

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome: The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the M.A., M.S. in Anthropology to be in Good Standing.

The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-study report were accomplished during the time-period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks the program for a comprehensive and critical self-study report that included input from multiple stakeholders.

The committee commends the program faculty for their recruitment efforts that have resulted in strong and steady enrollments over the course of the first years of the program (which began in Fall 2014). Enrollments during the program review cycle stayed relatively constant (from 17 in 2015 to 20 in 2021). The program indicates that, with increased graduate funding, their ideal target is 30 students. The committee commends the department faculty for efforts to increase the diversity among its students. The percentage of graduate students from groups traditionally underrepresented in the discipline has increased (from 17.6 percent in fall 2015 to 40.0 percent in fall 2021). Similarly, the percentage of students identifying as female has increased from 58.8 percent in fall 2015 to 65.0 percent in fall 2021. We commend the program for eliminating the GRE admissions requirements to lower barriers to prospective students and to increase diversity within their applicant pools. The committee commends the work faculty have completed regarding their recruitment efforts (e.g., participation in Graduate School Fairs and Seminars at annual professional meetings, and new promotional brochures, flyers and posters for distribution to regional B.A., B.S. Anthropology programs).

The committee commends the program faculty for their efforts to support the success of their graduate students. Students who are assigned graduate assistantships participate in an orientation led by the Graduate Coordinator (in addition to an orientation by the Graduate School). The program faculty have developed and implemented a Writing Mentor Workshop program to provide training for graduate students mentoring other students in disciplinary-specific writing. We commend the program on its ability to continue to limit enrollments in many of its courses, which is in keeping with the University's commitment to fostering a small-college atmosphere with large-university opportunities. Graduate students are invited to attend the departmental brown bag series in which internal and external speakers present their research. We further commend the department for their financial support of students participating in research trips and professional conferences. The committee also commends the program faculty for their identifying and supporting civic engagement opportunities that further support the program's student learning outcomes.

The committee commends the faculty for their work during the period of review to revise the curriculum. This work included the creation of the Applied Community and Economic Development sequence, a non-thesis capstone option, a dual-degree program in Japanese Studies with Nihon University, and program revisions that resulted in reducing the number of required hours from 33 to 30. Furthermore, the program faculty are commended for their commitment to the inclusion of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusiveness as core principles of the program. This is evidenced by the reinvention of the foundational theory course (ANT 461) to have an explicit focus on scholars from under-represented groups, the revision of the methods course (ANT 402) to include a focus on decolonizing ethnography, and the addition of several new courses (e.g., ANT 303 Latin America in Ethnographic Perspective, ANT 343 Food, Place, and Power, ANT 383 Selected Cultures). We also applaud the program faculty for the creation of a new undergraduate accelerated sequence designed to facilitate entry for Illinois State Anthropology majors into this graduate degree program.

The committee commends the faculty members of the program for their teaching, scholarly, and service contributions to the M.A., M.S. in Anthropology. Faculty members are active researchers who publish peer-reviewed journals articles, and present at national and international interdisciplinary professional conferences. The program faculty regularly engage in professional development opportunities. Additionally, we recognize that faculty in the program have been actively involved in advising and supporting professional student organizations demonstrating their commitment to facilitate learning and educational experiences of our students outside the classroom.

The committee appreciates the analysis of comparator and aspirational programs. As part of this analysis, the program faculty identified multiple institutions with similar programs that excel in ways that our program may aspire to. The committee also recognizes that faculty developed specific action plans to implement similar initiatives as those to improve the program at Illinois State. Actions planned as a result of these analyses include the development of a graduate certificate program in Museum Studies (in collaboration with the Department of History) and clarifying benchmarks for graduate student success to better support time-to-degree completion.

Follow-up Report.

Assessment plan. The Academic Planning Committee recognizes faculty efforts in developing and implementing the assessment. However, the self-study report suggests that the program faculty are in the early stages of implementation of a substantially revised plan. The committee asks that the program faculty submit a progress report regarding the implementation of the assessment plan to the Office of the Provost by May 15, 2024.

Recommendations.

The Academic Planning Committee thanks faculty members of the M.A., M.S. in Anthropology program for the opportunity to provide input regarding the program at Illinois State University through consideration of the self-study report submitted by faculty. The following committee recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle are provided in a spirit of collaboration with Anthropology faculty members. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2030, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Develop a plan for enrollment management. The committee notes that demand for the program remains strong but enrollments are below target levels. The committee acknowledges the work faculty have completed regarding their recruitment efforts. The committee encourages the program to continue refining and implementing their plan for student recruitment, including strategies for increasing enrollment by students from racial and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. We recommend that the program work with the Graduate School, Enrollment Management and Academic Services, and the Office of the Provost to refine and implementing their plan for student recruitment.

Continue to focus on diversity, inclusion, and equity. The committee recognizes the efforts that have resulted in the diversity of faculty and students within the program and encourages the program to continue to pursue its goals related to further developing an equitable, diverse, and inclusive environment that effectively supports students, faculty, and staff from diverse backgrounds. We encourage the program to continue refining and implementing their plans for recruiting students from groups who are traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline. Furthermore, we encourage the program faculty to continue to examine ways to infuse diversity, equity, and inclusion into the curriculum.

Continue to focus on student success and retention. The committee recommends that the program faculty develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recognizes substantial work by former and current faculty members to review and update the program and its curriculum. The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field and to maintain program retention and graduation rates. The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly examining potential barriers to thesis completions that have contributed to highly variable completion rates and time to degree.

Continue the collaborative work with Milner Library. The committee recommends that the program work with the subject liaison librarian to examine and evaluate the library's journals and monograph collection to aid in both the selection and deselection process of these sources. Given recent journal cancellations and expected increases in distance and hybrid courses, we encourage the department and library to further collaborate to increase awareness of alternative access to resources, such as Interlibrary Loan and I-Share lending, among faculty and students.

Continue to revise the plan for alumni tracking and engagement. The committee encourages the faculty to continue to refine their plan for tracking program alumni and use this system to enhance alumni networking and

engagement. These activities may become even more important in the years ahead as the program's alumni become more diverse. The program could benefit from increased involvement of its alumni, employers, and other external stakeholders in providing input regarding the program and in mentoring students and provide employment opportunities for program graduates.