**History M.A. Assessment Report for 2015-2016**

1. **What learning outcomes did you assess this year?**

**Student Learning Outcome 1:** Students will demonstrate advanced content knowledge in specified areas of concentration and also demonstrate mastery of historiographical debates related to the specified areas of concentration

**Student Learning Outcome 2:** Students will identify relevant sources and use data or information from sources to support evidence based arguments.

1. **What instruments did you use to assess them?**

Research Paper – **HIST 200B. Introduction to Graduate Research and Historiography.** This course focuses on the methods and skills of graduate research and students are required to have previously identified either a potential thesis topic or topics for their M.A. exams. In addition to the instructor, students also consult with their thesis/exam advisor as they conduct their research, write a brief analysis of relevant sources, and then write a major research paper. These papers are approximately fifteen pages, must include a thesis or argument, use sufficient evidence to support each point, and cite all sources in the appropriate format. The History Department uses a different rubric for graduate research papers since the expected level of content knowledge and expectations for the sophistication of the argument and use of evidence are significantly higher for graduate students. All fourteen students or 100% were expected to achieve a score of 2 out of 3 and demonstrate basic proficiency in all five areas. Students take History 200B during the second semester and thus we did not expect all students to demonstrate advanced proficiency in all five of these areas in their History 200B papers. We predicted that some students might demonstrate advanced proficiency in at least one of the areas.

1. **What did you discover from the data**

There were fourteen students in History 200B, during the Spring 2016 semester, and all of their papers were reviewed. The rubric used to evaluate them focused on five key areas: context of and purpose for writing, content development; genre and disciplinary conventions; sources and evidence; and control of syntax and mechanics. These papers were assessed using a writing rubric that was modified to be appropriate for graduate level work. The scores given based on this rubric indicated that the student papers demonstrating that the student either had no discernable proficiency, basic proficiency, or advanced proficiency in each of the five key areas. All fourteen students scored a 2 or basic proficiency in all areas and thus the benchmark was met. The department had expected that a few students might demonstrate advanced proficiency but none did so on these papers. Furthermore, although all of the students were deemed minimally proficient the papers were weakest in the area of writing (syntax and grammar) with most papers including too many writing errors. Some of the papers were also weaker in the area of sources and evidence, which is one of the most challenging aspects of historical research and writing. Students provided sufficient evidence but some students did not use as many sources as they could have, nor were their sources as diverse as they should be. All fourteen papers not only demonstrated basic proficiency in content development and disciplinary conventions but these were the strongest areas in the History 200B papers. Students demonstrated considerable content knowledge, their writing style was appropriate for historical papers, and included appropriate citations in the required format. It is expected that students will continue to develop and improve in all areas and thus be able to demonstrate advanced proficiency in their culminating projects.

1. **What changes did you make as a result of the findings?**

All fourteen students met the benchmark in all five areas and thus no changes to the assigned paper or graduate curriculum were deemed necessary at this time. The History department had already planned to review the graduate SOAP again this semester and to update the assessment time-line with activities for the next five years and this will be discussed at the second graduate committee meeting of the semester. Furthermore, the department has been collecting and distributing the student assignments by hand up to this point and the department will discuss the possibility of collecting and maintaining a digital collection of graduate student work again and the recommendation of the graduate committee will be an agenda item at a department meeting.

1. **What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2015-2016 academic year?**

Review M.A. Theses (citations and bibliographies for information literacy)

1. **What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?**

August, 2015: This Action Plan reflects the fact that we have already accomplished some of the items mentioned in our review.

1. Assessment for both undergraduate and graduate degree programs has been improved.
2. We successfully hired Dr. Frederik Vermote for our Asian history position and we have formalized Dr. Lopes’ position as our historian of Mexico. During the 2015-2016 academic year the department will conduct searches for a public historian who can increase interaction with and outreach to the community and an Islamic historian who would enable the department to increase its non-western offerings.
3. The department chair reviews all syllabi each semester for compliance with university standards. The department has reviewed the syllabi of all part-time faculty to be sure that they have appropriate learning outcomes in addition to meeting other requirements.
4. We have changed our curriculum to reflect changes in the field of history. Students will now be required to take History 20 and 21 instead of History 1 and 2. This will help credential students who will now have six units less of course work. This is a reduction of units for a least a quarter of majors. Furthermore, many students complete the bachelor’s degree and later enter the credential program and these students will also benefit. The department has proposed curriculum changes that will enable students to take the History 100W course before their senior year thus demonstrating proficiency prior to their last year in the program.

**Action Plan Items and Steps Taken:**

1. Continue to work on assessment plans and closing the loop in assessment. Continue to discuss assessment results and make changes as necessary according to assessment results.

**Progress:** In conjunction with the on-going efforts of the University to improve student success and achieve more consistent assessment to provide data for the upcoming WASC review, the History Department has already taken and will continue to implement specific actions in regard to student assessment. The department has revised its undergraduate and graduate SOAP plans by reducing the number of goals and outcomes and changing our measures to align them more closely with our outcomes. The department has introduced new measures focused on writing assignments to measure G.E. outcomes instead of relying on a pre and post-test. The department has revised its senior survey and created an alumni survey to determine the extent to which graduates are prepared for graduate school and/or the job market. The department has also taken steps to assess students earlier in the program by collecting History 4 assignments and analyzing this data. Deficiencies. The department is currently considering implementing an e-portfolio requirement that would require students to create a collection of work that would enable us to do more thorough comparisons of student work over time.

1. Advising. Two reviews ago our reviewers noted a great deal of discontinuity in our student advising. In response the department assigned a single person advising duties and arranged for them to have six units of release time. As a result of budget cuts, all departments in our college lost their release time for advising. Although each faculty member remains responsible for specialized advising, content advising and career planning, we would hope to make degree advising much more consistent.
2. **Progress:** Students with unique issues are referred to the Chair of the Department who either assists them or refers them to someone (often in advising services) who can work with them to resolve the issue. During the 2014-2015 academic year, President Castro approved and funded the creation of a centralized advising center for every college that did not already have such a center. COSS has hired two full-time advisors who will be responsible for G.E. and initial major advising which should improve consistency. History faculty will continue to meet with students to advise them on graduate schools, career options, and other specialized opportunities.
3. We want to continue to work on the university’s goal of internationalization. Several of our faculty have already taught abroad but we would like to see many more students taking advantage of opportunities to study abroad.

**Progress:** A recent College of Social Sciences initiative that provides some scholarship money for student travel should help with this endeavor. Dr. DenBeste took a group of 17 students to Russia in summer 2014. Dr. Lopez took approximately 18 students to Italy as part of a Study Abroad Program in June of 2015. Dr. Jordine took 18 students, 15 of which were History Majors, to Central Europe as part of a WWII & Holocaust study abroad trip in July 2015. These trips in addition to requiring students to read and write papers on topics in European History also greatly expanded their cultural knowledge and gave our students direct experience in interacting with individuals with different backgrounds and perspectives than their own. The department also hopes to be able to recruit additional international students to our program.

1. We strongly support undergraduate research opportunities and will continue to encourage our students to apply for university funding for research. We have also been encouraging students to present at the regional Phi Alpha Theta history conference. In addition we are exploring ways to begin a History Honors program. Increasing the numbers of students working on undergraduate research projects remains a long-term goal.

**Progress:** Several of our students have worked with faculty mentors to apply for and have received undergraduate research awards from the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. No steps have been taken towards creating a History Honors Program. A College Honors Program has been created but no History students participated in the first cohort. Two or three will be participating in the second cohort.

1. The graduate program generally received excellent reviews at all levels. We have already improved recruitment and retention. We have had many students this year and last attend conferences and give research presentations. We have reviewed and will continue to review our graduate level outcomes. The most pressing issue related to all of these concerns however, is graduate advisement (as noted by the review committee). We have always had a graduate advisor. However, in connection with recent budget cuts the advisor has been reduced from 6WTU release a year to 3WTU. Keeping a larger graduate program afloat, planning research opportunities for students, keeping students abreast of opportunities in their field and keeping our graduate program current is a big task for one person. We will continue to seek creative ways to fund an additional 3WTU release for our graduate coordinator.

**Progress:** Even with an improved budget situation, and the continued growth and success of our graduate program, we have not been able to secure the additional 3 WTUs of release time for the graduate coordinator. The HGSA (History Graduate Student Association) Organization sponsors a symposium every year and again this year there were a diverse array of graduate students, both our own and several from other institutions, presenting. This year, for the first time, we recorded several presentations by our own students and used them to assess the oral communication skills of students in our program.

1. Future Hiring. We believe that hiring a Public historian would allow us to connect with new programs across campus and with the community in a much stronger way. A Public Historian would raise the profile of our department and college throughout the Central Valley by engaging with community organizations, libraries, historic sites, and county archives.

**Progress:** The department hired a public historian during the 2012-2016 AY.

1. The Jewish Studies Certificate Program (JSCP) was launched in Spring 2013 under the auspices of the department and is now in its first full academic year.  The JSCP incorporates and encourages interdisciplinary collaboration across campus, in addition to providing opportunities for community-campus interchange, student involvement, and curriculum development.  The department plans to continue to support the evolution of the JSCP.

**Progress:** The Department continues to offer courses that are part of this certificate (History 129T: Anti-semitism) and History 140 (The Holocaust) and to support the JSCP.