

Narrative Report
History Department Review
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga
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Opening Summary: The History Department at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is young, energetic, highly trained and motivated with strong leadership under Department Head John C. Swanson. Since becoming the department's leader in 2012, Dr. Swanson has overseen a remarkable transformation from a department in much turmoil and skewed toward insecure one-year contract lecturers to a stable department composed largely of tenure-track, publishing and soon-to-be published historians. It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of this shift. The increased stability has led to an ambitious curriculum re-structuring as well as increased harmony and connections with students and alumni. The faculty is overwhelmingly excited about the future and collectively members feel a strong commitment to the university and the Chattanooga community.

***Strengths: This is increasingly a strong department steadied and buoyed by the following identifiable strengths:

- 1) The pyramid restructuring of the department's new curriculum is strong, paving the way for strong student skill development by layering skills and types of historical analysis to unfold from the time a student declares the major all the way through to the completion of the degree. Class sizes have been adjusted appropriately for this kind of intensive skill development.
- 2) Students are complimentary of the concern and care they sense from faculty, praising their availability and teaching styles. Even without a formal public history program, some 27 students over the past two academic years participated in internships—a critical link to job placement and career development.
- 3) Faculty are diversely represented in terms of concentration areas. They are energetic, highly trained, and genuinely interested in connecting with students. Female faculty members actually provide a majority of the overall number of tenure-track and tenured faculty. There is some ethnic diversity within the department and a genuine interest in adding more ethnic diversity as opportunities present themselves in the future.

***Areas for Improvement: I've identified four areas where significant improvements might and should be made when possible:

1) Space is a critical need as this department grows and provides a strong foundation for its majors. The pyramid structure of its curriculum requires available seminar rooms conducive to analytical discussion in the smaller 4000-level capstone and elective courses. Office space is also critical with tenure-track faculty stuffed into very small spaces (one a former closet) and NTT faculty sharing an open space with limited privacy for work and advising consultations with students. In addition, the current small computer lab is in jeopardy of being lost due to office and other space needs.

2) It is critical that increased information on the whereabouts and activities of History alumni be collected and charted as the department moves forward. This is necessary for both charting the effectiveness of student learning outcomes as well as potential fundraising and recruitment for majors. Once this information is attained, the department would benefit from some type of annual newsletter—either online, via mail, or both.

3) A couple of specific career tracks would aid both the department and students. A) A B.S. degree with a focus on public history jobs would give an added dimension to students' understanding of how history degrees are marketable, giving students with a natural love for history a clearer path to occupational development. With a strong internship focus already coming under the strong leadership of Michael Thompson and an exceptional museum concentration in the Chattanooga area, this would seem a natural development and one with tremendous promise for UT-Chattanooga and its students. B) Though this would require the cooperation of the College of Education, students training for a career in public school teaching at the secondary level would benefit from a major in History with a career concentration in Education. The development of this type degree would foster increased cooperation between the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Education. Several options would be available in the creation of this kind of program, including either the hiring of a History Education specialist in the History Department or perhaps the appointment of a History Education liaison to work with faculty in the College of Education.

4) While untenured tenure-track faculty basically understand that the department's publishing expectations for tenure are either a book or a significant contribution in referred articles and book chapters, they yearn for some clarification in this regard. The publishing of a monograph by a University press is regarded as the "gold standard" but a more explicitly stated expectation regarding the quantification and quality of articles would be helpful. I found that young faculty members are a bit unclear as to the combination of how many and how prestigious a set of articles might qualify should a University-published monograph not materialize during the tenure review process.

***Specific Report Notes:

PART 1 – Learning Outcomes

How would you rank this program with similar ones in the state, region, and nation?

Are the intended program and learning outcomes clearly identified?

- Has the department specified program mission, vision, and goal statements? Do these statements clearly identify intended program and student learning outcomes? Are they appropriate for the program level (undergraduate) and for UTC?
- What goals should the department establish regarding its curriculum? In particular, what advice should be offered to the department developing goals regarding the following aspects.
 - Student performance on standardized exams
 - Student opportunities for research/involvement in faculty research
 - Student opportunities for practical/field experiences
 - Graduates' admittance to/performance in graduate schools
 - Student placement in occupational positions related to major field of study
- What goals should the department establish regarding its teaching? Faculty qualifications? Faculty development?

What criteria does the department use to evaluate sufficient achievement of intended program outcomes? Are the criteria appropriate for such evaluation and/or for the program?

Does the department make use of evaluation information and/or information obtained from student, alumni, and employer surveys and/or data from institutional research to strengthen and improve the program?

*Part 1—Learning Outcomes: The learning outcomes expressed by the faculty in the department's self study are clear and appropriate for a History department. The study includes excellent data on licensure and certification exams to demonstrate the effectiveness with which History majors are being taught. Data over the past three years reveals that department graduates score significantly higher in critical thinking, reading, and writing proficiencies than their classmates in the College of Education and the College of Business; they also score relatively higher than fellow graduates in the College of Arts and Sciences. The department has a strong web page presence as well as a Facebook link that provides information and potential connections to current and former students. A critical need is the development of additional data regarding History alumni, including information about occupations. Without additional alumni data, it will be difficult if not impossible for the department to follow through on its goal of continuous improvement with respect to charting learning outcomes.

The History department at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is small but extremely talented. It is also very young, very energetic, and ideally positioned for significant publications in the very near future. Given this unusual profile, I would rank it as one of the up and coming History departments in the region. This can be seen to some degree in the department's self-study—much of which was authored by the ranks of these talented but as of yet untenured, tenure-track faculty members. The goals and vision for the future are clearly articulated and show much thought and analysis.

The department recently (2014-16) underwent a thorough curriculum revision with a pyramid structure that provides a strong building block for the future.

PART 2 – Curriculum

Is the current curriculum appropriate to the level and purpose of the program? Is it adequate to enable students to develop the skills and attain the outcomes needed for graduates of the program? Does it reflect the current standards, practices, and issues in the discipline?

Does the department regularly review and revise curriculum content and organization to ensure that it is appropriate and that it prepares students to meet the specified learning outcomes? Will the department need to update the curriculum and/or develop new or alternative offerings in the near future?

Is the curriculum content appropriate for UTC? Are the core and advanced courses approximately balanced? Does the overall curriculum ensure the development of appropriate skills in the following areas: general education, critical thinking skills, research strategies and skills, written and oral communications, and computer and technology-related skills (in general and specific to the discipline)?

Are appropriate pedagogical and/or technological innovations included that enhance student learning? Are the department's instructional practices consistent with the standards of the discipline?

- Do the instructional practices provide adequate opportunities for student interactions with one another, faculty, and professionals?
- Does the department make adequate efforts to include students in the life of the program (e.g., seeking student advice in reviewing the curriculum/course schedules/teaching methods, etc.)?

Do students have adequate opportunities to participate in research, practica/field experiences/internships, or other experiences that allow them to apply learning outside the classroom and/or expose students to professional and career opportunities appropriate to the discipline?

Does the department clearly outline program requirements and offer courses regularly to ensure timely completion of the program?

*Part 2—Curriculum: The current re-ordering of the department’s curriculum dates to the 2014-16 academic years and thus is only now beginning to unfold. Nonetheless, it is clear that the pyramid approach to education is a positive step for the department and its majors. The unfolding of this curriculum structure, consistent with the American Historical Association’s “Tuning Project,” will pay dividends with the development of specific skill sets moving from lecture-style geographical and chronological surveys through more intensive, analytical seminar studies with an increased focus on historiographical interpretation.

The development of a couple of B.S. programs, specifically a B.S. in History Education and possibly a B.S. in Public History, would greatly aid in student recruitment and job preparation. Having a B.S. in History Education would require a close working relationship with the College of Education, a relationship that would be beneficial for all parties including History majors. A B.S. in Public History is a natural fit for UT-Chattanooga given the strong presence of museums in the local area and the overall draw of tourism. Even if a separate degree is not established, I urge the department to consider establishing one or two courses that focus on public history—perhaps an introduction to public history course, a museums and historical interpretation course, or even a historic preservations course. It is likely that potential adjunct faculty already working in the area would be able to teach such courses without adding any substantial faculty resources. The advantage of such a course or two in the regular curriculum would be to expand what is already a thriving internship program (roughly 25 percent of the department’s total number of majors over the past two academic years) and it would also build with substance on the department’s excellent two-part workshop for History majors focusing on “What to Do with a History Degree.”

PART 3 – Student Experience

Does the program and curricula provide students with the opportunities to evaluate the curriculum and the faculty? What procedures are in place to ensure and document that the department provides students with regular opportunities to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of teaching? How well is this information used to improve the program?

Do students have adequate opportunities to participate in professional and career opportunities appropriate to the discipline and to opportunities to apply what they have learned outside of the classroom?

What curricular and/or extracurricular activities does the department offer towards exposure to diversity? Do these activities provide adequate opportunities for students to be exposed to the perspective or underrepresented groups?

Do the students have access to appropriate academic support services? Describe the academic support services and comment on their adequacy and appropriateness.

*Part 3—Student Experience: The department provides an active History Club and Phi Alpha Theta chapter as well as regular lecture series and events. In particular, programs related to the Africana Studies and Holocaust emphases offer students stimulating and varied speakers both from on and off campus sources. The students and alumni with which I met spoke glowingly of their experience as History majors, particularly the opportunities they have and had to engage in innovative academic discussions. Students also seem relatively connected to the local museum culture even though the department does not yet have a formal public history program or regular public history-focused courses. Over the period from the beginning of the fall 2015 semester to the end of the fall 2016 semester (four semesters including the summer 2016 session), a full 27 students (more than ¼ of the department's total majors) engaged in internship programs and a number of students currently attend and/or plan to attend graduate schools that focus on advanced public history degrees.

The department collects student satisfaction data from the University's regular online course evaluation initiative and takes very seriously the results from student rankings. Additional important data could be gleaned from some sort of senior survey results—perhaps administered by the College of Arts and Sciences for the benefit of multiple departments.

PART 4 – Faculty

Are faculty competencies/credentials appropriate to the level of the program, and do they at least meet the SACSCOC qualifications? Do faculty specialties correspond to the needs of the program? How might the program address needs for additional/different qualifications/expertise?

Is the faculty adequate in number to meet the needs of the program with reasonable and efficient teaching loads and/or credit hour productions? Are the regular-to-adjunct faculty ratios appropriate for the program?

With respect to ethnicity, gender, and academic background, is faculty diversity appropriate for the program?

Does the program use a faculty evaluation system to improve teaching, scholarly and creative activities, and service? Does the system include information from the teaching evaluations of student, alumni, and employer surveys? Are the faculty evaluation procedures adequate and successfully implemented and used?

Are faculty engaged in scholarly, creative, professional association, and service activities that enhance instructional expertise in their areas of specialty?

- Are the faculty involved in research, publication activities, conference presentations, or other scholarly and creative activities that are appropriate for the program?
- Does each faculty member have a professional development plan designed to enhance his or her role as a faculty member? Is there evidence of successful achievements within the plan?
- Are faculty services to UTC and the community adequate? In view of UTC's mission, as a metropolitan institution, does the program have adequate linkages with the community?

Are faculty engaged in the planning, evaluation and improvement processes that measure and advance student success?

*Part 4—Faculty: The faculty in the History department regularly teach large numbers of students as is demonstrated by their higher than average numbers overall based on the Delaware workload model. With so many young untenured, tenure-track faculty focusing their efforts on research and publishing projects, and without the benefit of a graduate program and teaching assistants to help with grading, the high number of student credit hours per semester is particularly impressive. The department head does a good job of providing scheduling that allows these faculty members to juggle the classes they teach and still have large blocks of time to allow for continued research and writing. The student credit hours are especially impressive given the department's regular participation in the University's Honors program and in the smaller 4000-level seminars both required and encouraged of majors. Department trends in number of majors over the past decade show a decline linked to the recession of 2008-2010 with increased numbers rebounding over the past few years. These numbers offer some hope that increased majors will be in the offing, especially with an attractive, more secure faculty on hand and with the possibility of growth in the public history and education areas. If department majors do grow significantly, new faculty lines will be needed to handle the needs of a larger program.

The department has reduced its overall number of non-tenure track lecturers and that seems to have improved overall morale in the department. The program continues to use a number of adjunct faculty teaching one or more courses per semester but the overall number is not unusual or out of bounds with current trends within academe.

One concern emerged in my discussions with untenured faculty about the possibility of faculty exchanges. Though the university as a whole has pushed for study-abroad programs and has had success in this area, the perception is that very few parallel opportunities exist for faculty exchanges. In particular, faculty who research in distant and expensive travel areas around the globe could benefit from what would seem a logical extension of a vibrant international studies program.

PART 5 – Learning Resources

Does the program regularly evaluate its equipment and facilities and pursue necessary improvements?

- Has the program requested/encouraged necessary improvements of its equipment and facilities through appropriate internal mechanisms? Through appropriate external mechanisms?
- Does it appear that the program's resources are appropriate within the context of overall college resources?
- How should needs of the program be prioritized? Could savings be realized from current program operations to fund any new budgetary needs?

Are library holdings and other learning and information resources current and adequate to support the teaching and learning needs of the discipline?

*Part 5—Learning Resources: This is an area of major concern for the department especially as the number of majors continues to rebound from what appears to be a low mark reached exactly four years after the conclusion of the 2008-2010 recession. At present the department has equipped a small computer lab for use by History majors and that lab is now in jeopardy due to the acute need for office and seminar classroom space. The library offers some relief in this area but computer and seminar meeting spaces are critical given the department's commitment to a pyramid structure that requires smaller class meetings and projects during the final year of a History major's education. Library meeting rooms and labs can be scheduled but not for an entire semester for a stand-alone class.

This concern is exacerbated by overall poor office equipment. Faculty complained about regular breakdowns in office computers and printing machines. Combined with the acute office space problem, this is something that deserves immediate attention.

Library holdings and access to Interlibrary Loan resources appear to be adequate for student needs and provide at least a foundation for faculty research resources. The Walker Center provides additional resources for teaching and curriculum development.

Part 6 – Support

Is the program's operating budget consistent with the needs of the program?

- Considering current budget constraints, what are the most pressing resource needs of the program?

Does the program have a history of enrollment and graduation rates sufficient to sustain high quality and cost effectiveness?

Is the program responsive to local, state, regional and national needs of the discipline?

*Part 6—Support: The department budget appears to be adequate for the day-to-day teaching and research needs of the department. With the exception of space needs, faculty members seem to be receiving sufficient support, including support for conference attendance and research presentations. Enrollment rates, especially given the untapped resources in public history and education, are strong and recent trends suggest that these numbers will show some increase in coming years. The department's curriculum revision encourages skill development and has History majors on track to graduate within a four-year period. The department is clearly in touch with national trends within the discipline and is responsive to the majority of local and regional needs. One obvious addition would be the presence of a historian specializing in Civil War history. Chattanooga seems a natural fit and the department would probably benefit from having another historian linked generally to the American South and the Appalachian region.

PART 7 – Summary Recommendations

Overall, what are your impressions of the program?

- What are the major strengths of the program?
- What are the major weaknesses of the program?

What goals would you suggest the program set for the next five years? Please list goals in order of priority (i.e., the most important goal first, followed by the second most important goal, etc.)

How can the program work to achieve these goals over the next five years?

- Considering current budget constraints, what are the most realistic strategies the program can use to achieve the highest priority goals?
- What goals would require additional resources? What level of resources would these goals require? How might the program secure these resources?

*Part 7—Summary Recommendations: Overall, I would like to reiterate that this is a dynamic, talented young faculty enjoying stable leadership with a strong focus on teaching and teaching-related research. Few departments in any discipline enjoy the camaraderie that this group is likely to develop in the years ahead as majors increase due to a strong curriculum that this very group of young faculty helped build and as research projects are published and tenure/promotion cases are positive due to the standards they collectively supported. There is clearly an opportunity with public history and education to grow the department's majors and increase connections with the local community and economy. Space needs are the most acute at the moment and relief in that area would go a long way toward ensuring the continued health and productivity of the department's faculty and students.

***Suggested Goals:

1) Work toward the creation of a B.S., History degree track designed toward specific career options. This is consistent with the stated concerns of the department about its role in the immediate future and mirrors other developments within the nation in the History discipline. Specifically a public history focus offers tremendous promise with the already thriving internship program and available resources in the Chattanooga area. The most immediate and efficient transition would be the inclusion of a couple of focused public history courses at the 3000 and/or 4000 level (possibly an introduction to public history, a course in historic preservation, and a course in museum/cultural resources management). In time, a more developed public history track could be developed if student demand and faculty resources pointed in that direction. In addition, negotiations should begin with the College of Education about the possibility of a History degree with a career concentration track in Education as the preferred route for students seeking a career teaching in secondary public and private schools. Released time for a faculty liaison to the College of Education would seem the most immediate and efficient solution. Should the program develop and prove popular, a faculty line for someone with either a background in public school education or perhaps a research field in the History of American Education would be appropriate.

2) Strengthen the department link with alumni by investigating all available resources from the University Alumni Association as well as department links to Facebook, graduating student emails, and employment/internship data. An annual department newsletter highlighting the accomplishments of faculty and students as well as on-campus events would be relatively easy to begin as an online publication and would provide a much-needed link for the future in terms of student development and fundraising. In time, a print edition could be considered, at least in limited numbers.

3) While the department is young and advancing toward tenure and promotion, develop a more tightly focused tenure/promotion guidelines document. Though directed and implemented by tenured faculty in the department, this process should include input from the ranks of untenured, tenure-track faculty members. Establishing a more clearly worded department guideline regarding publication expectations (and especially the quantity and quality of a body of referred articles and book chapters) will build unity in the future and lessen the friction in borderline tenure/promotion cases.

4) Though space needs are acute, I am listing them as number four in my list of goals precisely because so many other factors are involved in bringing about the much-needed improvement. Discussions with the Provost's Office also made it very clear that space needs are paramount and that a number of projects are already in the works to bring about relief for History as well as other academic departments. Though I am placing this as fourth on the goal list, I would urge at least the following immediate action: The History

Department head should appoint two additional faculty members to meet with him and the Provost as soon as possible to detail the many space needs currently at issue in the department. This exchange will ensure that the significant needs of History students and faculty are understood and that the best option available to meet those needs can be ascertained.