



University of Colorado **Boulder**

2025 Program Review

Department of History

Academic Review and Planning  
Advisory Committee Report

Approved

Signed by:  
*Ann Stevens*

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Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs | Date

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## Process Overview

The Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee (ARPAC) review of the Department of History (HIST) was conducted in accordance with the 2025 program review guidelines. The degree program report and goal setting exercise were prepared and submitted by the unit. An external review committee (ERC), consisting of two experts from outside of the University of Colorado Boulder, engaged in a virtual visit and submitted a report based upon review of relevant documents and interviews with faculty, staff, and student unit members and university administrators. ARPAC staff, employing web conferencing tools, facilitated the external review as a remote visit over April 24 and 25, 2025. The ARPAC unit liaisons submitted a summary of findings derived from the goal setting exercise. ARPAC reviewed and considered these materials, met with the chair, and wrote this report.

## Past Reviews

The last ARPAC review of the Department of History was in 2016. At that time, ARPAC directed four recommendations toward the department that focused on increasing student recruitment and retention, improving inclusive excellence (particularly in the context of a growing international student population), pursuing faculty hires in key areas, and pursuing the renovation of facilities to increase the capacity of the department.

The department has made impressive progress on all of the 2016 ARPAC recommendations. Almost immediately following the last review, the department began a large, highly structured, multi-year effort to reinvigorate their undergraduate curriculum called the History Teaching and Learning Project (HTLP). This project addressed ARPAC's recommendation to address student recruitment and retention through curricular reform and went much further, leading to a peer-reviewed publication that described their cohesive strategy for addressing the nationwide trends in declining history students. Since the last review, the number of undergraduate majors has stopped declining, but the number of student credit hours (SCH) taken in the department has continued to decline. The department very much considers these efforts to be a work-in-progress. This year's ERC made several recommendations that echoed many of those in 2016, encouraging HIST to continue to keep these activities as a top priority.

HIST has taken steps to address ARPAC's recommendations regarding challenges in inclusive excellence, particularly in the context of gender imbalances in the department and a growing international student population. The department's inclusive excellence committee conducted a survey to begin addressing the impacts of international student enrollments and teaching assessments on female faculty, faculty of color, and international faculty. The department engaged in facilitated faculty meetings and participated in the multi-departmental Teaching Quality Framework efforts to improve faculty teaching evaluation practice and assessment. While all accounts describe a positive, strong, and supportive departmental culture, the department continues to recognize that this remains an ongoing area of work in the unit. (See "Inclusivity and Unit Culture" below.)

The final two recommendations from the 2016 ARPAC involved actions that were not entirely within the unit's control, but HIST effectively advocated for the actions that were needed to make progress on both fronts. To address gaps in their expertise, they continued to advocate for new faculty hires, and the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences granted some of these requests. However, several faculty departures (due primarily to retirements) have led to an overall decline in

the number of faculty in the department by 20%. As a result, key gaps in the department's scholarly profile have emerged or widened, and the teaching and administrative burden on the remaining staff has increased. Finally, ARPAC's concerns about the state of the department's facilities have been addressed through the comprehensive renovation of the Hellem Arts & Sciences building, which is scheduled for re-occupancy at the end of 2025.

The 2016 recommendations to the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences included funding a part-time staff position, addressing funding disparities for graduate students across the humanities, prioritizing space renovations for the department, and fully considering the department's hiring requests to increase the number of faculty. Following the review, the department was able to hire a full-time staff person, but two subsequent staff departures (only one of which was allowed to be refilled) have led to no overall change in the number of staff positions in the department. Follow-up reports did not include responses from the dean's office about their responses to funding disparities within the humanities.

The 2016 ARPAC report had two recommendations for the vice provost and associate vice chancellor for undergraduate education. First, they were encouraged to investigate recent international student admissions that were impacting the course evaluations of specific faculty. The 2025 ARPAC did not see if or how this recommendation was addressed in follow-up reports. The second recommendation was to investigate the practice of charging fees to graduate students. Since 2016, the majority of graduate student fees (like the majority of undergraduate student fees) have been converted to tuition, and the ASSETT fee has been eliminated.

## Unit Analysis

The campus' standardized description of the Department of History is available on the website of the Office of Data & Analytics (D&A) at <https://www.colorado.edu/oda/institutional-research/institutional-level-data/information-department/academic-review-and-planning>. D&A updates the profile annually in the fall semester. Generally speaking, this report cites data posted for the unit profile in August 2024, reflecting the state of the History Department as of fall 2022. Additional data was obtained from the department, including the degree program report and the goal setting exercise, as well as the unit data profile posted by D&A in October 2025.

## Teaching and Learning Excellence and Assessment

The Department of History currently offers Bachelor of Arts (BA), Master of Arts (MA), and Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degrees in history, as well as an undergraduate minor. The MA program includes two dual degree options, one with Asian Languages (D-HISTALAC) and another with Religious Studies (D-HISTRST). The department offers a broad range of courses in multiple subfields, approaches, and geographic regions, providing students with many different degree paths that align with their individual interests and professional goals. Undergraduate students edit, produce, and publish in a departmental undergraduate journal, "The Colorado Historian," run an active History Club, and have many opportunities for advanced study through the honors thesis program and credit-earning internships. The graduate program is well-known for its strengths in US History (particularly Environmental History and the American West), Asian History, and European History. Across all of their courses and programs, the department emphasizes critical reading and thinking skills, effective communication (particularly in writing), and research methods,

The HTLP was designed to address a pattern of declining student engagement in HIST at CU Boulder that reflects a broader national trend in humanities disciplines. By many measures, the project has been extremely successful. Through the HTLP, HIST developed department-wide undergraduate student learning objectives and incorporated assessments (i.e., CU's Teaching Quality Framework and the Quality Teaching Initiative from the College of Arts & Sciences) to measure undergraduate outcomes and improve faculty teaching. Perhaps most importantly, the HTLP succeeded in creating a "culture of scholarly teaching" in the department that successfully built the momentum needed to make long-lasting changes to the undergraduate experience in the program. The number of majors in HIST has stabilized in recent years, indicating that these improvements are translating into increased student attraction and retention. Nonetheless, the department considers their work in this area to be far from done, with several current and planned activities aiming to further streamline the curriculum, address new pedagogical challenges like artificial intelligence (AI), increase interdisciplinary offerings, and cultivate a student population that better reflects CU Boulder and state demographics.

The department is in the process of reforming and streamlining its curriculum to make it more attractive and accessible to students, particularly in the context of the new budget model. A major priority is revising a complicated course numbering system to make the sequence of courses required for the major simpler and easier to navigate. New introductory courses are being developed to more effectively draw students into the program, and defunct courses are being removed from the catalog to reduce confusion about course offerings. A current challenge involves addressing gaps that have emerged in Modern European, Latin American, and gender history due to the shrinking faculty size. Once curricular reforms are complete, there are many opportunities for the department to expand its offerings to facilitate interdisciplinary studies. Particularly exciting collaborations include those that support student pathways in sustainability, public health, environmental studies, and international affairs. More interdisciplinary connections, including micro-credentials, certificates, and cross-department minors, will likely increase the attractiveness of the department to undergraduates while expanding the unit's reach across campus.

As HIST continues to reform and reimagine its program, they would benefit from beginning to incorporate assessments that specifically evaluate the student experience. They are already moving in this direction by creating an undergraduate student advisory board and increasing their efforts to track and engage with alumni. Adding formal and informal assessments that solicit feedback from students that take HIST courses, both majors and non-majors, will help clarify barriers to attracting and retaining students (particularly women and other underrepresented groups) in the program that might not be detected through the course assessments that are currently in place.

Finally, it is important for the department to expand curricular reform and assessments to include the graduate curriculum, particularly given declining graduate student enrollment. Improvements to the MA and PhD curriculum and program requirements should aim to reduce time to completion, standardize workload expectations, and ensure that new training opportunities are designed to track the changing professional landscape. Plans to do this are already in place and should be prioritized in the near future. Any changes must now be considered in the context of the broader Arts & Humanities (AHUM) Future State plan; for example, new limits on the number of years of support that may be included in MA admissions offers will reverse the department's recent progress in offering competitive funding packages to MA students. As with undergraduate offerings, the graduate program will also benefit from cross-departmental collaborations that facilitate interdisciplinary research and training opportunities for MA and PhD students.

## Research, Scholarly, and/or Creative Work Excellence

The Department of History consists of “an energetic group of excellent and award-winning faculty” with expertise in both premodern and modern history. They use a range of historical methods and approaches to understand the causes and context of change. While the department’s research expertise is broad in both geographic and methodological scope, its historical strengths lie in US History (particularly Environmental History and the American West), Asian History, and European History. Currently approximately half of the faculty specialize in East Asian or South Asian History, and an ongoing hire in Indigenous American History will help fill a major gap in Western American history that has recently developed in the department.

HIST has an award-winning collection of faculty, including three winners of the Boulder Faculty Assembly Award for Excellence in Teaching and Pedagogy, a Distinguished Professor, two College of Arts & Sciences Professors of Distinction, a MacArthur “genius grant” winner, three Guggenheim fellows, several Fulbright fellows, and winners of a long list of various book awards. The ERC identified the “quality and pace of publishing and research contributions to the historical discipline and beyond” as one of the primary strengths of the department. Faculty have been particularly successful in receiving research funding and prestigious fellowships; between 2017-2023, HIST was consistently in the top three units in AHUM for direct grant expenditures. They regularly publish refereed books, scholarly monographs, journal articles, and digital history projects and are in the process of developing mechanisms for rewarding faculty for other research products that may reach broader audiences outside academe.

The primary challenge to the department’s research excellence is maintaining their strengths in multiple areas despite shrinking faculty numbers. Recent retirements and departures have weakened the department’s strength in US History and European History and increased the service and administrative burdens on the faculty that remain. A timely search for a tenure-track scholar in Indigenous American History is currently underway and will help address a key gap in the department’s expertise. The department is cognizant of other gaps and poised to be strategic with future hiring opportunities to ensure they maintain their depth and breadth of research expertise. Increasing administrative support, e.g., by adding staff positions that are shared among units, would help protect the research excellence of the unit by ensuring that faculty can devote appropriate time to their research programs. As aptly summarized by the ERC, “Squandering the varied opportunities inherent in a well-hired, well-mentored faculty complement should be avoided.”

## Hiring and Mentoring (Faculty, Staff, Postdoctoral Fellows)

According to the D&A profile for academic year (AY) 2023-2024 faculty personnel in the Department of History consisted of 28 tenured and tenure-track (TTT) faculty (1 distinguished professor, 10 full professors, 13 associate professors, 5 assistant professors), 2 teaching-track faculty, and 4 lecturers. This represents a 20% decline in TTT since the 2016 ARPAC review, when the department had 35 faculty. A disproportionate number of these TTT losses have been in European History, reducing the representation of this area in the department relative to past levels. The average salary for TTT faculty in HIST is, on average, 16% lower at CU Boulder compared to the average among Association of American Universities (AAU) peer institutions. The disparity is greatest for full and associate professors, which are 83% of equal-rank faculty at peer institutions on average. The salaries for assistant professors are 92% of the average salary at other peer institutions.



The department has a strong and supportive mentoring structure for early-career faculty (ECF). All ECF have 1-2 assigned faculty mentors, and the department has a "chair of mentoring" who provides mentors with guidance on how to support their mentees and follows up to make sure that they are meeting on a regular basis. The chair of mentoring keeps track of ECF timelines and progress towards promotion, meeting with ECF individually and with their mentors as needed to discuss their progress. Given this strong and supportive mentoring structure, it is not surprising that ECF reports a collegial and supportive departmental culture where they feel that their contributions are encouraged and valued.

Moving forward, the department could benefit from extending their departmental mentoring structure to include mid-career faculty. Over the past several years, the rate of associate professors being promoted to full professor has stagnated. This is due in part to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on faculty whose research requires extensive travel to archives, but it is also the case that many of these associate professors had already been long in rank at the time of the pandemic. Given the striking success of the ECF mentoring program, it is likely that mid-career faculty would benefit from a similar support structure that helps ensure their timely promotion and professional growth.

According to the Office of Data & Analytics profile for AY 2023-2024, staff personnel in the Department of History consisted of 1 university staff member, 2 classified staff members, and 2 student hourly employees. Since the 2016 ARPAC review, the department was granted (and filled) an additional staff position. However, since that hire, one staff member retired, and another left the department. The department was allowed to fill one of the two vacancies with a position that is now stretched across both graduate and undergraduate programming. The unit has pursued several short-term solutions to cover critical gaps in administrative support, such as hiring a temporary worker and creating a graduate research assistant (GRA) position to focus on public and community engagement. However, these solutions are not sustainable in the long term. Given current financial constraints in AHUM, the department would benefit from a division-wide program that created additional shared administrative support services for functions that the department cannot currently cover without overburdening their current staff.

## Student Success and Mentoring (Undergraduate and Graduate Students)

According to the 2025 D&A profile and degree program report, in fall 2024 the Department of History had 314 undergraduate majors, which ranked 5<sup>th</sup> of 16 units currently under review, and which was an 8% decrease from 5 years prior. In fiscal year (FY) 2024-2025, the department awarded 92 bachelor's degrees, which ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> among units under review, and which was a 7% decrease from 5 years prior. In 2024, the Department taught 12,768 SCH, ranking 5<sup>th</sup> among units under review, and which was a 19% decrease from 5 years prior. Seventy-five percent of those SCH were taken by non-majors, and 56% of the SCH were taught by TTT faculty, 21% by teaching-track faculty, 3% by graduate part-time instructors (GPTIs) or teaching assistants (TAs), and 20% by others.

Student interest is fostered in part by a History Club. According to the 2021 Senior Exit Survey, 50% of seniors were planning on employment, 8% were seeking employment, and 41% were continuing their education. While 92% of those seniors reported being satisfied or very satisfied with their history major, only 28% felt satisfied with their preparation for the job market. According

to the unit, since the last review, they have “restarted and expanded our internship program, created undergraduate scholarships, and developed summer funding opportunities for graduate students.”

Regarding graduate education, as of fall 2024, 28 PhD students and 7 master's students were enrolled. This represented an 8% increase in PhD students and a 53% decrease in master's students compared to five years prior. In 2025, the department awarded 5 master's degrees and 2 PhDs. Compared to five years prior, this was a 67% increase in master's degrees and an equal number of PhDs. As the department explains, the decrease in master's students is attributable to their shift to two-year funding packages for MA students, resulting in a more productive MA environment. The department also now has full funding packages for PhD students. The Department notes that it is a challenge to move MA students through in two years in part because the declining number of TTT reduces the number of graduate courses provided.

Both the PhD and MA use a “dual field system” that emphasizes training in a regional area alongside a thematic field, allowing the students breadth, depth, and flexibility, while enhancing recruiting. Graduate students can serve on the department's graduate studies committee in an advisory role, and the ERC observed that graduate students felt well mentored. HIST does not have a system in place for formally tracking graduate student employment placements but is working to informally track this via LinkedIn. They would welcome support from Alumni Relations on this project.

The department observed that increasing PhD student stipends, which currently lag behind the Boulder cost of living, would help in recruiting. The department also emphasized the need to better train graduate students for jobs outside of academia, given the challenging academic job market nationally. Finally, the department observed that there is an opportunity to streamline some of its graduate degree requirements.

## Inclusivity and Unit Culture

In February 2022, a collaborative group met and identified the following [five goals to advance diversity, equity and inclusion](#) at CU Boulder: (1) employee skills and development; (2) student achievement outcomes; (3) community building; (4) employee recruitment outcomes; and (5) preparing students to participate in a diverse democracy. As the ERC observed regarding the Department of History “the 2016 report referred to tensions with the department that showed no continued signs in our virtual visit.” The department concurred in this assessment, with the return to the renovated Hellems Building in spring 2026 likely to further enhance community building. As to inclusivity, the department recently folded its dedicated inclusive excellence committee into the executive committee but will continue to evaluate the efficacy of that approach. The department has developed a set of “Inclusive Excellence Principles,” that signal its commitment to inclusivity among faculty, staff, and students.

The 2021 Campus Culture Survey results suggested that generally speaking HIST's various constituencies experienced a high degree of belonging and inclusivity. As discussed, hiring a professor in Indigenous American History, along with strengthening relationships with the Center of the American West, has the potential to further deepen the department's commitment to inclusivity. As noted by both the department submissions and the ERC, HIST's principal challenge/opportunity is the need to boost major/minor enrollment and SCH, as well as address the demographic gap in majors, which skews 59% men and 41% women. Potential methods of addressing these challenges, as identified by the department and/or ERC, include developing additional experiential

learning opportunities to both foster and educate about employment opportunities, additional faculty recruiting/teaching by women in introductory history courses (though currently 55% of the TTT faculty is women), the continued streamlining of the major requirements coupled with expanded curricular breadth, and creating connections with other disciplines including, for example, through courses such as History of Science or Public Health.

## Unit Planning and Governance Structures and Processes

The department's vision includes maintaining and modestly expanding its high-quality faculty, maintaining and expanding its undergraduate student population, and maintaining and strengthening its graduate programs. While the department views its governance structure as fair and as a strength of the department, to help facilitate the department's broader goals, it plans to reexamine service distribution and committee structures, revisit its equitable but cumbersome annual merit review process, and conduct a thorough review of department bylaws for improved efficiency. Through their goal setting exercise, the department developed a timeline for revisiting annual merit review, which should be completed in spring 2026. These concrete and specific revisions to the department's governance structures seem both feasible and underway.

The department has bylaws that were last revised in 2022, policies and procedures last revised in 2022, and standing rules that were last amended in 2024. Tenured and tenure-track professors and teaching-track faculty on at least 50% appointments have voting rights to set rules, policies, and procedures for the department. As required by Regent and CU system law and policy, decisions about hiring into TTT positions are made by the tenured and tenure-track faculty. In contrast, decisions about hiring rostered instructorships are made by the executive committee and the search or review committee. The department has detailed rules regarding the procedures for reappointment, promotion, and tenure, as well as published criteria for these employment achievements. As noted, the department has extremely detailed methods for calculating annual merit raises that it is considering streamlining. A committee on mentoring exists to provide formalized mentoring through the probationary period for "junior faculty." The department has a detailed grievance policy that encourages resolution at the lowest level possible, with escalating involvement of department leadership and, if needed, the development of a formal committee. The grievance process for students simply says university procedures should be followed. The department is governed by a chair and executive committee. The department's governance procedures seem comprehensive, though there did seem to be some minor discrepancies among the documents.

# Recommendations

The members of the Academic Review and Planning Advisory Committee address the following recommendations to the Department of History and to the offices of responsible administrators:

## To the Unit:

1. Recruit and retain a tenure-track faculty scholar in Indigenous American History in collaboration with the Center of the American West and other units and partners on campus.
2. Continue developing mechanisms for assessing the “student experience” to inform changes to the curriculum and requirements.
3. Review and revise the undergraduate curriculum in order to:
  - a. Pursue reducing the number of credit hours required for both the major and the minor, to align with history departments at peer universities.
  - b. Rethink the structure of the BA for the purposes of streamlining the major and logically sequencing courses.
  - c. Take student feedback into account while planning curricular revisions.
4. Aggressively pursue interdisciplinary collaborations with other units to create new offerings for students in conversation with the Future State discussions in AHUM.
5. Evaluate methods for streamlining the graduate curriculum and sequencing to better facilitate timely graduate degree completion.
6. Extend the departmental mentoring program to support mid-career faculty and facilitate promotions from associate to full professor.
7. Prioritize the maintenance of the positive departmental culture as the unit returns to its renovated space in Hellems.

## To the Dean of the Arts and Humanities:

8. Support the department in recruiting, supporting, and retaining a tenure-track hire in Indigenous American History.
9. Consider opportunities for shared staffing resources to support units across AHUM with their unmet needs.
10. Explore creating shared administrative support services for certain key functions for which individual units, especially smaller units, may not have staff personnel, e.g., graduate student administrative support, event support, budget and finance support, etc.
11. Facilitate collaborations between HIST and other units to promote interdisciplinary offerings in the undergraduate and graduate student curricula.
12. Emphasize and support the important role that HIST—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university

administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

### To the Provost:

13. Emphasize and support the important role that HIST—and the humanities disciplines as a whole—play in CU Boulder's mission when communicating and advocating to university administration, the local community, and the state of Colorado, including in central campus (SRC) communications and storytelling.

## Required Follow-up

The chair of the Department of History shall submit two follow-up reports—one due on the first of April 2027 and one due on the first of April 2029. The follow-up reports shall focus on the implementation of the recommendations from ARPAC detailed herein. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, as well as the provost and other relevant central campus leadership will also respond to all outstanding matters under their purview arising from this review year's recommendations. The dean of Arts and Humanities and the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences will submit one follow-up report due on May 1, 2028, while the provost and relevant central campus leaders will submit one follow-up report due on June 1, 2030.