

Implementation Plan, History M.A. Program, for the Next APR Period (2017–2014)

Note: This Implementation Plan is already included within the narrative for question V.B. We attach it here, separately, as instructed.

Anticipated Student Profile

Current trends indicate that the History M.A. Program will remain, as it has through this review period, relatively small compared to other graduate programs at the university but still reasonably well enrolled and highly rigorous academically. We anticipate that aspiring junior college instructors, public history professionals, and doctoral candidates will figure increasingly prominently in our student profile and that aspiring secondary school teachers will remain important. The program will continue to become more gender-balanced than it was at the beginning of this review period; it is currently nearly at parity. Minority students, currently representing over one-third of the program's student body, will remain a strong and likely increasing presence. An increasing percentage of students will continue to be drawn to the program from universities other than Stanislaus State, a reflection of both increased recruiting efforts and the competitiveness of the program.

Key Recommendations, including Action Steps and Needed Resources

On the basis of the current academic program review, the History Department has identified several key recommendations (some of which also appeared in our previous academic program review) to ensure the continuing vitality and growth of its graduate program.

1. The hiring of tenure-track faculty in early modern European History, Latin American History, and US History to replace retired and retiring faculty. Specifically, our specialist in early modern European History, Dr. Katherine Royer, fully retired at the end of AY 2016-17; Dr. Samuel Regalado, one of our US historians, entered the faculty early retirement program beginning in AY 2016-17; Dr. Sanchez Walker, our Latin American specialist, is entering the faculty early retirement program beginning in AY 2017-18. Each of these three areas is of high student demand, both at the graduate and undergraduate levels; specialists in these three areas are essential to our ability to offer our graduate students a geographically and chronologically comprehensive program. The History Department has already requested a search for AY 2017-18 to fill the early modern European position. As has been discussed in this APR, the program hopes to hire faculty in one or more of these three areas who are capable of offering graduate courses in Public History and Digital History. These two interrelated subfields of history are in high and growing demand, as an ever greater number of positions become available not only in the more traditional museum curating and archival management fields, but also in historical consulting and developing digital historical databases. One aspect of Public History is Local History, and, for the US History position, we would seek a candidate who is able to maintain HIST 4010 (Practicing Local History), which may be taken by graduate and upper division undergraduate students alike. The practice of local history constitutes a key link between the department/university and the region and is an important training mechanism for students seeking employment in regional museums, archives, parks, historical societies, and other relevant political and social agencies.

Action steps: Prepare and submit requests for tenure-track hires as the program faculty fully retire from the faculty early retirement program.

Needed resources: Achieving this goal will require a commitment by the university to funding these tenure-track positions at competitive salary levels; substantial commitments of time from department faculty members, in the form of service on search committees and participation in candidate interviewing; and an ongoing commitment at all levels, from the department to Academic Affairs, to providing an environment conducive to, and the fiscal resources for, new course development and scholarly productivity.

2. Increasing and institutionalizing release time for research and scholarly activity. The American Historical Association (AHA) has defined as “onerous” teaching loads of “seven to eight courses or more a year,” under which “even the most exceptional members of the profession find it impossible to continue their research” (AHA Perspectives 46:5, May 2008). In agreement with this sobering assessment by the AHA, the department recognizes the importance of maximizing release time for research by its faculty (especially, but by no means only, junior faculty) compatibly with meeting its FTES obligations. All full-time tenure track History faculty teach in the History M.A. Program and the maintenance among our faculty of high levels of scholarly engagement is essential to our education and training of students at the graduate level.

Action steps: Build into future schedules whatever release time can be mustered compatibly with meeting FTES obligations. Support faculty in their applications for release time from both University RSCA funding and from the newly instituted CAHSS RSCA funding.

Needed resources: Achieving this goal will require adequate funding for RSCA from both the University and the College. However, given that demand for release time for RSCA currently exceeds funding availability, department chairs must be given the latitude to assign release time (independent of RSCA funding) compatibly with meeting departmental FTES obligations and while ensuring a fair distribution of that release time among all faculty. Such latitude must be recognized by College- and University-level administration.

3. Establishing financial support for teaching assistantships. Currently, the University provides no support for teaching assistantships (which, to be clear, are different from Teaching Associate positions in which students in a very small number of disciplines are paid to teach their own classes). Most of our graduate students intend to teach, and there is an ongoing need in the region for trained teachers in both secondary schools and junior colleges. Practical teaching experience is a must if they are to be competitive in a tight job market, and the desire for such experience is very strong among them. Currently the program can offer only (unpaid) teaching practicums via Individual Study (HIST 5980) courses. Furthermore, the growing lower-division course responsibilities of tenured and tenure-track faculty, with the added workload those responsibilities entail, mean that TA support has become increasingly useful, perhaps even necessary, for the maintenance of high levels and quality of scholarly productivity, a matter of special concern to junior faculty seeking tenure and promotion.

As discussed in Section III.B.5, for three semesters during this APR period, from Spring 2014 through Spring 2015, as part of the short-lived university-wide Student Success Initiative, the History Department designed a Student Success Initiative project to help students struggling in large, lower-division History courses. This initiative provided funding, for that short period of time, for advanced History M.A. students to work as teaching assistants. Although Student Success Initiative projects produced positive results in disciplines across the University, including History, funding for the Student Success Initiative was terminated after AY 2014-2015. We therefore recommend (as we also did in the last APR) the institutionalization of regular paid teaching assistantships for graduate students on a permanent basis.

Action steps: This particular recommendation lies beyond the ability of the program to institute unilaterally. Nonetheless, we call attention to the issue here, and will continue to encourage University administration to give this matter serious consideration and to try to locate resources to fund it.

Needed resources: New funding for graduate education, or the reallocation of current University funds, will be necessary to establish this objective. The program cannot speak to possible sources of that funding, but here we provide contextual information for the level of funding for graduate students that is currently available. The U.S. Department of Education Title V PPOHA Grant, which was awarded to the university in the fall of 2010 for a 5-year period, provided much-needed Graduate Assistantship (GAship) funding. However, this funding was intended primarily for graduate research, rather than teaching. When the grant expired (after a sixth-year extension), the University took steps to institutionalize some of the funding through the Center for Excellence in Graduate Education, which continues to provide a limited number of GAships, as well as funding for research travel and conference travel. The size of the GAships has fallen, however, from an initial \$5,000 per year to only \$2,000 per year. Therefore, the creation of permanent, institutionalized teaching assistantships would not only provide graduate students with essential pedagogical training, but would also go a long way toward supporting them financially as they progress toward their degree, to an extent that GAships—as important and necessary as they are—cannot match.