

9-24-2007

Academic Planning Council Minutes of September 24, 2007

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ACADEMIC PLANNING COUNCIL
Minutes of September 24, 2007
3 p.m., Holmes Student Center – HSC 505

Present: Alden, Anderson, Bond (for Bose), Cassidy, Fox, Freedman, Gorman, Gough, House, Jeris, Marcellus, Marsh, Molnar, Prawitz

Guests: Kenton Clymer, Chair, Department of History; Carolinda Douglass, Director, Assessment Services; Chris McCord, Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Jamie Rothstein, Assistant to the Dean, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; and Christine Worobec, Acting Director, Graduate Studies, Department of History

The meeting was called to order at 3:05 p.m. The 2007 Interim Performance Report was distributed; the APC will discuss the 2008 Performance Report in the spring. It was moved and seconded to approve the minutes of August 27, 2007, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chris McCord, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Jamie Rothstein, Assistant to the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences; Kenton Clymer, Chair of the Department of History; and Christine Worobec, Acting Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of History were introduced.

McCord provided some introductory remarks regarding the Department of History. The Department of History is clearly one of the strengths of the college, and the Ph.D. in History is the oldest Ph.D. in the college. The American history program is noteworthy and so is the department's engagement with the Center for Southeast Asian Studies. The Department of History has been recognized as an impacted department, a department whose growth in majors, service to the general education program, supervision of Ph.D. students, and other demands coupled with losses in faculty lines has severely challenged its ability to meet its responsibilities. The undergraduate program has grown from 286 students to 506 students during the review period, and the faculty lines stood at 30, dropped to 20, and are now back to 26.

At the undergraduate level 80 percent of the credit hours are dedicated to non-majors as service instruction. The pressure on serving the undergraduate program is challenging. In spite of these challenges, the department continues to offer high-quality degree programs.

Clymer said that he came to NIU in 2004, and he was attracted to the department because of its strengths. The Department of History faculty have received many prestigious awards, and writing books is important in this discipline. A number of the faculty have won major prizes for their work, and five of the eight full professors have been awarded Presidential Research Professorships. All of the faculty are engaged in research, hold graduate faculty status, and are involved in the graduate program at some level. There are 35-55 students in upper-division course sections, and our faculty have a heavy teaching load. All of our programs in the department have recently been revised based on information obtained from students and alumni. Another strength of the Department of History is teacher certification for history and the social sciences. We have wonderful advisors.

In going through the program review process the department identified some problems. One of the problems is that the number of woman majors at the undergraduate level has been decreasing, and the department is working on this issue. It was also noted that while the proportion of women enrolled showed a decrease, their graduation rate was higher than for men. A handout with information about gender imbalance in the department was distributed. The graduate assistantship stipends need to be

increased if the program is going to attract the brightest students. At other research institutions the teaching load is usually 2/2, and our teaching load is 3/2. This load is not oppressive, but it is out of line within the discipline. A 2/2 load would allow faculty to give more time to students. At other institutions it's also a practice to give probationary faculty a lighter teaching load or release from teaching for one semester in order to prepare for tenure review. Our assistant professors would view a similar arrangement very favorably.

Jeris presented the subcommittee report for the Department of History. The program review was very well done. It was previously noted that the class size at the upper division (approximately 55) is a concern. At the graduate level the Department of History has worked hard to cap enrollments in classes at 15 when possible. The department is making these choices very carefully.

Access to important print-based periodicals in the University Libraries has decreased 50 percent in the last two decades. The online databases have partially addressed this issue, but not adequately. This is not an NIU phenomenon, but the library cuts have hit history very hard. Historians need to have printed resources available to them. There are 10-12 major periodicals that are not available to faculty and students, and some of the electronic databases only have one year of the journals available online.

At all program levels changes have been made based on the use of assessment data. At the undergraduate level a new course (historical methods) has been added to help prepare students for the capstone course. Curricular changes have also been made at the graduate levels, and the department will continue to monitor the results of these changes.

The department provides an enormous amount of service even at the graduate level, and the 1.67 student/faculty ratio compares favorably to the external programs selected for comparison. It is also the case in the Department of History at NIU that all faculty work with graduate students, even if their primary teaching responsibilities are with undergraduate students. This is not the case at all institutions, some of which have faculty members who teach at the graduate level only.

There were four doctoral degrees awarded last year. The Ph.D. program has 35 students and about 20 of them are ABD. The department supports 9 (ABD) first and second year students. How has the department identified factors that seem to increase the time-to-degree? At the Ph.D. level we can only provide four years of funding. At the fifth year students can apply for a dissertation completion award, but this significantly impacts their income. The students' income drops by \$4,600, so it is necessary for these students to find other kinds of employment. Several of them become adjunct teachers elsewhere. Most universities support students for five years instead of four years. The University of Michigan provides \$25,000-\$28,000 per year in assistantship support, Urbana provides \$15,000 in support, and we provide \$12,000. Many students are researching a topic that requires research abroad, and this is very difficult to do without support. Students incur the costs of traveling and living abroad as well as the costs for conducting their research. This is a snowballing problem, but we are not that unusual in how long it takes history students to obtain a degree. Nationally, 25 percent of all history Ph.D. graduates complete the degree in 10 years, which means that 75 percent take more than 10 years.

The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn A. Craddock