

**Sonoma State University**  
**External Reviewer's Report**  
**Human Development**

OVERVIEW

The SSU HD program has developed well in its new home through dedicated faculty commitment and collegial support. The impacted program with nearly 100 majors has innovative advising, a new faculty hire, and support from several campus departments. As a program distributed across a number of departments, the program lacked a core to focus curriculum or to fit together the relevant ideas from various disciplines. Now, dedicated faculty have embarked upon creating core coursework in HD. The creation of this core is a necessary step forward.

The primary concern for the future of the HD program is designing intentional curriculum that meets learning outcomes under exceptionally limited resources. With such limited resources, development is not possible. An HD program should be an interdisciplinary program that crosses the lifespan. At multiple CSUs, HD programs serve 800 majors. A successful HD program can meet the needs of students with diverse backgrounds while also meeting the needs of our local communities.

My overall recommendations would be for administrative support to meet the most pressing needs of the HD program through hiring a new faculty member and starting a pre-HD major. Further, faculty should develop a sequential core of HD coursework based on established learning outcomes.

STRENGTHS

A. Housing in Anthropology

Housing the Human Development Program in the Department of Anthropology is a great solution to the program's lack of a home and support staff. The collegiality between the two programs is impressive. Dr. Smith finds support and mentorship through Anthropology. Anthropology considered HD needs in their recent hire, selecting an excellent candidate, and seems to allocate faculty for teaching HD courses willingly. The faculty in anthropology can offer meaningful curriculum for HD students, including Dr. Jaffe's ANTH 200 and Dr. Senghas's ANTH 380.

In the future, it may arise that HD needs do not dovetail as perfectly with ANTH needs. For example, a program in HD should include faculty teaching statistical, psychological, and sociological coursework. I was impressed that the chair voiced the possibility of objections from other departments, rather than how it would affect anthropology.

B. Advising

At Sonoma State University, faculty do not receive release time dedicated to advising. The workload is intended to be distributed amongst faculty members. Since there is only one faculty member in HD with 100 majors, this clearly is not a feasible distribution of work.

Even so, Dr. Jaffe has demonstrated considerable progress in advising and the development of the HD program. Her work with advising technology and attention to individual student needs is exemplary, efficient advising. The clear application process with online deadlines, sign-in sheets, and resources could be modeled across programs and campuses. Further, assuring the completion of pre-requisites before admittance into the program will not only help with advising, but will help with teaching as well because students will begin the major with a more consistent background. The crucial extension of these advising plans would be the pre-HD major.

### C. Pedagogy

The design of an interdisciplinary program can be both aided and challenged by the utilization of existing curriculum. The HD program benefits greatly from using coursework in ANTH, EDEC, EDMS, EDSS, GERN, and WGS, along with GE courses in BIOL, SOCI, NURS, and PSY. Through partnerships with these programs, the HD major at SSU offers a stronger focus in gender and sexuality, biological underpinnings, and language than other HD programs. These strengths prepare students well for future MA programs and successful career paths from HD.

Another pedagogical strength is the creation of HD courses for majors. The self-study indicates the benefit of these units to prevent students from basically completing the major without declaring the major. In addition to this advising benefit, the HD coursework can offer the sequential architecture that will allow the reliance on these other departments to be successful in training students for careers from HD.

Within these HD courses, two courses stand out as especially strong. First, Dr. Smith's theory class offers a breadth of content area in political economy, social cultural, psychological, biological, and critical frameworks that can help students to apply HD knowledge to coursework in other departments. Second, the senior seminar with service learning, reflective essays, and an integrative paper offers the opportunity for a synthesis of coursework before graduation. Both these courses should be placed in sequence to benefit student progress on learning outcomes.

The self-study offers the following draft learning outcomes:

- “1) students will understand the way in which the life course comes to be culturally shaped as well as inflected by social positions like gender, race, sexuality, class, and disability;
- 2) students will understand the central theoretical concepts that shape scholarship and practice in human development;
- 3) students will have experience in undertaking research that is rigorous as well as ethically and methodologically sound;
- 4) students will be familiar with the applied settings in which human development knowledge has come to be of importance; and
- 5) students will engage in critical reflection about how human development knowledge can be used to facilitate positive change in the life course, especially in contexts of inequality and structural violence.”

While these learning outcomes may not have been formally adopted, they could be successfully used to develop a roadmap for curriculum design and periodically revised in response to assessment and student needs.

D. Administrative Support

The HD program benefits from a supportive administration that seems aware of the workload issues and potential for the program. The collegial, open relationship will hopefully allow the program to flourish as HD has on other CSU campuses.

E. Research & Scholarship

The faculty have an existing record of successful scholarship and include students in their research. Even without significant support for research or release time for student mentorship, the faculty continue to be engaged and active in their fields of study.

F. Diversity of student population

The HD program has a more diverse population than the campus in general. As an impacted program, they do not have the ability to widely recruit but still aim to meet the needs of a diverse student body. While GPA requirements can limit diversity when students from disadvantaged schools initially struggle at college, it does not seem to be the case in this particular program.

G. Connection to campus communities

The HD program has strong connections to campus communities, most notably with ANTH. Dr. Jaffe securing letters of commitment from various departments is a demonstration of the connections she has sought that this program relies on. Dr. Smith building ties with CCE is a strength as well.

## CHALLENGES

A. Tenure-Track Faculty

A program of Human Development should have a breadth of faculty to teach interdisciplinary coursework across the lifespan. Dr. Smith and the associated faculty alone are not capable of providing a holistic Human Development curriculum. For example, a methods class in Human Development should include coursework in experimental methods and coursework utilizing statistical skills learned in pre-requisite courses. The current methods course provides in-depth, high-caliber coursework in areas that are within Dr. Smith's expertise. However, it doesn't include a balance of content that is outside his expertise. The minimum requirements for programmatic design cannot be met with one tenure-track line. While at minimum HD programs should offer a multi-disciplinary program (where everyone teaches from their own expertise), the best programs are interdisciplinary (where everyone integrates coursework from all disciplinary perspectives). It is a challenge to design curriculum without partnerships with faculty who have the appropriate complementary expertise that crosses disciplines and the lifespan.

B. Holistic Curriculum Design

Without faculty to teach classes or established learning outcomes, it is difficult to design a holistic curriculum plan that allows learning outcomes to be introduced, practiced, and demonstrated. Such a plan will help students to synthesize HD perspectives with coursework in other departments and help students to meet more challenging performance indicators.

C. Campus Support

The HD program has managed to weather a lack of institutional support through an overload of work for so long that the one hire for an impacted program is viewed with gratitude. Other programs, including sociology and psychology, ban students from their classes even though the students they initially banned from their major go to HD. The HD program should receive greater support to unleash its potential for providing students with a meaningful degree.

D. Supporting Scholarly Agendas

The expectation that faculty will publish is the expectation that faculty will take release time. While faculty did not complain about the expectation and are productive, the continuation of the program means consideration of scholarly agendas. Currently, the curriculum depends upon Dr. Smith teaching a full load of courses every semester and then some. If Dr. Smith did earn a sabbatical, there would immediately be delays in graduation for those expected to graduate that semester and the following semester.

## STUDENTS

There was considerable turn-out for students. They greatly appreciate their faculty and programmatic advising but expressed frustration at getting classes, making connections between content, and knowing how to use their major.

Administration and faculty seem to agree with students that completing classes is a difficult task in the program. Careful planning of units to assure graduation means an excessive workload for the program coordinator and a difficult pathway for students. If a student fails a course or has a conflict with the one time a year a course is offered, this will impact their graduation progress.

Students' apparently paradoxical preference for classes outside the major with a dislike for courses outside the major is actually a direct result of the need for a programmatic sequence. Students in HD will enjoy a wide array of courses and the ability to tailor coursework to their particular interests, whether education, healthcare, or some other career goal. However, these courses are less beneficial if students lack preliminary coursework introducing frameworks to apply to such course content.

Some students expressed concern about the ability to use their major, including in regard to competing with other HD students and/or entering MA programs. One student who took an upper-division HD course at another CSU expressed concern about the skills she lacked in comparison to her classmates. Students did not understand a distinction between 300- and 400-level coursework, and couldn't identify the skills they would bring to their next endeavors. Unfortunately, these concerns were from the more informed students in the room. Others were jotting down

possible career options that were mentioned. A few students were baffled by the question as to what courses they might like included in their major that were pre-requisites for possible future MA programs, which was unexpected since the major is mostly seniors and juniors. They were happy to hear the statistics, biological, linguistic and education coursework could open several pathways.

Students did not express concern for what could be perceived as luxuries like student organizations, equitable units to workload, honors programs, or if they like their courses.

#### ASSESSMENT

The self-study does not include recent assessment data because of severe workload issues in the impacted program. The self-study indicates the intention to collect assessment data when curricular revisions are completed, but I would encourage the collection of assessment data as a way to guide the curricular revisions. Importantly, assessment data can inform curricular design with knowledge of desired student career paths and the efficacy of different courses to meet particular learning outcomes. Successful curriculum is continuously under revision through assessment.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

While most external reviews recommend further hires and resources, few programs could make a more successful argument for hiring both on curricular and staffing needs. The following recommendations can only be followed with additional tenure-track or adjunct hires.

##### A. Pushing students into un-impacted majors is not a solution

While it may ease difficult decisions to divide resources, pushing students into un-impacted majors does not meet the needs of students. Such majors might not meet their future goals. Employers and graduate programs do care about the courses that students take, and students' job performance can depend on it. We should be pushing students into careers that are paying well and hiring, not merely open seats based on historical staffing allocations.

While students interested in social work, non-profit work, or advocacy work might find success from WGS or Political Science, students who want to go into public health, teaching, counseling, occupational therapy, physical therapy, geriatric care management, nursing, or biomedical research do not have a valid path from the un-impacted majors. The blocked pathways are the ones that are hiring and paying better, so successfully convincing students into alternative majors is failing the generation of students burdened by high student debt. HD can be a major for students from a number of impacted majors (nursing, psychology, and sociology), so devoting resources to HD can have a multiplicative effect for meeting students' needs.

The institution should commit to supporting necessary programs of higher education, such as philosophy and ethnic studies programs, without it requiring a set of students to be denied their desired future directions. It is as if there is a second set of admissions where more successful students can enter impacted majors and the other students are left to support less desired programs.

B. Start a pre-HD major

As described in the self-study, a pre-HD major will help the management of student progress. First, the pre-HD major will provide a more accurate count of the students served for resource allocation. One hundred majors is an under-representation of the number of students HD is serving. While the distribution of 100 majors in another major might span junior and senior years, each HD major for the most part is only being counted as a senior. This means instead of students counting toward major counts each successive year, most are only counting once yet the program is still responsible for graduating them. Second, the pre-HD major will allow tracking that will substantially assist in determining course offering needs. Currently, Dr. Jaffe meets with students and carefully tracks their progress in a color-coded spreadsheet. While effective, a pre-HD major will have much improved analytics to increase graduation rates. Third, the pre-HD major can be managed to more effectively address impaction. In the program now, the pre-requisites may focus on limiting access to the major rather than preparing students for the major. Fourth, it will help development of sequential curriculum which will be addressed in a separate recommendation.

- The pre-HD major should begin with an annual application period to create cohorts and thereby more consistency in course offering needs when there are limited faculty.
- The pre-HD major should include a 100-level HD course. The program coordinator can determine when to offer the 100-level course based on how many/how often students should be permitted into the major based on staffing levels.
- The pre-HD major can move students out of undeclared advising earlier. Students expressed consensus regarding issues with the knowledge of undeclared advisors delaying graduation progress and meeting career objectives.

C. Hire new faculty to meet curricular needs and staffing shortage

For the SSU HD program to develop as other HD programs have in the CSU, I would suggest hiring up to four positions (or two more Karins).

- Theoretically, a program of HD needs to cover the lifespan. More importantly, our community needs an HD program that covers the lifespan. A second hire should address adulthood and aging.
- Students in an interdisciplinary program of HD need exposure to the disciplines associated with HD, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and biology. The collegial connections with anthropology and biology have been established. However, the exclusion of HD students from psychology and sociology courses means that the program should ideally have their own psychologist and sociologist. A psychologist hire to the HD program before the psychology department would be unpopular. I would recommend this need 1) be used as leverage to allow HD students in to the departments with an appropriate hire, 2) lead to a joint appointment, or 3) be met by hiring a psychological anthropologist and a social anthropologist focused on urban settings. Based on input from faculty and utilizing the strength of HD being housed in anthropology, the third options seems most feasible.

- A program of HD should also offer a breadth of methodological approaches. A faculty member with statistical expertise would benefit the program.

Ideally, several of these curricular needs could be met with fewer hires, such as a scholar focused on the quantitative analysis of cognitive aging in disadvantaged communities to meet lifespan, methodological, psychological, and sociological needs. Of course, CSULB and every other HD program is looking for that person too. At a minimum, a new hire that can instruct curriculum in aging is needed.

#### D. Establish student learning outcomes

Faculty should adopt learning outcomes before moving further with course design to meet these outcomes. The learning outcomes suggested in the self-study could be used effectively. They can also be part of continuous revision as is typical in curricular design.

- The learning outcomes should better connect to Bloom's Taxonomy and WASC VALUE Rubrics so they expect skills beyond comprehension and knowledge and expect synthesis, creation, and application.
- I recommend dividing the first suggested learning outcome to have the life course and social positions as two separate outcomes. Some courses in other departments will meet one but not the other.
  - 1) students will understand the way in which the life course comes to be culturally shaped
  - 2) students will understand the way social positions like gender, race, sexuality, class, and disability impact development;
- I would also recommend delineating the disciplines that shape scholarship and practice in human development, including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and biology. This will help both faculty and students see how coursework in other departments meet HD goals.
  - 3) students will understand the central theoretical concepts that shape scholarship and practice in human development, *including anthropology, sociology, psychology, and biology*;

#### E. Develop sequential curriculum based on SLOs

A major cannot meaningfully introduce, practice, and demonstrate learning outcomes within one year. Students complete 90 units before taking an HD course. Instead, they should be equipped with HD perspectives throughout their education to meet sequenced learning outcomes. The increased number of HD courses will help students make connections, but the careful sequencing of courses will make these connections building blocks for higher order skills. The current course offerings cannot successfully meet this goal.

The curriculum of topics and special topics lacks an effective structure. There are no pre-requisites for individual courses once in the major and courses do not seem to assume knowledge from previous courses. For example, the 350 courses count equivalently. This is an effective way to meet students' needs. However, the courses are theory, applications, and culture. Yet, culture is addressed both in theory and application. Is the cultural content in

the theory class something that prepares students for the culture class? Also, topics include childhood, adulthood, gender, and culture/language. This is more feasible as a pair of contrasts and a pair of topics. All of these courses belong in an HD major, but the structure of knowledge development is missing. Instead, I suggest the following sequential structure.

- Introduction: A lower division HD course can introduce the learning outcomes through a set of HD frameworks and survey of associated disciplines. The pre-HD major should require such a lower division course that frames the major and can control admission to the impacted major. I would suggest moving the requirement for ANTH 200 or ENGL 203 as additional options for the social science foundation with ANTH 203, PSYCH 250, and SOCI 201, or expecting students to take two of the five options. Linguistics is not a normal requirement for HD, and in its place the lower division HD class would provide the survey students need before taking courses across departments.
- Lifespan: Students should have sequential coursework in HD. HD 325: Childhood and HD 335: Adulthood are courses that should be taught to all HD majors. Further, adulthood courses aim to cover a significant number of years in the lifespan that aren't well covered in other courses. As such, it should not be an "Adulthood and Lifespan" course, but instead an "Adulthood and Aging" course. Moving Dr. Smith to one of these courses and hiring someone for the other should be a first priority before a 350 on culture is regularly offered. Cultural concepts are offered successfully throughout the major in large part thanks to the close ties with anthropology.
- Topics: If made familiar with HD frameworks, students have the opportunity to practice learning outcomes in coursework options from different departments. There are several beneficial courses listed even after the removal of courses from Sociology and Psychology, such as the Biology of Aging. However, as stated above, there are some oddities to the course groupings. Out of necessity, the course options are based on availability rather than any conceptual structure. This avoids the Herculean task of substitutions that the program coordinator previously completed. As the curriculum develops in accord with learning outcomes, the groupings should respond better to those particular goals. I would encourage moving Dr. Senghas from his current lower division Intro to Linguistics class to specialized classes in his expertise, such as Schooling and Culture along with more advanced linguistics topics. Students looking into communicational disorders or occupational therapy would benefit greatly from his expertise, and HD students in general would benefit from a faculty member who knows they are in the room.
- Methods: Based on curricular development, faculty should determine when methods coursework should come for students. Is methods a time when they will demonstrate their skills from earlier courses, presenting a synthesis in a research project? Or is methods a time to practice various disciplinary approaches, learning about the production of scholarship that will be surveyed in later courses? These two options would lead to different course content, and is an example of why the sequenced learning outcomes for the major should be addressed earlier.

- HD 350 coursework: This course as a shell for course development is a productive way to build the program while graduating students. As courses are created within the shell, attention should be paid to how they fit into a holistic curricular plan. What skills does the course expect from previous coursework? What skills does the course teach for future coursework? Each course should do at least one or the other, if not both.
- Senior Seminar: The senior seminar should not be 1 unit. As it is currently taught, it is an exceptional opportunity for the demonstration of learning outcomes with reflection and integration. It is also an opportunity for assessment: students are not well-prepared for these skills in prior coursework. It should be extended to 4 credit units with a significant increase in service learning hours for students. Internship experiences can help students with a number of career pathways, including ones that require practicum hours such as childlife specialties and ones with competitive graduate programs such as social work. Having Dr. Smith create an internship program for students that is not attached to units, when an effective one already exists, creates workload issues for both students and faculty. I would suggest extending the allocations for the current adjunct faculty while keeping Dr. Smith with lifespan and theory courses.

This plan might seem to indicate an extensive amount of hiring. However, with an extension of units for the senior seminar lecturer, earlier entrance into the major with annual admission, and moving units from Intro to Linguistics to Intro to HD (a large lecture with a TA can work well), it may be possible to make these changes with the current allocations. With annual admission to the program, Dr. Smith could teach two lifespan courses, three 350's, and one methods course as his six courses each year. Preferably, one new faculty member could cover a lifespan course outside Dr. Smith's expertise and create additional offerings for all other courses. (This would also make room for the possibility of course releases for Dr. Smith for research or as program coordinator in the future.) The new hire in anthropology and/or a pool of visiting lecturers could similarly support these sequential offerings as well. However, such massive curriculum development necessitates incentives and significant value placed on service efforts by RTP review committees.

F. Build further connections to campus communities

The HD program exists solely because of the excellent connections it has built on campus, most recently through Dr. Jaffe's dedication to the program. It benefits from a solid connection with education programs, WGS, ANTH, and several GE courses. Efforts to establish necessary connections with psychology and sociology have been ineffective, and lead to recommendations for further hiring. I would suggest looking for additional partnerships with departments offering coursework that can benefit students looking toward public health and counseling. Reducing reliance on other departments is important, but extending the options can also further reduce reliance on specific departments.

Beyond the connections to other departments for course offerings, I would suggest connections to campus communities to out-source some tasks. GE-advising is done at a campus advising center. I would similarly suggest relying on the Center for Community

Engagement to manage internship programs. Also, the program should build connections with the Career Development Center. A faculty member cannot effectively advise a HD student on career pathways nor organize recruitment fairs, interview workshops, or job offering databases. A faculty member especially cannot accomplish this as the lone faculty member in a program.

## CONCLUSION

The HD program benefits from the Anthropology Department support, excellence in advising, pedagogical efforts to utilize existing courses and create new courses, and administrative support. Faculty conduct valuable research, teach a diverse student population, and connect to campus communities. However, they face considerable challenges especially in staffing courses and creating an effective curriculum with that lack of staffing. One faculty member receiving funding for research release time should not bring an entire program to a halt, especially one that so many students do and would like to rely on.

The coordinator has developed the existing program as a reasonable response under unreasonable constraints. The HD program is not seeking to unnecessarily duplicate curriculum; their students are not permitted in relevant courses in impacted majors. Administrative support should be offered to staff additional sections of these courses for HD majors to assure timely graduation, even with visiting lecturers.

Through further hiring and careful curricular planning, the HD program can develop to benefit the campus and community at large, preparing students effectively for MA programs, lessening the impact for associated disciplines, and training future community servants. Other CSUs have approximately 800 HD majors. After years of support, it would be possible to remove impact and create a successful pathway to graduation for students who may have needed time to explore upon matriculation. For example, a student who did not succeed in biomedical majors currently would not meet pre-requisite GPA standards, even if the coursework he or she struggled with is irrelevant to HD. Students may be left repeat-deleting courses they don't need to raise their GPA instead of taking courses they could use. Impact can leave students who struggled without a major.

On other campuses, HD can also be a GE powerhouse, teaching a breadth of coursework in ethnic studies and critical thinking, along with E, B2, B4, D1 and D5. This GE role can help students struggling in the wrong field find the HD major earlier as well, but currently the under-funded program has to hope instead that students do not find them.

Overall, careful curriculum planning and hiring to teach courses can allow the HD program to flourish, serving an expansive number of students with a highly valued degree while still utilizing an exceptionally low amount of resources to meet those needs.