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October 4, 2019

**Memorandum**

TO: Faculty Senate Executive Committee

FROM: Jeffrey Brodd, Chair   
Academic Program Review Oversight Committee

SUBJECT: Program Review of the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies

The Academic Program Review Oversight Committee has reviewed the Academic Program Review report of the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies prepared by Tom Krabacher and his review team and agrees that it is ready for final approval. The Committee thanks and commends all of those involved in the review for their collegial and effective approach to the process.

The Review is ready for action by the Faculty Senate.

cc: Alyson Buckman, Chair, Department of Humanities and Religious Studies  
Sheree Meyer, Dean, College of Arts & Letters  
Kitty Kelly, Chair, Curriculum Policies Committee  
Amy Wallace, Associate Vice President, Academic Excellence

# **Academic Program Review Report**

## **Department of Humanities and Religious Studies**

**California State University, Sacramento**

### **Review Team**

Anne Bradley  
University Library

Carolyn Gibbs  
Department of Art &  
Department of Design

Thomas Krabacher (Chair)  
Department of Geography

### **External Consultant**

Dr. Jed Wyrick  
Comparative Religion and Humanities  
California State University, Chico

**Spring 2019**

## INTRODUCTION

The Humanities and Religious Studies program review took place during 2016-2017 according to the following schedule:

- *September 2016:* Self-study proposal submitted
- *December 2016:* Completed Self-study submitted
- *Spring 2017:* Review and external consultant visit conducted

Additional interviews took place in early summer, 2017.

The Self-Study was organized into three sections in accordance with program review guidelines laid down in the University's 2016 *California State University Sacramento, Academic Program Review Manual*, which is organized around the following three components:

- A general overview of the program, including degrees offered, curriculum, students, faculty, staff, and facilities, etc.
- A review of the program's assessment process.
- A Focused Inquiry that examines "issues of particular interest/concern to the department itself, in the context of what is currently important to the college and university."

For its Focused Inquiry the Humanities and Religious Programs elected to probe the question of program identity by undertaking an examination of the definition of Humanities and Religious Studies as disciplinary fields. To this end, the Department focused on (1) the Program's own definition of Humanities and Religious Studies as academic disciplines; (2) how Humanities and Religious Studies are defined by other programs across the CSU; and (3) the degree of alignment between the HRS programs at Sacramento State and those of California community colleges. All of this was laid out very clearly in the Department's self-study. This report is, in turn, is by and large organized around the framework found in the self-study.

**Commendation 1:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their preparation of a very detailed and thoughtful Self-Study, which proved to be an invaluable resource throughout the course of the program review.

### Individuals Consulted:

Dr. Bradley Nystrom, Department Chair

Dr. Edward Inch, former Dean of Arts & Letters, currently Provost/VAPP at CSU East Bay  
Graduate Students, HRS 220

Carol Downey, Administrative Coordinator, Humanities and Religious Studies

Dr. Sheree L. Meyer, Dean, College of Arts & Letters

Dr. Amy Liu, Director, Office of Program Assessment

Dr. Jed Wyrick (external consultant), Department of Comparative Religion and Humanities,  
California State University, Chico

The following Humanities and Religious Studies faculty groups:

- All department faculty
- Probationary/tenure-track faculty

The review team also met with several of the program faculty on an individual basis.

Undergraduate Students in Humanities and Religious Studies (HRS 195: Seminar in Humanities)

Graduate students in Humanities and Religious Studies (HRS 220: Seminar in Religious Studies)

In addition to the above, the program review team also received separate written comments from individual faculty and students, all of which were greatly appreciated and informed the review team's final report.

*Documents Consulted:*

The following documents were consulted during the review process:

Self-Study Proposal (Fall, 2016)

Humanities and Religious Studies Program Self-Study (2016):

[https://www.csus.edu/acaf/programreview/Self\\_Study\\_Report/14-15\\_Reports/HRS\\_SSReport\\_14-15.pdf](https://www.csus.edu/acaf/programreview/Self_Study_Report/14-15_Reports/HRS_SSReport_14-15.pdf)

Academic Program Review Manual, California State University, Sacramento (2016):

<http://www.csus.edu/acaf/programreview/programreviewmanual2016.pdf>

University Factbook 2016:

<https://www.csus.edu/oir/datacenter/universityfactbook/University%20Factbook%202016.pdf>

HRS 2017 Factbook:

<https://www.csus.edu/oir/datacenter/departmentfactbooks/Humanities17.pdf>

Annual Assessment Reports 2013-14 thru 2015-16, BA Program:

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2013-14reports/Reports%20pdfs/Remaining%20Reports/2013-2014%20Humanities%20Religion%20Assmt%20Rpt%20-%20BA.pdf>

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2014-15reports/Report%20PDFs%20and%20FEEDBACK/Feedback/AL%20Feedback/14-15%20HRS%20BA%20Humanities%20Packet.pdf>

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2014-15reports/Report%20PDFs%20and%20FEEDBACK/Feedback/AL%20Feedback/14-15%20HRS%20BA%20Religious%20Studies%20Packet.pdf>

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2015-16reports/Report%20PDFs%20and%20FEEDBACK/Feedback/AL%20Feedback/15-16%20ba%20hum%20pkt%20final.pdf>

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2015-16reports/Report%20PDFs%20and%20FEEDBACK/Feedback/AL%20Feedback/15-16%20ba%20hum%20rlgs%20pkt%20final.pdf>

Annual Assessment Reports 2013-14 thru 2015-16, MA Program:

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2013-14reports/Reports%20pdfs/Remaining%20Reports/2013-2014%20Humanities%20Religion%20Assmt%20Rpt%20-%20MA.pdf>

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2014-15reports/Report%20PDFs%20and%20FEEDBACK/Feedback/AL%20Feedback/14-15%20HRS%20MA%20Packet.pdf>

<https://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2015-16reports/Report%20PDFs%20and%20FEEDBACK/Feedback/AL%20Feedback/15-16%20ma%20hum%20pkt%20final.pdf>

Office of Academic Program Assessment. Feedback for both the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2016 Department of Humanities and Religious Studies Annual Assessment Reports:

<http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2013-14assessment.html>

<http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2014-15assessment.html>

<http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/annual-assessment/2015-16assessment.html>

Department of Humanities and Religious Studies 2016-2017 CSUS Catalog listing:

<http://oldcatalog.csus.edu/16-17/programs/hrs.html>

Department of Humanities and Religious Studies website: <https://www.csus.edu/hum/>

Humanities and Religious Studies faculty resumés and curriculum vitae.

External Consultant's Report (Dr. Jed Wyrick, California State University, Chico)

**Note:** The program review team would be remiss if they failed to acknowledge the excellent external consultant's report submitted by Dr. Wyrick. Incredibly detailed and insightful in its analysis, it was in effect a program review in its own right and a valuable resource for the review team when it prepared theirs.

**Commendation 2:** Dr. Jed Wyrick is commended for the preparation of an outstanding External Consultant's Report; its comprehensiveness, level of detail, thoughtful analysis made it an invaluable resource for the HRS program review.

## SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Commendations:**

1. The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their preparation of a very detailed and thoughtful Self-Study, which proved to be an invaluable resource throughout the course of the program review.
2. Dr. Jed Wyrick is commended for the preparation of an outstanding External Consultant's Report; its comprehensiveness, level of detail, thoughtful analysis made it an invaluable resource for the HRS program review.
3. The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their excellent undergraduate and graduate programs, which, with their core curricula and designated faculty, makes them unique in the CSU and one of the few of its type in the nation.
4. The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their well-structured undergraduate degree programs that offer a BA in Humanities and a BA in Humanities with Religious Studies Concentration.
5. The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their well-designed MA program that is intellectually stimulating and prepares students for a range of different post-graduation academic and career options.
6. The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their knowledgeable and dedicated faculty who command a wide range of interests and expertise, and offer a diverse and intellectually stimulating curriculum.
7. The adjunct lecturers in Humanities and Religious Studies are to be commended for their dedication to the Humanities and Religious Studies Programs and for excellent and essential teaching support they provide.
8. Chair Bradley Nystrom and the Department staff are to be commended for their leadership and service to the Program, its faculty, and its students, which includes, not least of all, guiding it through the current program review.
9. The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their well-organized and thoughtful responses to the recommendations made to it as part of the previous (2009) program review.
10. The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for the development and implementation of well-structured, if ambitious program assessment plan.

- 11.** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for carrying out a well-designed focused inquiry whose results will serve as a resource for the program's ongoing review of its curriculum and offer guidance for future strategic planning.

**Recommendations to the Program:**

**Recommendation 1:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs should make available a proposed multi-year schedule of class offerings to assist students in their class scheduling. If such a schedule already exists it should make it more widely known.

**Recommendation 2:** The Department should clarify, either in the Department RTP policy or elsewhere, the level of service activities expected of probationary faculty.

**Recommendation 3:** The Department should take up the question of faculty workload, looking specifically at what factors should be taken into account in evaluating workload and how it should be measured; the Program should then consider whether guidelines (or policy) to ensure the equitable distribution of workload is warranted.

**Recommendation 4:** Steps should be taken to include lecturers in departmental culture without requiring them to do anything that is outside their contractual responsibilities.

**Recommendation 5:** The Program should investigate the desirability of making annual academic advising a mandatory requirement for undergraduate majors.

**Recommendation 6:** The HRS program assessment plan should establish a process by which the assessment results are integrated into programmatic and curricular planning; in addition, the program should establish reasonable student performance expectations for its learning outcomes.

**Recommendation 7:** Humanities and Religious Studies, in consultation with the Dean of the College of Arts & Letters, should develop a comprehensive plan for reversing recent enrollment declines in the HRS undergraduate BA and graduate MA programs.

**Recommendation 8:** The Program should develop a three-to-five year faculty hiring plan to address the impact of faculty retirements and allow for desired curricular change.

**Recommendation 9:** The Program and the College Dean should work jointly to develop a faculty hiring plan that is compatible with the Program's efforts to increase its enrollment in its undergraduate and graduate programs.

**Recommendation 10:** The HRS faculty should investigate the desirability of moving selected upper-division GE course offerings to lower-division status.

**Recommendation 11:** The Programs should investigate whether placing major-required courses in the GE program requires them to sacrifice the depth desired by majors in order to accommodate GE. If true, the Programs should undertake a discussion of desirability of the trade-offs involved.

**Recommendation 12:** The Department should consider the necessity of developing an online course policy.

**Recommendations to the Dean:**

**Recommendation 7:** The Program, in consultation with the Dean of the College of Arts & Letters, should develop a comprehensive plan for reversing recent enrollment declines in the HRS undergraduate BA and graduate MA programs.

**Recommendation 8:** The Program should develop a three-to-five year faculty hiring plan to address the impact of faculty retirements and allow for desired curricular change.

**Recommendation 9:** The Program and the College Dean should work jointly to develop a faculty hiring plan that is compatible with the Program's efforts to increase its enrollment in its undergraduate and graduate programs.

**Recommendation to the Faculty Senate:**

**Recommendation:** The Review Team recommends that the degree programs in Humanities and Religious Studies be approved for six years or until the next scheduled program review.

**PART I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

Humanities and Religious Studies is one of ten departments housed in the College of Arts and Letters. Originally created in the 1970s by faculty from different departments as a means of offering students a more holistic program in the humanities, it was designed to offer coursework and degrees in both the Humanities and Religious Studies. The program currently offers two undergraduate degrees, a BA in Humanities and a BA in Humanities with Religious Studies concentration, two undergraduate minors (in Humanities and in Religious Studies) and the Master's degree (MA) in Humanities.

The External Consultant, Dr. Jed Wyrick, stated in his report that the HRS program is unusual among such programs both in the CSU and nationwide both for the way it houses Humanities and Religious Studies degrees in the same academic unit and for having its own designated faculty.



He goes on to observe that the Humanities MA program is unique in the CSU and one of the few nationwide that, like the BA programs, has its own in-house curriculum and is not based upon coursework from multiple departments. [External Consultant's Report, p. 1].

**Commendation 3:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their excellent undergraduate and graduate programs, which, with their core curricula and designated faculty, makes them unique in the CSU and one of the few of its type in the nation.

### BA Degrees

The Program offers two 39-unit BA degrees, one in Humanities and the other in Humanities with Religious Studies Concentration. They share a similar structure with some curricular overlap in the core requirements. The BA in Humanities requires a 12-unit lower-division core that provides students with a chronological overview of both Western (HRS 10 and HRS 11) and Asian (HRS 70 and HRS 71) ideas and art. This is followed by 9 units of specified upper-division coursework (HRS 105 and two seminars), and an additional 18 units of upper-division elective classes, structured to ensure breadth of historical and non-western cultural coverage. The requirements for the BA in Humanities with Religious Studies Concentration consist of a 12-unit lower-division core (9 of which overlaps with the BA in Humanities, plus HRS 4), 12 units of required upper-division coursework, including HRS 108, which focus on the nature of Religious Studies as a discipline, plus two seminars), and 18 upper-division elective units, at least 9 of which are distributed across different culture areas.

The Self-Study (p.3) observes that these BA degree programs are the only ones in their fields in the CSU that (1) require an extensive core curriculum and (2) provide sufficient course offerings within the department to allow students to complete their degree requirements without being forced to take much of their coursework in other departments. As the Self-Study goes on to note, this allows Religious Studies to offer a coherent group of courses that provide majors with “a strong foundational knowledge of culture history and the liberal arts.” (Self-Study, p.3).

The External Consultant agrees with this assessment. He recommends, however, that both BA programs place greater emphasis on introducing students to specific disciplinary skills, such as the ability to interpret different genres (e.g., the epic, poetry, novel, painting, religious iconography) and religious ethnography, earlier in the curriculum, for example in HRS 105 and HRS 108, rather than waiting until the capstone seminars to do so.

Students are strongly positive about the undergraduate major: they like the Program's general structure with its combination of a clearly defined core and a range of options in the upper-division requirements. They are very positive about their faculty, and find them both approachable and very knowledgeable in their subject matter.

From the student perspective the biggest issue is class scheduling. They note that, given the issues with class scheduling, to make the most efficient progress through the degree one must begin as a freshman; transfer students often find it hard to optimize the schedule of the classes in

the major given the infrequency of specific course offerings. In addition, the lack of choice in the schedule – often there is only one course per semester that will satisfy a particular requirement – can be frustrating since a specific course the student was hoping to take is not available. In addition, the fact that the catalog only shows the schedule of classes for the current semester makes it difficult to plan ahead.

**Recommendation 1:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs should make available a proposed multi-year schedule of class offerings to assist students in their class scheduling. If such a schedule already exists it should make it more widely known.

Students acknowledged that many of these problems could be addressed through regular advising but some students, even in their senior year, remained unclear as to how advising worked. Students were unsure how advisors were assigned and how frequently they should meet with them; as a result they often tend to gravitate toward individual faculty on an informal basis. The consensus among students with whom the review team spoke was that requiring students meet with an assigned advisor on a regular basis would be helpful.

Students also recommended that faculty consider making greater use of classroom technology including options such as chat boards to promote student interaction. They also suggested that the programs consider the use of hybrid or online course formats to increase flexibility in class scheduling.

**Commendation 4:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their well-structured a BA in Humanities and BA in Humanities with Religious Studies Concentration degree programs.

### Minors

The Humanities and Religious Studies Program offers two 21-unit undergraduate minors, one in Humanities the other in Religious Studies, whose structures parallel those of their respective BA degrees. The Humanities Minor requires three courses (9 units) that overlap with the BA lower-division core and 4 upper-division courses (12 units) 3 of which are distributed across the major elective categories. The Religious Studies minor requires 6 units that overlap with the BA core (HRS 108 and 140) plus 15 elective units, with at least three units taken in each of the two major regional culture areas. Data was unavailable on the number of Minors awarded and since many students do not declare a minor until close to graduation, the Review Team had no opportunity to meet with them.

### MA degree

The Master's Degree (MA) in Humanities is one of four such programs offered in the CSU. Established in 2011-12, it grew out of the MA program in Liberal Arts, which was being phased out at the recommendation of the previous (2009) program review. At the same time, the History

Department, at the Humanities and Religious Studies Department's behest, eliminated a previously existing MA in History with a Humanities Concentration. For faculty, especially those who were familiar with its Liberal Arts predecessor, the current MA program has been a success both in terms of student quality and time to degree. The Program's goals are flexible, designed to allow students either to pursue a more advanced studies in the Humanities or related fields, or to teach at the community college level.

The six graduate students in HRS 220 who met with the review team spoke positively about their experiences in the program. Their reasons for pursuing the Humanities MA included preparation to teach (the most common response), curatorial work, and personal development. They generally had no problems with course scheduling and cited cases where the instructor was willing to adjust class content to accommodate student interests. As with students in the undergraduate major, they had universal praise for the faculty ("they're great"). In addition to commending them on their subject matter knowledge, they found the personal interaction with them very rewarding.

**Commendation 5:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their well-designed MA program that is intellectually stimulating and prepares students for a range of different post-graduation academic and career options.

The one key complaint, to the extent that there was one, was that some courses are unnecessarily repetitive, particularly in Classical Studies (Greece and Rome). This is especially the case for those graduate students with an undergraduate degree in Humanities. Students acknowledged that there might be reasons for this: that some courses dual offerings that have to satisfy both undergraduate and graduate degree requirements, and at other times some of their fellow graduate students may not have had the necessary background knowledge. Nonetheless, they were not buying the argument that "one has to teach it at a more introductory level to accommodate those graduate students without an undergraduate degree in Humanities."

**Table 1: Graduate Program (MA) Enrollment 2011 – 2016**

|                     | <b>2011</b> | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Humanities</b>   | 0           | 0           | 17          | 13          | 11          | 11          |
| <b>Liberal Arts</b> | 19          | 19          | 3           | 3           | 1           | 1           |

Source: 2016 and 2017 *Factbook for Humanities and Religious Studies*, Tables 4 and 5.

The Department considers the program to be a success in that it does a good job in placing its graduates professionally upon their completion of the degree. The MA program's biggest challenge, however, has been the decline in its enrollment (Table 1). Initially graduate enrollments were respectable, particularly during its early years as the Liberal Arts MA program was being phased out, but in the years immediately prior to the program review, enrollments have been declined steadily as new admissions have fallen; only three new students had been admitted to the program during the year of the review. The External Consultant referred to this pattern as anemic, and the College Dean frankly described it as unsustainable.

It is important to note, however, that the above was based on the most recent data available in the department Factbooks at the time of the review. No updated Factbooks have been released since then by the University's Office of Institutional Research, Effectiveness, and Planning and, as a result, Table 1 does not capture more recent trends. Unofficial figures recently reported by the Department, however, show the decline has been reversed in 2018 and 2019, with six new students admitted in each of those years. Nonetheless, low enrollment is clearly the biggest challenge facing the MA program and will be discussed in more detail below.

### General Education

The Humanities and Religious Studies Program is a major participant in the University's General Education (GE) program. Of the 54 undergraduate courses offered by the Program at the time of the review 45 of them fulfill one or more General Education requirements. They are distributed within the GE curriculum as follows:

- Area C1 (Arts): 2
- Area C2 (Humanities): 36
- Area D (Individual & Society): 1
- Area E (Understanding & Personal Development): 1

All but five of the courses are upper-division and one of the lower-division offerings, HRS 21, is a first-year seminar. At the time of the current review GE offerings accounted for 83% of the program's FTES.

The program is committed to maintaining its strong presence in the GE. At the same time, however, several faculty have expressed concern that the program's large upper-division service component impinges on the major by making it difficult for courses to satisfy many majors' desire for depth while accommodating GE students who may have limited or no experience with the subject matter. Some majors who met with the review team reported this as a source of frustration, a case of having to repeat introductory subject matter at the cost of depth. This situation is reflected in the fact that very few upper-division classes have prerequisites – another factor in limiting depth. The review team notes, however, that the small number of majors makes it difficult to offer major courses without the additional support of GE enrollment; this is frequently unavoidable.

### Faculty

At the time of the program review there were eight full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty in the Program. In addition, two additional tenured faculty members, Jackie Donath and Richard Shek were in their first and third years of the Faculty Early Retirement Program (FERP), respectively. Another tenured faculty member, Robert Platzner, had retired since the previous program review. Two of the full-time faculty members, Mary Doyno and Harvey Stark, were relatively recent hires (2014) and not yet tenured. In terms of curricular distribution, the full-time faculty (including those on FERP) appear to be more or less evenly distributed between Humanities and

Religious Studies, with several faculty displaying an interest in both areas. Based on information available on the Program's website, the curricular distribution is as follows:

Humanities: 3 (Buckman, Donath, Shinbrot)  
 Religious Studies: 3 (Dubois, Jaoudi, Stark)  
 Both: 4 (Brodd, Doyno, Nystrom, Shek)

In addition, at the time of the review there were also 13 non-tenure track lecturers teaching in the program. This number tended to vary on a semester by semester basis, ranging between 6 and 13, with an average of around 10 over the preceding three years. Individual lecturer course loads also varied from semester to semester, ranging from 3 WTU to 12 WTU. Based on Self-Study data (p.4) the ratio of full-time tenure/tenure-track and lecturer faculty workloads for 2015-2016 was as follows:

**Table 2. Full-Time/Lecturer Workloads, 2015-16**

|                  | <i>WTU</i> | <i>FTES</i> |
|------------------|------------|-------------|
| <i>Full-Time</i> | 45%        | 37%         |
| <i>Lecturer</i>  | 55%        | 63%         |

*2017 Factbook for Humanities and Religious Studies, Table 9.*

Notably, lecturers are responsible for a greater proportion of the class workload than are full-time faculty, a difference that is due in large part to both the fact lecturers are more likely to teach the more heavily enrolled courses with a large GE component, and also because a number of full-time faculty are on a reduced teaching load due to reassigned time for other responsibilities.

Probationary faculty were positive in their feelings about the Program. They found their colleagues to be collegial and supportive and generally had no complaints. While they expressed some frustration over the perceived vagueness of tenure/promotion expectations at the College and University levels, they felt that Program-level expectations were generally clear. Their one concern was over what they saw as the ambiguity of service expectations, which they felt were high. This, however, they acknowledged (as did the Department Chair), is likely the result of senior colleagues trying to be too helpful; a case where suggestions of alternative ways by which they could elect to meet the service requirement are perceived as an expectation that they take on all of them.

**Recommendation 2:** The Department should clarify, either in the Department RTP policy or elsewhere, the level of service activities expected of probationary faculty.

The review team found morale among full-time faculty generally to be good, although some minor issues were apparent. Although the review team did not find it to be a major concern, the external consultant noted that some faculty felt the Religious Studies part of the curriculum was under-supported and felt that the issue needed to be addressed; this is discussed in more detail in the Enrollment and Curriculum section of the report below.

A more commonly expressed concern among all faculty involved the question of workload. Frustration was expressed by several faculty that workload was not being distributed evenly. The issue frequently was one of the number of preps versus class size, but also over the actual workload, such as the amount of grading involved, especially writing. The workload concerns applied to service assigned time as well. There was a sense that some faculty know how to work the system and others could not or would not, causing frustration and resentment.

**Recommendation 3:** The Department should take up the question of faculty workload, looking specifically at what factors should be taken into account in evaluating workload and how it should be measured; the Program should then consider whether guidelines (or policy) to ensure the equitable distribution of workload is warranted.

The feeling was also expressed by some that Humanities and Religious Studies faculty teach more than those in other departments. There is some evidence to support this; the Humanities and Religious Studies Student Faculty Ratio for the five year period from 2012-13 to 2016-17 of 31.2 was distinctly higher than that of both the College (26.7) and the University over the same period.

Both senior and probationary faculty were quick to point out that none of these were major sources of tension among them. While they acknowledged that there were at times disagreements over specific issues, these were generally worked out without ill-feelings. They praised the strong sense of collegiality within the Department and the opportunity it provides them to teach their specialties. As one faculty put it, "It's a wonderful place to work."

**Commendation 6:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their knowledgeable and dedicated full-time tenured/tenure-track faculty who command a wide range of interests and expertise, and offer a diverse and intellectually stimulating curriculum.

The review team met with three lecturers whose teaching experience with the HRS Program ranged from two years to more than a decade. They liked teaching in the program and spoke positively of the experience; they found the department to be very supportive. They singled out the Department Chair, Brad Nystrom, who they said was always willing to provide guidance with syllabi, assignments, and other course-related matters. It makes them feel part of the Program. It should be noted, however, that this contradicts the external consultant who reported that he found low morale among lecturers stemming from both crowded part-time office space but also from a sense of exclusion by not being included in regular communications or invited to attend departmental meetings. Given the likelihood that this is something that the review team missed, having only had the opportunity to meet with three lecturers, the review team includes the external consultant's recommendation (External Consultant's Report, p. 11) here:

**Commendation 7:** The adjunct lecturers in Humanities and Religious Studies are to be commended for their dedication to the Humanities and Religious Studies Programs and for excellent and essential teaching support they provide.

**Recommendation 4:** Steps should be taken to include lecturers in departmental culture without requiring them to do anything that is outside their contractual responsibilities.

### Students

At the time of the program review there were a total of 44 undergraduates enrolled in the HRS majors, with 31 pursuing the BA in Humanities and 13 the BA in Religious Studies. This was a dramatic decrease from the 103 majors at the time of previous Self-Study in 2008. As Table 3 shows, the decline has been steady across the six-year review period preceding the current review.

**Table 3. Humanities & Religious Studies BA Program Enrollment 2011-2016**

|                     | <b>2011</b> | <b>2012</b> | <b>2013</b> | <b>2014</b> | <b>2015</b> | <b>2016</b> |
|---------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Humanities</b>   | 40          | 34          | 32          | 38          | 36          | 31          |
| <b>Rel. Studies</b> | 24          | 16          | 18          | 11          | 12          | 13          |
| <b>Total</b>        | 64          | 50          | 50          | 49          | 48          | 44          |

Source: 2016 and 2017 Factbook for Humanities and Religious Studies, Table 5.

This has been accompanied by a corresponding decline in the number of degrees conferred during the period which declined from 25 in 2011-12, to 12 in 2013-14 before increasing somewhat in 2015-16 and 2016-17 through [Table 4].

**Table 4. Undergraduate Degrees Conferred 2011-12 to 2016-17**

|                  | <b>2011-12</b> | <b>2012-13</b> | <b>2013-14</b> | <b>2014-15</b> | <b>2015-16</b> | <b>2016-17</b> |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| <b>BA degree</b> | 25             | 21             | 12             | 16             | 19             | 16             |

As the external consultant observed, this enrollment contraction is not unique to the Sacramento State Humanities and Religious Studies program; it has been characteristic of Humanities programs nationwide, including in the CSU, since the beginning of the economic recession in 2008. Nonetheless it represents what is probably the greatest challenge to the long-term viability of the Program at present.

The profile of undergraduate Humanities and Religious Studies students [Table 5] shows that, by a ratio of almost two to one, majors are predominantly female (65%), which is significantly above the averages for the University (55.9%) and the College of Arts & Letters.(57.7% [not included in table]). The ethnic breakdown of majors reveals 39.2% to be White/Caucasian, which is noticeably above the University's overall average (27.2%); given the wide variation in the ethnic composition of majors across the University, however, it's not clear how significant this is [See *University 2017 Factbook*, Table 11 ff]. While the HRS faculty observed that lower than average enrollment by some ethnic groups many reflect the attraction of the Ethnic Studies major as an alternative, they also noted that it is indicative of the need for the program to broaden its curriculum to reflect the increasing diversity of the University's student population, particularly Latin American and Latinx culture. Nonetheless, as the Table shows, overall Humanities and Religious Studies minority enrollment approximates that of the University as a whole.

**Table 5. Student Profile by Percent, 2012 to 2016\***  
(six-year averages, by percent)

| <b>Category</b>                 | <b>Program</b> | <b>University</b> |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| <b>Ethnicity:</b>               |                |                   |
| <i>White/Caucasian</i>          | 39.2           | 27.2              |
| <i>Latinx</i>                   | 17.3           | 30.5              |
| <i>Asian</i>                    | 8.9            | 20.9              |
| <i>African-American</i>         | 10.8           | 5.7               |
| <i>Multiracial</i>              | 13.3           | 6.3               |
| <i>Other/Foreign/Unreported</i> | 9.9            | 9.5               |
|                                 |                |                   |
| <b>All Minority (total)</b>     | 55.4           | 56.4              |
|                                 |                |                   |
| <b>Gender</b>                   |                |                   |
| <i>Female</i>                   | 65.5           | 55.9              |
| <i>Male</i>                     | 34.5           | 44.1              |

Source: *Humanities and Religious Studies 2016 Factbook*, Table 2

\* Calculated from *University 2017 Factbook*, Table 9.

### Student Advising

At the time of the program review most one-on-one undergraduate advising for both majors and minors was done by the department chair, although students also could seek advisement from individual faculty if they so choose. The review of graduation applications on the other hand is carried out by a faculty committee established for each BA program; this is done in order to distribute the workload more evenly, although there can be confusion as to which committee members have responsibility for which application. Graduate student advising is carried out primarily by the Graduate Coordinator.

In the past, advising has been *ad hoc*, where students are not required to see an advisor on a regular basis. An older advising policy existed but was non-specific and generally not followed. As mentioned earlier, students were often unclear as to how program advising worked and felt that mandatory advising would be helpful.

At the time of the review Dr. Doyno had been in the process of working on an updated advising policy, drawing on those currently in place at other institutions. Key elements were expected to include required advising for all students on a semester basis (also recommended by the external consultant) with the advisees evenly distributed among the faculty. The update has since been completed and faculty are generally supportive although some concern has been expressed over the additional workload it would entail.

The review team supports the idea of a mandatory advising policy but -- given faculty concerns over workload and the experiences in our own departments -- feels that requiring advising every



semester is unnecessary and recommends that students be required to see an advisor on an annual basis, instead.

**Recommendation 5:** The Program should investigate the desirability of making annual academic advising a mandatory requirement for undergraduate majors.

### Facilities

The HRS Department is housed on the second floor of Mendocino Hall. The main office suite (MND 2011) consists of a reception area, the department chair's office, and a workroom containing faculty mailboxes, a network printer, computer workstation, and work tables. The department also has a small secure storeroom used primarily to store video and other classroom materials such as DVDs. The Department has no designated meeting room at its disposal, but is generally able to use the Philosophy Department Office's conference room in the same building. The Department relies on Space Management if additional space is needed. Faculty offices are located in Mendocino Hall in close proximity to the department office. Full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty members have an individual office; temporary faculty have to share offices, which can create congestion at busy times during the day.

The majority of HRS classes are scheduled in Mendocino Hall. Under the prior classroom allocation policy HRS had priority scheduling for three "smart" classrooms, MND 1020, 1024, and 4004, which had the advantage of being conveniently close to the department and faculty offices. This proximity made student visits to faculty offices more common. The new classroom policy, which did away with classroom prioritization and centralized their allocation, however, has led to fewer classes being offered nearby.

The staff currently consists of one full-time ASC (at the time of the review, Carol Downey) on a twelve-month appointment. When she's absent, the office is covered by someone from the Arts & Letter Dean's Office or another department coordinator within the College; Philosophy and Communication Studies, both in Arts & Letters, are also in the building. The Department occasionally has the use of a student assistant, sometimes informally scheduled. Their OE budget is tight but they are able to live within their expenses.

Faculty and Staff are generally pleased with the current state of the Department's facilities. Equally importantly, personal relationships are generally good, a result in part (as the Chair noted) of the collegiality fostered by the compactness of the Department's physical space.

### Governance:

Given its relatively small faculty size Humanities and Religious Studies lacks a formal faculty governance structure. Traditionally the chair "did mostly everything," – seeing to undergraduate advising, making most day-to-day decisions, and taking on most operational tasks. In recent years with the elimination of an active scheduling committee, this has also included class scheduling and setting teaching assignments. Big decisions or policy changes traditionally have

been made by faculty-based committees of the whole, where matters were more commonly decided through consensus than by voting. Individual responsibilities are delegated when deemed advisable; Dr. Shinbrot serves as its Graduate Coordinator and Dr. Mary Donyo, a probationary faculty member was, at the time of the review, in the midst of revising the Program's outdated advising policy; the revision has now been completed.

This loosely defined governance structure for the most part has seemed to work reasonably well but, as a former chair noted, it can create conflict for whoever is serving as chair, since they can become the focal point for dissatisfaction with departmental and programmatic administration. To the extent that this is occurred since the last program review, the primary source of tension appears to have been over class scheduling; the lack of a scheduling committee has created a need for more consultation on schedule development and a greater willingness on the part of both faculty and the chair to negotiate in this area.

The review team wants to emphasize that leadership issues did not rank high on any of the faculty's list of concerns, and all were generally appreciative of Dr. Nystrom's leadership as chair, including in preparation of the Self-Study and overseeing the program review.

**Commendation 8:** Chair Bradley Nystrom and the Department staff are to be commended for their leadership and service to the Program, its faculty, and its students, which includes, not least of all, guiding it through the current program review.

#### Response to Previous Program Review Recommendations:

The 2009 program review generated twelve recommendations for the Humanities and Religious Studies Program. The program took the recommendations seriously and in the time since then has made a number of significant changes, which include revisions of the BA curriculum, development of the MA in Humanities, and a major overhaul of its program assessment plan.

A list of the recommendations with a summary of the Program's responses, can be found in the Appendix to this report. Full discussion can be found in the Self-Study (pp. 9-13).

**Commendation 9:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for their well-organized and thoughtful responses to the recommendations made to it as part of their previous (2009) program review.

## **PART II: PROGRAM ASSESSMENT**

Recommendations from the 2009 program review were "assessment heavy," with seven of the twelve recommendations (#s 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9; see Appendix) calling for changes to the Humanities and Religious Studies assessment process, which at the time had been in place since 2003. The program has made major revisions to its assessment since then. In 2012-13 an assessment committee was established for the purpose of coordinating assessment efforts and

assisting in preparation of the annual assessment reports. The revised assessment plans for both the BA and MA programs were implemented in 2013-2014.

At its core the BA assessment plan (Self-Study, Appendix C) is built around the evaluation of student performance on five broad program learning outcomes (PLOs) and their subsections. Forty in total, these break down into 21 individual outcomes the Humanities BA and 19 for Religious Studies. The PLOs, in turn, are aligned with the University's Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BLGs). Student performance on the learning outcomes was assessed by applying the VALUE rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education, developed by the American Association of College & Universities) to evaluate student papers from core requirement classes for the major. To this end a curriculum map linking learning outcomes to the specific courses in which they are to be evaluated was developed. The plan calls for a selected set of PLOs to be assessed annually on a rotating basis to ensure that all of them are assessed at least once during a typical six-year program review cycle. At the time of the current program review a full round of core competencies assessments had been completed. The number of learning outcomes (both concentrations combined) scheduled to be evaluated during the current review cycle are as follows:

2016/17: 6  
 2017/18: 6  
 2018/19: 4  
 2019/20: 4  
 2020/21: 2

It should be noted that, while praising the ambitious nature of the assessment plan, the external consultant expressed concern that there were too many PLOs (40) to allow them to be assessed on a regular basis without exhausting the faculty. He suggested that they be reduced to a more manageable number by combining the subsidiary outcomes where possible. While the review team is reluctant to make this as a formal recommendation, it nonetheless urges the Programs to give careful consideration to the suggestion.

As with the assessment of baccalaureate programs, the MA assessment plan is built around five broad PLOs: Critical Thinking, Information Literacy, Oral Communication, Global Learning, and Intercultural Knowledge and Competence. Assessment of the learning outcomes using the 2013-2014 revised plan began that year and by the time of the program review an initial assessment of all five PLOs had taken place on the following schedule:

2013/2014: 1  
 2014/2015: 2  
 2015/2016: 2

As with the baccalaureate learning outcomes student performance was evaluated using the VALUE rubrics, but given that this was the first round of assessment no pre-assigned standards of performance were employed. These will be developed for future review cycles.

The PLO assessment results for both the BA and MA programs are then augmented by information derived from the *Humanities & Religious Studies Alumni Survey, Summer 2013*. The survey comprised 35 questions that asked respondents about their satisfaction with their experiences in the Humanities and Religious Program, how it contributed to their subsequent intellectual and personal growth, and its application to their lives, post-Sacramento State. The survey was distributed to 149 alumni of both the undergraduate and graduate programs; 56 (37.6%) responded. The responses thus provided an additional indirect measure of program effectiveness.

**Commendation 10:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Program are commended for the development and implementation of well-structured, if ambitious program assessment plan.

The Program currently views the development of its system of assessment as an ongoing process. As the Self-Study notes, the primary goal of the previous review cycle was to put a functioning assessment system in place. The review team agrees with the Program that highest priority for the next (current) cycle should be to establish a process by which the assessment results are integrated in programmatic and curricular planning. A second goal should be a review of student performance expectations for PLOs; both the Director of the Office of Academic Program Assessment and the External Consultant believe that Program's decision to set a score of "2" out of "4" score on the VALUE rubrics as acceptable for undergraduate performance is probably setting the bar too low. The review team agrees.

**Recommendation 6:** The Humanities and Religious Studies assessment plan should establish a process by which the assessment results are integrated into programmatic and curricular planning; in addition, the programs should establish reasonable student performance expectations for its learning outcomes.

### **PART III: FOCUSED INQUIRY**

For its focused inquiry the Department undertook a comprehensive comparison of its own Humanities and Religious Studies to similar programs throughout CSU, with particular attention to definitions of the disciplines and program structure. In addition, it examined the degree of alignment between the Department's programs and similar curricular offerings at local area community colleges. The goal of the inquiry was to sharpen the distinctions between the Program's BA concentrations and strengthen their respective senses of identity. In addition, the results are expected to serve as a resource for the Program's ongoing review of its own curriculum and offer guidance in the establishment of a formal curriculum policy.

The results are impressive. The data contain not only a detailed breakdown of individual humanities and religious studies programs (or their equivalents) at other CSU campuses, but also extensive analysis of community college course alignments with those in the Humanities and Religious Program's own curriculum. According to the Self-Study, results from the focused inquiry have informed several changes implemented at the departmental and program levels,

including modification to the Humanities and Religious Studies Programs' catalog descriptions and the development of a curriculum policy. They have also helped shape other changes currently under consideration, including the relocation of many of its GE course offerings from upper- to lower-division to align them with community college curricula, and the possible establishment of Latin American and American humanities curricula as part of its lower-division offerings.

In addition to aiding the Programs in its curriculum review, the results also provided both the external consultant and the program review team with useful input for their own evaluations and recommendations. Several of the review team's recommendations derive at least in part from the focused inquiry, and the external consultant's identification of the strengths and uniqueness of the Humanities & Religious Studies Program at Sacramento State are based on many of its findings as well.

As a final note, should the Program elect to undertake a similar survey of other humanities and religious studies programs at some point in the future, the review team urges them to look not just at programs in the CSU, but also more broadly at programs elsewhere, including nationally.

**Commendation 11:** The Humanities and Religious Studies Programs are commended for carrying out a well-designed focused inquiry whose results will serve as a resource for the Programs' ongoing review of its curriculum and offer guidance for future strategic planning.

#### **PART IV: ENROLLMENT AND CURRICULUM**

The interrelated issues of enrollment and curriculum are at present the two principal challenges to the long-term health of the Humanities and Religious Studies Program.

##### Enrollment

In one sense the Humanities and Religious Studies Program can be satisfied with its overall enrollment; it offers a full suite of classes each semester while maintaining a student-faculty ratio well above that of both the College and University averages; this is largely due to a strong GE service component [2017 *Humanities and Religious Studies Factbook*, Table 9]. A more serious concern exists, however, in the steady decline in enrollments in both the undergraduate major and graduate programs in recent years.

As Table 3 shows, there has been a steady decrease in number of majors in both the Humanities and Humanities with Religious Studies Concentration BA programs since the time of the last program review in 2009. While this can be attributed in part to the recession and a recent downturn of interest in humanities and religious studies nation-wide, it is nonetheless a problem that needs to be addressed. For one thing, it limits the number of major-specific courses the Programs can offer during a given semester. For another it has the potential to dilute course content to accommodate non-majors who may be taking the course to meet a GE requirement.

Perhaps most importantly, the Dean of the College of Arts & Letters has stated that future faculty hiring will depend on the Program coming up with a plan to reverse the decline and increase the number of majors.

As discussed earlier, the key to reversing the decline lies not in improving retention but in attracting new majors. The external consultant offers several suggestions to this end and we urge the HRS Program to give careful consideration to each of them. The review team, however, recommends that it give particular attention to the following:

- Change selected upper-division major courses that also play a GE service role from upper-division to lower-division status. As explained more fully in the Curriculum section below, this has significant potential as a recruiting tool. We particularly urge this for courses such as the World Mythology and introductory Religious Studies offerings which are popular in GE.
- Encourage enrollments in the minor; as other programs have found (including that of one of the review team members) minors can become recruiting tools for the major.
- Expand community college outreach to increase awareness of the Humanities and Religious Studies majors among both advising staff and potential transfer students.
- Internships – students are also supportive of the idea; it helps potential students become familiar with some of the post-graduation employment opportunities open to majors.

For the MA program, low enrollment is its most serious challenge; it is considerably more acute than that for the BA (Table 1). The Department needs to develop a plan to reverse the trend if it is to remain viable. At the time of the program review only three new students entered the program that academic year. (Numbers subsequently reported by the Department show this has increased somewhat since then.) The external consultant, after conversation with the campus Dean of Graduate Studies suggests (perhaps optimistically) that a number of 10-15 entering graduate students per year would be the ideal target and suggests several strategies for making the program more attractive. These include:

- Lowering the GPA requirement for admission from the current 3.0 to 2.75, provided the student shows evidence of otherwise being able to succeed in the program;
- Take steps to promote the major more widely; work with the Office of Public Affairs and others on campus to develop promotional materials.
- Consider creation of a five-year blended BA/MA program, which could have the additional benefit of attracting undergraduate students to the program.
- Find a way to offer partial student fee relief through internships or teaching assistantships.

While the undergraduate and graduate programs will ultimately be responsible for developing their own strategies for expanding enrollment, the review team strongly urges the Department to

consider these above suggestions as it moves forward. Moreover, any of the ideas for improving enrollment at both the undergraduate and graduate levels will likely require additional resources, such as assigned time for outreach. HRS should therefore work with the Dean as it develops its strategies in this regard.

**Recommendation 7:** Humanities and Religious Studies in consultation with the Dean of the College of Arts & Letters, should develop a comprehensive plan for reversing recent enrollment declines in the HRS undergraduate BA and graduate MA programs.

### Curriculum

The Programs' immediate curricular challenge is to find a way to maintain the current curriculum in the face of recent and pending retirements. Two faculty were in the FERP program at the time of the program review and one of these, Richard Shek, who has taught East Asian humanities and religion, has now fully retired. The other, Jackie Donath, an Americanist, will complete her FERP and retire shortly. Additionally, both the department chair and external consultant have pointed out that the Religious Studies Program has for several years lacked faculty coverage of Judaism with the retirement of Robert Platzner.

A second challenge is to increase the Program's curricular diversity beyond its current curriculum which focuses primarily on Western and Asian ideas and art. Latin America and Africa were frequently mentioned as areas meriting inclusion in the curriculum. The review team notes, however, that it is hard to build a broadly diverse curriculum with the small number of faculty and declining number of majors the Program currently has. It is important that the Program recognize that, given these size constraints it cannot cover everything. The program needs to think in terms of developing a curriculum that (1) best serves the majors they have, and (2) is most likely to draw in new majors.

A likely strategy would be to maintain and strengthen the Program focus in American humanities and religion and begin to expand its curriculum to include Latin American humanities. Both reflect the make-up of the University's current student population and are therefore likely to attract new majors; in addition, as the Focused Inquiry describes, they are most likely to attract transfer students from community colleges in the Sacramento area through their lower-division programs in American and Latin American studies.

Meeting these challenges will necessitate new faculty hires over the next 3-4 years. Based on conversations with HRS faculty and the external consultant's report, the review team considers the following to be the primary hiring needs:

1. East Asia: This should be the top priority, given the curricular gap left by the departure of Dr. Shek; there is currently no one else on campus prepared to cover the range of material the position requires.
2. American Humanities: To replace Jackie Donath when she retires, but also to complement Alyson Buckman, whose interests are shifting more to film. The subject is central to

the experience of most of the University's students. It also shows the potential to attract new majors through community college transfers. [See Self-Study/Focused Inquiry.]

3. Latin America/Latinx Humanities: The subject increasingly reflects the University's student population and is becoming more important on the national level. It also shows the potential to attract new majors through community college transfers.
4. Judaism: It's a major world religion and particularly important in American society, and is currently not covered.

These are only suggestions. The hiring plan should ultimately be developed by the program faculty themselves based on their own understanding of the Program's needs.

**Recommendation 8:** The Programs should develop a three-to-five year faculty hiring plan to address the impact of faculty retirements and allow for desired curricular change.

It is important that the Dean be kept informed of these discussions since it is the Dean that ultimately sets the hiring priorities for the College of Arts & Letters. While the Dean has stated that future hires will be dependent on expanding HRS enrollments, it will probably take time before the results of efforts to do so become apparent. The need for faculty hires in some areas, meanwhile, especially for the replacement of retiring faculty (Richard Shek, in particular), is more immediate. The Program and the Dean need to negotiate a strategy by which both goals can be achieved.

**Recommendation 9:** The Program and the College Dean should work jointly to develop a faculty hiring plan that is compatible with the Programs' efforts to increase its enrollment in its undergraduate and graduate programs.

In addition to the above the review team urges the Department to investigate the desirability of converting key upper-division courses, particularly those with a GE service component, to lower-division; this might require eliminating the Writing Intensive component. The move was recommended by the external consultant and suggested by results in the focused inquiry as a means of attracting new majors. As an increasing number of the University's students now enter as first-year freshmen, the change would give them the opportunity to take first year Humanities and Religious Studies courses early on, at a time when they are less likely to be locked into their major. In addition, as the Focused Inquiry points out, doing so would allow transfer students to receive credit for lower-division coursework taken at community colleges that would then articulate with the Sacramento State major requirements.

**Recommendation 10:** The Humanities and Religious Studies faculty should investigate the desirability of moving selected upper-division GE course offerings to lower-division status.

Finally, the review team has two additional recommendations regarding curriculum. First, some faculty as well as undergraduate majors have expressed concern that the Programs' heavy ties to



GE in may have led to a dilution of the major as depth is sacrificed to make courses appropriate for GE. The review team urges the Department to investigate the validity of the concern.

**Recommendation 11:** The Programs should investigate whether placing major-required courses in the GE program requires them to sacrifice the depth desired by majors to accommodate GE. If true, the Programs should undertake a discussion of desirability of the trade-offs involved.

Second, in recent years departments have been urged to consider new pedagogies in the classroom, including increased class size and placing some multi-section courses online. The Department should consider whether an online course policy is needed to ensure rigor and establish minimum standards for student-faculty interaction.

**Recommendation 12:** The Department should consider the necessity of developing an online course policy.

## **PART V. CONCLUSION**

This review finds The Humanities and Religious Studies Program to be an important asset to the College of Arts & Letters and California State University, Sacramento. It offers well-designed degree programs at both the undergraduate (BA) and graduate (MA) level. These are, as external consultant, Dr. Jed Wyrick concluded “are intellectually encompassing, chronologically comprehensive, geographically and culturally diverse, and self-contained. Its faculty are dedicated, enthusiastic, well-respected, and knowledgeable in their disciplines.” Based on the above, the review team makes the following recommendation to the Faculty Senate:

**Recommendation to the Faculty Senate:** The Review Team recommends that the degree programs in Humanities and Religious Studies be approved for six years or until the next scheduled program review.

## APPENDIX

### Humanities and Religious Studies Responses to Previous (2009) Program Review Recommendations

The following recommendations were made to the Humanities and Religious Studies Program as part of its 2009 program review. Recommendations are accompanied by a brief summary of the Program's responses. For full responses refer to the Self-Study, pp. 9-13.

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

Two hires in 2014 (Stark and Doyno) have brought on board faculty conversant with current trends. In addition, Stark teaches Islamic religion, further strengthening the Program's world culture curriculum. Introduction of a new graduate seminar and revisions to HRS 190 (capstone course for majors in both programs) have also provided enhanced opportunities for global studies.

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

The Program revised the previous assessment plan that dated back to 2003; in 2013 Program added assessment of MA to assessment plan. The new plan more closely correlates Program goals and the University's Baccalaureate Learning Goals (BLGs). Several AAC&U Value rubrics are now used in the assessment of student learning; a set of common rubrics used now used by many of the instructors for HRS 190.

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.*

Response to this is included as part of the response to #2, above.

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

Response to this is included as part of the response to #2, above.

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.*

An assessment committee now in place.

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 humanities.*

Program implemented outreach strategies to local community colleges, in particular American River College. Roadmaps were under development at time of review. Regular emails to majors by program leadership to keep students up to date on program-related matters.

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 programs.*

This is a component of current assessment plan (see Part II: Program Assessment above). The Program is attempting to build on the current alumni survey conducted by OIR.

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.*

Underway – see response to #2.

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.*

The Department waited until University completed its revision to GE areas. The Department is currently considering integrating assessment of its GE offerings into assessment of its major programs.

10. *Encourage the faculty in the Department to participate actively in the University GE reforms and experiments.*

The Department has done so.

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 other important short-term and long-term decisions.*

Has made use of previous program review (2009) recommendations including reducing the number of units in UG major from 45 to 39. It has also replaced the former MA in Liberal Arts with the current Humanities MA program.

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.*

Because of budgetary constraints at the time, work was primarily with Dean Inch rather than Dean Mason. Inch was entirely supportive of program initiatives in these regards.

To: Jeffrey Brodd, Chair of APROC  
From: Alyson Buckman, Chair, Humanities and Religious Studies  
Date: 8 September 2019  
Re: Humanities and Religious Studies Department Program Review

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Thank you for sending our program review. The Department of Humanities and Religious Studies appreciates the thoroughness of the reports by Jed Wyrick, External Consultant, and by Thomas Krabacher, Carolyn Gibbs, and Anne Bradley from CSUS.

I am responding to the invitation for the chair's input. Since our most important and appropriate response will come as part of our next self-study, this response is not meant to be exhaustive but as an initial response to the report and as a means to provide some updates to the review since the program review team visited in 2017. While there is some "reasoned exception to judgments or conclusions drawn," our primary purpose is to "correct inaccuracies in fact or data." This response will comment directly on the report's twelve recommendations to the Department. We are not asking for actual revision but providing a helpful update on our program.

Recommendation 1: Smart Planner and its use by students should help to make planning their course through our major more seamless. However, the Department also is considering developing a multi-year draft schedule. The Department agrees to create guides for our undergraduate degree programs and perhaps minors that are similar to the current guide for the graduate program. We also have increased the number of online and hybrid courses offered.

Recommendation 2: Our yearly evaluations of tenure-track faculty make clear how well they are meeting standards for tenure. Our tenure-track faculty express satisfaction with Departmental support and mentorship on their tenure goals; however, we are soliciting feedback from them. It is difficult to formulate specific expectations of service.

Recommendation 3: The PR report does not address our self-study's points on workload, which addresses the relatively high percentage of upper-division GE courses (and thus significant assessment of students' writing) in our curriculum as of Fall 2016, the time of the study. However, this recommendation does suggest an area of concern. Ideally, we would prefer to distribute workload fairly, to tenure/tenure-track and temporary faculty alike. Determination of fair distribution would require analysis beyond merely counting WTUs, FTEs, and enrollment counts. We would need to take into consideration of the actual workload involved in specific classes, which in turn involves especially appraisal of the necessary amount of assessment of student writing.

Recommendation 4: The tardiness of the report (the External Consultant report arrived in June, 2017) has the consequence of coming after changes occurring in Departmental culture and procedure. We began addressing the issue of lecturer involvement in the Department in August 2018 and are pleased to report increased lecturer satisfaction with their role in the Department. As a result, the report now contains "inaccuracies in fact or data," especially as per recommendations 4-10 and 12.

Recommendation 5: We currently require majors to meet with an advisor at least once per year. The faculty fellow program enabled training and advising, and we were greatly satisfied with Dr. Stark and

Dr. Dubois' participation in the program. Unfortunately, we are not able to participate in the program this year. However, we continue to expect majors to receive advising.

Recommendation 6: We agree with the recommendation to join assignments more thoroughly to PLOs for more meaningful assessment but also note that we have made more headway than noted here on establishing "reasonable student performance expectations." Our current Assessment Reports, in response to the standardized question, "What will be the standard of performance?" set forth specific standards with regard to all PLOs assessed in recent years. As one means of addressing this recommendation's call for the Department to "establish a process by which the assessment results are integrated into programmatic and curricular planning," the Assessment Committee will report to the Department each fall on the results of its work from the previous year.

Recommendation 7: We are working with Dean Meyer on outreach and on discussing strategies with other campuses, both CSU and national. We also would like to note that, in the two years prior to 2019, we admitted 6 students to the graduate program each year. Our number of majors has increased to 73 and our grad student numbers now are at 17, an indicator of a positive potential trend. We certainly will continue to attempt to increase these numbers.

Recommendations 8 and 9: We have a hiring plan in place which matches, in general, the recommendation by the program review team. We have worked to craft an acceptable position announcement but have not received a single line in the last two years, although at least one is urgently needed due to inability to find lecturers capable of and willing to teach Asian Studies courses. We have become caught in a Catch-22 situation in which lack of tenured and tenure-track faculty, especially those with a non-Western emphasis, negatively impacts the numbers of majors in our program.

Recommendation 10: HRS 140 already has been moved to lower-division and has been such for a year. Two upper-division courses, HRS 180 and HRS 151, are in the process of being moved to lower division as an HRS 80 and an HRS 51, respectively

Recommendation 11: This is an excellent recommendation and one we would like to follow; however, under current circumstances, it is nigh impossible to increase the number of majors-only classes.

Recommendation 12: We already have adopted online course policies, and we continue to consider our guidelines.