Purpose

The purpose of this External Program Review Report is to evaluate the History Department’s recent achievements and challenges it faces. It offers recommendations as to how the Department may continue to flourish, as well as offering insight as to the most serious systemic issues that threaten its effectiveness in the longer term.

Summary

I was provided with all relevant official documentation pertaining to the performance of the Department of History 2006-2015 well in advance of my on-campus review on February 10-11, 2016. During this site visit, I was also provided with full access to Department faculty members, current students, alumni and administrators, all of whom were generous with their time and open and candid in response to my queries, particularly Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Michael Platz, for which I am very grateful.

All documentation and oral interviews support the conclusion that its award-winning History faculty are superb in the areas of both teaching and scholarship; they offer courses vital to fulfilling its own mission, the programs in other disciplines, such as Hawaiian, Pacific Islands, Gender & Women’s Studies, and to the University in terms of its service to the General Education Program, most particularly through its writing intensive courses. The Department also houses the Public History lab, which though its space is limited, possesses a collection that any university would view with pride and which offers opportunities for students for both pure research and acquaintance with preservation and archival studies.

Nonetheless, as previous self-studies have indicated, this high level of performance is jeopardized by inadequate faculty lines as defined by long-established standards
of the American Historical Association and past and current evidence-based analysis of peer institutions. The lack of adequate secretarial support is also an ongoing issue for this and other Social Science departments. Currently, there is one full-time secretary for fifty faculty members in the Social Science Division. While this secretary is remarkably efficient and hardworking, the volume of secretarial tasks needed by departments and faculty is overwhelming for just one individual, leaving the History faculty, and faculty in other departments, to spend an increasing amount of their time on secretarial tasks. As a result, the Department’s members are stretched very thin.

Therefore, the chief concern of the External Program Review is to help identify ways in which the University can make reasonable investments, such as the addition of at least one faculty line, that will enable the Department to sustain and possibly expand its current remarkable level of productivity and leadership in its delivery of the University’s educational mission.

That this investment is necessary cannot be overstated. While the Department has great strengths and does yeoman work for the university, it has undergone heavy wear and is precariously balanced against potential for exhaustion and loss. If appropriate measures are taken, the History Department and its programs will thrive, but failing what established professional standards demand, the Department will weaken and decline in a manner detrimental to the University.

University leaders are fully aware of both the achievements of the Department and also its long record of requests for additional support. However, at every level of administration, it is argued that institutional and system-wide forces prevent them from addressing the Department’s needs. Indeed, some hold the Department’s problems, such as their taking on of additional courses in the key Hawai‘i and Pacific history area to meet student demand; their efforts to offer independent study courses to insure timely graduation; and their focus on smaller writing intensive courses, as “suicidal” and thus their problems are of their own making. However, at the same time, they recognize that the alternative to bearing these additional burdens would come at the detriment of other disciplines, the general education program and to an even wider range and larger number of students. It is thought that some relief may be found in a proposed institutional reorganization, but evidence encountered during the on-campus visit suggests that, despite the best of intentions, it is highly unlikely to serve as a panacea.

Since the Department’s outstanding performance and its struggles with inadequate staffing have been well-established by the previous External Review completed by
Professor of History at the University of North Carolina at Asheville in November, 2005 and were reaffirmed by the History Department’s most recent self-study (2016), it is not proposed here to repeat their findings in great detail. It will however, provide a review both the current strengths of the History Department, the current state of the challenges it faces, and offer recommendations designed to encourage administrators to proactively address concerns who, over and above their considerable appreciation of the Department’s value, have not as yet been able to reverse what all perceive as an “unsustainable” situation, a term used by students as well as administrators and History Department faculty.

**Strengths**

Both on paper and through interviews, the History Department of UH-Hilo has a well-developed mission, an excellent program that meets established best practices, serves its students well in preparing them for careers, has developed a flexible strategic plan suited to the current changing global social-political environment, and is fully integrated into the University’s General Education and other academic programs.

**Evaluation of Mission**

The Department has adopted a Mission Statement and related Student Learning Outcomes that are well-geared to address the students it seeks to serve and the resources at its disposal. The curriculum leading to the Bachelor of Arts in History is designed to develop broad historical knowledge and the skills in data analysis and communication of critical importance in all professional endeavors, while providing “a basic knowledge of history in the United States, Europe, East Asia, Hawai‘i, the Pacific Islands, and world history, and with an introductory knowledge of historiography.” Interviews with alumni and current students confirm that the Department is successful in achieving its aim to develop their ability to communicate clearly, both orally and in writing, and to develop their ability to gather, process, and analyze information from various traditional historical sources, but also media and emerging digital formats. Through a regularly taught capstone course, students have an opportunity to apply their originality, increase their information literacy, and employ their critical discipline-based skills and knowledge. Students appear to value the capstone experience regardless of who is assigned to teach it.

Most important, the Department’s current faculty are enormously popular with students for the right reasons. Students confirm statistical evidence that History faculty are able to nurture their writing skills, build their analytical skills, develop
their sense of global responsibility and citizenship and awareness of cultural diversity. They have also persuaded them that the past is prologue. Students interviewed remarked that their history instructors instilled in them an ability to think for themselves and also provided them with examples of cultural encounters that have increased their understanding of the way they perceived each other.

**Evaluation of the Program**

The Department’s five full-time faculty members cover five areas of discipline-based specialties and a foundational knowledge world history in addition to working with students in methodology, research, thesis, and capstone courses. The History major requires a total of 39 upper-division credit hours. The Department also offers a minor requiring 15 credits. Remarkably, this small department has always sought to pursue the best practices in the discipline of history as outlined by the American Historical Association by offering five specialty tracks in the areas of European, American, East Asian, Hawai‘i and Pacific Islands history, along with Foundation requirements that ensure that, in addition to knowledge of their field of specialization, history graduates have a foundational knowledge of the other four focus areas provided by the department, as well as a general knowledge of world history. A Major in History at UH-Hilo takes the following courses designed to meet AHA standards:

1. Strong foundation—HIST 300 Historical Methods  
2. Global diversity—HIST 151-152 World Hist. sequence; foundation requirement  
3. Area Specialization—at total of four UD courses in a regional specialty  
4. Historical Methods—HIST 300 and HIST 490 Historiography & Research  
5. Research Seminar—HIST 491 Thesis  
6. Integrating Capstone: HIST 490 Historiography and Research Methods

While maintaining courses in the fundamentals of its program (historical research methods, historiography, senior thesis) each faculty member teaches fundamental and interesting courses within their specialization that correlate to the program's focus areas.

In addition to its academic program, the History Department sponsors the History Club not merely open to all students, but actually attracting members from other disciplines, apparently due to their experience of General Education Course 151 and 152. This is quite a tribute to the quality of instruction they receive in those classes, as UH-Hilo students in the Club did not arrive at the university with a high regard for the field. Interviews with members of the Club and History Majors and Minors
shared that they make good use of their History Resource Room (though they wish it was larger!) and participate in community activities and film nights and other activities. They also, through membership in the Alpha Beta Omicron chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (the national history honor society), regularly present papers at the regional PAT conference, and it is my observation as a Judge of these papers, that in past years, they have received top honors for outstanding undergraduate writing.

The History Department also offers various opportunities for work-study and internships and other activities. History students gain valuable experience through History-specific service-learning projects, internships, externships, and departmental collaborations that further enrich students’ educational foundation.

The Department offers many opportunities that can translate into career opportunities within and beyond the discipline of History. These opportunities include Public History Program, including the ongoing Public History Lab project, which was made possible by a "Diversity and Equity Initiative Grant" secured by Dr. Kerri Inglis in 2009.

Public History is a growing and popular new field within the larger discipline of History. It offers an approach to history that promotes the collaborative study of the past, and generally takes place in settings beyond the traditional classroom – bridging the gap between academia and the various interests of the local community. Public history practitioners include museum professionals, historical consultants, archivists, cultural resource managers, oral historians, film and media producers, and many more. There is a growing job market for public historians, especially in Hawai‘i. The Public History Program features fieldtrips, and applied-learning opportunities through internships and service opportunities, and coursework provided by the History Department which include the following courses:

- HIST 390 Public History in Hawai‘i
- HIST 391 History Internship
- HIST 393 Archives & Historical Preservation

Central to the Public History program in terms of both research and career preparation is the Public History lab, which I explored during my on-campus visit. I was impressed by the quality of its small but culturally significant collection and was pleased to observe the work of a student learner diligently labeling and digitizing material from the collections.
Clearly, the Public History lab provides students with information resources and technology as part of UH-Hilo’s educational mission.

History Department faculty work closely with Mookini Library staff in support of their own research and that of their students. The Department is quite fortunate to have the services of librarian (and on occasion history class student) Amy Saxton, who I had the pleasure of meeting and clearly represents the interests of the History faculty. Librarians enthusiastically join with faculty in working individually with upper-level History students on specific research projects, providing important research assistance. There are, however, budgetary and other constraints limiting the Library’s support of the History Program that will be addressed below.

Interviews with students suggest that with a History degree from the History Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo they feel capable of working in a variety of workplaces that encompass a myriad of job titles, including educator, researcher, writer, editor, information manager, advocate, businessperson, or simply as a professional historian or archivist, both public and academic which is the Department’s express intent. It is worth noting that among students interviewed, alumni successfully secured management positions in critical non-academic areas; one rose to direct a Kidney Dialysis Center.

**Strategic Planning**

The Department has developed a thorough Strategic Plan. It members correctly note the coming important of the last lesser developed continent, Africa, the rise of interest in Islam and the growing importance of Southeast Asia in the U.S. pivot to Asia. It thus has long been committed to expanding offerings to include more coverage of Africa and expanded coverage of Asia to include Southeast Asia. Given that the University of Hawai‘i has been in the vanguard of world history, it also is committed to expand its coverage of this area and develop it as a new track, which might be devoted so as to increase the Department and the University’s preeminence in the emerging field of Indigenous Internationalization, considered a sub-field of world history.

Consistent with the recommendations of its last External Review, it has become clear that the Department has an urgent need for a replacement hire in world history and a new hire in Pacific/Hawaiian history. Furthermore, the goal of expanding the program consistent with the best practices of the discipline necessitate acquiring a new faculty line in the area of Southeast Asia and/or South America and/or Africa as mentioned above. With the replacement hire (for the lost faculty line) and these
two new hires, the number of history faculty at UH-Hilo would reach eight members, consistent with the 2005 External Review recommendation of eight as the optimal number sufficient to meet the Department’s needs and support its ambitious plans for improving the quality and scope of the Program.

In view of the limited resources available to it, these goals remain aspirational, but, as will be discussed below, the Department is constantly reviewing strategies to keep its program relevant and this is to be commended.

**Institutional Setting**

As the History Department notes in its self-study, it is committed to offering high quality courses directly applicable to UH-Hilo’s General Education and Graduation Requirements. All tenured and tenure-track members of the Department consistently offer courses that contribute to the GE curriculum (HIST 151, 152, 284), a vital component of the World Cultures Requirement at the university. The History Department offers numerous Upper Division courses as Writing Intensive, enabling all students to fulfill the Graduation Requirement in this area. Worthy of special note, it appears that approximately 50 percent of the History curriculum is applicable to meeting the Hawai‘i-Asia-Pacific Graduation Requirement.

It also appears that currently and for several years in no other department at UHH does every member of the faculty teach at least one section of a 100-level GE course every semester, and offers not one course, but two each year (HIST 151 and 152) not simply the same 100 level course every year.

The History Department seems to be extremely well-integrated into the University’s academic programs, as it serves not only the General Education Program, but also the needs of many other academic programs at the university, including the China-U.S. Certificate, the Teacher Education Program, Hawaiian Studies, Japanese Studies, Pacific Studies, and Gender and Women’s Studies. I was able to interview students, some members of the History Club, but not History Majors or Minors, who spoke of the value of their history courses in these areas of study. Students also testify that they leave the History courses in the General Education curriculum (History 151 and 152) not only having learned valuable content relevant to present global circumstances, but also have increased their ability to learn more about the world around them, evidence of the development of life-long learning skills.

The Department’s contributions to the General Education Program are also praised by UH-Hilo administrators.
Challenges

The leadership talents, flexibility, and professionalism of the entire History Department faculty have enabled the History Department to maintain their program at a high standard, but that capacity has been seriously compromised since its last External Review (2005). In that review, a case was made by the External Reviewer, Dr. Grant Hardy, that the Department was understaffed under local conditions as well as failing to meet AHA Best Practices for a university of its size (see above). He urged that at the very least an additional faculty line was necessary that would bring the up from five to a total of six. UH-Hilo administrators agreed and a new line was filled the following year. It was unfortunate, given the Department was already in a deficit, that the new hire in 2008, went on leave in 2012, returned briefly in 2014, and left in December of that year. With that departure, though enrollment in courses serviced by the Department had grown, the University decided not to sanction a replacement, returning the Department to its previous condition of need, three below the minimum of eight established by the previous External Review.

The Department quickly noted a direct connection between the loss of that faculty line and a decline in students in the Major which was compounded by changes in the General Education Program, as both led to a reduction in direct contact between the History Department’s popular faculty and students enrolled in History 151 and 152 as well as Upper Division courses, which had in the past allowed the Department to weather the general decline in History and the Liberal Arts generally. However, enrollments rose dramatically in the non-history programs that the Department serviced with their courses.

Despite a fulsome understanding by UH-Hilo’s administration of the causes of the decline in UH-Hilo History Majors, any such decline is universally cited as a reason to oppose any requests for additional faculty lines, and that seems to be the case at UH-Hilo, which in recent years has experienced significant fiscal tightening. Not surprisingly, “new” lines have been created to serve growing programs such as KES. Unfortunately, the growing number of students in that program in particular (which has led to the creation of two new faculty lines) are flocking for their required writing intensive courses to the Department of History. Understandably so. According those students interviewed on campus, while they did not particularly like history as taught in their secondary schools, most had some experience in writing in that discipline and thus felt it is less intimidating than English. Moreover, these students rated the instruction they received in the writing intensive courses offered by the History
Department as a valuable experience, a judgment supported by the high teaching ratings Department faculty routinely receive.

Here it should be noted that the overall enrollment at UH-Hilo has risen since the last External Review established a need for more than the five historians then on staff. Yet, also the same number of faculty now are responsible for servicing an increasing number of students in other programs, continuing the paradigm in which the Department teaches more students, but those students are the least likely to consider a History Major, such as KES after exposure to the Department’s much loved faculty.

Remarkably, to deal with the growing demand by non-majors for History Department courses and faculty, an administrator suggested that the Department should simply curtail its offering of its small sections of writing intensive courses to save itself, as apparently was the course taken by Sociology, a rush to the bottom strategy that this administrator decried, but believed it to be necessary in view of the financial conditions faced by the University. Perhaps institutional memory is deficient in this regard. It was in response to appeals from different stakeholders in the university, that it had greatly increased its Writing Intensive Courses, from around 4% to almost 20%. These courses, each one capped by university regulations at an enrollment of 20 students, almost always function at full capacity and beyond, but of course this limitation obviously, and artificially, makes the number of students served appear fewer in number.

There is also an independent factor that deepened the staffing challenges faced by the Department. The Department devotes considerable resources in support of other programs. Many of the history course offerings (especially those with the Hawai‘i-Asia-Pacific GE designation) contribute directly to programs such as Hawaiian Studies, Pacific Islands Studies, Education, Administration of Justice, and offer important electives to other programs across campus. With the "lost" faculty line, more of the burden for world history and program requirements (e.g. historiography) has fallen on the remaining faculty – meaning, at least one less Hawai‘i/Pacific course is offered each year and with fewer world history sections, recruitment into the major is also suffering.

The Department devotes considerable resources in support of the College of Hawaiian Studies, but as a result of growing enrollments in the related Pacific History Area and Hawaiian History Area, these courses must be handled by one faculty member, Dr. Kerri Inglis. She manages this responsibility, which includes offering enough courses to insure that students can graduate on time, by offering
regular overloads. This specific issue was observed by the previous External Reviewer, Dr. Hardy and by me from the relevant documents. They also arose unprompted by faculty early in the campus visit, and was again raised, unprompted, in response to a question as to “Do you have any observations about instruction,” to which both alumni and current students replied that they could not believe that that such perennial overloads had been allowed to occur and, with regard to Dr. Inglis, remarked that they had no idea how she has been able to deliver high quality instruction under these circumstances and that this seemed ridiculous and unsustainable to them, though these views were expressed in less delicate terms.

Again remarkably, an administrator suggested that Dr. Inglis takes on this burden “because she likes to.” A possibility, but more likely it is out of commitment to UH-Hilo students. When I raised this issue in conversation with Dr. Platz, he made it clear that having one faculty member bearing such a burden was, indeed, “unsustainable,” confirming the opinion of the students under his charge.

The previous External Review recommended three new hires, including Hawaiian History, bringing the total number of History faculty to eight. As noted above, he thought the Department needed at least six members to meet the needs of the time, a decade ago, when enrollment was lower. At that time (the Fall of 2015), the History Department had only five FTE faculty members, while its own recent self-study of comparable institutions indicates that 10 is a reasonable aspirational size for a student body of UH-Hilo’s size, 8 is the mean (as at Hawaii Pacific University) and 6 at a general minimum.

The previous External Reviewer gave first priority to the Hawaiian History hire. Ten years later the Department believes it has an urgent need for at least a replacement hire in world history (covering the loss of its one time 6th faculty member) and create a new hire in Pacific/Hawaiian history to lessen the burden in those growing areas. Furthermore, the goal of expanding the program consistent with the best practices of the discipline does necessitate acquiring a new faculty line in the area of Southeast Asia and/or South America/and or Africa. With the replacement hire and these two new hires, this would bring the number of history faculty at UH-Hilo to eight members, consistent with Dr. Grant Hardy’s assessment of the optimal number sufficient to meet the Department’s needs and support its ambitious plans for improving the quality and scope of the Program. I agree, but I have discussed a more modest alternative for the near term that has sparked some interest in the Department, and will be addressed in my recommendations.
Lack of adequate faculty lines exacerbates other issues also long-standing. Department of History faculty clearly have met the requirements sufficient for achieving tenure and promotion. However, the Department’s commitment to standards of excellence, and its insistence on the importance of service activities, both before and after promotion, has taken a toll on the capacity of Department members in terms of research and publication. The Department’s recent Self-Study argues that the university personnel committees have historically been rather lax in standards for sufficient performance in service and that has been a source of frustration for the Department, whose members have the sense that they are examples of the dictum “no good deed goes unpunished.” Insufficient faculty, and the loss of faculty, has aggravated this problem. In this context, and with the recognition that UH-Hilo is a small liberal arts university lacking the support and resources of other comparable peer and benchmark institutions, let alone a tier 1 school, the Department asserts that “nonetheless the research accomplishments of the Department have been considerable.” I concur with their belief that increased support for the Department in terms of replacement and new hires would most definitely improve this situation.

History Department faculty are also concerned that, though research and service demands on UH-Hilo faculty have been increasing in recent years, faculty development has been neglected “to an alarming degree.” Currently, any funding distributed under the rubric of “professional development” is time-consuming to obtain and very restricted in its use, making it doubly unattractive for busy and productive members of the faculty. Members of the History Department believe that this lack of readily obtained and easily used funding for faculty development discourages engaged faculty members from remaining engaged and current in their fields. I would observe that this is of special concern to a shorthanded History faculty covering a variety of course subjects as well as world history, which is a field driven not merely by the march of events, but by shifts in historical processes. The roots of resurgent Islam can be traced back centuries, but its current expression is entirely new in ways that are only now becoming apparent.

Interviews with faculty suggest that tenured faculty are limited to funding every two years for travel to conferences. Research funding can be applied for yearly, on a competitive basis, for up to $5,000 a year. With heavy teaching and service loads (that often bleed into the summer months despite their 9-month contracts) little time is left for meaningful research and writing that can lead to publishing opportunities. Despite these limits and challenges, the History faculty have remained very productive, but, together with the issues identified above, suggests the Department’s high standards are not sustainable.
The previous external Review recommended the provision of more release time for the Chair, as well as more clerical support given the Department’s then current size, which made it “exceedingly difficult to meet the demands of being Chair, while also teaching a full load of classes and serving on committees, etc.” He believed a teaching-load reduction for the Chair [of one course] will be essential to the success of the Department’s ongoing initiatives and to its anticipated growth, particularly in the area of Hawaiian history.” Willingness to do the job of Department Chair at all, let alone to try, and be able, to do it well, is certainly impacted by the issue of compensation. As was noted in the Department’s 2015 Self-Study, this is an important matter of faculty development as well. Teaching, research, and service to the university are the criteria for promotion; service in the department is highly time-consuming, but from testimony gathered onsite, it seems that such service is not always adequately appreciated by promotion committees as significant “university service.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

First Recommendation

_The University should commence a search for a tenure-track assistant professor of Hawai‘i and the Pacific, with expertise in World History beginning now, in order to complete the process have the faculty member in place by Fall 2016._

It may have been forgotten that in 2010, the importance of obtaining a new hire in Hawaiian History was sufficiently clear that the Chancellor approved the search for this position. A search was conducted, applications were received, and applications were under consideration when the administration cancelled the search. The need for the position has only grown greater since that time, and the result is reasonably represented by the Department as “a missed opportunity to benefit the major and the student body as a whole.”

I have identified above some of the lasting and current effects of the resulting understaffing of the Department of History, but would point out here how it has presented a major obstacle to the Department’s ability to plan for the future. The Department has longed for at least one new hire in Hawaiian History, but has had difficulty abandoning the call for a world historian, which constitutes the only hope the Department has of passing another decade beyond survival mode, meeting course responsibilities with overloads and unable to add to the heritage of world history in
Hawai‘i, such as by contributing to the “Indigenous Internationalization” initiative such a new hire can facilitate.

Accordingly, the 2015 Self-Study pinned the Department’s hopes on the hiring of a World Historian who can teach and possibly conduct research in Hawaiian History.

In discussions with Department faculty, I have suggested that instead, the Department consider committing themselves to requesting a new hire in Hawaiian History who can teach and possibly conduct research in world history. The growth of such a teaching and research agenda was illuminated by the recent publication of a collection of articles, some by rising young Hawaiian scholars (See “Forum on Hawai‘i in World History,” World History Connected, available at http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/8.3/). Moreover, thanks to the pioneering work of Matt Matsuda (Pacific Worlds: A History of Seas, Peoples, and Cultures, 2012) over 50 younger scholars, many of them budding historians of Hawai‘i, attended a recent American Historical Association on “The Pacific in World History.” These two developments are good indication that the job market can be expected to provide excellent candidates for such a position.

While preparing this Review, I received an e-mail conveying the entire Department’s affirmation that, “While the replacement of the vacant World History faculty position with a combined Hawai‘i/World position still leaves the History Department understaffed, it would allow our students to focus on the place of Hawai‘i within a broader World History viewpoint. In an increasingly globalized world, this is a decided advantage for our students as they pursue careers both within and outside of the state.”

Such a decision is to be commended and rewarded.

**Second Recommendation**

*It is recommended that the UH-Hilo Foundation approach the Donor of an Endowment given specifically for the support of the Department of History and discuss with her the desirability of a common option in American academia for the development of an Endowed Chair that has been overlooked by stakeholders.*

During the campus visit, the testimony of administrators indicates that they understood the pressures and burdens faced by the Department of History and admitted that, given their own pressures and burdens, they were inclined to take the
approach of “If it is not broken, one does not have to fix it,” while acknowledging that waiting for a collapse is not a “best practice” under any circumstances.

The belief that nothing can be done to remediate a problem is not productive of finding a solution. As one Wall Street giant said last week, “One someone tells me something is impossible, I tell them to work harder.”

This ambivalent mindset came to mind when in conversation, I asked if the University understood that two of its members – Dr. Michael Bitter and Yucheng Qin – won the highest of University honors (and two more have been nominated, Kerri Inglis and Douglas Mikkelson) and that two History students have been accepted at Oxford University. The administrator’s response was wholly enthusiastic, but when I followed that comment with an observation as to the apparent inability of the University to respond to its long-term concerns, that administrator could hold out hope that any such assistance was in the offing, though much to be desired.

Having come prepared for this meeting, I then asked if they were aware of the Endowment given in support of the History Department by a former student grateful for the education she received from it. This was the only administrator who had any familiarity with it, but it was not on their policy horizon until I mentioned it.

My interviews revealed that, when the Endowment was established, the donor, together with the retiring faculty member in whose name it was given and the History Department, expected that the Department would at least be informed of the Endowment’s progress. It was not. As a result, its existence was barely known to many administrators. At the conclusion of the campus visit, it appeared that my inquiries into the Endowment at every one of my interviews into this matter would at least lead to more transparency in the Endowment’s operation and might even lead to a meeting between the still living donor, the Foundation and representatives of the History Department.

The inquiries I initiated have thus far only resulted in the circulation of a brief statement on the current terms of the Endowment, with no offer of a meeting of stakeholders. The donor is still alive and it is quite possible that she might be willing to offer relief to the Department at this time. However, appears that no such discussions are likely and that the Foundation may be able to continue its policy of not making regular reports to Department on the progress of the Endowment designed to support it. There would be value in that, at least as a morale booster,
and might even encourage the Department to take a more active role in raising further funds.

Moreover, it would appear at present, without any changes to the instrument of Endowment, the Department may decline by time the Endowed Chair has been vested. In fact, Best Practices for Endowed Chairs (under the rubric of Distinguished Professorships) can be given in the form of a rotating $10,000 grant to deserving Department faculty in support of research, instructional design, and other activities identified as best serving the needs of the Department. Such a grant could also be used to bring in a visiting scholar to enrich the students’ experience, offer a course or two that would thereby relieve some of the pressure bearing down on the faculty at present by providing for regular faculty to teach the courses that they are most passionate about. Moreover, a visiting faculty member may be able to assist regular faculty in achieving their scholarly progress and stimulate the faculty’s intellectual goals. Such a course can be pursued in a manner that even does not necessitate the abandonment of the original goal of the donor to establish an Endowed Chair and vest it approximately five years from now.

The conversion or modification of the Endowment after discussion with all stakeholders may be considered by the Foundation as impossible, but, again, nothing is impossible if one is willing to work a bit harder. It is recommended that UH-Hilo should at least have a discussion of this matter among at least the Foundation and the Department Chair, optimally as laying groundwork for a meeting of all stakeholders.

**Third Recommendation**

*It is recommended that the University should consider attaching a second course release to the position of the Chair of the Department of History.*

Clearly the assignment in 2010 of one course release for the chair per year was believed generous given budgetary restraints. Moreover, the current pressure on the Department to meet its obligations may seem to prohibit the assignment of an additional release for the Chair at this time. But given the current needs of the Department far exceed in work and the scholarly expectations now expected of the Chair led to the previous External Reviewer to recommend at least one course release in 2005 *as well as three new hires*, it is my recommendation that a second course release be assigned to that position as soon as possible following the addition of at least one new faculty line.
Fourth Recommendation

*It is recommended that a reasonable increase be made in the Library’s Budget for History-related database support. UH-Hilo should also consider prioritizing the extension of the Library’s open hours as current limits are the subject of much criticism by History students that is echoed by other students. Given the progress of, and importance to UH-Hilo, of Pacific History, the university should seek interlibrary loan access to Hamilton Library, world-renowned for its Pacific collection as soon as possible.*

In times of fiscal retrenchment, Library budgets often must reduce purchases of books, journals and databases whose costs are on the rise. At UH-Hilo, Interlibrary Loan and databases available through the UH system help lessen the impact of these developments. However, students of history are increasingly dependent on databases in particular. Students and alumni interviewed often found themselves advised to visit the Public Library because they have access to needed databases to which UH-Hilo does not. Students without their own transport have complained about this for a variety of reasons, one of which seems to be concern over traveling back from the Public Library at night. All students interviewed complained that the current opening hours of the Mookini Library are an obstacle to their learning.

More important, I was very much surprised to find that students and faculty specializing in Pacific History do not have interlibrary loan access to Hamilton Library’s Pacific collection. The Department’s recent Self-Study notes that this “has had a material effect on the Department as a whole, inasmuch as the concentration of resources at UH Manoa disadvantages both students and faculty at UH-Hilo; the constant need to rely upon it, including trips taken to Oahu, lengthens time required to accomplish academic work.”

Naturally, both database searches and Library open hours are constrained by budget, but I would be remiss if I did not note the need, acknowledged by History Department faculty, that an increase in open hours and having access to more resources would be of great benefit to students and faculty campus-wide and most particularly to students enrolled in History courses and in the General Education courses and other academic programming the History Department serves.

Fifth Recommendation

During my on-campus visit I learned that the History Department is not alone in its frustration with the cumbersome nature of the current Scholarship and Faculty
Development policies and that there is a widespread support for alternatives, such as the granting of perhaps $1000.00 per year for faculty to use for their development with less cumbersome safeguards that are apparently discouraging faculty from applying for support. The History Department endorses such an effort and I concur.

**Sixth Recommendation**

*It is recommended that University of UH-Hilo should engage more proactively in resolving longstanding threats to the condition of the History Department.*

The previous External Reviewer concluded his work with the observation that the then Dean Hirokawa informed him that the Dean wanted to “reward ambition.” The Reviewer then remarked that “In my opinion, the History Department at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo has drive and direction. Greater support for them and their ideas would be a wise investment, not only for that department, but for the university as a whole.”

Over the past ten years, though the Department has retained its drive and ambition, support for the Department’s “ideas,” its faculty and students has often been lacking, most obviously in terms of communication and perception. My interviews with administrators cited in this Report indicate that these officers, though well-disposed towards the Department, are so hard-pressed that they are not able to examine those needs in a pro-active manner, such as working effectively with the Department to explore ways around the obvious fiscal concerns that threaten it.

I sympathize, but my responsibility as an External Program Reviewer compels me to draw attention to the multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by the Department for a decade, and that this warrants a heightened attention to the Department’s concerns, such as the status of the Endowment, of which only one administrator I spoke to was more than only dimly aware, but had left it on the back-burner where it most likely would have remained if not raised by this External Review process. Without more pro-active steps, perhaps even more direct effective measures than represented by that example might be discovered and implemented.

Perhaps such attention might yield other insights such as the chronic undercounting of History Majors. Many double Majors are not counted as History Majors due to a university policy that only counts as Majors the first Major listed. Yet, many students choose one major and then add a second Major in History after their exposure to History Department faculty who are able to demonstrate to them that an education in History is essential to their University experience and life thereafter. It
is necessary to repeat here that generally speaking, students do not arrive at UH-Hilo with an over-fondness for the field, hence it is not a popular choice as a Major upon arrival. Thus, that policy works against the Department of History more than others.

**Seventh Recommendation**

*It is recommended that, while College Reorganization may offer some benefits to all Departments, the solution to the major challenges faced by the History Department lies elsewhere and should be prioritized over and above reorganization. This recommendation is not offered in opposition to a reorganization, but to suggest that in that event, considerable attention would have to give to the Department of History to offset its possible effects on the Department’s already tenuous condition.*

Dr. Grant Hardy in his External Program Review of ten years ago recommended that a then proposed university action was not in the best interests of the Department of History. In that case, it was the transfer of an Art Historian to the History Department. It was aborted. I would like to raise another such issue: the best interests of the Department may not lay with a well-intentioned assumption that a solution to its current difficulties may rest with College reorganization.

Dr. Platz has some hopes that a reorganization of UH-Hilo College structure might offer some succor to what he recognizes is a hard-pressed Department. My experience with academic reorganization is that may heighten competition among restructured units, which leads to a rush to the bottom in terms of quality as well as morale. For example, at my institution, seven colleges were reduced to five, the existence of entire programs was threatened, some disappeared entirely, and departments sought to protect themselves by combining in perhaps less efficient but certainly bigger units perhaps on the basis of being” too big to fail.” Three years later, many of these changes were reversed as they were not promoting efficiency. In the process of reorganization, the College of Liberal Arts was turned into the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and then back into the College of Liberal Arts with some programs still without a permanent home.

A glance at the organizational chart of the UH-Hilo suggests many possible avenues that may have the advantage of putting like with like (or at least more like with like) which is among the Vice-Chancellor’s very admirable desiderata. However, such a step is likely to lead to a struggle for the survival of the fittest in the sense that it is every Liberal Arts program for itself, a struggle Departments of History do not win.

During my on-campus visit, I observed what appeared to be confirmation of that
assumption. There was a rumor the Department of History might once again find itself being asked to receive an Art Historian for reasons that have little to do with the Department’s needs or own circumstances, but which will be certainly be perceived in the current atmosphere as a “solution” to their staffing problems. The conclusion of External Reviewer’s Report in 2005 cited above was very explicit on this point: “Don’t move an art historian into the department.” I concur.

Even if the rumor is untrue, conversations with administrators during the campus visit were peppered with remarks like “Who knows where History belongs? It is debatable. Is it a Humanities or is it a Social Science?” which are without malice, but lay the groundwork for a presumption that, through such misunderstandings, reorganization will fail to meet the History Department’s needs. At the time, when hearing such speculation, I asked “Should not what matters most in terms of efficiency be where in the Humanities or Social Science the History Department might wish to reside?” The question went unanswered.

To be fair, it is with no fault arising from its faculty or administration sponsors that almost all large scale reorganizations end up with less input from individual departments on the grounds of speed or the seeming necessity for triage. I say this full in the knowledge that both the Department’s current leadership in its Division and the College would do their very best for it in a reorganization. This is because, despite the best of intentions, History Departments that service large numbers of students in other undergraduate programs, as is the case at UH-Hilo, almost universally end up not benefiting from reorganization: though short of staff, they still survive on their excellence under pressure. This suggests to the reorganizers that efficient Departments can be easily shifted around without close attention to the comparative needs of the programs it serves or the departments they will serve with.

As an example of this process, when the issue was raised during my campus visit that the History Department’s number of faculty is far below accepted standards, the reaction of administrators hard pressed by rising costs and lower support is understandably “Well, that is true of other departments.” The problem is that no evidence has yet been collected to allow a comparison with other departments and their standards which might reveal a shocking gap. In the rush of reorganization, even from the ground up rather than imposed from above, it is thus likely that the History Department will be placed among other departments that may be suffering less, but in which History will still be given no more resources than any other in the new alignment. Moreover, it might take years before the shake out of the reorganization is complete and attention might be turn to the Department of History’s long-standing needs.
It is encouraging that UH-Hilo administrators, especially Dr. Platz, are aware of these issues and possible negative outcomes, but I remain concerned that reorganization does not have a favorable track record of greatly ameliorating the difficulties of the kind faced by UH-Hilo’s Department of History.

CONCLUSION

The History Department of the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo is acknowledged to be one of the brightest jewels in the crown of the university system. However, that jewel is becoming tarnished as a result of long neglect, a situation all the more regrettable in that the neglect is acknowledged by administrators, who value the Department’s contributions to the University, but consider this to be a situation that cannot be remedied under current circumstances. It is this reviewer’s opinion that this gem can be burnished by a little consideration (of its degree of service to other programs and by the Foundation) and attention to what Best Practices, professional standards, and many students I have interviewed expect: the restoration of the sixth faculty line, preferable devoted to a historian of Hawai‘i with the ability to at least teach, and optimally research, world history and the role of Hawai‘i within it.