

To: Gail Niklason, Frank Harrold  
From: Susan Matt, Chair, History Department  
Re: Response to History Department Program Review Report  
April 17, 2017

The Program Review Report was generous in its praise of the History Department; below are our responses to areas where they made specific suggestions.

**Standard A:** The Program Reviewers thought our mission statement offered a clearly articulated sense of our program and its goals.

**Standard B:** The reviewers commended the Department for its cohesive curriculum and its public history minor. It noted that the curriculum met the departmental mission and offered a great breadth of courses. It recommended we hire a Middle Eastern historian, a need we ourselves have identified; we are awaiting a new line to open up. It should be noted the reviewers suggested the lack of such a faculty member was “a glaring omission” in our department, a position we ourselves support.

The reviewers noted the importance of adding digital literacy to our classes; this is a skill that we have devoted time to in our new History 2000 course. Additionally, we will work to integrate it into other upper-division courses, especially History 4985 and History 4990 and in our public history offerings.

**Standard C:** The Program Reviewers had no suggestions for improving our assessment strategies, and commended us for being at the cutting edge of our discipline.

**Standard D:** The reviewers praised our advising system; they suggested we make two changes to it:

- publicize the availability of the advisor to all students
- make meeting with the advisor mandatory for all majors

These are good suggestions and we will work to accomplish them. However, given that the advisor, Dr. Stephen Francis, already has his day filled with students who seek him out, we would need to offer him more compensation or release time in order for him to meet the goal of meeting with all majors.

The reviewers also suggested we hold a graduate school orientation session. We have done this in past years, but turnout has been very low. Instead, faculty have taken to meeting one-on-one with students who express interest in graduate school. We should better publicize our willingness to hold these one-one-one sessions, perhaps directing interested students to first consult with the Chair who can then direct them to appropriate faculty in their field of interest.

**Standard E:** The Program Reviewers commended the faculty for their teaching proficiency and their research productivity. They urged the Dean and the Administration to increase support for faculty research, as this is an activity central to the discipline, one which brings real rewards to

our students and our university. They suggested increasing financial support, as well as offering course releases, in order to encourage and sustain faculty scholarship. We concur.

The other notable comment in this section concerned Concurrent Enrollment. The reviewers suggested faculty offer guest lectures in concurrent enrollment classes, in an effort to connect students in these classes with the Department, to recruit new majors, and to increase upper-division enrollments. This is an excellent suggestion, and we will enact it. Additionally, they suggested we offer more enrichment opportunities for Concurrent Enrollment. To that end, we hold an annual meeting with all of them together, and make individual classroom visits and observations, as well. Additionally, we have embarked on a new publicity campaign to promote our Social Science Education Center, which has as its mission to offer advanced courses for public school teachers. We circulated information about this at our meeting with the Concurrent Enrollment instructors and will continue to make them aware of these advanced offerings.

**Standard F:** The Department agrees with all of the recommendations for enhancing program support, noting that these are outside of our actual jurisdiction. We particularly support the suggestions that Jenna Daniels' salary be raised and that faculty salaries be raised, as well. Jenna is an amazing asset to the Department and deserves far more than she earns. Additionally, faculty deserve pay increases, as well, relative both to faculty in other departments on campus, and history faculty across the state and the nation.

Finally, the suggestion that the Library should have more faculty input is a most welcome one. The Library is fundamental to our work as historians; however, we've had very few opportunities for consultation about its future. We note with appreciation the work Dr. Kathy Payne has done to keep us informed of library plans, but there needs to be a more formal, institutionalized faculty advisory board to prevent some of the problems that have cropped up in recent years. (In particular, we note that many valuable books were discarded and in some cases burned with virtually no warning to faculty who use those collections. This kind of practice should not happen in the future.)