External Review, submitted by Dr. Carolyn White, University of Nevada, Reno

Report of the External Reviewer
Cultural Resources Management MA Program
Department of Anthropology
Sonoma State University
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INTRODUCTION

The Cultural Resources Management MA Program in the Department of Anthropology at Sonoma State University hosted an external reviewer on campus from the evening of Monday, April 14 through the late afternoon on Tuesday, April 15, 2014. Carolyn L. White, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Historic Preservation Program at the University of Nevada, Reno, conducted the review. Dr. White has served as graduate director for the program at UNR and also directs the departmental research museum.

The reviewer met with the Provost, Graduate Dean, and College Dean for an exit interview. Over the course of the visit, she met with Program faculty individually and as a group. She had one-on-one time with all of the active members of the CRM Program as well as with the Anthropology Department Chair. She also met with other Anthropology Department faculty and with affiliated program faculty. Finally, she met with a large group of current MA students enrolled in the program. She received a tour of the Anthropology Studies Center (ASC) and of the campus. She reviewed the department’s written self-study and supplementary materials along with six syllabi from CRM Program courses.

The overall impression of the program is very positive. This is a small M.A. granting program with four faculty members that teach, advise, and serve as directors of student research. The program is affiliated with the Department of Anthropology, and the faculty in the CRM Program are also full participants in the undergraduate anthropology program. In addition to the four program faculty, the Anthropology Department has two faculty that participate on an informal basis. There are an additional three faculty from Geography and Global Studies, History, and Environmental Studies and Planning that teach and serve as thesis committee members for CRM students.

STRENGTHS

Faculty
One of the clear strengths of the program is the faculty. The campus visit affirms the excellent contributions of departmental faculty to SSU’s graduate students, to the department, and to the university. The four faculty members that work in the program are devoted to the CRM Program and the rest of the anthropology faculty is also committed to the support of the program in
numerous ways. In one-on-one discussions and in the self-study, it is clear that the faculty are committed and enthusiastic teachers in the program, even as their contributions go well beyond students in the program.

The meeting with the graduate students affirmed that faculty are accessible, concerned, and knowledgeable, and that they bring their diverse experiences into the classroom. Faculty were described as having a clear sense of where the discipline has been as well as where it is going now. One student described the faculty approach as “they lead and let us go,” encapsulating the ways that faculty both impart knowledge as well as provide practical opportunities for students.

The tenured faculty in the program have very strong and visible national/international reputations. The extensive experience of faculty is important not only in teaching students, but in creating and affirming connections beyond the program. The success and visibility of these well established faculty has far reaching impact on attracting students to the program as well as for connecting students to opportunities within and outside the program. Newer faculty have also clearly demonstrated a commitment to the continued success and improvement of the program and are in the process of crafting national/international reputations that will serve the program into the future.

It should also be noted that the faculty contributing to the program include several faculty from outside the Anthropology Department. These faculty demonstrated considerable enthusiasm and devotion to the CRM Program, and I was able to speak at length with each faculty member. Coming from the disciplines of Geography and Global Studies, History, and Environmental Studies and Planning, these faculty were clearly engaged with the CRM Program and we discussed at length the ways that faculty worked to teach appropriate courses as well as serve on student theses. This commitment from faculty outside the department is truly commendable and greatly enhances the program.

**Coordination and curriculum**
The CRM Program draws on the strengths of the faculty in the anthropology department and in other departments across the university. The self study states that the program seeks to “produce professionals who are competent in the methods and techniques appropriate for filling cultural resources management and related positions, and who have the theoretical background necessary for the construction of research designs, data collection and analysis, and the assessment of the historical and cultural significance of a diverse array of cultural resources.” My observations confirm that these goals are being met in myriad ways through the curriculum and opportunities offered to students. In turn, students generally reported that their experiences and training were excellent and effective.

As a cohort program, students move through the core courses together. This approach means that students receive consistent training even when resources are pulled in numerous directions. The students take four core classes that provide necessary content and professional training for the field of CRM. Two of the core courses are offered each year (Anth 500 and Hist 472), and the others are offered every other year. I had the opportunity to look over recent syllabi for all of the core courses and was very impressed by the creativity of the course design as well as the rigor. The program also offers extensive opportunities for experiential/practical learning though
internships. Students commented on the importance of these practical opportunities, noting that students learn “how to do the job” and that the methodological components of the curriculum were excellent both in the classroom and outside of it.

The curriculum for the CRM Program is intrinsically woven into the activities of the ASC. The ASC is a key and core component of the success of this program (as discussed further below); faculty, students, and administrators all commented on its instrumental character in my conversations. In relation to the curriculum, there are three student internships available to students, and each of these are well-designed to give students experience in varied aspects of CRM practice (small- and large-scale fieldwork, labwork, and other forms of project management).

Relationship to the Anthropological Studies Center
The importance of the relationship between the CRM Program and the ASC cannot be understated. It is a testament to the faculty in the department and to the staff at the ASC that such a productive relationship exists. Students used phrases like “wealth of knowledge,” “helpful,” “big strength,” “how to do the job,” and “obsessed with methods” to describe their experiences with the ASC. It was clear from my visit that students and faculty (both those within and outside of the ASC) valued the relationship between to the ASC. Administrators also praised it highly. Adrian Praetzellis’s superb management of the dynamic between the facility and the department has been essential to the successful shape of this relationship. Elsewhere around the country, many similar cultural resource management units associated with academic departments have failed, whereas this one is a tremendous success.

The ASC fills multiple roles for students in the program. It offers a practical component in a career-focused degree as well as opportunities for employment. Beyond these practical components, the presence of the ASC colors students’ daily experiences, whether it is having professional staff to interact with as they move through their career, to informal mentoring, to reality checks about the nature of the work, to a sense of a holistic training experience. The facilities in the ASC also make up for the lack of space for archaeological work inside the department. It is important, going forward, that the relationship between the program and the ASC be carefully assessed as staffing and budget conditions evolve.

Collegiality and Leadership
This is a highly functional program within what seems to be a highly functional department. All of my interactions with faculty and students were overwhelmingly positive. The program is run by dedicated faculty, some of whom remain dedicated after many years of service and others have a fresh energy that seems well-directed toward improving the program. The program has addressed the recommendations from the 2008 program review, particularly those requiring self-reflection without the additional of budgetary resources. The addition of new faculty and the engagement with faculty beyond the department have helped to offer more resources to students and slightly ameliorated the workload of the affiliated faculty. The director’s leadership seems to be solid. Although Dr. Boutin is not yet tenured, she successfully balances her responsibilities to the program with her teaching obligations at both the undergraduate and graduate level, while conducting research. She should be commended for taking on this position so effectively. The leadership of the Anthropology Department, more broadly, also offers considerable support to
the program on both formal and informal levels. Conversations with the department chair were overwhelmingly positive and asserted the department’s continuing commitment to the graduate program. It is no easy task to run the undergraduate program and graduate program with the available resources, but this department has done an excellent job of doing so. As discussed below, more resources could truly help to make this work better.

**AREAS OF CONCERN AND CAUTIONARY NOTES**

There is always room for improvement in any graduate degree-granting program. The strengths of this program far outweigh the weaknesses, but I do hope that faculty and administration might take note of several areas of concern as they advance into new territory with this program. Areas of concern have been identified through the very thorough self-study, and, generally, my impressions echo those noted by department faculty.

**Faculty**

As mentioned above, the success of this program rides on the shoulders of a number of experienced, highly competent, and committed faculty who have steered the program to national recognition. Despite this high level of success they have demonstrated, there is concern for appropriate staffing going forward. Each of the involved faculty are dedicated and seem to carry their responsibilities readily and competently. Nonetheless, faculty workload and appropriate levels of staffing are of significant interest going forward.

There are four Anthropology Faculty within the program, but several have limitations imposed on their availability. Dr. Wingard is currently serving as Interim Dean of the School of Social Sciences, and while he has maintained his commitments to established students, is not taking additional students while he is in this position. The lack of a cultural anthropologist in the program is a problem. Dr. Praetzellis’s time is also divided between his obligations to the CRM Program and the ASC. While his position in the ASC is part of the reason that the connection between the ASC and CRM Program work so well, it also means that he (theoretically) has only 50% of his time available for teaching.

Because of these other obligations, much of the daily and regular work of teaching and advising students falls to Dr. Purser and Dr. Boutin. The self study notes that Dr. Alexis Boutin joined the Anthropology department in 2009 and the CRM Graduate committee in 2011. She serves as the Graduate Director currently and she coordinated the program review and was the liaison for my campus visit. Clearly her addition has been of great benefit to the program. Dr. Purser is involved in faculty governance as Chair of the Faculty in the Academic Senate, and while she manages her multiple responsibilities with aplomb, it bears consideration as to whether her workload is desirable and sustainable.

My impression is that all faculty in the Anthropology Department are committed to the continuation, success, and expansion of the CRM Program. Nonetheless, the administrative responsibilities as well as the advising, teaching, and supervisory responsibilities can mean that faculty are often spread thin between their graduate and undergraduate responsibilities.
Finally, while the program should be commended for capitalizing on contributions from faculty from external departments, the lack of a California prehistorian in the Program is a substantial void.

**Anthropological Studies Center**

As noted above, the ASC is one of the tremendous strengths of the program. Over the course of my campus visit, I was continually impressed by cooperation between the ASC and the CRM Program. The success of this relationship lies in the excellent faculty on the CRM Program side and on the faculty and staff on the ASC side and their ability to work together. It is of paramount importance that adequate and strategic planning for the future relationship of the two entities be undertaken actively.

The lack of state funding to the ASC means that its resources are constrained by their obligations for 100% self-support. It is my understanding that there has been some scaling back of involvement because of budgetary and financial considerations. It would be mutually beneficial for more release time to be afforded to ASC faculty for the student supervision and to look into further ways that student supervision might be facilitated.

**Curriculum and Student Concerns**

The students expressed general satisfaction with the program, but brought several ideas to the floor when asked about areas for improvement. One concern was the size of the cohorts moving through the program. The economic downturn and the ensuing success of student recruitment has meant that incoming cohort sizes have not been consistent. Students expressed concern about a trend to larger entering cohorts, leading to very large seminars. The self-study indicates awareness of a need to buffer against fluctuating class size, and this should be kept in mind going forward.

Other students expressed concerns the lack of a prehistorian on the faculty. An additional desire expressed by several students was for teaching opportunities. Both of these aspects of program improvement seem to be on the radar of faculty—each of these elements was also expressed to me by faculty.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The recommendations of this reviewer follow directly from the areas of concern expressed above. Some of these areas can be addressed through faculty discussion, but others are more appropriately addressed at a higher administrative level.

Above all, the program is one that seems to run very well, possess committed faculty, and be engaged in producing well-educated graduate students who are successful in obtaining jobs following graduation. The program is viewed at the administrative level as one that is successful and has weathered the storm of budget cuts and resource restrictions very successfully. The program faculty, affiliated faculty, and Anthropology Department should be commended for their work in creating and maintaining such a successful program.
Despite its success and favorable status at the University, the program faculty, department faculty, affiliated faculty, and the ASC should proceed with caution as moving forward to continue to investigate ways to improve and to address challenges. I found the challenges noted in the self-study—increasing competition at other universities, curriculum reform to address Department of Interior Standards and Guidelines, and resource issues vs. program delivery—to be perceptive.

**Resources**

Of those recognized concerns, the area of faculty resources is most pressing. All of the faculty that teach in the program have significant administrative obligations (Director of the ASC, Graduate Coordinator, Chair of the Faculty in the Academic Senate, and Interim Dean for the School of Social Sciences). Faculty teaching obligations compete with administrative responsibilities as well as with undergraduate teaching. I strongly recommend that a new faculty line be added to the department, preferably by the addition of a California prehistorian. The faculty and administration should discuss the best way to structure this appointment. It may be beneficial to structure the appointment similar to Dr. Praetzellis’s current arrangement with time allocated to the ASC and to the undergraduate and graduate program.

I also recommend that the loss of the faculty member to the Dean position be rectified by the addition of a cultural anthropologist. While it is beyond the scope of this review to address the undergraduate curriculum, the lack of a full time cultural anthropologist in the department is problematic. But the graduate program demands the expertise of a cultural anthropologist as well, particularly one that can address the issues of tribal consultation and stakeholder communities.

It would be extremely beneficial to the program on many levels if the University could support students through teaching assistantships. The use of state funded teaching assistantships could help to relieve some of the teaching burdens of the undergraduate curriculum, attract students to the program, alleviate pressure on the ASC to hire inexperienced students, and create greater synergy between the undergraduate and graduate programs. Although resources are scarce for such new budgetary requests, the addition of two or three assistantships would be extremely beneficial and help the program to remain competitive. As it stands, lack of funding is one of the main reasons students decline to attend SSU following their acceptance into the graduate program.

**Anthropological Studies Center**

It is clear that the ASC is integral to the success of the CRM Program. It is concerning that there are barriers faced by the ASC in regard to policy and practice that prevent the ASC from fulfilling its role in the CRM Program, particular in regard to internship supervision, collections access, and field and laboratory experience. I recommend that the administration discuss such impediments with ASC staff to develop strategies for easing these difficulties. It is clear that the administration values the CRM Program and the ASC, but there are likely institutional obstacles that could be removed to ease the ASC’s ability to support the CRM curriculum.

Although it is not on the immediate horizon, the faculty and administration should begin to consider what will happen upon the retirement of Adrian Praetzellis. It is highly unlikely that a
new faculty hire at the Assistant Professor level could step in to cover the multitudinous roles that he has in the department and in the ASC. Active discussion about how to replace him should commence soon to ensure a smooth transition.

**Curriculum**
The faculty are actively engaged in curriculum development and improvement, as is evident in the changes that have occurred since the self study. The faculty should be commended for the long-term view they have about the curriculum, and further opportunities for reflection should be scheduled in the upcoming years.

**Complacency**
Over the course of my visit to SSU and to the CRN Program I encountered many positive impressions of the program, especially at higher administrative levels. I caution the administration about viewing the CRM Program simply as an ongoing success. While the program is well-run with dedicated faculty and successful student experiences, it is all too easy to ignore the program while directing attention to less well-functioning areas of the University. The University should recognize that it is beneficial, if not absolutely necessary, to allocate resources to strong programs. Assuming that such a well-run program does not merit additional attention and resources would be a costly mistake.

**CLOSING**
Finally, this reviewer very much appreciates the gracious hospitality shown by the program and department faculty and the university’s administration. The enthusiasm of the graduate students was also much appreciated, as was their candor in answering questions, and their willingness to have their time interrupted. It was a pleasure to spend time with all of the faculty, students, and staff.