

Draft—May 2015

Strategic Plan, Department of History

Update (approved by the faculty, May 1, 2015)

Mission:

Teacher-scholars of the Department of History at Texas A&M University, dedicated to the premise that teaching and research are inseparable parts of the educational process, embrace four interrelated and complementary core commitments: strengthen our faculty's national profile, build our graduate program, enhance the quality of the undergraduate experience, and cultivate an environment that is inclusive and supportive of all.

Goals:

As a nationally prominent department at a major research university (RU/VH, member Association of American Universities), the Department of History seeks to:

- *Build a world-class faculty*
- *Recruit, mentor, and place exceptional graduate students*
- *Excel in undergraduate teaching*
- *Foster inclusive and welcoming workplace and learning environments*

Strategies:

In order to build a world-class faculty:

- *Produce influential and innovative scholarship*
- *Seek the broadest possible visibility for our work by publishing in prestigious presses and journals.*
- *Secure major external grants, fellowships, and awards to increase our scholarly reputation, impact, and productivity*
- *Present the results of our research at high-profile national and international venues, especially in keynote and plenary addresses*
- *Establish long-term hiring priorities to enhance our areas of excellence, develop emerging strengths, and meet curricular needs*
- *Participate in high-profile professional activities (e.g., serving on editorial boards, as evaluators for major grant organizations, and as external evaluators for tenure and promotion committees at peer institutions)*
- *Invite distinguished scholars to our campus for colloquia and conferences*

- *Publicize our accomplishments through university outlets and national venues*
- *Encourage one another, through our annual review process, to fulfill professional standards and expectations commensurate with the aims of a major research university*
- *Reach out to the public, particularly in Texas, to advance its understanding of history and to encourage an appreciation of historical thinking*

In order to recruit, mentor, and place exceptional graduate students:

- *Increase the number of applicants to our program from aspirant peer universities by actively networking with colleagues*
- *Increase the number of top prospects who enroll in our program by continuing our highly successful annual recruiting weekend*
- *Nominate our students for Merit, Diversity, Liberal Arts Vision 20/20, and Pathways to the Doctorate Fellowships*
- *Make a substantial commitment from the department's operating budget for graduate student research*
- *Create a student culture based on the importance of external recognition, most notably grants and fellowships, scholarly conference papers, and publications*
- *Hold monthly professional development workshops, organized by the Graduate Placement Director, focusing on teaching and aspects of the academic life cycle, such as grant writing, successful submission of journal articles, and the job search process*
- *Fund venues such as writing groups to encourage students to work collaboratively*
- *Continue to place graduates at highly competitive positions in the state and federal government*
- *Increase the number of students who secure tenure-track positions at four-year B.A./M.A.-granting institutions and strive to place our best graduates at peer academic departments*

In order to excel in undergraduate teaching:

- *Educate students to appreciate the complexity and diversity of the human experience in historical context, to question simple explanations, to evaluate evidence in multiple forms, and to offer insightful interpretations with clarity of expression*
- *Fulfill and expand our course offerings in the new Core Curriculum—U.S. History and Language, Philosophy, and Culture (roughly 5,000 students per semester)—the vast majority of which are taught by tenured-tenure track faculty, not temporary instructors or graduate students*
- *Devote ourselves equally to high-impact practices, most notably HIST 280 and HIST 481, our required gateway and capstone courses, which allow faculty to bring their research and pedagogical expertise into small writing-intensive seminars (capped at 15)*
- *Provide and expand opportunities for successful and highly motivated students to participate in Honors courses and programs that challenge their interests and abilities*
- *Pursue study abroad opportunities and provide department-funded grants for selective students*

- *Give students the opportunity to present their research at the annual TAMU History Conference*
- *Fund the Department of History Undergraduate Scholarly Activities Grant, awarded to high-achieving students to travel to archives to conduct research or to conferences to deliver papers*
- *Offer extra-curricular academic activities through Phi Alpha Theta, History Club, and Webb Society (Texas State Historical Association)*
- *Revise History course titles and descriptions in the Undergraduate Catalog, as needed*

In order to foster inclusive and welcoming workplace and learning environments:

- *Promote intellectual and demographic diversity across the department—faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate majors*
- *Revisit the issue of faculty mentoring and revise current practices, as needed*
- *Encourage broad participation among faculty in the governance of the department*
- *Build stability of leadership by identifying and cultivating future department administrators*
- *Practice effective and careful stewardship of our resources for purposes of accountability, fairness, and transparency*
- *Recruit and retain students, faculty, and staff who represent a diverse set of experiences and perspectives*
- *Choose speakers and other visitors who contribute to many kinds of diversity*
- *Continuously evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives to improve climate and respond to concerns by updating the department's diversity plan*