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TO: Antonio Moreira, Vice Provost  
FROM: Scott E. Casper, Dean, College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences  
RE: Academic Program Review (APR), Department of History

I have carefully reviewed the Self-Study for the Academic Program Review for the Department of History (HIST) and the report of the External Reviewers. The Self-Study highlights the Department's many successes in teaching and research, while also examining straightforwardly its challenges especially in the recruitment of majors. The External Reviewers' report both confirms the strengths and offers thoughtful suggestions for future directions. Both are important documents that should be most helpful in the Department's ongoing planning and development.

**Context: To provide some context for the visitors' report, I offer some data on enrollment in the Department.** (This is routinely part of the CAHSS Dean's Report for APRs.)

Student numbers: Posted IRADS data for Fall 2017 indicate that the department had 223 total majors (primary and additional plans), 63 minors, 28 master's students, and 5 non-degree graduate students. The number of majors is nearly identical to that in Fall 2014 (221), though considerably reduced from earlier years (282-305 from F08 to F13, with a one-year surge to 335 in F11). The number of minors has remained in the 60s nearly every year of the past decade. The number of master's students has been roughly constant since Fall 2014 (33), though in prior years it was considerably higher, due largely to the Teaching American History grants (a federal program since discontinued) that encouraged many K-12 social studies teachers to seek M.A. degrees.

Student-faculty ratios: In Fall 2017, the student-faculty ratio (SFR) for students in all plans was 16.1 for full-time faculty, as against 24.3 for CAHSS; it was 14.3 for FTE faculty, as against the CAHSS average of 20.2; and it was 19.1 for tenured/tenure-track FTE faculty, as against the CAHSS average

of 34.4. The SFR for FTE students was 14.3 for full-time faculty, as against 18.8 for CAHSS; it was 12.7 for FTE faculty, as against 15.6 for CAHSS; and it was 16.9 for tenured/tenure-track FTE faculty, as against 26.6 for CAHSS.

### **Reviewers' Evaluation:**

The Reviewers offer copious praise for UMBC's History Department, in numerous areas of endeavor:

- Collegial, thoughtful attention to and revision of the undergraduate and graduate curricula, based on “a number of steps to ‘close the loop’ on student learning outcomes.” These include successful redesigns of key gateway courses (HIST 201, HIST 701-702), as well as development of “common rubrics and assessment tools.” Syllabi “demonstrate the faculty’s engagement with the best new work in both scholarly expertise and pedagogy.”
- Outstanding “level of scholarly work by faculty members, . . . impressive by any standard or measure,” as seen in publications, fellowships and grants, and internal and external awards and prizes. Moreover, the “incredibly hardworking and talented” faculty members “serve both the campus and the profession” in myriad ways.
- Students perceive and appreciate the quality of their education in the Department, notably the “intellectual and professional development they have experienced as History students, and their strong sense of support from faculty, who are caring, perceptive, and dedicated advisors and advocates.”
- The overall departmental climate is “excellent,” including the “dedicated and caring staff” who “are the backbone of the department’s overall effectiveness.”
- The Department’s undergraduate and graduate public history program is “nationally known” and is poised for further success (but is also stretched quite thin, as I will discuss below).
- The History program at the Universities at Shady Grove is successfully addressing the national challenge of History enrollments through considerable recruitment efforts, thanks to its enterprising faculty and to resources from the Division of Professional Studies.

The visitors’ recommendations are quite modest, and in the main coincide with those of the Self-Study. They fall into several distinct categories; my responses are in *italics*.

- a) Student recruitment and marketing: Both the Self-Study and the External Reviewers’ Report discuss the challenge of decreased numbers of History majors. This is a nationwide trend, possibly exacerbated at UMBC by the creation of new majors (Asian Studies in 2011, Global Studies in 2013) that attract students who otherwise might have majored in History. The Reviewers offer a panoply of suggestions, many of which echo the faculty’s own current efforts (e.g., rethinking lower-division requirements, “easing the path for community college transfer students,” and developing “core themes” aligned with students’ interests such as civic engagement).
  - 1) *I encourage the Department to pursue this discussion toward action over the next year or two, considering also the variety of other potentially valuable approaches mentioned by the reviewers, such as rethinking course titles and “seek[ing] out other opportunities to connect to departments where enrollments are currently higher” and “designing sample combined course paths” for students to plan*

*double majors. (I am not recommending specific approaches but rather asking that the Department consider those mentioned by the Reviewers, in addition to those it has already begun to discuss.)*

- 2) *If the Department develops a marketing strategy—perhaps derived from the success at Shady Grove, and in consultation with Enrollment Management—the Dean’s Office will be happy to serve as a liaison with appropriate units on campus to execute it, and to consider cost sharing in the effort, ideally also with support from the Provost’s Office.*
  - 3) *The Department has done good work in engaging alumni to share their career paths with current History students (including in the gateway course HIST 201). Collaboration with the Career Center might provide additional ways for HIST to highlight these paths, not just for current majors but also for prospective students.*
- b) Sustainability of public history: The External Reviewers correctly explain that student demand for public history at all levels (undergraduate and graduate) currently places extreme pressure on the single full-time faculty member in this area on the main campus. This pressure will only intensify, because public history is a critical avenue for recruiting new students to HIST’s programs. *While I agree with the Reviewers that engaging the alumni network now in public history careers might “relieve some small part of the tremendous workload of the program director,” the challenges here are more substantial. I agree with the reviewers that the next tenure-track hire in History should be directed in some form toward public history (see below on History of Science). I further encourage the Department to consider the Reviewers’ suggestions about defining a niche for its public history program (e.g., “grassroots public history,” “inequality and social justice”) in the context of many competing programs in the mid-Atlantic region.*
- c) History of Science: As the Reviewers note, HIST has been an essential partner in the Human Context of Science and Technology (HCST) certificate program, which has been largely moribund for the past decade although its introductory course is offered regularly. A faculty working group, with representation from numerous CAHSS departments as well as from the other two Colleges, is now revisiting the program’s curriculum and will recommend changes to revitalize it and attract student interest across disciplines. A HIST faculty member serves on this working group. *I concur with the Reviewers that HIST should play a role in the curriculum that emerges from this process, although HIST might not be the program’s “home” department as it has previously been. I agree with the Reviewers also that hiring a historian of science would be valuable—but not “a position in HCST,” which does not and will not have its own faculty lines. The CAHSS multi-year faculty hiring plan includes a position for History, identified as “environmental history.” I recommend modifying this to history of science/public history, along the lines described by the Reviewers (within which it is conceivable that an environmental historian could be hired, though I would not restrict the search to this field).*

*In addition to the recommendations of the External Reviewers, I recommend that the Department develop strategies for increasing the enrollment in its M.A. program. Its strength in public history—especially if enhanced by another faculty position in the near future—as well as the national recognition of its stellar faculty should be attractive to prospective students from numerous undergraduate institutions. UMBC’s History Department has the potential to broaden and diversify the pipeline into both Ph.D. education in History and the world of public history, whose challenges in inclusion have been widely documented. The Department should work with the Graduate School to consider potential marketing and recruitment strategies, including direct recruitment to undergraduate institutions with a record of inclusive excellence, as well as expanding the number of promising students in its own accelerated B.A.-M.A. track. The Dean’s Office will be happy to consult as well, and (as above) to consider sharing the cost of recruitment materials. I appreciate that the recent decrease in HIST’s*

GA funding, occasioned by the decline in M.A. enrollment and the surpluses in HIST's GA budget, could be seen as hampering recruitment. I have encouraged the Department to use some of its (not insignificant) rollover funds to maintain the existing level of GA support, including possibly allocating some of this support for its B.A.-M.A. enrollees, which could also be attractive in recruiting undergraduate students to History. Within the newly created CAHSS process for reviewing and adjusting departmental GA allocations every three years, increased enrollments may occasion restoration of some of the previous GA funding.

## **Conclusion**

Over many years, History Department has built a well-deserved reputation as one of UMBC's strongest departments in every respect. Its faculty members regularly publish prize-winning scholarship, in the most selective journals and with the most prestigious book publishers. Within the humanities, they lead the College in securing nationally and internationally competitive fellowships and grants. They are also widely recognized as exemplary teachers, winning numerous campus and Board of Regents award and devoting immense attention to both pedagogical and curricular currency. Equally important, the Department has a long history of University-wide leadership, whether directing interdisciplinary academic programs or serving on and chairing faculty committees, and of service to the discipline. And the Department is exceedingly well governed, with an outstanding current Chair who is the latest in a long succession of excellent leaders and with collaborative, collegial ethos and practices.

The Department's chief challenge at this moment is not unusual to History departments across the United States, which have witnessed similar enrollment declines over the past decade. Given the faculty's creativity and commitment to students' success, I have little doubt that our Department will devise smart approaches to face this challenge. Its own Self-Study suggests several; the Reviewers' Report offers others; and a survey of similarly situated and/or peer departments' actions might provide others still. I look forward to working with the History Department—and with the appropriate administrative support units on campus—to address the challenge, and more significantly to extend to more students the innovative, compelling education for which it is justly renowned.