

## **Outcomes Assessment Report Public Affairs: Concentration in History**

M.A. Public Affairs, Concentration in History

Report Year: 2017-2018

### **New Mexico Highlands University: Mission Statement (Adopted as part of new Strategic Plan, 2016):**

New Mexico Highlands University is a public comprehensive university serving our local and global communities. Our mission is to provide opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students to attain an exceptional education by fostering creativity, critical thinking and research in the liberal arts, sciences, and professions within a diverse community.

### **Mission of the Public Affairs Program:**

The Master of Arts in Public Affairs is an interdisciplinary program in the Social Sciences that provides academic training for careers in public and private organizations, both nationally and internationally. The multidisciplinary core curriculum includes courses in political theory, social theory and historical thought, human culture and economic theory. These courses foster a comprehensive understanding of the social and cultural environment or public and private organizational policy design and implementation. The program prepares students for professional positions in managerial and leadership roles in government agencies, consulting firms, human services, public-interest organizations and businesses significantly affected by public policies, as well as training them for doctoral studies.

### **Goals of the Public Affairs Program, History Concentration:**

It is our goal to train students for careers in teaching plus various kinds of professional employment. Professional applications of history include careers in public affairs, business, and the private sector where research, communication, and other liberal arts skills are required and appreciated. In addition, the program seeks to prepare students for advanced graduate programs in history and the law.

### **Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose Linkage & Institutional Mission Reference:**

The University's commitment to programs focusing on a diverse campus community, especially the rich heritage of regional traditions and cultures.

### **College/University Goals Supported:**

The university aspires to develop broadly literate citizens and leaders, educated in analytical and critical thought and the appreciation of the arts and sciences. University's commitment to programs focusing on a diverse campus community, especially the rich heritage of regional traditions and cultures.

**Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes:**

- 1) Students exhibit an understanding and appreciation of a multidisciplinary approach in relation to the work they eventually do and the social environments in which they live.
- 2) Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the nature of history as a discipline, and the relationship between historiography and historical research.
- 3) Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical and reflective thought, and communication. The acquisition of these skills will prepare graduates of the program for teaching in secondary schools and community colleges, for research-oriented employment in non-academic and applied settings, and for the additional education necessary to earn a PhD or other additional advanced degree.
- 4) Students will master the scholarly literature in their chosen field of concentration (History)

**Student Learning Outcome 1:**

Students exhibit an understanding and appreciation of a multidisciplinary approach to graduate education.

**NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1:**

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills

**1<sup>st</sup> Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:**

Students will successfully complete the program's Interdisciplinary Core requirements earning a B or above in the non-history courses:

- ANTH 651 – Seminar: Concepts of Human Culture (3)
- POLS 563 -- Political Economy (3)
- POLS 654 -- Seminar: The State (3)
- SOC 638 -- Advanced Classical Social Theories (3)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:**

Students fill out surveys (see attachment 2) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including questions asking them to comment on the program's impact on their research, writing, and analytical skills. Criteria for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in all three areas.

**Summary of Data:**

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	5	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	5	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: Indicates general success in meeting this measure	<b>100</b>

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	0	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given lack of respondents	<b>0</b>

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:**

With so little data, there are few concrete conclusions to be reached. The most obvious point is that the program needs to recruit more students in order to prosper. Nonetheless, the limited evidence available suggests that the program is producing real success for our students.

**Student Learning Outcome 2:**

Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the nature of history as a discipline, and the relationship between historiography and historical research.

**NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2:**

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills

**Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:**

- 1) Students will achieve a grade of A or B in Hist/Poli Sci 615: Contemporary Historical Thought. Criterion for success, 75% of students earning A or B.
- 2) The program's Graduate Coordinator will fill out a portfolio checklist (attachment 1) evaluating a sample of each graduating student's written work, including his or her thesis, professional paper(s), or comprehensive exam. Criteria for success, rating of good or excellent on Checklist Item N° 2 (understanding of history, particularly the historical period(s) reflected in their coursework and thesis/professional paper).

**Summary of Data:\***

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	<b>100</b>

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	0	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	<b>0</b>

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:**

With limited data, there are few concrete conclusions to be reached. The students assessed grasp the fundamentals of history as a discipline, and understand the importance of historiographical analysis as an integral part of historical research and writing.

**Student Learning Outcome 3:**

Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical and reflective thought, and communication. The acquisition of these skills will prepare graduates of the program for teaching in secondary schools and community colleges, for research-oriented employment in non-academic and applied settings, and for the additional education necessary to earn a PhD or other additional advanced degree.

**NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3:**

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills
- Critical and reflective thinking skills
- Effective Use of Technology

**Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:**

- 1) Methods in History. Criterion for success, 75% of students earning A or B. Students will achieve a grade of A or B in Hist/Poli Sci 620: Research.
- 2) Students fill out surveys (see attachment 2) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including questions asking them to comment on the program's impact on their

research, writing, and analytical skills. Criteria for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in all three areas.

### Summary of Data:

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	2	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	1
Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort. (Note: student not meeting criterion received B-)	67%

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	0	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	0

### Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

The limited evidence available suggests that the program has been successful in developing students who can conduct historical research, analyze and evaluate data, and present it in coherent ways.

### Student Learning Outcome 4:

Students will master the scholarly literature in their chosen field of concentration (History)

### NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 4:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills

### Means of Assessment for Outcome 4:

- 1) Faculty portfolio checklists (attachment 1) ask Graduate Coordinator to evaluate student mastery of the relevant scholarly literature in graduating students' theses/professional papers. Criterion for success, rating of good or excellent on the relevant evaluative measure.
- 2) Students fill out surveys (see attachment 2) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including questions asking them to comment on the program's impact on their understanding of the literature of the field. Criteria for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in this area.

**Summary of Data:**

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	0	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	0

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	0	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	0	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion: not useful given small cohort	0

**Interpretation of Results for Outcome 4:**

With no data available—no students having completed the program this year--there are few concrete conclusions to be reached. The program obviously needs to recruit more students—and move them through the program expeditiously—in order to prosper. There are a number of new students in the program pipeline, so subsequent reports may well provide additional data for assessment and give a clearer view of the prospects of the program.

**Utilization of Results:**

The faculty of the Public Affairs/History concentration have reviewed the somewhat anorexic data derived from our outcomes assessment process, and have discussed concrete steps going forward. The primordial problem facing this concentration of the Public Affairs program is that recruitment efforts over the last several years have yielded relatively little fruit. A first step in improving the program is to increase student recruitment. The concentration is still fairly new, and we hope that going forward more students interested in historical study will enlist in our history army.

**Changes to Program Based on Results:**

The data available indicate that our students are meeting our expectations in the program; students are performing well in many of the learning outcomes measured by the assessment plan. Nonetheless, the program's greatest problems lie in recruitment and successful completion of the program. We are currently developing new approaches to aiding students to complete the program and receive their degrees in a more timely fashion. Another potential problem facing both of our graduate programs is staffing. The department has lost a total of two faculty positions, and this hurts both our undergraduate and graduate programs. Not having an Americanist available to teach graduate courses has been a major handicap for efforts to move the program forward. The prospect of filling the position for the Fall 2019 semester is an encouraging one.

**Retention Strategies:**

Before students can be retained, they need to enter the program. Our main focus for the 2017-2018 academic year has to be recruitment. The Public Affairs/History faculty is attempting to develop new approaches to recruit more students. It is clear that the current approach is bearing insufficient fruit. Traditionally, the program—or at least the History concentration—has relied on graduates of our undergraduate programs to transition to the graduate program; shrinking undergraduate enrollments in History & Political Science (a national trend) are progressively rendering this an unsustainable strategy. The components of a new strategy will necessarily involve an up-to-date web presence, better promotional materials, and targeted contacts with other universities who graduate students who may be interested in our program. Some progress has been made in the development of new promotional materials; program faculty will endeavor to communicate with University Relations in order to give them the information necessary to improve the website and enable the establishment of up-to-date webpages for this and other graduate programs. We will also maintain our efforts to fill vacant faculty positions in history and political science, in order to shore up the undergraduate programs, and strengthen our ability to recruit and serve new graduate students.



### Portfolio Checklist for Outcomes Assessment Public Affairs/History

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Evaluator: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Evaluated: \_\_\_\_\_

After reviewing the work being evaluated, assign a number from 1 to 5 for each of the categories below, with 5 signifying “excellent” and 1 signifying “poor.”

	Poor		Fair		Excellent	
1. Subject matter relevance to program mission	1	2	3	4	5	
2. Understanding of history, historiography	1	2	3	4	5	
3. Factual accuracy	1	2	3	4	5	
4. Organization (chronology, logical progression)	1	2	3	4	5	
5. Clarity of expression and argument			1	2	3	4 5
6. Review of literature (completeness, critical thought)	1	2	3	4	5	
7. Original contribution to the field	1	2	3	4	5	

Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments:

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## Survey of Graduating Students

### Public Affairs/History

#### New Mexico Highlands University

Please help us to evaluate and improve the Public Affairs Program by responding to the following questions. All responses will remain anonymous. **Note: PLEASE ANSWER QUESTIONS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SHEET.**

1. Name \_\_\_\_\_ ID N° \_\_\_\_\_.

2. Program Evaluation (please use reverse side if necessary)

2.1. Considering what you learned while in the Public Affairs program at Highlands, what has been most useful or helpful to you?

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2.2. To what extent did your experience in the Public Affairs Program assist you in:

Well	Poorly			Extremely	
Understanding the literature of the discipline	1	2	3	4	5
Critical analysis of written arguments	1	2	3	4	5
Appreciating cultural diversity	1	2	3	4	5
Writing clearly	1	2	3	4	5
Developing the skills necessary for research	1	2	3	4	5

2.3. Is there something you wish you had learned while at Highlands that was not included in your Master's program?

2.4. How would you rate the Public Affairs Program in terms of:

	Poor	Fair	Excellent
Quality of courses offered	1	2 3	4 5
Variety of courses offered		1 2	3 4 5
Availability of courses offered	1	2 3	4 5
Accessibility and approachability of faculty	1	2 3	4 5
Education and qualification of faculty	1	2 3	4 5
Quality of academic advising	1	2 3	4 5

2.5. What recommendations would you make concerning the Public Affairs Program at Highlands?

2.6. Looking back, are you pleased you chose to pursue a Master's in Public Affairs? Please explain.

2.7. In your opinion what is the academic quality of:

	Poor	Fair	Excellent
The Public Affairs Program overall:	1	2 3	4 5
Your specific area of concentration:	1	2 3	4 5

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please return this questionnaire to Dr. Linder in Douglas Hall N° 241. Thank you very much for your assistance.

\* Please answer these questions only if they are relevant to your experience in the program and concentration.

