November 11, 2004

David W. Pershing
Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
205 Park
Campus

RE: Graduate Council Review - Department of History

Dear Vice President Pershing:

Enclosed is the Graduate Council's review of the Department of History. Included in this review packet are the report prepared by the Graduate Council, the Department Review Sheet, and the Memorandum of Understanding resulting from the review wrap-up meeting.

Please forward this review to the Academic Senate to be placed on the information calendar for the next meeting of the Senate.

Sincerely,

David S. Chapman
Associate Vice President for Graduate Studies
Dean, The Graduate School

Encl.

DSC/dh

cc: Eric Hinderaker, Chair, Department of History
    Robert Newman, Dean, College of Humanities
The Graduate School – University of Utah

GRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT TO THE SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AND THE ACADEMIC SENATE

March 29, 2004

The Graduate Council has completed its review of the Department of History. The external reviewers were:

Paul S. Boyer, Ph.D.
Department of History
College of William and Mary

Barbara N. Rumusack, Ph.D.
Department Head
Department of History
University of Cincinnati

David J. Weber, Ph.D.
Department of History
Southern Methodist University

The Internal Review Committee of the University of Utah included:

Mary Francey, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Art and Art History, and Utah Museum of Fine Arts

Mark Ely, Ph.D.
Professor
School of Music

Allan Ekdale, Ph.D.
Professor
Department of Geology and Geophysics
This report by the Graduate Council’s ad hoc review committee is based on the Department of History self-study, the report of three external reviewers, the report of three internal reviewers, and the responses of the Chair and the Dean of the College of Humanities.

**Department Profile**

Although no formal overall rankings are apparently available, the Department of History is well regarded nationally. It has an especially important regional role given the lack of such research-oriented departments in this part of the country. As of Autumn 2004, the Department of History has 30 tenured or tenure-track faculty, one assistant professor-lecturer, 10 adjuncts, and a staff of four. Of the 30 tenured or tenure-track faculty, 8 are assistant professors, 14 are associate professors, and 8 are full professors. Six of the faculty are joint appointments with only half of their teaching loads in history. In terms of diversity there are 19 men and 11 women, with four being from ethnic minority groups.

The History Department has specializations in the areas of Ancient, Asian, Latin American, Medieval Europe, Middle East, Modern Europe, United States, and World History. It is well-known as a national leader in several of these concentrations. However, the reputation of the department has suffered lately due to the loss of several key faculty members. The reasons for such departures appear varied but may be linked to relatively low salaries. Nevertheless, the department has achieved all around excellence as evidenced by their research productivity, teaching awards, and service contributions. Since the last Graduate Council review the current faculty have published 30 books or edited collections, 108 articles or essays, 112 encyclopedic entries, and have won 23 national grants or awards for their scholarly works. Ten faculty members have also received college or university-wide teaching awards, with six of these faculty members receiving multiple teaching awards. Service also remains at a high level as departmental faculty have served as editors for leading journals, grant reviewers for national agencies, and members of local / national associations (e.g., President of Mormon History Association). The History Department also maintains active ties to seven interdisciplinary university-wide programs such as Ethnic Studies and Gender Studies.

The History Department offers a B.A. for academic majors and minors, as well as a teaching major and minor in History. Graduate degrees include the M.A., M.S., and Ph.D. In terms of course enrollment, small decreases in SCH are apparent (see attached chart). However, the numbers of majors are at an all time high, which bodes well for future SCH, as well as the number of B.A. degrees awarded. The numbers of graduate students, however, have declined. This is primarily due to attempts to better track student progress through the program (e.g., yearly evaluations) as recommended by the prior Graduate Council review.

Both undergraduate and graduate students are very enthusiastic about the department. Satisfaction with the quality of teaching, diversity of courses, and mentorship is generally high. Although the diversity and flexibility of course selections was viewed as a strength, some
reviewers thought a more coherent educational experience might be possible, along with the development of other aspects of the curriculum (e.g., Asian, African History).

A steady decline in the History Department’s operating budget is an important problem and cause for concern. This places severe limitations on the department in terms of providing funding for graduate students and adequate staffing. Problems are evident with the facilities at Carlson Hall, partly due to the age of the building and its relative isolation from technical support and the College of Humanities. In the near future it appears that a new building will be provided to the department.

**Progress on Prior Graduate Council Review Recommendations**

Since the last Graduate Council review, the department has maintained its considerable strengths, with the exception of notable faculty departures. Scholarly activity remains high, teaching is excellent, the department remains committed to diversity, and ties to interdisciplinary university-wide programs have been maintained.

The department has made good progress on most of the prior Graduate Council recommendations, especially in light of budgetary constraints. First, the faculty reconsidered its strategic planning in 1996 and again in 2000. Although progress was made in identifying areas of need, strategic planning was especially difficult given existing budgetary issues (e.g., declines in operating budget, loss or suspension of faculty lines). Due to the loss of several key faculty members, the need for further strategic planning based on this review is evident. Second, the prior Graduate Council Review emphasized what reviewers saw as an excessive average time to receive a Ph.D. (over eight years). Even though this time frame was comparable to national averages in History, the Department addressed this issue by implementing more regular evaluations to better track student progress. This has resulted in the termination of a number of students whose progress was not satisfactory and could not be remedied. Third, given the current budget situation little could be done to increase the competitiveness of its student stipends. Finally, some progress was made in infrastructure due to the hiring of a full-time staff member, along with some strategic remodeling.

**Commendations**

The reviewers saw similar strengths in the Department of History. These points are summarized below.

1. The History Department has a good reputation nationally which is reflected in their scholarly output and their ability to recruit quality junior faculty.

2. The History Department has continued its strong tradition of excellence in teaching.

3. There is a strong commitment to gender and ethnic diversity as evidenced by current faculty and recent junior faculty hires.

4. Graduate and undergraduate student morale and regard for the department are high.
5. The curriculum is viewed as comprehensive and rigorous.

6. The department has been an active leader in various interdisciplinary programs. This helps the Department remain at the cutting edge of its discipline, and facilitates an important initiative within the University as a whole.

Recommendations

The reviewers made a number of constructive recommendations. In many cases, the reviewers focused on different departmental concerns. It should be noted that the department has already taken steps to address some of these issues (see Chair/Dean’s letter). These reviewers, however, were in general agreement that the most pressing issues facing the department relates to faculty retention and the declining operating budget. These points and others are detailed below.

1. **Strategic planning to address issue of faculty retention.** Faculty retention is the most important challenge facing the History Department. Since the last Graduate Council review there have been nine resignations. The reasons behind the resignations are unclear from the reports and in need of further study (e.g., relatively low salaries, better opportunities). More recent issues may exacerbate this problem (i.e., lack of clear communication regarding RPT standards and emerging tensions between assistant and full professors). The reviewers do recommend a strong consideration of alternatives to address the issue of faculty retention that should be discussed in light of why such resignations are occurring. These alternatives range from using existing open lines to increase faculty salaries, to fostering more intellectual exchange between junior and senior faculty members (e.g., departmental colloquia).

2. **Increases are needed in the department’s operating budget.** Problems related to the low operating budget of this department need addressing. Probably the most important area influenced here relates to graduate student funding. Increasing both the number and amount of graduate student stipends would help in the recruitment of outstanding graduate students and ease student progress through the program. This general concern with the department’s operating budget is particularly important as it was noted in the prior Graduate Council review.

3. **Address graduate student problems with the foreign language requirement.** One of the most salient issues brought up by the graduate students was related to the foreign language requirement. There was concern that the Languages and Literature Department courses were inadequate to meet their needs. As recommended by the reviewers, the department should examine how this requirement is fulfilled at different institutions. These issues should also be discussed in consultation with the Languages and Literature Department.

4. **Strategic planning to address program direction.** The reviewers also noted the need to consider issues related to program development. Besides the nine resignations, five faculty have retired from the department since the last Graduate Council review. Ideally,
the department will receive the institutional resources to fill these existing vacancies in order to maintain its national reputation, along with its research, teaching, and service missions. However, the department’s strategic planning should consider different “paths” and its potential consequences in the context of existing budgetary constraints (e.g., selectively building on program strengths).

5. *Consider developing certificate programs in interdisciplinary areas.* Given that one long-term strength of the department has been its interdisciplinary faculty, consider leading the development of certificate programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level where appropriate.

Submitted by the ad hoc review committee:

Bert N. Uchino (Chair), Department of Psychology  
Gary Drews, Biology  
Michael Zhdanov, Geology and Geophysics
Memorandum of Understanding  
Department of History  
Graduate Council Review 2002-03  

This memorandum of understanding is a summary of decisions reached at a wrap-up meeting on September 28, 2004, concluding the Graduate Council Review of the Department of History. David W. Pershing, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs; Robert D. Newman Dean of the College of Humanities; Eric Hinderaker, Chair of the Department of History; David S. Chapman, Dean of the Graduate School; and Frederick Rhodewalt, Associate Dean of the Graduate School were present.

The discussion centered on but was not limited to the following recommendations contained in the Graduate Council review completed on March 29, 2004: (1) Conduct strategic planning to address the issue of faculty retention; (2) Increase department's operating budget; (3) Address graduate student problems with the foreign language requirement; (4) Conduct strategic planning to address program direction; and (5) Consider developing certificate programs in interdisciplinary areas.

At the wrap-up meeting, the working group agreed to endorse the following actions:

**Recommendation 1: Strategic planning to address issue of faculty retention.** Faculty retention is the most important challenge facing the History Department. Since the last Graduate Council review there have been nine resignations. The reasons behind the resignations are unclear from the reports and in need of further study (e.g., relatively low salaries, better opportunities). More recent issues may exacerbate this problem (i.e., lack of clear communication regarding RPT standards and emerging tensions between assistant and full professors). The reviewers do recommend a strong consideration of alternatives to address the issue of faculty retention that should be discussed in light of why such resignations are occurring. These alternatives range from using existing open lines to increase faculty salaries, to fostering more intellectual exchange between junior and senior faculty members (e.g., departmental colloquia).

The department will undertake the development of a strategic plan during the Fall 2004 semester. A major objective of the planning activity will be to address the problem of faculty retention. As low faculty salaries are understood to be a major obstacle to successful faculty retention, funding for targeted increases in faculty salaries will be a central component of the strategic plan. The department’s plan will address the current strategy of maintaining ten areas of specialization. A plan that includes a more limited number of concentrations and which permits the reallocation of funds from existing open lines to salaries will be met by the Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs with support for increases in funding. In addition, the Dean of the College of Humanities is working to allocate college funds for salary increases in the department. The chair and dean will submit the department’s strategic plan to the Senior Vice President and Graduate School by the end of Fall Semester, 2004.
Recommendation 2: *Increases are needed in the department’s operating budget.* Problems related to the low operating budget of this department need addressing. Probably the most important area influenced here relates to graduate student funding. Increasing both the number and amount of graduate student stipends would help in the recruitment of outstanding graduate students and ease student progress through the program. This general concern with the department’s operating budget is particularly important as it was noted in the prior Graduate Council review.

The goal is to increase graduate student funding. The chair is increasing his effort to fund raising and development. In addition, the Dean of Humanities is providing stipend supplements which are allocated on a department matching share basis for the purpose of recruitment of exceptional applicants. The Dean has also increased competitive funds at the college level which are available to departments for graduate student support.

Recommendation 3: *Address graduate student problems with the foreign language requirement.* One of the most salient issues brought up by the graduate students was related to the foreign language requirement. There was concern that the Languages and Literature Department courses were inadequate to meet their needs. As recommended by the reviewers, the department should examine how this requirement is fulfilled at different institutions. These issues should also be discussed in consultation with the Languages and Literature Department.

The chair reports that the Department of Languages and Literature has been responsive to the department’s expressed concerns and is now providing acceptable levels of course offerings in the required areas.

Recommendation 4: *Strategic planning to address program direction.* The reviewers also noted the need to consider issues related to program development. Besides the nine resignations, five faculty have retired from the department since the last Graduate Council review. Ideally, the department will receive the institutional resources to fill these existing vacancies in order to maintain its national reputation, along with its research, teaching, and service missions. However, the department’s strategic planning should consider different “paths” and its potential consequences in the context of existing budgetary constraints (e.g., selectively building on program strengths).

This recommendation is tied to Recommendation #1 and will be addressed by the submission of the Department’s strategic plan at the end of Fall semester, 2004.
Recommendation 5: Consider developing certificate programs in interdisciplinary areas. Given that one long-term strength of the department has been its interdisciplinary faculty, consider leading the development of certificate programs at both the undergraduate and graduate level where appropriate.

The college supports a number of interdisciplinary degree and certificate programs and the Department of History is an active participant. These include interdisciplinary programs in environmental studies, American studies, Latin American studies, International studies, British studies, and peace and conflict studies. The dean and department chair contend that these participations adequately address this recommendation.

This memorandum of understanding is be followed by annual letters of progress from the Department Chair to the Dean of the Graduate School. Letters will be submitted each year until all of the actions described in the preceding paragraphs have been completed.

David S. Chapman
Eric Hinderaker
Robert D. Newman
David W. Pershing
Frederick Rhodewalt

David S. Chapman
Assoc. V.P. for Graduate Studies
Dean, The Graduate School
November 11, 2004