

Academic Program Review Report

Department of Humanities and Religious Studies California State University, Sacramento

Review Team

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INTRODUCTION

In Fall 2008, we reviewed the following three programs in the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies (HRS):

- 1) Undergraduate Major,
- 2) General Education (GE), and
- 3) The Liberal Arts Master's Program.

This program review has adopted a new process and new policies that emphasize the collaboration between the review team, the Department, the College, and the University. The goal is to explicitly integrate student learning assessment into the campus program review process.

The Pilot Study is intended to determine ways by which Program Review can become what it is meant to be: a collegial peer review process that seeks, through a facilitative approach, to improve our University, involving a wide spectrum of participants, including the entire faculty and not just the Chair, the Dean, and the Provost.... The Pilot Study is designed as a means of determining how best to revise the Program Review process in order to make it as effective as possible. (Program Review Pilot Study, 2007-2009: Manual of Procedures for 2007-2008 Cycle)

This *Program Review Pilot Study* was adopted by the Faculty Senate in May 2007 and involves the following seven departments/programs for the 2007-2008 review cycle:

<u>Department/Program</u>	<u>Department Chair</u>	<u>Review Team Chair</u>
Humanities and Religious Studies (A&L)	Jackie Donath	Amy Liu
Philosophy (A&L)	Thomas Pyne	Tom Krabacher
Chemistry (NSM)	Susan Crawford	Fred Baldini
Geology (NSM)	Dave Evans	Bruce Bikle
Mathematics/Statistics (NSM)	Roger Leezer	Jeffrey Brodd
Environmental Studies (SSIS)	Dudley Burton	Kimo Ah Yun
Family & Consumer Sciences B.A. (SSIS)	Dianne Hyson	Mary Jane Lee

Since the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies proposed in Fall 2007 to focus on the program assessment in this review, the review team has been working closely with the faculty in the Department, Dean Mason of the College of Arts and Letters, the University Faculty Assessment Coordinator, and the Director of Academic Planning and Quality to figure out how to get the faculty actively engaged in meaningful and effective assessment and how to provide support to sustain such efforts in the Department and the College.

To help the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies with its assessment efforts, our review team has studied the following documents:

HRS Self-Study Proposal

HRS Self-Study Report, including the appendices:

Appendix 1: Department Assessment Plan, 2004

Appendix 2: Department Learning Goals

Appendix 3: Cultural Legacies/GE Area C Assessment Report Template

Appendix 4: HRS 190 Department Assessment Rubric

Appendix 5: Department's Most Recent Hiring Request

Appendix 6: HRS Alumni Survey Highlights

Appendix 7: Working Draft, Humanities M.A. Proposal

Comments regarding HRS Self-Study Report by Dr. Terry Underwood, the University Assessment Coordinator

External Consultant Report for the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies, Dr. Joel Zimbelman, 2009

University Fact Book for the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies

The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies (HRS) website, including catalog descriptions of undergraduate and graduate programs, syllabi archives, current class schedules, and faculty areas of interest

The Department's most recent assessment plan and assessment reports

A. Department Assessment Plan (2004)

B. Department 2007 Assessment Report (2006 to 2007)

C. Department 2008 Assessment Report (2007 to 2008)

D. HRS GE Assessment Report, Spring 2008

E. Dr. Terry Underwood's comments regarding the department GE assessment report

Previous program review reports for HRS undergraduate major

A. Program Review Team Report

B. External Consultant Report

C. Department Self-Study Report

Previous program review reports for the Liberal Arts Master's Program

A. Program Review Team Report

B. External Consultant Report

C. Program Self-Study Report

The most recent university GE program review documents

- A. Program Review Team Report
- B. External Consultant Report
- C. GE Program Self-Study Report
- D. Report on Assessing Baccalaureate Learning Goals at Sacramento State, prepared for the General Education Program/Graduation Requirements Committee by Dr. Elizabeth Strasser, the University GE Assessment Coordinator, August 19, 2008

Program Review Pilot Study, 2007-2009: Manual of Procedures for 2007-2008 Cycle

Program Review at Sacramento State

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/progReview/>

Office of Academic Program Assessment at Sacramento State

<http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/index.html>

University GE policy and assessment related websites and information

- A. GE assessment policy and procedures
<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/GE/asmntpolicy.stm>
- B. GE Learning Outcomes and the University Baccalaureate Learning Goals
<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Portfolios/GE/matrixgoals.pdf>
- C. Other university GE related information
<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ge/>

The University Baccalaureate Learning Goals

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/Portfolios/GE/lrngls.stm>

The University Strategic Plan

http://www.csus.edu/acaf/2007CSUS_StrategicPlan.pdf

CSU Compass Subgrant Proposal for the GE program and assessment, Dr. Janet Hecsh, Chair, General Education (GE) Policies Committee, Faculty Senate

Memorandum from Chancellor Charles Reed to CSU Presidents, June 18, 2008

CSU General Education Breadth Requirements — Executive Order No. 1033

[file:///G:/UDISK20%20\(G\)/teaching/community.dir/ssisasesment/WASC/The%20executive%20order%20of%20GE%20from%20CSU.htm](file:///G:/UDISK20%20(G)/teaching/community.dir/ssisasesment/WASC/The%20executive%20order%20of%20GE%20from%20CSU.htm)

WASC (Western Association of Schools and Colleges) Commission Action Letter to President Gonzalez, July 17, 2007

http://www.csus.edu/wascaccreditation/WASC_Commmission_Action_Letter.pdf

WASC assessment related documents

- A. WASC Rubrics for assessing undergraduate majors
<http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/WASC/RubricsforEvaluatingtheEffectivenessofAssessmentProcesses.9.07.pdf>
- B. WASC Rubric for assessing GE
<http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/WASC/GeneralEducationAssessmentRubric8-08.pdf>
- C. WASC Rubric for assessing educational effectiveness
<http://www.wascenior.org/node/211>

Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) by Association of American Colleges and Universities, <http://www.aacu.org/LEAP/index.cfm>

The Essential Learning Outcomes developed by LEAP
<http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm>

In the process of this review, the Humanities and Religious Studies Program Review Team has interviewed faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students in the Department. We have also consulted:

- Dr. Jackie Donath, Chair, Department of Humanities and Religious Studies
- Dr. Jeffrey Brodd, Coordinator, Liberal Arts Master's Program
- Dr. Greg Wheeler, Associate Dean, Undergraduate Studies
- Dr. Mike Lee, Associate Vice President and Dean for Academic Programs
- Dr. Don Taylor, Director, Academic Planning and Quality
- Dr. Jeffrey Mason, Dean, College of Arts and Letters
- Dr. Chevelle Newsome, Acting Dean, Graduate Studies
- Dr. Terry Underwood, University Assessment Coordinator
- Dr. Janet Hecsh, Chair, Senate General Education (GE) Policies Committee
- Dr. Elizabeth Strasser, Coordinator, University GE Assessment, and Chair, University GE Course Review Subcommittee
- Dr. Joel Zimelman, Interim Dean, College of Humanities and Fine Arts, CSU Chico

The review team wishes to thank all the above colleagues who have made a tremendous contribution to the success of this program review. Special thanks go to the Office of Academic Affairs, the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies, and the College of Arts and Letters. We are also very fortunate to work with Dr. Terry Underwood, the University Assessment Coordinator, Dr. Joel Zimelman, our external consultant, and Dr. Janet Hecsh and Dr. Elizabeth Strasser, our campus faculty GE experts. We sincerely appreciate their insight and support.

STATE BUDGET CUTS, THE WASC REVIEW, AND GE REFORMS

This report was drafted with the consideration of the deep budget cuts to the CSU system and the University this year and next year, the impending WASC review, and the

significant changes in the GE program and assessment on campus and the entire CSU system. These three forces have had and will continue to have a profound impact on how programs are structured, assessed, and reviewed at this university and how resources have been and will be allocated to assess and support various programs on campus.

State Budget Cuts

The state budget signed in February by Governor Schwarzenegger has serious implications for the CSU system and this campus. The *CSU Leader* on February 27, 2009 summarized it for us:

Here is what the budget means for the CSU:

- The budget reduces state general fund support to the CSU by \$97.6 million for the current 2008-09 fiscal year, placing the CSU system \$313 million below its operational needs.
- The budget falls short of operational needs for the 2009-10 fiscal year by \$283 million. These cuts could grow by an additional \$50 million depending on the size and scope of the economic stimulus package.
- The Legislature will discuss in upcoming budget subcommittee hearings the following CSU-related proposals that were not included in the enacted budget:
 - \$325 million proposed from lease-revenue bonds for six capital outlay projects;
 - \$3.6 million for a new cohort of 340 Bachelor of Science in nursing students.

Although the severity of the state's fiscal crisis required difficult decisions by the legislature, the budget will negatively impact CSU's ability to maintain quality and services for its 450,000 students. The CSU is currently serving 10,000 students for whom the state provides no funding and has been forced to reduce enrollment levels by 10,000 this coming fall.

WASC Review and the WASC Visit in April 2009

In July 2007, the WASC Commission informed the California State University, Sacramento, that substantial progress needs to be made before April 2009 in student learning assessment and in strategic planning that explicitly links agreed-upon priorities with adequate resources (The WASC Commission Action Letter 2007:2):

Although much work has been done to build the capacity for assessment at CSUS, progress has been uneven across campus, and efforts have not been

sustained over time. Various mechanisms for promoting and overseeing assessment of student learning are in place but are not adequately supported with resources. There is no central entity or unit that is responsible for moving the assessment program forward. The University should create an effective structure and process for oversight of assessment activities, communication of assessment good practices, and sharing and use of assessment results. Assessment activities should be adequately supported. More strategic and effective steps should be taken to build the interest and expertise of the faculty to engage in assessment of student learning. Assessment of student learning should be comprehensive and conducted in all programs, including graduate programs, and special attention should be given to methods of assessing general education outcomes across disciplines at the undergraduate level. Program review, with assessment embedded in it, must be conducted regularly and systematically. The results of assessment should inform planning and budgeting decisions. Substantial progress in addressing these issues will need to be made by the time of the Educational Effectiveness Review in order for the University to demonstrate its core commitment to Educational Effectiveness.

Profound Changes in the University GE Program and Assessment

More than 90 percent of the undergraduate courses in the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies are GE related, however, the Department does not have direct control over the university GE program and assessment policies. As a result, this department is more susceptible to the changes in the university GE program and assessment, which are in the middle of a huge transformation due to the new CSU Executive Order No. 1033, WASC accreditation, the recent university GE program review, and many other forces. Thus, it is very difficult for anyone on campus to predict at this moment what the university GE program and assessment will look like in the next few years.

Significant changes are taking place at the CSU campuses with the issue of Executive Order No. 1033 - General Education Breadth Requirements in June 2008. Although this executive order keeps the same structure and minimum curricular requirements for the GE programs at CSU, it has shifted the emphasis of the CSU GE programs from “curricular content to what students learn through the breadth of their general education experiences.” (Chancellor Reed 2008) Moreover, CSU has identified for the first time the GE student learning goals for the CSU general education.

According to this executive order (CSU 2008):

Each CSU campus shall define its GE student learning outcomes, to fit within the framework of the four “Essential Learning Outcomes” drawn from **the Liberal Education and American Promise (LEAP)** campaign, an initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Within the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes framework, campuses may identify more specific outcomes, such as students' ability to:

- think clearly and logically;
- demonstrate information competency—finding and examining information critically;
- carry out effective oral communication;
- write effectively;
- apply quantitative reasoning concepts and skills to solve problems;
- make informed, ethical decisions;
- understand and apply the scientific method;
- apply learning from study abroad experiences to general education areas;
- utilize technology in pursuit of intellectual growth and efficacious human interaction;
- demonstrate understanding of human beings as physiological and psychological organisms;
- demonstrate understanding of the physical world in which they live and the life forms with which they share the global environment;
- demonstrate knowledge of cultural endeavors and legacies of world civilizations;
- demonstrate understanding of how human societies have developed and now function;
- apply socially responsive knowledge and skills to issues confronting local or global communities;
- demonstrate life skills such as financial literacy;
- understand and apply the principles, methodologies, value systems, ethics, and thought processes employed in human inquiry;
- engage in lifelong learning and self-development; and
- integrate and apply the insights gained from general education courses.

Our university GE learning goals were developed in 2000-2002 academic years for each of the general education areas by the General Education Area Coordinator Task Force. The emphasis at that time was on what needs to be included in the GE courses in each of the GE Areas (curriculum content or teaching) rather than on what students have learned (student learning outcomes) from the university GE program as a whole.

Our university has just finished its GE program review, and one of the key findings is that the GE program on our campus “lacks coherence and continuity even though it offers a lot of course options and enjoys strong support from our faculty.” To many departments and colleges, GE courses have become one of the primary tools to increase student enrollment or to ask for more faculty hiring and other resources. Two of the key recommendations from the GE review team are: 1) to search for means to ensure program coherence “by reducing the no. of courses that are accepted as satisfying GE requirements” and 2) “to establish a process for assessing student learning outcomes for

the GE program as a whole and acting on the results of that assessment.” (GE Program Review Team Report 2007-2008)

Under the leadership of Dr. Janet Hecsh, Chair of the Senate General Education (GE) Policies Committee, the committee has been working hard with Dr. Terry Underwood, the University Assessment Coordinator, and many other faculty members to experiment with better ways to assess our GE program and/or redesign the GE program and assessment based on the new CSU executive order and the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes framework:

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Integrative Learning

In fact, our campus has been recently selected as one of the three CSU campuses to participate in a pilot study partly sponsored by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) to experiment with more effective ways to deliver GE education and to assess student learning.

This new executive order also intends to help better transition from lower division to upper division GE as well as from GE to a student’s individual major. Better aligning GE learning outcomes from community colleges to those of the CSU campuses would facilitate transfers between CSU and community colleges. Thus the executive order can aid student learning and progress towards the degree. Therefore GE reforms can involve not only this campus, but many community colleges as well, since more students can take lower division GE courses at community colleges and then transfer units directly to our campus.

Significant progress in assessment has been made in the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies during this self-study and program review cycle. However, a great deal more work needs to be done to sustain such efforts. The following are our team’s findings, which are presented in the form of commendations and recommendations.

COMMENDATIONS

Academic Programs

COMMENDATION 1: The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies (HRS) is commended for its tremendous contributions to the university GE program, including providing high quality liberal arts education and helping ensure the timely graduation of our students. Its hard work is essential to the mission of the University.

COMMENDATION 2: The review team commends the Department for providing truly interdisciplinary studies of humanities and religion to our undergraduate and graduate students.

COMMENDATION 3: HRS is commended for its ability to collaborate with other programs on campus to provide a wide variety of interdisciplinary education courses to the university community.

COMMENDATION 4: The review team commends the Department for consistently maintaining higher FTES (full time equivalent student) in its classes than its colleagues in the College of Arts and Letters and in the university at-large.

Program Review and Assessment

COMMENDATION 5: The review team commends the Department for its excellent *Self-Study Report*, which has provided comprehensive information about the Department, its three programs (the undergraduate major, GE, and the Liberal Arts Master's Program), its contributions to this institution, and its concerns with assessment, especially the university GE assessment.

COMMENDATION 6: The review team commends the Department for having taken the time and effort to articulate a good mission statement and learning goals that include not only the content areas but also relevant institution-wide outcomes, such as cultural legacies, writing skills, and critical reasoning skills. Moreover, the Department has explicitly linked its department and course learning goals and objectives to the university GE and baccalaureate learning goals.

COMMENDATION 7: The review team is impressed with the large amount of work the faculty have put into the department GE assessment and with how the faculty have used the assessment data to improve their courses.

To meet the university assessment requirement for GE Area C review, the Department produced 23 reports in Spring 2008. The review team is very impressed with this work. In these reports, each faculty member has examined the GE courses taught by each. Most faculty members report the letter grades on a particular assignment and claim 60 to 80 percent of students are accomplishing the learning outcomes. It is quite clear that faculty members in the Department have a strong commitment to excellent teaching and many instructors have used their course assessment data to improve classroom instruction. Together, these assessment efforts have revealed “a complex, powerful, shared focus on” assessing the cultural legacies goal (Underwood 2008).

COMMENDATION 8: The review team commends the department faculty for working closely with the review team and for using the team's suggestions to improve student assessment and learning. In fact, due to the close collaboration between the review team and the Department, the latter made some breakthroughs in this cycle of program review.

For example, although faculty members in the Department decided in 2006-2007 to use common essay prompts to assess student writing, each faculty member analyzed and interpreted his/her individual students' essays and graded them accordingly. The Department was not successful getting faculty together to agree upon a common rubric to analyze student work from other faculty members' classes or to reflect on the results. In fact, there is strong resistance to such program assessment practices.

According to the 2006 and 2007 departmental annual assessment report:

The faculty teaching HRS 140: Exploring World Religions assessed the learning goals for analytical reading and expository writing skills. Students in HRS courses will develop and demonstrate the ability to examine complex issues and write about them in clear, purposeful and analytical prose essays which summarize, evaluate and integrate texts outside their own experience and use appropriate structure, development, usage and reference sources.

The participating faculty agreed to a common essay prompt and administered the prompt either as a short paper assignment or as an essay question on a take-home examination. Overall, faculty reported satisfaction with the result, with an average of 70% of students scoring at the "C" level or better on the activity.

Candidly, what was most clear from this effort was the resistance of many faculty members to any sort of review of their students' learning in a systematic and programmatic way. Additionally, despite the Chair's best efforts to involve the department faculty in assessment and reflection on student learning, most faculty members continued to assert that they were "teaching well," even while complaining about the level of their students' performance.

By 2008 and 2009, some fundamental changes related to program assessment have taken place in the Department and the University. The University has changed its program review process and policies with a greater emphasis on helping the Department under review to carry out better program review and assessment from the very beginning of the self-study. The University has also established a brand new *Office of Academic Program Assessment*, and Dr. Underwood has been named as its coordinator. Both the review team and the Department can contact this office for assistance.

The review team is working closely with the Department and has been able to give timely suggestions and feedback since the beginning of the self-study in Fall 2007. Under the leadership of the department chair and the program review team chair, this department has made great progress in assessment. For the first time, the Department was successful in bringing faculty together to directly examine a random sample of student work, to reflect on the results of the assessment, and to propose changes based on these results. This is also the first time that the Department has shifted its focus from examining how well faculty are teaching to how well students are learning in the core classes.

After careful examination of the core courses for the HRS major, the review team strongly encourages the Department to critically examine research papers for HRS 190, Topics in the Humanities & Religious Studies, which is a senior seminar for the HRS major that provides advanced study of a selected topic each semester. According to Appendix I of the Department Assessment Plan, “this culminating course requires students to use the interdisciplinary analytical, critical reasoning, and writing skills covered in other department required courses to explore primary and secondary materials through directed class seminar discussions and presentations, research paper, and exams.”

For the first time, the Department has formed a committee of three faculty members and analyzed a random sample of anonymous HRS 190 papers using a common rubric developed by its faculty.

This committee has already finished examining HRS 190 papers. Although it had not had a chance to share its results with the entire department when the Department submitted its *Self-Study Report* in November 2008, there were several informal conversations among the committee members, instructors, the department chair, and the review team chair that suggest the need to clarify and refine the final HRS 190 research paper to more clearly reflect the skills students are expected to have developed in their earlier core classes. This is the first time many faculty members in the Department have seen the importance of better alignment and coordination among these core classes and the key program learning objectives.

Moreover, before and during this process, the Department has received quick and supportive feedback from the review team. There have been several discussions between the program review team chair and the department chair regarding the purpose of this rubric and with respect to student learning outcomes to be measured or to be evaluated. These dialogues have led the faculty in the department to question the purpose of this research paper and to propose how to revise the rubric and assignments to better align student learning objectives and key assignments in these core courses.

Faculty and Staff

COMMENDATION 9: The review team commends the department chair, Professor Jackie Donath, for her leadership in creating an excellent working environment within the Department.

COMMENDATION 10: The review team commends the department graduate coordinator, Professor Jeff Brodd, for his leadership and commitment to the Liberal Arts graduate program.

COMMENDATION 11: The review team commends the Department for the collegial environment maintained in the Department. Faculty members are very nice to each other, to the staff, and to the students.

COMMENDATION 12: The review team commends all faculty and staff members alike for their hard work and commitment to the students and to this institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEPARTMENT

RECOMMENDATION 1: Plan strategically to follow the most current trends in the discipline. The review team suggests hiring at least one tenure-track faculty member who can help the Department regularize several of the most popular offerings in world culture and avoid losing or burning out faculty in this tough budget cycle.

The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies commits to “the study of world cultures.” According to the most recent program description in the catalogue (<http://aaweb.csus.edu/catalog/current/PROGRAM/HRS.asp>):

The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies offers an integrated approach to the study of world cultures. In courses on Western European, Asian, and American cultures, students explore ideas, ideals and values as they are expressed in art, music, drama, history, literature, philosophy and religion.

The Humanities concentration provides a strong interdisciplinary foundation while also allowing students the opportunity to focus their studies. For example, students can concentrate on a specific era, such as the Ancient World, the Middle Ages and Renaissance, or the Modern World. Students may also concentrate on a single cultural field such as American Studies or Asian Cultures.

The Religious Studies concentration is an in-depth comprehensive study of religious belief and practice on a global scale that surveys diverse interpretations of religious experience within and across cultural boundaries and examines religious institutions and sacred texts within an historical framework.

However, the Department’s current curriculum still focuses more on the traditional western cultures. Thus, there is a significant gap in the Department’s curriculum treatment of non-Western humanities and religious studies.

From 2003 to 2008, fulltime faculty in the Department has gradually decreased by 27 percent, especially since the unexpected resignation of a faculty member in 2008, who was an expert in Islamic studies. Her departure deepens the gap between its commitment and its ability to offer consistently high quality courses in world cultures, particularly in the area of Islamic Studies. The national trend in the discipline has already shifted from the focus on Western civilizations to more consideration of global cultures and values. We strongly encourage the Department to review these trends, considering their merit for

the Department and our institution and adapting the program as the faculty believe appropriate to keep up with national practices.

Hiring a replacement would also help avoid losing or burning out faculty in this tough budget cycle. According to the *Department Fact Book*, the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies employed 11 full-time tenure track faculty in 2003. At present, there are eight tenure-track faculty members who maintain similar FTES (full time equivalent student) to 2003.

The reduced number of full-time faculty has significantly increased the workload of the remaining full time faculty in the Department. In recent years, they have worked very hard and are under a tremendous amount of pressure to meet each year's FTES targets and other needs of the Department, the College, and the University.

This department has devoted an overwhelming amount of its resources to the university GE program. Except for HRS 105, HRS 108, HRS 190 and HRS 143, all its undergraduate classes are designated as GE courses. Besides all the GE commitments, the Department also offers the Humanities and Religious Studies major and two minors (religious studies and humanities). Moreover, faculty members are also responsible for the administration of the Liberal Arts Master's Program.

In addition to teaching, full-time faculty members have also served the Department, the College, and the University in many other productive ways. For example, Dr. Jackie Donath, Department Chair, is the Chair of the Educational Effectiveness Review Planning Committee on campus. In the past two years, she has been responsible for writing the University's *Educational Effectiveness Review Report*. She has spent tremendous time and energy to produce this excellent document. This report was proudly submitted to WASC by President Gonzalez in January 2009.

Reduced support for research and professional development, its commitment to its students and to excellence in scholarship, in addition to pressure from WASC and other external forces for greater accountability and more meaningful program review and assessment, have combined to increase the faculty's commitment and workload. This has produced a lot of tension and frustration for faculty members in the Department.

We recognize that not all these sources of frustration rest with the Department or with the College. We do recommend, however, that the Department take concrete steps to address these issues and prioritize its needs accordingly in order to avoid losing additional full-time faculty. The review team strongly recommends the Department work closely with Dean Mason to hire at least one replacement.

Obviously, this is not a departmental decision alone, but is dependent upon the cooperation and ability of the administration to provide the necessary resources. The review team agrees with its external consultant that the challenge in these difficult economic times is in finding ways to meet these various program needs and "to do so in a way that will allow the faculty to continue to provide high-quality learning experiences

for students while still avoiding losing or burning out faculty members in a time of acute budget constraints.” (Zimbelman 2009)

RECOMMENDATION 2: Think strategically about how to carry out program review and assessment for its three programs (the undergraduate major, the GE program, and the graduate program) so that assessment activities will benefit student learning and success and avoid undue stress on the faculty.

There is a considerable variation in the quality of the assessment efforts on our campus. This is one of the departments needing a great deal of support. As Dr. Donath, the department chair, pointed out in her 2007-2008 annual assessment report, the Department “has been slow to undertake regularized assessment of courses or the program. The self study and program review process holds some promise for helping to normalize the process.”

The department Assessment Plan presented in Appendix I of the department *Self-Study Report* was developed in 2003-2004 academic year and is the most updated version. The Department has made some changes to the plan during this self-study and program review cycle, including modification to the student learning goals and the intentional alignment of these goals to the university GE and baccalaureate learning goals. The Department has also developed a matrix that indicates how each course in the Department is linked to the Department’s learning goals. Significant progress has also been made in assessing the GE courses and the undergraduate major.

However, a great deal of work is still needed for this department to build the capacity to promote and oversee a sustainable program review and program assessment. The review team concurs with its external consultant that “given the complexity of the GE program and the allocation of resources devoted to its assessment” in the Department and the College, we do not think the present assessment plan is the best option at this moment.

For example, in Spring 2008, the Department produced 23 reports and submitted them to the department chair for the assessment of the GE Area C. The department chair and its faculty were overwhelmed by this assessment effort. The dominant method for assessment of student learning outcomes was writing. Formal rubrics were not used in many classes to analyze student writing. Faculty gave the letter grades on the particular assignment and claimed that 60 to 80 percent of the students were accomplishing the learning outcomes. It seems that each individual faculty member is clear with respect to the evaluation of student work. However it is not known if faculty members are consistently and explicitly communicating their expectations to the students.

In addition, given the variability and widespread use of inconsistent grading practices, each course instructor may be able to determine the exact state of the student learning in his/her class. However, considerable time and labor is required to do so at a departmental level. It takes skills for other people, including the department chair and other faculty in the Department to figure out the exact state of the student learning for the department GE program as a whole.

Given the complex nature and potential changes of the GE assessment at this point and given the limited time and resources, we recommend the Department to think strategically about the review and assessment of its three programs: the undergraduate major, the GE program, and the graduate program. One way to prioritize this is that the Department can start with the simplest program first: the undergraduate major. The Department can move easily to assess the graduate and GE programs once faculty members have established a solid assessment foundation for the major. This foundation includes reasonable learning goals, measurable learning objectives, and good rubrics. Furthermore, faculty members must become good at using rubrics to examine student work to see if students have achieved the learning objectives and feel comfortable with the changes made according to assessment results.

In the following section of the report, we will present how to carry out the above strategy with the focus on assessment of the major. Many of the suggestions and ideas for this assessment can be transferred easily to the graduate program and the GE program.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Re-organize *Program Objectives, Disciplinary Competencies, and Departmental Teaching and Learning Goals* into one set of reasonable student learning outcomes that include key knowledge, skills, and values the Department expects its undergraduate majors to learn and demonstrate.

These three sets of learning goals and objectives exist within the Department.

According to Appendix I of the department *Self-Study Report*, Department of Humanities and Religious Studies Assessment Plan, the program objectives are the same for both GE students and the undergraduate majors:

Students completing courses in Humanities & Religious Studies are expected to develop their analytical reading and writing skills, their critical reasoning skills, their ability to perform formal analysis within an interdisciplinary context, and to have gained an historical and contextual understanding and appreciation for diverse cultures and religious systems.

However, according to Appendix II, there are *Disciplinary Competencies* (See Item II below) and *Departmental Teaching and Learning Goals* (See Item III below) in addition to *Program Objectives* mentioned above and repeated in more detail in Part I of Appendix II (See Item I below):

I. Program Objectives:

For Undergraduate Major and General Education Student Courses

1. Analytical reading and expository writing skills
Students in HRS courses will develop and demonstrate the ability to examine complex issues and write about them in clear, purposeful analytical essays which summarize, evaluate, and integrate texts outside

- their own experience and use appropriate structure, development, usage, and reference sources.
2. **Critical reasoning skills**
Students taking HRS courses will develop and demonstrate the ability to examine complex ideas and issues through evaluating evidence, making appropriate inferences, and understanding the relationships between premises and conclusions.
 3. **Formal analysis skills**
Students taking HRS courses will build on previous General Education courses in critical thinking to develop and demonstrate their ability to use critical reasoning skills and a variety of critical methodologies to formally analyze arts, humanities, religious systems, and cultures within interdisciplinary, historical and cultural contexts.
 4. **Humanities appreciation**
Students taking HRS courses will be able to use a variety of critical methodologies to identify, systematically and insightfully analyze, and effectively communicate an understanding and appreciation of changing perspectives on beauty and spirituality.
 5. **Respect for cultural diversity**
Students taking HRS courses will demonstrate an appreciation of diverse cultures and will cultivate an attitude of tolerance and respect for cultures other than their own.
 6. **Understanding of global cultural and religious systems**
Students taking HRS courses will develop an historical/contextual understanding of various global cultural and religious systems.

II. HRS Disciplinary Competencies (from 2002 Self-Study)

1. Make meaningful comparisons among cognate forms and ideas in diverse societies
2. Develop sophisticated understandings of historical epochs and contextualize the major expressive works and ideas of those epochs
3. Engage in critical analysis of texts and identify central themes and concepts
4. Display critical reasoning skills
5. Awareness of theories of art
6. Awareness of theories of religious experience
7. Ability to write expository/analytical papers
8. Command of standard English
9. Demonstrate superior ability to articulate logically structured thesis
10. Demonstrate superior reading skills—evidenced by retention of salient facts and key ideas
11. Information literacy/computer skills

III. Departmental Teaching and Learning Goals (revised 10/2007)

1. Development of cultural literacy within a global context
2. Development of an empathetic understanding of human diversity within historical and cross-cultural contexts
3. Understanding of the arts as expressions of social/philosophical values
4. Understanding of the academic study of religion and knowledge of the world's religious traditions

What do the above program objectives (I), disciplinary competencies (II), and department teaching and learning goals (III) really represent: GE or major goals, program or course goals, program or course objectives?

These three sets of learning goals and objectives should be re-organized into one set of clear and meaningful outcomes that include key knowledge, skills, and values the department faculty expect the HRS undergraduate majors to learn and demonstrate. Such a clarification is critical to reduce the frustration of both faculty and students in the Department. Defining clear and meaningful outcomes is also the basis for effective and efficient program review and assessment.

It often takes considerable time for a department to develop a well-organized set of student learning outcomes. We recommend that faculty collaborate regarding learning outcomes for the departmental major first, including broad goals and measurable objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Modify or create a set of rubrics that the Department will use for analyzing student work.

It may take even more time for the Department to develop and refine a set of rubrics to explicitly evaluate the learning objectives developed in Recommendation 3 and to clarify the purpose of many key assignments in the Department's core courses. The key that links the learning objective and students' work (the key assignments) is the rubric that specifies clearly the criteria of how students can demonstrate their learning and how students' work will be analyzed.

The Department has used a common rubric for HRS 190. However, this rubric needs a great deal of revision to achieve its goal. More rubrics also need to be created to evaluate other learning objectives for the Department.

Once the Department is happy with its assessment plan for the undergraduate major, it can devote more time to the Department's GE assessment. By that time, we hope the dust will have settled on the university GE program and assessment. Many of the rubrics for the HRS major can be easily modified to evaluate similar GE goals and objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 5: We strongly encourage the Department to establish an assessment system with an organizational and leadership structure and culture to

support effective program review and assessment, including the development of clear learning outcomes, effective assessment strategies, and the use of assessment results in decision-making.

For the Department to sustain the assessment efforts, it needs to establish an organizational structure and create a culture of assessment. For example, electing an assessment coordinator, establishing an assessment committee, and setting aside several department meetings a year for program review and assessment would provide opportunities for faculty to routinely get together to examine student work, reflect on the assessment results, and propose changes based on the data. This can also assist the Department with emphasis on the use of assessment results to improve student learning, to recruit and retain more students in the graduate and undergraduate programs, and to attract high quality faculty to strengthen the Department.

RECOMMENDATION 6: We recommend that faculty members in the Department think creatively to recruit, to advise, and to retain undergraduate students in the major. This will also help create an important source of students for a master's program either in liberal arts or in humanities.

Profound transformation of the university GE program and assessment and concerns for severe budget constraints on this campus in the next few years may have the potential to reduce the demand for the department GE courses. Moreover, now may be a good time for the Department to invest more time and energy to rebuild a more robust undergraduate major since the number of overall students in the major has decreased by nearly 25 percent in the past several years, from 104 in 2003 to 73 in 2007.

A strong undergraduate major is one way for the Department to rely less on offering only GE courses, have a better chance to replace or hire additional full-time tenure track faculty, and provide more students for a master's degree program.

We recommend that the Department seriously consider the following suggestions offered by Dr. Zimelman (2009:8-9), its external consultant:

- Consider reducing the size of the major to closer to 39 units. That is smallish compared to many other majors on the campus, but about average for HRS majors across the country. Reducing the unit requirements for the major will encourage more students to take the major, especially transfer students; those who have completed a minor and might now complete a major with only one semester's extra work; those who want to double major; or those who are under pressure to complete a major and graduate.
- Make sure that if GE and major courses are distinguished as recommended in 2 above, that majors can still count their enrollment in the GE courses for the major; that transfer students from community colleges and other institutions are given liberal credit for their previous work in the program; and that some credit toward

the major is given for foreign language study, study abroad, or even some previous service learning.

- Make sure that students who say they are committed majors or minors are registered as such for the full course of their study. Institute mandatory advising each semester during the week preceding open enrollment for the next semester, and put hold on student registration if they fail to go through advising. This policy, in conjunction with the offering of majors-only courses that need to be fully enrolled in order to be offered, will guarantee that your majors declare their intentions, and that you are able to offer the courses that they need in order to accomplish program objectives.
- Market the program on campus if you want it to grow and want to avoid forcing students to have fewer curricular choices. You have a very energetic and articulate faculty; and they are interesting as well. Capitalize on that by using your GE courses to recruit students to the major. Use one period or a part of a period each semester in each lower-division GE course heavily populated by freshmen and sophomores to introduce your faculty to students; talk about what they do and why they are excited about what they do; what majors courses they teach; what students can do career-wise with a major in HRS or a double major; what helpful minors faculty would recommend to students; and what opportunities there are for study abroad with an interest in humanities or religion. The RS website at CSUC lists all study abroad sites with an assessment of their strength for RS majors; the same could be done for your program. A soft sell on the program will do wonders for enrollments in the major. Students need guidance in thinking about majors.
- Be sure to put your most dynamic, energetic faculty who are the strongest supporters of the program in your GE classes. Students choose majors for personalities as much as for the content and love of the discipline.

RECOMMENDATION 7: We strongly recommend that the Department use a variety of assessment results, including survey data, to design an effective recruitment, advising, and retention strategy. The Department would need to work closely with the Office of Institutional Research to develop several surveys and exit interviews, including a survey of GE students, graduating seniors, and alumni, and use the results to improve and promote the programs.

Surveys are very effective at identifying the needs and desires of students. Based on the data, the Department can explore ways to better serve its students. The Department can also use survey data to promote its excellent graduate and undergraduate programs, to recruit and retain students, and to improve their learning and success.

RECOMMENDATION 8: Carry out an effective and efficient program review and assessment for the graduate program, including clarifying the departmental mission statement, developing student learning goals, objectives, and rubrics, examining students' work, and making program changes based on the assessment results.

Once the faculty has created an effective review and assessment of the undergraduate major, it can follow the same steps to develop an assessment plan for the graduate program.

By this time, the development of learning goals and objectives for graduate students on the campus may be complete. The Graduate Working Group on campus has developed a mission statement for all the university graduate programs. However, there is no institutionally-agreed upon learning goals for graduate education on campus yet. The newly established Graduate Council and Senate Graduate Policies Committee are working hard to develop a mission statement, learning goals, and learning objectives for the graduate studies on campus, and will finish the document soon. This will greatly facilitate program review and assessment for the graduate programs at this institution.

Although the Department administers the Liberal Arts Master's program, this program has always been reviewed separately from the HRS undergraduate major and GE program until this review cycle. Now the Department is contemplating reframing the graduate degree program in Liberal Arts to a more focused program in the Humanities. In this review cycle, the program review team and the external consultant have examined "the feasibility and meaningfulness" of the Humanities Master's Program in the context of the Department's undergraduate major, GE commitment, and the tough budget.

The Department has developed the following mission statement:

The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies has a vital two-fold mission within the University Community. First and foremost, through general education courses the Department provides the foundation for undergraduate students' historical and contemporary interdisciplinary understanding, appreciation of the arts, and development of tolerance and respect for diverse cultures and religious cultural systems. Second, within its undergraduate major, the Department strives to facilitate students' achievement of an historical and contextual understanding of changing perspectives on aesthetic and spiritual values, an historical, contextual and interdisciplinary understanding of diverse cultures and global religious systems.

The above mission statement has included the GE program and the undergraduate major, but has not mentioned its graduate degree program. The mission statement needs to be revisited to include the departmental master's degree program. If the Department plans to replace the current Liberal Arts Master's program with a master's degree program in humanities, an expanded mission statement should be created to include the change in program emphasis.

The Department must also engage the graduate faculty to develop an effective plan for assessing student learning in the graduate program, which includes the development of a mission statement, learning goals and objectives, key assignments for data collection, and

key rubrics to evaluate these assignments. The Department also needs to examine students' work and make program changes based on the assessment results.

RECOMMENDATION 9: Carry out a systematic program review and assessment for the GE program, including developing student learning goals, objectives, and rubrics, examining students' work, and making program changes based on the assessment results.

Once the faculty members in the Department have created an effective review and assessment of the undergraduate major and the graduate program, it can follow the same steps to develop an assessment plan for the GE program. By this time, a much better understanding of the university GE program and assessment may be possible and the University may have finished modifying the learning goals and objectives for the program.

RECOMMENDATION 10: Encourage the faculty in the Department to participate actively in the university GE reforms and experiments.

The current university GE reforms can provide the Department with tremendous opportunities and potential to be a full and active partner in redesigning the university GE program and assessment. The results and feedback from the GE experiments will have significant impact on the university GE program and assessment process and policies. Since more than 90 percent of the department undergraduate courses are GE related, the Department should find opportunities to make significant contributions to the GE reforms on this campus. This is especially the case if it can actively and creatively collaborate with other departments and colleges.

RECOMMENDATION 11: We encourage the Department to use program review and assessment results and available resources to review and update the department curriculum and course offerings, and to make many other important short-term and long-term decisions.

The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies is very supportive of its faculty. So far, its faculty members have developed new interests and created many new courses that have enriched the department and the university GE curriculum. The unprecedented budget cuts, the profound transformations in the university GE program and assessment, the faculty's increasingly deep concerns with workload and the support for professional development make it difficult but necessary for the Department to make some hard curriculum choices as they review the catalog entries and update the curriculum.

Now may be the best time to look into the departmental and university missions, the updated learning goals and learning objectives for the three programs, and the resources the College and the University can offer at this time, along with the assessment results in order to explore what classes are essential to the Department's mission and to the learning goals and objectives of the three programs.

Now is also the time to ask tough questions while the Department is discussing adding new programs and responsibilities. Who is responsible for the department program review and assessment since this task will take a great deal of time and effort? Does the Department have enough faculty members or enough potential students for a robust and sustainable Humanities Master's degree program or Humanities Honors GE program? Who is responsible for the student recruitment, retention, and success? Is it reasonable to expect such a small number of faculty members to fulfill all those expectations as many faculty members in the Department already feel overwhelmed by heavy teaching loads and lack of time and resources for professional development? Would the Department be able to use graduate students to help teach large undergraduate classes? What additional resources and support is the Department able to get from the College and the University during these tough budget times?

RECOMMENDATION 12: Work closely with Dean Mason to figure out the best way he can support the Department and its short-term and long-term plans and decisions.

Dean Mason is happy with the department chair and most of the faculty. He is satisfied with the departmental program review and assessment, including the last two years' annual assessment reports and the GE assessment report. After reading the departmental Self-Study Report, Dean Mason is concerned that the Department has difficulties with program assessment, especially the GE assessment, and is willing to help the Department.

We strongly encourage the Department to communicate with Dean Mason as soon as possible and invite him to department meetings to explore the best way he can provide support to the Department. The Department needs to communicate its needs and concerns openly and clearly, and may have to make some tough choices.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEAN AND THE COLLEGE

RECOMMENDATION 1: We strongly recommend that Dean Mason give his full support and encouragement to the hiring of a new faculty member who will be able to contribute to the missions of the Department, the College, and the University. This is significant to the program's diversity, important to its course offerings, and relevant to its current and long-term goals.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Great progress in program assessment has been made in the Department and the College. However, to move the assessment to the next level, the Department and the College need more help. The review team recommends Dean Mason appoint a faculty member with assessment expertise as a college assessment coordinator. This faculty assessment leader can work closely with the Dean and the college faculty to better meet the program review and assessment needs of this department and many other programs in the College.

At the time this report is being drafted, obviously there are deep budget cuts in store for the University and the College in the next two years. On the other hand, faculty interest

and support are critical for any sustainable success of program review and assessment not only in the Department but also in the College. It is critical to establish and maintain an assessment infrastructure and culture with a faculty assessment leader who is able to provide the long-term vision and quick feedback to better meet the needs of program review, assessment, and planning of the Department and many other programs in the College. For example, faculty members in the Department have expressed the concern that students have the problem of understanding the content because they still need work developing skills. The college assessment coordinator can lead a college wide discussion with respect to student learning outcomes in terms of both content and skills, and the way in which different departments in the College have addressed this issue.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The review team encourages Dean Mason to explore new and creative ways to fund this college assessment position, working closely, of course, with the Provost in this endeavor.

A faculty assessment leader in the College is essential for the Department, the College, and the University to meet the first two of the University's five strategic priorities, as well as several of its more specific goals listed below (Strategic Plan 2008:5):

1. Implement a strategically focused, campus-wide effort to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.
 - Enhance and better integrate current campus efforts to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.
 - Develop undergraduate and graduate recruitment targets that reflect a sustainable balance of academic excellence, access, demands, systematically managed growth, workforce development, and campus capacity.
2. Create and sustain an organizational structure and culture that facilitates evidence-based decision-making and purposeful planning in all important endeavors.
 - Develop and utilize unit-level measures of progress for critical unit functions that further the mission of the University.
 - Use student learning and program assessment data to shape decisions about program and service enhancements and/or modifications.

RECOMMENDATION 4: We encourage the College to use program review and assessment results in decision-making at both the department/program and the college levels.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The review team recommends that the College participate actively and strategically in the university GE reforms and experiments.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PROVOST AND THE UNIVERSITY

RECOMMENDATION 1: We know the Provost has worked very closely with deans to provide support for their assessment efforts. The review team encourages the Provost to continue this effort to find the resources needed to fund a college assessment coordinator position for this college.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The review team recommends the Provost consider launching more creative and efficient faculty development efforts in program review and assessment on the campus.

Under the Provost's leadership, great progress has been made in program review and assessment in the Department, the College, and the University. However, to sustain this effort, more faculty members with assessment interest and expertise are needed in the Department, the College, and the University. Such interest and expertise are critical to move faculty from resistance and disengagement to a culture where assessment is valued, owned, and led by faculty.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Improve communication of best assessment practices and sample annual assessment reports on campus, including the posting of such practices on the campus website for easy access. This would be a relatively inexpensive, efficient, and effective means of allowing this department – and all others – to benefit from the institutional knowledge and experience that we have as a community.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE FACULTY SENATE

RECOMMENDATION 1: Working closely with the faculty and the administration, the Faculty Senate needs to revisit and clarify the purpose of program reviews on this campus and explore the best ways to achieve the desired goal. These efforts will significantly facilitate program review and assessment in the Department, the College, and the University.

Our conversations with the faculty in the Department and the University indicate that their willingness to take assessment and program review seriously is directly related to the support they perceive from the college and the university administration.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Faculty Senate should encourage the University to move toward a GE program review and assessment that is simple, meaningful, and sustainable.

Clarify and simplify University GE assessment policies and procedures and communicate any changes directly to the different departments and colleges. The Department has reviewed all GE classes in the program and is overwhelmed by this experience. The Department is looking for better ways to assess the program as a whole, not through

individual GE courses, thus making GE review and assessment procedures and process more effective and efficient.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Based on this program review and the Self-Study Report prepared by the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies, the review team recommends all the degree programs and minors in the Department and the Liberal Arts Master's Program be approved for six years or until the next scheduled program review.



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May 8, 2009

Jeffrey Brodd

Chair, Program Review Oversight Committee

California State University, Sacramento

Dear Jeffrey,

On behalf of my faculty colleagues, I first wish to express our appreciation for the Program Review report. It provides the department with a number of practical and helpful suggestions and offers us much by way of astute observations and compelling suggestions. The report's gracious recognition of the many people involved in the review process indicates its wide-ranging purview and the high degree of collegiality that went into its production. It appropriately acknowledges the challenges stemming from the current budget situation. In a manner that meshes well with the primary element of our focused inquiry, the report details our department's heavy investment in General Education. We especially appreciate Commendation 1 in this regard; GE courses typically are tougher and less enjoyable to teach than are courses for majors and graduate seminars. Recommendations 9 and 10 offer enlightened suggestions relating to our interrelationship with GE. For all of these fine attributes, we offer our thanks to all responsible for the production of the report, most especially to Amy Liu and her team, Shannon Datwyler, Albert Lozano, and Mark Williams, and to external consultant Joel Zimbelman.

All of the report's recommendations provide us with good ideas that will surely prove efficacious as we move forward. Recommendation 2, for example, urging strategic thinking about assessment, and Recommendation 3, with its sensible call for hemming in our efforts with regards to departmental learning goals, set forth clear paths for improvement. I wish to concentrate here, though, on some of the recommendations' points that we find especially challenging. I also wish to comment on one issue – namely, the possible transformation of our graduate program – that we think warrants a more substantive response, not by way of criticizing the report, but rather in order to set forth clearly our perspective lest silence be mistakenly taken to imply acquiescence or apathy on our part.

Recommendation 1 begins: "Plan strategically to follow the most current trends in the discipline..." We agree entirely with the gist of this recommendation, and strongly support its endorsement for filling the faculty position left vacant by our colleague's unexpected departure last year. We also note some significant challenges with regards to this call for strategic planning. For one, *what* "discipline"? Neither Humanities nor Religious Studies are disciplines in and of themselves; rather, they are fields of study, quite nebulously defined, that draw upon multiple disciplines (and are both, therefore, interdisciplinary). When these two fields are combined into one department, an even tougher challenge arises with regards to strategic planning based on current trends. In any event, reflecting critically about our fields and about the intermeshing of the two is something we do naturally and with a certain degree of relish. This recommendation serves as a healthy reminder of the need always to do such reflecting with current trends in mind.

Recommendation 5 encourages us "to establish an assessment system with an organizational and leadership structure and culture to support effective program review and assessment..." While we concur that such a system is desirable, we will need to proceed very strategically in order to accomplish this. Having a departmental assessment coordinator and a committee and so forth would be a welcome change – but whence comes the time and energy? While we are certainly working toward building a culture to support assessment and ongoing improvement of our curriculum's quality and our students' learning, such activities are an extra set of responsibilities on an already burdened faculty. The Program Review includes recommendations to the Dean in support of the establishment of a college assessment coordinator. The Dean has decided to do this, which likely will prove to provide needed support for all of departments as we strive to improve our assessment efforts. Given

its many helpful points in this area, the Program Review report itself will serve us well as a guide for strategic approach, and for this we are grateful.

On the matter of assessment, there are a couple of misunderstandings about the department's use of rubrics in the Program Review, which we would like to correct. Recommendation 2 asserts that our GE Area C review indicated that we did not employ a rubric in any of the 23 courses which are in Area C: "None of the reports used formal rubrics to analyze student writing." (p.15) In fact, HRS 117 does use a rubric, as noted in the assessment plan. As a matter of fact, Catherine Gabor, then Faculty Assessment Coordinator solicited this rubric to use as a model. Other HRS Area C courses also included writing rubrics in their assessment plans, but may not have explicitly referred to them in the most recent Area C review cycle. In Recommendation 4, the Program Review Team noted, "The Department has used a common rubric for HRS 190. However, this rubric needs a great deal of revision to achieve its goal" (p.18) The Department wonders why and what sorts of revisions the Program Review Team would suggest. Some HRS faculty feel the HRS 190 rubric is working very well. Finally, there is also at least one inference in the Program Review that the Department only recently began using a rubric in HRS 190: "For the first time, the Department has adopted a rubric. . ." (p.12) In fact, Dr. Brodd developed and pioneered rubric during the spring 2002 semester and we've used it in HRS 190 ever since.

Recommendations 6 and 11, on the recruitment of undergraduate majors and the updating of our curriculum and course offerings, respectively, offer intriguing ideas, some of which we are already considering. Recommendation 11 makes sensible suggestions for proceeding cautiously as we ponder the possibilities for launching a Humanities Honors GE program or a revised graduate program. There is indeed much to examine before we forge ahead on either front, but at this point, we foresee significant advantages of each for the Department and for the University. I especially wish to comment here on the possibility of transforming the graduate program.

The text following Recommendation 11 asks, "Does the Department have enough faculty members or enough potential students for a robust and sustainable Humanities Master's degree program...?" (p.23) Our Self-study's Appendix 7 (Working Draft, Humanities M.A. Proposal) outlines our case for making the transition. There are elements of this case that certainly can be (and need to be) refined and fortified – for example, rather than depending on anecdotal information with regards to the degree preferences of our current graduate students, we can administer a survey. There are also steps we can take to provide more data by way of a "needs analysis," looking especially to California community colleges in order to draw upon enrollment figures and the deans' perspectives. In any event, our department maintains that such a transition would in fact be *beneficial* to the University in terms of resources, and certainly rewarding in terms of our professional lives. Recommendation 8 specifically addresses our graduate program and the implementation of a sound approach to defining its mission and to assessment, while being helpfully noncommittal to the future form our graduate program takes. We think this recommendation is perfectly appropriate, so long as the suggested steps be taken in collaboration with development of the *new* program. We thus agree with what is stated on p.21: "If the Department plans to replace the current Liberal Arts Master's program with a master's degree program in humanities, an expanded mission statement should be created to include the change in program emphasis." At this point, we are indeed planning to replace the current program – although we intend to proceed cautiously, as the report suggests.

In sum, we have no serious disagreements with the Program Review report, and we find much that is very helpful. The entire review process has been collegial and engaging, and we look forward to continue making the most of it.

Best,



Jackie R. Donath
Professor and Chair
Department of Humanities and Religious Studies

cc: Amy Liu, Review Team chair