05-06 Assessment Reports

Name : Chris Castenada

Contact : Phone : Email :

Department : History

Mission : The mission of the History Department at California State University, Sacramento is to promote an understanding, appreciation, and enthusiasm for history. In the undergraduate major and graduate programs, the Department seeks to provide students with an advanced critical understanding of the process of history, diversity and depth of historical knowledge, and sufficient bibliographic and research skills to conduct independent research.

Outcome : The central objectives of the History major are to instill in students an appreciation of the color and complexity of history and to create in them a life-long love for the discipline. Aside from this, History students shall achieve adequate mastery of the following insights and skills: 1) They shall be able to write a clear expository essay in which they develop a consistent argument and marshal evidence to support an interpretation. 2) They shall develop adequate reading skills, oral communication skills and collaborative skills. 3) They will develop basic mastery of a significant body of historical knowledge in one or more fields of their choosing. Students will be aware of the achievements of more than one civilization. 4) They shall be able to access historical information through traditional (printed) and new technology sources including electronic databases, bibliographies and text storage sites; students shall be able to make qualitative distinctions among history sites posted on the web. 5) They shall develop basic critical skills in history; be able to identify and analyze fundamental problems of historical interpretation; and be familiar with at least some of the “schools” of historical analysis. 6) They shall achieve a basic mastery of research techniques in history, including the use of primary historical sources both printed and electronic to compose a history research paper; they shall use citation standards acceptable in the discipline of history. 7) They shall show their ability to place research findings in a context of broader categories of analysis, historical schools of thought, and other contexts established by the secondary literature of the discipline of history.

Description : 1) Questionnaires: The department shall administer every semester an Exit Questionnaire to all graduating students in History and Social Science. The questionnaire assesses: 1) the students’ academic growth over the course of their college career, particularly in the History/Social Science major; and 2) the students’ experience in the History Department and their recommendations for changes in the department’s policies and programs. The questionnaire has both an objectively graded portion and a written part for extended student comments. The survey shall be conducted in History 192 or History 197. In collaboration with Sacramento State Office of Institutional Research, the History Department will also conduct an Alumni Questionnaire. This questionnaire will focus on ways in which former students have applied the History major to their subsequent careers, their critique of the History program at Sacramento State and suggestions for changes. The Department shall seek to create a closer relationship with their alumni for the benefit of both parties. This questionnaire will be conducted every five years in conjunction with the Department’s Academic Program Review. 2) Moderated Group
Discussions: The Assessment Committee and/or the Department Chair shall conduct moderated group discussions with approximately 12 graduating History majors every academic year. The discussions shall cover in more detail the subjects discussed in the Exit Questionnaire. 3) Performance Measures: The Assessment Committee shall collect from a) History 100 and b) History 192 and/or 197 a selection of student papers that would indicate the progress toward achieving the History program objectives made by students in their course of study and their level of achievement at the end of their program. The selection should include copies of papers from all satisfactory grade categories, and should be stored in a readily accessible format such as ring binders. The Department shall determine whether it will collect paired papers from the work of individual students so that their progress from the beginning to the end of their programs might be tracked.

Date and Time: spring 2005

Result: Based on our reading of the Department’s assessment tools, the Department continues to do a good job achieving its seven education objectives (see list of objectives at the end of this document. Students report that the Department provides its majors with an educational experience that broadens their historical knowledge, increases their appreciation of the history of minorities and other cultures, and sharpens their critical and analytic skills. These last two categories remain the areas in which the Department’s strength is most pronounced. While students gave the Department high marks for teaching research skills, sharpening writing skills is an area in which the “strongly agree” and “agree” categories have slipped from a high of 92% in 2004 to a lower (but still respectable) 85% in 2005. Most students reported that their experiences made them more aware of the impact of history in current events and made them question some of their fundamental assumptions and to be aware of the bias and subjectivity in historical sources. Overall, students continue to express satisfaction with the major. Most (79%) gave professors quality of instruction. Students expressed high satisfaction with those instructors who incorporate visual technology in their lectures. Seventy percent said they would recommend the history/social science major to their friends. As in past years, the survey indicates that most of our majors plan to obtain a teaching credential or attend graduate school in history or some related field. More than half of the majors (57%) expressed an interest in continuing their studies in history. This figure is down from 87% in 2004. The assessment tools also revealed a number of areas in which student expressed less satisfaction and made a number of recommendations for improving the program. The department’s advising system was the most mentioned. However, it should be noted that those who expressed satisfaction with the quality of student advising in the department rose from 29% in 2004 to 39% in 2005. This increase suggests that the department’s newly implemented policy of mandatory advising for majors is beginning to have a beneficial effect. Students continued to express frustration with the difficulty of obtaining classes they needed or desired. Students continued to be interested in improving departmental communication and creating a better sense of community among majors. They appreciated the departmental newsletter and suggested ways of using technology (e-mail, e-lists) for increasing community. The Department staff also received high marks for their helpfulness and accessibility. The exit interview participant praised the sense of community fostered by Phi Alpha Theta, the history honor society, and suggested that the department acknowledge and incorporate other student academic groups to increase collegiality.
**program_change**: We haven't made formal changes, but we are continuing to examine our advising program. With the support of a faculty senate assigned time grant, we are conducting an intensive examination of our advising system.

**procedure**: We will use student feedback through the program assessment process to determine the effectiveness of any changes in our advising program.

**academic_change**: We added more flexibility in the lower-division requirements for the Minor in History. We also added "sub-topics" to our upper-division elective requirements.

**Upcoming_year:**

**NotEngage:**