

ANNUAL REPORT

Tri-University Graduate Program in History

2007- 2008

David Monod
Director

Tri-University Graduate Program in History Annual Report 2007-8

The Tri-University Graduate Program in History experienced major changes in 2007-8. Among program achievements were an outstanding OCGS appraisal, PhD program reform, the creation of an MA pre-registration system, a new website, the formation of a Tri-University Graduate Students Association, new advertising and promotional initiatives and the first internationally-attended Tri-University History Program Conference. Applications for 2008-9 remained high but, even more significantly, acceptance rates hit a staggering 90% on first round offers, demonstrating that we are now the top choice school among our top-rank applicants. Each of these initiatives will be reviewed briefly below:

A. The Year in Review:

1. The OCGS Appraisal

The program was successfully reviewed in May/June 2007 and the appraisers offered high praise to the Tri-University: *“We are not examining an ordinary department nor an ordinary graduate program”,* they wrote, *“rather we are evaluating what might be termed a centre of excellence. The programmatic merging of these three departments has created a whole greater than its parts and it needs to be seen and nurtured as such. It is our opinion, that properly cultivated and supported, the Tri-University program could become one of the top graduate programs in History in Canada.”* The report contained many recommendations dealing with how to better promote jointness and enhance the program’s profile. Most significant among these were recommendations calling for more coordination in advertising and admissions, a new website and more effective marketing, a streamlined doctoral program and the harmonization of student funding. Much of the year under review has been spent implementing these recommendations.

2. The Revised PhD Program

PhD program revision was undertaken in order to streamline, simplify and focus the doctoral program in keeping with the recommendations of the OCGS appraisers. In July and August committees of students and faculty representing the three institutions discussed different aspects of program reform. By September a draft program was ready for presentation to the departments and it was revised at the departmental level and approved in October 2007. The new program received Senate approval at the three institutions early in 2008.

The new program requirements are modeled around a four year-to-completion degree and they include a number of novel provisions, such as a teaching practicum, a colloquium, a single year of field work and a streamlined major exam structure.

In addition to the revised doctoral program, significant progress was made in the area of course coordination. The three department chairs have decided for the first time to offer all major PhD fields each year and to solidify course offerings by agreeing on a rotation of fields and normal faculty compensation for major field seminar instruction.

3. MA Pre-registration System

Program jointness at the MA level has been limited by the fact that each university has a separate registration system with different registration dates. As a result, there have been structural obstacles which discouraged students enrolled in one university from taking courses at the others. In order to resolve this problem, the program has created its own stand-alone on-line pre-registration system. The new system allows students at the three universities to pre-register on the same day for courses at all three institutions. The departmental administrators will then reserve spaces in the courses for students from the different departments and will use the regular university registration period to fill unclaimed spaces. In this way, all Tri-University MA students will have equal access to all the courses at all three institutions.

4 The Tri-University Program Website <http://www.triuhistory.ca/>

In November 2007 the new website went on line. Designed by Michael Denny at the University of Guelph, the new website offers the program an exceptionally flexible tool for promotion and communication. Instead of operating merely as a channel, linking students to the individual departments, the new website offers students and applicants a one-stop guide to the entire program. Although we were only able to get the website up fairly late in the season, it attracted immediate and extensive attention. By April 2008, the website had received over 2,600 hits, 721 of them through Google or other off-campus search engines (the remainder accessed the site through one of the three university links). One striking measure of the success of the website has been that program faculty who have never before drawn significant numbers of graduate students are now attracting applications.

5. Advertising and Promotion

In fall 2007, the Tri-University program undertook its first multi-dimensional, centrally coordinated advertising and promotional campaign. This was in response to the OCGS report recommendation that the program fully coordinate its advertising. The 2007 campaign began with poster advertising and the preparation of a one-page handout for use in direct mailings and at university recruiting fairs. Fridge magnets advertising the program were made and sent to all Canadian history departments for free on-counter pick up. Because the campaign only got moving in the fall, there was little time to assemble email lists in time for electronic mail advertising. However, an email list of all history departments in English speaking countries was prepared and these were contacted for the email addresses of all university history clubs and their executives. An email advertisement was then sent out for distribution through all departments and clubs.

6. Tri-University Conference

The Tri-University Conference has been held annually for 14 years. It provides a forum for the program's graduate students and faculty to present papers and discuss their research. The conference also operates as an advertisement for the program, attracting visitors and potential students from area universities. This year the conference organizer (Alex Statiev, UW) placed the call for papers on H-Net (the leading website for academic historians) and although the advertisement was only placed in August, two months before the Conference was to be held, we received proposals from a large number of non-Canadian students and faculty. Ultimately, over one third of the papers were presented by students and faculty from outside the Tri-University program, half of those by international scholars, a proportion that we hope to further increase in 2008. Two scholars provided key-note speeches: Professor Francine McKenzie from the University of Western Ontario, who spoke on The GATT and Global International Relations 1947-1968, and Professor Geir Lundestad, University of Oslo and President and Director of the Nobel Prize Institute, who spoke on American-European relations since the end of the Cold War. The local media were present and the Conference received a warm write-up in the newspaper.

7. 2008-9 Admissions

The spectacular growth in applications which took place during Dr. Richard Reid's tenure as Director was solidified in 2007-8. For the 2007-2008 academic year, there were 171 applications (140 MA and 31PhD); for the 2008-9 academic year we received 169 applications (127 MA and 32 PhD). Strikingly, however, the acceptance rate on graduate applications rose between 2007 and 2008 from 60% to almost 90%. What this suggests is that we have become far and away the first choice among those students who applied to the Tri-University program. With this in mind, the goal for future marketing must be to broaden student knowledge about the program and in this way attract even more top quality applications. The program's goal is the luxury of choosing from among the very best candidates in the country.

8. Tri-University Graduate Students Association

In the spring of 2008, graduate students at the three institutions met together and drafted a constitution creating the first students association covering the three campuses. The association held its founding meeting in March 2008 and an executive was elected and the constitution approved. In April, the new organization hosted its first event, which included faculty presentations and a visiting lecture by Professor Steven Penfold of York University. The association appears to be off to a good start and, with appropriate direction, it promises to become a focus of inter-university activity and graduate student identification.

9. Success of Tri-University Students

It was another good year for the Tri-University's students. In addition to a large number of scholarship and award recipients, we currently have five SSHRC doctoral fellowship holders, one Provost Award winner (a University of Waterloo entrance scholarship for an outstanding female doctoral student) and two Brock Scholarship recipients (the

University of Guelph's most prestigious academic award), enrolled in the program. Tri-University students presented papers at international and national conferences and five articles written by our students appeared in scholarly journals in 2007-8. Several of our graduates secured tenure-track academic jobs including: Korrily Freeman (Saint Mary's University), James Wood (Trent University) and Tracy Penny Light (St. Jerome's University)), one received the award at Wilfrid Laurier University for the best TA at the university, another was awarded the Governor General's Academic Medal of Excellence at the Graduate Level and one of our graduates' theses, in published form, won the 2007 Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction.

B. Directions for 2008-9

1. Fund raising

External fund raising is a priority if the program is to continue to grow and attract the finest applicants. Among targets for fund raising are international student scholarships and fee-waivers, student research and travel fellowships and funds to support collaborative faculty research.

2. Doctoral Field Development

For a program of its size, the Tri-University is surprisingly narrow in its formal scope. The program is authorized to advertise in only 6 doctoral fields, which leaves many of the country's leading faculty unrepresented in our PhD field structure. In 2007, the War and Society Field was added and it instantly attracted doctoral applications, five of whom were offered, and have accepted, admission. A proposal for new fields in Cold War era history and Medieval history will be made in 2008 and the program will discuss transforming the "Race, Imperialism and Slavery" field into a "Global History" field. With eight doctoral fields, the program will be able to secure its place as a leader and innovator in Canadian graduate history education.

3. Advertising and Promotion

The program needs to press its advertising and promotional campaign. Plans call for an enhanced direct email campaign, a new brochure for applicants attached to the website and a multi-dimensional advertising campaign promoting individual faculty and interesting/niche areas of study. The program will maintain the direction of the 2007-8 campaign, which stressed the program's size (the largest history faculty complement in Canada) and diversity and it will continue to draw potential applicants' attention to the benefits of studying at three different universities at once. Advertising for the Tri-University conference (to be held in November) is already underway and this will provide a further instrument for marketing the program.

4. Common Funding Policy

Developing a single funding level within the program remains a priority. The Coordinating Committee will continue to work to try to close the gaps in the levels of student support between the three institutions. Thanks to the support of administrators at all three campuses, significant progress was made in 2007-8, but student support still

needs to be brought into closer harmony and a mechanism needs to be established to minimize the impact of sudden leaps or drops in funding at any one campus.

5. Student Travel between campuses

There is every reason to expect that this will become a major problem in 2008-9. The enhancement of jointness through MA preregistration and PhD field coordination will lead to increased inter-campus student travel. Unfortunately, because of increased demand and the liability issues involved in own-car travel, the program will from Fall 2008 only be able to refund student travel expenses when accompanied by bus or parking receipts.

6. Tri-University Conference

The 2008 Conference is currently being organized. Professor Roderick MacFarquhar of Harvard University has accepted an invitation to deliver the keynote address. The conference organizers will continue the process of raising the profile of the conference through international advertising and promotion. The conference theme for 2008 is “Imperialisms Old and New”