

History Department Program Review Response

April 15, 2024

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Summary

The History Department is extremely grateful to Drs. Tammy Proctor and Mark Stevenson for their time and detailed Site Visit Report, which definitively affirms History's program viability: "The reviewers were impressed by the History Department's commitment to excellence in undergraduate education. Their creative and proactive approach to the changing higher education climate in Utah and more broadly is exemplary. Particularly noteworthy is their thoughtful and deliberate engagement in processes of continuous program improvement in a number of areas, including curricular development, advising and assessment. In short, this is a strong robust program that prioritizes student learning and is highly visible in the community." The Site Visit Report concludes that "University resources invested in the history department, a high-functioning and energetic program, would produce outcomes and benefits for the whole institution."

Below are the specific areas of commendation and recommendation from the Site Visit Report along with the History Department's Response and Plans.

1. Department Mission Statement

- "The mission statement is clearly laid out in the Self-Study and the Executive Summary, and it reflects well the larger standards in the field."
- "The department has developed a thoughtful and regular assessment mechanism that evaluates its program against not only the disciplinary objectives of the AHA but also in relation to Weber State's own mission and strategic planning."

History Department Response: Agree. Our current [mission statement](#) and goals provide clear, attainable, assessable, and dynamic metrics for promoting student success and ensuring program viability.

Plan: We will continue to utilize our annual assessment protocols along with the biennial assessment reports and SPRs to maintain the strong ties between History and Weber State's own mission and strategic planning.

2. Curriculum

- Site Visit Report commends History for having "extremely clear guidelines for their History major/minor, History Teaching and Social Studies degrees, and for their Religious Studies minor and Public History minor."
- Commendation for HIST 1000 intro and two-semester capstone sequence that directly contribute to student success, providing support from freshman entry to senior graduation.
- Noted as "particularly impressive" the department's "collaborative scheduling process [that] is conducted by the entire department, balancing departmental needs, accessibility for students, and faculty preferences. This is an extremely transparent and fair process for what can be contentious in some units."

- History was also commended for “how thoughtfully the department has embraced the university's mission, mirrored it in their own goals, and then created a curriculum to meet that.”

Site Visit Report Recommendations:

- “The department would thrive even more if there was a Mon/Wed and Tue/Thu option for courses, leaving Friday all or largely for other parts of the mission - experiential learning, student events and activities, faculty meetings.”

History Department Response: Strongly agree. Because of the unique realities of our students (many are married with families and have jobs), the two-day-per-week option draws much better enrollment numbers.

Plan: History will experiment with offering Mon/Wed schedule options for courses after 12/12:30 to gauge student interest while avoiding classroom scheduling conflicts.

- Recommend a) “additional faculty who can contribute to the Public History program while also teaching in their geographic and chronological areas” as well as ensuring b) coverage of “modern Asia (especially China and India), sub-Saharan Africa, Modern Middle East.”

History Department Response to a): Agree. The department anticipated this emphasis on integrating Public History skills and techniques into upper division History courses to best prepare students for the job market with our new hire, Kerri Clement, to complement the talents of James Almeida and Leah LaGrone. One of the challenges History faces is that there is no specific financial support for Public History. If the Dean’s or Provost’s Office could provide some level of consistent funding, more public-facing projects would be possible.

Plan: Over the next two years, this trio of faculty will incorporate Public History experiences, especially digital applications of historical skills, into more upper division History courses.

History Department Response to b): Agree. History currently utilizes the expertise of Dr. Greg Lewis in Asian History and Visiting Professor Dr. Abdunaser Kaadan to offer courses in Islamic Civilization and Middle Eastern History.

Plan: History will continue to offer classes with Dr. Kaadan. History will likely remove HIST 4610 History of Africa from the catalog since that expertise is not in the department. History will offer HIST 4700 U.S. and East Asia: War, Revolution, and Modernization as well as other Asian History courses and will ensure that Dr. Lewis’ position remains as a central tenure-track faculty line in the department.

3. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment

- Site Visit Report commends the “extremely detailed and thorough” nature of the History Self-Study
- “The external review team has little to add beyond noting that in every element, the Department excels.”

History Department Response: Strongly agree.

Plan: Keep up the good work.

4. Academic Advising

- Site Visit Report commends the consistency of History’s “single-point advising” and the

collaborative work that the advisor does with the administrative assistant and department chair.

- Notes variety of advising outreach efforts including HIST 1000 requirements, Career Day, and History Webpage Information.

History Department Response: Agree

Plan: Dr. Stephen Francis currently serves as the History Advisor and has proven extremely effective. If he decides to step down in the future, History will implement a one semester “shadowing” program for the incoming advisor.

5. Faculty

- Site Visit Report commends the accessibility and accommodating nature of the faculty, their diversity, qualifications, and scholarly productivity. Significantly, it noted that “students overwhelmingly praised the quality of the classes and their sense of faculty dedication to learning.”
- Discusses the “strain” of the heavy load History faculty bear due to “budgetary constraints.”
- Notes that the “department has consistently evaluated its faculty needs and made recommendations that echo WSU's mission and strategic planning as it moves forward, but many of their requests have not been answered.”
- Characterizes the “growth of Concurrent Enrollment” as “one area of real concern,” noting the “lack of university administrative support in maintaining their standards.”
- Commends History for creating “a community of educators in the region that look to the university for leadership and opportunities such as the CE Advisory Board and the Master Class for CE teachers.”
- Labels History’s Concurrent Enrollment efforts “exemplary.”

History Department Response: Strongly agree. On numerous occasions over the past few years, History has endeavored to hire new faculty (going through the entire search process) only to fall short because of meager salary offers combined with a 4/4 teaching load.

The Site Visit Report states plainly: “Salaries are not keeping pace with competitors. Added to this difficulty are soaring housing prices in Ogden.” The Site Visit Report strongly recommends: “that the university undertake a serious study of competitive salary structures and cost of living in the region” as well as thinking “creatively about start-up packages and other incentives, including grants, that can help with these pressures, at the departmental, college, and university levels.” History strongly supports this recommendation.

Plan: The number one priority for the History Department, SBS College, and Weber State University must be to hire a tenure-track Historian of the United States and Concurrent Enrollment (CE) Supervisor, ideally starting July 1, 2024. The size, complexity, oversight, and importance of the History CE component to Weber State's enrollment and outreach has necessitated this hire to convey appropriate authority and security to the individual supervising and managing this ever-growing program. Preference given to candidates with CE supervising experience who can also offer courses in support of the Religious Studies minor and upper-level courses in US early national period, Civil War, and Utah history to ensure “good curricular coverage” as advised by Site Visit Report. History envisions funding for this position coming from the still-unfilled tenure-track line vacated by Dr. Kathryn MacKay (2021), the tenure-track line being vacated by Dr. Sara Dant (July 1, 2024), and the full-time instructor position currently

occupied by Dr. Nathan Rives. Funding for this position should continue the precedent set by the instructor position with half of the funding provided by Continuing Education, which oversees the half of the position providing Concurrent Enrollment supervision, and half provided by the COSBS for the teaching portion of the position.

6. Program Support

- Site Visit Report commends Administrative Specialist III Jenna Daniels as “very capable” and notes that she “works well with faculty, students and the department head,” and importantly, that “she indicated that [she] enjoyed working in a mutually supportive environment.”
- Notes the value of History’s relationship with Special Collections
- Documents “widespread concerns” of the faculty about “inadequate support in the form of library resources.”

History Department Response: Strongly agree.

Plan: History faculty continue to serve on the library advisory board and have developed close working relationships with faculty librarians to promote library resources best practices. Beyond this, there is not a lot that History can do.

7. Relationships with External Communities

- Site Visit Report notes that History “maintains a strong presence in the university and local community, and it is proactive in creating opportunities for students outside of the classroom” particularly with our internship program that integrates “an impressive array of community partners.”
- Commends the diversity of community outreach programs, from Career Day to Weber Historical Society to University of Tübingen exchanges to Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society to diverse sponsored lectures.

History Department Response: Agree

Plan: History will continue to provide all of these opportunities for our students and faculty to connect with the larger community.