the University Librarian, Richard Pollard, agreed to hire her as a library faculty with the title of Archivist. In 2010-11, the COPH director paid for her salary through privately raised funds (funding that was built in to the different oral history projects they were carrying out). In fiscal year 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 her entire salary was paid for by the library, despite attempts by the COPH director and the University Librarian to convince the HSS Dean to pay for at least part of her salary. (Prior to 2010, the position was a fiscal year renewable position; according to the COPH director, the former Dean had stated his intention for the position to become permanent). However, according to the COPH director, the University Librarian has made it clear that he cannot pay for her salary (\$50,000) in full in 2013-2014. Additionally, assigned time (formerly referred to as released time for COPH Director/Associate Directors) per semester was .8 from Fall 2003-Spring 2009 and funded entirely by the HSS Dean's office. In Fall 2009, assigned time funding was cut by the College to .6 each semester; remaining funds for the former level of assigned time was augmented by the History Department. At the time, the COPH director was promised by the HSS Dean that the assigned time would be returned if the budget improved. According to her, while the College budget was much better in 2011-2012, COPH assigned time remained the same.

If CPH is to continue to play the vital role it currently plays in the life and reputation of the university, the College, the History Department, its students, and its stakeholders in the regional and national historical community, the University must commit and solidify funding of it as an independent center that is not dependent on the vagaries of department-level funding (the Dean implied that she would like to see the History Department assume “more responsibility” for CPH since the two are so interconnected; CPH and History Department faculty are concerned that there is a desire to subsume CPH under the History Department’s budget). According to the CPH directors, if the University and College do not devote considerable time and energy through their advancement teams to aid CPH in raising the money needed to fulfill the terms of the NEH Challenge Grant, CPH will have no other choice than to return the funding to NEH. Doing so could very well impact CPH’s, the History Department’s, and other CSUF humanities departments’ and faculty’s ability to receive future funding from one of few remaining humanities granting agencies.

Of similar concern to the History Department and CPH directors is the continued college-level de-funding of the full-time archivist position and the reduction of assigned time necessary for the Center Director and Co-Directors to partner with the University and College Advancement teams to raise the funds for the NEH Challenge Grant. If funding is not restored and stabilized for the archivist position, CPH’s ability to function in the manner it has will be severely compromised and very likely would force the Center to close its doors as a research archive and would force the return of the NEH Challenge Grant.

The Review Team strongly recommends that the CSUF administration, including the HSS Dean, the Provost, and the President, to lend their full financial and administrative fundraising support to the Center for Oral and Public History. The Review Team recognizes that while it is often easy during tight budget times to think exclusively in terms of expenditures, it believes that the failure to commit to CPH in this manner would likely mean the demise of one of few programs that makes CSUF distinctive from other southern California universities, including UC and CSU campuses. The loss for CSUF students and faculty, and the local, regional, national, and global historical communities would be profound.

CLOSING REMARKS

All in all, we feel confident that, with the support it needs, the History Department can continue to flourish. It is a strong unit, which has been well led, enjoys a high degree of cohesion, and has a realistic view of how it can move forward, even in challenging times.