

Classics

A department in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts offering the B.A. in Classics and M.A.T. in Latin and Classical Humanities.

■ The Review Process

This was a standard AQAD review. Reviewers were:

Nancy T. de Grummond (Florida State University)
Lillian Doherty (University of Maryland College Park)

■ Main Issues

The Visiting Team provided positive comments on many aspects of the Department, remarking on its record of “sustained excellence” in scholarship, teaching, and service. Despite the economic challenges common to many departments, the reviewers acknowledge that the M.A.T. program in Latin and Classical Humanities retains its national reputation, noting the 100% placement record of its graduates. The team also commented very favorably on the Department’s undergraduate program, noting its impressive size, the quality of the student body, and students’ high level of engagement in activities important to their development, such as the Sanskrit Club and the honor society, Eta Sigma Phi. The team concluded that the Department’s faculty shows “amazing productivity in a variety of specializations”, and made special note of the important recent hire in Greek tragedy, as well as the enhancements to the Department brought by hires in Etruscan and Roman archaeology.

The team offered several specific recommendations for new initiatives:

- In light of considerable intersecting interests across departments and the Five Colleges, consider developing a certificate program in Museum Studies.
- Offer courses dealing with ethnic diversity in antiquity (e.g., comparative mythology), as recommended by the previous AQAD review team.

The team also highlighted several “problem areas” and offered recommendations in these areas:

- Scheduling of classes and meetings: Create a scheduling committee to address continued concerns over equity in course assignments, and schedule faculty meetings at a time during which all can attend.
- Impending retirement: Make replacement hiring decisions that place a high priority on language pedagogy and pedagogical research, ultimately also accepting these areas as legitimate forms of scholarship that count towards promotion.
- M.A.T. stipends: Maintain full funding of student stipends in the M.A.T. program.

- Growth of M.A.T. program: Research the prospect of developing a part-time M.A.T. program particularly for local full-time teachers.
- Salaries, space, and staffing: All areas need to be addressed in light of the potential for faculty and staff burnout under current circumstances. This includes reinstating faculty raises, increasing office space, hiring at least a part-time assistant for the staff member, and making nine courses taught over a two-year period the normative load.
- Website: Redesign the website with an eye towards a more dynamic online presence and the presentation of a greater array of information especially for potential undergraduate majors and M.A.T. students.
- TK20: Offer guidance to M.A.T. students in the use of this website in which they are required to submit their documentation for certification (though the software is not administered by the Department).

■ Results of the Review

The Chair expressed overall agreement with the evaluation performed by the Visiting Team. He announced the Department's intention to address areas of concern with the following actions:

- Study the possibility of building a concentration in museology.
- In accordance with the Provost office's initiative, pursue a cluster hire of six faculty members in the Humanities, expanding the Department's strengths in "civilization, archaeology, mythology, and/or studies relevant for the museum".
- Continue development of a new departmental website.

The Department concurred with the reviewers about the urgency of lack of departmental space, as well as the thoughts the Visiting Team offered on potential faculty burnout as a result of teaching and service burdens topped with the salary freeze; on the latter point, the Department urgently requested that the administration address these issues. The Department also appealed to the Dean and/or Provost to address other recommendations made by the reviewers: continued full funding for M.A.T. students, eventual funding for an M.A. in archaeology, and replacement of faculty nearing retirement with full-time, tenure-track faculty.

The Dean endorsed the many positive findings of the Visiting Team, complimenting the faculty for their work in mentoring, teaching, university service, and scholarship. She also confirmed that funding for Classics graduate students would continue without interruption, and that there will be a small increase to stipends as part of the conversion from three to four credits for General Education courses. She also encouraged the Department to think further about the Visiting Team's suggestion for enhancing their summer programming and summer institutes, stating that the College would welcome proposals seeking College support for development in this area.

■ Student Outcomes Assessment

The Classics department has defined undergraduate student learning outcomes in agreement with the goals and aims of the American Philological Association. These include fundamental learning

outcomes for all students as well as learning outcomes for their specific tracks: Greek and Latin Language and Classic Civilizations.

The department uses a number of indirect assessment tools to measure the attainment of these learning outcomes, including tracking their graduates and tracking student success in competitions. The department also makes use of benchmarking data (course evaluations, graduating senior exit surveys, departmental NSSE results). The department has made improvements and plans others, in part based on these results, in the areas of writing preparation and advising:

- The department plans to revise its Junior Year Writing course, and offer additional instructional support for its upper level Classical Civilization courses.
- The department has improved communicative processes in support of advising, by implemented an Advising Night for the students and redesigning print materials.