

May 1, 2012

Dean's Response to the Program Review of the History Department

I appreciate the thought and effort that went into the Program Review Team's report, and into the History faculty's self-study and response to the report.

The Review Team found that the Department to be an excellent academic unit, with major strengths in mission and vision, curriculum, faculty teaching and research, assessment, advising, and community outreach.

The Team's report recommended changes in the Department's mission statement to reflect greater emphasis on civic engagement, civil dialogue, and research orientation. The Department's response noted that the changes have already been made.

The report suggested a section devoted to assessment on the Department web site, a change the Department anticipates implementing over the summer.

Regarding faculty-related issues, the Team's report expressed the hope that the position in Latin American history would be replaced, and a Middle Eastern historian added to the staff. The Team also expressed concerns about the condition of the building, tight budgets, high teaching loads in an environment where research and external funding are valued, and the level and equitability of salaries. The Department's response echoed these concerns.

In response to these issues, several points are relevant.

- I intend to support a search to replace the departing Latin Americanist in the Department. A Middle Eastern specialist can certainly be considered when resources allow a hire (whether through a retirement replacement or availability of new resources). In the meantime, the transfer of a faculty member into the Department from another college, and the return to the faculty of the former Dean of the College will provide enhanced teaching resources.
- The Social Science Building is heavily used and 40 years old, and looks it. Steps were taken this year to mitigate the current and future insect infestations. A thorough renovation of the building is planned, if not yet scheduled.
- Budget cuts in recent years have caused stresses, but the situation has hopefully stabilized. One reason for seeking external funding is the additional money it makes available to support faculty and students. As a College policy adopted this year provides, faculty members who have secured external grants can negotiate with me about course releases. Despite the relative disadvantage that historians face in seeking funding, I am pleased to note that in the past semester, one History faculty member received an ACLS

Fellowship, while another applied successfully for the College-sponsored Summer Grantwriting Workshop.

- Salary issues are difficult to address if little or no money is available for raises, as was the case in recent years. This year, modest raises, including some equity adjustments, were possible. I hope to be able to continue to address equity in the future, but it is important to note that not all salary inequalities are equity issues. Market differentials between disciplines are, and will continue to be, a factor (if a relatively modest one) within the College, and (often to a greater extent) between colleges. The statement in the Department response that the other WSU colleges have established equity across disciplines, so that all assistant professors are paid the same, is incorrect. Market differentials play a role in salaries across the university.

Finally, the report recommended that the Department extend and deepen connections with alumni, and utilize Phi Alpha Theta to connect current students with alumni to gain insight into life and careers after graduation. The Department responded that it will begin efforts in both of these areas.

I believe that the Review Team report correctly identified and stressed the considerable strengths of the History Department, and made a number of useful suggestions. I support the positive responses of the Department to these suggestions.

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