

California State University, Fullerton

PROGRAM PERFORMANCE REVIEW

(PPR)

External Reviewers' Report^[1]

Program Performance Review (PPR) external reviewers are encouraged to access the [Program Performance Review Guidelines](#) prior to conducting the review. The external reviewers' report should comment on the **strengths, challenges, and recommendations** for each of the seven report sections identified in Section 6 of the guidelines ("Content Requirements and Elements of the Self-study") and any other observations they find significant. The following template is provided to help structure the report, but the external reviewers may follow different report structures if desired.

Introduction

Reviewer Names:

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Overview of the review process:

The Program Performance Review (PPR) process is guided by UPS 410.200 under the guidance of Dean Jessica Stern and Associate Dean Carl **Wendt**. Asian American Studies (ASAM) Department Chair Dr. Eric Reyes and Assistant Professor Dr. Davorn Sisavath facilitated the writing of the Department self study that was reviewed by the Dean, Associate Dean, and members of the PPR team; as well as the Review Team visit on February 16, 2024.

The Review Team visited with all members of the Department (minus one faculty **[Eliza Noh]** who was out of the area at the time of our visit), including faculty both full and part time; staff members; students; as well as the Dean and Associate Dean. We engaged with seven tenured and tenure track faculty. We interviewed them as an entire faculty group; as a group of four tenured faculty; a group of three tenure track untenured faculty; as well as each person individually. We also interviewed a sample of lecturers in the department; two staff members; and a group of current students, including a transfer student, Asian American Studies majors and minors, and others active in relevant student organizations.

I. Department/Program Mission, Goals, and Environment

Strengths:

A leading Department of Asian American Studies in the CSU, ASAM is a dynamic and vibrant community of teacher-scholars who produce knowledge on, teach about, and serve Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian American communities. Community engagement is central to the department's mission whose goal is to achieve and sustain social justice for APISAA communities, especially those in Orange County. The department is multidisciplinary in its approach to research and teaching, with offerings in psychology, history, cultural studies, women and gender studies, and public health. We are impressed by the three new hires for their excellent research, teaching, and service, which have contributed to the vibrancy of the department.

We found evidence of a good working environment, with senior faculty appearing to welcome ideas from the junior faculty, and with the faculty striving to establish a set of shared core values, to create a "humanizing environment," and to practice "intentional communication."

Challenges:

We are concerned that the expectations of ASAM faculty to institutionalize the Area F requirement are misaligned with the department's existing capacity, and that this misalignment can transform the department from being a well-regarded academic department of Asian American Studies to being primarily a provider of DEI services to the university. Moreover, although the existing chair, by all accounts, has done an outstanding job, the chair position remains unsustainable. We concur with the department's assessment that the misalignment of University expectations of what a chair can do and the actual capacity of the chair in a small and under-resourced department can create a cycle of burnout and disillusionment. The position remains too vaguely defined and enables excessive exploitation of chair labor, making it difficult for the department to create a succession plan. With three new untenured faculty, and an outgoing chair, the department needs to develop a shared governance structure to guide intentional and proactive decision-making.

Recommendations:

The administration needs to provide ASAM with an adequate number of faculty and staff in order for the department to implement the AREA F requirement. At the departmental level, we encourage the faculty to clearly outline the work of the department, and the expectations of the baseline roles and responsibilities of the faculty; to establish a shared governance structure and decision making policy; and to develop the faculty for leadership positions. We recommend the creation of a vice chair position to assist with the chair's responsibilities and to be prepared to succeed the chair. We also recommend increased incentives to make the chair position doable and more attractive to current faculty, such as additional release time.

II. Department/Program Description and Analysis

Strengths:

ASAM produces knowledge on, teaches about, and serves Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian American communities, with a special focus on local communities in Orange County and the larger Southern California region. The scholarship of the faculty, especially the untenured faculty, reflects the priorities and trends in the discipline, centering critiques of power and work for transformative justice. The new courses in the curriculum also reflect new trends in the field and student interests, with topics such as war and militarism; art, leisure, and food cultures; community and identity, and placemaking. We note the faculty's commitment to community-engaged learning, a cornerstone of a CSU education, as reflected in their place-based pedagogies, such as service-learning with local community partners and course topics on communities in Orange County and Southern California.

*The department would like to add this text: "ASAM has revised one course (101) and created two courses to create a series of courses that fulfill GE Area F. 101 and 202 are currently scheduled, while the third 303 will be further developed and taught based on our experiences teaching 101 and 202 in the near future."

The department has made significant contributions to CSUF general education by developing two new academic courses to fulfill the GE Area F Ethnic Studies requirement, and one new course to fulfill GE Area E. These courses have been well attended and well received. Since the last departmental review in 2011, student demand for ASAM offerings has increased. Since the introduction of Area F, ASAM has met or exceeded enrollment targets. Once CA AB 101 takes effect in AY 2025-26, ASAM plans to recruit and market toward students and counselors about the major from high school feeders in Orange County, which is anticipated to increase ASAM major enrollments among First-Time Freshman regular admits.

Challenges:

Although the Area F courses have generated a lot of student interest and enrollment, the department needs to develop ways to transform student interest into majors, and to balance the teaching needs for the lower-division Area F courses with the faculty interest in teaching upper-division courses in their research areas. Also, ASAM's coordination with the other two ethnic studies departments is uneven, often adding to the department's and chair's workloads.

Recommendations:

We see a misalignment of what ASAM contributes and how the department is being evaluated. Research has consistently shown that interdisciplinary ethnic studies produces 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. We encourage the administration to create more appropriate criteria to better capture the contributions of ASAM to the university, including properly valuing student mentorship and community work in faculty reviews, and considering the overall number of students that the department serves, and not only the number of majors. The administration also needs to be attentive to foster the intellectual growth of the department, so that it does not become primarily a service department. We recommend the department develop a rotating schedule assigning lower division courses to faculty that would allow for balance in full time faculty teaching in upper division courses as well.

III. Documentation of Student Academic Achievement and Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes**Strengths:**

The Asian American Studies (ASAM) Department has established an assessment committee with defined roles and responsibilities for each member. Annual assessments are now an embedded practice in the department. They have established a system for refining the collection of data and use multiple forms of data to assess student learning including quizzes, papers, and creative work. In their most recent assessment of PLO #2, the assessment of student work produced in courses at the 200, 300, and 400 levels show students display increased or improved critical thinking and analysis skills regarding Asian American history. Finally, the ASAM faculty plan to incorporate the use of indirect assessment measures such as an exit survey for graduating ASAM majors and minors. Among the greatest strengths of the program, from a student academic achievement perspective, is the high graduation rates of ASAM majors and minors and their post-baccalaureate progression into graduate school, and success in a wide variety of career fields.

Challenges:

It is unclear how assessment reporting is disseminated to the rest of the faculty for feedback and input before, during, and after the assessment is completed. Likewise, it is unclear whether students are involved in the assessment process.

Recommendations:

We recommend increasing the size of the assessment committee to three faculty (possibly a lecturer faculty member who are compensated through a stipend) in anticipation of the increased workload of assessing large-enrolled courses like ASAM 101. We also recommend involving students in the assessment process by way of writing a reflexive essay about their learning and engagement through ASAM in their upper-division core courses, either ASAM 307 or ETHN 490.

IV. Faculty

Strengths

The ASAM faculty are dedicated teacher-scholars who have contributed to the university, profession, and local communities. The senior scholars are experienced and seasoned faculty who are dedicated to the vision of the department. The three most recent hires are vibrant junior faculty with active research and teaching profiles. The junior faculty have been central to the department's standardization of Area F GE's required course. There is high morale among the junior faculty who expressed that the department has enabled them to grow as scholars and teachers and has given them the lead to shape committee work. They have also received "tremendous" support from the chair and from Professor Yee on tenure preparation. All praised the current chair for his "intentional" and "thoughtful" leadership, for creating a space in the department where the faculty felt they could ask questions, and for organizing governance retreat to build morale and to create governance structure for the department. The chair's organizational skills have also enabled faculty to engage meaningfully in department meetings and remain focused on their work towards department goal. He has also protected the junior faculty from external pressure and the revolving administrations.

Challenges:

The faculty expressed concerns about their workload, which has been increased significantly due to the institutionalization of the General Education Area F Ethnic Studies Requirement. This increased workload has highlighted the importance and necessity for sustainable department development. Moreover, it appears that the department has little control over the implementation of Area F; the priority has been to fill seats. We are also concerned that the untenured faculty are unduly burdened with teaching the GE Area F courses and thus have fewer opportunities to teach upper division courses in their research areas. The workload is high for all faculty, but is particularly challenging for the junior faculty who expressed that they are “at capacity” and feel “overloaded” with teaching and service work. Finally, the department needs a clear succession plan and training for the next department chair. We recommend the Dean’s office take a lead in collaborating and supporting an agreed upon succession plan.

Recommendations:

We strongly recommend that the administration considers providing ASAM with additional faculty to meet the department’s growing responsibilities to the students, campus, and local communities. The faculty is at capacity; the department currently has 8 faculty but needs 12-15 faculty to grow the major, to serve the local communities, and to contribute to scholarship--all the goals that the administration expects the ASAM faculty to meet. With at least 3 faculty members close to retirement and the increased need for faculty capacity due to the statewide Ethnic Studies requirements, the department anticipates needing to hire 3-5 faculty members in the next 3-7 years. Additional faculty members are needed for the department’s sustainable growth and stability. Internally, we recommend that the department develops a leadership pathway, such as creating a vice chair position with clear duties, in order to have a smooth leadership transition. We also believe that clear guidelines about workload distribution and departmental operations would enable the faculty to sustain the collegiality and productivity that they sincerely want for the department. Continued attention at the College and department level to ensure retention of tenure track faculty is crucial.

V. Student Support and Advising

Strengths:

The ASAM advising structure has changed and adapted over time. For the better part of ten years, major advising was done solely by the department chair until 2020 when the department moved to a peer (recent alum) and part-time lecturer advising structure which utilized online advising and in-person advising socials. With the COVID-19 pandemic, advising and submission of advising documents moved totally online. In 2022, with the arrival of the new tenure-track hires, the advising system was redesigned to form an advising committee consisting of two co-advisors who meet students online and in-person by appointment. These co-advisors also conduct grad checks, monitor students' progress through the major, recruit students through orientation sessions and other events, monitor a dedicated asamadvising@fullerton.edu email to respond to student questions and encourages students to take part in a variety of co-curricular programs to increase their learning and career readiness. The current advising structure divides the advising responsibility equally so that the workload is not overwhelming for a single person and with the innovation of an advising email address, students can be sure they can get the support they need. With the addition of tandem advising offered through the College of Humanities and Social Sciences success centers, students needing general information about ASAM can use those resources as well.

The ASAM Department should be applauded for their work in developing activities that extend student engagement and learning outside of the traditional classroom including a robust service-learning and internship program led by Dr. Yee; faculty mentoring of students who present their research at the Asian American Studies Association conference; scholarship co-published with students; departmental involvement with the formation and continued success of Asian Pacific American Resource Center (APARC) and its programming. Dr. Nguyen's innovative study away program in Little Saigon; and the awarding of High Impact Practices grants by Dr. Noh and Dr. Reyes.

Challenges:

In conversation with students during our site visit, it was clear that students felt supported and encouraged to become involved in AAPI student organizations, the APARC events and programs and co-curricular activities offered by ASAM faculty who often serve as faculty advisors. This type of advising can become taxing because it involves mentoring young people who are unfamiliar with how to navigate the university bureaucracy, sometimes have personal issues which impacts the work, and takes time away from required teaching and research needed for tenure and promotion. It is important for university leaders to recognize

how these outside activities support what happens in the class but also impacts the career trajectory of ASAM faculty and thus can lead to significant cultural-identity taxation (see the work of Nicol and Yee, 2017, for an explanation of cultural-identity taxation).

Recommendations:

We recommend retaining the faculty advising committee structure as is but it needs to be made clear that tandem advising in the HSS Success Center is not a substitute for faculty advising in the major. Tandem advising should serve as a supplemental advising resource.

Regarding ASAM faculty involvement with APARC events, mentoring students working on publications and conference presentations, study away and other high impact practices, we recommend university leadership track the service activities of its faculty and work to either support ASAM faculty with additional course releases for service projects that dovetail into faculty research or teaching and/or work to equalize the service workload of smaller departments like ASAM by making sure large departments service workload is similar in size and depth.

VI. Resources and Facilities

Strengths:

We see the co-location of the ASAM department with the other ethnic studies departments (African American Studies and Chicana & Chicano Studies) as highly beneficial for purposes of inter-ethnic collaboration, camaraderie, partnerships and effective curriculum development. The common degree structure currently in place and the intersectional issues that these departments face make it highly desirable to be located in close proximity with each other. The current office space is centrally located on the campus making student access to the office an important asset.

Challenges:

While the co-location with related departments and being centrally placed are advantages, the current space is wholly inadequate for the effective daily operations of the department and perhaps in legal violation of required protocols. For example, part time faculty do not have office spaces and instead share cubicles. In some instances this may be adequate, but currently student advising occurs in open areas where privacy is crucial for effective advising,

as well as compliance with FERPA regulations that limit sharing of student information. There are 60 part time faculty needing to work in the current space. Fully $\frac{1}{3}$ of these faculty have no space to do their work.

Recommendations:

We recommend moving the department (and its ethnic studies collaborators) to a significantly larger and centrally located space that reflects this group's contributions to the students and campus as a whole. This should include private office space for any student advising that is occurring, as well as increase if working space available for all part time faculty. 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.

VII. Long-term Plans

Strengths:

With the impetus provided by state legislation to require Area F courses for students, enrollment growth has been significant. This has led to much needed emphasis on diversifying the educational foundation for all students. Ethnic studies departments have always been the disciplinary experts that campuses rely on in these areas. The placing of ethnic studies departments at the center of this effort to transform the requirements for all students is a vital and long overdue recognition of the work of ASAM and the other ethnic studies departments. In order to fulfill their potential in this area, however, resources are required. The PPR self study comments on the need to remain "fully state-supported" while being open to external funding. We view this as crucial for long term sustainability.

The department plans to continue to develop curriculum and teaching for the current Area F requirements. Further, with ethnic studies courses required in high schools and community colleges in the state, the department is planning to increase and develop collaborations with these institutions to create a pipeline for students through the CSU. This outreach work is student centered and necessary for the department to undertake. Providing resources to engage in this outreach work is highly recommended.

Plans to further develop and implement student assessment are in the works, including exit surveys, which will provide necessary feedback to ensure program and curricular responsiveness to student and community needs. Involvement of lecturers and students in the assessment process was mentioned earlier in this report.

The implementation of these plans promises to keep the ASAM program at the forefront of ethnic studies efforts in the CSU. The projections of the need for increased tenure track faculty appear to be supported by the enrollment needs, as well as the potential for continued growth. The hiring of graduate and undergraduate student assistants can be an important element of this effort as well.

Challenges:

Resource allocation issues are generally challenging with many competing needs. Space issues are generally contentious and difficult. Receiving necessary input from the main stakeholders is a necessary element but is also time consuming. Based on our visit, the case being made by ASAM for increased space is compelling both logistically, legally, and politically.

The challenge of creating partnerships at P12 and community college settings is at times dependent upon the functionality of the neighboring institutions. The challenge of curriculum development, assessment upgrades, succession planning, and leadership development can be dependent on adequate training, time, and incentive for faculty take on additional roles.

Recommendations:

The challenges are many, but not insurmountable if campus leadership recognizes the need for an abolitionist turn that would provide needed resources as identified; transform the assessment and resource allocation structure to reflect the actual human, community, and student centered work that is occurring in ASAM and related departments.

Our hope is that the campuses such as CSUF will recognize the need for this transformation and institutionally prioritize the needed staffing of both faculty and classified staff; the student centered and legally required office space to effectively advise and continue to build intra and inter ethnic community; fully support the curricular, infrastructural and human needs of this department; this would then allow CSUF to take a lead in building a transformed campus community that is less reliant on and dependent upon the racial capitalist structure

and allow prioritization of the development of a humanistic, culturally relevant, and dynamic ecology, with ethnic studies (including ASAM) central to this development.

The opportunity is now to develop effective, transparent, and grass roots led movements to take back the university from the privatized incursion and extreme budget cuts that have led to the steep tuition rise and continued marginalization of some of our most humanistic and student centered programs such as ASAM.

They are a model of how we should be doing our work and deserve much needed support from the CSU and from CSUF. The members of this PPR Committee unanimously agree that the recommendations in this report will benefit not only the ASAM department, but CSUF and the CSU System as well.

VIII. Other Comments

- Our team had the opportunity to meet with departmental support staff and it was clear that while they enjoyed working with ASAM department faculty, particularly with chair Dr. Reyes, their working conditions are not conducive to their effectiveness on the job or their long-term growth as a professional. Staff reported that 7 years ago, there were 28-32 faculty in the ethnic studies area. Today there are 76 faculty, with no increase in staff. As noted in section VI regarding facilities, staff expressed deep dissatisfaction with the configuration of the space they currently reside. Additionally, however, the low pay relative to their responsibility for three departments makes it difficult to retain staff. The lack of chair on-boarding and training increases the workload for the staff without a commensurate increase in pay and benefits. We recommend that the university leadership work to address the facilities crunch and right-size the staff workload by hiring two additional administrative support assistants. Further, the staff would like to see staff professional development training in person, not just on-line.
- The CSU as a system and CSUF as a university have to decide if and how they want to support Ethnic Studies departments to ensure their success. The existing model that relies on a numerical measure matrix is insufficient to account for the value of Ethnic Studies that goes beyond the number of majors, notably its role in preparing a large number of students through the Area F courses to address key issues of inequality and social justice in U.S. society.

[1] Developed by the Academic Senate Assessment and Educational Effectiveness Committee, May 2023