



**SAN FRANCISCO
STATE UNIVERSITY**

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MEMORANDUM

To: Andy Harris, Dean, College of LCA, SFSU
Jennifer Summit, Provost, SFSU
Lori Beth Way, Dean, UEAP
Academic Programs Review Committee

Date: April 11th, 2019

Dean Harris, Provost Summit, Dean Way, and members of APRC,

The members of the Department of History are pleased to be able to respond to the extraordinarily positive review of the department by Dr. Ed Dickinson (UC Davis) and Dr. Linda Ivey (CSU East Bay). The value of this appraisal is heightened by the seniority and experience of these two examiners, both of whom have served at length as chairs of their own departments and both of whom are held in high regard for their leadership and contributions to the field and to history education.

The External Review in many ways matches many of our own findings. The Department of History has, at great length, undergone serious contemplation and redesign of our curriculum to better serve our students and the university as a whole. Over the past 5-year period, despite dramatic decline in our faculty numbers [12], including some tragic losses, we have endured a nation-wide challenge to history enrollment and to our discipline, and, despite a budget that the examiners describe as “shoe-string” [11], we have emerged out the other side “at the very forefront of initiatives within the discipline and profession nationally” [13]. It is worth enumerating some of those initiatives here:

1. An evidence-based revision to the major, compliant with Executive Orders and better designed to serve a new generation of major students.
2. A redesigned minor that better fits current practice in the university and student need.
3. A new Certificate in Historical Research, the only Honors certificate approved for the university.
4. A redesigned MA that is more flexible and responsive to the current situation and student objectives.

5. An entirely new Graduate Certificate in History Education designed to attract and serve an entirely new population of students.
6. In alliance with the College of Ethnic Studies, a re-certification of a waiver program for future Social Studies teachers, a designation lost by the university several years ago.
7. Multiple new courses serving critical areas of General Education including History 101 (Critical Thinking), History 103 (First-Year Experience), and History 112 (Quantitative Reasoning).

These are only our major initiatives. We could mention many other changes, most significant of which are a new advising pattern, major marketing initiatives, and an expanded service to students including a new department graduation event. Our graduation rates are on the increase. Our major numbers are rebounding. We have increased the number of students we serve in our courses from 7,094 SCUs in Fall 2016 to 7,676 in Fall 2018. This is no mean feat in this time. We have also been successful in raising significant funds from kind donors and outside funders, including multiple grants (CURE, Teagle, Curriculum Development) and over \$600,000 in gifts in the past three years. All of this, while maintaining “very high level and quality of scholarly activity” [14] and excellent contributions in service and teaching [13] as well as a culture of collegiality that extends to lecturer faculty and that is “a notable, and most impressive strength”.

Of course, we have a great deal of work yet to do. We are currently working diligently on a plan to align classroom teaching with our new curriculum and program outcomes – in particular in intentionally developing research and communication skills in our major students. We are attempting to address DWFI rates in introductory courses and GVAR (13). We are attempting to find ways to connect more deeply with community institutions. We are taking steps to address our need for greater student diversity, but there is work to do there as well.

The external examiners’ recommendations are clearly meant to help the department to take the next steps in serving our students by both concretizing our achievements and elevating our engagement with areas for promising further work. In particular:

1. As the examiners note, we desperately need two tenure-track hires immediately. We have lost multiple faculty in the recent past, and have been unable to hire for three years. The first hire we need is a position in Race and Ethnicity in US History, to fill a hole created by the tragic death of Dr. Dawn Mabalon. This hire will help to increase program diversity and connect to local communities while teaching multiple high-enrolled courses. The second hire, in digital history/new media with a specialization in either Latin America or Asia, will help us to develop our online strategy, offer key skills-based digital history courses, and also help us to serve diverse students with diverse needs. [14]
2. The examiners also note the importance of ‘space’ [5], as well as our superb staff, for creating the kinds of community that students need. It should be noted that multiple studies have shown that this kind of community is the key to attracting and graduating students at elite history programs such as at Yale University. If we are to move our

location, as seems to be the case, we *must* retain student and faculty access to community space.

3. We plan to further develop our intentional pedagogical and curricular design, and appreciate university and college support in this respect. [14]
4. We are not averse to exploring further online courses, although we share the trepidation of the reviewers [14]. Also, this kind of endeavor would be best supported by a faculty hire who has some expertise in online course design and delivery.
5. The examiners suggest that we deepen community engagement, in particular with aspects of SF history such as the housing crisis. We would note that members of the department are, in fact, deeply engaged in an Extraordinary Ideas Grant around the housing crisis already. More importantly, we believe that a key missing ingredient for this kind of community engagement will be a hire designed specifically for such purposes, as described above.

In conclusion, this department has worked extraordinarily hard, and very smartly, to improve the ways in which we serve the university, our students, and our wider community. We feel vindicated in this work by the overwhelmingly positive external reviewers report, but we are not resting on our laurels. We hope the university will support the next stage in our development with the resources we need to move forward.