**Annual Departmental Assessment Report**

**Department or Program: Folklore and Public Culture, MA Program**

**Academic Year of Report: 2020-2021**

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**Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report**

The Folklore Program offers an MA (no PhD), consisting of two years’ of coursework and a final thesis of 60-120 pages or equivalent project in another medium (e.g. a video documentary, etc.)

The Learning Objectives of the MA program are that students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate mastery of Folklore scholarship.
2. Demonstrate effective oral and written communication skills.
3. Demonstrate ability to conduct ethnographic fieldwork on folklore topics and integrate research findings into speech and written presentations
4. Understand ethical issues and responsibilities especially in matters related to professionalism, data collection, and in writing and publishing scholarship.

**Section 2: Assessment Activities**

There are currently six MA students in their final year in the Folklore and Public Culture program. Because of the pandemic, five of these have petitioned to postpone their final term of thesis writing to summer 2021, and the sixth, although scheduled to defend and graduate at the end of spring term 2021, is still finishing. Thus the final products of all of these students are not yet available, and a full assessment is accordingly not yet possible. Nevertheless some preliminary assessment can be made.

All of the six students have passed all of their classes finished to date, and are on course to finish their spring term courses with good grades. This requires a full competence in Learning Objectives 1 and 2. Many of them have taken the 500-level "Folklore Fieldwork" class, and done independent fieldwork projects for that class, which assures mastery of Learning Objective 3. All six have taken and passed the required seminar FLR 681, “History and Theory of Folklore Research,” which assures mastery of Learning Objectives 1 and 4. Passing the final thesis, if the thesis is written as opposed to on video or other form — and all of the current theses are written — assures the written component of Learning Objective 2, and the accompanying defense provides evidence of the oral component of Learning Objective 2. The committee members of the six graduate students are confident in their ability to finish their theses satisfactorily, so although the finished products are not available for assessment at this time, there is no cause to think that the Learning Objectives will not be found to be met.

**Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis**

We are satisfied that the program's learning goals are being met. The challenges faced by the program, described below in Section 4, relate to other aspects of student experience.

**Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience**

As we have written in the undergraduate assessment, the biggest challenge faced by the program is the extreme reduction in the number of courses, due to a drastic reduction in core faculty. Where the program had 12 active core faculty in 2015-16, that has been reduced to 7 in 2020-21, including two on leave and one other teaching only one course. This necessarily results in a fewer number of courses available to graduates, and indeed there have been a number of complaints from the graduates. To try to increase our faculty size, we put in both a Hiring Proposal and a Target of Opportunity hiring proposal in 2020-2, but were not successful.

In the face of the pandemic, we did establish a graduate Zoom Writing Circle, and a series of professional folklorists who Zoomed in to offer career advice. We are also establishing a more systematic approach to giving incoming graduate students guidance on finding housing.

**Section 5: Plans for Next Year**

In 2021-22 we will attempt to improve the student education experience by putting in yet another hiring proposal, hoping to strengthen our course offerings. As we have no excess budget, particularly after the summer earnings were reclaimed by the Provost's office, we cannot undertake any initiatives that call for additional resources. Our Equity & Inclusion committee will attempt to devise ways to strengthen our diversity initiatives without further funding. Despite our attenuated ranks, the evidence shows that the program offers what it should to students, and that students are accomplishing the Learning Objectives as they should.