CONCLUDING ACTION MEMORANDUM
SAN FRANCISCO STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
Spring 2010

Introduction

The San Francisco State University Department of History is housed in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences and offers a BA and an MA in History. The program currently enrolls approximately 350 undergraduate majors and between 80 and 125 graduate students, making it one of the largest graduate programs in the university. The graduate program comprises approximately 5% of the total FTES while 20% of the total FTEF is dedicated to the MA, so it appears that the program is well-resourced in that respect. The curriculum for the MA requires five graduate courses and five undergraduate courses and either a thesis or a comprehensive examine as the culminating experience.

The Department undertook a self-study of its graduate program in 2008/09, which was followed by an external review by two consultants: Nancy Fitch, California State University, Fullerton and James N. Gregory, University of Washington, Seattle. The external review was, in turn, followed by an internal review from the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) of the Academic Senate, which examined all documentation from the Department and the external review.

As noted in the APRC report and the external consultants’ report, the Department of History at San Francisco State University has been and remains a Center of Excellence. The high quality of teaching and the national and international recognition of the scholarship that the faculty brings into the classroom provide SFSU students with an impressive educational experience.

The Department has been questioned for the unusually large number of undergraduate courses required in its curricular structure. Typically, such a curricular offering signals a program that lacks rigor and commitment from the faculty. However, this is not the case with the Department of History. The external consultants noted that the curriculum requires substantial papers and essay examinations with close reading of major texts and an emphasis on critical thinking. The program works well because the Department has nationally and internationally ranked scholars in the classroom working closely with students.

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY: Bakersfield, Channel Islands, Chico, Dominguez Hills, East Bay, Fresno, Fullerton, Humboldt, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Monterey Academy, Mono Bay, Northridge, Pinnawa, Sacramento, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, San Luis Obispo, San Marcos, Sonoma, Stanislaus
Commendations

The Department of History is commended for:

1. The quality of scholarship and teaching produced by the faculty.
2. Its commitment to extensive advising and mentoring students outside the classroom.
3. The substance and rigor of the work required of students.
4. Its thorough assessment process.
5. Its efforts to engage alumni.

Action Plan

Based on the outcome of the academic program review and on the discussions resulting from this review, the Department of History will take the following actions:

Curriculum

1. The Department should re-evaluate the culminating experience in an effort to relieve the faculty of the heavy burden that the comprehensive exam places on faculty.
2. The Department should move forward in developing a pedagogical component to the curriculum.

Students

1. The Department should implement a plan to increase the ethnic diversity of its student population.

Faculty

1. When resources become available, the Department should work with the Dean to implement a hiring plan for two or three new faculty hires in order to maintain the current high quality of the program.
2. The faculty should move forward to create a Bay Area Civil Rights and Labor History Project, which could serve as a vehicle for community service opportunities.

Resources
1. The Department should work with the College to secure more large classroom space. It should also work with Academic Technology on the use of lecture capture and Hyflex course design to accommodate more students in the current classrooms.

Provost’s Statement

The following statement from Provost Sue Rosser is intended to provide a context for addressing resource-related issues in all Concluding Action Memoranda: “Student demand is growing in many areas of the curriculum. Furthermore, given the current fiscal setting, we do not expect that overall funding for programs will increase at all beyond current levels. In fact, in the current financial environment, we expect that funding will likely be further diminished. Therefore, all academic units are being asked to examine the depth and breadth of offerings in their programs and to assess the extent to which they can be sustained. Accordingly, as with all academic units in the University, the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences and the Department of History must look at their ability to continue to offer the full array of current programs over the next several years.”

Authorization

We hereby approve this Memorandum of Understanding:

Sue V. Rosser, Provost

Date

Joo Kassiola, Dean

Date

Barbara Loomis, Chair

Date