

DT: September 11, 2024

TO: Su Swarat, Senior Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, Accreditation Liaison Officer

FR: Eric Estuar Reyes, Chair and Professor, Dept. of Asian American Studies
Faculty of the Department of Asian American Studies

CC: Jessica Stern, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences
Carl Wendt, Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

RE: Response to Dean's Summary and Evaluation of the Ethnic Studies Option in Asian-American Studies (B.A.)

The Department of Asian American Studies (ASAM) completed a program performance review in AY 2023-24. The review included the Department Self-Study, External Review Committee visit, External Review Report, Department Response to External Review, Dean's Summary and Evaluation, and this Response to the Dean's Summary. The external review on February 16, 2024, was completed by Dr. Yén Lê Espiritu, Distinguished Professor of Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego, Dr. Donna J. Nicol, Professor and Chair of Africana Studies Department, California State University Dominguez Hills, and Dr. Eugene M. Fujimoto, Associate Professor of Educational Leadership Development. The Department acknowledges and concurs with some of the Dean's Summary and offers alternative perspectives below to address identified issues.

The Department acknowledges the work of the Dean's Office, external reviewers, University administrators, and the staff to help complete the program performance review. The Department is grateful for administrative support work throughout the process.

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ASAM manifests the mission and guiding principles of the California State University system and CSU Fullerton. CSUF serves the Asian Pacific Islander and South Asian American (APISAA) communities in Orange County, which is “home to the third largest Asian American population in California and in the United States. It is also home to the largest Vietnamese population in the United States.”¹ and is uniquely positioned geographically and academically to actualize the CSU’s mission by:

Serving communities as educational, public service, cultural, and artistic centers in ways appropriate to individual campus locations and emphases.

Encouraging campuses to embrace the culture and heritage of their surrounding regions as sources of individuality and strength.²

Further, the Department’s work directly aligns with “CSUF Strategic Plan Goal 1 - Enhance Support for Student Access, Learning, and Academic Success; in particular, Objective 1.2 Learning Experiences of the Fullerton Forward Strategic Plan - Provide equitable, engaging, and innovative learning experiences to foster students’ ability to apply the knowledge, skills, and cultural awareness gained through their academic programs.” The program performance review illustrates and affirms the Department’s commitment to align ASAM’s guiding principles, plans and actions, with both the CSU mission and CSUF strategic plan.

The Department continues to evolve and grow to meet the challenges of a changing University and society. Hiring three new tenure-track faculty in Fall 2021 effectively increased our tenured/tenure-track faculty by 60%. We are focused on supporting our junior faculty to promotion and tenure, and already one has earned early tenure by this Fall 2024. The increase in faculty lines has also enabled us to reestablish our department infrastructure to advise and support students, which had waned during the pandemic and while several tenured faculty were on leave.

The implementation of the General Education Area F Ethnic Studies requirement is another key internal driver for department transformation for the foreseeable future. The increase in FTES from Fall 2012 to Fall 2022 of 614% and the 700% increase in the number of minors since 2011 indicates the scale of the influence of implementing Area F. In response, ASAM is growing to manage and implement changes while fulfilling our central responsibility to provide productive learning experiences for student success. Through adapting and learning, the Department is in the process of transformative institutional change. ASAM emphasizes the External Review Report and Dean’s Summary observation that supporting ASAM’s progress, also fundamentally supports the transformation of the University.

ASAM is and will be utilizing the Program Performance Review insights to guide strategic planning and decision-making at faculty, committee, and department levels.

¹ <https://www.ajsocal.org/orange-county/about-oc/>, accessed September 10, 2024.

² <https://www.calstate.edu/csu-system/about-the-csu/Pages/mission.aspx>, accessed September 10, 2024.

Administration

“The value of ASAM and other ethnic studies departments is much more than the number of majors and graduates per year.” (Dean’s Summary and Evaluation)

ASAM concurs with the External Review Report and Dean’s Summary to measure department success beyond time-to-degree and numbers of major/minors. As the External Reviewers Report notes, “We see a misalignment of what ASAM contributes and how the department is being evaluated. Research has consistently shown that interdisciplinary ethnic studies produce many benefits, including students who are more academically, civically, and politically engaged, social justice-minded, and community-oriented. And yet, the criteria for evaluating ethnic studies continue to be narrow, relying principally on the number of graduate majors.” (5) More specifically, the Dean’s Summary suggests including “GE footprint” as a necessary part of evaluating a department. This misalignment also illustrates how historical institutional barriers hinder the department’s transformation to meet the emerging needs of a changing society. The Department acknowledges the need for data-driven decision-making and highlights the need to develop the capacity to support and implement new ways of consultation, consent and decision-making.

Action: ASAM continues to build capacity to develop alternative measures of department and student success. See below under Teaching also.

Recommendations:

- Request the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Planning to gather and include students’ second majors so that we may count all students who graduate with B.A. in Ethnic Studies Option in Asian-American Studies.
- Request to include GE footprint/impact as part of the evaluation of department performance.
- Request that administration acknowledge and address the need to build administrative capacity before changing expectations for departments and the roles and responsibilities of faculty.

Staffing and Human Resources:

The Department concurs with the External Review Report (3, 7) and Dean's Summary that additional faculty are needed to sustain ASAM's transformation. Even with additional faculty, our current faculty is not sufficient. Additionally, as noted, we have three faculty close to retirement due to not hiring from 2007-2021, and rank diversity has increased the need for understanding and management of faculty development and career trajectories.

ASAM also notes the importance of administrative staff and have included their input in the external review.

Action: ASAM continues to advocate for additional faculty lines. ASAM also is developing personnel standards to address new University Policy Statement changes and to clarify Department expectations for faculty baseline roles and responsibilities. The Department is learning how rank diversity affects shared governance and workload equity which informs overall administration development. ASAM has developed a baseline faculty line request and continues to advocate for new faculty lines.

Recommendations:

- Request College to work with the Department to advocate for faculty lines with the Provost's Office and Academic Affairs.
- Identify and approve funding for faculty lines that should be coming from the Division of Academic Affairs.

Governance/Planning and Policy

ASAM affirms the interrelated relationship between shared governance, faculty engagement and student success. All three reflect value-based practices that work when they are aligned. The Dean's Response does not identify shared governance directly, but the External Reviewers' Report emphasizes its importance for faculty well-being and retention, and importantly provides ASAM with a process to "guide intentional and proactive decision-making." (3) Shared governance requires the department to examine, review, and align governance with core values of the department with actual operational decision-making and long-range planning. ASAM affirms shared governance for how the department runs baseline operations, plans and develops the department, and identifies policies to guide the department in the future.

Action: Transparency, the chair and faculty are continuing high levels of transparency through intensive consultation and consent processes. Governance Retreat, the faculty plans to continue discussions started last year on department level decision-making in a Spring 2025 department retreat.

Recommendations:

- Provide additional support for capacity-building through funding retreats and external mediators.

Space and Facilities

ASAM concurs with the External Review Report (10) and Dean's Summary for the need for space. Sufficient space is needed to create productive office spaces for faculty and staff. Space is also needed to create accessible communal spaces for student, staff, faculty, and community partner gatherings. Also, ASAM highlights the External Reviewers' Report viewpoint on the use of Area F funding: "We also recommend that the Area F funding not be used for capital improvements. This was not the intent of those funds, and if used in this way, will negatively affect the intended growth and development of this area. Capital improvements are the responsibility of the university. We recommend consulting faculty and staff on the most effective use of Area F funds." (10)

Action: ASAM continues discussion on space planning and has identified faculty work on space as expected faculty workload into the future. Potential work may include cross-departmental committee work with Department of African American Studies (AFAM) and Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies (CHIC), as well as liaison work with administration. Preliminary conversations about office space and potential communal spaces continue from earlier conversations. Department chair continues conversations with Dean's Office and AFAM and CHIC chairs. Chair is in periodically discusses space availability and development with the Dean's Office and monitors the capital fund accruing from an annual set aside by the College of \$600k from the annual \$905 baseline state funding for ethnic studies departments since 2021.

Recommendations

- Form working group to guide next steps including transparency of shared information, and budget accounting, plans and spending of Area F funds
- Include AFAM, ASAM, and CHIC faculty in all discussions about using Area F funds for space.

Financial Management/Budget

ASAM acknowledges the importance of fiscal stability for department operations. Area F funding has provided resources for capacity-building, primarily through assigned time for faculty. However, Area F funding should not replace existing department baseline funding from Academic Affairs.

Action: ASAM continues to develop and standardize budget procedures in partnership with Dean's Office and Ethnic Studies Office staff, e.g. using previous years' expenditure patterns to develop an annual spending plan to guide the following year's budget activities.

Recommendations:

- Requests continued partnership with Dean's Office for transparent budget accounting.
- Requests support for adequate administrative staffing to manage budget at all levels.
- Clarify decision-making and management of Area F allocation held in capital fund for remodeling of new office/department spaces.

Collaborations and Partnerships: Community Engagement

ASAM highlights ‘hidden’ but critical department-level work in administration and planning that is needed to establish department sustainability. While not specifically identified, the Department highlights this work as crucial, and time-consuming for the Department’s success.

Action: ASAM, AFAM, and CHIC chairs continue discussion of collaborative work areas such as Area F coordination, curriculum, and budget/finance matters.

Action: ASAM has implemented a standing committee, Organizational Development Committee which is charged with developing and maintaining relationships with campus and off-campus partners. For example, the Committee engages with non-academic partners such as Asian Pacific American Resource Center and Asian American Pacific Islander Faculty Staff Association. These partnerships and relationship-building strengthens both the Department and the University.

Recommendations:

- Continue support for community engagement and development of capacity for community with partners, both on and off campus.

Teaching

Curriculum and Assessment Development

The Department acknowledges the issue of low numbers of degrees conferred and concurs with the Dean's Summary and External Reviewers' Report that advises more in-depth curriculum development. ASAM highlights the issues of the ratio of the number of service (i.e., General Education courses serving the entire University) to major courses, ratio between lower- and upper division courses, and the undesirability of ASAM devolving into a predominantly service/GE-providing department.

Action: Through planned curriculum review and mapping, the Department aims to develop academic discipline-consistent ways to educate our majors and minors and to measure student success. ASAM plans to review and revise our curriculum beyond Area F to increase the impact of the curriculum, attract new majors/minors, and improve the learning experiences of students. ASAM has obtained some intramural funding to support a comprehensive review of the complete structure of the major and courses offered. We plan to update our curriculum's currency and align the major/minor curriculum with Department guiding principles (goals, SLOs, mission, vision, core values). Additionally, due to the California GE Transfer Curriculum (Cal-GETC) implementation among the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California by Fall 2025, the Department's Ad Hoc Cal-GETC Committee is developing and revising ASAM's two affected GE courses during AY 2024-25. Through this short and long-term curriculum development work, the Department hopes to meet on-going uncertainties of future demographic changes and potential budget crises.

Action: ASAM also plans to collaborate with existing CSUF offices, staff and administrators who conduct outreach to high schools and colleges, e.g., University Outreach and recruitment and transfer student advisors. ASAM seeks to partner with existing campus structures, as this additional work may contribute to faculty burnout by asking faculty for culturally taxing work beyond the scope of the campus, work that goes greatly beyond existing norms of faculty teaching, scholarly/creative activity, and service.

Action: ASAM envisions and aims to develop a pro-active plan so that our Curriculum Committee and Assessment Committee work is more intentionally coherent, and seamlessly systemizes feedback from Assessment to inform and improve our Curriculum. Challenges include faculty capacity, expertise, and experience which ASAM is addressing through training and time for faculty and the department to change the focus from responding to annual crises and immediate needs to planning and implementing changes in our teaching with intention and thoughtfulness.

Recommendations:

- Continue support and partnership with campus offices for outreach and recruitment.
- Continue support for ASAM curriculum and assessment development capacity.
- Provide funding for and access to curriculum development specialists, e.g. for expert mediators at retreats.

Service

Faculty Workload and Department Leadership

The External Reviewers' Report and Dean's Summary both identify faculty workload and department leadership as areas of concern. The Department concurs and is engaged in several ways to address these challenges.

Action: ASAM continues its transformation from a "committee of the whole" when the department was five tenure-track faculty to a committee-based Department. ASAM has developed the Workload Service Assignment worksheet that identifies all work assigned by committee and by faculty. This facilitates transparent understanding of what faculty are expected to do including assigned time and provides a comprehensive view of department work to assess workload equity across committees and faculty, especially by rank.

Action: ASAM constituted an Ad Hoc Leadership Transition Committee last Spring to organize leadership development and facilitate onboarding of new chairs. The group creates institutional space and normalizes the expectation for the Department, rather than solely the chair, to manage the on-going department-level responsibility of ensuring there is a chair, which supports department stability and sustainability. This will also facilitate the development of Vice-Chair or other department leadership structures.

Recommendations:

- Requests the University review and revise expectations of department chairs.
- Requests continued support for leadership development.

Scholarship and Creative Activities

The Dean's Summary acknowledges the value of ASAM is more than just as a service department. More specifically, the External Review Report suggests the University to be "attentive to foster the intellectual growth of the department, so that it does not become primarily a service department." (5) ASAM emphasizes the need the University and department to assist faculty's achievement of their intellectual and creative potential.

Action: ASAM has provided support for faculty scholarly and creative activities through funding activities that exceed annual professional development allocations and plans to restart semesterly 'lunch talks' that provide opportunity for faculty to share and discuss their work. The Department is encouraging newer tenure-track faculty to develop courses directly related to their intellectual and creative interests. This interleaves faculty teaching, intellectual, and creative work and adds to ASAMs uniqueness and impact. Updated curriculum will then also reflect current faculty interests and the very different societal context of today.

Recommendations:

- Continue support for faculty intellectual and creative development including increasing sabbatical leave support.

Conclusion – Alignment and Partnership

The Program Performance Review has identified key areas of concern. ASAM acknowledges these areas and provides recommendations address issues raised in:

Administration

- Staffing and Human Resources
- Governance/Planning and Policy
- Space and Facilities
- Financial Management/Budget
- Collaborations and Partnerships

Teaching

- Curriculum and Assessment Development

Service

- Faculty Workload and Department Leadership

Scholarship and Creative Activities

Even before the institutionalization of the Ethnic Studies General Education requirement, the Department of Asian American Studies was a critical part of CSUF. ASAM provided and continues to provide learning experiences that foster student imagination and success, community engagement and experiences, and promotes transformative change and social justice. With Area F, ASAM is part of the transformation of the University that seeks to address the complexity of today's society through supporting a wholistic learning experience of our students beyond whichever major or minor a student may choose. ASAM aligns with and realizes CSUF's strategic goals and CSU mission. ASAM looks forward to working in partnership to continue deepening alignment of guiding principles from all levels to enable ASAM to grow, transform, and thrive.