

**Assessment and Future Needs for Heritage Studies Ph. D. Program, College of
Humanities and Social Sciences, Arkansas State University
April 27, 2009**

Charge to Outside Reviewers

Two peer reviewers, Dr. Paula Petrik, George Mason University, and Dr. Carroll Van West, Middle Tennessee University, were charged to assess the effectiveness, the viability, and the future opportunities of the Heritage Studies Ph. D. program at Arkansas State University (ASU). Each reviewer spent two days at ASU in April 2009. They had extensive interviews with the program director, associate director, participating faculty, graduates, students, and the Deans of the Humanities and Social Sciences and Graduate Colleges. Both reviewers also interviewed Dr. G. Daniel Howard, ASU Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs and Research.

Overview

By any measure—faculty commitment, administrative energy, scholarly accomplishment, student achievement, and regional recognition—the Heritage Studies has been extraordinarily successful in a very short time. It is rare to see such a strong, vibrant program at any stage in its development. That the Heritage Studies program has attained its present status so quickly speaks volumes for its future. The reviewers, therefore, recommend the implementation of an aggressive four-year strategy to sustain and expand ASU’s successful Heritage Studies Ph. D. program. Because the reviewers are so impressed with the program, they also wish to underscore their evaluation with the following observation: failure to fund the Heritage Studies Program would constitute an extraordinary error in administrative judgment.

Four-Year Road Map for the Sustainability of ASU Heritage Studies Ph. D. program

To outline this strategy, we have provided the following “road map” for the program’s sustainability. The road map, in turn, rests on the following two principles:

- a university backs its winners and rewards its stars
- challenging economic times dictate funding strategy

The first principle is a familiar dictum and has governed university budgeting from the university’s beginnings. The second principle, albeit hardly new, results from the current economic situation. While one group of financial pundits predict an early end to the recession, an equal number argue that the recession has some distance to run. State budgets, moreover, lag behind economic recovery. An effective strategy to meet the vagaries of state funding is, therefore, “front-end loading”—putting more dollars into the Heritage Studies program in the next two years when there are

funds available—rather than delaying funding until a more propitious time, a time that may not come. Despite the advantages of upfront funding, all the Heritage Studies programs needs cannot be met in a biennium; hence, the “road map” extends over four years.

Unhappily, successful university programs receive greater and greater resources; unsuccessful program receive fewer and fewer resources until they become untenable. Even on a very brief visit, it is obvious that Environmental Sciences has through unfortunate circumstances become moribund. While Environmental Sciences is a potentially strong candidate for a doctoral program, its current condition suggests that it be placed on hiatus and that its remaining students provided for until the program can be stabilized. Meantime, whatever funds that had been available to Environmental Sciences—administrative salaries, support dollars, graduate stipends and fellowships—be reallocated to the Heritage Studies Program, a strong, vibrant, successful program.

1. Year 1: AY 2009–2010

- Increased budget (\$10,000) for student and faculty research and travel, including an unfulfilled commitment to students for research and presentation as well as restoration of the reduction (\$10,000) in the supplies and services budget by July 1, 2009. TOTAL=\$20,000
- 1.0 FTE faculty line to retain two core faculty from the Departments of English and Philosophy in the HS program (i. e. Drs. Chappel-Traylor and Hansen at .5 FTE each); tenure Brady Banta in HS program. TOTAL=TBD
- Hire second professional archivist 1.0 FTE to be in place by January 1, 2010. (This can be accomplished in a revenue neutral manner with present library budget and staffing needs.) TOTAL=TBD
- Announce search and hire 1.0 FTE faculty in historic preservation to be in place by July 1, 2010.

2. Year 2: AY 2010–2011

- Second 1.0 FTE faculty line (.5 in key departments) to retain faculty who are directing dissertations and serving on doctoral committees. TOTAL=TBD
- Recurring funding for faculty summer stipends to support summer offerings and dissertation in summer 2010. TOTAL=\$18,000
- Second increase in budget for student and faculty (\$10,000) research and travel. TOTAL=\$10,000

3. Year 3: AY 2011–2012

- Recurring funding (\$30,000) to support and extend community-based initiatives. TOTAL=\$30,000
- Funding for infrastructure, personnel, and technology to support video conferencing/distance learning and for the Heritage Studies doctoral program. TOTAL=TBD

4. Year 4: AY 2012–2013

- HS becomes a sustainable program, with dedicated faculty, facilities, and funding for project/research development.

Our own estimates for funding the Heritage Studies Program amount to around \$150,000–\$180,000 or less, depending on how the replacements for partial faculty lines in the contributing departments are handled. For a doctoral program the figure is a very modest funding request. By way of comparison, supporting a chemistry or physics lab for a new assistant professor, depending on his or her specialty, costs a college between \$250,000 and \$350,000 and it is, essentially, a “high-roller” bet that the new hire will be successful and make a good return on the college’s investment. A bet on the Heritage Studies program is a “sure thing”; the program has already proved itself and repaid the university’s confidence.

Effectiveness of Heritage Studies Ph. D. Program

In less than a decade, ASU’s Heritage Studies Ph. D. program has become one of the region’s major graduate programs in public history/public folklore/museum studies/historic preservation. Its curriculum, quality of research, and quality of graduate students exceeds comparable graduate programs at University of Arkansas, Little Rock, the University of Memphis, Delta State University, and Southeast Missouri State University. The ASU Heritage Studies Ph. D. program now competes with such older, established programs as the Center for Southern Culture at the University of Mississippi and the Ph. D. in Public History at Middle Tennessee State University. The accomplishments and strengths of the Heritage Studies Ph. D. program, listed below, reflect that ranking and document the program’s untapped potential to have an even more substantial impact on the culture and economy of Arkansas and the Mississippi Delta region.

- The program is among ASU’s high-profile research/public service vehicles, participating in the administering of heritage projects throughout eastern Arkansas, supporting the national award-winning statewide Arkansas Heritage SITES program, and producing oral history and archival programs throughout the region.

- The program has effective outreach through sustainable, partnership-based collaboration between its students, ASU, and the university's multiple audiences.
- The program has produced a nationally competitive number of 9 graduates since its inception, and has another 20 students entering the dissertation stage in AY 2009-2010.
- The program adds significantly to ASU's research culture since its dissertations have yielded high quality research, with one already published and three under consideration for university press publication.
- The program has exceeded its goals of attracting qualified, motivated graduate students, with 42 students enrolled during AY 2008-2009.
- The program is a donor program to the graduate college since its demanding admission standards have increased ASU master's enrollment since many entering students take have additional master's level work in order to be admitted to the program.
- The program's director (Milner), associate director (Banta), and Heritage SITES director (Hawkins) are nationally recognized experts in their respective fields.

Viability of Heritage Studies Ph. D. Program

The program is a viable, substantial contributor to ASU's graduate program, its record of research and publication, and its goal of providing meaningful, reciprocal public service projects to Arkansas communities and citizens.

- The program's thoughtful design has attracted an impressive number of doctoral students.
- The program's curriculum is demanding and cross-disciplinary, designed to equip students with the theory and practice of heritage studies.
- The program's quality of research/public service provided by students and faculty, both individually and in collaboration with each other, is commendable and creates life-long engagement between regional communities and ASU.
- The program pursues a sustainable vision of community engagement as its foundation strategy to achieve ASU goals of high quality research, teaching, and public service at the local, state, and regional levels and projecting to the national and global levels.

- The program has succeeded in creating a multi-disciplinary research culture, involving highly qualified faculty, which is nationally competitive with comparable public history or public humanities programs.

Contributions of Heritage Studies Ph. D. Program to University and State Goals

The program has become the “go-to” agency for sustainable heritage development in Arkansas and for much of the Delta region, contributing to the state’s economic emphasis on tourism and a providing an invaluable vehicle for ASU to project itself into the communities of Arkansas and the region.

- The program has become, in many ways, the public face of ASU in much the same way that county extension and home demonstration agents represent the University of Arkansas in local areas.
- The program identifies and attracts nationally significant internships for its students.
- The program is a wise steward of funding and support from ASU, federal agencies, and community sources. It attracted over \$1.2 million in challenge grants, research grants, and donated funds in 2008.
- The program has furthered ASU goals in attracting and retaining international students.
- The program’s contribution to scholarship at ASU has been exemplary, including books, documentary films, fellowships, and an impressive list of visiting lecturers.

Future Needs of the Heritage Studies Ph. D. program

The program, due to a combination of success and a lack of appropriate university support, is not sustainable. The size and success of the program cannot be maintained without ASU fulfilling past commitments and implementing a four-year plan to ensure the program’s future effectiveness and viability.

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- The program needs an additional 3.0 FTE faculty lines assigned to the Heritage Studies Ph. D. classes, 1.5 FTE of which were committed in 2001 when the university applied for state approval of the program, to ensure continuity in instruction and in project development. It is absolutely critical

and ethically mandatory to ensure that doctoral students can retain committee members to the completion of the degree. (One of these FTE lines is the new faculty appointment in historic preservation explained below.)

- The program needs a second full time professional archivist at the Ellis Library due to the administrative and teaching demands placed by the Heritage Studies Ph. D. students on the associate director, who also serves as the university archivist.
- The program needs a 12-month faculty appointment in historic preservation to work with Heritage Studies Ph. D. program, Arkansas Heritage SITES, and the ASU History Department. This position will enable the program to better compete for outside funding and in-state projects as well as enhance its ability to recruit strong graduate students.
- The program needs a project development fund to provide seed monies and/or support for student-involved public-service research projects that can extend beyond the state to address regional opportunities. The lack of a seed-money fund significantly hampers the ASU program to develop larger, more regional, even national projects and opportunities found at other similar regional public history or historic preservation programs.
- At the very basic level, the program needs the agreed (2001) commitment to provide \$10,000 annually to support graduate student research.
- The program needs a summer school budget to retain faculty to work with students and projects. The lack of consistent summer funding significantly hampers the ASU program to compete for internships and outside funding opportunities with similar regional programs.