Assessment of Student Learning Plan (ASLP): History Department

2014-15 Academic Year

A. College, Department/Program, Date

College **CAHS**
Department/Program **History**
Date ***May 2015***

B. Contact Person for the Assessment Plan

Name and title **Libby Bischof, Associate Professor of History, and Chair, Department of History and Political Science.**

C. Degree Program

Name of Degree Program ***History (including K-8 and 7-12 teacher certification pathways)***

D. Assessment of Student Learning in Your Program

Step 1: Identify Student Learning Outcomes (What are students able to do by the end of your program?)

> *a. List 3-5 of the most important student learning outcomes for your program.*

After multiple discussions over the course of the academic year, the History faculty agreed on the following student learning outcomes. These outcomes are adapted from the American Historical Association's (AHA) comprehensive History Tuning Project, designed to facilitate departmental assessment work nationwide on core competencies and learning outcomes for history majors. All members of the history faculty read through the resources on the Tuning project website, and discussed the ways in which we can adopt some of these practices for our program moving forward. The tuning project has been very important in the framing of our outcomes as well as our assessment goals for next year. See more here: http://www.historians.org/teaching-and-learning/current-projects/tuning/history-discipline-core

The history faculty also read and discussed Professor Jonathan Chu's (UMass Boston) January 2015 article "The Benefits of Self-Assessment: Measuring Historical Thinking Skills at UMass Boston" in the AHA's *Perspectives on History* publication: http://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-

The rubric/matrix included at the end of this article will be useful as we move forward with our own assessments. This article also served as evidence that working on assessing our research seminar course (HTY 200) was wholly appropriate and worthwhile (see later discussion).

Our Learning Outcomes:

1) History students can engage in historical inquiry, research, and analysis.

2) History students can understand the dynamics of change over time.

3) History students can explore multiple historical and theoretical viewpoints that provide perspective on the past, and can recognize where they are in history.

4) History students can seek a variety of sources that provide evidence to support an argument about the past and develop a methodological practice for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting evidence.

5) History students recognize and practice historical thinking as central to engaged citizenship in their application of historical knowledge and analysis to contemporary social issues and contemporary dialogue.

Note: As one of our assessment practices this year, we have incorporated this list of learning outcomes in the program overview section of the History major website. See here: https://usm.maine.edu/history/overview

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We then worked with the AHA Tuning Project's list of 23 sample student tasks for demonstrating core competencies to see how the assignments given in our required courses align with disciplinary standards as put forth by the AHA. The history faculty decided that it made the most sense to focus our planned assessments on the two courses that all history majors (including the majority of transfers) must take to complete their degree: HTY 200: Research, Reference and Report Writing, a mid-level research methods course, and HTY 400: our Senior Seminar/Capstone course. Students are required to take HTY 200 before they can take HTY 400.

Catalog Descriptions of HTY 200 and HTY 400:

HTY 200 Reference, Research, and Report Writing

An introduction to research and writing, designed to prepare undergraduates for the requirements of upper-level courses in history and the social sciences with emphasis on practical methods of utilizing a library, locating materials, taking and organizing notes, and writing and rewriting research papers and reports. History majors are strongly encouraged to take this course in the sophomore year, but no later than the first semester of the junior year. Preference to history majors. Prerequisite: sophomore status or permission. Cr 3. Every Fall & Spring semester.

HTY 400 Senior Seminar

The capstone to the major and required for the degree, this seminar explores the nature and the craft of history. The topic will vary but will always be a particular theme or set of issues to which the student will

be expected, through discussion and writing, to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in previous history courses. Prerequisites: HTY 200 and senior status. Preference to history majors. Cr 3.

While our students also take other common courses at the introductory and advanced levels as they proceed through the major, they have many choices within those requirements, so not all majors end up taking the same exact set of courses, with the exception of HTY 200 and HTY 400.

Within the sample list of tasks provided by the AHA, we then narrowed our choices to 14 tasks that aligned with the types of assignments given in HTY 200 and HTY 400. Those highlighted in yellow are covered in HTY 200; those highlighted in blue are covered in HTY 400. Tasks highlighted in both colors are currently emphasized in both HTY 200 and HTY 400. These also align with Learning Outcomes 1-4.

- Explain in written or oral presentation the difference between primary and secondary sources.

- Demonstrate how various sources may be synthesized.

- Find appropriate materials online, in a library, or in the community and know how to cite them.

- Demonstrate the relationship between primary and secondary materials by assessing a historian's work and recognizing the tools used to construct that historical argument.

- Narrate, in written or oral presentation, an event from the past.

- Present and analyze, in written or oral presentation, different perspectives on an event from the past.

- Select appropriate primary source(s) as evidence.

- Select appropriate secondary source(s) as evidence or in support of a position or argument.

- Identify existing and compelling questions about the subject.

- Pose appropriate research questions and assess the range of materials necessary to answer them.

- Identify and cite sources and points of evidence appropriate in number and type for exercises such as an annotated bibliography, paper proposals, a semester paper, or a capstone exercise.

- Write a successful capstone research paper with appropriate citations.

- Complete a substantial historical project autonomously.

While HTY 400 (offered at least three sections a year) rotates among all department faculty members, HTY 200 is typically taught by Professors Bischof, Eagan, and Zhao. What the department plans to do (beginning with preliminary work over the summer) is to develop a pre-and post-HTY 200 assessment that all students enrolling in the course (also offered at least three times a year) will take the first and last weeks of class. This assessment will emphasize core competencies and include some of the tasks referenced above. We will pilot this assessment in Professor Zhao's section of HTY 200 in the fall semester, and in both HTY 200 sections taught in the spring semester. All History faculty will then discuss the results of the pilot. We hope this exercise will aid us in the curriculum revision we are embarking upon next year. Professors Bischof, Eagan, and Zhao will also compare HTY 200 syllabi and discuss common activities to ensure appropriate emphasis on the above. Although each section of

the course may have different activities, reading assignments, and topics, the culminating assignment for the course is the same for all sections: a 12-15 page research paper on a topic chosen and crafted by the student with an appropriate bibliography that incorporates primary and secondary sources, and employs Chicago style footnotes as the preferred citation method. Professor Bischof has developed a rubric for assessing the final drafts of these research papers, which other faculty have occasionally adopted. The HTY 200 faculty will look at the rubric together and endeavor to make it a more useful document for all sections of the course.

Finally, we have also agreed to collect (for 2015-2016), all of the final projects/papers for the various sections of HTY 400, our Senior Seminar, and develop a basic assessment of historical thinking skills (like the one used by UMass Boston, previously discussed) that we can use to evaluate this work. This basic assessment will aid us in understanding whether or not our majors are leaving USM with the historical thinking, reading, and writing skills we are endeavoring to teach them throughout the course of the major curriculum.

> b. *Then, identify which student learning outcomes were assessed this past academic year.*
>
> *See substantive discussion in Step 1.*

Step 2: How and When were the Learning Outcomes assessed?

See substantive discussion in Step 1.

> a. *Briefly describe the assessment tools, measures, or forms of evidence that were utilized to demonstrate students' accomplishment of the learning outcomes selected.*
>
> b. *Briefly describe when and how you implemented the assessment activity.*

Step 3: Process of Using the Assessment results to Improve Student Learning

> a. *Briefly describe your unit's process of reviewing the program assessment results, and how you expect to improve student learning.*

Although unrelated to the previous assessment discussion for HTY 200 and HTY 400, one of the review/assessment activities we undertook this year was a comprehensive look at our language requirement. Beyond the 39 credits required for the BA in History, all History majors (with the exception of the K-8 pathway students) are required to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language. They could choose to show proficiency by taking a test (placing them in at least advanced intermediate proficiency); they could achieve intermediate proficiency by getting a C- or better in any of the following courses: ASL 202, FRE 202, GER 202, GRE 251, LAT 251, or SPA 202; or, they could take beginning I and II of any language and then study abroad for a semester in a non-English speaking country. Additionally, they could complete the requirement by taking beginning I and II of any language and two additional

upper-level HTY electives (non-US). With the substantive cuts made to languages at USM in the past few years (especially the elimination of the French program and Classics program this year), the department voted to simplify the language requirement in order to ensure that students could continue to complete their BAs in a timely fashion. Pedagogically, the faculty all support the importance of history majors studying an additional language for a variety of reasons—expanding one's worldview, facilitating study abroad opportunities, developing the ability to read primary and secondary sources in multiple languages to broaden perspectives, and to prepare students for graduate programs, among others. Thus, we decided to keep a language requirement. Beginning with the 2015-2016 catalog, all History majors (except for K-8 pathway students) will be required to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language at the advanced beginning level, by completing ASL 102, CHI 102, FRE 102, ITA 102, GER 102, or SPA 102 with a C or better (or test out of the requirement).

E. Other Course Assessment Activities:

If your department/program is unable to complete any of the above steps, are you able to report any assessment-related activities at the Course-Level; for example: created grading rubrics to use in required courses, examined student progress in an entry-level course, developed a new course, redesigned a course to include community-based learning, etc.

Briefly explain.

Our major assessment activity was discussing the AHA Tuning Project for Core Competencies, Learning Outcomes, and related materials in preparation for more targeted assessment in the 2015-2016 year, when we have planned a substantive discussion of curriculum revision and a more holistic assessment for HTY 200 and HTY 400 (described in detail in a previous section). In undertaking a revision of the curriculum, we will also employ some indirect assessments, such as student focus groups.

It should also be noted that Libby Bischof, as Chair and advisor to K-8 and 7-12 Education pathway students within the History major, actively participated in a comprehensive assessment of the K-8 and 7-12 History BA students who applied for candidacy and student teaching for the 2015-2016 academic year. This assessment included a review of each student's portfolio, qualifications, reference letters and other application materials in relation to College of Education and Human Development standards, as well as state and national standards and benchmarks. The assessment process also included interviewing students and assessing their readiness to engage in student teaching. This process is common to all undergraduate education pathways through various majors, and is ongoing—e.g. every year there will be a new cohort of K-8 and 7-12 students ready to enter into their professional internship year.

Professors Bischof and Johnson have also been involved in the yearlong system-wide APRIP process for assessing History on all seven campuses and moving toward greater collaboration. These lengthy meetings and discussions necessarily meant discussing and reflecting upon a great deal of data. The History report stemming from this work will be issued in a few weeks. It should be noted, however, that one important indicator of our success as a program is the fact that we have the most undergraduate History majors of any campus in the system (fall '14: USM= 138; UMO=88; UMF=34; UMPI=18; Data taken from: "APRIP 2014-2015 Majors and Double Majors with Academic Plan Overlaps" document), and that we graduated 48 students in 2014-2015 with BAs in History. Our faculty is proud of these numbers and our ongoing work and efforts regarding recruitment, advising and retention.

F. Are there "community engagement" activities integrated in your departmental curriculum?

> a. *Please indicate which of the components, listed below, are <u>included</u> in your program's curriculum, and then indicate if the activities are <u>required or optional</u> for students in your major.*

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<u>Community Engagement Activity</u>	<u>Included</u>	<u>Required/Optional</u>	
Student Research (related to a community-based problem)	__X_	R	O
Student-Faculty Community Research Project	__X_	R	O
Internship, or a Field Experience	_X__	R	O
Independent Study (community-related project)	_X__	R	O
Capstone Course (community-related project)	___	R	O
Service-Learning (a component of a course)	_X__	R	O
Study Abroad, or an International Program	_X__	R	O
Interdisciplinary Collaborative Project (community related)	__X_	R	O
Student Leadership Activities (related to a team project)	___	R	O
Students/Faculty Community Leadership	_X__	R	O
(advisory boards, committees, conference presentations)			

Other Activities (not mentioned above):

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> Note: Many of these activities mentioned above, while optional, are encouraged both in class and during advising sessions. These activities by and large align with Learning Outcome 5.

> b. *Please list the courses (i.e. EDU 400) that have a "community engagement" activity in your program:*

Entry-level courses: HTY 141 and HTY 142, HTY 122 (Bischof Fall 2015 version)

Mid-level courses: HTY 200 (depends on who teaches—included in Bischof and Eagan's HTY 200 courses)

Upper-level courses: HTY 300: History Internship; HTY 346: Civil Rights Movement (Rowe), HTY 357: Gilded Age (Eagan), HTY 360: History of Maine (Bischof); HTY 364: History of Women in the United States (Eagan); HTY 394: The Great Depression and New Deal (Eagan); HTY 398: Independent Study (Varies); HTY 400 (Senior Seminar— depending upon who teaches it and the topic). Professor Johnson's COR 302: Religion and the Creation of the Human course also has a community engagement component (service learning), as does Professor Tuchinsky's COR 301: Thoughtful Giving: Philanthropy and American Culture (students work with and award grants to local non-profits). Professor Tuchinsky's EYE on Thoreau: Nature Society and Self also includes service learning and community engagement activities, as does Professor Bischof's Honors EYE: Outside Lies Magic—Exploring Maine Landscapes. Students in the K-8 and 7-12 education pathways have a great deal of community engagement incorporated in their education courses, especially during their professional internship year.

Additional Comments: If you would like a more detailed discussion of our department's many community engagement activities, I would be happy to forward the summary I prepared for Lynn Kuzma earlier in the semester. As we work on further revising our curriculum next year, we will be incorporating more public history opportunities for students, as well as potential digital history and digital humanities coursework.

Thanks for your cooperation!