

African American Studies Department
Chair's Response to the
Program Performance Review External Review Team Report

I am happy to write this response to the very encouraging and helpful report prepared by the African American Studies Department's External Review Team. During their visit on February 9, 2016, team members Leigh Raiford (Chair of African American Studies, UC Berkeley), Jesse Mills (Chair of Ethnic Studies, University of San Diego), and Eileen Walsh (Chair of Sociology, CSUF) met with Dean Sheryl Fontaine, Associate Dean Lynn Sargent, African American Studies tenure-track faculty and lecturers, undergraduates, and Ethnic Studies support staff and faculty members Eliza Noh (Asian American Studies) and Alexandro Gradilla (Chicana/o Studies). At every meeting, the External Reviewers asked thoughtful questions about the program, listened carefully to students, faculty and staff, and offered excellent suggestions for the coming years.

The External Review Team Report contains the following six recommendations for the department, along with fourteen recommendations for the University and Administration. I have shared the report with the African American Studies faculty, and we concur with all of the team's recommendations. I will share the department's collective response to each of the departmental recommendations below.

Recommendations

1. The External Review Team recommends that we generate and adopt departmental by-laws to clarify responsibilities, policies and procedures of the Department. We will consult other small departments and programs (such as Chicano Studies, Asian American Studies, and Women and Gender Studies) to see how they have incorporated bylaws into their department cultures.
2. We strongly agree with the External Review Team's recommendation that we create a strategic hiring plan and formalize and present to the Dean plans to hire faculty in areas of carceral studies, visual culture, and black entrepreneurship. We have submitted such a hiring plan, and hope to be able to pursue one of these searches within the next two years.
3. We strongly agree with the team's recommendation that we continue to provide enriching opportunities for our students. With this in mind, we will be holding our second annual Faculty-Student End of the Year Celebration this spring. Now that we have established the Student Scholars of African American Studies Organization, we will work with them to create research symposia and professional activities for students. We will take steps to connect our majors and minors with alumni and we

will create the kind of programming that better demonstrates the range of career opportunities available to those who pursue this program of study. And we will also collaborate more intentionally with the African American Resource Center and the Black Student Union.

4. The committee asks that the department re-examine our course offerings and scheduling practices. We have been carefully balancing the need to increase enrollment with the desire of faculty and students to expand our offerings. With that in mind, we have been scheduling our classes very deliberately. We are also adding new courses to the curriculum and strategically reviving inactive courses. For example in fall 2016, we will be offering the long-dormant AFAM/POSC 317 (Black Politics) as well as a new special course on the Black LGBT experience (AFAM 463s). These classes will speak directly to student demand for courses on contemporary social and political issues, and, hopefully draw additional students to the program.

5. The External Review Team suggests that we continue to reflect on the department's ideal institutional situation and status. We concur with this assessment and we plan to continue considering all the possibilities as we continue to move forward.

6. The team believes that the department needs to prioritize its financial needs and pursue support from the administration to meet those needs. We agree with this assessment.

I appreciate the time and careful attention Professors Raiford, Mills and Walsh paid to the African American Studies department during their visit. I am pleased to hear that the External Review Team found the African American Studies Department to be a "strong academic unit" committed to the success of ES-AFAM majors, AFAM minors and other students of color on the CSUF campus. And I am especially happy to see the hard work of AFAM faculty - both inside and outside the classroom - formally recognized by the External Review Team. The suggestions and recommendations contained in their report offer excellent pathways to follow as we continue to grow and strengthen African American Studies in the coming years.