

## INTRODUCTION

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

Tennessee Technological University (TTU) is a comprehensive university, one of six universities in the Tennessee Board of Regents (TBR) system. 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 <http://www.tntech.edu/about/mission>.

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 <http://www.tntech.edu/cas/vision>.

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. We are also generally appreciative of efforts to increase recruitment and retention. One faculty member for example, Dr. Paula Hinton, has been the head of a "Learning Village" since that program's inception. We also appreciate efforts such as the Stonecipher lectures and Center Stage series which enhance cultural enrichment. Academic freedom is 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 is likely the best in the TBR system. 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 2009 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 now seems reversed. The arrival of President Philip Oldham has coincided with a less threatening fiscal climate in the state. Generous alumni donations have continued to support scholarship programs and lecture series, while increasing faculty development and student travel opportunities. A series of proposed improvements and growth initiatives outlined in President Oldham's "Flight Plan" has fostered a climate of optimism across campus, which the department faculty shares.

On the other hand, department faculty endured a nearly two-year renovation of Henderson Hall, beginning in the summer of 2011 and lasting to some degree well into 2013. This rather unpleasant experience brought some improvements, but created new problems without solving all the old ones. The department has presented a full list of its concerns to appropriate authorities, is attempting to address the most pressing needs, and does not wish to rehash its facilities-related issues within an "academic" audit. Chief among our concerns, however, is our lack of a large classroom. As this does directly impact teaching and learning, it is hereby noted. Access throughout the week to an appropriately-sized classroom is our number one request.

### **A Short History of the Tennessee Tech History Department, 1929-2014**

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 have further broadened the curriculum with courses in Social, Cultural, and Latin American history. Recent course additions include Sports History, a new History of Science survey, African history, expanded European offerings, Public History, and a "freshman experience" course. The department is also expanding its pre-law offerings, via both courses offered by regular faculty, and local attorneys working as adjuncts.

From 2011-2013, 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, we are no longer actively pursuing the proposal.

### **The Audit 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. Meetings were held on August 26 (introductory session), September 24 (partly dedicated to a meeting with our new provost), October 28, and November 18, 2013. This report is a product of those meetings. The original 2009 draft served as a basis of this report. There was a profound sense of "déjà vu" as we found ourselves asking many of the same questions, and reaching similar conclusions. 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 is new. The department expressed consensus for the document at our last audit meeting held January 23, 2014, and hereby submits it following final review and editing.

### **Department Mission**

The department enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century with 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 history as elective hours, minoring in history, 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 missions. Hence, we drafted and adopted a new departmental mission statement, which remains in effect. It can be viewed at <http://www.tntech.edu/history/home/>.

### **Faculty Credentials and Recent Appointments**

The History Department currently consists of eleven (11) full-time faculty members, and six (6) part-time faculty members. In 2009, these numbers were nine (9) and eight (8), respectively. In 1999, these numbers were twelve (12), and two (2), respectively.

Ten of the eleven full-time faculty hold the Ph.D. degree. The faculty members earned their doctoral degrees at the University of Arizona, the University of Arkansas, Florida State University, The University of Illinois, Miami (Ohio) University, The University of Mississippi, The Ohio State University (2 members), and the University of Tennessee (2 members). Eight of the eleven are tenured.

Eight faculty have left the department since 1999. Three left TTU for other jobs, the most recent of whom accepted a tenured position at Arizona State University in 2011. The other five retired. To date, the department has replaced six of the eight. We completed a search for a new Europeanist in 2010. Most recently, we hired a new Native American specialist in 2013. The department also hired a full-time, tenure-track instructor in 2012.

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. All six individuals are employed in teaching the American history survey courses. Additionally three emeriti faculty share an office, remain research active, and theoretically could be called upon to teach surveys or upper-division courses in their specialty.

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.

### **Teaching Loads**

The TBR requires a minimum load of 15 credit hours per semester or equivalent for full-time faculty. The standard teaching assignment for the History Department is 12 hours 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 College of Arts and Sciences, 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. On rare occasions quadruple sections of 200 have been offered as overload assignments. During the audit 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.

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. In recent years, staffing shortages have required the chair and other faculty to teach overloads on a consistent basis.

### **Staff**

The department has one full-time secretary. In December, 2007, Lois Clinton abruptly retired after thirty-three years of service with the department. Following the search process, Leslie Burk assumed the position in March, 2008. The faculty appreciated Ms. Burk, but she moved to Oregon in the fall of 2011. The department hired Amy Foster, who had previously served the Department of English. This time, there was no gap in staffing. The faculty praise Ms. Foster's courtesy, efficiency, helpfulness, initiative, and positive attitude.

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

### **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 ten. 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 TBR, 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.

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

#### **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 only 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 <http://www.tntech.edu/gened/learnoutcomes-hist>.

Additionally, the department serves students who take World Civilization, or Western Civilization to fill a humanities requirement. Since 2009, Science and World Cultures has filled this requirement as well. As is the case with American History, the basic Learning Objectives for General Education Humanities courses are centrally defined. They are listed at <http://www.tntech.edu/gened/learnoutcomes-hum>. All faculty are required to note these General Education requirements on their syllabi.

The department devoted a substantial portion of its 2013 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, and can be seen in 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. 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 to as great an extent as possible, Secondary-Education/History majors) 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 will 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, while preparing them to

succeed in their upper division classes. All incoming freshmen and transfers (be they from other majors or other schools) are required to take History 3410 during their first semester as history majors. 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.

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, as is History 3410.

### **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 (4990), 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 and CO-CURRICULUM**

### **Overview of the Major**

CAS graduates share a 41-hour General Education Core as per TBR requirements. 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. The History Department does not have a formal system of concentration within the undergraduate program. Given the diverse goals of our graduates, any informal concentration 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 College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Business (now ICB – International Cultures and Business). The Department of History debated for

some time the merits of requiring Western or World Civilization, and briefly considered eliminating the older sequence. Ultimately, the faculty decided to retain both, and allow our majors the option of either. Both the 2009 and 2013 audit affirmed this decision.

Reinforcement for this dual system stems 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. This unusual arrangement arose from conversations with a previous Dean of the College of Education, who was concerned with a disappointing pass rate on the Praxis exams in History. Though mildly redundant, this additional requirement apparently has proven successful in reinforcing basic knowledge. Since its implementation, the results (until very recently) had been a 100% pass rate! Our efforts to address the Praxis pass rate were cited by our 2005 SACS review team 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 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. The department also requires an upper division Political Science, Sociology or Criminal Justice course, and an upper division English requirement, which includes all offerings of the former Department of English and Communications (including Speech, Journalism, Theater, Communications, and Web Design)

The question of a minor generated considerable discussion during and following the 2009 Audit. Our college all but eliminated minors when the curriculum fell to 120 credits. We have maintained the minor as a departmental requirement, while allowing the BS students considerable flexibility in defining it. BA students have a minor in foreign languages built in to their program, and are encouraged to have a second minor. The 2013 audit affirmed this policy. Though we are now the only department on campus that requires a minor, we remain convinced that such policy (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 Department majors are pursuing a variety of degree and professional aspirations. Graduate school is the goal of some majors. Others attend law school. Still more secure teaching certification after finishing the baccalaureate degree. More do graduate work in other disciplines, pursuing advanced degrees in education, business administration, or library science. 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 (we consider our students clients - a much more accurate word than 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: two or three sections of Western Civilization, two or three sections of World Civilization, two sections of Science in World Cultures, approximately thirty-three sections of American History Survey (roughly split between 2010 and 2020, with a slight majority of 2010 in the fall, and 2020 in the spring), 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.

Within the European field, we have expanded both the frequency and coverage across the earliest periods, most notably with new travel courses on Athens and Rome. This enhancement arose from the results of surveys of incoming majors and SEED majors 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 Reformation through the French Revolution. Dr. Propes has also added courses in modern French and German history.

Our courses classified as "World" are relatively scattered. These include: Native American Studies (may count as American instead), Russia and the Soviet Union (may count as European), Modern Middle East, Japan, China, Vietnam, and since 2004, Latin America. The retirement of our Asian specialist and a failed search for a replacement has forced the department to be creative. Our new Europeanist is helping here as well. Not only has Dr. Propes taken over the China course, she also introduced a new African history course (with an emphasis on Francophone Africa) in 2011. Three professors, including our newest member, Dr. Troy Smith, combined to teach the History of Japan in the summer of 2013. Other team-taught courses are currently under consideration.

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. 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.

### **History of Science**

In general, the mandated TBR reduction of graduation requirements from 132 to 120 credits had little effect on the Department of History, with one regrettable exception. Previously, the CAS required all of its majors to complete two science sequences. The CAS allowed, however, for humanities and social sciences majors to replace one sequence with the History of Science survey. TBR's new requirements called for only eight hours of science. When the CAS Curriculum Committee rejected any additions, History 2810 and 2820 lost their clientele.



An effort to salvage a history of science component through the creation of a one-semester replacement initially failed. Though approved by the university General Education Committee and accepted by all other relevant campus committees, TBR officials rejected the course as a General Education Social Science requirement. Although the department continued to offer two upper-division history of science courses, the faculty remained concerned, given the unique status of TTU as the premier "STEM" institution in the TBR system, that the lack of a history of science component in the university's general education offerings was a serious shortcoming.

Dr. George Webb thus created History 1310 to satisfy Humanities outcomes. Following approval by the relevant college and university committees, TBR agreed to include the course in the Humanities core. It was offered for the first time in the fall of 2010. As it was one of our 2009 Audit initiatives, its successful implementation is discussed in detail below.

### **Co-Curriculum**

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 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 hosts a special program designed to highlight undergraduate research. The first "History Lyceum," the brainchild of Dr. Susan Laningham, was held in April, 2010. As this, too, was an initiative in the 2009 Audit, it is discussed in greater detail below.

PAT traditionally sponsored an awards banquet and initiation in the spring. In 2013, however, they held a picnic-initiation which attracted their largest crowd ever. 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.

### **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 was recently honored for his philanthropy 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. 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 and 2012), Athens and Delphi (2008), and various sites in Spain (2009). Dr. Jeff Roberts organized two trips to Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands (2008, 2010). These extensive, 7-to-10 day excursions have proven extremely popular with the students. The department continues to offer less expensive domestic trips as well. In the summer of 2013 we revived our extensive summer trip, visiting Plains and Andersonville, Georgia, Charleston South Carolina, and Kings Mountain and Cowpens National Battlefields. Even History 1066 students have been afforded travel opportunities, with day trips to Chattanooga and Shiloh.

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, and Mexico. Recently several students have taken advantage of programs in South Korea, with some taking courses, and others teaching English as a second language. Study Abroad and travel courses have proven increasingly popular. 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 the Department of Criminal Justice and the College of Engineering, he designed History 4940, a three-credit course for interns. The course syllabus, and a list of recent participants, can be made available upon request.

### **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, Omega Phi Alpha (service fraternity), 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, several history specific scholarships are available. At least three (and often more, depending on accrued interest) are awarded each year based upon need, grades, test scores, service, and excellence in the writing of papers. One scholarship is funded entirely by contributions from department 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/>.

Full-time faculty members serve as academic advisers to history majors. Initially the chair advises incoming students, both freshmen and transfers from other institutions. 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.

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.

## **TEACHING and LEARNING PROCESS**

### **Class Size and Structure**

History 1010, 1020, 1110, 1120, 1310, 2010 and 2020 are typically taught in single-section (30 students) double-section (80 students) or triple-section (140 students) formats. An increasing number of large sections, 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), are a means of coping with enrollment increases.

The department offers two smaller sections of History 2010 to Learning Communities students each fall, with 2020 following in the spring. The program aspires to place freshmen in the same core classes, in the hopes that familiarity with one's classmates will create a warmer and more successful learning environment. In 2012, in response to another enrollment increase, the department began offering a special section of American History for international students each semester. Both the freshmen and the international sections are designed to promote greater retention. 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. Upper-division courses, including Historical Methods, are similarly taught in sections limited to 25.

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. Every

section offered for spring 2014 is again filled – there is not a single seat available. Upper division enrollments remain strong as well.

### **Methods Currently Employed**

The lecture continues as the primary teaching approach of all department members. History, perhaps better than any other discipline, can still be well served via lecture format. 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 course in particular is 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, 140, or 200 students.

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 have become a significant part of the department's instructional program. The department began building a video library of documentaries, historical films, and movies relevant to its curriculum in the 1980s. The collection is kept in the department office and is available to all faculty. The department remains committed to enhancing its multimedia capabilities and is actively seeking to convert the VHS formatted materials into DVD format.

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 to afford instructors a full array of audio-visual options. In the fall of 2013 we requested and received funding for "smart boards" which should be installed soon. 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.

Department faculty use diverse methods in our teaching. We consider that diversity an asset to student learning and faculty development. Discussion likely remains the most common 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" for instant student responses.

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, 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. Increasing size makes some amount of objective testing mandatory 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 examinations, and on papers as well. Students who perform poorly are typically invited to meet with the professor.

In some ways, it might be easier to list the methods we do not use. We are averse to group projects (though we encourage the formation of study groups). We regard group work as highly problematic (especially with regard to grading) and overrated by the education experts and evaluation processes. We'll leave group work to other disciplines where it perhaps works better.

### **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, the Southern Historical Society, and the Southern Conference on African-American Studies address 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.

### **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 2013 Audit 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. They 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," 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. Twenty-five years ago, the Department required all teachers in the American History survey to use the same text. This had some advantages in guaranteeing a degree of common coverage, while easing 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 TBR initiatives which encourage faculty to avoid using textbooks altogether, we believe our board concurs.

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 2013 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.

Our 2009 Audit team affirmed our commitment to instructional diversity, writing: "Faculty needs to continue to preserve diversity in delivery methods for course material. Students praised distinct teaching methods. Lectures are appropriate for history courses, but individuals should feel free to modify as deemed appropriate, e.g. seminar discussions for upper-level courses. ... Faculty members are dedicated to the quality of their individual courses and collective areas of interest ... Faculty members are commended for excellent attitude and commitment to a productive learning environment."

## **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 battle amidst the culture wars. 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) as “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 has mandated specific evaluation criteria for Math and Communications (Composition and Speech) General Education courses, our World, Western, Science and American surveys remain the subjects of “reflective assessment” (in which the faculty reflect on methods and results).

### **Standardized Testing**

As an example of the challenges we face regarding assessment, consider our recent experiences with standardized testing. The Department long participated in two university-wide testing programs: the College Base Examination and the ETS Major Field Test in history. Test scores achieved by seniors on the College Base indicated a slightly higher rank among history students than their peers. Scores on the Field Test were even better. A comparison with national scores showed that Tennessee Tech history majors, more often than not, scored above the national average. This data, contained in our 2013 SACSCOC Update, can be made available upon request.

While many disciplines (and politicians) consider standardized testing the bedrock of assessment, the department faculty do not consider it of paramount 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, roughly one-quarter of them, are transfer 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 (one of eight finalists for the university's highest academic award!), 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 this experience, 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 discontinued its Major Field Test in History. Our administration informed us of other possibilities. In the fall of 2011, History majors began taking the Area Concentration Achievement Test (ACAT). Scores have been impressive. In 2011-2012, 18 majors scored an average of 601, much higher than the ACAT national average of 500. In 2012-2013, 15 graduating seniors averaged 562, again exceeding the national norms. Scores on the general education exit exams, the California Critical Thinking Skills Test Majors (CCTST) have been similarly

impressive. In 2011-2012, the department's BA majors averaged 21.0, while the BS majors averaged 18.9, both well above the CCTST's national average of 16.8. 2012-2013's CCTST scores were again strong, with the BA's at 17.5 and the BS's averaging 19.6.

The Department of History thus can point to a record of generally positive trends in standardized testing. We believe, however, that a variety of other assessment measures are required to fully demonstrate the impact of our programs.

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

The department faculty believe that pre-testing and post-testing constitute a more 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 nine years, and more recently in upper-division courses as well, have shown positive results in every case (individual summaries are available upon request). The faculty have come to embrace the concept of value-added tests with enthusiasm, and plan to continue our efforts as per Appendix H. 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 4990, is an essential component. The 4990 papers themselves must demonstrate sufficient competence. Failure to do so impedes graduation. Students do at times fail this course. In the spring of 2013, two students received grades of incomplete, and did not graduate until the end of the summer, after improving their work. During the audit process, we continued earlier efforts to define exactly what is required of a successful senior seminar paper, noted in Appendix G. This information is referenced on 4990 syllabi.

For the past several years, we have 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 provides evidence of student achievement. In the wake of the 2009 audit, based on best practices, we decided to expand this effort, and create individual student portfolios. These include not only their 3410 and 4990 papers, but other upper-division papers, as well as any individual honors, travel journals, advisement records, and so forth. Expanded portfolios can theoretically be even more demonstrative of overall student development, document faculty feedback, help with advisement, and discourage the "recycling" of papers.

### **IDEA Student Evaluations**



By means of an institution-wide program (IDEA), each faculty member receives an evaluation from his or her students every semester. The Department of History has consistently ranked among the highest of TTU's departments. This is true despite the fact that the Department of History has the highest student-to-faculty ratio in the College of Arts and Sciences. This data is available at <http://iweb.tntech.edu/ideaevaluations>.

The faculty 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 additional 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 three new endowment funds established since 2005. There were, however, some areas of concern. Thus discussion of the alumni survey continues under Quality Assurance.

### **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.

### **SACS(COC), and Annual Departmental Goals**

Section IV of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) criteria covers all aspects of the faculty's professional life. In the 2005-2006 self-study for re-accreditation by SACS, the History Department demonstrated compliance with all relevant criteria. Future SACS reviews require continuous performance, including the yearly development and modification of strategic goals. Ours have included such things as teaching new courses (Mexico, Sports, Freshman experience), securing appropriate equipment for faculty members and classrooms, providing learning opportunities beyond the classroom (lectures and field trips), increasing access via night courses, increasing student awareness of diverse cultural heritage, and imparting to the students the ability to conduct research and present it effectively. Our 2013 SACSCOC update is available upon request.

### **Regular Department Meetings**

The work of the History Department is done at regular 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, as was the case with the "Faculty Requirements" subcommittee for this Academic Audit.

### **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 (this was 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.

### **Selection of Faculty**

When it selects faculty, the department follows guidelines provided in the University's faculty handbook. 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 (most recently with TTU's own Office of Disability Services).

### **Faculty Evaluation, Promotion and Tenure**

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 of the department.

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.

Sometimes tenured faculty need assistance as well, and 2013 witnessed an example. In late April 2013 student complaints surfaced concerning a faculty member who had failed to return a midterm examination given in February. The faculty member offered a series of excuses, promptly graded the tests, and recorded final grades on time. The extent of complaints from students and parents, however, mandated efforts to prevent a recurrence.

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 noticed certain traits that seemed to confirm medical problems. The semester culminated with the faculty member in the hospital, and all of his fall grades recorded as “incomplete.”

Following consultation with doctors, human resources and administrative personnel, the faculty member in question has been approved for a leave of absence for the spring of 2014. Other faculty have volunteered to teach his spring classes while he recovers.

During the 2013 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. A subcommittee has been formed and recently submitted a report addressing both issues. This will be a matter of continuing discussion during 2014.

### **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 involves 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. We are continuing to revise our website, essentially shifting from a site that targeted fellow professionals, to one that will better serve current students, parents, and alumni. During our 2013 Audit discussions, we raised the possibility of a Facebook, Twitter, or other social media presence. Overall, we intend to expand our contact with our alumni as opportunities present themselves.

Efforts to address both of these items are noted below under “Response to the 2009 Audit.” 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 rest of the department. It is not uncommon for them 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 Dr. Susan Laningham’s 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 have been gratifying: Lower DFW rates and more exemplary grades (A/B) without sacrificing course rigor or quality.

Another example exists in 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.”

### **Awards Trifecta and University Service**

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 follows 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. Others preceded Dr. Kharif in winning the Service Award.

Additionally, the Department of History is quite possibly the most active service department on campus. Several members of the department serve on committees that are integral to the operation of the University (Academic and Administrative Council, Planning and Budgeting Committee, General Education Committee, etc.), and require a lot of time. That five of its members – half of the department – have been elected to serve on the Faculty Senate gives some indication as to our overall reputation on campus.

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.

### **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.

### **FOLLOW UP on IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES from the 2009 AUDIT**

Dept Goal #1: Require all History Majors to complete one of the following: Independent Study, Study Abroad or Directed Studies with Travel, or an Internship ("The 4910/4950/4905 Plan").

*Action Plan: A draft of the internship proposal is currently under construction. Pending concurrence from the visiting audit team and administration, we will move forward through the various curriculum committees with a target date for implementation of 2011.*

During our visit with the audit team, doubts began to surface regarding the feasibility of this plan. While all agreed on the potential benefits of the three components, questions were raised as to whether the department could, or should, require this of all its majors. That the audit team neither affirmed nor recommended this led to a reevaluation.

Foreign travel exposes the student to cultural diversity, encourages life-long learning, and promotes a global outlook. Study abroad can be the highlight of an undergraduate career, but is not for everybody. Opportunities are limited, can be somewhat costly, and are typically restricted to those with high grade point averages. Our internship program has grown substantially since 2009. Roughly a dozen students have completed the program, working for entities ranging from the White County Historical Society to the Cookeville Depot Museum, from the Putnam County Public Defender's Office to the Tennessee State Archives. Again, however, opportunities are limited, and typically are better suited to our high-achieving students.

It soon became clear that, were this made a requirement, independent study would become the default option for many of our students, particularly the weaker ones. This seemed a bad idea, as weak students tend to need classroom guidance more than others. Furthermore, independent study requires no small amount of effort from the faculty. Given the overloads already in place, the plan seemed inappropriate.

The department, however, has and will continue to offer and encourage foreign travel. Our internship program has grown dramatically and successfully, and independent study

opportunities remain available (five students are enrolled this semester, for example). All three have and will continue to augment the curricula of our students. But the department, following a reassessment, has backed away from any plan to require one of the three options of every major. That seems excessive, and in some cases, counterproductive.

Audit Team Recommendation #1:

*“Although the students had high praise for the advising they receive, the team feels there should be a more equitable distribution of the workload”*

The chair has followed the suggestion and has attempted to address the imbalance in advising. Every semester, as registration approaches, he has encouraged our majors to change advisors when their academic interests so warrant. This has had limited, arguably minimal effect, but he will continue such efforts. While much of the imbalance remains, this is only a true burden on the chair for one or two weeks per semester, and the department remains reluctant to assign advisers randomly, without student concurrence.

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 for the first time in the fall of 2013, seems to offer great potential for career development, augmenting the career counseling already included in History 3410.

D-Goal #2: Inquire regarding a formalized Pre-Law Program and revive Constitutional History.

*Action Plan: A letter has been sent to the Provost. A syllabus for Constitutional History is under development and will be ready by the time of the audit visit. Further action will depend on the response of the Provost and other interested parties.*

Audit Team Recommendation #2

*“The pre-law program should be pursued to allow students to plan.”*

Part B of this affirmed goal, the revival of a long dormant Constitutional History course, was a straightforward success. Dr. Wali Kharif prepared a syllabus, the course received approvals from all relevant curriculum committees, and Dr. Kharif successfully taught the course in the fall of 2012. He plans to do so again in 2014.

Part A, the pursuit of a formalized Pre-law program, has been much more of an adventure. In a time of fiscal difficulty, a formalized pre-law program, with the History Department playing a key role, seemed to offer growth potential without undue investment costs.

Initially, following our contact with then Provost Armistead, the department pursued the idea of a pre-law minor. This ran into opposition almost everywhere. Part of the problem was opposition to minors in general. More importantly, the courses that seemed ideally suited to a pre-law minor (such as Business Law and Criminal Justice courses) already are routinely booked to capacity. No one from those departments supported the multidisciplinary minor idea. It also became clear that other departments tended to view pre-law through different lenses, perhaps even regarding our initiative as encroachment on their turf. Our only successful collaboration was in creating a pre-law web-page designed for applicants and undecided majors.

Following the abandonment of the minor idea, the department moved to increase its own pre-law offerings. Most notably, we invited local attorneys to offer night courses on legal topics. 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. For Spring 2014, Dr. Troy Smith will offer a course on Native American Law. We plan to return to an attorney-led course next fall, and are currently considering the establishment of a permanent rotation of such courses.

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 will offer a similar seminar this spring.

Dept. Goal #3: Reorganize the 3410/4990 archive and establish individual student portfolios.

*Action Plan: The first part of this initiative is an ongoing process primarily involving the chair and secretary. The target date for completion is the end of the summer, 2010. All faculty must henceforth ensure that student papers are placed within the portfolios.*

The Henderson Hall construction severely interrupted progress. Papers from History 3410 and 4990 were placed in cardboard boxes and stored in room 118C. Most remain therein.

Regarding expanded student portfolios, three related problems remain. 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.

We are currently investigating possible electronic solutions, with a focus on a "Terabyte" drive. We would welcome any suggestions or advice of the Audit committee.

Audit Team recommendation #3

*"The department's student organizations should be more active in seeking financial support from university sources, such as Student Affairs, for student research and travel."*

Our organizations have solicited and have received funding at times. For example, our dean's office supported both the Lyceum and the Phi Alpha Theta picnic in 2013. Individual students have likewise successfully pursued funding. Recent examples include one who received support for a research trip to Ireland, and another who presented a 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 Phi Alpha Theta members.

Both Phi Alpha Theta and the History Club remain reluctant to go before the Student Monies Allocation committee, however, citing negative, even demeaning past experiences.

Department Goal #4: Increase outreach to our alumni

*Action Plan: The department website had been revised substantially. Plans for an alumni field trip are under discussion. Aside from those initiatives this goal is open-ended. We welcome input from the audit committee regarding other potential actions.*

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, as all the italicized names have been updated since 2009. 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.

We are hopeful, however, that the Phi Alpha Theta spring picnic in Dogwood Park can become an annual alumni gathering. Dozens of alums attended last year, and they will be invited again in 2014. We are also investigating social media options.

Department Goal #5: Teach History 1310 and incorporate it into the curriculum

*Action Plan: The course will be taught for the first time in the Fall of 2010. How to best fit it into the History curriculum will be determined at faculty meetings in the months ahead.*

This likely has been the most successful of our 2009 initiatives. Dr. George Webb did indeed teach the course for the first time in the Fall of 2010. It was so successful that he expanded it to a double section the following semester. It filled to capacity every semester since, even in the fall of 2013 when it became a 140-capacity triple section.

Evaluations from the course have been exemplary. 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).

Our only concern here is that Dr. Webb has announced his intention to retire in 2015. Replacing him will certainly be difficult, but must be a priority, for several reasons beyond History 1310.

Department Goal #6: Conduct regular student surveys in History 3410

*Action Plan: At least one survey will be conducted in each section of 3410 each semester.*

This has been done, albeit with a few exceptions. The surveys from Fall 2013 are currently under examination and will be made available to the committee upon its arrival.

Department Goal #7: Highlight undergraduate research via a Phi Alpha Theta Lyceum



*Action Plan: Plans are underway to host the first Lyceum in April, 2010.*

This rivals #5 as an unqualified success. Not only was the first Lyceum held in April 2010, but a second followed in April, 2011 and a third in February, 2013. Students have actively competed for spots on the program, with scholarships awarded to those with the best papers and/or the best presentation. Beginning in 2013 Dr. Susan Laningham (PAT advisor and chief organizer) added another event to the program, a multiple choice test, open to all attendees (not just presenters), with scholarship prizes for the highest scores. Last year, we had nearly forty students and even a few parents on hand for the six presentations, a catered lunch, and the test.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS AND MATRIX OF IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES**

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

Prior to the construction, the department used Henderson room 205 as a 75-capacity classroom during virtually every hour of the day. After the construction, the room is now limited to 36-48 students (It accommodates 36 somewhat comfortably. 48 is only possible with some students sitting between tables). Action Plan: We hereby request access to a large classroom as a priority.

If we cannot have such access now, the chair will persist in exploring possibilities to at least be included in a future plan for one.

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

Action Plan: Faculty have developed two new related courses since the last Audit, and local attorneys have taught three others. Additional course development will transpire by the next Audit in 2019. Law School related seminars will be continued.

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

Action Plan: Largely self-explanatory. Additionally, all faculty must henceforth ensure that student papers routinely are placed within the portfolios.

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

Action Plan: A subcommittee submitted an initial report on January 16. The faculty will review and revise their work between now and April.

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

Action Plan: Dr. Paula Hinton taught a "Maymester" course (two intensive weeks in May) for the first time in 2013. Dr. Wali Kharif reintroduced survey courses specifically designed for international students in 2012. Given continued enrollment pressures from international students, we will at least continue, and possibly expand, these experiments in 2014 and beyond.

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

Action Plan: Plans are underway to host the statewide Phi Alpha Theta conference in February. Lyceums will return in 2015 and afterward. Alumni will be invited to these and other events as appropriate. The faculty will give serious consideration to a possible social media presence.