

STANDARD A—MISSION STATEMENT

Evaluate how effectively the mission statement articulates the following elements

- a. Weber State History Department has a clearly articulated mission statement that fulfills the objectives of this rubric admirably. In response to the previous external review, the department added a sentence to its mission statement designed to reflect the faculty's commitment to research, interpretation of the past, and publication of its findings. This addition reflects the dedication that faculty have to the highest standards of their profession in both teaching and historical inquiry and highlights the department's allegiance to research informed teaching.
- b. The assessment process is covered in detail in STANDARD C below. The mission statement adequately addresses this process.
- c. The mission statement adequately defines the department's educational program.
- d. The mission statement dovetails nicely with the mission of the college and the university.

STANDARD B—CURRICULUM

Evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum based on the following elements.

- a. The Weber State University Department of History undertook a revision of its curriculum in the five years since its prior external review. Its revised curriculum is cohesive and well organized. In its curriculum revision, the department tied the organizational structure of its courses to its learning outcomes and has thereby created a unified teaching vision for its faculty and students. We commend the department for such a thoroughly organized articulation of its curriculum and how well it translates to specific learning outcomes, something that our interview with history majors verified. The department also offers the only public history minor in the state of Utah. The department's trailblazing and foresight in this area is commendable. Students singled out the public history offerings as particularly valuable preparation for and introduction to a variety of job opportunities and specifically mentioned public history internships as one facet of that preparation that they prized.
- b. The curriculum matches the department's mission statement well.
- c. Faculty members offer a commendable breadth of courses for a department this size. The faculty's chronological and geographical sweep is impressive. Despite its breadth, the department has a long-standing gap in its course offerings that leaves the history of the Middle East uncovered, a particularly glaring omission given the region's ongoing importance in world affairs. We recommend that department, college, and university administrators seek opportunities to address this omission. As the department contemplates its future hires, we also recommend that it think creatively about the new positions it defines. The American Historical Association's career diversity initiative, for example, highlights "digital literacy" as a skill set that it recommends folding into history curriculums in order to better prepare graduates for a twenty-first century job market. Weber State's History Department might profitably consider including digital history as a secondary skill set that it seeks as it writes future job ads. In the department's newly created "Introduction to the Craft of History" course, the department could also consider ways to include digital history projects and/or consider including digitally inflected teaching across its curriculum, especially its public history offerings.
- d. The department provides a significant service to the university in the number of general education courses it offers. It uses full time faculty and adjunct faculty effectively to staff

general education courses in regular rotations and at various days/times/locations to meet student demand. It also provides regular rotation of its major and minor courses.

STANDARD C—STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES AND ASSESSMENT

Evaluate the extent to which the program has clearly defined outcomes

- a. The Weber State University Department of History faculty have agreed upon 23 learning outcomes and these are listed on the department's web site.
- b. The American Historical Association Tuning Project represents an extensive, national project devoted to providing the history discipline with a renewed vision and direction. The 2016 History Discipline Core includes learning outcomes and the Weber State Department has adopted those. This puts the department on the cutting edge of disciplinary efforts in terms of assessment.
- c. The Weber State University History Department has mapped each course in their curriculum to the learning outcomes.

Evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment process based on the following elements.

- a. Weber State History Department has a clear set of measures for assessment.
- b. Weber State University History Department exceeds this standard.
- c. The department is well ahead of most history departments in this category.
- d. The department has utilized assessment data as the foundation for an overhaul of the curriculum.
- e. The Weber State University Department of History assessment process is nothing short of exemplary. We were impressed with its thoroughness, its intellectual underpinnings, and with the collegial and unified departmental approach to assessment.

STANDARD D—ACADEMIC ADVISING

- a. The program has moved to a system where a single faculty member, Professor Stephen Francis, provides all of the advising. In order to improve retention, the department might consider reaching out to all students in order to make certain that they know who to contact.
- b. Since students in good standing are not required to meet with an advisor in order to register, retention/graduation rates could be improved if the department developed a system that includes a required advisory meeting for each major. This will offer an opportunity to clearly outline the pathways to graduation and this kind of program plan would benefit students.
- c. The students interviewed suggested that some kind of "applying to graduate school" sessions would be helpful. Students would benefit from having peer review of graduate school application statements and could garner information regarding the "ins and outs" of the graduate school application process. We commend the department for its successful Career Day—the students value this effort. Since successful alumni are participating in the Career Day, it would be relatively simple to highlight alumni on the department's web page. This could enhance retention through providing role models. It could also foster greater philanthropic giving on the part of the alumni.

STANDARD E—FACULTY

Evaluate the extent to which the faculty demonstrates the following characteristics.

- a. The History Department has attracted a group of well qualified and professionally committed faculty members. Faculty members are devoted teachers and engaged researchers who have produced an impressive list of articles published in professional journals and books published at top academic presses. Despite this faculty dedication, the University offers little institutional support for professional development activities, whether for teaching or research and little or no incentive for continued professional development. While we appreciate Weber State University's emphasis on and dedication to teaching, research/scholarly activity remain central to History as a discipline. Research/scholarly activity enhances the teaching mission in a number of significant ways. First, the students we interviewed valued faculty research both for the excitement it generates in the classroom and as a model for students' own career goals. Second, Weber State University has recruited top notch faculty to join the Department of History. Even small recognitions of research are vital to retaining those faculty members. Third, faculty research/scholarly activity brings recognition and added prestige to Weber State University. This helps to attract students and encourages alumni giving. We recommend that the college think creatively about honoring and incentivizing faculty research/scholarly activity. A one semester pre-tenure teaching release would offer tenure track faculty opportunity to transition their dissertation into a book and move them more effectively toward tenure. The dean might also consider turning an open faculty line in the college into a professional development fund that could provide raises to faculty for such accomplishments as book publications, journal articles, grant writing, professional training, and teaching awards.
- b. Faculty are committed to research informed teaching. As noted in STANDARD B, the department has identified the history of the Middle East as a region not currently covered by a faculty specialty and it has a long-term desire to hire in this field. We recommend that the faculty also consider the American Historical Association's career diversity objectives as it contemplates future hires.
- c. We commend the department for its treatment of adjunct faculty which includes offering research money to adjunct faculty for professional development (an effort that the adjunct faculty specifically praised). We recommend that the college and department seek ways to offer adjunct faculty benefit packages of a reduced nature and career-line faculty appointments that might include longer term contracts.
- d. The department should continue its efforts to attract diverse applicant pools as it contemplates future hires.
- e. The department offers one on one orientation for new adjunct faculty and an adjunct faculty handbook.
- f. Adjunct faculty praised the department's processes in this regard.
- g. The department is proactive on this measure and we find their processes to be effective. For concurrent enrollment teachers we recommend that the department consider occasionally sending regular faculty members to offer guest lectures in concurrent enrollment courses (to model best pedagogical practices and to provide recruitment opportunities into the major or minor). We also recommend the department consider enhancing its content enrichment opportunities for concurrent enrollment faculty.

- h. The department follows effective processes for periodic review of all faculty.

STANDARD F—PROGRAM SUPPORT

Evaluate the nature and adequacy of the program support based on the following elements

- a. Many faculty members mentioned the inadequacy of compensation for the administrative assistant. Dean Harrold noted that this was a college-wide challenge. Perhaps the dean could announce a plan whereby he provides a \$1000 salary enhancement for the college administrative assistant with the greatest seniority and then follows suit each year with the other administrative assistants according to seniority. Although this program would take several years and would only minimally address the issue, it would mark a beginning and would convey to the administrative assistants that their contributions are appreciated.
- b. Some support staff with specialization in recruitment and retention would benefit the department and the college.
- c. The department is fortunate to have Dr. Kathy Payne, historian, in the library. She is conscious of the disciplinary requirements of the department. We heard on many occasions that faculty do not think they have enough input into library policies and procedures, as was clearly demonstrated during a recent move to reduce the library book collection without any faculty consultation. We believe a faculty library committee would benefit the entire institution. Such a committee would provide a service opportunity for faculty and could potentially prevent a repeat of the recent situation, which we, like the department, judge to have been unfortunate at best.

STANDARD G—RELATIONSHIPS WITH EXTERNAL COMMUNITIES

Evaluate the relationships according to the following elements.

- a. The department has a vibrant internship program that students applaud. This is no doubt, at least in part, due to excellent relationships between faculty members and various external communities.
- b. Not applicable
- c. Not applicable

STANDARD H—PROGRAM SUMMARY

Evaluate the effectiveness of the program to implement recommendations and make changes based on previous reviews.

- a. The History Department at Weber State University implemented all of the recommendations from the previous review that were under its control. The department revised its mission statement, revised its curriculum, implemented a career day, instituted a new advising system, and implemented a thorough assessment process designed to track learning outcomes across the curriculum. While it is difficult to measure the effect of these changes, we note that in an era of declining history majors (and humanities majors in general) across the nation, Weber State University experienced a relatively minor downward adjustment and has been able to recover somewhat from a low of 207 majors in the 2014-2015 academic year (down from 285 in 2011-2012) to 217 majors in the 2015-2016 academic year. (For national trends in humanities

enrollments see this article from *Inside Higher Ed*:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/03/14/study-shows-87-decline-humanities-bachelors-degrees-2-years> and this blog post from Professor John Fea:

<https://thewayofimprovement.com/2016/12/09/what-is-causing-the-drop-in-humanities-enrollments/>).

We commend the Weber State History Department for its proactive measures and its successes in attracting and maintaining majors. As the department moves forward we suggest it consider supplementing its current efforts at recruitment and retention by specifically targeting the large number of general education courses that it teaches where non-majors self-select a history course to fulfill a general education requirement. History faculty could use those courses as recruitment opportunities, if not for its majors, then certainly for its minors. Each professor who teaches a general education course could spend ten minutes each semester extolling the virtues and value of a history degree (major or minor) and then hand students a history minor roadmap and the department's promotional material.

The areas where the prior external reviewers made recommendations that remain unaddressed are largely outside of departmental control (increase faculty salary, hire a historian of the Middle East, improve staff salary, incentivize and reward faculty research, publication, and teaching innovation). We reinforce the findings of the prior external reviewers, that low faculty and staff salary lead to low morale. In addition to the recommendations made in the body of this report designed to address the ongoing unresolved issues from the prior review, we recommend that the history department conduct a review of faculty salaries at comparable four-year state institutions to offer benchmarks against which they can measure themselves and provide incremental goals to the college and university. We recommend that the college and university consider creative ways (some of which are outlined above) to meet those goals and reward the levels of excellence that the history department regularly demonstrates.

In sum we found the History Department at Weber State University to be hard working, congenial, proactive, and highly productive. Faculty members, students, and adjunct faculty, pointed to the steady, deliberate, and measured leadership of Dr. Susan Matt as essential in creating such a positive culture in the department over the course of this review. The department has identified a new department chair, Dr. Sara Dant, and anticipates a smooth transition. We commend faculty members for the quality of teaching, research, and publications that they continue to produce and do so while bearing a heavy 4-4 teaching load.