

Academic Department Student Success Plan Annual Update: 2016-2019¹



Department: History

Department Chair: Steven Stofferahn (Interim)

Department Mission: History is a core discipline in the Humanities, concerned with exploring the dynamics of change over time in human societies. African and African American Studies is an interdisciplinary field of study centered on the history and culture of Africa and the African Diaspora and its vital importance to the American experience. The Department of History is comprised of faculty with expertise in a wide range of human history and cultures and offer courses in United States, Latin American, European, Russian, African, Middle East, and World History, with topical focuses on issues like social and cultural history, labor movements, race, ethnicity, and gender studies. As scholars, the Department faculty are engaged in the creation of new knowledge and many have gained national recognition through their activities in research and publishing. We are also engaged locally with the wider University community, the city of Terre Haute, and the state of Indiana with sustained support for service and outreach efforts. Our faculty is committed to training students to think like historians and scholars by engaging ethically with the past, thinking critically about the world around them today, and acting as engaged and informed citizens now and in the future. A degree in History or African and African American Studies requires developing proficiency in core academic skills considered vital to the life and mission of the University. These include the ability to think and read critically, to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, and to articulate informed arguments on complex issues. These are highly regarded disciplines among leaders in the public and private sectors for preparing students for analytical and interpretive work in a wide variety of careers. Equally important, an education in History or African and African American Studies enriches students' lives by imparting in them an appreciation for the great richness and variety of the human experience.

Department Freshmen (1st year) Retention Goal(s):

Freshmen retention rates shall increase incrementally so as to equal or exceed the University goal of 68% by Fall 2018.

Action Steps² (with dates & person(s) responsible):

- A. Apply the positive retention outcomes of the 2015-2016 pilot study of HIST 113 (smaller class sizes, more intensive writing focus, geared toward second-year students) to further planned revisions of the department's Foundational Studies course array. (Primary: Chairperson, Curriculum Committee, HIST 113 Instructors)
- B. Continue to partner with University College on 10-week classes, particularly in the fall semester, as these provide struggling first-year students with an opportunity to refocus and resume a path toward course completion. (Primary: Chairperson, Instructors of 10-week classes. Secondary: Instructors of 10-week classes, Dean of University College)
- C. Review majors' performance in HIST 101, 102, 302, and 313, and consider creating distinct sections for HIST/SSE majors in Fall 2017. (Primary: Chairperson, SSE Coordinator, Academic Advisors)

¹ Plan updates are due to your Dean by Nov. 4 as informed by your 2015-16 End-of-Year Report that is due to your Dean by Oct. 3.

² **Action Steps Defined:** The specific activities/actions taken to realize progress toward the goal. Such action steps should include not only student support type activities/actions but also student learning enhancement focused activities/actions.

D. Revive and systematically support student organizations for HIST/SSE/AFRI majors, encouraging the leaders of the History Club, Phi Alpha Theta, and perhaps others to take a more active role in departmental events, particularly relating to recruitment of new majors. (Primary: Chairperson, Faculty Advisor to History Club/Phi Alpha Theta, Departmental Faculty)

E. Build a comprehensive database on History alumni by fusing information from the Office of Registration and Records and the Alumni Office with our current departmental newsletter mailing list, and then working to fill in the remaining gaps with the help of cohort-specific alumni. The goal is to be able to give our current students an accurate idea of what our graduates go on to do with their careers. Enriching our alumni contacts will also enable us to highlight their stories on our website and other promotional materials. (Primary: Chairperson, Administrative Assistant, interested Graduate Assistants)

F. Continue to encourage the active use of the Department of History's Research and Career Center (Stalker Hall 109), both through classes' targeted research projects using materials housed at the Center, but also via periodic gatherings and receptions focused on career readiness and opportunities stemming from earning a degree in History. (Primary: Chairperson. Secondary: Career Center)

<i>Retention Benchmarks</i> (by latest department)	Fall 2013 Cohort: 68.75%	Fall 2014 Cohort: 58.82%	Fall 2015 target & actual: 58.14% (T) & 36.36% (A)
	Fall 2016 target: 46.00%	Fall 2017 target: 57.00%	Fall 2018 target: 68.00%

Other Freshmen Retention related benchmarks of focal interest to department

Note that considering the size of our Major cohorts, modest shifts in raw numbers may produce relatively significant statistical changes.

Department Persistence to Completion Goal(s):

4-year completion rates shall increase incrementally so as to equal or exceed the University goal of 30% by the time the Fall 2015 cohort matriculates.

Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):

A. Continue to support the work of departmental academic advisors, particularly as they help majors chart optimal pathways toward timely graduation through formal and informal audits of advisees with 60-100 credit hours. Such service should be highlighted in the faculty member's professional record, including in the Fall 2017 Biennial Review. (Primary: Chairperson, Academic Advisors. Secondary: Salary Committee)

B. Encourage History minors to make annual appointments with departmental academic advisors. (Primary: Chairperson. Secondary: Academic Advisors)

C. Ensure that HIST 300 (methods course) and the recently added HIST 302 (intensive survey of American history) fall into a regular pattern of being offered in the fall and spring semesters, respectively, so as to facilitate a logical course progression toward upper-level seminars. (Primary: Chairperson)

D. Conduct an open house for History majors once each semester at the Department of History Research and Career Center, with a focus not only on recruitment and retention, but also on career readiness. Alumni should be invited to share how their background as a student of history has aided them in achieving their long-term career goals. (Primary: Chairperson. Secondary: Career Center)

E. Offer institutional and logistical support for History Club and Phi Alpha Theta, the principal social and honor organizations for History majors. This should include a modest travel budget to allow students to travel to and, if possible, present research at the regional Phi Alpha Theta conference each spring. (Primary: Chairperson, Faculty Advisor to History Club/Phi Alpha Theta)

F. Review majors' performance in HIST 302 through assessment and informal faculty monitoring during and after its initial semester (Spring 2017). (Primary: Chairperson, Instructor of HIST 302, SSE Coordinator)

<i>Completion Benchmarks</i> (by latest department)	Fall 2010 Cohort: 36.00%	Fall 2011 Cohort: 24.00%	Fall 2012 target & actual: 28.27% (T) & 16.67% (A)
	Fall 2013 target: 20.00%	Fall 2014 target: 25.00%	Fall 2015 target: 30.00%

Other Persistence to Completion related benchmarks of focal interest to department

Note that considering the size of our Major cohorts, modest shifts in raw numbers may produce relatively significant statistical changes.

Other Goal(s), Action Steps, and Benchmarks of focal interest to department:

Inherently related to boosting retention and graduation rates of present HIST/AFRI students, the department will focus on increasing its overall *number* of Majors. An ad-hoc recruitment/retention committee comprised of the Chairperson, academic advisors, interested graduate students, and a member of the department's Advisory Council will meet in the late fall of 2016 to articulate a strategy and timeline to be implemented during the remainder of the 2016-2017 academic year.