DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY ANNUAL REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2001-2002

I. Department Mission/Vision Statement

History is one of the humanities and a social science. The values and skills that the discipline offers make it an integral part of a complete liberal arts education for better citizens in our complex, culturally diverse, increasingly global society. The fundamental mission of the Department is to offer all lower division students the opportunity to learn historical facts, interpretations and methodologies. The Department emphasizes quality instruction within the core curriculum, including meeting a legislative mandate that all degree-holders in state-supported institutions of higher education demonstrate familiarity with state and national history. The Department's mission also includes the preparation of students for a bachelor's degree with a major in history. The Department recognizes that many of its upper division students are preparing for careers in teaching at pre-collegiate levels, and that this requires courses with global perspective. History seeks to provide caring and accurate advisement to its students. The Department believes that, after completing requirements for a bachelor's degree in History, a major should have learned to think analytically; read carefully; judge the difference between historical myth and reality; and be receptive to new historical and intellectual movements. Those who earn a Master's degree should have learned all of the above, and in addition, acquired individual research skills. Graduate students are expected to display more sophisticated historical judgment than undergraduate majors. All members of the History faculty are expected to have, or to actively be seeking, a terminal degree, to participate in professional organizations, and to remain abreast of literature appropriate to specializations. History faculty are expected additionally to regularly be engaged in research activities, both to update lecture and class material and to contribute new knowledge.

II. Statement of Goals

The History Department teaches every student enrolled in this university in its core survey courses, as well as undergraduate History majors, students seeking certification in the social sciences, and undergraduate History minors, undergraduates in American Studies and Women's Studies programs, and graduate students pursuing an MA degree in History. Faced with such diversity, the Department has numerous goals. First, it seeks to hire, tenure and promote historians who are competent, industrious and dedicated scholars and teachers. Because it believes that a link exists between competency in the classroom and on-going scholarship, History demands that its faculty be engaged actively in research and publication. In addition, by emphasizing fact and interpretation in all its classes, History's faculty seeks to assure that its students will understand the past, be capable of making judgments in their own right, and gain human self-knowledge that will help prepare them to be teachers, scholars, or simply adequately prepared to be citizens with a quintessential liberal arts background.

Assessment of goals: Department members teaching in the core meet as a team annually to determine the success of meeting the general goals and learning outcomes in their respective survey classes and to make changes in materials, pedagogy, and so on, to meet the needs of the

faculty and the students. The Department assesses its fulfillment of these goals for majors by requiring its faculty to use rigorous testing procedures, to emphasize written assignments for the students in each course (where practical), and to require that its majors successfully complete both a Historical Methodology course and a Senior Seminar (a Writing Across the Curriculum course). The Senior Seminar, requires a major research and writing component. Both also test the acquisition of factual knowledge and interpretation through the administration of a nationally normed standardized test. The model upon which the History Department draws is the American Historical Association report on "Liberal Learning and the History Major" (*Perspectives*, 1990), supplemented by literature from the University System of Georgia and the insights of the faculty within this Department. The faculty members of the Department are assessed annually through a self-report and evaluation by the Department Chair. The Department Chair and/or peers, visit the classrooms of untenured members of the department, and others identified as needing further evaluation, followed by a discussion of the evaluation with the faculty person(s) involved. Recommendations for a timetable for improvements to be completed (if needed), follow the meeting.

III. Learning Outcomes for the Department of History

Undergraduate Major: B.A. Degree

Students completing the Bachelor of Arts Degree in History will:

a. demonstrate a general knowledge of United States and World History. They will be able to classify and describe varieties of historical knowledge and demonstrate the relationship of geography to history;

b. demonstrate an understanding of the major schools of historical thought (historiography) and a general understanding of historical causation;

c. apply historical research methods to produce independent works through the use of primary and secondary sources and will be able to evaluate the results;

d. demonstrate the ability to think critically about and to analyze selected historical materials;

e. demonstrate the ability to communicate effectively both in written and oral form.

Graduate Program: Master's Degree

Students completing the Master of Arts Degree in History will:

a. demonstrate the ability to undertake advanced historical research;

b. show basic familiarity with historical literature in major and minor fields of study;

c. demonstrate an understanding of historiography and its permutations over time;

d. be able to identify and describe career options in the field of history;

e. demonstrate a knowledge of the theory and ethics of public history [for Public History concentration];

f. demonstrate knowledge of the standards and practices for at least two fields in public history [for Public History concentration];

g. apply practical skills in at least two fields of public history [for Public History concentration].

Assessment Plan and Results:

1) Undergraduate major:

Plan:

Each student graduating with a major in History will be able to demonstrate the abilities outlined in the Learning Outcomes through the preparation of an essay and delivery of an oral presentation in the Senior Seminar. A. Students will demonstrate general knowledge of United States and World History through the successful completion of a variety of courses in the field. B. Students will complete successfully a sophomore-level course in Historical Methodology where they will demonstrate their mastery of the material through an initial essay evaluated by at least two different members of the department, covering their knowledge of US and World History and their understanding of material covered in any other history courses already completed. This is the baseline from which their work will be evaluated in the Senior capstone seminar. C. Each History major will submit an analytical essay in the seminar that will display knowledge of both history and of historiography in exploring a theme proposed by the Seminar's coordinator. Students are expected to draw upon any appropriate member of the Department in preparing the essay. Two or more department members most proficient in the specific area of inquiry will evaluate the essay. D. Each History major will give an oral presentation in the capstone Senior Seminar, to be evaluated by at least two members of the Department. E. Graduating Seniors will complete a questionnaire, evaluating the History major, with the opportunity to make suggestions for future improvements in the program. F. The Department will conduct a survey of graduates through its newsletter every third year. In addition, it will seek to target those students who graduated five years before through individual letters. The students are asked to evaluate their education at West Georgia, with specific reference to the History major, and to suggest ways in which the program might be improved to enhance their careers.

The Methodology course and the Senior Seminar are departmental courses, taught on a rotating basis, which draw on the personnel of the entire Department. All assessment activities involve two or more faculty members from the Department. The examination given at the outset of the Methodology course, a copy of the analytical essay, a report on the oral presentation (and ultimately information from the alumni) are deposited by the History faculty with the Department Chair. The Chair organizes the material and presents the results at a Department

meeting in the fall semester. The results form the basis of any action the Department will take in revising its assessment plans, or in making programmatic improvements.

Results:

Analysis of the Methodology assessment examination results led the Department (at its fall meeting 2001) to propose changes in the Methodology course from a Junior-level course to a Sophomore-level course and increased the credit to three hours. Faculty believed students needed the experience of "doing history" sooner and in more depth. So many students enrolled in the fall of 2001 that an extra section had to be added to give them additional opportunity for more personalized instruction. In addition, the Senior Seminar was changed from a four to three-hour course, to focus more on the research aspects of it. Results of the examination also indicated that instructors needed to focus more on developing research skills in their own classes and to emphasize the need to carefully evaluate primary sources. The examination on the factual material and interpretations taken by Senior majors indicated a need to require more study of the European Middle Ages. As a result, the Department was happy to have the service of a medievalist from Oldenburg University, as well as a new Chair, whose specialty is the Middle Ages. Comparing the products of students in the Junior and Senior-level classes indicates a clear improvement, in the vast majority of cases, in demonstrating the abilities outlined above. The results also indicate a need to continue to improve the writing skills of our majors. To that end, several faculty will make their courses Writing Across the Curriculum courses. Alumni questionnaire results (over 60 returned) indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the History program at West Georgia. Although it was expected that the 30+ who were in teaching would use the major, a number of those not in teaching, such as lawyers, business people, politicians and aides, and so on, also believed the major was very useful, especially the research skills they gained. Only five answered that the major was not helpful in their current occupations (sales, banking, food and beverage manager).

2) Graduate Program:

Plan:

The M.A. in History at West Georgia has as its primary purpose the development of a more sophisticated understanding of the discipline of History for the post-baccalaureate student accepted into our program. The outcome such students should achieve in the 45-hour thesis, or 60-hour non-thesis, program include those listed above. The assessment plan to assure each student meets these outcomes includes: successfully completing a Historiography course in which the student will write a research paper and present the results of the reading and research to the class in oral form. In addition, students will complete successfully the required course hours for their track. Students opting for the non-thesis track are evaluated by means of an oral and/or written examination presided over by at least three members of the department. Students taking the M.A. thesis option are evaluated by successful completion and oral defense of their thesis as well as an oral examination over course material, again presided over by at least three faculty members in the Department. Graduating M.A. candidates also complete a questionnaire indicating their satisfaction with the program and suggesting areas of improvement.

Results:

As a result of evaluations of the graduate faculty in History, and the results of the questionnaires, several revisions of the program have been undertaken. The History faculty has put together a graduate handbook for students and has delineated more clear differences between 4000/5000-level courses. Separate syllabi are produced for the students enrolled in a 4000/5000 level course. The Department has changed the designation of one course from a 5000 to a 6000-level course to more accurately reflect the level of work required. More faculty members will be participating in the design and implementation of the Historiography course and more faculty members will be teaching it in the future. New learning outcomes have been established for this course. For those completing the Public History concentration, the addition of a new faculty member in the field means two faculty members will be evaluating the products of those students. Students are assessed on the basis of their successful completion of the above outcomes in class work and internships.

IV: Example of How the Department Used the Assessment of Goals and Outcomes to Change/Improve a Process

See above for several examples already implemented.

Statement of Departmental Condition:

The 2001-2002 academic year was a successful one for the department in many areas. We added a new Chair and two new faculty members, improving the Public History program, our Civil War offerings and the coverage of the Middle East and Middle Ages. Our Public History program continues to expand and the Museum Certificate Program has expanded as well. Numbers of both graduate and undergraduate students are up again this year over last year. As will be seen below, the faculty members have been productive in scholarly and other activities this year. The major problem the Department has at this time is the failure to fill three positions that had been authorized and then cancelled due to budgetary considerations. Especially troubling is the lack of an African-American historian, a British historian and a historian to cover the Mediterranean world. Those fields have a backlog of students interested in taking courses in those areas. Three members of the Department were tenured and promoted this year, indicating the degree of commitment and trust the university has in this department and its future.