

San Francisco State University, Master of Arts Program in Human Sexuality Studies
Academic Program Review

External Consultants Site Visit Report

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During our site visit on September 24-25, we met with Core Faculty, Undergraduate Course Faculty and Graduate Faculty of the Human Sexuality Studies Program. We also met with graduate and undergraduate students in Human Sexuality Studies. We visited portions of a graduate seminar (HMSX 805) and an undergraduate course. We met with Dean Joel Kassiola, Vice President for Academic Program Development Gail Whitaker, Dean of Graduate Studies Ann Hallum, Associate Vice President for Planning and Educational Effectiveness Linda Buckley, and Faculty Program Review Coordinator Oswaldo Garcia. Finally, we met with the staff of the Institute on Sexuality, Inequality and Health, including members of the National Sexuality Resource Center and the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality.

We were excited about many aspects of the Human Sexuality Studies Program. We were extremely impressed with Professor Gil Herdt's leadership in guiding this program to international visibility. Given the interdisciplinary nature of human sexuality studies, the Program is to be commended for covering multiple disciplines in teaching, research, and student selection. Although the Master of Arts Program was only started in 2002, it is currently an internationally recognized program, and one of the only such programs in the world. San Francisco State University has a long history of teaching courses in sexuality and in lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) studies, and the Human Sexuality Studies Program continues to offer two minors in Human Sexuality Studies and LGBT Studies. We found both Professor Carrington's undergraduate Variations in Human Sexuality course and Professor Jessica Fields' graduate seminar in Sexuality and Public Policy to be extremely interesting, rigorous, and professional.

The Program has managed to forge alliances with a very large group of faculty across SFSU. We were also under the impression that these alliances have also been of benefit to these outside faculty. All core faculty of the Human Sexuality Studies Program have an impressive record of scholarship at the national and international level. Finally, the Institute on Sexuality, Inequality and Health, including the National Sexuality Resource Center and the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality are extensive and highly productive sources of research, public policy and activism on human sexuality.

GRADUATE STUDENTS

The Master of Arts Program in Human Sexuality Studies has admitted about 15 students a year via a rigorous admissions program where about one in six applicants is admitted. The Program has a strong focus on research training in the social and behavioral sciences. To date, 29 students have received their MA degrees. We found the curriculum to be balanced and extensive.

Our meetings and communications with current and past graduate students indicated that students have mixed reactions to the Program, although we found the newer students to be happier in the Program. We also found the students to be mixed in their career goals: some of them were planning a research career and were applying to doctoral programs whereas others viewed themselves as activists and sex educators. Given this, we have two recommendations for graduate student admissions and training. The first is to develop two tracks: research versus public policy. We envision this plan as providing students from both tracks a common curriculum during the first year, but separate courses during the second year. We understand that graduate courses are required to have a minimum enrolment of 12 students. Thus, in order to achieve this goal it would be necessary to admit more graduate students. This could only be achieved if the program had more full-time faculty (see recommendation below).

Our second recommendation regarding students is to focus future funding attempts on obtaining scholarships that cover graduate student tuition and stipends, including research assistantships via the Centers. This would allow the Program to be more competitive in attracting students with research career goals, including those from around the U.S. and from other countries. Increased funding would also attract more disadvantaged students, including students of color. It is our impression that Program faculty view their emphasis on training students in research, yet the Program's financial resources for students are scant and thus the Program is also recruiting students from the local area that already have jobs in service-related areas related to Human Sexuality Studies. We would also recommend that the university's president approve tuition waivers for out-of-state and international graduate students as is the case at other California State Universities.

In the meantime, given the presence of a cohort of students each year that is interested in activist issues and careers, we recommend more guest speakers on applied/activist topics. This could include alumni of the Program who are working in the Bay Area. The Professional Development course could also make greater use of local contacts (including lecturers such as Ivy Chen) for guidance and support.

EXTERNAL FUNDING AND FUTURE FACULTY HIRES

Given the small size of the Program, we were extremely impressed with the high level of external funding that Program faculty have obtained, particularly Professors Herdt and Tolman. The two Centers, funded by external grants, include about 35 faculty, staff, and student assistants. The Summer Institutes, international conferences, and the journal *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* all contribute to the international reputation of the Program.

We were extremely taken aback to hear that Professor Deborah Tolman is leaving the Program, and this is a major setback. The two faculty hires in the current year will be crucial in determining the future success of the Program. In particular, the replacement for the faculty director of the Center for Research on Gender and Sexuality will need to be a senior sexuality researcher with a history of obtaining large extramural grants. It

will be a challenge to find someone who can relocate to the Bay Area at short notice. This important hire will also influence the Institute for Sexuality, Inequality and Health Strategic Plan and necessitate changes in its mission depending on the qualifications of this senior faculty member.

In addition to replacing Professors Tolman and Teunis, we also recommend that the University increase the size of the Program via three additional tenure-track lines. Given the success of the Program in student admission rates, student graduation rates, external funding, and international reputation of the Centers and conferences, we recommend that the size of the Program be increased. This would allow admitting larger numbers of graduate students, which is necessary to have two tracks as described above.

Now that the Program has department status, faculty mentioned that the department chair may be appointed on a rotating basis. If that is the case, we urge the department to consider how the chair will relate to the director of the Institute at times when these are two different people. This has the potential to be challenging, and guidelines should be developed in advance.

ASSESSMENT

At our initial meeting with university administrators, we were told to focus on the Program's assessment procedures. We agree that these could be strengthened and should be formalized. We also agree that criteria should focus on the Program in general as well as on individual student achievement standards, and should include written as well as oral performance.

We encourage the Program to keep track of alumni contact information and achievements over time, so that faculty can determine whether their goals for graduate students' careers are being met. If the Program expects graduates to assume research careers, it is important to establish if this in fact the case. We commend the Program faculty for listing this as one of their recommendations in the Self Study.

Currently the master's thesis is only read by two faculty members. We understand that this is the norm at SFSU, but we recommend that one faculty member (perhaps the Faculty Graduate Advisor) evaluate all theses or thesis proposals in order to determine if they are meeting Program criteria. We also encourage thesis chairs to schedule a formal thesis defense.

We were impressed with the student research conference. However, we also advise that a faculty member evaluate the quality of these research papers in order to determine if the various research courses need to incorporate any additional elements to train students in research methods, design, or presentation.

ATTACHMENTS

We are attaching the following checklists:

1. Human Sexuality External Reviewers Visit Response to Program Recommendations
2. Appendix A, Worksheet for Program Review External Consultants