



May 16, 2024

### **Dean Response to History 2023-2024 Program Review**

I have read the “History Department Program Academic Review”, the “History Department Review Recommendations and Responses” and the “History Department Program Review Department Response”. I would like to thank Dr. Tammy Proctor, Dr. Mark Stevenson, the Chair of History, Dr. Sara Dant, and members of the History Department for the time and effort in providing a thorough review of the program.

The Department of History at Weber State University is to be commended for its strong leadership, innovative curriculum, and commitment to student success. Under the guidance of Dr. Sara Dant, the department has developed a comprehensive mission statement aligned with national standards, emphasizing critical thinking, research skills, and career readiness. The department's curriculum, including majors/minors in History, social studies education, public History, and religious studies, is well-structured with clear guidelines and innovative courses.

Student learning outcomes are rigorously assessed, leading to continuous improvement, while academic advising is personalized and effective. The department excels in maintaining high standards for campus courses including concurrent enrollment classes, setting a model for other programs.

**Program Recommendations:** I appreciate the thought and time that went into determining the recommendations as outlined by the external review committee and note the faculty/chair response to their analysis. My comments are as follows:

1. **Department Mission Statement:** The department's mission aligns well with national standards and Weber State University's strategic vision. I support the plan of the department to utilize their annual assessment protocols, the biennial assessment reports, and Strategic Planning Report (SPR) process to ensure program viability.
2. **Curriculum:**
  - a. The site visit report suggests that the department would “thrive” if classes were offered in a M/W or T/TH format with Friday as a day for events, faculty meetings and high impact student activities. I support History’s plan of offering some courses in the afternoon to test this idea and would highly encourage tracking and data gathering to determine if two-day-per-week classes improve enrollment numbers.
  - b. The site visit report recommends additional faculty who can help contribute to the

Public History program while also teaching in their areas of specialty. The department response is to use three faculty in the department to incorporate Public History experiences into their upper division courses. If funding for these experiences is necessary, I recommend adding this request to the department SPR along with a proposed budget and line item justification. I note that there are curricular gaps due to insufficient faculty coverage in historical fields and support the department's decision to remove HIST 4610 History of Africa from the catalog.

3. **Student learning Outcomes:** The History department has rigorous assessment methods to ensure continuous improvement in achieving learning outcomes. It is my recommendation that the department continue using the assessment methods that have been successful.
4. **Academic advising:** Overreliance on a single advisor poses long-term sustainability concerns. The department plans to implement a shadowing program when the present History advisor steps down. I recommend beginning a discussion on this shadowing program and identifying a possible 'heir apparent'.
5. **Faculty:** History faculty are engaged. They are accessible, accommodating, and dedicated, with diverse backgrounds and active scholarly pursuits. The department has also developed a collaborative transparent decision-making process for course scheduling and faculty workload distribution that fosters a supportive environment. The faculty are also to be commended for building strong ties with external communities to facilitate internships, career opportunities, and public History projects. Some of the challenges are resource constraints. The college and university struggle when it comes to hiring and being able to offer competitive salaries. The high teaching loads hinder recruitment efforts. Another challenge is the growth of concurrent enrollment and evolving student demographics that require ongoing adaptation and resource allocation. Some of these challenges would be resolved with more money (and time), but in the era of budget cuts it makes it difficult to meet some of these needs. On a positive note, the Dean's office is trying to obtain authorization to use some college salary money to fund a tenure-track Historian of the United States and Concurrent Enrollment (CE) Supervisor as one of its top priorities. The Provost's Office will decide, hopefully this summer, about our request.
6. **Program Support:**
  - a. The Administrative Specialist III, Ms. Jenna Daniels is dedicated and talented. Her support of the History program is one of the department's strengths. She works extremely well with faculty, staff, and students at the department, college, and university levels. I hope Ms. Daniels remains in her position for many years to come.
  - b. The program review highlighted limited library resources such as inadequate access to critical databases and reduced availability of instructional materials that can affect research and teaching. The library has a limited budget and has needed to consolidate and reduce resources. These are issues beyond the college's and

department's control. I support History faculty serving on the library advisory board in order to cultivate a relationship with faculty librarians and help promote best practices.

**7. Relationships with External Communities:**

- a. Continuing to build on the community relationships is an area of opportunity for the History Department. The expansion of the Public History program could enhance community-engaged learning and micro-credentialing opportunities. As mentioned previously, if there is a need for funding any Public History initiatives, the request should be made in the department SPR.
- b. Leveraging faculty expertise for grant programs, legislative presentations, and public-facing scholarship could benefit both the department and the university; activities that the Dean's office supports.
- c. I recommend strengthening partnerships with local schools, organizations, and international institutions, which could broaden opportunities for students and faculty.

In summary, the History Department boasts several strengths and excels in undergraduate education. The faculty are committed to student success, continuous improvement, and community engagement. I have no doubt it will continue to expand its potential and to further elevate its impact both within and beyond the university.

Best regards,



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