

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the M.A., M.S. in History to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-study report were accomplished during the time-period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders.

The committee notes that the program's enrollment have fallen during the period covering the program review cycle (from 43 in 2014 to 31 in 2021). The program indicates that, with current resources, the ideal range of 35-40. The percentage of students identifying as women has decreased from 45.7 percent in fall 2015 to 29.0 percent in fall 2021. The percentage of students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline has increased (from 5.7 percent in fall 2015 to 9.7 percent in fall 2020). The committee acknowledges the work faculty have completed regarding their recruitment efforts (e.g., sending marketing posters and brochures to nearby colleges and universities and HBCUs, and staffing an information booth at the annual History Education Symposium).

The committee commends the program faculty for their efforts to support the success of their graduate students. We commend the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in many of its courses, which is both aligned with the American Historical Association's recommendations and in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities. The committee commends the program for their support of the co-curricular events such as the History-Social Sciences Education Symposium, the International Studies Seminar, and several talks and public lectures. We further commend the department for their financial support of students participating in research trips and professional conferences. The committee also commends the program faculty for identifying and supporting civic engagement opportunities that further support the program's student learning outcomes by fostering a climate of intellectual curiosity and diversity.

The committee notes that the faculty have worked to revise the curriculum during the period of review. This work included the creation of a new undergraduate accelerated sequence designed to feed into the graduate program, revisions to 400-level seminar courses that reduced the number of required credits, revisions to HIS 497 requirements that increased student flexibility aimed at improving time to degree, and revisions to the HIS 490 exam format.

The committee notes that the program faculty have a plan for the assessment of student learning outcomes. While the self-study report notes that the plan has not been revised since the previous program review, the committee notes that the faculty have used the evidence gathered through the student learning outcomes assessment plan to inform program changes.

The committee recognizes the faculty members of the program for their scholarly contributions to the M.A., M.S. in History. Faculty members are active researchers who author books, peer-reviewed journals articles, published monographs, and present at national and international professional conferences. The program faculty regularly engage in professional development opportunities, including wide participation in the GROWTH Change Team and other EDI focused events. Additionally, we recognize that faculty in the program have been actively involved in advising and supporting professional student organizations demonstrating their commitment to facilitate learning and educational experiences of our students outside the classroom. The committee commends and congratulates the program faculty for earning Fulbright and NEH Fellowships as well as a wide variety of college and university awards for their teaching, scholarship, and service activities.

The committee appreciates the analysis of aspirational programs. As part of this analysis, the program faculty identified multiple institutions with similar programs that excel in ways that our program may aspire to. The committee also recognizes that faculty developed specific action plans to implement similar initiatives as those to improve the program at Illinois State.

Follow-up Report.

Comparator Analysis. The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational institutions in the self-study report outline to provide faculty members opportunities to consider the niche the program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee asks that program faculty return to this analysis to identify the program niche among comparator programs at Illinois public universities and to identify actions faculty could take to enhance the program with respect to the quality indicators faculty has prioritized. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator institutions and to summarize findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost by May 15, 2024.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members in the Department of History for the opportunity to provide input regarding the M.A., M.S. in History program at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2030, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan for enrollment management. The committee notes that demand for the program remains strong but enrollments are below target levels. The committee acknowledges the work faculty have completed regarding their recruitment efforts. The committee encourages the program to continue refining and implementing their plan for student recruitment, including strategies for increasing enrollment by students from racial and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. We recommend that the program work with the Graduate School, Enrollment Management and Academic Services, and the Office of the Provost to refine and implement their plan for student recruitment.

Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. The committee recognizes the efforts that have resulted in the diversity of faculty and students within the program and encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. We encourage the program to continue refining and implementing their plans for recruiting students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. Furthermore, we encourage the program faculty to continue to examine ways to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into the curriculum.

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The committee recommends that the program faculty develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recognizes substantial work by former and current faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum. The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field and to maintain program retention and graduation rates. The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly of students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Continue implementing and refining the student learning outcomes assessment plan. The committee encourages faculty to continue their implementation of the student learning outcomes assessment plan for the program during the next program review cycle, to continue to utilize information gathered through plan implementation to make program revisions as necessary, and to document how that has been done. The committee encourages faculty to periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the plan in assessing student learning to identify any modifications to the plan faculty may deem necessary.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in

distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the department and library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students.

Develop a plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee encourages the faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking and engagement. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program's alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni, employers, and other external stakeholders in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students and provide employment opportunities for program graduates.