



College of Humanities and Social Sciences
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To: Su Swarat, Director of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness

From: Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Subject: Dean's Evaluation: Department of African American Studies Program Performance Review

The Department of African American Studies completed a comprehensive Program Performance Review in AY 2015-16. The department's self-study, the report of the External Review Committee, and the Chair's Response are attached to this report.

The Program Performance Review process included a detailed self-analysis that examined the department's short and long-term goals, its staffing and operations, curricular structure and assessment program, support for student success and advising, and the resources and facilities available to support its key functions as a center for student and faculty scholarship. A thoughtful review by a team of highly qualified specialists with expertise in African American and Ethnic Studies provided valuable insight into the current state of the department as well as suggestions for future development. Review team members included Dr. Leigh Raiford (Chair of African American Studies, University of California, Berkeley), Dr. Jesse Mills (Chair of Ethnic Studies, University of San Diego), and Dr. Eileen Walsh (Chair of Sociology, California State University, Fullerton).

The CSUF African American Studies Department is a vibrant academic unit that contributes importantly to our university's intellectual life through its scholarship, innovative pedagogy, and engagement with both students and the community. This program review cycle captures the department at a moment of "profound transformation" and rebuilding after a wave of retirements between 2005 and 2013. In that context, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences is pleased to offer the following commendations and recommendations:

Commendations

The Department is to be commended for its commitment to high quality, high impact pedagogy. Particularly noteworthy is the department's active commitment to curricular innovation. Within the past two years, the department has identified structural problems in the curriculum and taken the necessary steps to ameliorate them. In addition, the faculty have developed new and exciting courses that speak to the disciplinary expertise of newly hired faculty, as well as to the intellectual and societal interests of students, faculty, and the community.



The African American Studies faculty engage in a high degree of scholarly and creative activity, including publication in leading peer-reviewed journals, success in grant seeking, and literary and musical composition. The broad range of faculty creative and scholarly work is an important and identifying strength of the department.

Departmental faculty members display a noted commitment to student and community-centered service. Faculty members have led or participated in significant co-curricular and community events, including very well-attended recent department symposia on Hip Hop and Black Fatherhood. In addition, faculty members have frequently been tapped and generously agreed to serve on numerous university and college committees, as well as to participate in Black History Month and campus diversity efforts.

The Department is to be commended for increasing enrollments and creating stability within the major and minor. Because the department recognizes that its campus impact far exceeds the number of its majors, it has leveraged both its General Education courses and its co-curricular work effectively.

The Department has a clear understanding of the curricular challenges it faces and a thoughtful strategy to address them. Among the issues that the department has identified are the need to move AFAM 107 from GE category D.5 to GE category D.1.

Willingness to collaborate in pursuit of common goals is a hallmark of African American Studies. Plans for focused collaboration with other departments in H&SS and other Colleges on campus are thoughtful, appropriate, and likely to significantly increase the visibility of African American Studies as a first or second major or minor for CSUF students.

The development of a new assessment plan in 2014-15, including new learning outcomes aligned with the University Learning Outcomes, will allow the department to begin to effectively and efficiently assess student learning within the major. The newly developed assessment plan is unusually well aligned with disciplinary values.

Recommendations

The department should develop and adopt by-laws to clarify internal responsibilities and articulate policies and procedures. Well-designed bylaws will allow the department to function more effectively and efficiently.

The department should continue its conversation with Asian American Studies and Chicano/a Studies as to the most appropriate relationship between the three Ethnic Studies departments/programs.



The department should develop a strategic hiring plan that speaks to both short term and long term departmental needs, as well as to the campus' strategic plan.

The department should continue to reexamine its course offerings and schedule and to develop a course rotation plan that will meet students current needs while also highlighting areas in the curriculum that may need revision or development. In addition, the department should initiate the process to move AFAM 107 from GE D.5 to GE D.1 in Fall 2016. Assistance in pursuing this goal will be provided by the Dean's Office.

The department is encouraged to partner with appropriate campus offices and organizations (the H&SS Success Center, the African American Resource Center, the Career Center, etc.) to develop workshops, panel presentations, and other activities that will meet the needs of current majors and minors as well as to potential majors and minors.

In collaboration with the H&SS Dean's Office, the department should develop priorities for faculty service and community engagement in an effort to ensure that such service address departmental goals and meets the professional needs of the faculty, while not jeopardizing their likelihood of achieving tenure and promotion. To accomplish this, the department should review its personnel standards and revise them if needed.

The department should collaborate with the H&SS Marketing Specialist and the H&SS Student Success Team to develop marketing and advising strategies and materials that will increase the visibility of African American Studies to prospective and incoming students.

Challenges for the Department, the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, and CSUF

The African American Studies Department plays a unique role on campus. Although our university prides itself on its diversity, both African American faculty and students represent a small portion of the campus. Of the 826 tenured and tenure track faculty employed by CSUF in Fall 2015, 24 were African American. Of these, 5 were housed within the Department of African American Studies. As a result of this imbalance, the department and its faculty are frequently called on to support campus diversity initiatives and efforts, as well as provide formal and informal advising and counseling to African American students. These efforts, while undertaken willingly, come at a very real cost to a small department that is made up of junior faculty. In addition, the work entailed in meeting these campus needs uses the limited human resources that might be used to pursue other goals, such as increasing the department's visibility on campus or advancing faculty members' scholarly and creative agendas. Thus, the "cultural tax" paid by the faculty in the Department of African American Studies is very real and very costly. The department deserves greater and more focused attention, including financial support, from the



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university in order to reach its full potential and effectively support campus diversity initiatives without undermining the personal and professional well-being of its faculty.

Similarly, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, in collaboration with the H&SS Dean's Office, should work with the department to identify critical support needs to ensure the long-term viability of African American Studies at CSUF. Because of the importance of the department in providing a center of gravity for both African American faculty and students at CSUF, and because of the critical role the department plays in supporting diversity on campus, support for the department in the performance of these roles should not rest solely on the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.