

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Academic Program Review
College of Arts and Sciences

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM
Department of History

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS
Associate Professor Ghislaine Lydon, UCLA
Associate Professor Maria E. Montoya, New York University
Professor Jerry Muller, The Catholic University of America

CAMPUS VISIT
May 1-3, 2013

The review team read the self-study written by the faculty in the department; reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; conducted class visits; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, the department's self-study and other university materials.

1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.

The external review committee did not provide a rating for the History Department. The faculty was praised for the high quality of their teaching and commitment to the students. The department covers a broad geographical range and "faculty members are critical to many trans disciplinary academic programs". The reviewers discussed the significant problems that the department is experiencing around decision-making and that these problems impact curriculum development. They provide suggestions on how to reduce "factionalism" and promote productive decision-making and "a community of mutual exchange."

2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?

- Quality of teaching in the department is high.
- The reviewers noted that the issue of diversity is a source of tension and impacts many aspects of departmental life. They discussed different meanings of diversity and provide suggestions for diversifying the subject matter in the curriculum.
- The range of regional expertise is a departmental strength. It has also had the effect of drawing faculty into regional programs, which can reduce departmental cohesion.
- Internal tensions in the department result from a combination of institutional (e.g., lack of departmental participation in tenure and promotion decisions, a weak chair model), departmental (e.g., lack of awareness of colleagues' scholarship and teaching), and interpersonal factors. The reviewers provided suggestions for creating a "culture of exchange" that may improve departmental decision-making ability.
- Aspects of the curriculum need to be clarified and course offerings need to be invigorated.

3. What specific recommendations for improving the program's quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?

The reviewers made specific recommendations in five areas: departmental culture, faculty, curriculum, student needs, and space issues.

Departmental Culture:

To foster “a culture of mutual exchange” the department should consider: regularly reporting to each other about their research, sharing information about course offerings in a public and accessible manner, sharing information about teaching, posting updated CVs on the faculty members’ websites, creating shared norms of behavior, and clearly articulating expectations and standards.

Faculty:

- The expected balance between teaching, research, and service is not articulated in a way that is easy for faculty to understand. The administration needs to explain the expectations for tenure and promotion more clearly.
- Administration should consider the burden placed on new faculty when they are asked to create new programs.
- Although student satisfaction with adjunct faculty is high, these faculty members need more supervision. Last minute changes to their schedules should be minimized.

Curriculum:

- The Department could form a curriculum committee composed of 3 or 4 faculty members that would make recommendations to the department. Proposed changes that are not supported by department consensus could be adopted with “sunset clauses.”
- The Department needs to more clearly state the goals of the 100 level course offerings and examine the partial mismatch between these courses and the areas of emphasis in the major.
- The logic behind the 200-level methods courses is unclear. A curriculum committee could discuss a shared pedagogical curriculum for the course and the course could rotate across instructors.
- The 300 and 400 courses could be improved if expectations for the courses were clarified.
- The Department should consider adding courses on political and economic history and other intermediate ranged courses commonly found at other university history departments.

Student Needs:

- The department should design clear student pathways through the major, including an honors path.
- Information about the department, major, and minor should be made more accessible using the website and/or a departmental newsletter.
- Consider creating a departmental advisor position and make advising information more easily accessible to faculty and students.
- Students expressed a desire for a place “to congregate, share information and develop community.”

Space Issues:

The administration needs to help the department locate smaller classrooms for the upper-level courses.

4. In the opinion of the external review committee, is the program following the University’s strategic initiatives?

a) Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.

The faculty was praised for their teaching and commitment to the students. Scholarship and service to the historical profession are “quite varied” with “some quite productive, and others barely so” and “without a substantial difference” across ranks.

b) *Enrolling, supporting and graduating a diverse student body that demonstrates high academic achievement, strong leadership capabilities, a concern for others, and a sense of responsibility for the weak and vulnerable.*

The reviewers did not comment on the characteristics of the students.

c) *Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the program.*

The reviewers stated that student comments during the on campus visit and SUMMA course evaluations indicated that the quality of teaching is high. The small class sizes “seem to have a high pedagogical payoff.” The curriculum, however, needs to be clarified and updated and information about the major needs to be more accessible.

5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?

The committee stated that the “program offers both a major and a minor in history that strengths the University’s commitment to developing a global perspective” and faculty members provide important expertise to trans disciplinary academic programs.

6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee’s recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?

The Department and the Dean will meet during the Fall 2013 semester to create an action plan and discuss resources. The Dean’s Office and/or Office of the Provost may be asked to support the following activities: 1) departmental retreats; 2) adjunct faculty mentoring; 3) curriculum changes; 4) website revisions; 5) space for small classes and student community building. In addition, administration should clarify expectations for tenure and promotion.

7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?

The reviewers also commented on the 2005 academic program review and related departmental tension. They found the previous reviewer selection process problematic and praised the new rule in the CBA that requires that at least one reviewer must be from the review list submitted from the department. The reviewers stated that the department has “clearly suffered some significant trauma” and hoped that the feedback “will help the faculty and the administration gain insight into how to improve departmental norms, practices, and behaviors towards a more productive, collegial, and stimulating workplace.”