

Department of History
Assessment Update 2009

The Department of History currently has 783 majors. In addition, the Department provides all the courses for the history major and minor in the School of Education's Secondary Education program (adding approximately 150 majors/minors in history and bringing the total to 1,000 or so). The Department of History's undergraduate assessment plan, drafted by the Undergraduate Council and adopted by the Department in 1996 and revised in 2006, is designed to measure whether students are reaching the goals the Department has set for its majors.

This year, the Undergraduate Council revised the senior exit survey developed in 2007-08 with the help of Elaine Klein in L& S and John Stevenson at the UW Survey Center. The revisions were designed to help us gain a better understanding of, first, students' command of historical practice, method, and analysis; and, second, of students' understanding of the transferability of those skills to a range of fields outside of history. After administering the revised senior exit survey, we learned that there are two major items we must address: 1) student preparation for capstone courses meant to provide majors with an opportunity to showcase their command of historical practice, method, and analysis; and 2) student education about how to transfer the skills of historical practice, methodology, and analysis to fields and careers other than history.

1. In order to prepare students for capstone courses, we have done the following:
 - a) Identified courses that have a research component that will help students prepare for the capstone seminar, which we will publicize to students; and b) initiated conversations among faculty to find ways to make more explicit the skills that faculty already are teaching in their courses (but which may not be apparent to students).

2. In order to provide students with information about transferring historical skills to other fields, we have:
 - a) organized a series of workshops titled: "What You Can Do With a History Major"; b) invited alums in fields other than history to talk about the ways in which their major in history has been useful to them in their careers (for example, John Rowe, CEO of the Exelon Corporation, met with students over lunch and gave a public presentation about the importance of his historical training in his success); c) organized a series of workshops on preparation for graduate school.

Next, we have completed a draft of a five-year survey to administer to recent graduates (those who have graduated with history majors over the past five years). We will administer the survey over the summer, 2009.

Finally, we are working in collaboration with the School of Education to include an assessment of the 150 or so history majors and minors for whom we are responsible in addition to the 783 who are L&S history majors. These students have been left out of all assessments to date. Since we provide the history major for them, it is important that we meet their needs, as well as the needs of those in L&S.

Camille Guérin-Gonzales
Director of Undergraduate Studies
Department of History