

## PROGRAM OVERVIEW

### **The History Department within Tennessee Technological University**

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) is a comprehensive university, one of six former universities of the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) system, now operating under its own independent board. The TTU campus is located in Cookeville, a city of approximately 30,000 located on the eastern Highland Rim of Tennessee. The range of opportunities available to TTU students is reflected in the University's mission statement. It may be found at [tntech.edu/about/mission.php](http://tntech.edu/about/mission.php).

The Department of History at TTU is one of the ten departments that reside within the College of Arts and Sciences (CAS). The CAS provides the fundamentals of a liberal arts education with a goal of supplying appropriate tools for lifelong learning. This emphasis is reflected in the CAS mission statement, available at [tntech.edu/cas/index.php](http://tntech.edu/cas/index.php).

The Department is satisfied with its relationship with the CAS and with the University administration writ large. The Department has been and remains supportive of interdisciplinary initiatives such as Environmental Studies, and Women and Gender Studies. As a recent example, the Department played a major role in working across five colleges and schools to establish a Religious Studies minor. We are also generally appreciative of efforts to increase recruitment and retention, provided they don't lower standards. We support programs such as the Stonecipher lectures and Center Stage series which enhance cultural enrichment. Academic freedom is typically respected at Tennessee Tech and institutions of faculty governance are well established and productive. The general relationship at TTU between the faculty and the administration remains more positive than not. Barring something unforeseen, we fully expect cordial relations to continue, and will continue to offer more than our share of service in return.

In our 2010 Academic Audit, we were "satisfied with the physical facilities provided at TTU," but frustrated by the "fiscal morass of the last two decades." Ironically, this situation seemed reversed in 2014. We were happy "with a less threatening fiscal climate," but facing a variety of physical challenges in the wake of the renovation of Henderson Hall. As of early 2018, both finances and facilities seem something of a mixed bag.

On the positive side, generous alumni donations have continued to support scholarship programs and lecture series, while increasing faculty development and student travel opportunities. Our operating budgets are not flush, but we do not suffer from any serious shortages. Library funding, a common bane through the 1990s, is as strong as ever. Our extremely helpful library staff have basically stated, "If you want something, just ask." While state funding remains problematic, and could worsen, for now Tennessee's fiscal situation is better than many states. The loss of a dedicated CAS development officer with whom we had a most positive relationship, however, threatens continued fundraising success.

An abrupt retirement in the summer of 2016 allowed the department to convert a faculty office into a long-desired student study area. The #1 request of our students for years, this has seen constant use and proven tremendously popular, especially with commuter students. The occupation of another room by Foreign Languages faculty (who seldom use it) however, along with flooding and mold concerns in a basement office, pose challenges for future placement of new hires. Chief among our concerns remains our lack of a large classroom, a residual problem from the renovation.

Access throughout the week to an appropriately-sized classroom is our number one request. The acquisition of another office (or two) on the first floor of Henderson Hall ranks a close second among support needs. Maintaining classroom technology, including both physical plant and personnel, ranks third.

### **A Short History of the Tennessee Tech History Department, 1929-2018**

Tennessee Polytechnic Institute first awarded a bachelor's degree in history in 1929. At that time the Department of History and Social Sciences offered a mere thirteen history courses and four additional classes in political science. By 1959 the Department had grown to include eleven full-time faculty (six historians, one political scientist, two sociologists, and two geographers) and offered forty-four courses, including nineteen in the history curriculum. In 1960, the master's program began. Then in 1962, the Department of Social Sciences divided. The Department of History and Political Science was one of the products. In 1971, the Department of History and Political Science split to form separate departments.

In the 1970s the Department developed courses in Diplomatic, Religious, Science and Asian history, put its curriculum on a stable, two-year rotating cycle, and established a modest scholarship program. During the 1980s, faculty replacement and curricular revisions, reflecting new concerns of historians nationally, resulted in adding courses in Women's History, Film Studies, Military History, and African-American History. But in an alleged cost-saving measure, the TBR ordered the master's program phased out by 1985. The last thesis was completed that June.

Faculty hired in the 1990s allowed the Department to expand its course offerings into the areas of Native American History, Environmental History, and the Modern Middle East. Faculty hired since 2000 further broadened the curriculum with courses in Social, Cultural, and Latin American history. Recent (since 2010) course additions include Sports History, a new History of Science survey, African history, expanded European offerings including the Holocaust, Public History, and team-taught courses in Popular Culture and the History of Medicine (the latter in conjunction with the School of Nursing). The department has also expanded its pre-law offerings, via both courses offered by regular faculty (such as Native American Law and Constitutional History), and local attorneys serving as adjuncts.

From 2011-2015, following a change in the state funding formula, the Department made serious inquiries into reviving the master's program. Faculty met amongst themselves and with the President, Provost, and Vice-Presidents for both Business and Graduate Studies, in preparing a proposal and related fiscal documents. As our work neared completion, however, the state changed another law, negating any fiscal incentive for teachers to obtain a master's degree. Without this encouragement, our program would likely be relegated perpetually to "low-producing" status. Under the current circumstances, and given current staffing shortages, we are no longer actively pursuing the proposal.

### **The Review Process**

In 2009-2010, the Department conducted its first Academic Audit. Our second audit was scheduled for 2014-2015, but following a request from the Department of Physics, we agreed to move our Audit forward one year. There was a profound sense of "déjà vu" as we found ourselves asking many of the same questions, and reaching similar conclusions. When the Provost's office

asked us to once again move up a year, we decided a Program Review offered more potential productivity. Three reviews in just eight years, however, still feels excessive.

This document attempts to highlight what is new. Some of the original seven appendices (A,C, and G) have been updated and are retained, with the others summarized in the text, or offered upon request. The extensive Appendix H was new in 2014. Appendix I, highlighting our expanded intern program, and Appendix J, our Program Goal and Student Learning Objectives, are new for the Program Review. The Department discussed the review process and examined a number of related proposals during three Fall 2017 meetings. The faculty expressed consensus for the document at a special meeting held January 19, 2018, and hereby submits it following final review and editing.

### **Department Mission**

The Department has a variety of missions. We serve the general student population by providing survey courses in American history. We offer Humanities General Education courses in Western and World Civilization, and the History of Science. The Department also provides a variety of upper-level course offerings for its own majors, secondary education majors, and a variety of non-majors. Several disciplines require one or more upper-division history courses, including English, Foreign Language, Political Science, and International Business. Upper-division history classes also enroll a large number of students who are taking elective hours, minoring in history or religious studies, or majoring in interdisciplinary studies. Our courses contribute greatly to the University's emphasis on cultural diversity. The Department also shares TTU's special commitment to the Upper Cumberland region.

In 2004, the faculty became concerned that our mission statement did not fully reflect our diverse missions. Hence, we drafted and adopted a new departmental mission statement, which remains in effect. It can be viewed at [tntech.edu/cas/history/index.php](http://tntech.edu/cas/history/index.php).

## **FACULTY**

### **Full-Time Credentials and Recent Appointments**

The History Department currently consists of nine (9) full-time faculty members, and six (6) part-time faculty members. In 2014, these numbers were eleven (11) and six (6), respectively. In 1999, these numbers were twelve (12), and two (2), respectively.

Eight of the nine full-time faculty hold the Ph.D. degree. The faculty members earned their doctoral degrees at the University of Arkansas, the University of Illinois, Miami (Ohio) University, the University of Mississippi, the Ohio State University, the University of Tennessee (2 members), and the University of South Carolina. Six of the eight are tenured, with a seventh up for tenure this year. The department also hired a full-time, tenure-track instructor in 2012. He received tenure in 2017.

Eleven faculty have left the department since 1999. Three left TTU for other jobs, the most recent of whom accepted a position at Arizona State University in 2011. (We hired a new Native American specialist in 2013.) The other eight retired, including two in 2016 and another in 2017. To date, the department has replaced only one of those three. We hired a new Historian of Science in 2016. A campus-wide hiring freeze precluded any new searches through the spring of 2017. We

are currently searching for a specialist in African-American History. The full-time faculty members, their specialties, and selected career highlights are listed in order of seniority in Appendix A. Full vitae are available upon request.

### **Part-Time and Temporary Faculty**

The Department currently employs six persons in a part-time or temporary capacity. One temporary instructor holds the Ph.D. Two of the others hold a J.D., and all of them hold at least the master's degree. Five individuals are employed in teaching the American history survey courses. The other assists with pre-law offerings. Part-time faculty are not eligible for tenure and are not expected to engage to the same degree in research, institutional service, and public service.

Additionally three emeriti faculty share a basement office, and remain research active. They, and two other recent retirees, theoretically could be called upon to teach surveys or upper-division courses in their specialty.

### **Selection of Faculty**

When it selects faculty, the department follows official guidelines. The faculty establish criteria for employment, and initiate a nationwide advertising campaign. Human Resources collects vitae, transcripts, references, and other appropriate documentation from applicants. After the applicant pool has been approved, the Department begins its evaluation process. Ultimately it selects those applicants that it wishes to interview and sends a final recommendation for appointment to the administrative officers.

Adjunct faculty are offered positions on a semester-by-semester basis at the discretion of the chair. Such decisions are submitted to the full-time faculty for discussion and approval. The chair reviews adjunct performance each semester, sometimes visiting the class. Other faculty may report problems at any time. If an adjunct faculty member is found deficient, he or she simply is not rehired. One such case transpired in 2007, after it was discovered that the individual in question had given 116 of 135 students in a survey class a grade of "A," and failed to assign any readings. A previous dismissal occurred when the adjunct instructor proved more interested in evangelism than instruction. Happily, most recent adjunct departures have occurred when the instructor received a full-time job elsewhere.

### **Teaching Loads**

The standard teaching assignment for the History Department is 12 hours (4 courses) per semester. The remaining three credit hours are divided between research time, student advisement and service work according to an Agreement on Responsibilities. These are signed each spring following consultation between the faculty and the chair.

The teaching load is comparable to that in most humanities departments in the CAS, but is higher than the normal load in the sciences, other colleges of the university, and most history departments in the US. Each faculty member typically teaches one or two upper-division courses, and a corresponding number of survey sections, at times including "double-sections" of 80, or "triple-sections" of 140. During the review process we discussed fairness issues (For example: Are three sections of 30 the equivalent workload of a single section of 140?), ultimately concluding that our current system is likely as fair as it can get. Still, the chair must take into account special

circumstances when he assigns teaching duties in consultation with the faculty. Upper-division assignments are based upon a regular cycle of course offerings designed to facilitate advisement and planning for both faculty and students.

Our instructors, both tenured and temporary, teach 15 hours (5 courses). The chair teaches three credit hours per semester, handles routine administration of the department, conducts a substantial portion of advisement, and currently serves as the university's Faculty Athletics Representative. Other faculty sometimes receive release time as well, typically from grant or committee assignments. With rare exceptions, staffing shortages have required the chair and other faculty to teach overloads on a consistent basis.

### **Staff**

The Department has one full-time administrative assistant. In the fall of 2011, the department hired Amy Foster, who had previously served the Department of English. The faculty praise Ms. Foster's courtesy, efficiency, helpfulness, initiative, and positive attitude. We all think she deserves additional compensation for her efforts.

The Department also makes use of work study students. Their numbers and quality vary.

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES/OBJECTIVES**

### **Program Goals and Student Learning Objectives**

Section IV of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission of Colleges (SACSCOC) criteria covers all aspects of the faculty's professional life. SACSCOC reviews require continuous improvement, including the yearly development, assessment and modification of strategic goals. The Department of History has three major student learning goals (SLOs). The first involves research paper proficiency. "All students completing a degree in History at TTU will demonstrate the ability to research and write a scholarly paper of professional quality." The second SLO calls for participation in co-curricular activities. "The department desires to instill in students and appreciation of the past, to include a desire to explore history beyond the classroom." The third SLO involves standardized testing. "History majors will demonstrate their factual knowledge competence by scoring at or above the national average on the ACAT achievement tests."

Our overriding program goal is to assist with the University's "Flight Plan." "This involves at least two initiative in all four target areas: Improved undergraduate experience, transform technology, create distinctive programs, and expand financial resources. All eight can be found in Appendix J. Assessment methods are discussed later in the document.

### **Survey Courses**

The Department of History serves a diverse clientele. As a result, our learning objectives vary accordingly. Our most numerous clients are students in other majors taking the required American History survey sequence. These sections (History 2010-2020) account for nearly 65% of the department's sections, and over 70% of its students. All Tennessee Tech students except engineering majors, roughly 80% of the student body, are required to take the American History Survey. Their Learning Objectives are defined by TBR-approved General Education requirements, available at [mtech.edu/cas/gened/learning-outcomes.php](http://mtech.edu/cas/gened/learning-outcomes.php).

Additionally, the department serves students who take World Civilization, Western Civilization, or (since 2009) Science and World Cultures to fill a humanities requirement. As is the case with American History, the basic Learning Objectives for General Education Humanities courses are centrally defined at [ntech.edu/cas/gened/learning-outcomes.php](http://ntech.edu/cas/gened/learning-outcomes.php). All faculty are required to note these General Education requirements on their syllabi.

The department devoted a substantial portion of its 2014 Audit to discussion of the survey courses. We discussed issues ranging from the trivial (When should we divide History 2010-2020 – we left it at 1876-1877) to the complex (Which of the centrally-defined outcomes are the most important?) The summation of the results (compiled by Dr. George Webb and submitted to the campus General Education Committee), includes expanded assessment plans as well as discussion of outcomes, were included as Appendix H.

Our overall conclusion is that outcomes designed for general students must reflect the content of the course and the preparation of students for future study, while providing students with a better understanding of historical processes, of central value to the preparation of properly educated citizens. The faculty consider it important, even within the survey courses, to introduce the students to broader historical concepts and analysis. Part of this initiative stems from a desire to do justice to the discipline, avoiding the common misperception of history as just so many names and dates. There is an additional motive. The survey courses serve as a recruitment ground. Less than half of our graduates start out as history majors. Demonstrating the importance and potential of history in the survey sections helps recruit majors.

### **Upper Division Courses**

Those broader historical concepts mentioned above constitute the learning objectives that the faculty want our majors (and others) to attain. These include the ability to think historically, to understand causality (cause and effect), to research effectively, to read critically and in context, to make and defend an argument, to make optimum use of library resources, to write clearly, to appreciate diverse cultures, and to understand the challenges involved in historical interpretation. Additionally, all history courses expand the factual knowledge of the students.

Our upper-division courses are designed with these learning objectives in mind, though the objectives vary with the instructor, course and topic. Because many outcomes are course-specific, wide latitude is necessary when defining departmental outcomes. Unlike in other disciplines, where there is a tendency for outcomes to define content, in history, content largely defines outcomes. Teaching content correctly results in outcomes being met. Faculty are required, as with the survey courses, to clearly state their learning objectives on their upper-division syllabi.

### **Historical Methods and the Freshman Experience**

History 3410 is designed to introduce majors to the discipline, providing them with the skills they need to become successful students and historians, thus preparing them to succeed in their upper division classes. The course introduces the student to historical writing, criticism, methodology, and technical skills. It requires several basic “how to” projects (how to write a book review, how to footnote properly using Chicago style, how to prepare a bibliography, etc.), and concludes with the student producing what is, for most, their first research paper. Initially designed for history majors only, History 3410 is required of Secondary Education/History majors as well.

Enrollment is limited to these two groups of clientele.

Traditionally, all incoming freshmen and transfers (be they from other majors or other schools) were required to take History 3410 during their first semester as history majors. Disappointing DFW rates, particularly in 2014, led the Department to postpone the requirement for freshmen until the second term, beginning in 2015. This course has been discussed more at department meetings than any other. If our reviewers have any insight to provide, on either the content or timing of such a course, please advise.

In 2007, the Department premiered History 1066. This “Freshman Experience” course is designed to introduce freshmen majors to the university, the Department, and each other. It provides general information that will help students adjust to university life and achieve academic success. The inclusion of student mentors is designed to further facilitate disciplinary bonding. To that extent, this course is as much a part of our retention efforts as part of our curriculum. It remains as a first semester requirement.

### **Senior Seminar**

Beginning in the spring of 2000, the Department initiated the senior seminar. This course gives the student an intensive experience in research, writing, and oral presentation. Designed as our capstone course, its goal is to assist the student in preparing a paper of publishable quality. Various members of the Department have taught the undergraduate seminar (499X), with each faculty member focusing on subject matter in his or her area of expertise. The expected outcomes are the most extensive in the department.

In May of 2008, as a result of a year-end assessment meeting, the department established a permanent rotation for the senior seminar. The complete list of Senior Seminars, the forthcoming rotation, and the expected outcomes can be found in Appendix G.

## **CURRICULUM**

### **Overview of the Major**

CAS graduates share a 41-hour General Education Core. This includes six hours of basic American History. Additional requirements include nine hours of English, three hours of speech, eight hours of science, three hours of mathematics, six hours of a social science, and six hours of humanities.

The Department requires each major to take the Historical Methods course, either Western Civilization or World Civilization, six other upper division courses, and a Senior Seminar. To ensure a degree of diversity, they are required to take at least one American, one European, and one World upper-division course. Given the diverse goals of our graduates, no formal system of concentration is required. Any informal area focus is left to individual students in cooperation with their academic advisers.

Western Civilization has been taught for decades. World Civilization became a departmental offering in the wake of the 1995 establishment of World Cultures and Business (WCB), a cross-disciplinary program between the CAS and the College of Business (now IBAC – International Business And Cultures). The Department of History debated for some time the merits of requiring Western or World Civilization, and has at times considered eliminating the older

sequence. Ultimately, the faculty decided to retain both, and allow our majors the option of either. Both previous audits and this review affirmed this decision. In 2018, we considered, and rejected, the idea of requiring both.

Reinforcement for retention of this dual system stems in part from our relationship with the College of Education. Secondary Education/History majors are required to take three out of the four Western and World survey courses. Though mildly redundant, this additional requirement apparently has proven successful in reinforcing basic knowledge. For several years after its implementation, the results were a 100% Praxis Exam pass rate. Our 2005 SACS review team cited our efforts as a prime example of "closing the loop" regarding assessment.

The Department is unique at TTU in offering both the Bachelor of Arts and the Bachelor of Science degrees. Additional requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree include eighteen credits of foreign language. For this reason, the BA is recommended for students planning to pursue graduate degrees in history. The Bachelor of Science degree currently requires eight hours of foreign language, seven further hours of science (three of which may be History of Science or Environmental History) and three hours of electives instead.

Both the BA and BS also require an upper division social science course, and an upper division English requirement, which includes all offerings of the former Department of English and Communications (including Speech, Journalism, Theater and Web Design). Given limitations in enrollment and restrictive prerequisites, as well as student interest, the Department expanded the social science options to include Psychology, Philosophy, and Religious Studies in 2015.

BA students have a minor in foreign languages built in to their program, and are encouraged to have a second minor. BS students are allowed to choose their minor (we considered, and rejected, restricting them to science or math minors). We remain convinced that minors, rather than random electives, helps prepare the students for success in the real world. Those who might question the need for a minor, or the coherence of such a flexible program, should be reminded that History majors are pursuing a variety of degree and professional aspirations. Graduate school in History is the goal of some majors. Others attend law school. Still more secure teaching certification after finishing the baccalaureate degree. More pursue advanced degrees in education, business administration, library science, or other disciplines. Of the remainder most finish their baccalaureate degrees in history and start careers in business, government service, tourism, the military, and a variety of other fields. A sampling of the diverse career paths of our graduates is included in Appendix C.

The diversity of our clients (students are clients - not "customers") further argues against extensive prerequisites within our program. While we have considered the merits, for example, of requiring Western Civilization as a prerequisite to upper-division European History courses, we do not wish to exclude the person with a passion for World War Two or the Renaissance from enrolling in an intensive course in their area of interest. We occasionally gain additional majors as a result of such experiences. We also maintain positive relations with the community. We typically have a handful of interested citizens enrolled in our upper division courses every semester.

### **Extent of Lower and Upper Division Offerings**

The Department of History typically offers the following courses each semester: one or two sections of Western Civilization, World Civilization, and Science in World Cultures, approximately

thirty sections of American History Survey (roughly split between 2010 and 2020), one or two sections of Historical Methods, and ten to twelve upper-division courses, including one senior seminar.

The Department offers course work in various aspects of American, European, and non-Western fields. Within the American field the Department is able to offer the greatest amount of specialization and the most complete coverage. This includes chronological coverage of all periods of American history from pre-Columbian to the present, and various thematic fields such as African-American, Native-American, Women's, Environmental, Southern, and Tennessee history. Recent retirements have impacted our modern American offerings, which a new hire should partially address.

Within the European field, we have expanded both the frequency and coverage across the earliest periods, most notably with a new travel course to Rome. This enhancement arose from the results of surveys conducted in 3410 classes. Additionally, the department offers a two-part overview of British History, a one-semester history of Russia, and courses that focus on the World Wars. The 2010 hire of Dr. Elizabeth Propes has filled a considerable gap in our curriculum, running essentially from the aftermath of the Reformation through the French Revolution. Dr. Propes has also added courses in modern French and German history, including the Holocaust.

Our courses classified as "World" are relatively scattered. These include: Native American Studies, Russia and the Soviet Union, The Modern Middle East, Japan, China, Africa, and the History of Mexico. The retirement of our Asian specialist and a failed search for a replacement has forced the department to be creative. Three professors (Drs. Smith, Birdwell, and Roberts) combined to teach the History of Japan in the summers of 2013 and 2015. Dr. Propes has taken over the China course, and she also introduced a new African history course in 2011.

Given the unique status of TTU as the premier "STEM" institution in Tennessee, the lack of a history of science component in the university's general education offerings seemed a serious shortcoming. Initial efforts to produce a survey as a social science offering failed. Dr. George Webb instead created History 1310 to satisfy TBR Humanities outcomes. A 2009 Audit initiative, it was offered for the first time in the fall of 2010. It was so successful that he expanded it to a double section the following semester. Praise has followed not only from students, but from colleagues ranging from chairs of the science departments (who appreciate the opportunity afforded their majors) to general education advisors (who appreciate more seats in General-Education Humanities courses). Dr. Allen Driggers is continuing this tradition. He has also taken over Dr. Webb's upper division History of Science courses, and is expanding them to include the History of Medicine and Nursing.

For professors who wish to offer a course not included in the curriculum, History 4900 (Topics) provides a way of doing this. History 4910 (Directed Studies) allows the student to engage in independent study under the supervision of a professor.

During the 2009 audit the faculty conducted an extensive examination of course offerings at other institutions of similar size. It was included as Appendix B, and is available upon request. This comparison of our program with those of peer institutions offered some suggestions for curricular expansion, and revealed no glaring deficiencies for an undergraduate history curriculum staffed by nine full-time faculty.

## **THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

The Department of History offers students various opportunities for intellectual development beyond the classroom. Department faculty regularly organize and lead field trips, sponsor guest speakers (both alone and in conjunction with other university units), encourage and direct student participation in study abroad, and facilitate personal growth and development through various student activities.

### **Phi Alpha Theta and the History Club**

The Department sponsors two student organizations: Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) and the History Club. PAT is the international history honor society. Membership is by invitation only, to students who have demonstrated excellence at an advanced level. The History Club is open to everyone interested in history, regardless of class rank, grade point average, or major.

Perhaps most notably, PAT has at times hosted a special program designed to highlight undergraduate research. The first "History Lyceum," the brainchild of Dr. Susan Laningham (PAT advisor), was held in April, 2010. It afforded students the opportunity to present their papers in a professional setting. Subsequent Lyceums were held more or less annually through 2015. Beginning in 2013 Dr. Laningham added another event to the program, a multiple choice test, open to all attendees (not just presenters), with scholarship prizes for the highest scores.

PAT traditionally sponsored an awards banquet and initiation in the spring. PAT members have also participated in a variety of day trips, most commonly to various cultural sites in Nashville. Fundraising activities, including a bi-annual book sale, have helped make this possible.

The History Club has also participated in field trips. Both PAT and the History Club host a variety of social activities ranging from an annual fall party and new student mixer, to movie or game nights with the faculty. Both organizations have also facilitated the formation of study groups. PAT students even offer tutoring services.

Our organizations have solicited and have received funding at times. For example, our dean's office supported both the Lyceum and the PAT picnic in 2013. Individual students have likewise successfully pursued funding. Recent examples include two who received support for a research trip to London, and another who presented at paper at the Ohio Valley History Conference. Support from the provost's office for foreign travel could also count here, as the majority of our travelers have been PAT members.

### **Guest Speakers**

The Department has typically hosted at least one guest speaker per semester since 2000. The most notable of these, held every spring and made possible by the generous donations of a department graduate, is the J. Michael Winchester Lecture Series. (Mr. Winchester has been honored for his philanthropy not only as a Distinguished Alumnus of the CAS, but also by receipt of the TBR Chancellor's Award). The Department has taken its rotational turn to access College and University funds to bring additional speakers to campus. Dr. Kent Dollar has played an essential role in hosting Constitution Day every fall since its inception in 2005. Faculty have also partnered with local organizations such as the Upper Cumberland Heritage Foundation and the Civil War Roundtable to bring even more speakers to Cookeville. Sometimes, we simply invite friends of the Department for special guest lectures and presentations.

Fall 2016 witnessed the inauguration of a second annual lecture series. Dr. Chuck Womack, a retired urologist and former mayor of Cookeville, endowed the series in honor of his mother, Pauline. Dr. Katherine Osburn, a former member of the Department, gave the first lecture on the Mississippi Choctaw. In 2017, Dr. Jeanette Keith, who received her undergraduate degree at TTU, made the presentation of the Yellow Fever Epidemic in Memphis. A sampling of the wide array of speakers and diversity of topics was included in the 2009 Audit as Appendix F. An update is available upon request.

### **Travel Opportunities and Study Abroad**

Since at least 1993 department faculty have organized field trips to various historical sites. The first were weekend excursions to such sites as Shiloh National Military Park or The National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. Beginning in 1999, these trips became week-long events in the summer. The first went to Harpers Ferry and Washington, DC. In 2002, however, the economic downturn and fears of terrorism combined to thwart extensive domestic trips for a time.

Beginning in 2006, with financial assistance from the Office of International Student Affairs, we initiated our first foreign trips, often associated with a class. Dr. Susan Laningham has led trips to Rome (2006, 2009, 2012, 2014 and 2017), Athens and Delphi (2008), and various sites in Spain (2009). Dr. Jeff Roberts organized two trips to Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands (2008, 2010). In the summer of 2015, Drs. Birdwell, Propes and Roberts, working in conjunction with Austin Peay State University, led the most extensive trip to date, a month-long excursion to Poland. Dr. Propes recently returned from directing a student trip to Paris (2017), her second such trip (2014), and will accompany a Foreign Languages group to Morocco in 2018. The Department continues to offer domestic trips as well. Drs. Propes and Roberts took a group through Georgia and South Carolina in 2013 (even meeting President Jimmy and First Lady Rosslyn Carter along the way). Dr. Roberts and Mr. Philip Davis took a group to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Gettysburg in 2014. Dr. Troy Smith and Dr. Andrew Smith (Department of English) took another group to Selma, Alabama for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary march in 2015. Even History 1066 students have been afforded travel opportunities, with day trips to Chattanooga and Shiloh, Columbia and Oak Ridge, Pall Mall and Nashville, Kennesaw Mountain and Chickamauga.

The Department routinely alerts its students to possibilities for educational enrichment via study abroad and student exchange. Several have taken advantage of such opportunities. Department graduates have studied in Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, England, Ireland, South Korea, and Mexico. Foreign travel exposes the student to cultural diversity, encourages life-long learning, and promotes a global outlook. Opportunities are limited, can be somewhat costly, and are typically restricted to those with high grade point averages. For those students who can afford it, it often proves the highlight of their academic career.

### **Internships**

The department also recognizes the potential in expanding internship possibilities for majors, designed to give students practical experience, while exposing them to the possibilities of historically based jobs. Department majors have previously participated in internships on an ad hoc basis. Students helped conduct an architectural survey of the Upper Cumberland, interned at the state legislature, or worked for local historical societies.

Beginning in 2010, however, Dr. Michael Birdwell spearheaded department efforts to organize these scattered initiatives into a more consistent and effective program. Basing his proposal on previously successful practices in other departments, he designed History 4940, a three-credit course for interns. Since inception, 21 students have completed 24 internships with 15 different entities ranging from the White County Heritage Museum to the Cookeville Depot Museum, from the Public Defender's Office to the Tennessee Preservation Trust. The course syllabus, and a list of recent participants and their employers, are included as the new Appendix I.

### **Other Extracurricular Activities and Scholarships**

Students are also afforded opportunities for intellectual and personal growth within an array of extracurricular activities. History majors play prominent roles in such campus organizations as ROTC, Rotaract, Mortar Board, Omicron Delta Kappa, Omega Phi Alpha (service fraternity), College Democrats and Republicans, and several social fraternities, among others. Departmental faculty advise many of these student clubs and groups.

Students who major in history have opportunities to compete for university scholarships and other forms of financial assistance available to all students. In addition, through efforts of alumni contributors and friends of the Department, departmental scholarships are available. At least three (and often more) are awarded each year based upon need, grades, test scores, service, and excellence in writing. One scholarship account, funded entirely by contributions from all department faculty, is used to recognize "good eggs" (outstanding freshman, best work study, best service record, etc.) at the discretion of said faculty.

### **Advisement**

Admission, retention, and degree requirements are clearly stated in the TTU Catalog. To make things even easier for students and advisors to chart student success, the department maintains flow charts for both the BA and BS degrees. These are available in the departmental office, and posted on the departmental website at <http://www.tntech.edu/history/home/>.

Freshman and sophomore history majors receive advisement through the CAS Student Success Center. Full-time faculty members serve as academic advisers to juniors and seniors. Initially the chair advises incoming transfers, both from other institutions, and internally. Thereafter, students are free to choose their advisor from among the faculty. Some do so according to likes and interests, while many remain with the chair for the duration. The department remains reluctant to assign advisers randomly, without student concurrence.

Students are required to meet with their advisors every semester. Most do so during advisement week, while some meet during the registration week that follows. The remainder either drift in late or avoid advisement altogether. Efforts to force students to meet with their advisors by withholding information required for registration has proven generally effective, though not without exceptions. Efforts to ensure the students do as advised are even more problematic.

Senior exit interviews, meanwhile, rarely indicate dissatisfaction with advisement. We remain convinced that any dissatisfaction rests more with career advisement than scholastic issues. The advent of a new course in Public History, developed by Dr. Michael Birdwell and offered regularly since the fall of 2013, seems to offer great potential for career development, augmenting the career counseling already included in History 3410.

## **LEARNING RESOURCES/TEACHING METHODS**

### **Class Size and Structure**

History 2210, 2220, 2310, 2320, 1310, 2010 and 2020 are typically taught in single-section (30 students) double-section (80 students) or triple-section (140 students) formats. The larger sections are held in whatever lecture hall we can obtain given our lack of a large classroom (typically the STEM Center, Prescott, Clement or Bruner Hall, or the new Nursing Building).

In 2012, in response to another enrollment increase, the Department began offering a special section of American History for international students each semester. Designed to promote greater retention, these classes ceased with the retirement of Dr. Wali Kharif in 2017, which corresponded with a decline in international enrollment. We also traditionally offer an honors section of 2010 in the fall and 2020 in the spring. Honors sections are limited to enrollments of 25. We offered our first online sections of 2010 and 2020 this fall (TBR regulations had previously restricted such to the community colleges).

Upper-division courses, including Historical Methods, were similarly taught in sections limited to 25. Recently the Department voted to lower the cap from 25 to 20. This has proven useful in both lessening the crowds in popular courses and ensuring that others reach sustainable enrollment.

Aside from the immediate past few years, in which the university suffered an overall enrollment decline, demand for history courses has grown steadily over time. Since the new General Education core plan took effect, the department has filled almost every one of its survey sections. Nearly every section offered for spring 2018 is again filled.

### **Methods Currently Employed**

Department faculty use diverse methods in our teaching. We consider that diversity an asset to student learning and faculty development. While lecture likely remains the most common approach, discussion is a popular alternative. Many faculty now include oral presentations among course requirements. This was prompted by alumni feedback encouraging opportunities to improve public speaking skills. Some of the more exotic methods include invited guest speakers, attendance at cultural events, role-playing exercises, music, field trips, and the use of "clickers" or "Kahoots" for instant student responses.

History, perhaps better than any other discipline, can still be well served via lecture format. That our discipline has its own "History Channel" speaks to our unique nature and popularity. The ability to tell a captivating story often gives historians an advantage over other disciplines in grabbing and maintaining the attention of an audience. With that attention, learning objectives can be successfully attained. Enthralled students are active learners. There are exceptions in our curriculum - the methodology and public history courses in particular are better-suited to hands-on learning - but for the most part, lecture remains an important cog in our offerings, particularly in survey classes of 80 or 140.

Department faculty, however, always have been willing to consider ways to augment lectures, and all employ some additional methods to enhance learning. Faculty have long incorporated maps and handouts into their presentations. The use of PowerPoint is common.

Audio-visual materials increasingly have become a significant part of the Department's instructional program.

Internet access expands audio-visual possibilities manifestly. All of the Department's classrooms have received a wholesale technological upgrade. The fully integrated systems include a Proxima projector, computer with DVD player, sound system, and projection screen. In the fall of 2013 we requested and received funding for "smart boards." The TTU server also provides housing for web-based instruction. Many history faculty members now post course syllabi, study guides, and related materials online. Some provide assignments and give quizzes online via the I-Learn system.

As with classroom presentations, faculty are left to choose when to test, how often to test, and which testing techniques to employ. The Department faculty generally prefer essay exams in upper division courses, regarding these as the best way to observe the full extent of a student's knowledge. Objective questions are also employed. These include multiple choice, fill in the blank, identification, map exercises, true and false, etc. Objective testing is common in large introductory classes.

All faculty members include reading assignments in all of their courses. Some test for reading comprehension via direct quizzes covering only the book in question. Others embed book-originating questions within their regular exams. Still more prefer having the students write book reviews or reaction papers.

Every upper-division course involves a major writing assignment. It is left to the professor to determine whether that assignment will be research-based, a book-review essay, or a journal, but each course is designed to improve research and writing skills. Faculty are willing to provide assistance along the way, with most offering to critique rough drafts of papers, and some actually requiring students to submit a draft before the final paper is accepted. We provide a great deal of feedback on papers. Students who perform poorly are typically invited to meet with the professor to discuss means of improvement.

In some ways, it might be easier to list the methods we do not use.

### **Sources of Best Practices**

Fields such as Nursing, in which every graduate is heading toward a similar career goal, are likely well served by a single accrediting organization that effectively dictates program content, expected learning outcomes, and best practices. Such is not the case with History. We have no accrediting organization. As is the case with our methods and graduates' careers, our sources of best practices are similarly diverse.

Discussions of teaching are often found in newsletters of our professional organizations. The AHA Newsletter, Chronicle of Higher Education, and Academe, for example, have all examined methods and assessment in the past few years. Likewise, sessions at conferences held by organizations such as the Ohio Valley History Conference (which the Department hosted in 2016), the Southern Historical Society, and the Southern Conference on African-American Studies address approaches to teaching history. In addition to maintaining professional contacts with regional and national organizations, the faculty attend conferences where best practices in teaching are discussed. These conferences have ranged from NEH Summer Institutes to the TNCHE (Tennessee Conference on History Education). Faculty also attend university-sponsored forums, and have participated in such projects as the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) and the Teaching Quality

Initiative (TQI). Five Department faculty have participated or are participating in the latter, whose stated goal is to encourage best-practices in evidence-based teaching and learning in university classes. In 2016, two department faculty (Drs. Propes and Roberts) attended sessions called "Reacting to the Past," designed to incorporate gaming into the classroom. Work on that continues.

Most importantly, the department remains willing to share teaching methods. Faculty routinely discuss possible improvements in teaching and learning, not only during structured activities, but informally among themselves as well. During the 2014 Audit process alone we discussed such issues as whether or not to give the students potential essay topics before a test, the advantages and disadvantages of comprehensive versus non-comprehensive final exams, Scantron tests and their utility in assessment, objective versus essay assignments, more exams versus fewer exams, various paper options, the benefits and challenges of I-learn, online maps versus flip charts, and so on. The completion and distribution of the General Education survey (Appendix H) is another example of faculty collaboration in the design and delivery of teaching and learning processes. Not only did this activity provide faculty with a better understanding of colleague's methods, it also introduced a technique to evaluate the effectiveness of this process. To reiterate, faculty members routinely discuss among themselves the teaching techniques they employ. We are constantly sharing ideas not only of what we do in our courses, but how to handle specific situations involving students.

### **Universal Standards vs. Instructional Diversity**

The Department of History is reluctant to impose any particular methodology in the classroom. This stems from respect for the concept of academic freedom and the acknowledgement that history is a diverse field, best served by diverse methods. To require faculty to use the same methods, we believe, would diminish the overall student experience. We agree with former NCAA President and noted academic reformer Myles Brand that "assimilation is the enemy of excellence."

In recent years we have encouraged discussion among faculty of major themes and concepts which students in introductory courses should retain. This led to further discussion during the 2018 Review of whether there should be a common examination administered to students in these classes. While we agree generally that students in introductory American History courses should be introduced to common themes, provided those themes are broadly defined, the idea of a common exam for assessment did not gain much support.

There are, however, some aspects on which there is general agreement. One of the most important is the use of primary documents. Virtually all sources of best practices cite their employment as critical. We agree. The tactical employment, however, is left to the professor, who might prefer handouts, artifacts, documents within a reader, a textbook which includes primary sources, Internet sources, etc. Beyond such general policies as "use primary documents," "give an essay exam in upper division courses," or "assign a writing assignment in upper division courses," we are reluctant to define just how common the student experience should be.

One good example of our flexibility involves the use of a textbook. Thirty years ago, the Department required all teachers in the American History survey to use the same text. This had some advantages in a theoretical degree of common coverage, while facilitating ordering and buyback issues. Given publisher incentives that might help our discretionary budget, we have at times discussed the possibility of a common text for the American History surveys. We

consistently vote overwhelmingly against this. Given modern initiatives which encourage faculty to avoid using textbooks altogether, this seems unlikely to change.

## **INDICATORS OF PROGRAM QUALITY/STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT**

As was noted above, history as a discipline is not served by one particular organization with a final say regarding assessment. Indeed, attempts to impose common standards across our field have proven desultory, if not outright failures. Witness, for example, the 1990s attempt to establish American History standards at the high school level, which accomplished little before degenerating into a nasty “culture war.” Add to that an open undergraduate curriculum in which students take a wide range of courses, the diverse career goals of our clients, and the very nature of the subject, and assessment becomes highly problematic. The concept of “indicators of student learning” or “benchmarks keyed to learning objectives” raises many conceptual difficulties.

Our boards seem to agree that assessment in our field needs to be approached with a great deal of flexibility. While the TBR mandated specific evaluation criteria for Math and Communications (Composition and Speech) General Education courses, they left our World, Western, Science, and American surveys subject to “reflective assessment.”

### **Standardized Testing**

As an example of the challenges we face regarding assessment, consider our recent experiences with standardized testing. While many disciplines (and politicians) consider standardized testing the bedrock of assessment, the department faculty do not consider it of much value. The tests neither provide information helpful to the program, nor do they assess our broader program objectives. History as a field has no handful of theorems, formulae, or procedures required for mastery, and no single core of factual knowledge requisite for success. This problem is perpetually aggravated by the changing nature of the field. Despite the advent of new branches such as social and cultural history, evidence indicates that standardized tests still overwhelmingly reflect traditional themes, gleaned predominantly, but not exclusively, from World Civilization and American History surveys. Yet many of our majors, between one-third and one-half of them, are transfer or dual-enrollment students, who did not even take these courses at Tennessee Tech.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, there is little incentive for students to perform well on such standardized tests. No passing grade is required for graduation, and unlike the ACT, LSAT or GRE, the tests have no impact on admissions. Students often complain about having to take the tests. During exit interviews, they routinely label the experience a waste of time.

This hit the proverbial fan in 2007. That spring, only two of our graduates even showed up for the Major Field Test. One of them, one of our best students, left early, claiming she had to babysit. The other, one of our weaker majors, packed his bags a few minutes later. In the wake of the embarrassing scores that followed, we decided to require the Field Test as part of the Senior Seminar course. Though the standardized test has never been formally factored into the 4990 grade, this integration did at least guarantee the students would spend an appropriate amount of time taking the test, and scores did improve.

In 2009, ETS decided to discontinue its Major Field Test in History, and we switched to the ACAT in 2011. Since that time, scores on the ACAT test have been relatively impressive, albeit

with a few exceptions. In 2011-2012, our majors earned the university our full quota of performance funding points. Our average score was 601, well above the national average of 500. The 2012-2013 result average of 562 was certainly not shabby. The 2013-2014 results, however, were simply average (496). Given that the class featured a higher proportion of students emphasizing European history, while the test features primarily American history questions, that score was neither surprising nor terribly disappointing. That one student who graduated with Honors scored in the 8<sup>th</sup> percentile, (two others were even lower), however, suggested that we still have issues with students not taking the test seriously. We have tried to counter this with various encouragements within our senior seminars. The 2014-2015 results were again above national norms, with an overall net of 530. 2015-2016 approached outstanding. Nine of eleven students scored above average (including one in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile), with the two lowest still ranking in the fourth stanine (of nine). The average percentile was 70. Fall of 2016 featured a solid if skewed 562 average, courtesy of two huge scores (98<sup>th</sup> and 97<sup>th</sup> percentile) and three marginal ones.

Spring of 2017, however, has prompted more reflection and analysis. One student did well (89<sup>th</sup> percentile), and three others scored slightly above average. The remaining seven scores were bad, if not terrible, including two scholarship winners with percentiles of 32 and 16 respectively. Worst was a raw score of 368 (9<sup>th</sup> percentile) from a student with a 3.4 GPA. The overall average for 2016-2017 was 466, with only six of sixteen students scoring above the national average. This was the lowest we have recorded. Much evidence suggests that the 368 score was the result of a severe case of “senioritis.” The US vs. Europe challenge noted above may well have returned in a few cases. There is also growing concern that many of our cutting-edge courses, in eschewing traditional topics, may be leaving our graduates unprepared for the basic factual focus of the ACAT.

The department cannot divorce itself from standardized testing entirely, but remains skeptical of the results despite generally positive trends. The department faculty have (witness several related pages within our 2014 Academic Audit) and no doubt will continue to discuss the challenges our discipline faces with regard to assessment via standardized tests. Such challenges suggest that pre and post testing, and documentation of graduate achievements, should be employed and maintained alongside standardized test scores

### **Pre-Tests, Post-Tests, and Course Grades**

The Department faculty believe that pre-testing and post-testing constitute another useful approach to quantifiable assessment. Such tests allow the instructor to determine what the students knew beforehand and the material they have mastered. Experiments in this regard, conducted by some faculty in survey sections for the past dozen years, and more recently in upper-division courses as well, have shown positive results (individual summaries are available upon request) in every case. Most faculty have come to embrace the concept of value-added tests, and plan to continue our efforts. Our 2009 Audit team affirmed this commitment, writing “Pre- and post-testing demonstrates commitment to assessment. Evidence provided the team indicates real learning occurred during the semester.” Pre-test and post-test activities are certainly valuable measures of what students have learned.

Yet so too are grades earned by students in their history classes. In such a content driven environment, grades are useful assessment indicators. Faculty use a wide-variety of assignments (papers, exams, quizzes, etc.) to assess student learning. Discussion of the effectiveness of these

methods is an ongoing practice in the department. Each faculty member is constantly evaluating his/her effectiveness. Program effectiveness is the summation of individual faculty activity reinforced by the sharing of experiences and the results of new methods.

### **Capstone Course and Student Portfolios**

Assessing the broader program goals expected of our majors is challenging. Our capstone course, History 499X, is an essential component. The 499X papers themselves must demonstrate sufficient competence. Failure to do so impedes graduation. Students do at times fail this course. During previous audits, we continued earlier efforts to define what is required of a successful senior seminar paper, noted in Appendix G. This information is referenced on 499X syllabi.

For several years, we maintained an archive of papers from History 3410, and History 4990. This includes a history major's first term paper, and what should be his/her ultimate writing sample. Comparing the two can provide further evidence of student achievement.

### **IDEA Student Evaluations**

Each faculty member receives an evaluation from his or her students every semester by means of an institution-wide program called IDEA. The Department has consistently ranked among the highest of TTU's departments. This is true despite the fact that the Department of History has one of the highest student-to-faculty ratios in the College of Arts and Sciences. The average scores for the department faculty (full-time and adjunct), from Fall 2011- Spring 2016, were: 65, 62.3, 61.7, 60.4, 59, 58.5, 58.5, 58.4, 58, 57.7, 57.5, 57.5, 57.3, 53.3, 25.7. Thus only one faculty member scored below the national average (50) across the time period. That individual has since retired. In the most recent example, all department members, including all adjuncts, averaged at least "50" on their Spring 2017 summary evaluations. Indeed every single class scored above "50," with but two exceptions (49 and 47)

The faculty have discussed whether any specific IDEA goals should be required of any course. We agree that "factual knowledge" should typically be a component of the survey courses. Aside from that suggestion, the goals are left to the discretion of the instructor. While we believe that IDEA scores - and student evaluation in general - should always be viewed with caution, the IDEA program does offer some confirmation, or at least an indication of student perception of achieved outcomes.

Some faculty use additional survey instruments beyond the IDEA, particularly in summer classes where IDEA is not available. Faculty are free to design and employ such additional evaluation instruments as they see fit.

### **Alumni Survey**

The ultimate test of any program is the success of its alumni. With that in mind, the Department administered an alumni survey in the summer of 2009. We sent mailings to over 400 graduates, and received nearly 100 responses. The summary of those responses was included in Appendix E.

The overall results were certainly positive. Some of the responses were absolutely heartwarming. We could provide several additional examples of good alumni relationships, ranging from long-standing scholarship programs to four new endowment funds established since

2005. Appendix C, our list of graduates and their professions, is arguably our strongest indicator of success. We have plans for a new alumni survey in the summer of 2019.

## **ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE**

The faculty of the Department of History questions those who demean lectures, advocate standardized methodologies, and are obsessed with numerically-based assessment. Of continuous quality assurance, however, there is no doubt. We are fully committed to this concept, and are glad to demonstrate it in as many ways as possible.

### **End-of-Year Assessment Meetings**

Since May of 2005, the Department has held a special end-of-the-year assessment meeting, at which we review our accomplishments from the previous year and set goals as noted above for the following one. (We skipped 2009, owing to the impending Audit, and 2010, owing to its recent completion). Typically held over an extended lunch, these assessment meetings may be the best example of working collaboratively that we can demonstrate. Some of the highlights include the initiation of experiments in value-added (pre- and post-) testing in 2005, and conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis in 2006. (Summarized in Appendix D in the 2009 Audit). At the 2007 meeting, each faculty member composed a personal multi-year plan, while in 2008 the Department established the (recently modified) senior seminar rotation. 2011 witnessed an extensive discussion of DFW rates and retention plans. 2012 focused on pre-law issues. 2013's meeting was devoted primarily to the now dormant master's degree proposal. 2014 defined promotion requirements and basic faculty duties. 2015 continued the discussion of standards generally, while issues of objective testing and cheating issues highlighted the 2016 session.

### **Regular Department Meetings**

The work of the Department is done at regular departmental faculty meetings, scheduled at least three times per semester. Special meetings are called as needs arise. Each faculty member has the freedom to bring policies, procedures, and decisions before the committee of the whole at any time. A majority vote determines the departmental policy on the matter in question.

Questions of hiring, tenure-track review, tenure, and promotion, are handled as a committee of the whole. Additionally, all faculty members serve on at least one departmental scholarship selection committee. Those are typically the only subcommittees employed, though ad hoc committees may be formed as needed.

### **Faculty Evaluation**

The Department chairman and dean evaluate each faculty member on an annual basis, in light of the Agreement on Responsibilities document signed by the faculty member. They evaluate instruction, research, professional activities, and public service, and inform the individual of the results. Non-tenured department members, moreover, undergo an annual review of their performances by a committee of tenured faculty, and are subjected to an even more rigorous review by the tenured faculty, the department chairman, the dean, provost, and president. Part-time faculty

are also evaluated by their students via the IDEA program, and by the chairman.

In the event of unsatisfactory performance of tenure-track faculty, the Department would follow the termination and non-renewal procedures as outlined in the faculty handbook. No tenure-track faculty member has failed to be renewed since 1993. There were, however, three effective dismissals (officially “resignations”) for various causes from the mid-1980s to 1993.

The Department recently faced perhaps its most difficult situation involving a tenured faculty member. Beginning in the fall of 2011, the individual’s IDEA evaluations dropped markedly, and remained desultory through 2012. In late April 2013 student complaints reached chronic proportions as the faculty member had failed to return midterm examinations given in February. The faculty member offered a series of excuses, graded the tests within a week, and recorded final grades on time.

Over the course of the summer the department chair met with this faculty member. They discussed various strategies and coping mechanisms for the fall semester. Despite these efforts, the problem grew worse. During visits to the classroom the chair documented certain traits that seemed to suggest medical problems. The semester culminated with the faculty member in the hospital, and all related course grades recorded as “incomplete” through late January. Following consultation with doctors, human resources and administrative personnel, the faculty member received a medical leave of absence for the spring of 2014. Other faculty volunteered (for adjunct pay or nothing at all) to teach extra spring classes.

The return in the fall of 2014 was not accompanied by corresponding improvement. Though the chair and other department faculty continued to offer suggestions, no change was evident aside from incorporating a computerized attendance and grading system, which likely caused more problems than it corrected. Through the spring of 2015, the chair continued to receive more complaints about this faculty member than the rest of the department combined.

In the fall of 2015, after volunteering to chair a promotion committee, the faculty member failed abjectly in that task. Continued student complaints, policy violations, unconvincing excuses, and an online posting featuring grossly exaggerated research accomplishments, left the faculty little choice but to confront the issue. At the end of the spring, 2016 semester, the chair called a special meeting of the other tenured faculty. They voted unanimously to request the faculty member to resign. Before any further actions transpired, the faculty member retired. While an unfortunate story, it does illustrate the department’s commitment to quality assurance, both in terms of a willingness to try to help a struggling colleague, and a professional imperative to require appropriate performance.

### **Alumni Survey**

In general, the results of our aforementioned summer 2009 Alumni Survey were pleasing. In areas that pertain to the program in the Department of History those responding to the enrolled student survey indicate extraordinarily high satisfaction. Overall, there were 975 positive responses, compared to 45 negative ones. The most troubling specific question on the 2009 survey involved advisement. Twelve negative responses seemed to reflect dissatisfaction with career counseling.

Further examination of the alumni survey also hinted at a general lack of knowledge about the Department. That fourteen alums, when asked about the current quality of the Department, responded “don’t know” seemed an open invitation to increase our contact with the alumni. During

our 2014 Audit discussions, we raised the possibility of a Facebook, Twitter, or other social media presence. Dr. Troy Smith spearheaded efforts to create a department Facebook page, and Dr. Allen Driggers recently started a Instagram page as well. Overall, we intend to expand our contact with our alumni as opportunities present themselves.

We will conduct another Alumni survey in 2019.

### **Exit Interviews and Current Student Surveys**

The Department chair attempts to interview all graduating seniors during their final semester at TTU. Students will occasionally complain of one particular professor or class, but they inevitably offer praise for the bulk of the Department. Recent complaints, when voiced, have centered on senile professors in other departments, poor group project partners, and parking. It is not uncommon for students to have no complaints at all. In comparing History with other TTU departments, they routinely praise the History faculty as both more challenging and more caring. Both the alumni survey and exit interviews suggest that the history faculty, courses, and program are highly regarded by our graduates.

We have also, at times, surveyed our main clients enrolled in History 3410. In one notable example, we surveyed three different sections of History 3410, asking the students for their preferences regarding the expansion of departmental upper-division offerings. The students made a clear, indeed nearly unanimous call for more courses in ancient history. The Department responded, evidenced by the highly acclaimed travel courses to Athens and Rome.

### **“DFW Rates” and Retention Initiatives**

Beginning in 2010, given information provided by our dean, the chair began sharing information regarding “DFW” rates with the faculty. This refers to the proportion of students receiving grades of D, F, or W in any given class. One can measure retention success via this rate, with higher rates equaling less success. Given statewide incentives to maximize retention, high DFW rates are problematic.

The individual in the department with the highest rates, Dr. Susan Laningham, took it upon herself to address this issue. Helped by a work-study student with considerable technological savvy, Dr. Laningham modernized her lectures to include more audio visual components and other retention increasing strategies. The results were gratifying: Lower DFW rates and more exemplary grades (A/B) without sacrificing course rigor or quality.

Rates in 2013-2014 were disappointing, however. Further analysis indicated that Dr. Laningham’s classes were neither bereft of high grades, nor weighted down with Fs, rather the problem seemed to be too many W-grades. Subsequent discussion between the chair and Dr. Laningham focused on offering the students more chances, allowing them to drop a major assignment grade via better performance on a subsequent exam. This has led to improved grades in the past few years overall, albeit with a few exceptions. Discussion of standards vs. retention, to include accusations of “too easy” along with “too hard,” remains an active issue throughout the department.

Retention data as supplied by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness tracks only freshman cohorts and thus is not always useful to the Department of History. For example, of our 2004 cohort, only 2 of 10 graduated, producing the lowest percentage of any department in our college.

The 2005 cohort, however, produced 9 graduates out of 15, for the highest percentage in the college! Such a disparity seems more attributable to personalities and small sample size than department policies or actions.

The Department is conducting its own retention analysis with regard to History 1066, our Freshman Experience course. Our 2009 audit team noted student doubts about this course within their final report. Though designed as a retention aid, History 1066 actually had the highest DFW rate of any course in our department! In 2012, we changed instructors. Dr. Jeff Roberts added more bonding experiences, including a field trip. He also invited all the other professors in the department to give mini-lectures, introducing themselves and their course offerings. The DFW rate improved (14% in 2012, 25% in 2013), and Dr. Roberts won the 2012-2013 “Award for Excellence in University 1020 Instruction.” Subsequent rates are as follows: 2014 – 9%, 2015-12%, 2016-23%, 2017-30%

Most of our majors do not enter the program as freshmen. Instead, they transfer from other majors and other institutions. Those who do enter as freshmen sometimes do so without full appreciation of the program, or with unrealistic career goals. That several transfer to other majors should not be surprising. We are continuing to track the data from History 1066. A list of our students, their various rates of success, and/or their reasons for leaving, is available, and could be made available to the reviewers upon request.

### **Research, Service, and Teaching Awards**

University-wide awards are certainly indicators of quality. The Department of History had a banner year in this regard in 2013, receiving awards in all three professional areas of responsibility. Dr. Kent Dollar won the university’s Distinguished Teaching Award. Dr. Wali Kharif won the university’s Distinguished Service Award. Dr. Michael Birdwell was named co-winner of the College of Arts and Sciences research award.

While 2013 was a special year, it followed a long tradition. Dr. George Webb won the Caplenor Award, the university’s highest award for research, in 1993. Several faculty have received a Distinguished Teaching Award from the University, CAS, or the Honors Department. Drs. Paula Hinton and Jeff Roberts are among those who preceded Dr. Kharif in winning the university Service Award.

Awards have continued to flow in. Dr. Paula Hinton received the TBR’s Harold Love Outstanding Service award in 2014, and was named Beta Sigma Pi’s “Woman of the Year.” Dr. Michael Birdwell won the Dean’s Award for Innovative Teaching that same year, and the General Education Teaching Award in 2015.

2016 rivaled 2013. Most notably, Dr. Birdwell joined Dr. Webb as a winner of the Caplenor Award. His edited anthology, People of the Upper Cumberland (in which he wrote three articles) won the Tennessee Librarians Association Award for the best book on Tennessee. Paige Ottenfeld, a History and Geology major, won the Derryberry Award, the university’s highest student honor. Another history major, Zack Hammons, won first prize at the state Phi Alpha Theta conference. Department graduates Calvin and Nelia Kimbrough (1969 and 1971, respectively) won the CAS Distinguished Alumni Award for 2016. Lastly, Dr. Wali Kharif capped off his career with receipt of the university’s Diversity Advocate Award.

2017 winners include Dr. Susan Laningham (CAS Research Award). Dr. Troy Smith

(SPUR Award for Fiction Writing, the third of his career) and Dr. Allen Driggers, who won a fellowship to the Mutter Museum in Philadelphia, and helped two of his students receive Yreka Travel Grants which funded a research trip to England.

### **University and Community Service**

Additionally, the Department of History is quite possibly the most active service department on campus. The tenured and tenure-track faculty together contribute to roughly two hundred departmental, university, and community service activities. Selecting highlights in this category is always most challenging. That six of its members – two-thirds of the department – have been elected to serve on the Faculty Senate gives some indication as to our overall reputation on campus. Consider as examples, our most recent retiree, and the currently tenured professors.

Within a distinguished career Dr. Wali Kharif's service accomplishments stand out. His service to the AAUP, Cookeville Toastmasters, and the Southern Conference of African American Studies Incorporated (SCAASI) encompassed virtually all offices (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, etc.) across his 29 years of service. His outreach efforts in the aftermath of 9/11, his service to the Muslim Students Association, and his receipt of the Heart of Hospice Award are testaments to his humanitarianism.

Dr. Michael Birdwell continues to serve as chair of the Tennessee Great War Commission. The Commission's task, as specified by Governor Bill Haslem, is to honor the centennial of the First World War. In 2016-2017 Dr. Birdwell organized and scheduled no less than 28 different commemorations all across the state. He also chairs a second statewide committee, for the National Register of Historic Places. On campus, he has assumed the leadership of the Upper Cumberland Institute following the retirement of Homer Kemp. He is also the Vice-President for the Tennessee Preservation Trust.

Dr. Paula Hinton concluded her service with the Crawford Hall Learning Village last summer. She continues her work for the Women and Gender Studies Coordinating Committee, the Diversity, Equity and Access Council and the President's Commission on the Status of Women. She has worked with the Retention Committee and the Service Learning Committee. She also serves the Humane Society of Putnam County in a variety of ways (Vice-President, Board of Directors, etc.). She is the faculty coordinator for WGS 2010. Last fall, she also served most effectively as chair of Philip Davis' tenure committee.

Dr. Kent Dollar has also received an appointment from Governor Haslem, in this case to the Tennessee Historical Commission. He continues to play a leading role with the Constitution Day Committee, which he has served since its inception in 2005. Dr. Dollar also serves as the steward for three departmental endowments: The Buddy Bowers, Ed Copeland, and Stuart Stumpf funds. Dr. Dollar continues to direct the Upper Cumberland Civil War Roundtable. Dr. Dollar also chaired Dr. Laningham's tenure and promotion committee most effectively.

Dr. Susan Laningham continues to serve as Departmental Advisor to the Tennessee Tech Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society. That she has the second largest group of advisees, including many of our best majors, should not go unnoticed. In 2015-2016, Dr. Laningham also assumed the role of History Club advisor. One of our departmental goals is to ensure student participation in co-curricular activities. These two groups do much to satisfy that

objective (along with the aforementioned field trips), while also aiding retention, and highlighting undergraduate research via our own Lyceum and opportunities to present at regional conferences. Dr. Laningham also chaired Dr. Propes' tenure and promotion committee most effectively.

Dr. Elizabeth Propes deserves special commendation for serving as Chair of the Ohio Valley History Conference, which the Department of History hosted on October 7-8, 2016. She solicited presenters and ultimately put together a program of 23 panels featuring 61 papers covering a vast array of historical topics. The program also included a welcome reception on Thursday night, a book exhibit throughout the weekend, and banquet Friday night, and a farewell luncheon on Saturday. Dr. Propes also continued her service on the college Curriculum Committee and assisted in the transformation of the Honors Program to the Honors College. She is currently chairing Dr. Smith's tenure and promotion committee most effectively.

Dr. Jeff Roberts continues to serve as the University's Faculty Athletics Representative, a role he has held since 2006. He has also served on the Executive Board of the Tennessee United Faculty Senates (TUFS) since 2012. He thus represented all ten Faculty Senates of Tennessee's public universities (UT and TBR systems). He continues to serve District 6780 of Rotary International on District Vocational Service Committee by hosting the Four Way Test Speech contest, and is the Foundation Chair for the Cookeville Rotary Club. President Oldham appointed him to Tennessee Tech's FOCUS Act Transition Task Force, and Provost Ghorashi assigned him to a mentoring task force working with our Nursing dean. He spent much of 2016-2017 working with five past Faculty Senate presidents reviewing all university policies in anticipation of the transition from the TBR to an independent board. As of December, 2017, he was serving on four search committees simultaneously (Provost, Head Football Coach, Head Volleyball Coach, and African-American Historian).

### **Universal Open Door Policy**

Lastly regarding Quality Assurance, it is important to note that all our faculty maintain an open door policy for our students and colleagues. Suggestions are welcome anytime.

### **OVERALL PERFORMANCE**

After a complete review of our program, we find the curriculum sound, comparable with that of peer institutions, and suitably diverse for a faculty of nine. We are proud of our co-curricular offerings and foresee their expansion. Our methods are diverse, and we regard that diversity as strength. The absence of an accrediting agency forces us to actively seek best practices, helping to guarantee exposure to potential new methods. Assessment is our greatest challenge. Our Learning Objectives, both those mandated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and those defined by the Department, are difficult to measure. We believe a diversity of measuring instruments offers the best confirmation of student success. Quality Assurance is an ingrained feature of departmental culture. We routinely seize opportunities to improve our offerings and performance. We consider that a professional duty. Ultimately we invite any reviewer to look at the full extent of our faculty activity, including teaching, research, professional and public service. We have included a list of faculty highlights as Appendix A, and again offer complete curriculum vitae upon request.

## **FOLLOW UP on IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES from the 2014 AUDIT**

Of the six goals from our 2014 Audit, the department made extensive progress on three of them, significant progress on another, and partial progress on a fifth. One remains a dream. They are listed below by rank of relative success.

### Goal #4: Establish a list of basic faculty responsibilities and examine promotion requirements

During the 2014 Audit process, the Department discussed the possibility of more rigidly defining publication requirements for promotion. Additionally, the notion that students have a right to timely return of their assignments was one of the motivators behind a decision to compile a list of basic faculty responsibilities. The faculty would address both issues in the ensuing months. It was the first goal from that Audit to be achieved, and can be made available upon request

### Goal #5: Continue our “Maymester” and international student course experiments

Dr. Paula Hinton, who taught the first “Maymester” course (two intensive weeks in May) in 2013, has taught one every year since. Mr. Philip Davis joined her in 2015, thus we offered both halves of the American History survey. Dr. Elizabeth Propes offered Western Civilization for the first time in 2014, and the first upper division Maymester courses in 2016 and 2017.

Dr. Wali Kharif reintroduced survey courses specifically designed for international students in 2012. He continued to offer History 2010 in the fall, and History 2020 in the spring, until his retirement last summer. Given a decline in our numbers international students, we are not planning to continue this initiative, but will monitor the situation.

Dr. Hinton and Mr. Davis’ Maymester courses noted above should also be considered retention initiatives, as they serve primarily international students with no background in American history. The Maymester courses also generate substantial income for the university, at times in excess of \$150,000.00.

### Goal #2: Continue to develop and expand our pre-law offerings.

Faculty have developed two new related courses (Dr. Kharif’s Constitutional History and Dr. Smith’s Native American Law), and local attorneys have taught seven others. The first such experiment (on the First Amendment) proved something of a disappointment, but the second installment (Gender and Racial Court Issues) was well received and all indications are that the third (History of the Supreme Court) also went well. The last four were all taught by Sam Schiller, and have received exemplary reviews.

Furthermore, in February 2013, the department invited several attorneys to present a seminar for interested students. “So You Are Interested in Law School” afforded those in attendance an opportunity to ask questions about the law school admissions process, law school itself, and employment opportunities thereafter. We have offered similar seminars virtually every semester since, often to standing room only crowds.

Goal #6: Continue to highlight undergraduate research while expanding alumni outreach

Our results here have been mixed. Alumni tend to keep in contact with individual faculty, who in turn pass on updates to the chair. Appendix C, the updated career list, demonstrates considerable contact. Alumni participation in Phi Alpha Theta events continues to increase. Donations have been on the rise in several areas.

On the downside, plans for an alumni field trip have run afoul of insurance issues. That has also plagued department efforts to revive any specific Homecoming activity. Traditionally, through the 1990s, the Department hosted alums to a wine, beer and hors d'oeuvres gathering at the local Catholic Church. Concerns about excessive and/or underage drinking prompted its cancellation, and no suitable substitute event has ever been found. The Department has considered "tailgating" before football games, briefly considering the purchase of a tent for such and potentially other purposes. Ultimately we decided against this, owing to the problems mentioned above, considerable competition, and the costs involved. We also considered the possibility of a lecture for Homecoming, but the only available time is 8:00 AM, and we are afraid that such a time will be even less popular with alumni than it is with current students.

The department hosted the statewide Phi Alpha Theta conference in February, 2014, and the Lyceum returned in 2015. Students again actively competed for spots on the program, with scholarships awarded to those with the best papers and/or the best presentation

A lack of Phi Alpha Theta members has prevented another Lyceum. We also cancelled the annual Halloween/dress up party for a variety of reasons. We are hopeful, however, that the spring of 2018 will witness another Lyceum, or at least another Phi Alpha Theta spring picnic in Dogwood Park, which has also become an annual alumni gathering.

Goal #3: Find an electronic solution to the question of individual student portfolios.

In the wake of the 2009 audit we began to encourage the creation of individual student portfolios. These could theoretically include not only 3410 and 499X papers, but other upper-division papers, as well as any individual honors, travel journals, advisement records, and so forth. Expanded portfolios could be even more demonstrative of overall student development

Three related problems combined to convince the faculty that this needs to be student-driven. First is the question of what papers to include. Our desire is to include corrected copies, but we also wish to return those to the student. A second, related problem, involves protecting the confidentiality of grades. Lastly, the keeping of hundreds of papers is a storage nightmare, which possible electronic solutions did little to mitigate. Leaving all these questions to the students themselves still seems a prudent option.

We chose to encourage the creation of portfolios via a "best portfolio" scholarship competition. Unfortunately, we received few competent submissions. While beneficial to the winners, overall results have been disappointing to date.

Goal #1: Obtain a large classroom for use by the History department faculty.

We have routinely requested throughout the week access to a large classroom as a priority. We simply have not received such. If we cannot have such access now, we hope to at least be included in a future plan for one. Hence it is Goal #1 for next time as well! (See below)

**RECOMMENDATIONS and FUTURE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES**

Goal #1: Obtain a large classroom for through-the-week use by the History department faculty.

Goal #2: Expand our “Maymester” course experiments to “Wintermester and/or “Augustmester”

Goal #3: Expand our Online offerings to include upper-division and Humanities courses

Goal #4: Complete two successful searches, one this year, and one next year

Goal #5: Conduct an Alumni Survey in 2019

Goal #6: Enhance our social media presence, and continue exploration of “digital history.”