Mission: The Department's Graduate Program engages graduate students and faculty in individual and collective investigations of historical thought and in research on the historical experiences of humanity in different times and places. We offer MA and PhD degrees in history as well as course and faculty support for graduate students in fields outside of history. The program is designed to meet the needs of the Ph.D. candidate; our terminal (“Plan B”) MA is a small and discrete program (primarily a professional improvement degree). The department anticipates that most of its students will accept positions as academic or public historians, but also prepares students for careers in scholarly research; historical writing; K-12 teaching; archival, museum, and library work; and government service. We encourage students to design individual research programs based on varied methods of critical inquiry and interpretation. The department seeks to train productive researchers, committed teachers, and engaged public intellectuals who recognize a responsibility to participate actively in the world beyond the university.

Admission Processes and Criteria: Student demand for our graduate program remains very strong. Over the last ten years, we have averaged approximately 100 applications a year, and matriculated about 10 percent of those (we only admit those we can support financially to our MA/PhD and PhD programs). Applications jumped last year to 125. This compares favorably with other CLAS Departments, and places us well ahead of the average across PhD-granting history departments (80.9 applications and a matriculation rate of 8.8% for AY 2007/08; 74.1 applications and a matriculation rate of 8.1% for AY 2006/07) Candidates for admission are vetted by prospective advisors and then considered by our admissions committee, which is charged with finding the very best applicants across fields. We take GRE scores and GPAs into consideration, but the committee devotes the bulk of its attention to the writing sample submitted as part of the application. This practice has yielded a strong and diverse admissions pool (although we sometimes lose top candidates to larger or better-funded programs). Between 2004 and 2009 we enrolled 9 Presidential Fellows (5th best among 60 departments reporting such data). Of 37 CLAS programs with more than 15 grad students (Fall 2007), History ranks sixth with a minority enrollment of 13.5%. We garnered 4 Dean’s Fellowships between 2004-00, ranking us 7th of 60 departments reporting such data.

Program Size and Graduate Student Support: Training of future faculty is an important responsibility and it is crucial that our program maintain a size which enables us undertake this responsibility. Important considerations include the mentoring load across faculty, the ability to sustain topical seminars across fields, and our commitment to staff GER courses. The Department has given careful thought to these issues in recent years, culminating in reforms touching all aspects of the program.

- **Aid:** We offer a 5-year (4 years for those who already have the MA) package of eligibility for major aid. Under our new guidelines, eligibility is partially suspended for students making inadequate progress, and extended for those undertaking specialized (usually language) training or winning major external awards.
- **Curriculum:** Our curriculum consists of topical seminars (readings and research) and service courses. Recently we also introduced a sequence of “cohort” seminars designed to bring students together at key stages (first semester, preparing an MA paper, writing a prospectus, etc).
- **Internal and External Funding:** Our students have strong record in internal and external funding competitions (see summary under “Program Outcomes” below).
- **Time-to-Degree and Attrition:** The median UI History PhD time-to-degree (TTD) is 9.4 years (2003-08 grads). Of 16 UI humanities departments that awarded one or more PhDs during that period, History is in the group with the longest TTD. We are not satisfied with this, and have taken strides (particularly regarding graduate curriculum and eligibility for aid) to streamline degree requirements. At the same time, we think it important to underscore two factors: First, the History PhD requires both specialized training (frequently including, for example, advanced training in more than one foreign language) and field research, and sets a high threshold for the dissertation – a work of original, monographic, primary research. Second, the teaching load for our students is much heavier (in terms of students and sections) than those of their CIC peers. Despite this, our TTD is nearly a year shorter than the national median
for History (10 years). Those UI humanities departments with shorter TTD tend to be disciplines which do not normally require both language training and field research (such as Spanish), or which require neither (such as Communication Studies and Mass Communications).

In all, we feel that our graduate program is undersized. In part, this reflects our commitment to admit only funded students in the face of the discontinuation of RA allotments from the Graduate College. This has made it harder to sustain enrollments in graduate classes. In part, this also reflects size of our faculty which, at 27.75 FTE, is much smaller than either any of our CIC peers or those Departments close to us in national rankings. As a result of our small faculty size, rising administrative thresholds for enrollment, and the demands of the undergraduate program, we are frequently unable to offer a full array of graduate courses representing the many subfields in which we have both faculty strengths and a significant contingent of graduate students who need training. As a result, graduate students face delays in preparing for comprehensive exams and, especially, in beginning their research programs.

Program Outcomes: Our students have a strong record of achievement in internal and external competitions. Between 2006 and 2008, our students have won 8 Ballard/Seashore awards (2nd among departments surveyed), and 19 T. Anne Cleary awards (1st among departments surveyed); between 2004 and 2008 they won 20 Graduate College summer fellowships (3rd among departments surveyed). Six students won Stanley grants between 2005 and 2008. A partial list of major external awards includes the AAUW, Fulbright-Hays, Berlin Program for Advanced German and European Studies, Social Science Research Council, German Academic Exchange Service, Japanese Ministry of Education and Science, Council for European Studies, and the State Historical Society of Iowa.

Our placement record is also strong. Between 2003 and 2008, we graduated 28 doctoral students. Of these, 79% are employed in post-secondary teaching and 50% in tenure-track jobs. 1 holds an academic postdoc, one is in academic administration, and one is employed by the government, yielding a professional placement rate of 89%. Of the remaining 3 students, 2 are unreported or unemployed, and one is employed out-of-field. Academic placements include tenure-track jobs at peer institutions (Texas A&M, Missouri-Columbia, UNI, Kent State, Colorado, Syracuse, Northeastern, Wisconsin-Madison, Purdue), at international institutions (Monash [NZ], Ryerson [CAN]), and at a wide range of 4-year colleges and smaller state schools. By professional standards, this is a stellar placement rate: For the last 15 years up to 2004, only one-third of doctorates in history (national figures) found employment by 2005 at schools listed in the American Historical Association’s Directory of Departments, a rate that improves only slightly (43 percent) for the top-tier (rated in the top 25 percent) graduate programs. By the same criteria (jobs in AHA-listed Departments), our Department’s placement rate from 2003-08 – a period of only five years, compared to the fifteen years in the AHA’s survey – was 79 percent.

Program Characteristics: The History Department is a leading national program, ranked 18th among PhD programs in public universities (US News & World Report) and 1st among “small” programs (fewer than 30 FTE). As underscored in our recent external review, our record at external (NEH, Guggenheim, etc) and internal (Faculty Scholar, Global Scholar) funding outpaces that of all other CLAS departments. The History Department has deep roots in the interdisciplinary life of the University, marked by our close ties with other programs such as African-American Studies; American Studies; Gender, Women’s, and Sexuality Studies; Global Health; International Studies; Latin American Studies; Center for Asian and Pacific Studies; etc.. Because our courses contribute substantially to the GER program, we employ a large number of Graduate Instructors and play a major role in training-for-teaching.

We have taken steps in the last years to address degree progress through a combination of curricular reforms and new expectations for teaching and internal aid. Following through fully on these reforms will depend upon resolution of three challenges facing the Department (and the College):

- **Supporting non-teaching first-year students.** The disappearance of non-teaching aid (i.e. RA positions) for new students has made it harder to sustain a healthy graduate curriculum and to compete for the best candidates in our admissions pool. SIF funds have partially offset the loss of the RA bloc, but only partly: while the RA bloc tended to permit us to bring in three first-year students as full year RAs, the current SIF permits us to bring in three first-year students only as single semester RAs. Since we use SIF funds to internationalize our program, the RAs are typically foreign students who would especially benefit from waiting a year until they begin teaching.

- **Recruiting top candidates for admission.** Even our major fellowships (Presidential and Dean’s) are less attractive than the packages many of our peer institutions offer to their best candidates, and as a result we often lose our fellowship winners. In addition, because it takes a long time to make offers via the two-step process of departmental followed College selection, many of our awardees have already been intensively recruited by peer institutions by the time we are able to make our offer, and awardees are sometimes unable to arrange a campus visit before the 15 April deadline for making their decision.

- **Supporting continuing students.** While our CLAS teaching bloc has been fairly stable, the workload is very high and student progress is demonstrably slowed by teaching commitments. Recent increases in enrollment benchmarks for GER courses have increased Gls’ teaching burden to the extent that we can no longer, within the limits set by the COGS contract, demand the grading and mentoring necessary to fulfill the GER requirement of intensive instruction in writing.

**Conclusions:**

Although we are a small department relative to our peers (in the Big Ten/CIC and in national rankings), we have sustained a widely-regarded graduate program. We take the admissions process seriously and attract a consistently strong and diverse pool of applicants. Along with an impressive record of external funding, we have garnered more than our share of internal (Presidential, Merit, Ballard/Seashore) fellowships. Maintaining and increasing our strength will require (1) increased funding of first-year students not on the teaching allocation, (2) a relaxation of teaching loads either by reducing class size or reducing the number of sections students are expected to teach, (3) a moderate increase in faculty size to permit us to increase our international offerings while maintaining existing strengths, and (4) better packages for top candidates, or at least an expedited process that will permit us to get our offers out earlier.