

B. A. History

Program Review Committee Report

2023 - 2024

(i) Program Goals, Objectives, and Activities:

The History program at the University of Arkansas at Monticello (UAM) aims to cultivate essential skill sets such as research, critical thinking, long-term planning, organization, and analysis. These skills are designed to be transferable to a diverse array of jobs spanning various sectors, including corporations, government agencies, and non-profit organizations. Historians may find employment in roles involving the gathering and analysis of historical data for purposes such as policy development, marketing, and strategic planning.

The history faculty has developed a program that carries out UAM's mission as it seeks the "development and dissemination of knowledge." Acquiring these goals, students can grow intellectually and socially as they become productive members of the academic community and beyond. The faculty meets these goals and objectives by: (1) fulfilling state-mandated requirements in the general education core; (2) preparing students for graduate study in the discipline; and (3) equipping students to pursue fields related to the discipline, i.e., curators of museums. Students may pursue both baccalaureate degrees and minors in the discipline.

Faculty members regularly participate in professional meetings at the state, regional, and national levels by presenting scholarly papers. They thereby hone their knowledge and

remain aware of current trends in the field. The faculty is particularly sensitive to cultural diversity and global learning and is fortunate to have the Taylor House Plantation as one of its outreach programs. This facility has shown remarkable growth in the last five or so years; it has become a popular destination for high school students and other groups outside the University proper. In the last year, the Arkansas Philological Association hosted a picnic supper at the facility with faculty from the School of Social & Behavioral Sciences participating.

Reading the list of scholarly presentations and publications amassed by the history faculty, one might be inclined to believe them among the most active scholars on campus. Many of them have contributed to textbooks and to national journals. The faculty has also encouraged their students to present at scholarly gatherings, and they have facilitated their attendance at meetings. Notable is UAM's participation in Phi Alpha Theta Regional meetings. Both faculty and students have participated in "workdays" at the Taylor House Plantation.

(ii) Program Curriculum

Following current trends, UAM faculty are developing courses that are comparative, thematic, and interdisciplinary. Comparative history courses focus on the history of a region of the world rather than the history of one specific country; the content of such courses is built around comparisons between countries in order to understand how history works on a regional and even global level. Thematic courses are built on more abstract historical topics that eschew traditional geographic boundaries and chronological timelines in favor of an in-depth investigation of a specific topic.

History faculty attend and present at subject conferences several times an academic year. At these conferences faculty discuss current trends and curriculum changes needed. The History program uses the standard 120 credit hours with appropriate upper-level course work in history as its exit requirements. These upper-level courses frequently require projects and research to reflect the appropriate level of achievement students need to be successful post-graduation. The program's elective and required courses indicate that it was developed with respect and understanding for cultural diversity.

Faculty are also expanding the notion of research beyond the traditional paper format. Projects include one that requires students to research current events and present how history can help to explain those events, another has students create a multi-media project that requires students to use research skills to develop a mixed media project (such as a video, a podcast episode, or mock social media pages) on a historical topic, while another has students engage in a simulation where they game out a civil war battle and have to make decisions based on both troop movements and environmental factors. For students who excel in research, the History program has further opportunities through the Phi Alpha Theta honor society, which regularly sponsors conferences for students to present their research. Faculty work with students to revise their research, learn how to organize their research for oral presentations, and learn how to present themselves professionally in an academic conference setting,

(iii) Academic Support

The History faculty actively engage in scholarly professional organizations, contribute to community service projects in Monticello and surrounding areas, and stay abreast of the

latest developments in their field. Their research is predominantly showcased through academic monographs and articles in peer-reviewed scholarly journals, with regular participation in conferences. For instance, Dr. Kyle Day's scholarly work resulted in the publication of an academic monograph titled "The Southern Manifesto: Massive Resistance and the Fight to Preserve Segregation" by the University Press of Mississippi in 2014.

The undergraduate History program at UAM emphasizes historical research, beginning with the course HIST 3513 Historiography and Historical Methods. This course imparts the fundamentals of historical research, culminating in students producing a 12-page research paper based on original historical research. Exceptional papers or keen interest in independent research prompt students to present their work at academic conferences.

Despite disruptions caused by the global COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022, conference participation resumed in the spring of 2023.

The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences provides financial support for faculty research and scholarly activities, including attendance at professional meetings and the publication of research findings. Faculty members are encouraged to serve on university committees, furthering their engagement with the academic community. The UAM administration supports faculty research by funding travel when costs exceed SSBS resources, enhancing exposure to research projects for all students. In addition, the UAM Library offers substantial resources for faculty research, and the recruitment of History majors begins early through outreach efforts at high school recruitment days.

Mentoring students involves faculty and instructors interacting through various channels, such as online content delivery, assessments, discussion boards, and email. The Alpha Nu

Zeta chapter of Phi Alpha Theta National History Honor Society plays a crucial role in recruiting and retaining undergraduate History majors. This active chapter recognizes academic excellence, supports research and service projects, and helps students prepare for post-college endeavors. Efforts to retain History majors include peer mentoring and programs from the Academic Advising office, as well as support from Phi Alpha Theta.

UAM's School of Social and Behavioral Sciences facilitates the transition of incoming transfer students into the History program, aided by course compatibility transfer requirements established by the Arkansas legislature. The school consistently sends program graduates to graduate school, providing informational meetings to assist students in navigating the application and selection process.

(iv) Program Faculty

The UAM history faculty is composed of five members: four tenured senior faculty and an M. A. instructor. All senior members hold doctorates from a variety of academic institutions; moreover, the instructor has a minimum of 18 hours of content courses at the graduate level. Four of the faculty members carry full loads; one also serves as Dean of the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences and carries a reduced teaching load. The faculty has a good mix of faculty representing a variety of fields within the discipline; they can, therefore, offer students a good range of special-topic courses.

In accordance with state law, all faculty must prepare an annual self-evaluation that includes demonstrable strength in teaching, scholarship, and service. The yearly evaluations also include student and peer evaluations and assessment by department heads. The faculty and staff also attend Professional Development Week, where they attend

training sessions and hear varieties of outside speakers. Faculty must also take a variety of training sessions on such topics as Title IX, safety, and cybersecurity.

(v) Program Resources

The university provides support for the four full-time faculty members in development in teaching, research, and service that include encouragement for faculty to develop special topic courses and technical support in instructional software. All the faculty members have attended at least one conference in the past two years. The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SSBS) support of research and travel of the faculty members using faculty development funds, the UAM administration has been very supportive of our faculty in funding travel when costs exceed the SSBS resources and competitive faculty research grants are available through the university. Finally, faculty members are encouraged to serve on university committees in addition to committees for the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Over the past three years, History faculty have served on Academic Appeals, Faculty Research, General Education, and Program Review to just name a few.

The Fred J. Taylor Library and Technology Center's collections includes printed books, e-books, journals, e-journals, and databases in addition to inter-library loans. Electronic databases are upgraded regularly giving faculty access to new publications that include ProQuest Centra, JSTOR, and EBSCO. The total budget for the Taylor Library for 2023-24 was \$22,597 for books (including e-books) and \$160,000 for online resources, including journals and databases.

All the classrooms in the Memorial Classroom Building are equipped with a computer that is connected to the internet, a projector, and an audio system that faculty utilize in their

classroom instruction. In addition to the classrooms, students have access to computers in the library, a Tutor Center, printed and electronic resources in the library, and consultations with reference librarians. The following chart is a list of equipment purchases over the last three years. History is housed in the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences so many items are used by additional areas.

Item Description
Classroom Computers, 13 Rooms
Classroom Furniture, Four Rooms
Classroom Laser Projectors, Four
Dell Computers for Faculty, Three
Dell Laptops, Two
Dell Monitors, Two
Flat Panel Monitors, 10
Projector Screen
Smart Board and Stand
Webcams for Four Classrooms

(vi) Program Effectiveness

The major objectives and activities of the History program are centered around student success in the history curriculum. Students are engaged in courses preparing them for graduate or professional programs in history, with the major driving force behind this preparation are dedicated faculty members. Many of the faculty members have continued to develop their research interest and have published in national venues while maintaining a full teaching load. The program is geared to have a dual purpose accomplished through a curricular focus on history and critical problem-solving techniques.

The history program serves the general education program and other opportunities for history majors to earn a baccalaureate degree, the history program offers a minor program of study that complements the University's other degree programs. For example, education majors wishing to become a history teacher can benefit from this additional understanding of history. The history program also serves the general education program by providing an array of popular courses that satisfy the social science elective requirement.

With advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, UAM Information Technology replaced all classroom computers in the Memorial Classroom Building with wall-mounted mini-computers as part of a general technology upgrade. At the same time, classrooms were outfitted with 70-inch high-definition television displays which have higher quality images and are easier to maintain than the AV projectors and screens previously used. (Digital laser projectors were kept in the three largest lecture halls, which need larger-sized displays.) Seating arrangement in the MCB are outdated and need replacing. This would allow for a conducive learning environment for student success. In the fall of 2022, SSBS

was able to outfit MCB 306 with new furniture and use existing tables and chairs to re-outfit MCB 218 and 318 (which are used by History and Political Science as seminar rooms), thus gaining three newly furnished spaces for the price of one. During the summer of 2023, the unit was allocated funds to refurbish MCB 204 and 226; the latter room is used almost exclusively by History classes.

(vii) Instruction by Distance Technology

After a review of the History Program Review report, it seems as if **Distance Technology was not addressed in a manner consistent with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education External Reviewer's Report Template**. The information obtained from the submitted report regarding Distance Learning is limited to a listing of the courses that are offered through UAM's online platform. Those courses are as follows:

HIST 1013 World History to 1500

HIST 1023 World History Since 1500

HIST 2213 American History I

HIST 2223 American History II

HIST 3593 Arkansas History

In addition, information was included in the report regarding interaction with students online. Instructors interact with students through online content delivery, assessment, discussion boards, and email. With the recent technological advances, however, online/hybrid classes have become more interactive. For one, the ability to stream recorded

lectures and recorded PowerPoint lecture notes in ways that are easy for students to download means that online students can see and hear their professor discussing the topics covered in the online class. Students are also encouraged to attend office hours in person or via Zoom for further interaction with faculty. Students can message professors through Blackboard, email professors through Outlook, or call professors by phone.

(viii) Program Research and Service

Reading the list of scholarly presentations and publications amassed by the history faculty, one might be inclined to believe them among the most active scholars on campus. Many of them have contributed to textbooks and to national journals. The faculty has also encouraged their students to present at scholarly gatherings, and they have facilitated their attendance at meetings. Notable is UAM's participation in Phi Alpha Theta Regional meetings. Both faculty and students have participated in "workdays" at the Taylor House Plantation. Members of the history faculty also serve faithfully on campus committees; members have also served as officers of the campus governance body.

IX. Local Reviewer Comments

The History program prepares graduates to meet the needs of the local, regional, and state industries. Graduates are successful in finding employment in education, government service and politics, non-governmental (especially charitable) organizations, private-sector positions requiring leadership and decision-making skills and military service. For graduates that decide to further their education, many have gone to graduate degree programs such as JD, MSW, MA in Public History, MAT, MLIS and MM in Musicology.

As with many programs right now, the biggest modification needed is more students. To try increase the number of majors, the History program plans to merge with Political Science to give students skills from two different disciplines for them to take into the job market. A new class is being developed that will replace multiple research methods courses to teach students how research works in multiple disciplines to better prepare them for projects they will experience in the workforce. Due to the age of the building, the dean will continue to request money to replace the furniture in the classrooms, so the students feel like they are in a college atmosphere versus elementary classroom. In addition, plans are being made to create a virtual teaching space for faculty and students to record audio and videos in addition to other online needs.

(x) Report Summary

Arkansas has experienced steady population growth, and this growth has led to continued demand for secondary school teachers. Combined with increased enrollments and adding classes that were cut during the 2008 economic downturn, AMTE reports that school districts across America are planning to hire as many faculty as possible. The History program does an excellent job of preparing their students for work in a variety of positions within industry, business, and educational institutions, or attend graduate programs. In addition to preparing their own students for graduation, the program provides courses for other majors and for the general education program. The History faculty are continually searching for better methods to serve the students and modifying the program as needed.

Committee Recommendations

(1) Distance Technology (section (vii) Instruction by Distance Technology) was

not addressed throughout the Program Review report of the Political Science Program.

Items to be addressed should include:

- A. Are the program distance technology courses offered/delivered in accordance with best practices?
- B. Does the institution have appropriate procedures in place to assure the security of personal information?
- C. Are technology support services appropriate for students enrolled in and faculty teaching courses/programs utilizing technology?
- D. Are policies for student/faculty ratio, and faculty course load in accordance with best practices?
- E. Are policies on intellectual property in accordance with best practices?

(2) Once committee member stated “The objectives and goal are good but very subjective in nature. Goals need to be quantified and measured using a tangible outcome scale (Pretests/Posttest----t-Testing). This would show if current standards were meeting stated objectives.” The member in question was reviewing (vi) Program Effectiveness.