

Outcomes Assessment Report

Southwest Studies: Concentration in History & Political Science

M.A. Southwest Studies, Concentration in History & Political Science

Report Year: 2019-2021*¹

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 Department of History & Political Science

Because of its multi-ethnic composition, varied traditions, and rich history, the American Southwest lends itself to interesting and important studies. The M.A. in Southwest Studies marshals interdisciplinary resources in the study of the anthropology, history, and political science of the Southwest. Students will particularly demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of the unique social and cultural makeup of the greater Southwest and of the complex prehistory and history that produced it.

Goals of the Southwest Studies Program, History & Political Science Concentration.

It is our goal to train graduate students for careers in teaching plus various kinds of professional employment. Professional applications of history and political science include careers in government, business, and the private sector where research, communication, and other liberal arts skills are required and appreciated. The regional focus of the program prepares students in particular for careers in New Mexico and the greater Southwest. In addition, the program seeks to prepare students for advanced graduate programs in history, political science, public administration, and the law.

Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose Linkage & Institutional Mission Reference:

*Because of the impact of the pandemic, this report combines information from the 2019-2020 & 2020-2021 academic years.

The University maintains its 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, the use of technology, and the appreciation of the arts and sciences. The university's commitment is to programs focusing on a diverse campus community, especially the rich heritage of regional traditions and cultures.

Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes:

- 1) Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the unique social and cultural makeup of the greater Southwest, as well as the complex prehistory and history that produced it.
- 2) Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical and reflective thought, the use of technology, and communication.
- 3) Students will master the scholarly literature in their chosen field of concentration within Southwest Studies (History & Political Science).

Student Learning Outcome 1:

Students will demonstrate understanding and appreciation of the unique social and cultural makeup of the greater Southwest, as well as the complex prehistory and history that produced it.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 1:

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

Means of Assessment for Outcome 1:

- 1) Students fill out surveys (see attachment 2) at or after their comprehensive exam or defense, including a question asking them to comment on the program's impact on their appreciation of diversity. Criterion for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in that respect.
- 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^o 2
 (understanding of Southwest prehistory, history, and culture).

Summary of Available Data:

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Comment: A single questionnaire was returned in 2019-2021; the respondent rated the program as a 5 (excellent) in assisting in the appreciation of cultural diversity.

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Comment: A single student graduated in the period under review; his professional papers were reviewed, and the student's work was rated as 4 (on a 5-point scale) for "Understanding of Southwestern prehistory, history, culture."

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 1:

With so little data, there are few concrete conclusions to be reached. As noted in previous reports, the most obvious conclusion to be derived is that the program concentration still must recruit significantly more students—and move them through the program expeditiously—to return to prosperity and stability. Nonetheless, it is encouraging that the limited information obtained implies program quality and student satisfaction with the program and courses.

Student Learning Outcome 2:

Students will develop skills in reading, research, writing, critical thought, communication, and the effective use of technology.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 2:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills
- Effective communication skills.
- Critical and reflective thinking skills.
- Effective use of technology for research.

Means of Assessment for Outcome 2:

- 1) Students will achieve a grade of A or B in Hist/Poli Sci 6200: Research Methods in History. Criterion for success, seventy-five percent (75%) of students earning a grade of A or B.
- 2) Graduate Coordinator will fill out a portfolio checklist (attachment 1) evaluating all students' final papers in Hist 6180: Seminar: Southwest (the sole required History course in the Southwest Studies Core Curriculum). Criterion for success, average rating of good or excellent (3.75-5 on a 5-point scale) in the relevant measures of the checklist.
- 3) Students will achieve a grade of A or B on the electronic research assignment in Hist 6180.
- 4) 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. Criterion for success, majority rating program as excellent or good in all areas.

Summary of Data:

1)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion: (2 SWS/H & PS)	6	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	6	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Comment: Four students took Hist 6200 in Fall 2019; two were Southwest Studies/Hist & Poli Sci. All four received grades of A or B. Two students took Hist/Pols 6200 in Fall 2020; neither was in Southwest Studies. Both received grades of A.

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Comment: There were a total of three students in Hist 6180 in Spring 2020; of those all three received an average of good or excellent (3.75-5 on a 5-point scale) on their final paper evaluations. Hist 6180 was not offered in 2020-2021, because the instructor was on sabbatical and it was not possible to have another faculty member offer the class because of other departmental obligations. The course will be offered again in Spring 2022.

3)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	3	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	3	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Comment: There were a total of three students in Hist 6180 in Spring 2020; of those all three received grades of A or B on the electronic assignment. Hist 6180 was not offered in 2020-2021, as noted above. The course will be offered next in Spring 2022.

4)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Comment: A single questionnaire was returned in 2019-2021; the respondent rated the program as a 5 (excellent) in developing his skills in research, writing, and analysis.

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 2:

With a small sample size, firm conclusions remain somewhat elusive. The indices for this outcome are encouraging and suggest that the program is doing what the department intends it to do. The recruitment of more students for our concentration of Southwest Studies must remain our priority.

Student Learning Outcome 3:

Students will master the scholarly literature in their chosen field of concentration (History & Political Science.

NMHU Traits Specifically Linked to Student Learning Outcome 3:

- Mastery of content knowledge and skills

Means of Assessment for Outcome 3:

- 1) Faculty portfolio checklists (attachment 1) ask Graduate Coordinator to evaluate student mastery of the relevant scholarly literature for theses and 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:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%

Comment: A single student graduated in the period under review; his professional papers were reviewed, and the student’s work was rated as 4 (on a 5-point scale) for “Review of literature (completeness, critical thought).”

2)

Number of Students Meeting Criterion:	1	Number of Students Not Meeting Criterion:	0
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Total Number of Students Assessed:	1	Percent of Students Meeting Criterion:	100%
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Comment: A single questionnaire was returned in 2019-2021; the respondent rated the program as a 4 (very good) in assisting in his understanding of the literature of the field.

Interpretation of Results for Outcome 3:

With limited data available, few concrete conclusions may be reached. The most obvious point— noted above —is that the program concentration needs to recruit more students. The program also needs to identify ways to help students complete their degrees in a timely fashion.

Utilization of Results:

The faculty of the Southwest Studies/History & Political Science program have reviewed the numbers and have discussed concrete steps going forward; those discussions will continue. The recruitment of additional students must be a high priority. Because of the dislocations attendant upon the COVID-19 pandemic, efforts to attract more students have lagged, as have our discussions of means and methods. The development of a robust web presence remains a high priority. One bright spot is staffing. The History/Political Science component of the Southwest Studies program conducted a successful search in Spring 2020 and hired a new American historian, Dr. Luke Ritter. Because of the pandemic, Dr. Ritter had been teaching remotely from out-of-state but arrived on campus in August of 2021. He is currently teaching both face-to-face and remotely, and has undertaken several initiatives to better meet departmental and discipline needs. Unfortunately, a search conducted during the 2020-2021 academic year did not result in the hiring of a second political scientist; this search has been reauthorized and is underway. In the meantime, the offerings in political science are in part being provided by term and adjunct faculty. In our judgment, filling the vacancies in Political Science is essential for the viability of the program over the long term. This need is reflected in the current strategic plan of the History & Political Science Department, submitted in September 2021, and in our most recent budget request.

Changes to Program Based on Results:

As noted in earlier reports, the limited data available indicate that our students are meeting or exceeding expectations in the program; the students currently enrolled continue to perform well in most of the areas the department assesses. The program's

greatest problems remain in new graduate student recruitment and successful completion of the program, and the closure of campus has delayed initiatives designed to address these issues. We continue to work on new approaches to aiding students to complete the program and receive their degrees in a timely fashion. We continue to consider the development of a comprehensive examination option for this concentration as well as in our other graduate programs.

In a sense, the needs of the program go beyond the concentration alone. One of the other concentrations in the Southwest Studies Program—the concentration in Spanish Language & Literature—has been suspended for more than a decade, though it still appears in some university materials.

Retention Strategies:

Before students can be retained, they need to enter the program. Our primary focus going forward must be recruitment, and we have continued to explore new ways of attracting students even during the depths of the pandemic. The Southwest Studies faculty from the History & Political Science Department is attempting to develop new strategies to recruit students. Traditionally, the program—or at least our 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. It should be noted that many of the obstacles to recruitment facing the Southwest Studies: History and Political Science concentration are common to many of the graduate programs in the College of Arts & Sciences. The Graduate Council has discussed this pervasive series of problems and is attempting to develop a comprehensive strategy. Meanwhile, some progress has been made in the development of new promotional materials; program faculty will endeavor to work with University Relations to improve the website. We will continue to importune the administration for permission to fill vacant faculty positions, in order to shore up the undergraduate programs, and strengthen our ability to recruit and serve new graduate students.

Portfolio Checklist for Outcome Assessment Southwest Studies/History & Poli Sci

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 Southwestern prehistory, history, culture	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: _____

Mean Score: _____

Comments:

Survey of Graduating Students Southwest Studies Program

New Mexico Highlands University

Please help us to evaluate and improve the Southwest Studies 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^o _____.

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

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

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

	Poorly		Extremely Well		
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
*Developing a basic grasp of Spanish language	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?

(OVER)

2.4. How would you rate the Southwest Studies 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 Southwest Studies Program?

2.6. Looking back, are you pleased you chose to pursue a Master's in Southwest Studies?

Please explain.

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

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

Comments:

Please return this questionnaire to Dr. Linder in Douglas Hall N^o 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.