

## Summarized Assessment Report

**Department:** History  
**DEGREE:** B.A./B.S.  
**CIP:** # 450801

### 1. Centrality/Uniqueness of the Degree.

The Department of History offers both a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Science for its undergraduate majors; a minor in History is also possible. Though no rigid rule determines the choice of degree, the B.A. has traditionally been chosen by students interested in pursuing admission to a graduate program in history or to a professional school. More commonly, the B.S. is pursued by students interested in a career in public education or in business. The departmental requirements for each are identical.

As a humanistic discipline that also draws upon the methodologies of social science, History serves a unique role in bridging two key disciplinary components in the undergraduate curriculum, teaching to majors and non-majors alike the intrinsic importance of both perspective and analysis. Moreover, the nature of the historical discipline is inherently multicultural and international, and the department serves both students and the larger society with these emphases. In addition, the department fosters skillful communication along with critical thinking. A writing-intensive curriculum as well as seminars and internships enhance job eligibility and placement in professional and graduate schools.

History at Kansas State has certain features common to History departments across the nation. For example, the department provides the broad surveys of U.S., European, and World history common to history curricula. Though the department is too small to provide comprehensive coverage of the history of all the world's nations and geographical areas, the upper-division courses available to Kansas State students offer the wide array of thematic and chronological topics, particularly in the American and European contexts, typical of most undergraduate history programs. What is less typical is the department's emphasis upon quality advising; the aim is to establish a student/adviser relationship that will last throughout the student's collegiate career. In addition, the requirements for the major are less rigidly defined than in many programs in order to encourage the student -- under the supervision of his or her adviser -- to sample broadly, and simultaneously, to develop a program individualized to his or her needs, interests, and career goals.

Finally, it should be noted that, with the exception of the capstone course for the major, all courses offered to majors are open to students from other disciplines. The major therefore fulfills a large service mission within the university.

### 2. Quality of Faculty.

The foundation of excellence in undergraduate education is a superb teaching faculty actively engaged in scholarly research. The Department of History meets those criteria. Every member of the faculty is actively engaged in specialized research leading to ongoing peer-reviewed publication. Moreover, the Department of History has set for itself the highest standards for teaching; the departmental ethos emphasizes excellence in all aspects of the instructional mission and embraces one overarching goal: to be the best teaching faculty on campus. Faculty employ a wide range of instructional methodologies, from traditional seminar methods to the latest innovations in instructional methodology, but regardless of method, the faculty approaches classroom teaching with both thoughtfulness and passion. The record, the department believes, speaks for itself. Not only are History courses well subscribed across the board, but in the last seven years alone, five faculty members have won university-wide teaching awards (the Presidential and the Commerce Bank awards) and two others have received college-wide awards (the Stamey). During the same period, two of the department's graduate teaching assistants were selected for university-wide awards and one other won a college-wide award.

### 3. Quality of Students.

The department has been pleased to note that, even as the numbers of majors has steadily grown (now numbering over 200), the quality of students has steadily risen as well. Fifteen years ago, the average composite ACT score for History majors was about 22: it is now above 25. Forty percent of all majors carry overall GPAs of 3.0 or better and more than one fifth have GPAs above 3.5. Not surprisingly, History majors are well represented in academic honor societies.

### 4. Employer Demand.

Students are drawn to History for a variety of reasons. Some students clearly intend to enter the discipline, either as academic historians or as practitioners in the burgeoning field of public history or museum/archival work. Still others see the discipline's analytic focus as providing an especially suitable preparation for professional education, particularly in law, and for careers in business or public administration. Accordingly, History graduates can be found in a wide variety of careers. A sizable minority has gone on to become professional historians, either in academia or in public history venues. Attorneys are also well represented in the alumni population and, in the last decade, the department has also seen two majors become physicians. Students with the dual degree in History and Education have found ample job opportunities in public education. A great many graduates have entered business or government service where graduates in the liberal arts remain in high demand. Among the most recent graduates, the department counts several on the staffs of members of Congress, and at least four are currently teaching under the auspices of AmeriCorps and Teach for America, or overseas.

### 5. Service Provided by Degree Program.

With the exception of the capstone course, all undergraduate courses offered by the department are open to students from other disciplines; indeed, approximately 85% of the department's instructional mission is directed toward these students. As a cornerstone of the liberal arts, the course offerings engage students in an exploration of the complexity, ambiguity, and the inevitable diversity of the human endeavor, inculcate the habits of analytic thinking and the discernment of meaning, and encourage the practice of oral and written communication skills, all of which serve as foundational for a broad array of life and career choices. Moreover, inasmuch as an understanding of the past is a foundational aspect of so many endeavors, the department is also deeply involved in interdisciplinary efforts at Kansas State. Finally, the faculty's excellent record of community service in public history endeavors and in public school outreach as well as its superb record of service in the national and international professional community all work to enhance recognition of Kansas State University.

### 6. Cost Effectiveness

For the last five years for which data is currently available (through FY03), the undergraduate program of the Department of History has generated roughly 2 and one half percent of the university's student credit hour production at the undergraduate level; it has done so with only 1.5% of the university's general use instructional expenditures.

The department has performed this cost effective mission during a time of notable growth. History has become an increasingly popular major: the number of majors has doubled in the last fifteen years and growth patterns have recently accelerated: the latest departmental count of majors numbers around 240. At the undergraduate level, all faculty members typically offer one large survey course and two upper-division courses per year; most courses are over 90% subscribed. The seventeen faculty members, with the assistance of approximately nine graduate teaching assistants, fulfill the entire instructional mission of the department. Advising, done by all faculty (including the chair), has become more time-consuming as the number of majors has grown. Relative to departments that include laboratory experience as part of coursework, the infrastructure costs of history education are quite low. More and more of the faculty are, however, making use of technology in an effort to enhance classroom experience: certainly the recent addition of a technology classroom to the second floor of Eisenhower has been greatly welcomed.