

Date: May 7, 2020

To: Dr. Laura Massa, AVP for Academic Programs  
Dr. Seema C. Shah-Fairbank, Faculty Fellow for Program Review

From: Dr. Iris S. Levine, Dean *Aris S. Levine*  
College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences

Re: Response to MA in History Program Review

The History self-study was submitted and contained an extensive review of the program, as per the template provided by the Office of Academic Programs. It carefully addressed the mission and goals, reflection of the previous self-study and changes to the program in the last decade, program description, and all of the necessary data and narrative to describe the status of the STS program. External reviewers visited the campus on April 23 and 24, 2019. As part of the visit, I met with the reviewers to discuss the college's support of the department and the reviewers' preliminary findings. The college received the reviewers' report on May 22, 2019. Overall, the review was extremely positive, citing support for the accomplishments of the History department, and highlighting the fact that the cohesive curriculum is tailored to program objectives that is unique to the region and aligns to the mission of the University.

**General comments:**

The reviewers noted that they were "impressed with the program and commend the department for implementing such an innovative and effective program." They noted that this is a "young" MA program, which is just completing a period of transition (semester conversion). They noted that the program has many strengths that support student learning and student success. They were highly impressed with the cohort model and the impressive graduation rate of 95% after three years. They noted that faculty specialties correspond to the program needs and that the faculty are dedicated and committed to the success of the program.

The reviewers came away from their visit very impressed with the department culture, the new emphasis on digital humanities, the quality of the faculty, and the cohort model.

The reviewers also addressed challenges in the department, such as the need for the following: a faculty hiring plan; a dedicated seminar room; a dedicated digital humanities classroom; and a curricular review to better meet program goals. The reviewers made recommendations in each of these areas and the department met to review these recommendations and develop their post self-study action plan.

**Post Self-Study Action Plan**

Dr. Amanda Podany, Graduate Program Coordinator, and I discussed an Action Plan addressing the items above as well as some of the recommendations noted in the external review. We believe that the plan, which contains both short and long-term goals, is attainable with the support of the Department, College and University.

The action plan is divided into short-term priorities and long-term priorities. In the short term, the department will focus on five categories: Faculty support, Student Learning and Assessment, Student Success, Program/Curriculum, and Recruitment. In the short-term priorities, the proposed actions are well articulated and require little resources on behalf of the college. Dr. Podany and I have talked about ways to support faculty mentoring and recruitment efforts. The department has a clear vision as to reviewing and aligning the curriculum, student learning and assessment, and student success. I especially appreciate the entire department's dedication in placing the priority of student success on the action plan as so many of our students struggle with the cost of expensive textbooks and the department has committed to affordable course materials.

With respect to the long-term priorities, the categories are Faculty, Program/Curriculum, Facilities/Space/Resources, and Operating Budget. The proposed actions are reasonable and attainable, although the hiring of tenure track faculty is a decision made at the provost level, not the college level. All tenure track hires fall under the purview of the Provost. I will advocate for the department, but it is not the Dean's decision. Nonetheless, the department should outline a hiring plan to address the department needs. In our discussion, Dr. Podany and I talked about the need for a dedicated graduate seminar room and a digital humanities lab. I am keenly aware of these needs and have committed to working together to seek a resolution. Furthermore, Dr. Podany and I discussed the possibility of an additional course release for the graduate coordinator. I revealed that it had been in my plan for the next year, but with the pandemic and the current budget crisis, it was not possible at this time. I am committed to making this happen, when the budget situation improves. I am aware of the need for additional release time and the incredible dedication that Dr. Podany has given toward the MA program. I am in support of the actions listed on the plan and look forward to working with the department on achieving these long-term goals.

### **Recommendations**

The reviewers provided recommendations in the following categories: faculty hiring, curricular matters, student success/inclusivity, facilities, and recruitment.

The department has responded to these recommendations in the department response document and I am in agreement with the response. I commend the department for discussing these recommendations and for creating a vision toward improvement on each of the matters. The action plan articulates the vision and the strategies.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the review was exceedingly positive and laudatory. The MA in History program was recognized for its curriculum, its quality, its faculty, and its interaction with the students. The reviewers were especially impressed with the program's innovation and effectiveness. The reviewers' concerns have been identified in the department response and/or proposed action plan. The program review process has been extremely informative, and I am impressed with the outcome – the exceptionally well-written self-study, the external reviewers' visit and subsequent review, and the post self-study action plan. I am very proud of the Master of Arts program in History and I look forward to working with Dr. Podany and the entire department as we enact the action plan.