January 16, 2017

To the External Review Committee:

On behalf of the College of Arts and Sciences, please let me express my sincere appreciation for your service as external reviewers for the Georgia State University Department of History. We understand the demand on your time and very much appreciate your willingness to help. Your expertise and insights into the state of the department and its future directions will be critical to our effort in formulating a strategy to move forward.

We have enclosed the department’s self-study report, which provides a comprehensive summary of the state of the department consistent with the strategic directions specified in Georgia State’s current strategic plan (http://strategic.gsu.edu/gsu-strategic-goals/) and in the recently adopted strategic plan of the College of Arts and Sciences (http://cas.gsu.edu/about/college-strategic-plan). We appreciate the evident hard work of the self-study committee (Glenn Eskew, Amani Marshall, Greg Moore, J.T. Way, Kathryn Wilson, and committee chair Jared Poley) and the department chair, Michelle Brattain. We believe the report clearly demonstrates how the History Department has made important contributions to the university’s strategic planning goals, and it helps shape a pathway for future sustainability and accomplishment.

We applaud the Department of History’s progress over the course of the review period, particularly in challenging circumstances. The department plays a notable role in the university’s general education core curriculum, serving increasing numbers of students in the five core courses it teaches or co-teaches. For three of these courses (U.S. History and World History I and II) the department has also introduced online versions that match or exceed student success measures for in-class courses. As is noted in its self-study, the department wishes to build on this accomplishment by adding more online options for History majors at the undergraduate and graduate levels in the near future. The unit has seen decreases in the number of bachelors and masters history students, however, consistent with national trends for the discipline. Many of the goals articulated in its plan aim to reverse this trend by revising learning outcomes, introducing innovative teaching pedagogies, and emphasizing the career readiness of history majors.

During the period since the last self-study, the size of the department faculty has decreased, both through deliberate college and department decisions to refocus effort and through unexpected deaths and resignations. Despite these losses, the faculty has been increasingly successful in securing external research funding, and has seen improvements in both the quantity and quality of faculty scholarship. The Department has actively contributed to the urban and global goals of the university, both through its research and service relating to Atlanta and other cities and its extensive research and teaching on world history and global topics.
The Dean’s Office agrees with the general goals outlined in the Department of History’s self-study. We must, of course, identify the most effective way to achieve these objectives. In the context of Georgia State University’s revenue-neutral budgetary climate, we essentially have three options for developing the strengths of our programs: 1) redirection of resources within existing departmental budgets to maximize programmatic impact, 2) entrepreneurial pursuit of opportunities for external funding, and 3) lateral redirection of resources from other units within the college where we are convinced that the value added in a particular unit or focus area is an effective way of achieving the goals of the college and university strategic plans. In keeping with these parameters, we ask that the external review team members consider the following:

• What opportunities for interdisciplinary, collaborative research can the Department of History pursue that would shape internal requests for faculty hiring, enhance prospects for external funding, and enrich its academic programs?

• In addition to Heritage Preservation, are there other professional programs or certificate programs that the department could develop to attract new students seeking professional training and employment? In addition to developing new programs, how can the department adapt its existing curriculum to emphasize the acquisition of career competencies in support of college and university career-readiness goals?

• Are there opportunities for building partnerships with city and community agencies, non-profits, and businesses that can develop into funded research projects, internship/practicum opportunities, or other mutually beneficial relationships?

• What else can the History Department do to advance college and university goals relating to understanding the complex challenges of cities and globalizing the university?

• As a research university, our Ph.D. programs are critical to our research success. What are the current strengths and weaknesses of the History doctoral program (recruitment, funding, mentoring, time to degree, and job placement), and how can we support continued strength of the program?

• Are there any other recommendations or suggestions for increasing undergraduate and graduate enrollments, improve academic programs, and/or enhance faculty research productivity? Are the specific targets proposed by the department achievable?

We look forward to your analysis and insights on the state of the department and its future directions.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Sara Rosen, Dean
College of Arts and Sciences