

Department of History
Graduate Program Mid-Term Review

Overall

In the last three years have you made any changes in the degree programs that your department offers? If so, what degrees/minors/options have you dropped, and what degrees/minors/options have you added?

In 2013, the History Department clarified the requirements for and distinctions between the M.A. and the M.S. degree. Because the M.A. degree requires language proficiency, the M.S. often became the “fall back” degree for students who failed to meet the language requirement. In order to shape the M.S. degree toward a professional, public history degree, we added a requirement to the M.S. degree. Students earning the M.S. must take an additional 3 credit course in a field relevant to their professional interests. For example, they could take a course in Natural Resources, Political Science, Museum Studies, or any other field relevant to their studies, as determined by the student and his/her committee chair.

What, if any, changes in degree programs are you considering for the next 5 years?

The History Department is considering adding a Public History certificate or emphasis to our graduate degree program. This might possibly include a dual degree with another college. One of our faculty is researching the possibility, and will report to the rest of the department in August 2015. A public history emphasis within the Department will require a new faculty line or a conversion of an existing line. We are particularly interested in such a program since a quarter of our 2015 applicants indicated their interest in a public history emphasis.

The Religious Studies program is planning to develop an online certificate program in Religious Studies in the next two years. We don't see this affecting our graduate numbers unless it draws attention to USU and its other programs among a group of professionals who may be drawn to this certificate.

Additional Faculty: The Department hired a Visiting Distinguished Scholar for Spring 2016 to teach a graduate-level course and to work with graduate students. She has a strong history of getting grant money outside the United States, and we've asked her to conduct two workshops for faculty and students that will enhance student opportunities for seeking funding.

What specific goals did you identify in your 5-year plan, and what progress have you made towards those goals?

The general goals of the Five Year Plan were to provide competitive funding for more of our graduate students, and to generally increase the quality of students we attract to the program. As with the applicants to USU in general, we have seen the quality of our graduate applicants improve over time. As we have hired new faculty, particularly in modern Europe and World history, we have been able to accept a broader range of students to the program. We hope to continue this trend in the coming years. Our funding picture has not improved, but we are working to develop alumni giving by increasing outreach to our alums, and we are focusing on developing partnerships that increase possible funding sources for our students. We have created partnerships with the Hyrum Museum and the Special Collections and Archives, and this year, with the Space Dynamics Lab.

OUTCOMES:

38 students completed the History Master's degree program between roughly spring 2009 and fall 2014. Of those, the following numbers indicate where they are currently working.

3 ---Legal field

8—PhD, JD or other advanced degree graduate work

7—Archives, libraries, or historical societies

7—Corporate or management work

3—Writing, editing, researching

6—Teaching

1—Other (working at home/parenting)

3—Unknown

22% go on to graduate work in history, law or another field

68% have jobs in fields related to their master's work in history

10% are working at home/parenting or we do not know their current status

In 2014, graduate students presented their research at seven professional conferences, and made research trips to the Pacific Northwest, the Intermountain West, California, Notre Dame University, and Italy. One of our students, Bradley Kime, presented at the Mormon History Association Conference and won two awards. One for a published article, "Exhibiting Theology: James E. Talmage and Mormon Public Relations, 1915-1920," (*Journal of Mormon History* 40 [Winter 2014]: 208-238) and Graduate Paper Award of Merit for "Prophetic Restorationism in the Long Nineteenth Century: Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, and John Alexander Dowie," which is currently in "revise and resubmit" status with *Harvard Theological Review*.

One of our first-year students, Nina Cavazos, was chosen to represent the College of Humanities and Social Sciences at the USU IGNITE! Event during the 2015 Student Research Symposium. Ignite is the rising star of Research Week, encapsulating the essence of what it means for students to do research at Utah State. The program includes talks by ten graduate and undergraduate students, each of whom will discuss the stories and motivations behind their academic pursuits in just five minutes, with slides automatically advancing every 20 seconds. Ignite is part of a national speaking program with events regularly occurring around the world.

Of our second-year students, one has been offered a prestigious Jefferson Fellowship at the University of Virginia (full tuition, \$35,000 living expenses for five years, \$7500 travel budget, health insurance).

Others have been accepted into Ph.D. programs at the University of Southern California, Notre Dame, Florida State, the University of Oklahoma, and University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

Graduate Student Numbers

Our last Five Year Review did not aim to change the number of students in the History Graduate program. We intentionally limit our program to 10-12 new students per year in order to provide some funding to each incoming student. Traditionally History students pursue the M.A. degree, but we expect to see the number of students pursuing the M.S. degree increase due to the State Legislature's funding initiative for M.S. students. That number increased from 2 to 6 students between 2013-2014, and we will continue to encourage our students to pursue this funding until the Legislature includes the M.A. degree in the out-of-state portion of tuition funding package.

In terms of enrollment, the Department has created a package of information that is mailed to each accepted applicant to the program. The package includes:

- Welcome Letter
- M.A. to M.S. Form
- Insurance Information
- Residency Application & Requirements
- Fall Class Schedule

- USU Contacts
- I'M AN AGGIE Booklet
- Student Involvement Pamphlet
- USU Map
- Graduate School Pamphlet

- CVTD Route Map
- Logan Walking Guide
- Logan Visitors Guide
- Utah Map
- Logan Canyon Guide
- Hyrum City Museum Pamphlet
- Housing Guide

Number of Graduate Degrees Awarded

The number of graduate degrees awarded by the History Department over the past five years has remained relatively consistent, hovering around seven per year. The department is always considering ways to encourage students to graduate in a timely manner – in four to six semesters. Lack of funding makes this a difficult goal for many of our students who are forced to undertake part-time work while completing their degrees. Because we can fund only a few of our second-year students, we have initiated competitive strategies to encourage progress toward the degree. The closer to completion, the better the chance of a second year student receiving a Graduate Assistantship and tuition waiver. We measure their progress according to the date of submission of the Committee Form and Program of Study and thesis proposal defense.

This year the Department initiated two workshops per academic year to assist graduate students in professional development. The first, in Fall 2014, was led by Professors Tim Daniels and Victoria Grieve, and titled, How to Create a Professional C.V. Although not intended to increase graduation rates per se, these workshops are intended to help our graduate students progress along the professional path of their choosing.

Graduate Applications

Our last Five Year Review did not set a goal of changing our application numbers. We intentionally limit our program to 10-12 new students per year due to limited funding and the desire to provide close faculty to student mentoring and manageable class sizes. Our goal is to attract more high quality students, not more students in general. When the *Western Historical Quarterly* leaves the History Department, there may be a potential drop in the number of applicants because the *Quarterly* has traditionally attracted graduate students to our program. We anticipate a period of flux in applications and enrollments when USU loses the *Quarterly*, which has been a mainstay of our graduate program for nearly 50 years.

This fall, we sent information on the program to History department chairs around the country. Next year we may want to send a faculty member to

conferences to recruit good students for the program, especially because we will lose our traditional recruiting source from the *WHQ*.