

Assessment Report (May 2016) – discussion and decisions

1. Methods Course update

A. HIST 3000 – new course created in spring 2015

- Jamie Sanders section – spring 2015 (face to face)
- John Barton section – fall 2015 (IVC)
- Kyle Bulthuis section – spring 2016 (face to face)

B. Preliminary Assessment tools

- Oral reports from three faculty who taught course planned for August 2016 retreat
- Student exit surveys from the first course sections taught
- Department head review of IDEA forms and enrollment figures
- Students in History capstone asked to discuss the role of the HIST 3000 in their preparation (beginning in Fall 2016)

C. Initial Conclusions (May 2016)

- IDEA scores – average to above average marks on “Progress on Relevant Objectives”
- Student exit surveys report improved knowledge of library and research skills, but they suggest that more fine-tuning of the historical process parts of the class may need to feature in future sections.
- Extensive report on the first two years (Jan. 2015-Jan. 2017) planned for January 2017

2. Internship Review and Implementation of New Policies (September 2015-April 2016)

The department hired an internship coordinator for the 2015-16 school year in order to improve our internship policies, accessibility, and information. Student exit surveys from the five-year period prior to 2015 had suggested that internships were a weakness in our program. As of May 2016, our internship procedures have been totally overhauled. Here are the steps in that process and our initial outcomes.

Review

The internship coordinator reviewed all printed and web material used by the department for internships. Next she conducted a best practices survey among institutions who are peers (or better) of USU. Finally, she met with on-campus and external stakeholders in the internship process. Armed with this information, the coordinator met with the full History Department to discuss her findings and with the Associate Department Head. After getting feedback from the department, she drafted new policies, forms, and contact sheets.

Accessibility

The internship coordinator wrote email blasts for high-quality internship opportunities that went to the students, and she did an initial screening of student applicants for these external fellowships. She worked closely with the external sites to match their needs with our student talent. Accessibility to external options, especially paid ones, improved, and in just three months, the coordinator added two well-paid summer internships to our regular roster, and she set up connections for several others (paid and unpaid). Finally, she held informational meetings for students, including one with a local museum curator.

Information

One of the students' biggest complaints prior to these changes was the lack of simple and clear information on internships. The coordinator drafted new materials and loaded these onto our website. These new materials are much more detailed and clear.

Next steps

In 2016-17, we plan to continue to develop our internship potential. First, the department will search for a permanent lecturer who will serve as a part-time internship coordinator. Second, the department will continue to reach out to internship sites, with a focus on those near our regional campuses (and USU Eastern) and at national/international sites. Finally, the department will hold an internship informational meeting in Fall 2016 in order to highlight the new internship website.

3. Strategic Planning Initiative

The department has appointed a strategic planning ad-hoc committee for summer 2016. This committee will meet in order to research best practices in other history departments, create a list of goals for the future, and present these goals to the full faculty for discussion and vote. The timeline for this process is as follows:

May 2016 – appointment of committee

May 2016 – initial research

June 2016 – drafting of new policy manuals for graduate education and for the History Department operating procedures

July 2016 – workshop for committee to draft recommended goals

August 2016 – Department Retreat with discussion of goals, policy manuals

September 2016 – Department Head will finalize policy manuals and a strategic planning document