



November 28, 2012

To: Robert Stacey, Interim Dean
College of Arts and Sciences

From: Gary L. Farris, Interim Vice Provost and Dean
Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean, Academic Affairs and Planning

RE: Department of History 2011-2012 Review

This memorandum outlines the recommendations from the 2011-2012 review of the Department of History. Detailed comments can be found in the documents that were a part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee, department faculty, and administrators (December 14, 2011)
- Department self-study (February 10, 2012)
- Site visit (April 5-6, 2012)
- Review committee report (May 3, 2012)
- Department response to the review committee report (June 15, 2012)
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (November 1, 2012)

The review committee consisted of:

Katharyne Mitchell, Professor and Chair, UW Department of Geography
(Committee Chair)

Richard Watts, Professor, UW Division of French and Italian Studies

Mark von Hagen, Professor and Director, School of Historical, Philosophical
and Religious Studies, Arizona State University

Penny von Eschen, Professor, Department of History, University of Michigan

Devin DeWeese, Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on November 1, 2012. Specific comments and recommendations on the Bachelor of Arts, Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degree programs include the following:

Program Strengths:

- Undergraduate teaching. It is an outstanding strength of the department and serves a large number of majors and non-majors. Faculty have received numerous teaching awards. Students spoke highly of the department, the accessibility of faculty, and flexibility that faculty afforded students in their projects.
- Collegial decision making. The faculty is satisfied overall with the governance structure. A need remains for increased communication and transparency to the faculty at large.

- Good scholarly productivity. In five years, the current faculty of 44 have produced 17 monographs, 18 edited volumes, 130 articles and book chapters.
- Strong hiring in areas of critical interest. Hiring decisions has transformed the department into one that is diverse demographically, in research and teaching.
- Both the M.A. and PhD. degree programs have been modernized and streamlined in response to concerns of graduate students and faculty.
- The department maintains active minority recruitment programs.
- The department has been successful in external fund-raising resulting in support for faculty and graduate students.
- The hard-working, if overlooked, undergraduate advisor is highly regarded by faculty and students.
- Good collaboration has been established with the Jackson School of International Studies and other academic units.
- The Center for the Study of the Pacific Northwest and the Center for Labor Studies are two examples of the department's strengths in public scholarship.

Challenges and Risks:

- Retention. The department has experienced faculty losses, especially in areas of critical interest. Of 13 faculty who received outside offers, 8 have left.
- Cutbacks in the graduate programs. Admissions were reduced by half starting in 2009, with some fields closed entirely and others alternating by years. An issue is whether students should be admitted without support.
- A more consistent and predictable funding source is needed for graduate students.
- Cutbacks in TA support for undergraduate teaching from a 1:50 ratio to a 1:100 ration. The higher student-to-TA ratio raises concern about the effect on the quality of undergraduate teaching, particularly writing.
- Understaffed advising is a serious challenge for the undergraduate program. The undergraduate advisor, while hard-working, is seriously overworked.
- More can be done to mentor graduate students and to track their careers, especially in non-academic employment.
- Re-organization of staff is needed with clear articulation of their responsibilities and performance benchmarks.
- Consideration should be given to more collaborative relationships with other academic units and joint appointments where appropriate.

Areas of Concurrence:

- With regard to faculty losses due to recruitment and impending retirements, the department has submitted a hiring plan to the College of Arts and Sciences Dean's Office.
- The department agrees that graduate funding is a pressing issue and its importance to graduate recruitment.
- The department acknowledged its success in fund raising but requests that more predictable and permanent funding solutions be found within the University.
- Financial support from the College of Arts and Sciences enabled the department to offer a multi-year contract to Charity Urbanski, Lecturer, to continue undergraduate teaching.

- A Graduate Student Assistant has been appointed to assist in undergraduate advising.
- The new Chair will consider reorganization of the department staff, their responsibilities and performance benchmarks.
- The Undergraduate Studies Committee has initiated department-wide consideration of how best to maintain or increase undergraduate enrollment while continuing a strong focus on writing.
- The faculty agreed about the need for improved communication department-wide and implemented initiatives to address the issue, i.e., will relaunch a research colloquium, hold a one-day faculty retreat, the Chair will work with Associate Professors on criteria for promotion and mentoring, and engage faculty, staff and students in considering effective ways to improve communication.
- The department website will be enhanced and a system will be developed to more effectively track current students and program graduates.

Recommendations of the Graduate School Council:

The Graduate School Council concurred with the review committee that the Department of History is a strong and important unit within the University. It has a reputation for excellence in teaching and research. It commends the department on action it has initiated in response to several of the review committee's recommendations.

The Council made the following recommendations on the review.

- Graduate student placement. More attention should be given to the training and mentoring of graduate students for both academic and non-academic placement.
- Teaching Assistants. The department is encouraged to consider alternative strategies for the best use of teaching assistants and the impact on the quality of instruction
- The continuing status of the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degree programs be reaffirmed and that the next department review occur in the 2021-2022 academic year.

We concur with the Graduate School Council's comments and recommendations.

c: Douglas Wadden, Executive Vice Provost, Office of the Provost
Judith Howard, Divisional Dean, Social Sciences, College of Arts and Sciences
Lynn Thomas, Professor and Chair, Department of History
Department of History Review Committee
Graduate School Council
Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School