Department of History
Academic Program Review Action Plan – 2018

Status of Action Items from APR 2010

In 2010 the department’s primary goals centered on strengthening 1. the Master of Heritage Preservation/Public History (MHP/PH) program 2. the World History (WH) Program and 3. Undergraduate and Graduate Instruction. The executive summary defined goals and actions primarily in terms of adding faculty (3 faculty in MHP/PH and 3 faculty in WH). Some faculty were added (2 in WH, 1 in MHP/PH). However the size and composition of History’s faculty overall has been so completely transformed since 2010 by resignations/retirements/deaths that those specific hires are no longer relevant goals. The department and external reviewers agree that while the global focus of faculty research remains a strength and contributes to the university’s strategic plan, the WH Program as conceived in 2010 is no longer viable. The associated 2010 goals for that program, such as creation of a WH Center, increasing WH PhDs/undergraduate certificates, and leadership in WH-specific professional activities, are no longer priorities. The department is also mindful that APR is expected to be “budget-neutral...with its major focus on non-resource dependent program quality improvements.” The 2010 plan’s emphasis on building and strengthening through hires is no longer a viable plan.

Other 2010 goals focused on quality improvement such as updating the MHP/PH curriculum, expanding university and external partnerships, increasing availability of MHP/HP scholarship, increasing the quality and diversity of students, attracting broader funding, promoting faculty diversity, maintaining adequate faculty support for graduate students, and improving assessment, remain very relevant and we have made progress in many of these areas. The department added courses in digital history. External funding for MHP/PH increased from $75,000 in 2005-2009 to $330,000 in 2010-2015 to $750,000 in 2017. External partnerships increased including a joint international program with the University of Pretoria. We improved our assessment process; data collected led to the introduction of new strategies to address low performance on a key SLO. Racial diversity of students has increased (undergraduate students of color from 39 to 44%; graduate students from 17.6 to 23%). Faculty diversity decreased with retirements and resignations. However, quality improvement goals are never really “complete.” Similar goals appear in this action plan with specific measurable targets for the next five years.

Major Findings in Current Review

1. Contributions to our Discipline: Research: The GSU history department makes significant research contributions to our discipline. Even as the number of T/T senior faculty members has decreased, total publications have increased (from 10 books and 55 articles/chapters in 2004-2007 to 17 books and 70 articles/chapters in 2014-2016) while quality remained high. Total external funding has increased (from $73k in 2013 to $144k in 2017). Total grant/fellowship applications have increased and the success rate has risen from 40% in 2014 to 92% in 2017. However, faculty were pessimistic about research opportunities and increasing service obligations. External reviewers expressed concern about a lack of sabbaticals or sufficient summer funding, while recognizing the significance of a new college program, RISE.

2. Contributions to our Discipline: Leadership: External reviewers described the Department of History as “well ahead of its peers,” occupying a “prominent place in national discussions about the future of the discipline,” as demonstrated by History’s grant-funded participation in initiatives led by the NEH and the American Historical Association. The department’s PhD career diversity initiatives, MHP/PH program, commitment to undergraduate career-readiness,
and action plan goals are “well attuned to the challenges faced by the discipline of history and the humanities in general,” in the words of the external reviewers.

3. Contributions to the University: History faculty research and teaching contribute to the university’s strategic goals of understanding the complex challenges of cities and globalizing the university. The department plays a major role in the undergraduate general education core, has developed model online courses, and is poised to make a significant contribution to the university’s college-to-career initiative. The department should pursue interdisciplinary collaboration with Global Studies and Urban Studies.

4. Undergraduate Education: External reviewers described history’s undergraduate curriculum as “innovative” and “responsive to change.” Surveys indicate a level of student satisfaction higher than university averages except on availability of classes. The number of history majors, however, has declined at GSU (as it has nationally). The department should increase history’s presence in interdisciplinary degree programs, improve communication with students, and adapt signature experiences to make them more accessible to students. Strategies successful in the graduate program—collaborating with career services, expanding coursework and experiences that emphasize applied history, bringing in alumni to speak about careers and pathways—should be extended to undergraduates. APRC recommends adding assessment points; the department recognizes that we can improve assessment of the 5 courses we track, however there are no required common midpoints that naturally serve as additional assessment points.

5. Graduate Education: PhD enrollment increased while MA enrollment decreased. Small fluctuations in GRE scores suggest that the quality of admits has been fairly consistent. External reviewers described History graduate programs as well aligned with current professional expectations and the job market for History PhDs. The department has introduced new programs that support career diversity for history PhDs, a necessary strategy as highlighted by external reviewers. A proposed online MA program is a “key initiative” for reversing declining MA enrollments. History should pursue more integration between the MHP/PH and the MA/PhD programs. The APRC recommends limiting PhD admissions. However, given declining enrollments at the MA level and dependent on our ability to recruit PhD students of consistent quality, History does not plan to cut PhD enrollment.

6. Faculty Composition: The Department’s heavy reliance on temporary faculty is not a tenable long-term solution to the loss of faculty. It deprives the department of faculty dedicated to building programs and invested in our mission. The Department should plan future hires to increase diversity, interdisciplinary collaboration, and support in areas critical to recruiting students at the graduate and undergraduate level. The department should pursue opportunities in collaboration with other departments, with an African American historian as the first priority.

Action Plan

1. Increase Research: The Department should nurture the culture of research and increase publications and external funding. Our goal is to increase applications for funding by 10% in 2019; increase the success rate by 10% by 2020; increase total publications by 10% by 2022.
   a. Department leadership will use History resources (mentoring, summer funding, F&A funds, and foundation funding) to encourage and reward research productivity, beginning in 2019.
   b. The Department will encourage faculty to take advantage of college (RISE) and university (RIG, Scholarly Support) programs, beginning in 2018-19.
   c. The Department will pursue ambitious development goals (1 large donation by 2020, 3 smaller donations by 2023) in order to generate resources for faculty research through the creation of a board of visitors and activating the development committee in 2019.
2. Leadership in the promotion of career planning and diversity:
   a. The Department will build infrastructure (alumni databases, mentoring networks), introduce permanent programs, and adapt our pedagogy course—all actions that will be sustainable through existing department resources when our grant funding ends in 2020.
   b. A “career diversity fellow” supported by a 2018-20 grant from the AHA will help build the alumni database and network (2019) and conduct alumni and student surveys (2019) to inform redesign of our “intro to graduate studies in history” course (2020).

3. Strategic planning for new hires: The department will forecast future hires with strategic programmatic goals in mind, such as supporting graduate research, increasing faculty diversity, and improving recruitment of majors and graduate students. Given the significance of African American history to our graduate programs, the loss of the primary faculty member in this area, and the opportunity it may present to increase faculty diversity, hiring an African American historian will remain a high priority.
   a. In 2019 the Department will use existing department resources and take advantage of efficiencies introduced by online courses and scheduling to convert a VL position into a lecturer. If resources and student demand permit, additional VL lines will be converted.
   b. In the short term, the Department will address our need for an African American historian on the graduate faculty and greater faculty diversity by collaborating with African American Studies (which does not have a PhD program) and seeking university resources for hires, such as the Next Gen program, in collaboration with other units.

4. Undergraduate Education:
   a. With SLO targets and external reviewers’ suggestions for applied history experiences in mind, the Department will increase emphasis on active learning pedagogies (in 50% of courses by fall 2021) and add HP/public history courses to the curriculum (2019).
   b. To meet needs and demands of majors, as suggested by reviewers and student surveys, the Department will add more broadly accessible signature experiences by 2020 and five additional online courses by 2022.
   c. Through improvements in the undergraduate curriculum and accelerated recruiting efforts in Gen Ed core courses, the Department seeks to increase the number of majors annually.
   d. The Department will use a college-to-career grant to accelerate an emphasis on career readiness and will use existing resources (F&A funds, strategic scheduling to enable workload adjustments) to incentivize curriculum development (emphasizing career-readiness, applied history and active learning [4b]) beginning in Fall 2018.
   e. The undergraduate studies committee and department leadership will reach out to global studies and urban studies to discuss adding history or cross-listed courses to their curricula.

5. Graduate Programs:
   a. The Department will strive to increase MA enrollments (20% by 2023) through recruitment efforts and development of an online program. We will maintain the size of our PhD program, while maintaining quality of admits, to be assessed through metrics (test scores, GPA, etc.) and the department’s national ranking.
   b. The Department will introduce an online MA curriculum by 2020. In 2018-19 we will develop the curriculum and plans for resourcing the program (addressing workload while meeting all our existing commitments, incentives for course development, working with the college/university leadership on models for tuition return).
Signatures:

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9/4/18 Date