

VSCS Policy 101: History Program Review & Continuous Improvement (PReCIP)

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Introduction

This fifth-year review follows the guidelines for the “abbreviated assessment.” It assesses the fifth (final) learning outcome.

The VTSU History program combines faculty from the heritage institutions of Castleton University and Northern Vermont University. The program consists of five historians. Three teach from the Castleton campus while two are based on the Lyndon campus but also offer classes at Johnson. We offer courses via a range of modalities, including in-person, F2F+, hybrid, hyflex, and asynchronous classes.

AY 2025-2026 will see the launch of our first five-year assessment and continuous improvement cycle for the VTSU History program. Similarly, AY 2025-2026 will see the launch of a revised, streamlined BA.HIS. Therefore, the current report and the data on which it relies provide a snapshot of the past, but they will also serve as a benchmark for future assessments.

The merged program, 2023-2025

With the merger approaching, the historians agreed that we would transition to a shared 45-credit major based on the Castleton program, with some adjustments, and a minor. This process was smoothly completed; like the RPK group, we believe that our program is worthy of investment, and we are committed to working together to further develop and improve our major. ¹

Following the merger, the VTSU history program offered a solid core taught by all full-time faculty, and a broader and deeper array of electives. It is important to note that, although new students are enrolled in this program, most of our students were, and continue to be, enrolled in history majors that preceded the merger, so they are being “taught out” of the NVU or CU programs according to the older catalogs.

¹ RPK Group, *Academic Portfolio Recommendations for the Transformation of the Vermont State College System*, May 2021: 45.

Revisions to the program, AY 2025-26

In Summer 2024, we revised the program and the catalog in response to both Optimization 2.0 and internal program decisions. We have not changed the program objectives or the requirements of the major; we have streamlined it. The revisions were approved by the VTSU Faculty Assembly, Dean, and Provost, and the [new catalog is available online](#), to be launched in Fall 2025. The revision process and the outcomes are detailed under “Student Success and Retention Data Review,” and more details may be found in the appendices.

Student Success and Retention Data Review

Institutional data reflect the state of the program before the merger and in the first three semesters of the merged history program. We present the data below. However, given that in Fall 2025 a newly streamlined program will be in place, the data presented here are of limited value. We will compile and review student success and retention data at the program and course level more meaningfully when we assess the revised program moving forward.

Program Mission and Goals

VTSU’s Mission Statement:

“Vermont State University prepares all students for meaningful work and responsible citizenship by fostering their intellectual, personal, and creative growth in an accessible, caring, and inclusive community.

As Vermont’s regional public university, our technological, professional, and liberal arts programs engage with partners throughout Vermont and beyond to provide students with rich real-world learning while meeting the needs of our communities and the state. “

(<https://vermontstate.edu/about/mission-history-values/>)

“Program Description,” ([2023-24 Catalog, archived](#)).

“Vermont State University’s Bachelor of Arts in History offers students the opportunity to acquire insights into the ideas and events that shaped the beliefs, desires, practices, and institutions of the people of earlier societies and therefore to learn much about the contemporary world.”

This has been [revised for Fall, 2025](#):

“Vermont State University’s Bachelor of Arts in History takes a global perspective on the past. From a foundation in U.S. and World history, students take elective courses that examine in depth varied topics and regions including the United States, Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa. Taught by experts in their fields, the History program fosters the development of skills that are essential in any career, including intellectual curiosity, critical reading and writing, research, and public speaking. Studying history from a global perspective prepares students for life and work in the 21st-century interconnected world. “

Our revised program goals align more overtly with the career-readiness focus of the VTSU.

Enrollment Data

Institutional Data

Term	FA 2019		SP 2020		FA 2020		SP 2021		FA 2021		SP 2022		FA 2022		SP 2023		FA 2023		SP 2024		Total	
Program_Title	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE
History	60	60	52	51	40	39	40	39	49	48	46	45	40	39	40	39	36	36	35	35	438	430

Term	SP 2021		FA 2021		SP 2022		FA 2022		SP 2023		FA 2023		SP 2024		Total	
Program_Full_Title	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE	Count	FTE
C.BA.HIS: CU History (BA)	29	29	34	34	33	33	26	26	26	25	19	19	18	18	286	283
J.BA.HIS.SEC: NVU History w/Sec Licensure - Johnson (BA)	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2	2	25	24
J.BA.HIS.TEA: NVU History w/Sec Licensure - Johnson (BA)	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	1							20	20
J.BA.HIS: NVU History - Johnson (BA)	5	5	7	6	6	5	8	7	8	8	4	4	4	4	73	69
L.BA.HIS: NVU History - Lyndon (BA)			1	1			2	2	3	3	2	2	1	1	9	9
S.BA.HIS: VTSU History (BA)											8	8	10	10	18	18
Total	40	39	49	48	46	45	40	39	40	39	36	36	35	35	438	430

In Fall 2023, eight new students enrolled in the VTSU history major. At that time, 19 students on the Castleton campus and eight on the former NVU campuses continued with their previously enrolled majors. These students are still being “taught out” of their former majors.

According to data provided by the VTSU Registrar, in Fall 2023 and Fall 2024:

	Fall, 2023	Fall, 2024
C.BA.HIS (Castleton)	19	13
C.BA.HIS.HON (Castleton)	1	-
J.BA.HIS (Johnson)	6	1
L.BA.HIS (Lyndon)	2	2
S.BA.HIS (VTSU)	8	17
S.BA.SED (with HIS major)	3	5
Total:	39	38

Distribution By Campus:

Castleton	24	27
Johnson	10	6
Lyndon	5	5
	39	38

History majors who were also enrolled in the Secondary Education major (SED) are listed separately in the table above, because these students are not reflected in the institutional data. History is listed as the “second” major. We have placed the word “second” in quotation marks because students who wish to teach Social Studies at the secondary level in Vermont are required to double-major in Secondary Education and history. For the first two years of the merger, the title of the Secondary Education major was Inclusive Adolescent Education (SED). (From Fall 2025, the name has been changed to [Education: Secondary with Special Education \(BA.EDU.SSP\).](#))

In Fall 2023 and 2024, one student double-majored in the more traditional sense (BS.XSC.SDP with a second major in History). This student is included in Lyndon’s figures. We have no data on any other students who may have double-majored, with history listed as the second major.

Course completion

Institutional DFWI data were provided for Fall, 2024.

I populated the column “NG” with course modality information.



Course Name	A, A-, A+	A U	B, B-, B+	C, C-, C+	D	D-	D+	F	I	NG/ notes	NP	P	W	Total Enrolment	DFWI
HIS-1125-S01	2		4	3	1			3		F2F plus (in person students)				13	4
HIS-1125-S02								1		F2F plus – zoom for S01				1	1
HIS-1125-S03	3		2	2			1	2		F2F plus (in person)				10	3
HIS-1125-S04	0		0	2				1		F2F plus zoom for S03				3	1
HIS-1125-S05	13		2	1				1		Asynchronous				17	1
HIS-1135-S02	8		7	2		2	3	3		In Person				25	8
HIS-1135-S03	4		8	10	1	1	1	2		In person				27	5
HIS-1215-S01	8		8	1	1		1	3	1	i				23	6
HIS-1215-S03	5		2	0					5					12	5
HIS-1225-S01	11		9	3		1	1	2						27	4
HIS-1225-S001	10		4	1				1		VTSU Online (not a VTSU program)				16	1
HIS-1225-S002	14		1	2	1	2		2		VTSU Online (not a VTSU program)				22	5
HIS-2520-S01	8		8	2	2			3	1					24	6
HIS-3025-S01	1									F2F+				1	0
HIS-3025-S02	5		1	2						F2F+ (ie same class)				8	0
HIS-3056-S01	2		1	0					2	F2F+				5	2
HIS-3056-S02	1		3	0				1		F2F+				5	1
HIS-3125-S001	8		0	0				2		VTSU Online (not a VTSU program)				10	2
HIS-3155-S01	2		4					1	3					10	4
HIS-3155-S02	3		4					1						8	1
HIS-3165-S01	18		1	0				1						20	1
HIS-3165-S02	4		4	0					5					13	5
HIS-3330-S01			2					1						3	1
HIS-3330-S02	4		1	2				2						9	2
HIS-3710-S01	7	1	2	1				1						12	1
HIS-3735-S01	10		1	1	2									14	2
HIS-4601-S01	8		2									1		11	0
HIS-4601-S02	2													2	0

HIS-4602-S01	1													1	0
HIS-4740-S01	1							1						2	1

Notes

- HIS 4740 was offered as a tutorial.
- HIS 4602 is a Spring course that was needed in Fall 2024 to enable a student to complete their B.A. This was offered as a tutorial
- HIS 4602 – S02 was offered as a tutorial due to low enrollment. From F2025, HIS 4601 and HIS 4602 will be F2F+ classes, incorporating all VTSU history majors in one capstone two-semester sequence.

Almost every course we offer is part of the General Education program, and we welcome students from other majors who take our courses purely out of interest. *The data do not distinguish between the DFWI rates of majors and non-majors*, so it is impossible to tell how majors are faring from the data alone. As part of our continuous improvement plan, we will endeavor to identify and track majors' success and completion rates moving forward.

F2F+ courses appear as two separate sections, but they should be read as one course. For example, HIS 1125-S01 includes 13 in-person students, while HIS 1125-S02 includes the student who joined the class via Zoom. For this course, the rate is 30.7 %for the in-person section and 100% for the one student who took the class via Zoom. The rate for the class as a whole was 35.7%.

The scholarship is clear that DFWI rates (particularly DFW) in introductory classes are significant for illuminating underprepared students, such as minorities, and in our case, first-generation students. Where courses are not designed to support and provide scaffolding for these students, early failures and low grades become self-fulfilling prophecies. Those who fall into the DFW category in particular are at high risk of giving up and dropping out. Therefore, it is critical to pay attention to these rates in 1000-level classes.

Looking at the 1000-level history offerings at NVU and CU for Fall, 2018, Johnson reported that 80% of students earned a C or better in *World History 1*, and that 69% earned a C or better in *U.S. History 1*. At Castleton, the figures were as follows: averaging the two sections of the *Survey of Early U.S. History*, 86.5% earned a C or better; in the *Survey of Modern U.S. History*, 73% did so, and in *Ancient World*, the rate was 81%.

This compares with Fall 2024 (averaged rates):

Ancient World (replaced World History 1): over five sections (F2f+ and asynchronous), the DFWI rate was 22.7; 77.3% earned a C or higher.

Global History (replaced Word History 2): two sections (both in person): the DFWI rate was 25%, with 75% of students earning at least a C.

Survey of Early U.S. History : Two in-person sections: DFWI rate was 24% with 76% earning at least a C.

Survey of Modern U.S. History: Two sections of this course were taught by VTSU Online, which is not part of the VTSU program, although the data is included. In the one VTSU section, taught in person, the DFWI rate was only 15 %, with 85% achieving a C or higher.

Apart from the *Survey of Modern U.S. History*, our Fall 2024 DFWI rates are quite high. There are many possible reasons, but we do not have sufficient information to do more than speculate. We do not know how many majors succeeded in these classes versus non-majors. We will endeavor to track our majors more closely in the future.

Equally important is to track DFWI rates across different modalities. Our sample is too small to draw any meaningful conclusions, but it is suggestive that in the 1000-level F2F+ classes, DFWI rates were lower in person than for the “zooming” students. It may be because fewer students tend to enroll in the online section of F2F+ classes, but it warrants more analysis moving forward.

Retention data (Institutional Data)

Below are the data provided for the fall 2023 to fall 2024 retention rates of the VTSU history program. They do not include the retention rate of students who were in the process of completing Castleton and NVU programs. Therefore, these data provide a very partial snapshot. By the end of the next review period, all majors will have been enrolled in the VTSU history program; their retention data will be more helpful to review.

Program Code	Program Title	Student Count	Retained N	Retention %	Avg Credits Enrolled	Avg Credits Earned	Avg First Term GPA
S.BA.H HIS	VTSU History (BA)	8	5	62.50%	15.25	11	2.56

Completion data:

According to the institutional data, the total number of students who earned a history degree between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024 is 12.

This does not include the student who graduated with BA.HIS.HON. We were informed that there is no institutional data for students in the C.BA.HIS program who were seeking Secondary Education licensure (BA.HIS.SEC). Before the merger, the EDU licensure program was not a major, so students in that program are not identified separately in the data for C.BA.HIS.

The more detailed breakdown of degrees below is drawn from data provided by the Registrar. Students who enrolled in the new Secondary Education major (S.BA.SED) – and who are required to also major in History – are not included in this data.

Graduation data: Spring 2024

Degree	Spring 2024	graduated with honors
C.BA.HIS	6	1
C.BA.HIS.HON	1	1
J.BA.HIS.	2	2
J.BA.HIS.SEC	2	2
L.BA.HIS	1	-
S.BA.HIS	1	-

Since the merger, our history program enrollment and graduation figures have been steady, with a good proportion of students graduating with honors. However, there have been challenges in navigating the merger.

Challenges resulting from the merger

Naturally, any merger is challenging, as faculty who have worked within different academic frameworks for, in many cases, decades are required to combine programs and departments across multiple campuses. Moreover, it is not necessary to go into detail about the challenges facing department chairs and program coordinators in their efforts to build communities of trust where previous identities and long-held suspicions and beliefs about a lack of equity, the existence of a zero-sum mentality, continue to bubble, or burst, to the surface even two years after the formal merger.

The Social Sciences department chairs have been stellar moderators who have worked tirelessly to create a department where faculty from every campus can trust them to represent the entire department and its needs. Program coordinators in our department

operate within this context and work towards the same goals. Within history, our transition has been remarkably smooth. One reason is that we each respect the credentials and expertise of each other. We all share the goal of providing an excellent education for our majors; we all care about our students and are committed to continuing the close one-on-one relationships we have developed with students on our particular campuses, as well as extending these to students who study remotely with us. Another is that we are all committed to a global perspective, and we all agreed on the shared program template at the time of the merger. We smoothly negotiated a few core course titles and descriptions (specifically regarding the World/ Global history courses).

Unsurprisingly, however, we do face challenges in developing relationships with “remote” students, but we are committed, through advising, to encourage our advisees to take classes with a history professor they do not yet know, or in a modality with which they are unfamiliar. The physical distance between Lyndon/Johnson on the one hand and Castleton on the other means that it is impossible for faculty to teach in person on each other’s campus, and therefore to meet their students and develop the kinds of familiarity and trust that influence students’ choices. Evidently, this will take time, as students tend to take classes with professors they know. New students may be more easily persuaded to take courses in unfamiliar modalities and with faculty across our program. Admissions staff have assured us that they promote each campus equally; Student Success Advisors need to be brought into the loop.

We face challenges that result from curricular changes beyond our program that impact our major. The reduction of language courses is a great loss to VTSU in general, and to the history program in particular. This loss negatively impacts the students who seek to go on to Ph.D. programs, many of which require a second language. More generally, both international travel and language classes support our mission of facilitating the development of a global perspective among our students, as well as in our course offerings.

The loss of several majors and minors that supported our history programs in the heritage institutions is also strongly felt. One of the key minors lost was NVU’s Russian and Eurasian Studies minor, which had been very popular among NVU history majors. The loss of Global Studies is another example of a program that supported our global perspective. NVU and CU had had their own versions of the Global Studies major and minor, but neither survived the merger. However, the Global Studies minor has been reinvigorated by recent collaboration between Social Science and History faculty across the VTSU and will be launched as International Studies in Fall 2025.

Previously, as part of the General Education program, students were required to take a course in public speaking. At Castleton, this course was *Effective Speaking*. General

Education courses support the major as we support General Education students. This course was immensely valuable for many first-generation students in particular, who began their academic careers with little self-confidence. Our fifth outcome includes the ability to present research publicly. Without having to take *Effective Speaking*, it is possible that history students who are in the capstone sequence may have had no prior education in public speaking. Presentations are required in many courses, but few professors can build in time to develop both skills and confidence in this domain.

According to the CU HGEP department's PreCIP 2019 report, "at least part of our success in retaining ... students results from the dedication of our faculty to teaching First-Year Seminars." At that time, FYS faculty served as both developmental and academic advisors for the first semester. This enabled the development of close mentoring relationships and encouraged retention of FY students. Advising was very time-consuming, but it was also critical in terms of students' sense of belonging and their continuation at Castleton. Two history professors taught in this program, one offering a U.S. history survey that was particularly significant in retention.

The merger included revisions to the FYS program, now renamed Connections I. Compensation was reduced and advising first-year students was removed from faculty purview. This negatively impacted the mentoring role previously played by FYS faculty and within our program, reduced them to "mere instructors" in students' eyes. Currently, we have no faculty teaching in the Connections program.

With non-academic staff being made responsible for advising students in their first semester instead of the FYS/ now Connections I faculty, there have been challenges as the Student Success Advisers familiarized themselves with the various program requirements. However, it is of concern that some students who enrolled in the Secondary Education program were not – and still have not been – enrolled in the history program too. It is very difficult to track such students unless the students themselves inform us. One reason for confusion may be that the [program description for the secondary Education program](#) includes the term "Social Studies," but it does not mention history as the major that is appropriate for teaching social studies. We plan to clarify the requirement with the SSAs.

Finally, changes to the Education curriculum with the merger have also impacted our course offerings (or FTE) negatively. For example, the loss of the CU Multidisciplinary Studies (MDS) major has been significant. Previously, *World History 1* (now *Ancient World*) was part of the core of this major, and the course itself was somewhat revised to take these students into account. Now only EDU courses are required in [Education: Elementary with Special Education \(BA.EDU.ESP\)](#).

Strategies to track and improve student academic success, retention, and on-time completion.

Firstly, our revision of the history program (to launch in Fall, 2025) is intended to support students' academic success, retention, and on-time completion. In the Summer of 2024, the history faculty revised the history program in response to Optimization 2.0. In addition to responding to the Optimization 2.0 Scorecard, we took the opportunity to conduct a deeper, more thoroughgoing review. (See Appendices)

We streamlined our elective offerings to adhere to a two-year rotation, and to support our program goals and objectives.

We provide scaffolding via course levels:

- 1000-level courses are required introductory surveys in the core.
- Electives are offered at the 2000- and 3000- levels.
 - ⌚ 2000-level courses are regional or topical surveys and include the development of critical reading and writing skills.
 - ⌚ 3000-level courses are typically topical. They include a focus on historiography and critical analysis of primary sources.
- The capstone sequence is offered at the 4000-level.

Milestones:

- In order to enter the two-semester capstone sequence (HIS 4601 History Research Seminar), offered in the Fall, students must have completed at least 60 credits. Originally designed for seniors only, we have accommodated the Education program by permitting juniors to take the capstone sequence a year early and complete their B.A. requirements the following semester. They then student-teach in their final senior semester.
- Students must pass HIS 4601 in order to be accepted into HIS 4602 History Thesis Seminar.

We revised the Degree map and the online catalog page to guide students, Student Success Advisors, and double-advisors in the Education program more easily through our major requirements. These changes have been approved by the Faculty Assembly, Dean, and Provost, and will be implemented in Fall 2025. (See Appendices and the 2025-2626 [online catalog](#).)

Secondly, the 2019 CU PreCIP report on history noted, “[b]ecause students in History ... tend to declare their majors upon admission to Castleton, program coordinators should continue to meet with Admissions personnel prior to each recruitment year, as has been the practice over the last three years.” (4-5)

At the time of the merger, there was some confusion about the role that faculty might play in terms of recruitment. We were unable to meet with Admissions staff at that time, but fortunately, conditions have changed, and we have re-established a positive relationship with Admissions. We shall continue to build this relationship moving forward.

Student Outcomes and Assessment Plan

2023-2024 Catalog (archived)

Program Outcomes

1. Demonstrate advanced knowledge of a variety of historical events, ideas and individuals that have shaped the world through time.
2. Demonstrate the ability to read scholarly literature effectively, and apply the knowledge gained from that to an understanding of economic, political, social, cultural, and religious historical forces.
3. Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze, interpret, and synthesize primary historical materials effectively, identifying purpose and point of view.
4. Demonstrate an understanding of major historiographical ideas and interpretations, and the ability to apply those ideas to both secondary literature and the student’s own research.
5. Propose, research, write, and publicly present a substantial research paper that uses authentic and properly cited historical research to develop an original and historically significant thesis.

For this abbreviated fifth-year report, we assessed the fifth program outcome.

Direct Assessment

We developed the program outcomes so that, although each outcome is assessable individually, the first four provide necessary scaffolding for the fifth, which is the culminating academic objective of the program.

The historians agreed that the best way to assess the fifth outcome would be to evaluate the culmination of the history majors’ undergraduate career, the two-semester capstone thesis sequence, HIS 4601 *History Research Seminar*, and HIS 4602 *History Thesis Seminar*. Through two consecutive semesters, students receive close attention and mentoring as

they learn to develop and apply skills they have been practicing through their various courses in the major. We have not made it a pre-requisite, but through advising we endeavor to ensure that students in HIS 4601 have taken at least one 3000-level history course. This is difficult with our Secondary Education students who take HIS 4601 in their junior year. In such cases, students take a 3000-level course alongside the Research seminar.

In HIS 4601, taught each Fall, students write a unique, historically significant thesis proposal which demonstrates an understanding of historiography and the ability to conduct both primary and secondary research. The focus, however, is on locating and compiling sufficient relevant primary sources in order to write a compelling thesis proposal. The main goal of HIS 4602 is to write the thesis and then to present it publicly. In the process, students progress in their attainment of Outcome 5. Students receive extraordinary attention and mentoring through the entire year, and although some have described the process as “gruelling,” by the end, all agree that they have grown as historians – and professionally. As each cohort of majors is together for an entire year, they also develop a sense of community that is seldom seen in other history courses which welcome students from all majors.

There are two signature assignments in HIS 4602 *History Thesis Seminar*. The first is the written thesis and the second a public presentation. This is organized to emulate a professional conference. Students are arranged into panels of four or five, and they each have ten minutes in which to present their theses. When each student in a panel has presented, we have a Q&A session in which each student is asked at least one question by members of the audience. This has been Castleton’s practice for many years, and all history professors – and other interested faculty, staff, administrators, students, and family & friends of the presenters – attended. The presentation event is an ideal venue for assessment, given the presence of all or most of the historians.

In Spring, 2025, we sought to bring all of our thesis students together from across the VTSU, even though only those on the Castleton campus were in this particular section of the course.

One faculty member from Lyndon was able to join us, bringing one thesis student to join the Castleton presentations. Faculty other than the course instructor completed evaluations of each of the history thesis presentations.

The evaluation template is included in the history program Appendices, as is the Spring 2025 program. The evaluations did not affect the grades students received for their presentations, as they are intended as an assessment tool for the history program, not individual students.

Three faculty members (excluding the instructor of the course) evaluated the thesis presentations along four axes: Accomplished, Proficient, Developing, and Novice. The following presents the percentage of presentations that were assessed as proficient or accomplished:

Presentation style: professional & engaging	79
Presents historically significant question	71
Evidence of authentic secondary research	75
Evidence of substantial, authentic primary research	71
Develops a coherent argument	76
Presents a historically significant thesis	67
Response to questions	92
Overall Professionalism	88

These results do suggest that most of our majors have indeed accomplished key elements of outcome 5. There are limitations, however. The obvious limitation is that the evaluation is of a ten-minute presentation, not the written paper itself. The students each have only ten minutes to present their theses. Most of the students' time is devoted to the development and writing of an academic paper of approximately 25 pages in length. Only a week and a half was allotted to the preparation of the presentation itself. There was one rehearsal before the event.

As the 92% proficient/accomplished responses to questions suggests, however, when students were given the opportunity to expand on their work and answer questions about it, they did so very well. In the past, some faculty who had taught Effective Speaking to these students in their first year would attend the event to see the culmination of their own efforts to facilitate the development of skills of public speaking.

Because the presentations took place at the end of the semester, there was no time to meet as a program to review the evaluations and discuss strategies for improvement, particularly in the presentation of historically significant theses. Given that the written theses are signature assignments, we will also develop a strategy for the assessment of the papers as well as the presentations.

Indirect Assessment

As noted in the History PreCIP Report for 2019: "[T]o better evaluate all of a program's goals and outcomes, we will introduce discipline-specific questions to ask students on exit surveys by the time of the April 2021 HGEP departmental meeting." (5) Prior to the merger, both NVU and CU had exit surveys, but in Spring 2025, we developed a shared pilot exit survey (see Appendices for the template). The students who returned the surveys were

uniformly positive about the value of the program. One student reported being underprepared for public speaking, and a transfer student did not return the survey, explaining that he felt it applied more to students who had been with us for the full four years. Other transfer students did not share that view. It will be useful to revisit the survey (students complained that it was long) as we enter into the full five-year assessment cycle.

Program Review

As a liberal arts discipline, history prepares students to embark on a wide range of careers, including but not limited to those within the field of history. Our program actively supports the development of transferable skills that are in high demand with employers.

Community development among students in the major

Considering the need to develop more of a community between students across our campuses, from Fall 2025, HIS 4601 History Research Seminar (followed by HIS 4602 History Thesis Seminar in Spring 2026) will be offered by a Castleton-based professor (we have agreed to rotate the teaching of this course; for now, it is taught from Castleton). The course will be offered F2F+ to accommodate students from Lyndon and Johnson in addition to Castleton. Historically, this course has always been offered in person, via a tutorial when there are few students to accommodate. It is difficult to envision how to provide equitable support across campuses and modalities, particularly regarding the most challenging and significant sequence of courses history majors will take in their undergraduate career. The historians will review enrollments in the late summer and discuss how best to support all students. The outcomes of such discussions will be included in the next five-year assessment report. However, in Fall 2025 we took our first step.

A Lyndon-based professor was able to bring one history thesis student from Lyndon to the Castleton campus, where the student joined the Castleton students, to present his thesis publicly. The Castleton students were very excited to meet their peer and to welcome him to their campus. Unfortunately, due to the two-hour commute each way, the professor and his student had to leave directly after their panel presentation and could not participate fully in the event, which included three panels and four hours. We know that other programs use Zoom for their capstone presentations, but we value very highly the in-person experience of a professional conference for our students, as do they, and we will continue to deliberate on how to enable all history majors to participate in person.

Not only do we want our faculty to interact with students from across the VTSU, but it is our vision for our history majors to meet each other and to develop an identity as a community of scholars across the VTSU. Other than the thesis class-based presentation



event, most of our majors participated in the VTSU-wide Students' Academic Excellence Conference in Spring 2024, initiated by Dr. Strokanov in collaboration with Dr. Tobias (both history professors). The conference was held at Lyndon, and students from various majors across different campuses participated. This gave students the opportunity to present their work publicly and to learn about each other's research. Unfortunately, there was no time in the schedule to plan activities to enable students to get to know each other; they tended to remain in their own campus-based groups. However, it was an invaluable starting point to build community among both students and faculty from different campuses, as well as to promote scholarship. We hope to be able to offer this conference regularly.

Experiential Learning: Internships and International learning and collaboration

We encourage our students to engage in hands-on learning. These do tend to be campus-based or -directed, apart from study abroad experiences.

International Travel Courses and Study Abroad

Jack Taylor studied for a semester at Suffolk University, U.K., in Fall, 2024.

Bryon Noyes studied in Normandy, France, in Fall, 2024.

Hunter Day will study in Cork, Ireland, for AY 2025-2026.

International Academic Tours (travel courses):

We are hoping to encourage more Castleton students to join the mostly Lyndon- and Johnson- based students who travel with Professor Strokanov to different countries each semester. Recent tours:

Italy and France: 2023

Uzbekistan: October 2023, April and October 2024, April 2025

Georgia: June 2024

China: May 2025

Education-based internship:

Emma Patria is engaged in a Summer internship working with a public middle school.

Public and Community-based History Partnerships and Collaborations:

Haley Agan has both volunteered and served in formal Summer internships at the St Albans' Museum. Her history thesis was based on research in this museum, and she is currently enrolled as a McNair scholar, conducting further research on Vermont museums.

History majors have been actively engaged in the Granger House Grant project, [Hidden Histories](#), on the Castleton campus. Between 2021 and 2023, the history program, in collaboration with the anthropology, archaeology, and geography program, received \$493,265 in

grant support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Over the life of the grant, forty-five paid student interns worked on research projects related to the Granger House's archaeological and archival record. During the summer of 2022, the project funded a field school in the humanities. As part of the field school, interns spent half of their time participating in archaeological excavations at the Granger House site and half of their time doing archival research related to the home's past occupants. They verified that the home had a significant record of ownership by women. They also discovered that one of the home's owners had ties to antislavery politics. The field-school students gained significant experience with in-demand technologies including, Geographic Information Systems, ground-penetrating radar, 3-D printing, and virtual-reality software.

The grant also supported a museum professional who taught two museum studies classes during the spring and fall 2022 semesters, in which students developed plans for future exhibits. The grant also covered fees for consultants in historic preservation, and the project contracted with a Native American educator to speak to K-12 school groups.

The project also included public outreach efforts. More than five hundred third-through-sixth graders and seventy-nine educators received classroom presentations. Three-hundred forty fourth-through-eighth graders and fifty-seven educators also attended field trips at the Granger House site. Forty-eight community volunteers participated in archaeological digs. Students at the field school and in related classes opened the house for public presentations of their research work. More than one hundred visitors attended these exhibitions. The grant also funded the acquisition of equipment and infrastructure for the Granger House Museum's exhibitions, including interactive digital display cases.

Students serve as interns at the Calvin Coolidge library, to develop the Castleton archive collection. J.E. Kinney developed the catalog system for the archives, and Sierra Dunkley has served as an intern organizing and cataloging materials. She is actively considering a career in this field.

In another community engagement opportunity, Castleton-based historians and our geographer are collaborating with the Ira Historical Society to develop internships that will serve the society as they benefit our students.

Lyndon-based faculty have partnered with Samarkand University of Foreign Languages and Samarkand State University, History Department. We have regular meetings of the students. In April, 2025, together with the History Department of Samarkand State University, we participated in the Forum "EU-Central Asia." Lyndon and Johnson students



have benefited from this collaboration. We hope Castleton-based students will participate in the future.

Our majors are often among the student leaders on campus, often in addition to working to put themselves through college. Many are college athletes. Each year since the merger, history majors have served in the Student Government Association leadership, including the Vice-President of Academics on the Castleton campus in 2024-25. Evan Primeau was instrumental in organizing a conference that brought high school students to campus to learn more about college opportunities.

Students serve as RAs of residences, and work in many other campus jobs including the library and Academic Support. Several also serve as tutors.

Majors initiated the Historical Society (a collaboration with archaeology) and more recently, under the leadership of Hunter Dayl, reinvigorated the History Club on the Castleton Campus. Majors are engaged in many clubs and activities, including club sports, and some perform in theater and musical productions; one major represented the university at the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival in 2025. Perhaps necessarily, [clubs are campus – based](#), although we would like to see interaction between our majors on different campuses.

Community Service:

History majors volunteer to clean historical gravestones and markers (including the World War I memorial in Orwell, Vermont), and in the Ethan Allen memorial project.

Examples of History Scholarship:

In Spring, 2024, students from Lyndon and Johnson campuses participated in an International Student conference, which included students from France, Germany, Austria, Russia and the United States.

J.E. Kinney, A history honors major, developed his history thesis into an article now published in *Vermont History* in 2024 (“The Cruel Indifference of Time: The Evolving Public Memory of the Eighteenth-Century Fortifications of Rutland County, Vermont”). He was interviewed for the [Vermont Historical Society](#).

Hunter Day, Haley Agan, and Davin McIver are [McNair Scholars](#), conducting historical research to be presented publicly in Fall, 2025. Hunter Day has already presented his research as a McNair Scholar in Summer 2024 and he is enrolled in his second Summer as a Scholar.

Zackery Quesnel presented his thesis, described as an “empathy project” on World War 1 Veterans of Orwell, VT, in a public lecture on Veterans’ Day, 2024, as part of the [Soundings program, Fall 2024](#).

As noted elsewhere in this report, our majors present their capstone history theses publicly, listed [on the VTSU calendar](#).

National History Honor Society Phi Alpha Theta

16 students were inducted into the Castleton chapter of Phi Alpha Theta in Spring 2025. We are investigating the establishment of a VTSU-wide chapter.

Alumnae

History Professor Dr. Strokanov is working on a partnership with VTSU Alumni Association about International tours specially for Alumni. He is expecting to have the first such tour in Fall 2025 (November-December).

Graduate school:

Many recent graduates apply to, and attend, graduate school. Examples of relevant graduate programs include: Information Science and Librarianship; Archaeology; Secondary Education; Higher Education (Student Life Administration; Public Policy; History; and Educational Research.

Examples of universities where recent graduates have been accepted or have studied include Ohio University; U. Mass. Boston; SUNY Albany; Montana University; and the University of Aberdeen, U.K.

Recent alumnae careers:

Our graduates pursue a wide range of careers, making use of the skills they have developed through our program.

Our history graduates seeking positions as Social Studies teachers are typically successful. A student who graduated in Spring, 2025, had already been offered Social Studies positions at two Vermont high schools, with an interview at a school in Mass. Recent graduates have positions across Vermont and in neighboring states. Most teach high school Social Studies, but others have chosen careers in Special Education and Music Education. Several students have pursued careers as ski instructors, and others have careers in management and H.R. Recent graduates have also pursued careers in the military.

We ask students to share their post-graduate mailing addresses so that we may keep in touch and follow their careers. Many keep in touch and return to campus to visit us and their younger peers.

Continuous Improvement Plan

Looking forward to the next five years, we have the following continuous improvement priorities for the program.

- A. We will gather useful information, both quantitative and qualitative, of majors' success and completion rates at the course and program level through the scaffolded program. As part of our continuous improvement plan, we will identify and track majors' success and completion rates moving forward so that the DFWI rates can be analyzed more meaningfully. In other words, we need to collect data on majors versus other students in our classes (besides the capstone courses, HIS 4601 and HIS 4602, which are restricted to majors). We will collect data internally and seek the support of the registrar.

In addition, we will explore qualitative methods to obtain feedback from students regarding their experience of the revised program. For example, research suggests that more frequent offerings of popular courses support success, retention, and completion.

- B. We will create shared assessment instruments for the program outcomes 1 – 4 across the curriculum. As we establish new collegial relationships across the campuses, we will review our existing assessment instruments and agree to piloting shared assessments in the next five-year cycle. Similarly, we will review the syllabi of shared core courses and electives at the 2000 and 3000 levels, to ensure that the scaffolding we have built into the program is clear to students.
- C. We will continue to develop internships and other experiential learning opportunities. For example, we are in conversation with the Ira Historical Society around collaborative projects which will include internship opportunities. We will continue in our efforts to make our majors more aware of the opportunities offered by internships and other experiential learning, such as travel courses and study away or abroad opportunities.



- D. We will endeavor to build stronger connections between history majors on the different campuses. At Castleton, the History Club is one way in which faculty have already collaborated with majors, and we look forward to further opportunities. We are aware that with more majors being located on the Castleton campus, it is much more difficult for those at Lyndon or Johnson to participate in this kind of community-building. Certainly, students could imagine the club in the F2F+ modality, as Lyndon and Johnson students have done in their collaboration with students at Samarkand University. Currently, these opportunities have been restricted to particular campuses, but we will explore ways to strengthen interconnectivity.



APPENDICES

(submitted separately)

Student Outcomes Documents.

History DEGREE MAP AND MILESTONES
Curriculum and Learning Outcomes Crosswalk
Program Outcomes Assessment Matrix
E-Series Form

History program documents.

History Program Assessment Survey pilot 2025 (Exit Survey)
HIS 4602 Presentation Evaluation form 2025
History Opt 2.0 Responses to Score Card 2024
2025-2026 HIS Catalog Revision
History Thesis Presentations Program 2025