

Academic Program Review Report

Department of History

California State University, Sacramento

Review Team

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INTRODUCTION

We have comprehensively reviewed the programs of the History Department, and have endeavored to make recommendations to address what we have perceived to be the three major concerns of both the Department and the College: proposed budget cuts to the College and the Department, support for teaching and research, and faculty frustrations.

In the process of this review, the History Program Review Team interviewed faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students of the Department of History in the fall semester of 2006. We also consulted:

Dr. Christopher J. Castaneda, Chair, Department of History
Dr. Jeffrey Mason, Dean, College of Arts and Letters
Dr. Nancy M. Tooker, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Letters
Dr. Catherine Christo, University Assessment Coordinator
Dr. Nancy J. Taniguchi, CSU Stanislaus, External Consultant

The Review Team also studied the following documents:

Department of History website and newsletters
2006 History Program Review Self-Study, including its appendices:
Appendix A: Strategic Planning Committee Memo (May 30, 2006)
Appendix B: Five-Year Tentative Hiring Priorities (March 2006)
Appendix C: History Department: Roadmap to the Major
Appendix D: History Department Undergraduate Survey
Appendix E: Graduate Student Survey: Questionnaire (Fall 2005)
Appendix F: Graduate Student Survey: Results (Fall 2005)
Appendix G: Alumni Survey (2005): Program
Appendix H: Alumni Survey (2005): Employment
Appendix I: Sacramento State Library: Historical Materials Allocations
Appendix J: History Department Recommendation: Year 2000 Self-Study
Appendix K: Electives for History Majors (upper division by course number)
Appendix L: History Course Syllabi
Appendix M: History Faculty Curriculum Vitae
2000 History Program Review Self-Study
Department of History Assessment Plan
Department of History ARTP Policies and Procedures
College of Arts and Letters ARTP Policies and Procedures
External Consultant Report for the Department of History

The Review Team wishes to thank the Department and the College for their support of our efforts. We were also very fortunate to work with Dr. Catherine Christo, our assessment consultant, and Dr. Nancy J. Taniguchi, our external consultant. We sincerely appreciate their expertise and insight. The summary of our team's findings follows, which is presented in the form of commendations and recommendations.

This report, it should be noted, was drafted in the shadow of a very uncertain budgetary adjustment to the College and the Department. Some of the comments contained in this report can be understood fully only in this context.

COMMENDATIONS

Academic Programs

COMMENDATION 1: The History Department is commended for its ability to provide a great diversity of services to a large number of students in the University. With only 17 active full time tenure-track faculty as of Fall 2006¹, the Department has provided seven quality programs for the University: 1) the undergraduate History major, 2) the pre-credential Social Science Subject Matter Program, 3) a general education (GE) program, 4) the History M.A. – Standard Program, 5) the History M.A. with Humanities concentration, 6) the Public History M.A. Program, and 7) the joint Ph.D. in Public History (with UC Santa Barbara). It also offers three minors: the History minor, the Hellenic Studies minor, and the Middle East and Islamic Studies minor. Moreover, the Department has one of the highest student-faculty ratios and average section sizes in the College and the University.

COMMENDATION 2: The Review Team commends the History Department for providing exceptionally high quality education to its undergraduate majors and graduate students. In our conversations with students, we found ourselves listening to articulate, well informed students who gave every appearance of being well acculturated into the Department's and the field's expectations.

COMMENDATION 3: The Department is commended for its tremendous contribution to the University GE program. These contributions are essential to the mission of this University, including providing high quality liberal arts education and helping to ensure the timely graduation of our students.

COMMENDATION 4: The Review Team commends the History Department for its unique and creative Ph. D. program and master's program in Public History.

COMMENDATION 5: The Review Team commends the Department's commitment and ability to serve not only the students on campus, but also social science teachers in the community. The History Department has recently developed a unique pre-credential Social Science Subject Matter Program. The Department has also secured grants to work with other community organizations to help K-12 social science teachers improve their history and social science education, and it serves as the academic content provider for three Teaching American History Grants (TAHG). The Department has the vision and the potential to become the leader in providing professional development for social science teachers in the region and has committed faculty who are willing to achieve this ambitious goal.

¹ Two additional full-time faculty were then on leave.

Program Review, Assessment, and Their Responses

COMMENDATION 6: The Review Team commends the History Department for its excellent self-study report, which has provided comprehensive information about the Department, the undergraduate and graduate programs, its contributions to this institution, and its frustration with the lack of resources the Department receives for teaching and research.

COMMENDATION 7: The Review Team commends the Department for having developed a clear and effective mission statement and a comprehensive set of seven learning objectives for the undergraduate History majors.

COMMENDATION 8: The Review Team is very impressed with how the Department has responded to the recommendations regarding its master's programs in History from the previous Program Review report. The Department's Graduate Committee has undertaken a comprehensive review of its graduate curriculum in History and has proposed substantive and compelling modifications.

COMMENDATION 9: The Department has also performed many surveys of its students and alumni since the last Program Review, and has made great strides in using the assessment data to make its programs better. We commend the Department for such a positive use of assessment data.

COMMENDATION 10: Based on the assessment data, the Department has initiated a comprehensive advising program to better meet students' needs and to create more advising and mentoring opportunities for its majors and graduate students. We commend the Department for its commitment to its students.

COMMENDATION 11: To better inform students, faculty, and the community of events, achievements, and other items of interest, the History Department has redesigned its website and launched a new monthly newsletter. The website and newsletters keep people well-informed about what's going on in the Department. The Review Team commends the History Department for its excellent website and very informative newsletters.

COMMENDATION 12: Faculty in the History Department are dedicated to building a strong sense of community among themselves, undergraduate History majors, and graduate students. The Review Team is very impressed with students' appreciation of the interaction and personal attention they have obtained from the faculty both inside and outside the classrooms. Several graduate students mentioned this as one of the reasons they had chosen to return to the Department to pursue their graduate degrees.

Faculty and Staff

COMMENDATION 13: The Review Team commends the faculty and staff in the History Department for their hard work and commitment to the students and this institution.

COMMENDATION 14: The Review Team commends the Department Chair, Christopher Castaneda, for his effective leadership during a period of innovation, rapid turn-over in faculty due primarily to retirement, and budgetary uncertainties.

COMMENDATION 15: The Review Team is very impressed with the History faculty's scholarly achievements in spite of their heavy teaching load and insufficient institutional support. Of the five faculty members undergoing the fourth year ARTP review this year, four have published or soon will have published a book.

COMMENDATION 16: The Review Team is very impressed with how hard the Department is trying to provide support for its faculty's teaching and research efforts.

COMMENDATION 17: The Review Team is very impressed with the departmental Strategic Planning Committee and its efforts to develop a vision and a long-term hiring plan for the Department.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT

Reduce Sources of Frustration for Faculty and Staff

RECOMMENDATION 1: Clarify ARTP policies and expectations, and simplify ARTP procedures and process for junior faculty. As of Fall 2005, there were 19 full-time tenure-track faculty, not including FERP faculty. Of those full-time faculty members, 63% were assistant professors. These junior faculty members are under much stress from a variety of sources. Specifically, many seem to have an unclear understanding of expectations with regard to the tenure process. Additionally, their workload, their salaries, stalled contract negotiations between the CFA and CSU, reduced support for research, and their own commitment to their students and to excellence in their scholarship all combine to produce tension. The junior faculty give every appearance of being capable and committed, but some are frustrated and demoralized. We recognize that not all these sources of frustration rest in the Department or with the administration. We do recommend, however, that the Department take concrete steps to address issues relating to this frustration by, for example, setting up more meetings with the Dean to clarify tenure expectations, and updating the Department ARTP policy. ***The Review Team recommends that the Department look at its ARTP policies to see if the ARTP expectations and policies for teaching, research, and services are reasonable for the faculty given the resources and support available from the institution to successfully achieve their teaching, scholarship, and service goals.*** The Review Team also encourages the Department to look for creative ways to simplify the ARTP procedures or

process. One suggestion, for example, might be for the Department to review the retention files on the second, fourth, and fifth years, rather than every year. If any changes of policies or expectations need to be made, these changes should be documented and communicated clearly to the faculty. It is to be hoped that this may help increase morale and reduce frustrations, anxieties, or confusion among junior faculty.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Carefully monitor and review its advising program to see how much by way of time commitment is needed from the faculty and staff and to see if the students are receiving the appropriate and necessary amount of advising (p50, 2006 History Self-Study).

RECOMMENDATION 3: Hire additional full-time tenure-track faculty to reduce overall faculty workload. The full-time faculty members in the Department have worked very hard and are under a tremendous amount of stress and pressure to publish, to teach more students, and to serve the Department, the College, the University, and the community. However, as of Fall 2006, part-time faculty taught approximately fifty percent of all History courses. The Department needs to continue working with the College and the University to hire more tenure-track faculty. Obviously, this is not a departmental decision alone, but depends on the cooperation and ability of the administration to provide the necessary resources.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Make continued efforts to hire full-time faculty from “diverse” background in its future hires. Not much progress has been made in this area since the 2000 Review Team made this suggestion (Recommendation 6). As of Fall 2006, there are 19 full-time tenure-track faculty: 4 full professors, 3 associate professors, and 12 assistant professors. Of the 15 assistant and associate professors, only one individual represents a minority culture (see p70, 2006 History Self-Study). However, there is good gender diversity in the Department with 47% of full-time faculty being female. In its five year hiring plan, the Department has made the commitment to hire more diversified faculty, and we understand that in the current academic employment market it is difficult to compete for well-qualified diverse faculty with institutions that offer lower teaching loads and more faculty development resources. While keeping academic excellence as a priority, we strongly encourage the Department to try its best to keep this commitment to a diverse faculty.

Review and Assess All Programs in the Department

RECOMMENDATION 5: Review and update curriculum and course offerings. This department has changed a great deal since the last Program Review. Many senior faculty members have retired. At the same time, the Department has hired a large number of new faculty. These new faculty have brought with them tremendous energy and expertise. They have created many new courses that have enriched the History curriculum. The Department has decided to review its catalog entries and to update its curriculum. We encourage the Department to continue this effort. Now is a good time, we suggest, to look at the general missions of the Department and the University in light of the resources this

institution can offer, in order to explore what classes are essential to the Department's mission and focus. This can help the Department with its strategic planning, including making decisions regarding new hires and course offering. As the Department has suggested in its Self-Study (p23), should the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies develop its own M.A. program, termination of the History/Humanities M.A. option seems advisable.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Work with the University Assessment Coordinator to continue to develop the departmental assessment program to explicitly assess all the programs in the Department, not just its undergraduate major. As we mentioned in our seventh commendation, the Department has developed a clear and effective mission statement and a comprehensive set of seven learning objectives for the History undergraduate majors. The mission statement and these learning objectives can be slightly modified or upgraded to apply to the assessment of other programs in the Department.

The History Department has also done a great deal of surveys of its students and alumni since the last review, and is constantly using these data to improve the quality of its teaching or to better meet its students' needs. However, program review involves more than surveys or students' self-reports. The assessment plan indicates that papers from key courses will be collected. With the development of a rubric for reviewing these papers they would be valuable direct measures of student learning outcomes. Other direct measures of student performance, such as capstone courses, culminating papers, exams or work from classes could also be used². Moreover, the development of a course and program outcomes alignment matrix, also suggested by Mary Allen (2006:4), for all its programs can make it much easier to identify how the missions of the Department and the University are connected to the learning outcomes for graduate and undergraduate students and how cohesive are all the curricula in the Department. This can help the Department with its strategic planning. Therefore, it can become another effective tool, besides the Department's high FTES, for the Department to communicate to the College and the University for its hiring and other funding needs. Thus, only a little more effort on the assessment from the Department would greatly benefit the Department and its programs.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Closely aligned with Recommendations 5 and 6, we suggest the Department review the breadth of its offerings. As we mentioned in our first commendation, the History Department provides an enormous array of programs with a relatively small faculty. We suggest the Department review its present structure, offerings, resources, and mission in order to consider whether such breadth remains in the best interest of the faculty and the Department. ***We strongly emphasize that we are not recommending the Department scale back its excellent programs.*** Rather, we are suggesting that this would be a good time to avoid acting out of rote or habit, but rather to have a faculty conversation that leads to conscious choices about the future of the program and that develops strong, conscientious rationales for program offerings. As we

² Allen, Mary. 2006. "Assessment Workshops: Moving From Plans to Implementation." November 3, 2006. California State University, Sacramento.

mentioned in our introductory remarks, the University is presently without a clear future budget, and we recognize this makes planning difficult; it does, however, obviously increase the need for developing strong program rationales.

Better Facility and Space Utilization

RECOMMENDATION 8: Explore alternative options to better use available spaces.

The Department has taught many large classes. However, the large classrooms are in short supply, especially during prime class times between 8:00 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., Monday through Thursday. Therefore the Review Team urges the Department to work creatively with the College and the University in order to pursue solutions for large classroom use. It is, of course, very important to explore alternative options, such as offering Friday or Saturday classes when large classrooms are more readily available.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Offer two-year course plans to facilitate enrollment and to utilize the space better. Although the Department has tried very hard to provide more course choices for students since the last Program Review, some students still find it hard to get the classes they need. If the Department can offer a course plan two years ahead and offer many classes with little competition for spaces, such as Friday, Saturday, or late afternoon classes, students may find it easier to plan to take them.

Continue to Obtain Additional Support

RECOMMENDATION 10: Hire another staff member, even if it is only a half-time position. This will increase the quality of student services and enhance student satisfaction and retention.

RECOMMENDATION 11: Increase library holdings for teaching. Students, undergraduate and graduate, and faculty have indicated that our library lacks resources for students to do some basic research. This adversely affects course work and learning. We strongly encourage the Department to work with the University and the College to increase the budget in this area.

RECOMMENDATION 12: Establish a departmental mechanism for maintaining and updating the Department's website. During 2005-06, the Department paid a student to develop and maintain its website. We recommend that the Department consider creating an internship for website maintenance so that a student can continue doing this work.

RECOMMENDATION 13: Continue to seek more support for its graduate programs (p50, 2006 History Self-Study).

Better Communication between the Department and the College

RECOMMENDATION 14: Review communication assumptions with the administration. It appears to us that, occasionally, the Dean has offered comments or

raised questions that he intends to be heuristic. The Department has sometimes received these remarks as if they were directives. The Department clearly values a good relationship with the Dean, so we encourage the Department to be aware of this possibility. We emphasize, again, that this is merely an impression we have developed, and that we detect no ill will here on either side.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEAN AND THE COLLEGE

Better Communication between the College and the Department

RECOMMENDATION 1: Review communication assumptions with the Department. As we noted in Recommendation 14 to the Department, it appears to us that, occasionally, the History Department has received as directives some comments or questions that the Dean may have intended only as heuristic suggestions. The Dean obviously values a good relationship with the Department, so we encourage the Dean to be aware of this possibility. We emphasize, again, that this is merely an impression we have developed, and that we see no ill will here on either side. As the faculty get to know their new Dean better, this issue may disappear.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Clarify college ARTP policy and procedure and communicate any changes directly to the Department. The Review Team recommends that the Dean and the Secondary ARTP Committee reexamine the college ARTP policies to see if the college ARTP expectations and policies for teaching, research, and services are reasonable for the faculty under the resources and support the institution can provide to them. As the Dean recognizes, the History faculty is a strong and committed group of scholars, and the Review Team recommends that the College and the Dean examine the degree of communication regarding ARTP policy and issues between the primary committee, the secondary committee, and the Dean. The Review Team also encourages the College to look for creative ways to simplify the ARTP procedures and process. For example, instead of reviewing the retention files every year, the College might review the files the second year, the fourth year, and the fifth year. If there are any changes of policies or expectations that need to be made, these changes should be documented and communicated clearly to the faculty. We hope this may help increase morale and reduce frustrations, anxieties, or confusions among the faculty, and especially the junior faculty. We also encourage the College and the Dean to communicate both concerns as well as acknowledgement of meritorious work in their evaluations of faculty.

Better Support for Teaching Large Classes

RECOMMENDATION 3: Hire more graders: History faculty members are willing to teach additional large sections of classes to meet the needs of the Department, the College, and the University as long as graders are provided. Increasing support for graders from the College for those faculty members who are teaching large classes could be a win-win strategy for the Department, the College, and the University.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Explore more alternative options to better use available spaces. The Department has taught many large classes. Therefore the team urges the College to work with the Department and the University creatively to pursue the needs for large classrooms. Moreover, it is also very important to explore alternative options, such as offering Friday or Saturday classes when there is much less competition for large classrooms.

Provide Real Autonomy to the History Department

RECOMMENDATION 5: At the time this report is being drafted, obviously there are budgetary unknowns. Nevertheless, it is our recommendation that the Dean seek creative ways to provide the History Department with as much real autonomy in its financial planning as possible. This will provide the Department with the flexibility to engage in long-term planning so that it can better handle the dual pressures of enrollment and support for faculty teaching and research, and thus better serve both the students and the faculty.

Provide More Support for Graduate Programs and Faculty Research

RECOMMENDATION 6: Seek creative ways to provide more support for faculty development and research.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Seek creative ways to provide more support for the graduate programs.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Provide more support so that the Department is able to hire more full-time tenure-track faculty from “diverse” background in its future hires.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PROVOST AND THE UNIVERISTY

RECOMMENDATION 1: Keep better track of alumni and their achievements through the Office of Institutional Research to raise funds and to increase the visibility of the University, the College, and the Department.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Build more large classrooms and provide more support – such as graders – for those faculty who are teaching large classes.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Increase support and training in CMS for faculty and staff.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Increase library funding to improve student learning.

RECOMMENDATION 5: Provide more support for faculty development and research.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Provide more support for the graduate programs.

RECOMMENDATION 7: Provide more support so that the Department is able to hire more full-time tenure-track faculty from “diverse” background in its future hires.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE FACULTY SENATE

RECOMMENDATION 1: Based on this Program Review and the Self-Study prepared by the History Department, the Review Team recommends all the degree programs and minors in the History Department be approved for six years or until the next scheduled program review.