

History Department Program Review
February 6-7, 2017

Review Committee

- Dr Dominique Marshall, Professor and Chair, Department of History, Carleton University
- Dr Gary Waite, Professor, Department of History, University of New Brunswick
- Dr Ann Stahl, Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology, University of Victoria

Executive Summary

The University of Victoria is justly proud of the programs of the Department of History and the accomplishments of its members. This is a vibrant, active, creative, and well-organized History Department, which is deeply engaged in the wider community and has recently benefited from strong and visionary leadership under Chair John Lutz. It is doing a great deal to overcome the widespread decline in enrolments in Humanities and History Departments across the country, and has achieved excellent results in maintaining large and strong Majors, Honours, and Graduate cohorts. Its staff and reputation contribute generously to the running and the reputation of the University as a whole.

The department serves a robust number of undergraduate majors through a program guided by clearly articulated learning objectives and ladder learning opportunities. The department demonstrates a laudable commitment to research-based, community-engaged and experiential learning and as such contributes importantly to the university's broader strategic objectives. At the same time the department serves the wider university with close to half its undergraduate enrolments coming from outside of Humanities. As such, the department plays a broader service role and demonstrates a clear commitment to student recruitment, retention and excellence in pedagogy. Our recommendations regarding undergraduate programming and instruction centre on strategies for future hirings and curriculum innovations which will at once maintain strengths in Asian and Indigenous history and expand expertise, especially in World and Digital History. We suggest ways to take further advantage of promising initiatives in research and teaching, especially in experiential learning, community partnership and digital public history to enhance the outreach and recruitment opportunities of the Department.

The department's well-respected graduate program is supported by a faculty that is actively engaged in research which is diverse in focus and creative in means of knowledge production and dissemination. A new program stream in Public History offers MA students an experientially enriched pathway to graduate credentials and holds potential to expand recruitment if properly supported by the university. Through its reputation for quality mentoring and innovative research, the department does a good job of attracting high quality applicants; however, they regularly lose qualified applicants to better funded graduate programs. Modest measures (a student handbook; clearer expectations around TA responsibilities; and seminars on the transition to the thesis and the transition to the workplace) can improve the graduate student experience, but the more critical inputs include increased graduate funding, library support, measures to improve time to completion, and strengthening ties with graduate units of other BC History departments.

Through its scholarship, research and service, the department is notable for its contributions to the university's strategic objectives of enhancing research-based learning, expanding experiential learning opportunities, promoting Indigenization and internationalization. A narrow focus on the department's declining overall UG EETs as a basis for resource allocation overlooks these key contributions which

should be taken into account in the university's planning processes. We strongly support the department's aims to hire an Indigenous scholar and to diversify their profile and build on existing strength in areas of the global south. Some of this may be achieved through creative hiring in conjunction with other units.

Recommendations

1. The committee advises that the Department further bolster the new Public History stream of the MA.
2. The committee recommends exploring the feasibility of a second-year methods course.
3. The committee recommends a faculty hire in Indigenous history and perhaps one to support internationalization of the curriculum (beyond Europe and north America). It further recommends aligning future hires with strategic themes.
4. The committee recommends that the evaluation criteria and amounts of funding for Internal Research Grants should be adjusted to support junior researchers in particular and further than professional development funds and pay during study leave should be enriched.
5. The committee recommends that a more sophisticated system of measuring teaching than 'EETs' should be considered in order to properly acknowledge the challenges of community-engaged teaching. They suggest that such course could be weighted.