

External Review Team Report  
Academic Program Review of UNM History Department

December 3, 2009

Table of Contents

- I. Overview of the Department
- II. Set-backs: Faculty loses since Spring 2005
- III. Strategy for future development
- IV. Further development efforts
- V. Contribution to the strategic mission of UNM
- VI. Comparison with peer institutions
- VII. Summation and specific recommendations
- VIII. Appendix: Department's questions

## I. Overview of the History Department

The History Department at the University of New Mexico currently consists of 26 faculty members who teach in five geographic sections (Latin America, European, United States, American West, and Asia). Across these sections many faculty members also teach within a broad theme of the comparative history of women and gender. The Department currently averages around 400 undergraduate majors (a number that has steadily increased over the years) and approximately 100 graduate students distributed between its MA and PhD programs.

The success of these programs can in large part be measured by increased undergraduate enrollments and the enthusiasm of graduate students the review team spoke with during its site visit. The success the Department has had in placing its doctoral and masters students—even in a tight job market—also attests to the caliber of the Department’s graduate programs.

Faculty members of the Department have made scholarly contributions that have received national and even international recognition in a wide variety of fields. Faculty cvs indicate the kind of scholarly productivity we hope to see at a public research university, with faculty regularly publishing with major academic presses and scholarly journals, winning book and article prizes, and major external research fellowships.

Within this generally high level of scholarly productivity, the Department boasts several areas of particular prominence and strength, namely in the areas of Latin American Studies and the American West. Located in a unique cultural crossroads that includes indigenous, Spanish and Mexican historical legacies, the University has developed an unrivaled concentration of studies in a variety of disciplines to focus on that nexus. The Department’s Latin American section plays a vital component in that broader focus of the University, including the Latin American Institute, and provides a rich resource of both scholarship and teaching in this area.

The reputation of the Department in terms of its study of the American West has been well established for many decades and is widely regarded as having one of the strongest concentrations within universities in the Trans-Mississippi West. This fact account for the reason the Department has been so successful in placing recent graduates in job searches seeking expertise in the military history, American Indian, and women’s history of the American West. Part of the strength in this area comes from the fact the Department contains two important Centers that fall within the rubric of the American West section: the Center for the Southwest and the Western Writer’s Association. In addition, the Department is the institutional home for one of the most historically important resources for the study of the West, Southwest, and the Spanish Borderlands: the *New Mexico Historical Review*. The scholarship produced by this journal for nearly 85 years is not only a state treasure, but a source regularly used by scholars internationally.

Another potential area of excellence includes medieval history. The Department currently operates UNM’s Institute of Medieval Studies that is directed through the herculean efforts of a single faculty member in the wake of significant recent faculty losses in that field. The Institute sponsors an extraordinary annual lecture series, hosts conferences, seminars, and a summer paleography institute that are widely admired and which contribute significantly to other

academic units in the University. The lectureship in particular garners considerable interest in and participation by citizens beyond the University community as well as members within that community. In recent years the Department has been able to offer a first-rate Masters program in Medieval history producing students who might, in turn, gain entrance to the country's top PhD programs in this field. This program is now jeopardized by the recent departure of three faculty members affiliated with it but could be rebuilt with appropriate institutional support. This realistic goal would give the University of New Mexico national recognition and attention without seeking to compete with programs that dwarf it in terms of resources and long-standing doctoral programs in Medieval Studies.

A final area that is ripe for development, particularly given the Federal laboratories and UNM Hospital, is the History of Science, Technology, Medicine, and the Environment (HSTEM). Strategies for the development of such a program and how it integrates with the needs and growth of the Department are detailed in Section III of this report.

Maintaining the high quality of the undergraduate program has been one of the Department's concerns and strengths over the years. Each undergraduate director has dedicated himself or herself to sustaining this strength through rendering effective advice to undergraduates and the Department as well as the UNM administration can be proud of the history undergraduate program.

The graduate program is well known nationally. The Department has encouraged its graduate students to present papers and apply for research travel grants. For example, the UNM graduate students make a strong showing in numbers every year at the Western Historical Association's annual meeting. Much of this success is due to the successful mentoring of the graduate students by the faculty.

The staff in the Department consists of individuals who are dedicated to fulfilling their roles and responsibilities. While they are working daily to keep the Department going, a new position to handle budgetary matters would be very helpful to the Department, and perhaps this position could be shared with another Department.

## II. Set-backs: Faculty losses since Spring 2005

We have identified several crucial areas of historical research and teaching affected by recent faculty losses:

- History of Science and Technology
- European History
  - 2006: 11 faculty
  - 2009: 7 faculty
  - Virtual disintegration of ancient/medieval

- US diplomatic history
- Latin American environmental history
- Failed recruitment in 2008: Native American

However one calculates the loss of “lines,” it was apparent to the review team that the Department has suffered a significant constriction of faculty that places enormous pressure on the Department’s ability to discharge its educational mission. Especially troubling is that some of the losses of faculty have undercut if not eviscerated programs that were poised to become areas of potential strength and renown for the University, including Medieval history (with the departure of two medievalists – one of them now a MacArthur Fellow – and one specialist in late antiquity, a crucial allied field) and the History of Science, Technology, Medicine, and the Environment (HSTEM), which has been especially impacted by the death of Tim Moy but also the attrition of faculty in allied fields capable of supporting this important area of study (e.g. history of medicine and the environment). Nonetheless, key faculty and the underlying institutional opportunities for developing the reputation of these areas remain intact, thus making the issue one of future development and growth and strategic planning.

### III. Strategy for future development

Despite the difficult losses sustained by the History Department, morale remains very high and it is apparent that the Department is working actively to maintain its programs while acknowledging that there are certain areas (such as ancient and aspects of medieval; history of modern science and technology) that it currently is not covering.

Rather than consider how to maintain the Department, as it has been, we want to encourage them to work with the administration to take this as an opportunity for strategic planning for the coming years. How do they want the Department to continue to grow and thrive in the next five years? What might be the first steps?

We invite the History Department to work with the administration to develop a five-year proposal for rebuilding and rejuvenation, being realistic about short-term limits on funding but ambitious about long-term possibilities.

Our *first recommendation* is to strongly encourage the administration to work with the Department and Development in support of a new HSTEM initiative that could be developed via fundraising. An endowed chair in the history of science and technology with allied funds that might support graduate students, public outreach, and other activities highlighting New Mexico’s unique place in the history of modern American science and technology is a natural objective that has considerable existing sources of support within the state. We would like to see this begin as soon as possible as a fundraising initiative, with the first goal being the support of an endowed faculty position in this area.

Our *second recommendation* is to strongly urge the administration to work with the Department to meet other critical hiring needs. From what we have understood, they are medieval and ancient (2010-2011) and US diplomatic history (2011-2012).

Our *third recommendation* is that the Department be invited to work again with diversity initiatives to hire outstanding scholars of Native American and African-American descent whose research and teaching interests might also fill crucial Department needs. Native American history deserves a strong representation at UNM due to nearly ten percent of the state's population being American Indian, and the absence of any courses in African-American history is a large hole in the US history program, though the Department should also be encouraged to identify opportunity hires of this kind in other fields that are also high priorities.

Our *fourth recommendation* is that the administration work with the Department to anticipate its most important needs in the next five years. It is highly likely, for instance, that in the not too distant future it will be essential to make hire in Asian history (a field of increasingly global importance but which has only two faculty members potentially nearing retirement). Maintaining a program in Asian history should be a university-wide as well as Department priority.

*Finally*, knowing that current hiring strategies at many universities have slowed because of the economy, we strongly encourage the administration to work with the Department to develop a strong program of postdoctoral fellows and lecturers who can be offered one or multi-year appointments that can fill critical teaching needs not only due to vacancies but also sabbaticals and faculty with course relief. In some instances, such appointments could be affiliated with key centers or research institutes as well as the Department, making this an attractive opportunity for a recent PhD. They might also combine teaching on the Main Campus with some teaching at the new Westside Campus (see Section V below). We fully support the Department's strong commitment to having regular faculty teach its core courses and anticipate that this kind of temporary teaching would fit the Department's longstanding and admirable mission of delivering excellent undergraduate instruction well, as particular needs arise.

#### IV. Further development efforts

In addition to the specific suggestion offered in Section III about fundraising for an endowed chair in the history of science and technology, we want to encourage the administration to offer the Department further support in the next stages of university's capital campaign. The History Department is one of UNM's flagship departments and many of its programs reflect the unique location, history, and contributions of the State of New Mexico. Fundraising that connects with existing programmatic strengths is already underway and should be supported but we also want to encourage the administration to give the Department the support it needs to be even more proactive on several fronts.

Current fundraising initiatives include:

- Center for the Southwest
- New Mexico Historical Review

- Friends of the Institute for Medieval Studies
- Tim Moy Memorial Teaching Fellowship

Other fundraising opportunities might include:

- Working with pre-existing History donors
- Special attention to active Ancient History donor (Gorham)
- Postdoctoral initiatives

In this current budgetary climate, all viable opportunities for fundraising should be actively pursued by the university in support of its strong departments. It seems clear that the History Department already has a good working relationship with the Development Office and this is an important first step in seeing what might be possible in the next few years.

#### V. Contribution to the strategic mission of UNM

##### West-side campus

The Department clearly contributes to the mission of the University in terms of its demonstrated and growing excellence in teaching, research and community service. As a member of New Mexico's flagship institution of higher learning, the History Department has practiced what the mission statement of the University proclaims: a dedication to teaching and maximizing the exposure of students to committed teachers. The Department has internalized this value of teaching in its long-standing and laudable practice of staffing basic undergraduate survey courses with full-time faculty. The burdens of this commitment are substantial, but apart from the intrinsic benefits of supporting the University's goal of excellence in teaching, this approach has attracted an increasing number of students to major in history and has undoubtedly contributed to the rise in enrollment in the graduate programs.

The review team detected a curious tension in conversations with upper level administrators about the Department's efforts to continue to involve full-time faculty in teaching the basic survey courses. While such teaching clearly responds to one of the stated missions of the University, the impression remained that the Department is perceived as being somewhat stubborn about the realities of covering courses, particularly as the University is proceeding to develop its west-side campus in Rio Rancho.

It should be noted that while the Department has attempted to cover as many of the basic survey courses in the day division as it can with full time-faculty, it presently utilizes part time teachers (PTIs) in its evening courses. The Department accepts this as necessary, indeed even helpful to the support of its advanced graduate students and recent PhDs as well as to its ability to effectively staff this part of their curriculum, and understands the continuing necessity of relying to some extent on PTIs in the future. This represents a practical recognition of the role of PTIs play in maintaining course coverage while at the same time remaining focused on the effort to cover as many key courses as possible with full-time teachers.

The present use PTIs in history offerings on the west-side campus is clearly part of the Department's strategy of covering courses that might be offered in that venue. In addition to the use of PTIs, the Department is exploring the options of utilizing advanced doctoral students and recent PhDs as a source of teachers for the west-side campus—providing both coverage for courses and important experience for scholars at the start of their academic career. Moreover, there is the possibility that the post-doctoral initiative (proposed in Section III) will also yield promising scholars and teachers who could support the History Department's presence and contribution to the west-side campus. Thus, it seems the Department is well-positioned and willing and able to make a substantial contribution to the University's development of the west-side campus.

### Latin American Studies

Latin American Studies forms a vital component of the stated strategic mission of UNM which recognizes the centrality of “our southwestern landscape and culture” as well as “the value of our location in the United States and the western hemisphere... as a hub for international initiatives that touch all parts of the globe.” Given that emphasis, it is also important to acknowledge the University's stated desire to “establish processes to engage and align the activities of the university community with UNM's strategic direction.”

Given the focus on Latin American Studies and the coordination of programs related to that program *it seems obvious that the Department's Latin American History survey courses should be added to the University Core Curriculum*. At present, those courses are not part of the Core, a fact that presents significant problems.

One problem arises from the fact that while the Department's survey course in Latin American History is offered every other year, that sequence only fulfills a core requirement for history majors, but not the University's core curriculum (as do several other courses offered by the Department, including the Western Civilization and US survey courses). As a result, graduate students in Latin American History very rarely serve as Graduate Assistants for Latin America courses since the Western Civilization and US surveys have much greater enrollments. Latin Americanist students thus do not receive the GA training (and preparation for exams) in their own field. Adding Latin American History to the Core would not only give graduate students in that field access to better training, but would relieve the enrollment pressure on the other surveys offered by the Department.

Another problem stemming from the fact Latin American History is not part of the Core affects undergraduate students. Since most students who enroll in upper-division Latin American history course have not taken a survey course in the field, they are not only hampered in their ability to succeed at an advanced level, but that fact induces faculty who teach those upper-division courses to offer basic as well as advanced instruction in most courses. And because the Latin American survey course do not fulfill university-wide requirements, history faculty have not made those survey courses a formal prerequisite for upper-division study, since this would discourage undergraduate enrollments at the upper-division level.

From the perspective of the review team it seems exceedingly unusual that a University with such a commitment to Latin American Studies and whose state has such long-standing ties to Mexico and Latin America would not consider the fulfillment of the Department's Latin American History surveys part of its Core curriculum. Many of UNM's peer institutions—most of whom have a substantially weaker claim on Latin American Studies as being central to their academic mission—allow the Latin American survey to satisfy their university's core course requirements.

Apart from the peculiarity of keeping the Department's Latin American survey course outside of the Core, rectification of that oversight would seem within easy reach and a timely correction. The Office of the Provost is currently engaged in curriculum review that includes a "UNM Core Curriculum Task Force." With the creation of numerous subcommittees, including one to assess the Core Curriculum, the time would seem propitious to redress the situation by including the Department's Latin American survey course into the Core.

The Department has sought this change for nearly a decade, but with no success. With the administration's recent focus on the reevaluation of the Core Curriculum, hopefully a change will be forthcoming to bring the practices and educational offerings of the History Department into alignment with an important aspect of the strategic mission of the University of New Mexico.

***It is our recommendation*** that the administration work with the Department to facilitate the change to include Latin American Studies in the Core Curriculum.

## VI. Comparison with peer institutions

- Superior comparison in terms of faculty publications, quality of programs, and national visibility
- UNM (currently 26) vs. Univ. of Arizona (27); Oregon (26); Oklahoma (36)
- Arizona and Oregon: no dept-affiliated Centers or journals
- Oklahoma's separate Dept of History of Science (9 additional faculty); several endowed chairs

Where does UNM wish to be?

## VII. Summation and specific recommendations

- High morale and enthusiasm of Department notwithstanding challenges and setbacks
- Terrific dedication to undergraduate and graduate teaching
- Strong campus involvement of history faculty

- High national visibility
- Concerns about faculty retention
  - exit of too many recent outstanding hires
  - Losing a faculty member (now a MacArthur Fellow) to Tennessee who was successfully retained during prior offer from UNC Chapel Hill due to lack of support for an extra year of leave funding by major national grant
  - How to avoid other departures

It is important to recognize that the University of New Mexico, despite its limited financial resources, has consistently attracted first rate faculty members who come (and stay at the university) despite the fact they might well make more money at other universities. This fact is abundantly clear in the History Department, where the review team encountered an energetic faculty who expressed a deep-seated commitment to the educational mission they are part of and the unique opportunities provided by the University of New Mexico that reinforce their decision to stay.

While money will always be part of the calculus of attracting and retaining faculty, it must be appreciated that *it is not inevitably the deciding factor*. The loss of the faculty member who was subsequently awarded a MacArthur “genius” award within six months of leaving UNM was *not* due to financial considerations nor was that move to a more well-endowed research university with a high profile graduate program. This lamentable (and preventable) loss to the Department underscores the need for greater sensitivity and understanding by upper level administrators about measures and steps that might be taken to create a climate that will retain talented teachers and scholars who wish to remain in New Mexico despite the blandishments of more money from other universities. Support for faculty research and also for their efforts at successful program-building is essential to maintaining the quality of UNM’s History Department.

The simple truth is that most scholars do not enter academia to make a lot of money. There is much that the university can do (besides raising faculty salaries) that might sustain the existing allegiances and commitments that attract talented people to the University of New Mexico. The willingness of the administration to reconsider and stream-line bureaucratic procedures that generate high levels of frustration on the part of faculty and Department staff is just one example of a step that would increase morale. A greater awareness of the non-economic aspects of academic life that promote satisfaction, morale and allegiance will hopefully avoid the unnecessary loss of further faculty in the future.

***Specific Recommendations:***

1. Implement recommendations (as per section III)
2. Immediately begin development efforts and build on them (as per section IV)

3. Include Latin American Studies survey in the Core Curriculum(as per section V)

Respectfully submitted:

Professor Paula Findlen, Stanford University

Professor Donald Fixico, Arizona State University

Professor Christian Fritz, UNM School of Law

Appendix: Department's questions

Prior to the site visit the Department posed the following three questions for the Review Team's consideration:

1. What strategies have you pursued at your home institutions for recruiting underrepresented minorities?
2. How have you dealt with the problem of enrollment in capstone courses?
3. What strategies have you employed at your home institutions with regard to the allocation of graduate assistants in survey courses?

Responses to Question # 1.

PF: We have made every effort to identified talented candidates through national searches but have also occasionally considered candidates brought to our attention through a waiver-of-search process and with support from university-wide diversity initiatives. Stanford's Center for the Comparative Study of Race and Ethnicity has been an important recruitment tool for a number of diversity appointments in humanities and social sciences.

DF: The history faculty has taken special action to target minority undergraduate students at ASU as well as minority master's students from other universities to recruit to its doctoral program. A similar effort is made to identify potential minority faculty and to aggressively recruit at the junior level and senior level with full support from the President's office.

CF: The law school has deliberately taken into account New Mexico's ethnic and racial diversity in student admissions policies, curricular design, and that diversity is reflected in the significant number of students, faculty, and staff who are functionally bilingual and bicultural. In addition, the School hosts an intense pre-law summer program for Native American students admitted to

any law school in the country (and not just UNM) which serves to underscore a commitment to encouraging the educational opportunities and success of this underrepresented minority.

Responses to Question # 2.

PF: We try to offer enough capstone courses to anticipate the needs of graduate seniors. It is not a perfect ratio but generally works.

DF: The head of history faculty and the director of undergraduate studies work collaboratively with the various fields of history to insure that sufficient capstone undergraduate courses are offered. The undergraduate director and head of history with field chairs to address this issue. In order to make sure that HST 300 and HST 498 capstone courses are offered by professors, talented faculty from other institutions in the Phoenix area have been hired on a need basis to help offer enough of these courses.

CF: Our equivalent form of “capstone” courses is the mandatory clinical experience. This is an intense experience requiring close supervision by faculty of groups of relatively small numbers of students at a time. The coverage of this program requires a substantial commitment of faculty members during the academic year (and during the summer), but thus far we have maintained this program that is deemed to be one of the signal strengths of the law school.

Responses to Question # 3.

PF: Enrollment is the important deciding factor in TA allocations but we also (so far) guarantee our graduate students the opportunity to do 2 of their 4 TAs in classes relevant to their main areas of interest. It is a balancing act some years, especially as more of our undergraduates prefer the seminar to lecture and discussion format. But we have several well-enrolled courses that can always use more TAs.

DF: In addition to the strategies we employ to place graduate assistants in survey courses, we enroll our graduate students in two-course sequence (one credit each) preparing future faculty. Our director of graduate studies does an amazing job of rotating graduate students into TA positions for proper classroom training in their areas of studies. While ours is not a perfect balance of allocating graduate students to assist in survey courses, each student is tracked by our director of graduate studies with consultation with the student’s major professors. All of this is done with the purpose of putting our graduate students into the classroom by their third year, especially after PhD qualifying exams.

CF: We do not have TAs, but rather use “Tutors,” who are drawn from the ranks of 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students. Our required first year classes are taught in multiple sections with a one tutor allocated to each section. Tutors meet with students individually, sometimes prep small groups prior to class and otherwise assist the instructor teaching the class, but in all instances faculty members are responsible for grading exams.