

## ***INTRODUCTION***

### ***2022-2023 Program Overview Report***

This document provides background information on the Tennessee Tech University history program and the history faculty. The History Department faculty members discussed the review process and examined a number of related proposals during three Fall 2022 and two spring 2023 meetings and hereby submit this report.

### ***Past Reviews***

In 2009-2010, the History Department conducted its first Program Review and a second during the 2013-2014 academic year. The department's last review was in the 2017-2018 academic year. Dr. Lori Glover of St. Louis University was the reviewer. This year's review makes three in the last nine years, which perhaps is excessive for a department, which in Dr. Glover's words "is succeeding at every part of [its] mission." She noted that the "history professors at TTU are ready to meet whatever changes and challenges emerge. Faculty members are also supremely dedicated to student success, to rigorous course standards, and to teach excellence." Of course, Professor Glover made some suggestions, which are listed at the end of this document. Dr. Glover's report can be found in Appendix A.

### ***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 35,000 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 <https://www.tntech.edu/about/mission.php>.

The University's enrollment (headcount) is at 9,902 currently, but has largely been trending downward for the past ten years. In 2012, the total number of students enrolled amounted to 11,768. The six-year graduation rate has been on an upward trend for the past few years, improving from 54.4 percent for the fall 2013 student cohort to 60.2 percent for the fall 2016 student cohort. See TTU's Institutional Dashboard for historical trends on these figures [https://www.tntech.edu/iare/institutional\\_research/institutional\\_dashboards.php](https://www.tntech.edu/iare/institutional_research/institutional_dashboards.php).

The Department of History at TTU is one of the nine 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. There are currently forty-three (43) history majors at Tech. The department offers both the B.A and B.S. degrees. Twenty-seven (27) majors are enrolled in the B.S. program, while the remaining sixteen (16) are in the B.A. program. Both are 120-hour programs with the B.A. requiring more foreign language, while the B.S. contains more science. History majors take thirty-six (36) hours of history courses, including a historical methods

course and a senior seminar course.

Students can minor in history by taking fifteen (15) hours of history courses, six of which must be at the 3000 or 4000 level. As of the fall 2021 semester, there are approximately seventy-five (75) history minors. The History Department houses two interdisciplinary minors, Digital Humanities and Race and Ethnic studies, while history courses are included in several others: Religious Studies, Women and Gender Studies, Environmental Studies, International Studies, and Social Science. The Department of History has no master's program. More information about these minors can be found at <https://www.tntech.edu/cas/history/programsofstudy.php>

The Department of History has defined three program goals/student learning objectives, which are explained in detail below. At the beginning of each fall term, the chair submits an Institutional Effectiveness Report for the past academic year, describing the department's progress toward attaining its goals and demonstrating continuous improvement. These are modified as needed.

The department maintains a good relationship with the CAS and generally with the University administration as well. The department has been and remains supportive of interdisciplinary initiatives such as Environmental Studies, Women and Gender Studies, and Race and Ethnic Studies. As a recent example, the department played a major role in working across four academic departments to establish a Race and Ethnic Studies minor and four other academic departments to establish a Digital Humanities minor. The department is also generally appreciative of efforts to increase recruitment and retention, provided they do not lower standards. Indeed, the history faculty routinely discuss in meetings the department's efforts in these areas and are always considering new ideas. The department supports programs such as the Stonecipher lectures and Center Stage series, which enhance cultural enrichment. Academic freedom is generally respected at Tennessee Tech and institutions of faculty governance are well established and productive. The relationship at TTU between the faculty and the administration is good.

In the fall of 2016, the department converted a newly vacated faculty office into a student study area, which had been the #1 request of history students for years. It has proven tremendously popular, especially with commuter students or those in between classes. The four history classrooms in Henderson Hall are adequate for single sections of lower-division courses as well as upper-level ones. The largest, HH205, seats forty-two (42) students, while the smallest, HH214, seats eighteen (18). Single-section surveys usually have an enrollment of thirty (30) and upper-division courses have fifteen (15). Double sections typically contain approximately eighty-five (85), depending on the number of sections offered. The double sections must be taught in classrooms in other buildings under the control of other departments. Chief among the department's concerns remains its lack of a large classroom. Access throughout the week to an appropriately-sized classroom is the History Department's number one request and has been since the building was renovated in 2011.

### *A Short History of the Tennessee Tech History Department, 1929-2023*

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 Middle East. Faculty hired since 2000 further broadened the curriculum with courses in social, cultural, and Latin American history. More recent (since 2010) course additions include a "Science and World Cultures" survey, "History of Africa," "History of France," "History of Modern Germany," "The Holocaust," and "Appalachian Studies." Courses on public history and team-taught courses in popular culture and the history of medicine (the latter in conjunction with the School of Nursing), have also been added. Two new hires in 2018 greatly expanded the department's course offerings in African-American history, one of the goals following the 2018 Program Review. Those offerings include "Introduction to Race and Ethnic Studies," "Black Women in US History," "The Civil Rights Movement," and "Modern African-American History." The department has also expanded its pre-law offerings, with courses offered by regular faculty (Dr. Troy Smith) and a local attorney (Mr. Samuel Schiller). Among these courses are "American Indian Law," "Supreme Court: Gender, Race, and You," and "Using Law to Promote Social Change." Numerous courses have been offered as Special Topics courses, such as "Nazi Germany," "Poland," "History of India," "History of Comics," and "The Female Body in Western Culture."

From 2011-2015, following a change in the state funding formula that rewarded graduate programs, 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 work on this neared completion, however, the state changed another law, negating any fiscal incentive for teachers to obtain a master's degree. Without this encouragement, the program would likely be relegated perpetually to "low-producing" status. Under the current circumstances, and given current staffing shortages, the department is no longer actively pursuing the proposal.

### ***Impact of Covid-19***

Covid-19 significantly impacted the history faculty, and classroom instruction in general, for at least three semesters. During the spring 2020 term, when Covid-19 cases were rising rapidly, the University administration extended spring break for a week and instructed faculty to convert all of their courses to an online format. (Up to that point that term, the course material had been delivered in a traditional, in-person format.) When Tech resumed classes, they were all online. With very little notice, history faculty were left scrambling to prepare lecture notes, record videos, and upload into I-Learn course materials for the remainder of the semester. (All courses that the History Department offered in the summer of 2020 were also online.) When classes resumed in the fall 2020, history faculty taught courses in a variety of formats, including in person (small classes), hybrid, and live-stream, which continued for the spring 2021 semester as well. Needless to say, the transition was challenging, but the history faculty accomplished all of this on time and in a professional manner.

The history faculty did realize some benefit from the experience. For instance, some of the faculty who had been reluctant to teach online courses found that they rather enjoyed the experience, in particular the ease at which online examinations could be administered. Others who prepared lecture notes or recorded videos discovered that they are an expedient way provide lecture material to students who are absent from class and miss a lesson. These prepared materials also allow professors to cover a class when the faculty member is out for an illness, a conference, a meeting, etc. Additionally, the history faculty have found that holding department meetings via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which was begun during the Covid-19 pandemic, functions very well and is far more convenient for some than meeting in person. With the exception of the fall kick-off luncheon and the end-of-the-year assessment meeting, every department meeting since the spring of 2020 has been conducted online.

### ***Department Mission***

The department has a variety of missions. It serves the general student population by providing survey courses in American history. It offers Humanities General Education courses in Western Civilization, World History, and "Science and World Cultures." The department also provides a variety of upper-level course offerings for its own majors, secondary education majors, and non-majors needing elective hours and possessing an interest in history. 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 students minoring in history or religious studies, or majoring in interdisciplinary studies. History courses contribute greatly to the University's emphasis on cultural diversity. The department also shares TTU's commitment to the Upper Cumberland region. In addition to courses taught on Appalachia, the Upper Cumberland Humanities and Social Sciences Institute (Upper Cumberland Institute for short), was established in 1983 and is housed in the History Department. Dr. Troy Smith is its director and is currently collecting oral histories related to various aspects of the region.

The History Department's mission statement can be viewed at

<https://www.tntech.edu/cas/history/index.php>.

For a list of TTU General Education courses, see

[https://catalog.tntech.edu/content.php?catoid=34&navoid=7308#TTU Courses Recommended for the TBR General Education Core](https://catalog.tntech.edu/content.php?catoid=34&navoid=7308#TTU_Courses_Recommended_for_the_TBR_General_Education_Core).

## ***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. The SACSCOC reviews require continuous improvement, including the yearly development, assessment and modification of strategic goals. The Department of History has three major Student Learning Objectives (SLOs):

**SLO 1: Students will demonstrate the ability to research and write a scholarly paper of professional quality, and 70 percent will score a “C” or higher in History 499X, the senior capstone course.**

SLO 2: The department desires to instill in students an appreciation of the past, to include a desire to explore history beyond the classroom.

SLO 3: History majors will demonstrate a reasonable command of general factual knowledge.

The History Department's student learning outcomes are clear and measurable. The department utilizes appropriate data/evidence to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes and takes proper action to ensure continuous improvement. The department's Institutional Effectiveness Reports document assessment data and continuous improvement actions. The 2021-2022 Institutional Effectiveness Report can be found in Appendix B.

The History Department's overarching goal is to assist with the University's Mission and Strategic Plan. The mission of Tennessee Tech University, as stated on its website, is: “Tennessee's technological university creates, advances, and applies knowledge to expand opportunity and economic competitiveness. As a STEM-infused, comprehensive institution, Tennessee Tech delivers enduring education, impactful research, and collaborative service.” The History Department's program aligns with the University's mission.

The History program also supports the University's Strategic Plan, which includes four target areas: Education for Life, Innovation in All We Do, Exceptional Stewardship, and Engagement for Impact. The four areas of the University's Strategic Plan can be found at

<https://www.tntech.edu/strategic/index.php>. For the department's contribution to the Strategic

Plan, see Appendix C.

### *Survey Courses*

The Department of History serves a diverse student body. As a result, the department's learning objectives vary accordingly. Most students are other majors taking the required American History survey sequence. These sections (History 2010 and History 2020) account for nearly 65 percent of the department's sections, and over 70 percent of its students. All Tennessee Tech students except engineering majors, roughly 80 percent 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 <https://www.tntech.edu/cas/gened/index.php>.

Additionally, the department serves students who take Western Civilization, World History, or (since 2009) "Science and World Cultures" to fill a humanities requirement. (Tennessee Tech is currently considering adding courses that fulfill the humanities requirement, and the History Department has other lower-level courses that could be included.) As is the case with American history, the basic Learning Objectives for General Education Humanities courses are centrally defined at <https://www.tntech.edu/cas/gened/learning-outcomes.php>. All faculty are required to note these General Education requirements on their syllabi.

Over the years, the history faculty have considered ways to improve the survey courses. For instance, the faculty have spent considerable time in department meetings discussing ways to reduce DFW rates in these courses without sacrificing academic rigor. For instance, the faculty examined whether the two American History surveys should be divided into three different courses, which would reduce the amount of material for each, but decided to leave the survey as two courses, with the division at 1877 or at 1898, at the discretion of individual faculty members. The faculty discussed the potential effect of requiring four exams in the survey courses, which would reduce the amount of material on each examination, but thought it best to leave that decision to individual faculty members. Also, the faculty discussed ways to measure classroom success and wholeheartedly decided to administer pre- and post-tests in the survey courses. (The faculty later decided to administer these assessment tests in all courses.)

The department's 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 memorization of names, wars, and dates. There is an additional motive. The survey courses serve as a recruitment ground for history majors. Less than half of history students start out as majors, and most who decide to enter

the program do so after taking one of the survey courses.

### ***Upper Division Courses***

Those broader historical concepts mentioned above constitute the learning objectives that the faculty want history majors (and others enrolled in upper-division courses) to attain. These include the ability to think historically, to understand causality, to research effectively, to read critically and in context, to identify, make, and defend an argument, 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.

The 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. Faculty are required, as with the survey courses, to state their learning objectives clearly on their upper-division syllabi.

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

“History 3410 Historical Methods” is designed to introduce new history majors to the discipline, providing them with the skills they need to become successful students and to do well in their upper division classes. Although the course content may vary depending on the professor, the course is intended to introduce the student to historiography, 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*, how to prepare a bibliography, how to make a presentation, etc. It concludes with the student producing what is, for most, their first research paper. The course was initially designed for history majors, but History 3410 is now required of Secondary Education/History majors as well. Enrollment is limited to these two groups of students.

Traditionally, all incoming freshmen and transfers (from other majors or other schools) were required to take History 3410 during their first semester as history majors. However, disappointing feedback and high DFW rates prompted a faculty discussion that resulted in a decision to postpone the requirement for freshmen until the second term. The course is taught on a rotational basis currently among four of the history faculty, although the department at times has discussed establishing a regular rotation among all of the faculty—similar to Senior Seminar. This course has been discussed more at department meetings than any other, including those in preparation for the 2023 Program Review. The History Department welcomes any insight on either the content or timing of such a course.

In 2007, the department premiered “History 1066 First Year Connections,” which was the department’s version of “University 1020 The Freshmen Experience.” Taught each fall, the course was designed to introduce freshmen majors to the University, the department, and each other. It provided general information that was to help students adjust to university life and achieve

academic success. Recently, Tennessee Tech abandoned its commitment to University 1020 and stopped compensating those teaching it. As a result, in early fall 2021, the history faculty unanimously agreed to delete the History 1066 from its department offerings. Realizing the value of the course with regard to student retention and mentoring, the history faculty have been discussing in their departmental meetings some mentoring alternatives but have made no final decisions.

### ***Senior Seminar***

The History Department introduced the Senior Seminar in spring 2000. The course is offered once a semester and offers the student an intensive experience in research, writing, and oral presentation. As the history program's capstone course, the major requirement is that students complete a twenty to twenty-five-page research paper of professional quality, although faculty may include other lesser requirements. Each faculty member teaches the History 499X course based on a permanent rotation, although on occasion there has been a need to adjust the schedule to accommodate staffing disruptions. Each faculty member focuses on subject matter in his or her area of expertise. The expected outcomes are the most extensive in the department. History faculty utilize a standard rubric when evaluating senior seminar papers. The complete list of Senior Seminars, the forthcoming rotation, the expected outcomes, and grading rubric can be found in Appendix D.

## ***CURRICULUM AND TEACHING METHODS***

### ***Overview of the Major***

College of Arts and Sciences 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 both halves of the American History survey, "Historical Methods," two courses in either Western Civilization or World History, 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, for a total of thirty-six (36) hours. Given the diverse goals of history majors, no formal system of concentration is required. Any informal area focus is left to individual students in cooperation with their academic advisers or department faculty.

Western Civilization has been taught for decades. World History 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 history faculty debated for some time the merits of requiring Western Civilization or World History, and has at times considered eliminating the older sequence. Ultimately, the faculty decided to retain both, and allow majors the option of either. Both previous reviews and this one as well affirmed this decision. In 2018, the faculty considered, and rejected, the idea of requiring both.



The History Department's role in providing historical content to Secondary Education/History majors also played a part in this decision. These majors are required to take three out of the four Western Civilization and World History survey courses. This additional requirement proved successful in reinforcing their basic historical knowledge. Indeed, for several years after its implementation, the results were a 100 percent Praxis Exam pass rate. The 2005 SACS review team cited the department's efforts as a prime example of "closing the loop" regarding assessment.

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

Both the BA and BS also require an upper-division social science course, and an upper-level 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.

All BA students have a minor in foreign languages built in to their program and are encouraged to have a second minor. The BS students are allowed to choose their minor. The history faculty remain convinced that a minor, 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. A master's or Ph.D. in history is the goal of some. Others plan to enroll in 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 history graduates is included in Appendix E.

The diversity of history majors further argues against extensive prerequisites within the program. While the history faculty have considered the merits, for example, of requiring Western Civilization as a prerequisite to upper-division European history courses, the faculty do not wish to exclude a student with a passion for World War II or the Renaissance from enrolling in an intensive course in their area of interest. The department occasionally gains additional majors as a result of such experiences. The History Department also maintains positive relations with the community. Many upper-division history courses have a handful of auditors enrolled in them every semester.

The history faculty discuss curricular matters in department meetings. Much of the discussion has centered on the BA and BS degree requirements, particularly how comparable they are in terms of

academic rigor. Faculty consider the eighteen-hour language requirement for the BA (plus eight hours of science), more demanding than the fifteen-hour science requirement (plus eight hours of foreign language) for the BS. The History Department faculty discussed revising the BS requirements to include more language or math but have decided to leave it alone for the time being. Having recently discovered that the history programs' science requirements were out of date when compared to Tennessee Tech's general education science courses, the faculty discussed the matter in a department meeting and agreed to expand the program's list of acceptable science courses.

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

Each semester, the History Department typically offers approximately thirty (30) sections of American History (including both early and modern), four (4) sections of both World History and Western Civilization (two each), and fourteen (14) upper-division courses, although this may vary slightly from semester to semester. Upper-division course offerings are at the discretion of the faculty members, in consultation with the chair, but are encouraged to establish a regular rotation to facilitate advisement and planning for both faculty and students. Each term, the department offers one section of "Historical Methods" and one Senior Seminar course. Select faculty also teach outside the department. For example, Dr. Troy Smith teaches an honors course in American history each semester, and Dr. Allen Driggers often teaches a course for Interdisciplinary Studies as well as an online E-Campus course. The department offers as many as eight or nine American History survey sections online and at least one online upper-division course each term. The History Department also utilizes adjuncts on a regular basis to increase its upper-division course offerings. Dr. Edward Beason, who is Assistant Director of the Accessible Education Center, holds a Ph.D. in Public History and has taught "History 4420 Public History" and "History 3430 Digital History," while Megan Atkinson, the Volpe Library archivist, offers "History 3420 Archives Management and Research" every other spring. And, Samuel Schiller, a nationally known attorney, teaches a "History 490X Special Topics" law class each fall.

Through "History 490X Special Topics" courses, the history faculty are able to teach new courses as a "trial run" without having the course approved through the CAS and University Curriculum Committees. The history faculty have repeatedly taken advantage of this to broaden the department's offerings to include courses such as "Nazi Germany," the "History of India," "The Crusades," and "The Female Body in Western Culture," among others. Courses that do well can be added to the department's regular course offerings once approved by the curriculum committees. For a list of Special Topics courses, see Appendix F.

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 pop culture.

The department's European offerings are more limited but have significantly improved with the addition of Dr. Elizabeth Propes in 2010 and Dr. Allen Driggers in 2015. Dr. Propes has added

courses such as “History of France,” “Modern Germany,” and “The Holocaust.” Dr. Driggers offers two courses on British history (early and modern), and the “British Empire and Commonwealth.” Among the other European courses offered by the History Department are “Russia,” “Rome” (with a travel component), “Medieval Europe,” “Renaissance and Reformation,” “Absolutism and Enlightenment,” “French Revolution and Napoleon,” and courses that focus on the World Wars.

History courses classified as “World” are relatively scattered. These include: “Native American Studies,” “Russia,” “The Modern Middle East,” “History of Japan,” “History of China,” “History of India,” “History of Africa,” and “History of Mexico.” The retirement of an Asian specialist and a failed search for a replacement has forced the department to be creative. For instance, three professors (Drs. Smith, Birdwell, and Roberts) combined to teach the “History of Japan” in 2013, 2015, 2018, and 2021. Dr. Propes has taken over the China course, and she also introduced a new African history course in 2011. For a list of current course offerings and a curriculum map, see Appendix G.

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. In 2010 Dr. George Webb created “History 1310 Science and World Cultures” to satisfy TBR Humanities outcomes. Immensely popular in its initial offering, the course was expanded 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 by teaching a single section of History 1310 online each term. For students interested in independent study, “History 491X Directed Studies” allows students to do so under the supervision of a professor. How professors structure the course is completely up to the faculty member.

During the 2009 review the faculty conducted an extensive examination of course offerings at other institutions of similar size. It was updated in 2022 and is included as Appendix H. This comparison of Tech’s history program with those of peer institutions offered some suggestions for curricular expansion, but revealed no glaring deficiencies for an undergraduate history curriculum staffed by nine full-time faculty.

### ***Class Size and Structure***

The History Department’s survey courses (“History 2210-Early Western Civilization,” “History 2220-Modern Western Civilization,” “History 2310-Early World History,” “History 2320-Modern World History,” “History 1310-Science and World Cultures,” “History 2010-Early American History,” and “History 2020-Modern American History”) are typically taught in single-sections of 30-32 students and double-sections of 80-85 students. The single sections are taught in the department’s four smaller classrooms in Henderson Hall. The double sections are held in whatever lecture hall the department can obtain, given its lack of a large classroom.

In 2012, in response to increased enrollment of international students, the History Department began

offering a special section of American History each semester. Designed to promote greater retention, these classes ceased with the retirement of Dr. Wali Kharif in 2017, which also corresponded with a decline in international enrollment. The department faculty have discussed the possibility of reviving the international section, but are uncertain if the course is needed now that Tech's number of international students has declined. The history faculty are open to teaching an international section in the future, if deemed necessary.

The department traditionally offers a single section of Honors 2010 in the fall and 2020 in the spring. Honors sections are limited to enrollments of 25.

Upper-division courses were similarly taught in sections limited to 25. In the last few years, the department voted to lower the cap from 25 to 20 then to 15. This has proven useful in both lessening the crowds in popular courses and ensuring that others reach sustainable enrollment. The new 15-student cap does not apply to "Historical Methods," but typically the course has fewer than 25 each semester it is taught. At times, when freshmen history major enrollment is up, the department has offered two sections of "Historical Methods." Enrollment in "Historical Methods" requires a registration permit issued by the department's administrative associate. This limits the course to history majors and social studies education majors.

Enrollments are strong in all of the survey courses—especially in the fall of 2022 when Tech welcomed its third largest freshmen class in University history. Single section enrollments reached 32 and doubles 83.

Tennessee Tech offers several sessions each summer, including an intersession term in May, two one-semester sessions, and one session that lasts the entire summer. The History Department offers courses in all of these. At one time, the department offered only one or two online courses during the summer, but a recent increase in demand (perhaps aided by Covid-19), led the department to increase its online offerings—eight in the summer of 2022, nearly all of which had strong enrollments.

### ***Teaching Methods Currently Employed***

The history faculty employ a variety of methods in their teaching. They consider diversity an asset to student learning and it aids pupils who possess different learning styles. While lecture likely remains the most common approach, some faculty supplement it with discussion. Others require oral presentations. 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.

History, perhaps better than any other discipline, can still be well served via lecture format. The ability to weave captivating stories into history lectures often gives professors 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 the history curriculum – “Historical Methods” and courses in Public History, in particular are better-suited to hands-on learning -- but for the most part, lecture remains the most common teaching methodology, particularly in the survey classes. All employ some additional methods or materials to enhance learning. Faculty have long incorporated lecture outlines, maps, illustrations, video clips, readings, and handouts into their presentations. The use of PowerPoint is common. Most expose their students to primary source material, whether in the written or visual form. Audio-visual materials increasingly have become a significant part of the department's instructional program. Internet access, in particular, has expanded audio-visual possibilities. Not only do professors utilize the technology in the classrooms, but they also post course materials on the web-based instructional system known as I-Learn. Department faculty, however, always have been willing to consider ways to enhance their teaching. Indeed, this is a topic routinely discussed in department meetings.

Regarding assessing student achievement, faculty are left to choose when to test, how often to test, and which testing techniques to employ. The department faculty prefer essay exams in upper division courses, regarding these as the best way to observe the full extent of a student's knowledge. Some professors also employ objective questions in those courses. These include multiple choice, fill in the blank, identification, map exercises, true and false, etc. Objective testing is most common in the survey classes.

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

Every upper-division course involves a major writing assignment. Indeed, this is a department requirement. It is left to the professor to determine whether that assignment will be research-based, a review essay, or some other form of paper, but each course is designed to improve research and writing skills. Faculty often provide assistance along the way, with most offering to critique rough drafts, and some actually requiring students to submit a draft before the final paper is accepted. Professors 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.

### ***Sources of Best Practices***

The History Department's sources of best practices are diverse. Discussions of teaching are often found in 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. 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 annual meeting of the American Historical Association. Faculty also attend university-sponsored forums, and have participated in such projects as the Quality Enhancement Program (QEP) and the Teaching Quality Initiative (TQI), whose stated goal is to encourage best-practices in evidence-based teaching and

learning in university classes.

Most importantly, the department faculty remain willing to share teaching methods and strategies both formally and informally. In the department meetings, faculty routinely share specific instructional issues they have faced as well as discuss possible improvements in teaching and learning. For example, during Covid-19, the department faculty considered ways to administer examinations in a secure manner and discussed the benefits and drawbacks of utilizing the Lockdown Browser and Webcam Recorder during online testing. These discussions carried over into 2021, as many professors preferred administering their exams online in I-Learn even when the course was taught in person. Other professors were forced to modify how they administered examinations in I-Learn. For instance, one faculty member indicated that he was experiencing higher than usual grades in his survey courses. After a discussion in a faculty meeting, his colleagues learned that he was using the Lockdown Browser but not the Webcam Monitor. After hearing the perspectives of his colleagues, he altered how he administered his exams the following semester, requiring students to use both the Lockdown Browser and the Webcam Monitor for each exam, and his grades returned to what they had been prior to Covid-19.

The history faculty have also discussed issues such as whether or not to give the students potential essay topics before a test (study guides), 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, the value of pre and post-tests, and so on. To reiterate, faculty members routinely discuss among themselves the teaching techniques they employ in both department meetings as well as informally. The faculty are constantly sharing ideas not only of what is done in their courses, but also 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. The history faculty believe that requiring professors to use the same methods would diminish the overall student experience.

In recent years, the faculty have discussed which major themes and concepts students in introductory courses should retain. This led to further discussion during 2018 of whether there should be a common examination administered to students in these classes. While the faculty agreed 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 of teaching 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. How they are employed in the classroom, however, is left to each professor. Some prefer handouts or items posted in I-Learn, while others utilize a primary source 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," the department is reluctant to define just how common the student experience should be.

One good example of the History Department's 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, such as a degree of common coverage, while facilitating ordering and buyback issues. The department faculty have at times discussed the possibility of requiring a common text for the American History surveys and have consistently voted overwhelmingly against this. Rising textbook costs has been one major reason given. Another is that many professors are able (and prefer) to provide the factual information in their lectures and wish to reserve book requirements for more those works that are more in depth, such as monographs, anthologies, or journal articles. This seems unlikely to change anytime soon.

### ***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 departments), 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 History Department sponsors two student organizations: Phi Alpha Theta and the History Club. Phi Alpha Theta (PAT) is the international history honor society with over 950 chapters nationwide. Membership is by invitation only, to students who have demonstrated excellence and possess a grade point average of 3.0 or above. The History Club is open to anyone interested in history, regardless of major, class rank, or grade point average.

Phi Alpha Theta has at times hosted a special program designed to highlight undergraduate research. The first "History Lyceum," the brainchild of Dr. Susan Laningham (PAT advisor at the time), was held in April 2010. It afforded students the opportunity to present their course research papers in a history conference-like 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. Dr. Allen Driggers, the current PAT advisor, revived the Lyceum in the spring of 2022 and is in the process of organizing the event for the spring of 2023. Because of the Lyceum's success and popularity, Professor Driggers is considering expanding the event to both the fall and spring semesters.

The History Club and PAT members have participated in a variety of day trips, most commonly to various cultural sites in Nashville or more recently in Knoxville, when students visited a replica of

Columbus's ship the *Pinta* in October 2021. Fundraising activities, including an annual book sale, have helped make this and other events possible. Both PAT and the History Club host a variety of social activities from a new student mixer to movie or game nights with the faculty. Both organizations have also facilitated the formation of study groups. The History Club, in particular, is one of the department's most effective recruitment tools. Indeed, several individual students have indicated to Dr. Laura Smith, the current faculty advisor, that they switched their major to history because of it.

### ***Guest Speakers***

The History Department has typically hosted at least one guest speaker per semester since 2000. Most notable is the J. Michael Winchester Lecture Series held every spring and made possible by Mr. Winchester, a graduate of the department. (Mr. Winchester also sponsors a scholarship for history majors and has at times assisted with travel funding.) The History Department, along with the Department of Sociology and Political Science, plays an essential role in planning the annual Constitution Day program at Tech. Dr. Kent Dollar has served as chair of the Constitution Day Committee since its inception in 2005. Made possible by a generous donation, Constitution Day at Tennessee Tech is sponsored by Dr. Nolan Fowler, a former member of the history faculty who taught a Constitutional Law course. His endowment allows the committee to seek out nationally known speakers to deliver a talk on some aspect of the US Constitution. 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. A sampling of the wide array of speakers and diversity of topics can be found in Appendix I.

### ***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, the department initiated its first foreign trips, often associated with a class. Dr. Susan Laningham has led trips to Rome (2006, 2009, 2012, 2014, 2016, and 2019), 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 led a student trip to Paris (2017), her second such trip (2014), and accompanied a Foreign Languages group to Morocco in 2018. The department offers domestic trips as well. In 2009, Dr. Kent Dollar took students to Corinth, Miss. and to Shiloh National Military Park, and he took two groups of students to Williamsburg, Jamestown, and Yorktown (2008 & 2010). Drs. Propes and Roberts took a group through Georgia and South Carolina in 2013. Dr. Roberts and Mr. Philip Davis took a group to Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington and Gettysburg



in 2014. Dr. Troy Smith took another group to Selma, Alabama, for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary march in 2015. Dr. Krystal Akehinmi took students to the Civil Rights Museum in Nashville in 2019. Other field trips include day trips to Chattanooga and Shiloh, Columbia and Oak Ridge, Pall Mall and Nashville, Kennesaw Mountain, and Chickamauga. Covid-19 halted the field trips for 2020 and for much of 2021, however. In 2022, Dr. Arthur Banton took his sports history class to the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame in Knoxville, and Dr. Propes' class walked down to the Cookeville History Museum and the Depot Museum.

The department routinely alerts its students to possibilities for educational enrichment via study abroad and student exchange and have a bulletin board dedicated to it. Several have taken advantage of such opportunities. Department graduates have studied in Spain, France, Italy, Belgium, Germany, Sweden, 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***

In 2010, Dr. Michael Birdwell spearheaded department efforts to organize a consistent and effective internship program. Basing his proposal on previously successful practices in other departments, he developed internship requirements and designed History 4940, a three-credit course for interns. Since inception, 21 students have completed 24 internships with 18 different entities, including at the TTU Archives, WCTE (the local PBS station), the Tennessee Division of Archaeology, the Great War Commission, and the Tennessee Historical Commission. Students can complete a total of six internship credit hours by taking History 4940 and History 4991. The internship requirements can be found at <https://www.tntech.edu/cas/history/historyinternships.php>, and a list of recent participants and their employers are included as Appendix J.

### ***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. In the past, departmental faculty have advised 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 History Department, departmental scholarships are available. The Winchester, Huddleston-Allen, Langlois, and Jones Scholarships are awarded each year based upon excellence in writing, grades, and need. Scholarship award amounts vary, but often are quite substantial. Indeed, in the spring of 2022, history major Jaden Mullins, the winner of the Winchester Scholarship, was awarded \$5,000. 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 the history faculty and can amount to as much as \$500 each.

### ***Advisement***

With the establishment of the Launchpad Student Success Advising Center in the spring of 2021 and the CAS Student Success Center offering to take over the role of advisement for all college departments, the history faculty began discussing whether they wanted to continue to play a role in student advisement. The discussion, for the most part, revolved around the faculty's interest in mentoring students, who, may for instance, want to pursue a graduate degree. In the end, the history faculty agreed to hand over to the experts in the Student Success Center the nuts and bolts of advising for all majors, while the faculty would continue to counsel students on graduate school or career options.

To make things even easier for students to chart their progress, the department maintains flow charts for both the BA and BS degrees. These are available in the departmental office, and are posted on the departmental website under Programs of Study. See

<https://www.tntech.edu/cas/history/programsofstudy.php>. Students can also track their academic progress using Degree Works.

### ***FACULTY***

#### ***Credentials***

The History Department currently consists of nine (9) full-time faculty members (ten if you count Dr. Jeff Roberts, who is currently serving as interim dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and typically teaches a course each fall). One of the nine is an instructor who teaches only American History surveys. The department is currently short one tenure-track position with the passing of Dr. Michael Birdwell in the spring of 2022 and is in the process of conducting a search to replace him. The department also employs a temporary, full-time instructor and four (4) part-time faculty members. The temporary, full-time instructor holds a Ph.D. One of the adjuncts recently earned a Ph.D. in Public History, two hold a J.D., and the other has a master's degree in history. The temporary instructor position is funded out of Dr. Roberts' line, which remains in the department. 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 while the instructor is ABD. 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, Purdue University, Rutgers University, the University of Tennessee, and the University of South Carolina. Seven of the nine are tenured, including the instructor. The two assistant professors were hired in 2018 and will be going up for tenure and promotion either next year or the year after. (The Provost

offered every tenure-track assistant professor a one-year exception because of Covid-19.)

Part-time and temporary faculty are not eligible for tenure and are not expected to engage to the same degree in research, institutional service, and public service. The full-time faculty members, their specialties, and selected career highlights are listed in order of seniority in Appendix K. Full vitae are available upon request.

### ***Selection of Faculty***

When the History Department hires a new faculty member, it follows official guidelines. The faculty establish criteria for employment and initiate a nationwide advertising campaign. Candidates upload their application materials electronically into PeopleAdmin, which search committee members then review. 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.

Having no graduate program to produce potential adjuncts, the History Department has at times experienced difficulty finding suitable part-time instructors. Fortunately, the four who currently serve in this capacity are of good quality and are reliably available to teach each semester. 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. Oftentimes, an adjunct professor has departed when he or she received a full-time job elsewhere.

### ***Teaching Loads***

The standard teaching load for the History Department is twelve (12) hours (4 sections/courses) per semester. The remaining three (3) credit hours are divided between research time, student mentoring, and service work according to an Agreement on Responsibilities. These are signed each spring following consultation between the faculty and the chair. (Tennessee Tech is currently experimenting with a new, online evaluation program that will be fully implemented in 2024.)

The teaching load is the highest among the humanities departments in the CAS (Mathematics is comparable), and is higher than the normal load in the sciences and other colleges of the University. Most faculty on campus teach a 3/3 load. Each faculty member typically teaches one upper-division course of fifteen (15), and a corresponding number of survey sections, which usually includes a single section of thirty (30) and a double section of eighty (80-85). Although most faculty members teach one upper-division course each term, some teach two. The department's two European

specialists routinely teach two upper-division courses each term to boost the department's offerings, as fewer students enroll in the World History and Western Civilization courses.

Instructors, both tenured and temporary, teach fifteen (15) hours (5 sections/courses). The chair teaches six (6) credit hours per semester (a single-section survey and an upper-division course), and handles routine administration of the department. The four adjunct professors' teaching load ranges from one course/section to three, the maximum allowed during a semester. Three out of the four of the adjunct professors teach only American History surveys (often at night), while the fourth teaches a law course each fall.

Staffing shortages necessitate the regular faculty to teach overloads, sometimes double overloads, on a consistent basis. These overload sections are staffed on a voluntary basis.

### ***Staff***

The department has one full-time administrative assistant. Ms. Foster's administrative and organizational skills are without parallel. Whether ordering supplies, scheduling classes, or completing and preserving the extensive amount of paperwork required by the administration, she fulfills her duties professionally, cheerfully, and always on time. It is important to note that Ms. Foster performs all these tasks while continuing to perform all the day-to-day duties needed to keep the department running in the very efficient fashion. Almost always, if she does not know the answer to a question, she can locate the applicable information or knows whom to contact to find the answer. Such knowledge is of great value and helps to keep the department running smoothly and efficiently. Ms. Foster's abilities have garnered the attention of the University, as she has won numerous awards. For instance, she was selected as the recipient of the Tech Togetherness Award for 2021-2022. The award recognizes those who "bridge the gaps and create stronger relationships between administrators, faculty, staff, and the Tech community at large." The department also makes use of work study students, when available.

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

History as a discipline is not served by one particular organization with a final say regarding assessment. Indeed, attempts to impose common standards across the 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." The debate continues today regarding issues of race and racism, LGBTQ+ student rights, and student access to library books. College campuses are not immune to these types of debates. Just consider the arguments over Critical Race Theory, and state legislatures (including Tennessee's) passing laws attempting to restrict what can be taught in college classrooms. Add to that an open undergraduate curriculum in which students take a wide range of courses, the diverse career goals of history students, and the very nature of the subject, and assessment becomes highly problematic. The History Department maintains that assessment in the field needs to be approached

with a great deal of flexibility.

### *Standardized Testing*

As an example of the challenges the history faculty face regarding assessment, consider the department's 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 provide neither information helpful to the program, nor do they assess 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 History, Western Civilization, and American History surveys. Yet many of history majors are transfer or dual-enrollment students, who did not even take these courses at Tennessee Tech. Furthermore, the ACAT proficiency exam the History Department administers in its Senior Seminar course has four content areas: US 1820-1890, US Colonial to 1763, US Military/Diplomatic, and US 1763 to 1820, and offers far less information regarding student achievement in the World or European courses.

Since switching to the ACAT in 2009, the scores have been relatively impressive, albeit with a few exceptions. The national average for history has hovered around 500 for two decades. In 2011-2012, history majors made an average score of 601. 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. The 2014-2015 results were again above national norms, with an overall net of 530. Results in 2015-2016 approached outstanding. Nine of eleven students scored above average (including one in the 99<sup>th</sup> percentile). 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.

Scores since 2016-2017, have prompted more reflection and analysis. One student did well in the spring of 2017 (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 the department has recorded. The US vs. Europe challenge noted above may well have returned in a few cases. There is also growing concern that many of the History Department's cutting-edge courses, whose focus is on non-traditional topics, may be leaving graduates unprepared for the basic factual focus of the ACAT.

Furthermore, there is little incentive for students to perform well on such standardized tests; there is no penalty for doing poorly on the examination. Following several instances of meager student performance on the test, the department faculty decided to require the test as part of the Senior Seminar course. The challenges persist, however. In the fall of 2021, nine students took the ACAT

exam. Although one student ranked in the 93<sup>rd</sup> percentile, another scored in the 18<sup>th</sup>. This pattern repeated in the spring of 2022, with one student reaching the 92<sup>nd</sup> percentile while another scored in the 9<sup>th</sup>. Scoring in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> percentiles is simply unacceptable for any senior history major who is completing the requirements for his or her degree. In department meetings, the history faculty have begun discussing means to incentivize pupils taking the ACAT. Among the potential solutions discussed is to assign the exam some weight in calculating the course's final grade or by excusing students from an assignment if they score high. The discussion on this matter continues. For more on the ACAT scores, see the department's Institutional Effectiveness Report, Appendix B.

In 2009-2010, the history faculty discussed the possible benefits of replacing the national exam with one created by the history faculty, but decided against doing so. With professors' assorted methodology and varied content, determining what material should be included on the test would have proved immensely problematic. Furthermore, utilizing a faculty-created examination would deny the History Department the ability to measure its majors' knowledge against others nationally.

The History Department continues to administer the ACAT exam but remains skeptical of the results despite generally positive trends. The challenges mentioned above suggest that pre and post testing, course grades, and documentation of graduate achievements, should be employed and maintained alongside standardized test scores to measure student achievement accurately.

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

Since 2005, the history faculty have employed pre-tests and post-tests in their courses to assess teaching effectiveness. Not only do such tests provide a straightforward measure of "value added" in history courses, but the pre-test also helps to identify gaps in students' existing knowledge. Since implementation, the tests have shown positive results in every case (individual summaries are available upon request). The 2009 review team affirmed the department's 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 one of the most effective ways to gauge effectiveness in the classroom, especially for historical content, and are required in all history courses.

Another indicator of classroom success are the grades earned by students in their history classes. In such a content-driven environment, grades are useful indicators of instructional success. Faculty use a wide-variety of assignments (papers, exams, quizzes, presentations, etc.) to assess student learning. Discussion of the effectiveness of these methods is an ongoing practice in the department, both in meetings and informally among the faculty. Each professor is constantly evaluating his or her effectiveness. Faculty Grade Distribution Reports have been available to the faculty for some time, and starting in the spring of 2022, are discussed in each faculty member's annual evaluation

with the department chair.

### ***Capstone Course***

Assessing the broader program goals expected of history majors is challenging, and to do this, the department's capstone course, History 499X Senior Seminar, is an essential element. As mentioned above, the course contains a major research component, and in their research papers, students must demonstrate satisfactory competence. During previous reviews, the department continued earlier efforts to define what is required of a successful senior seminar paper and introduced a scoring rubric in the spring of 2021. For the goals of the Senior Seminar and the scoring rubric, See Appendix D.

The History Department maintains an archive of papers from History 3410 and History 499X, which includes a history major's first research paper and what should be his or her finest writing sample. Comparing the two can provide further evidence of student achievement.

### ***IDEA Student Evaluations***

Students evaluate members of the history faculty each semester by means of an institution-wide program called IDEA. The department consistently ranks among the highest of TTU's departments. This is true despite the fact that the Department of History has second highest student-to-faculty ratios in the College of Arts and Sciences (behind Biology). Below is a table listing the average scores of the history faculty in the areas of "Overall, I rate this instructor an excellent teacher" and "Overall, I rate this course as excellent" by semester since the department's last program review in 2018. The scores are out of a possible "5." (Breakdown by individual faculty member is available upon request.) Possible responses are,

- 1-Definitely False
- 2-More False than True
- 3-In Between
- 4-More True than False
- 5-Definitely True

#### **Student Evaluation Scores from Fall 2019 to Spring 2022**

Fall 2019	Spring 2020	Fall 2020	Spring 2021	Fall 2021	Spring 2022
Instr.=4.31	Instr.=4.01	Instr.=4.24	Instr.=4.31	Instr.=4.39	Instr.=4.39
Course=4.21	Course=3.91	Course=4.12	Course=4.21	Course=4.26	Course=4.23

The six-year average for "Instructor" is 4.275 while the average for the "Course" during that same period is 4.156. If the Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 semesters are removed (because of Covid-19), the averages increase to 4.35 and 4.227, respectively.

The faculty have discussed the value of student evaluations, in particular, whether good evaluations reflect only courses the students perceive as less challenging. While the department believes 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. Faculty are free to design and employ such additional evaluation instruments as they see fit.

### ***ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF QUALITY ASSURANCE***

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

Since May of 2005, the History Department has held a special end-of-the-year assessment meeting, at which the history faculty review the department's accomplishments from the previous year and set goals as noted above for the following one. (The department skipped 2009, owing to the impending Program Review, and 2010, owing to its recent completion, and 2020-2022 because of Covid-19). These assessment meetings may be the best example of working collaboratively that can be demonstrated by the history faculty. Among the highlights are the initiation of value-added testing (pre-test and post-test) in 2005 and conducting a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis in 2006. (Summarized in Appendix L). At the 2007 meeting, each faculty member composed a personal multi-year plan, while in 2008 the department established the senior seminar rotation. The meeting in 2011 witnessed an extensive discussion of DFW rates and retention plans. The following year's meeting focused on pre-law issues, and 2013's meeting was devoted primarily to the now dormant master's degree proposal. At the 2014 meeting, the faculty defined promotion requirements and basic faculty duties. The meeting in 2015 continued the discussion of standards generally, while issues of objective testing and cheating issues highlighted the 2016 session. The assessment meeting at the end of the Spring 2023 semester will focus on the results of the 2022-2023 Program Review, the 2023 Alumni results, and the department's progress on its student learning outcomes.

#### ***Regular Department Meetings***

The History Department regularly holds faculty meetings, typically three times per semester, and special meetings as needed. An example of a reason for a special meeting would be to prepare for a Program Review. Indeed, the history faculty held five meetings to prepare for the current review. Each faculty member is encouraged to bring policies, procedures, decisions, concerns, and recommendations before his or her colleagues at any time. At times, the discussion of or decision on a particular matter is done via email. A majority vote determines the departmental policy on the matter in question.

The department faculty act as a committee of the whole when dealing with matters concerning hiring, tenure-track reviews, tenure, and promotion. Additionally, all faculty members serve on at least one departmental scholarship selection committee. Those are typically the only subcommittees employed, though ad hoc committees are formed as needed. For instance, a temporary committee



was formed in the spring of 2022 to create a Race and Ethnic Studies minor brochure and a corresponding website. Questions about the BA and BS curriculums in one department meeting in preparation for the Program Review prompted a meeting with the director of the Student Success Center to ensure that the curriculums are up to date and that the history program's requirements are being followed.

### ***Faculty Evaluation***

The department chair evaluates each faculty member on an annual basis, based on the Agreement on Responsibilities document (Activities and Goal Planning Document starting in 2023), signed by the faculty member. The chair evaluates instruction, research, professional activities, and public service, and informs the individual of the results in a private meeting. The results figure into a rating scale that includes, Outstanding, High, Good, Acceptable, and Unacceptable and are used in calculating annual raises when applicable. When completed, the annual reviews are passed on to the dean, who reviews (and revises if necessary), and approves the chair's ratings.

A committee of tenured faculty annually reviews the activities and achievements of tenure-track members of the History Department based on their dossier. In a subsequent meeting of the tenured faculty, the professors discuss the candidate's progress toward reaching tenure/promotion, and each rates the candidate and votes whether or not to renew the assistant professor's contract. In the event of unsatisfactory performance, the department would follow the termination and non-renewal procedures as outlined in Tennessee Tech policy. Annual reviews of tenure-track faculty include not only the tenured faculty, but also the chair, dean, provost, and president. Part-time faculty are also evaluated by their students via the IDEA program and by the department chairperson.

At times, difficult situations arise with tenured faculty, which require the chair's, and the department's, intervention. Such was the case from 2011 to 2015 when a full professor's evaluations dropped precipitously and student complaints increased significantly. The department chair met numerous times with the faculty member attempting to determine the problem and offer suggestions. Despite these efforts, the problem grew worse. 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, and unconvincing excuses 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.

### ***Individual Meetings***

On occasion, the department chairperson finds it necessary to meet individually with a faculty member concerning a specific issue involving that professor. For instance, after reviewing the history faculty's Grade Distribution Reports in the fall of 2021, the chair noticed that one professor's overall grade distributions over the past two semesters had risen much higher than what

they had been in previous semesters. After meeting with the faculty member and determining how he administered examinations and how much extra credit he offered in his courses, the chair made recommendations for improvement, that once implemented, resulted in a lowering of his grade distributions back to previous levels. Also, when a student lodges a complaint, whether it is concerning a grade, the inability to reach a professor after numerous attempts, or some other important matter, the department chair meets with the professor. After hearing the full story, the chair makes recommendations for improvement or resolution. One such instance occurred during the summer of 2022 when an international student objected to a portion of an instructor's lecture that he considered insulting to his country. After meeting with the professor, and then with the professor and the student together, the chair facilitated resolution of the matter to the satisfaction of all with no concession on historical accuracy or academic freedom in the classroom.

### *Alumni Survey*

The best way to determine the success of any program is to measure the contentment of its alumni. With that in mind, the department administered an alumni survey in the summer of 2009. The History Department sent mailings to over 400 graduates, and received nearly 100 responses. The summary of those responses is included in Appendix M.

The overall results were enormously positive. The department could provide several additional examples of good alumni relationships, ranging from long-standing scholarship programs to four new endowment funds established since 2005. Appendix E, the department's list of graduates and their professions, is arguably the department's strongest indicator of success.

In general, the results of 2009 Alumni Survey were satisfying. In areas that pertain to the history program, those responding to the indicated 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 the academic advising provided by the history faculty. In 2021, the department decided to hand over general advisement to the CAS Student Success Center, which has provided expertise and consistency in student advisement.

Some participants in the 2009 Alumni Survey also suggested that there was a general lack of knowledge about History Department's news and happenings. During the department's 2014 review discussions, the faculty 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 an Instagram page as well. Overall, the department intends to expand its contact with history alumni as opportunities present themselves. The History Department is currently conducting another alumni survey and hopes to have results available for the 2022-2023 Program

Review.

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

The chair of the History Department attempts to interview all graduating seniors during their final semester at Tennessee Tech. Students will occasionally complain about one particular professor or class, but most of the feedback is overwhelmingly positive. It is not uncommon for students to have no complaints at all. In comparing history faculty with those in other departments, they routinely praise the history professors 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 history graduates. Consider some of the comments made during the spring 2022 and fall 2022 interviews:

*“enjoyed connecting with the professors”*

*“enjoyed the variety of courses offered”*

*“keep going in the direction the department is going”*

*“the professors care about the students”*

*“good to have attorneys teaching law classes”*

*“liked the flexibility of the program, which allows students to retake professors they liked”*

*“methods course is a course to establish a good foundation”*

*“liked program so much that I changed from social studies ed to history”*

*“professors are very personable and available—they care”*

*“great experience”*

*“don’t change a thing”*

Beginning in the fall of 2022, graduating history majors have also completed a brief survey about their experience in the history program, which are also the department’s student learning objectives. (See below.) Faculty have also, at times, surveyed their students, asking a variety of questions, among them inquiring about possibly expanding departmental upper-division offerings. The students made a clear, indeed nearly unanimous call for more courses in ancient history. The department responded and added the highly acclaimed travel courses to Rome (2006) and Athens (2008).

Exit Interview Survey Results for Fall 2022 (N=3)

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
How satisfied are you that the history program provided you with historical general factual knowledge?	2	1	0	0
How satisfied are you that the history program taught you the proper way to conduct research and write effectively?	3	0	0	0
How satisfied are you with the history program furthering your desire to explore history outside of the classroom, i.e., visiting historical sites, reading history books, watching historical programs, browsing historical websites, etc.?	3	0	0	0

Total	8	1	0	0

### ***DFW Rates, Retention Initiatives, and Graduation Rates***

Beginning in 2010, the chair began sharing information regarding “DFW” rates with the faculty and continues to do so during the faculty member’s annual evaluation. One can measure retention success via this rate, with higher rates equaling less success. Given a state funding formula that incentivizes retention and graduation, high DFW rates are problematic.

The history faculty have shared their individual retention initiatives with their colleagues in department meetings. For instance, several professors provide some type of study guide for their students to assist them in exam preparation, while others conduct a review session before exams. Since the survey courses often comprise incoming freshmen, one professor devotes the first class meeting each term to a “What to expect in college” discussion, which not only sets expectations for the course, but also for others across campus. Professors have noted that administering pre-tests in I-Learn not only allow them to assess student knowledge, but also provide students experience in taking quizzes and exams using the online system. Others encourage their students to invite a friend to class, which often results in the visitor enrolling in a future course with that professor, while all professors permit non-traditional students to bring their children when necessary, i.e., illness, school breaks, or when child care arrangements fall through. Others reach out to students who are struggling or with numerous absences.

The individual in the department with the highest rates in 2012, Dr. Susan Laningham, took it upon herself to address this issue. She modernized her lectures to include more audio/visual components and other retention increasing strategies, and her efforts yielded success: lower DFW rates and more exemplary grades (A/B) without sacrificing course rigor or quality.

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. Dr. Laningham has since discontinued allowing to students to drop an exam grade, as she found that many students saw it as an opportunity to take a pass on one of the exams. She has since instituted a policy that allows students’ best exam score to count twice, which in her opinion, is much more successful. Discussion of standards vs. retention, to include accusations of “too easy” along with “too hard,” remains an active issue throughout the department.

Retention and graduation data supplied by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness tracks only freshman cohorts and has limited use to the Department of History, although it is not completely without value. The freshmen data do demonstrate that the department’s retention rates from fall-to-fall over a three-year period ending in 2021 are 83.3 percent, which places it in the upper echelon of

departments in the College of Arts and Sciences and considerably better than the college's overall three-year average of 78.7 percent, as well as the University's average of 76.3. The department's main retention effort, "History 1066 First Year Connections," ended after the fall 2021 semester when the University discontinued supporting these types of courses, and the history faculty are currently considering additional efforts to retain and mentor history majors.

The department's six-year graduation rate, when compared to the College of Arts and Sciences or the University as a whole, is excellent. The college's overall graduation rate for those years is 64.7 percent while the University's is 60.2. While the University's score is the highest among the former TBR institutions, the History Department's six-year graduation rate bests it at 75 percent.

A majority of history majors do not enter the program as freshmen, but rather transfer from other majors and other institutions. Some of those who do enter as freshmen do so without full appreciation of the program or with unrealistic career goals. That several transfer to other majors should not be surprising.

### ***Scantron Examinations***

Most history professors administer objective tests in their survey sections to some degree and utilize scantron answer sheets, which are scored by a computer. Once scanned, twelve detailed reports are created and delivered to the professor via email for each examination, which show, among other things, the percentage of students who answered each question correctly and incorrectly. By reviewing this information, faculty can pinpoint questions on which a large number of students did poorly and offer additional instruction on that material or adjust how that information is presented to the students in the future. The use of Scantrons allows history professors to evaluate their instructional achievements in the classroom, provides opportunities for improvement, and serves as another indicator of success.

### ***Faculty Recognition, Awards, and Service***

University-wide awards and recognition are certainly indicators of quality, and the Department of History has excelled in this area. In 2013, history faculty received awards in all three professional areas of responsibility: Dr. Kent Dollar won the university's Distinguished Teaching and General Education Teaching Awards, Dr. Wali Kharif received the university's Distinguished Service Award, and Dr. Michael Birdwell earned the College of Arts and Sciences research award.

The recognition in 2013 followed a long tradition. Dr. George Webb won the Caplenor Award, the university's highest award for research, in 1993. Several history faculty members 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.

Following the special year in 2013, the history faculty won awards in 2014 and 2015. 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.

The awards continued in 2016. 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 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.

The history faculty continued to rack up awards in 2017. Dr. Susan Laningham won the CAS Research Award, and Dr. Allen Driggers won a fellowship to the Mutter Museum in Philadelphia. Dr. Driggers also helped two of his students receive Yreka Travel Grants, which funded a research trip to England. That same year, Dr. Troy Smith won the Western Writers of America SPUR Award for Fiction Writing (the third of his career), and the Outstanding Honors Faculty Award. He also was recognized by the Tennessee State Senate by proclamation for "Fiction and Historical Achievements."

More recent recognition includes Dr. Paula Hinton's two awards, the College of Arts and Sciences Award for Innovative Teaching and the General Education Outstanding Teaching Award, given in 2018, and Dr. Troy Smith's Outstanding Diversity Advocate in 2018. Dr. Troy Smith also won the Peacemaker Award for Western Fiction in 2019, and Mr. Philip Davis won the 2020-2021 General Education Award for Outstanding Teaching. In 2022, Tennessee Tech's Commission on the Status of Blacks named Dr. Michael Birdwell Outstanding Diversity Advocate. History student Cassi Green received first prize for undergraduate paper at a history conference at Texas A&M University in 2022.

History faculty have also won grants at Tennessee Tech. Dr. Paula Hinton is Co-PI for a Grant from AmerisourceBergen Foundation via Power of Putnam/Tennessee Tech University, entitled "Prescription Drug Diversion Awareness and Prevention within the Tennessee and Southeastern Animal Care Community," (awarded in 2021), which provides funding of nearly \$58,000. Dr. Troy Smith is Co-PI on the "Engendering the Spirit of Gadugi at the Food-Energy-Water Nexus" National Science Foundation National Research Traineeship Program Grant (awarded in 2022), which carries a \$3 million award, and he is Co-PI on the Rural Reimagined: Upper Cumberland Weather Archive Grant (awarded in 2023), which provides a \$25,000 grant.

Omitted are the numerous *nominations* for faculty awards.

The History Department faculty have served and are actively serving their department, college, university, and community in a number of ways. That six of its members have served on the Faculty Senate over the past few years gives some indication as to the department's overall

reputation on campus. Selecting activities to highlight in this category is challenging but a few are offered below.

Dr. Wali Kharif's service included membership in AAUP, Cookeville Toastmasters, and the Southern Conference of African-American Studies Incorporated (SCAASI). He held virtually all offices (President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Secretary, etc.) during his twenty-nine 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 was appointed chair of the Tennessee Great War Commission by Governor Bill Haslam. The Commission's task was to honor the centennial of the First World War. In 2016-2017, Dr. Birdwell organized and scheduled no less than twenty-eight different commemorations across the state. He also chaired a second statewide committee for the National Register of Historic Places. On campus, he assumed the leadership of the Upper Cumberland Institute following the retirement of Dr. Homer Kemp. He was also the Vice-President for the Tennessee Preservation Trust.

Dr. Kent Dollar was appointed by Governor Bill Haslam to the Tennessee Historical Commission (THC) in 2015 and was reappointed by Governor Bill Lee in 2020. He continues to serve on the THC, its Executive Committee, and on the THC's Wars Commission Committee, where he is chair. He serves as chair of the Constitution Day Committee, which he has done since its inception in 2005, and he has served on Faculty Senate. Dr. Dollar also is chair of the CAS and University Academic Misconduct Committees and is a member of the *Tennessee Historical Quarterly's* Board of Editorial Advisors. Dr. Dollar founded the Upper Cumberland Civil War Roundtable and served as its president from 2008-2018.

Dr. Susan Laningham is a former advisor to the Tennessee Tech Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta, the national history honor society, and the History Club. Dr. Laningham founded the Phi Alpha Theta Lyceum, which highlights undergraduate research by allowing students to present their research papers in a conference-like setting. She also has served on the World Cultures and Business Executive Council, Faculty Senate, Faculty Affairs Committee, Commission on the Status of Women, and the Honors Council Executive Committee.

Dr. Paula Hinton continues her work for the Women and Gender Studies Coordinating Committee, (chairperson, 2002-2019), the Diversity, Equity and Access Council and the President's Commission on the Status of Women. She was on the Retention Committee, the Service Learning Committee, Faculty Senate, and Administrative Council (chairperson, 2005-2007). She also serves the Humane Society of Putnam County in a variety of ways (Vice-President, Board of Directors, etc.).

Dr. Elizabeth Propes' service includes membership on the CAS Curriculum Committee, the TTU Fulbright Committee, and the Program Committee for the European History section of the Southern Historical Association. She served as Conference Coordinator for the Ohio Valley History Conference in 2016, as president of the TTU chapter of AAUP, and assisted in the transformation of

the Honors Program to the Honors College. She served as Study Abroad Faculty Leader and on Faculty Senate. Dr. Propes also scores Tennessee Board of Regents' Dual Credit Exams in World History for Tennessee high school students.

Dr. Troy Smith is the advisor of the TTU College Democrats and Students for a Democratic Society and is the CAS Digital Humanities advisor. He was president of the Tech AAUP chapter and the Tennessee State Conference of AAUP. He has served on the General Education Committee and as president of the Western Fictioneers Writers Organization. He also served a stint as president of Faculty Senate.

Dr. Allen Driggers is the faculty advisor for Phi Alpha Theta and the former advisor of the History Club. He currently serves on the Faculty Research Committee, the Financial Aid Committee, the Commission on the Status of Blacks, and as Councilor of the South-Central Eighteenth-Century Studies Conference. He also has served on the Teacher Education Committee and as treasurer of the TTU chapter of AAUP.

Dr. Krystal Akehinmi's service includes membership on the Commission on the Status of Blacks and the CAS Diversity Council, where she is chairperson. She is also Tennessee Tech's Diversity Champion. She is a member of the Americans with Disability Act Advisory Committee and the Quality and Assurance Funding Student Equity Planning and Evaluation Committee. She has served on the President's Task Force on Racial Healing and assisted with the Cookeville West End National Historic Register Project.

Dr. Author Banton is chairperson of the Commission on the Status of Blacks, a member of the Teacher Education Committee, and the General Education Committee. He is also the director of the Race and Ethnic Studies minor and a member of the North American Society for Sport Historians.

Mr. Philip Davis has been a Dual-Enrollment Instructor at Cookeville High School since 2019, a member of the Constitution Day Committee, and the Academic Misconduct Committee.

Dr. Jeff Roberts continues to serve as the University's Faculty Athletics Representative, a role he has held since 2006. He was a member of the Faculty Senate from 1993-2021 and served as president 2010-2012. Dr. Roberts was on the Executive Board of the Tennessee United Faculty Senates (TUFS) from 2012-2018, where he represented all ten Faculty Senates of Tennessee's public universities (UT and TBR systems). In 2021, Provost Lori Bruce appointed Dr. Roberts as interim Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, a position he continues to hold.

In addition to the service mentioned above, the history faculty have made numerous presentations to the public on various historical topics throughout the Upper Cumberland region. A list of these lectures is available upon request.

### ***Universal Open-Door Policy***

Finally, it is important to note that the history faculty maintain an open-door policy for all



students and colleagues. Professors are often in their offices and available (doors open or cracked) at times outside of class to meet with any student or colleague about any matter. This is true for the department office and chair's office as well. Suggestions are welcome anytime.

### ***LEARNING RESOURCES AND SUPPORT***

All of the department's classrooms in Henderson Hall contain a desktop computer, a Proxima projector, a computer with DVD player, a sound system, a projection screen, and a camera capable of recording lectures. Faculty can easily plug their flash drive into the desktop and display virtually any lecture-related materials. Each professor also possesses a laptop computer that he or she can use in any classroom on campus that is technologically deficient. The laptop also doubles as their desktop computer in their offices, which permits professors to access their office files while working remotely. The TTU server also houses a web-based instruction system called I-Learn. Many history faculty members post course syllabi, study guides, readings, lectures, and related materials online. Some provide assignments and administer examinations/quizzes online via the I-Learn system utilizing the Lockdown Browser and Webcam Monitor. The classroom cameras allow professors to record lectures for later distribution to the entire class, to individual students, or to cover a class when the instructor is out, permitting him or her to stay on schedule.

Two Information Technology Services (ITS) personnel are assigned to the College of Arts and Sciences and are available to assist faculty and staff with any technological problem that may arise. Housed in Henderson Hall, these two technicians are able to respond quickly to a request for help and have been known to drop whatever they are doing to assist the history faculty, whether in their offices or in the classroom. In conjunction with the History Department, the CAS ITS technicians continually evaluate the technological equipment utilized by the history faculty and make improvements. Two such technological advances made were the introduction of smartboard displays a few years back and, more recently, the faculty laptops mentioned above.

Funding at the departmental level is good and is improving. Generous alumni donations have continued to support scholarship programs and lecture series, while increasing faculty development and student travel opportunities. Two recent endowments, the Calvin and Charlene Dickinson Fund (completed) and the Michael Birdwell Fund (in process) will boost even further the funding for faculty travel. The History Department's operating budget is not flush (\$11,500), but it does not suffer from any serious shortages. The department is able to provide equipment and supplies necessary for the faculty and usually has funds left over at the end of the fiscal year for special purchases, such as classroom maps, departmental swag, etc. The History Department uses its swag to attract prospective students at recruiting events such as Preview Day and Spring Showcase. Library funding has become a major issue for the faculty, however, as funding levels have declined to 1980s levels. Nevertheless, the library staff are helpful and generally will order any book the faculty request. In addition, the department houses two endowments, the Stumpf and the Bowers, both of which provide funds for the purchase of books in the Colonial/Early Republic periods and

the Civil War era, respectively.

Data on the history program's enrollment, retention, and graduation rate trends, can be found in Appendix N and on the Institutional Dashboard, [https://www.tntech.edu/iare/institutional\\_research/institutional\\_dashboards.php](https://www.tntech.edu/iare/institutional_research/institutional_dashboards.php).

### ***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 seek best practices actively, helping to guarantee exposure to potential new methods. Assessment is our greatest challenge, but we are making substantial progress in that area. Our Learning Objectives, both those mandated by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission, and those defined by the department, are difficult to measure, but we are developing ways to evaluate our effectiveness. We believe a diversity of measuring instruments offers the best confirmation of student success. Quality Assurance is an ingrained feature of the History Department's culture. We routinely seize opportunities to improve our course offerings, our instructional performance, and our professional duties. We are also open to new ideas and suggestions from the reviewer for continued improvement of the history program.

### ***FOLLOW UP on IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES from the 2018 Program Review***

Below are the seven goals from the History Department's 2018 Program Review and the progress made on each.

#### ***2018 IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES***

Goal #1 (not achieved): Obtain a large classroom for through-the-week use by the History Department faculty.

The lack of a large classroom that the History Department can regularly utilize each term remains its most significant issue in 2022-2023--as well as going forward. Each term the department is forced to rely on other departments across campus for those classrooms, which means, of course, that the history faculty get the leftovers. Often these rooms are either technologically challenged or are available at unappealing times. The department has on numerous occasions requested access to a large classroom throughout the week as a priority, but it simply has not received such. The completion of the new Lab Science Commons has not appreciably mitigated the issue, as those rooms are usually the first to go. Nor are there plans for an auditorium-size classroom in the engineering building under construction. Furthermore, the scheduled future renovation of Johnson Hall and the demolition of Foster Hall (two buildings containing large classroom space the history faculty routinely use for double sections) in 2023, is

going to exacerbate the scheduling crisis.

Goal #2 (not achieved, but progress): Expand our “Maymester” course experiments to “Wintermester and/or “Augustmester”

The overall reduction of international students at Tennessee Tech, who overwhelmingly made up the enrollment of these courses, prompted the History Department to put this goal on hold. The department did, however, expand the course offerings during the May intersession course to include at least one upper-division course. Among the upper-level courses offered during the “Maymester” include “The Holocaust in Poland,” “Nazi Germany,” “Europe, 1968,” and “The History of China.”

Goal #3 (achieved): Expand our online offerings to include upper-division and Humanities courses

The History Department began offering online single sections of “History 2010 Early American History” and “History 2020 Modern American History” during the fall 2017 semester and has offered a double section online each since that time. Beginning in the spring of 2019, the department began offering an online single section of “History 1310 Science and World Cultures” (a general education humanities elective), every term. The course is popular with students and fills to capacity every semester. Since the fall of 2020, the History Department has offered an online upper-division course each term, with the exception of summer. Among these courses are “England before 1714,” “The British Empire & Commonwealth,” “England to 1688,” and “the History of India.”

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

In 2017, the History Department conducted a successful search for a tenure-track professor to replace retiring faculty member Dr. Wali Kharif, who taught African-American history courses (among others) in the department. The quality of the candidates as well as the University’s (and the department’s) commitment to diversity prompted the History Department to make a special request to President Oldham to hire two new assistant professors, which he approved. Dr. Krystal Akehinmi and Dr. Arthur Banton joined the history faculty in 2018 and have greatly augmented the department’s course offerings in African-American history.

Goal #5 (not achieved, but progress): Conduct an Alumni Survey in 2019

The History Department did not conduct an alumni survey in 2019 but is currently overseeing one. The department hopes to have the results in time for the reviewer’s on-campus visit in March 2023.

Goal #6 (achieved): Enhance our social media presence, and continue exploration of “digital

history.”

Since its last review in 2018, the History Department has created a Facebook page and an Instagram page. Here history faculty post news and information and photos regarding events and activities, both past and future. A link on the Facebook page takes interested parties to the department’s webpage, where there is information about the history program. The department’s Facebook page boasts 350 followers while the Instagram page enjoys 70. Regarding the “exploration of digital history,” the History Department created “History 3430 Digital History” (taught for the first time in spring 2021) and houses the interdisciplinary Digital Humanities minor.

Goal #7 (not achieved): Re-establish a master’s program

Until the Tennessee General Assembly reverses its decision not to incentivize secondary school teachers to obtain degrees beyond the bachelor’s, reviving the master’s program remains unrealistic, as most of the master’s students in the program were teachers.

***ADDITIONAL GOALS for IMPROVEMENT from Dr. Lorri Glover’s 2018 Program Review Report:***

Goal #1 (achieved, but continuing): Find new sources of funding for faculty travel

The History Department has for years provided each faculty member \$500 for professional travel out of the History Academic account, which consists of general donations made to the department. Since the Program Review in 2018, finding additional sources of travel funding has been a priority, and recently, the History Department has enjoyed success in this area. In 2020-2021, Dr. Kent Dollar worked with Mr. Ed Copeland, a department donor since 2006, to revise his Letter of Agreement (originally intended to acquire Civil War-related materials), to fund professional and research travel. This doubled the amount of the individual annual award to \$1,000. The Calvin and Charlene Dickinson Fund and the Michael Birdwell Fund, both coming online soon, will substantially increase the amount awarded to each faculty member. The Dickinson Fund Letter of Agreement was finalized in the fall of 2022, with funds available for withdrawal in October 2023. Dr. Birdwell’s endowment is not finalized, but the department is hopeful that it will be completed in 2023. Both Dr. Dickinson and Dr. Birdwell intended a portion of the money to go toward faculty travel.

Goal #2 (achieved, but evaluating): Implement a mentoring process for junior faculty

The History Department established faculty mentoring for tenure-track assistant professors in 2019 after two new faculty members, Dr. Akehinmi and Dr. Banton, joined the department. (In 2018, Dr. Lorri Glover recommended in her Program Review report that the history faculty should consider ways to mentor new faculty.) The process includes regular classroom observations and periodic one-on-one meetings. After observing a new faculty member’s teaching, tenured professors make recommendations for improvement, if necessary. Among the

suggestions that have been made are, beginning each class with a review of the last lecture, utilizing lecture outlines and maps, striving for consistency in lectures, and asking open-ended questions during discussions. Tenured faculty are to meet with new faculty periodically and discuss other areas of concern, such as low student evaluations, high grade distributions, or the necessity of answering student emails in a timely fashion. Professors inquire about their research and stress the importance of demonstrating discernable progress. Basically, the tenured faculty are to make themselves available to new faculty members to assist them any way they can. Professors are encouraged to document their observations and discussions, which they provide to the new faculty member for his or her records.

Goal #3 (achieved): Expand the internship program into the summer

Since the last Program Review, the internship program has successfully been extended into the summer term. In 2018, there was one intern, three in 2019, zero in 2020 and 2021 (influenced by Covid-19), and two during the summer of 2022. Taking an internship during the summer months benefits the students by allowing them to serve with fewer distractions, such as a full course load and on-campus activities.

Goal #4 (achieved): Expand African-American History course offerings

As mentioned above (Goal #4), the History Department hired two new faculty members to replace Dr. Wali Kharif, who retired. In the fall of 2018, Dr. Krystal Akehinmi and Dr. Arthur Banton joined the history faculty, and as a result, the number of course offerings related to African-American history increased significantly. Many of these have been offered as upper-division courses, such as “The Civil Rights Movement History,” “Black Women in US History,” “Modern African-American History,” and “Black Popular Culture.” Other offerings are at the 2000-level and include, “African-American History” and “Introduction to Race and Ethnic Studies.” Recently, the History Department created a Race and Ethnic Studies Minor, which also includes courses in Native American Studies. (Information about the minor is available upon request.) The expectation is that the course offerings in African-American history will continue to grow.

Goal #5 (not achieved, but progress): Define parameters and expectations for 3410

The History Department faculty continue to discuss defining and establishing parameters and expectations for History 3410. The discussion thus far has included whether to require students to write a research paper or broaden the requirement to allow other research-related projects and

whether to implement a scoring rubric similar to the one used in the Senior Seminar.

***FUTURE IMPROVEMENT INITIATIVES***

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

Goal # 2: Evaluate and revise the mentoring process for tenure-track faculty

Goal #3: Find new sources of funding for faculty travel

Goal #4: Define parameters for History 3410

Goal #5: Complete history alumni survey in 2023

Goal #6: Implement a mentoring process for history majors

Goal #7: Establish an Appalachian Studies minor

Goal #8: Establish a pre-law concentration

Goal #9: Establish a public history concentration