**History M.A. Assessment Report for 2016-2017**

The History M.A. SOAP has been revised and the current version is posted on the OIE website.

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

**SLO 5:** Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by developing a valid evidence based argument with relevant and specific examples linked to key points.

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

The department reviewed the theses of 12 students who graduated in May or June of 2015 or 2016. As the culminating experience, evaluated and approved by a committee of three faculty members, theses represent the best work of students in the program. For assessment purposes this year, students were evaluated on their ability to construct a clear argument with supporting points as well as their ability to present relevant and accurately cited evidence. Since these are theses that were approved by a faculty committee, all clearly met or exceeded the minimum expectations for proficiency in the discipline. The two reviewers, therefore focused on distinguishing between those theses that scored a 3 which designated proficiency and those that scored a 4 and were thus deemed to be advanced. The expectation was that at least half of the twelve students would achieve the advanced designation. A rubric with one criteria focused on clearly stating the argument and one criteria focused on the use and citation of evidence was used by the faculty to evaluate the theses. The rubric is attached to the end of this report.

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

After reviewing the theses, it was determined that 4 students performed at the “advanced” level in both areas while the remaining 8 were just proficient in one or both areas of the rubric. There was a pattern or common issue among the eight theses that were only designated as proficient and not advanced. All students, except for two who were not deemed advanced, did not make explicit connections between their main points and their evidence. The thesis was clear enough but could have been discussed further. The evidence was also compelling, but in many cases not directly linked to the thesis and key points. In other words, the reader had to infer or imply the connection between the thesis/key points and the evidence. Those students that earned a four and were considered to be advanced. They not only successfully stated their thesis in detail with distinct supporting points, but also presented extensive evidence that was explicitly linked to their thesis and main points.

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

Although only four instead of six (50%) of the theses were deemed advanced, the department will not make any changes to the program or thesis requirements since all students were deemed proficient and four were deemed advanced. Furthermore, the theses were only evaluated for one narrow criteria and thus making changes prior to reviewing the theses for all required aspects would not be advisable. The key differences that the faculty reviewers noted between those theses that were advanced and those that were proficient will be shared with the entire department.

1. **What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2017-2018 academic year?**

During the 2017-2018 academic year, the department will be reviewing theses again, but this time they will be evaluated for proficiency in 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.

Rubric used to Evaluate History M.A. Theses

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Criteria | 4-advanced | 3-proficient | 2-developing | 1-insufficient |
| Valid Argument | * Student provides a thesis or main argument that is clearly stated. * There are numerous and more than sufficient supporting points that are directly relevant to the thesis or main argument. | * Student provides a thesis or main argument that is easily found. * There are adequate supporting points that are linked to the thesis or main argument. | * Student provides a thesis or main argument is broad or unclear. * There are some supporting points, but they may have little connection to the main argument. | * Student fails to provide a main argument or thesis or is extremely unclear. * There are little to no supporting points towards a main argument, or supporting points are irrelevant to the thesis. |
| Evidence | * Student provides more than ample support for their thesis and supporting points. * Student cites all evidence used and all examples are cited to valid sources. | * Student provides enough support for their thesis and supporting points. * Student cites sufficient sources and sources are all valid. | * Student provides some support for their thesis and supporting points, though not sufficient to render the argument credible. * Student cites an inadequate number of sources or a source that is not validz. | * Student fails to provide enough examples/ support for their main argument/ supporting points. * If student cites any sources at all, they are not credible. |