

**DEPARTMENT OF ETHNIC STUDIES**

**External Consultant Report**

**Dr. Judith Liu  
University of San Diego**

**Spring 2006**

Review of the Ethnic Studies Department  
California State University, Sacramento  
May 11-12, 2006

The following report details four major areas of concern as requested by Dr. Michael Lee, Associate Vice President and Dean for Academic Programs and Dr. Robert Buckley, Chair of the Review Team. These four areas are:

- I. Review of the Ethnic Studies Academic Program
- II. Assessment
- III. Graduate Program
- IV. Information Competency

### **Introduction**

In existence for more than thirty years, the Ethnic Studies Department at CSU, Sacramento has forged a strong program and department to meet the ever-growing need for diversity and inclusion. Since its inception in 1969, Ethnic Studies at CSUS has been grounded on the belief that students should have a firm foundation in the cultural histories and contributions of ethnic and racial groups that have tended to be overlooked in the study of "American" history. Consisting of four programs: Asian American Studies, Chicano Studies, Native American Studies, and Pan African Studies, each program has a director who coordinates a specific curriculum that focuses on academic inquiry, teaching, and service.

Much of the development, growth, and success of the department has been due to the fact that the department has enjoyed strong leadership. Under the direction of Dr. Otis Scott, who served as the chair for 21 years, the Ethnic Studies Center achieved department status (1996-97), hired new faculty, and developed an even more vibrant curriculum. Coming from a strong Ethnic Studies background and a history of program development, Dr. Gregory Yee Mark assumed the position of Chair in 2001; Dr. David Leon, who has been a member of Ethnic Studies since 1988 and who is the Director of Chicano Studies, will assume the Interim Chair position in Fall 2006.

The department has also increased its visibility and stature among academic institutions because of its impressive work with community service-learning. The department's collaboration with Will C. Wood Middle School and Hiram Johnson High School serve as a nationwide exemplar of effective university and community partnerships. At regional and national level community service-learning conferences, these programs have been recognized for their effectiveness and high standard of quality. Not surprisingly, the Ethnic Studies Department has received several prestigious grants (e.g., the Corporation for National and Community Service) to continue its impressive community service-learning endeavors.

On Friday, April 12<sup>th</sup>, the SSIS College and the Ethnic Studies Department hosted a colloquium entitled, "Building Innovative Community Partnerships: The Ethnic Studies Model." One session included CSUS student panels conducted in four different languages simultaneously. As I spoke with community leaders, agency liaisons, school principals and teachers, and parents, they could not say enough about the impact that such programs and departmental/university commitment have on the community. The department and the university should be proud of its achievements.

The department is also involved with the Cooper-Woodson College Enhancement Program that also provides a certificate through Pan African Studies. This mentorship and leadership development program further connects the community and university in a significant manner.

The Ethnic Studies Department is also unusual in terms of the amount and level of funding it has been able to attract. Most notable is the Centers for Disease Control funding for Asian/Pacific Islander youth violence prevention which brings both national and international recognition to the department and university.

#### **Responses to Curricular Recommendations from the 2000 Program Review:**

Seven recommendations were made by the 2000 Program Review Committee. The department has made substantial progress on most of those recommendations. Specific recommendations to further address recommendation number 3 (listed in the Self Study, Appendix, Exhibit I): "Undertake a thorough curriculum review to decide on a rotation of course offerings in relation to the respective programs within the Department" are given below.

#### **I. Academic Program**

##### Faculty Interviewed:

Gregory Yee Mark, Chair

Timothy Fong, Director of Asian American Studies

David Leon, Director of Chicano Studies

Boatamo Mosupyoe, Director of Pan African Studies

Annette Reed, Director of Native American Studies

Rita Cameron-Wedding

Julie Figueroa

Ricky Green

Wayne Maeda

Sam Rios

##### Students Interviewed

Nine Ethnic Studies majors and/or minors

Executive Administrator  
Ann Thomas

**A. Academic Program**

The strength of the department lies in the fact that the department is composed of four distinct programs each with a separate director. Each director was interviewed individually on Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, and they were unanimous in their agreement that the structure of the department should remain unchanged. Their strong professional and personal relationships with one another coupled with regular department meetings ensure that information is shared between and among the program directors as well as with the department chair. This is an especially close-knit department that prides itself on the quality and depth of its relationships. The willingness of department members to work cooperatively with one another is not only effective but admirable as well.

Each director has responsibility for advising students, developing curriculum, submitting course schedules each term, fund raising, organizing conferences, engaging students in academic and community life as well as teaching. The chair has the responsibility for the usual administrative responsibilities associated with the position as well as for coordinating the smooth functioning of the four programs and guiding the department in a direction that meets the ever-changing demands of the discipline.

Junior faculty are mentored formally and informally. An environment of trust, inclusion, and support has created a department where there is, as one faculty member noted, "the complete absence of jockeying for top position." Rather, an atmosphere of cooperation where everyone "feels respected and valued, and achievements are celebrated by all" has emerged. The smooth functioning of the four programs is a testament to the creation of a strong communal commitment and the success of the department.

Core courses for the major and minor are offered each semester; multiple sections of Ethnic Studies 11 and Ethnic Studies 100 accommodate a large number of students interested in the major/minor as well as in fulfilling general education learning objectives. Twenty-five courses in Ethnic Studies fulfill a GE requirement. These areas are: C3: Introduction to the Humanities; C4: Further Studies in the Arts and Humanities; D1A: Foundations in Social Behavioral Sciences; D1B: World Cultures; D2: Major Social Issues of the Contemporary Era; E: Understanding Personal Development and Race and Ethnicity in American Society; and the Writing Intensive area. The vast majority of courses that fulfill a GE area criteria are in "D." This "clustering" of courses reflects a problem with university policy that appears to privilege certain departments in specific area criteria. There is no reason why Ethnic Studies courses do not fulfill other area criteria such as "Critical Reasoning"; however, approval for fulfillment of area criteria in general education does not come from the department but from the General Education Committee.

The department is especially strong in ensuring consistency among multiple sections of the same course. The department is unique among Ethnic Studies departments in the fact that it has developed two separate anthologies that are used in Ethnic Studies 11 and Ethnic Studies 100. Faculty who teach these core courses also routinely share syllabi and engage in discussions on how to improve the quality and content of these courses. The department is also to be commended for another unique feature—it uses the royalties from these anthologies to fund student travel to conferences and symposia.

Recommendation:

- Change the textbook for Ethnic Studies 100.

Rationale: Ethnic Studies 100 should consider another textbook other than Richard Schaefer's *Race and Ethnicity in the United States* because it is also used in Ethnic Studies 11 where such a general text might be more appropriate. At present, there is too much overlap between the readings from Schaefer in these two courses.

The syllabi for the Ethnic Studies curriculum also show a decided consistency that is rarely found. Given the level of consistency that exists, the few exceptions (among affiliated departments) are quite glaring and can be easily rectified by working with the professor to bring these syllabi to the high standards of the department.

Recommendation:

- Include a statement of how the course fulfills GE requirements on the syllabus. ✓

Rationale: A recommendation I would make to all academic units is to include a statement as to what general education requirements are met by a course. I was impressed by the syllabi that linked the course to the university's general education objectives.

To facilitate the continued growth of the department, I offer the following recommendations:

- Hire another full-time executive assistant.

Rationale: Every single member of the department indicated the need for another full-time executive assistant in addition to Ann Thomas who has ably managed an ever-growing department. Since her arrival in the department, several full-time faculty have been added; consequently her workload has grown significantly without any additional administrative support. The addition of another full-time assistant would allow for a division of the duties and responsibilities in order to continue to provide the excellent service provided to the department by Ann.

- Reassigned time each semester for program directors.

Rationale: Nine students were interviewed on Thursday and Friday, May 11-12. Students were uniformly laudatory about the quality of advising and overall concern for their academic and personal lives provided by Ethnic Studies faculty. The Ethnic Studies faculty were regarded as caring, dedicated professionals who go beyond providing mere advising by making frequent and meaningful connections with their students. Thus, faculty in each program devote a considerable time to students in the program. In addition to the myriad of other administrative and teaching responsibilities, program directors also have the primary responsibility for advising students in their areas with the chair having responsibility for advising students with a general Ethnic Studies minor. More reassigned time will help.

- Small separate budgets for each program.

Rationale: Allocating a small portion of the overall departmental budget to be used at each director's discretion would decrease the administrative oversight by the department chair and allow greater flexibility for each director.

- Coordination of course offerings.

Rationale: The 2000 Program Review Committee recommended a review of the department's curriculum in order to coordinate a rotation of course offerings by each of the four programs. The recommendations under this bullet reaffirm the 2000 Program Review Committee's recommendation.

The department offers a wide range of courses each semester. In addition to offering Ethnic Studies 11 (Introduction to Ethnic Studies) and Ethnic Studies 100 (Ethnic America), each of the core courses required for the major/minor are offered each semester. Other upper-division offerings, however, need greater coordination to avoid cancellation due to not meeting the required minimum enrollment for course offerings.

The four directors and the chair are advised to hold an annual meeting to coordinate the course offerings for the next academic year. Not only will such a process avoid duplication of similar courses being offered, but it will allow for discussion about the overall vision of the department. Such coordination is essential to avoid the number of cancellations that appear on the website. Cancellation of classes may have the unanticipated psychological consequence of providing "evidence" that such courses are of "no interest to students" thereby reinforcing the misconception that Ethnic Studies lacks academic rigor.

Coordination of courses will also allow better scheduling of times for the courses. During interviews, students repeatedly mentioned that they preferred Tuesday/Thursday courses to accommodate their work and family obligations. The greater number of courses offered not only increases the scheduling logistics but may have a negative effect on the total enrollments in other

courses being offered. Furthermore, the cancellation of courses necessitates a reshifting of course offerings that is frustrating for both faculty and students.

- Limit the number of new course offerings introduced during the academic year.

Rationale: Related to the suggestion to coordinate course offerings is a suggestion to limit the number of new courses developed and offered each year. New courses traditionally draw fewer students initially. While I applaud the faculty's creativity in developing new courses to meet changes in the field and meet students' needs, too many new courses can also result in lower enrollments.

Coordination of both existing and new course offerings will have the benefit of producing an overall consistency in the department. Upper-division courses other than the core courses that enhance the concentrations can rotate into the schedule on a regular basis thus ensuring that courses listed in the catalog are taught in a more systematic manner. A tentative listing of the rotation of course offerings can be provided to incoming students as a means to help them better plan their own academic careers.

Limiting the number of new courses introduced into the rotation may help achieve the necessary enrollments as well as to avoid overlap in topics.

- Revamp existing course offerings.

Rationale: The department offers a wide range of courses to fulfill the academic and intellectual requirements of the field and the university. Courses that have met these requirements in the past may not necessarily be suited for present-day needs. In addition to developing new courses, consider revitalization of existing courses to incorporate new developments in the field.

- Potential new courses:

Rationale: During interviews with students, the following suggestions for new courses were made:

Popular culture (courses that have a focus on music [e.g., hip hop and rap; historical antecedents of contemporary music; the positive and negative effects of popular music]; dance [movement and motion in a cultural context]; film [courses that use contemporary films as commentary and texts. The department might consider cross-listing a course with Film Studies as a tactic.]).

Language and culture courses (courses that have a focus on teaching "functional" language and cultural understanding of the individuals that students encounter in their communities. For example, basic phrases for greeting and leaving a setting; ways in which to show respect in a given culture.) Students appreciate that Swahili is being taught and encourage the teaching of other languages that will prepare them better to serve in the communities in which they work/live.

## **B. Faculty**

The department is fortunate to have faculty who come from some of the most prestigious graduate programs in the country, including designated Ethnic Studies departments. Their list of publications of articles, chapters, and books, conference attendance and presentations, and level of commitment to community service-learning are impressive indeed and speak to the level of professionalism and involvement that would be the envy of any department.

A five-year hiring plan, 2001-2006, was created by the department. Since 2000, the department has been granted three new faculty lines. Filling the positions advertised in Asian American Studies and Native American Studies will help the department address existing needs.

Recommendation:

- Increase institutional diversity of departmental faculty.

Rationale: In its hires, the department should consider hiring faculty from institutions east of California to provide another form of diversity within the department. Graduates from institutions outside of the West Coast will add depth to the impressive list of current faculty.

## **II. Assessment**

New WASC accreditation requirements have placed greater emphasis upon assessment and evaluation at all levels. As a consequence, greater pressure will be placed upon measurement of learning objectives. Students who graduate from the Ethnic Studies Department are expected to achieve the following learning objectives:

1. Knowledge of socio-historical realities of African and African Americans, Asian Americans, Mexican/Latino/a Americans and Native Americans.
2. Understanding of the concepts of "race," ethnicity, racism, ethnocentrism, implications of discrimination, slavery, coerced Americanization, colonialism, sexism, color consciousness on the social experiences of men and women of color.
3. Students will be able to define, recognize, apply and critique theories of culture, acculturation, assimilation, cultural pluralism, "race," ethnicity, racism, and ethnocentrism.
4. Able to organize ideas clearly and effectively to reflect a mastery and appreciation of knowledge.
5. Acquire and retain the necessary information needed to answer a question or fulfill an assignment to reflect personal and intellectual growth and social consciousness and personal responsibility (Self Study, pp. 17-18).

Interviews with students yielded impressive information concerning what they have gained from their educations. Students were able to clearly articulate what they had learned from their Ethnic Studies courses. In addition to a more inclusive understanding of U.S. history and a comprehension about key concepts (e.g., racism, discrimination, marginality), students found that their Ethnic Studies courses provided more “Ah ha” moments than their other courses. Students stated, “The courses I took helped me to further myself. It pushed me to want to read and research more about the histories of others.” “I never knew anything about my own [people’s] history in America. The courses I took put me back into history.” “I learned how to communicate and understand people from cultures different from my own. I am now less judgmental about differences.”

Courses that included community service-learning were especially praised for connecting students to the communities outside of the university and for providing real-life application of materials learned in the classroom. Working with community members also helped students to develop social interaction skills. As one student stated, “I am more poised in social settings because I have been exposed to so many other cultures.”

Students also commented on their appreciation of the department because it provided numerous opportunities for them to attend and present at regional and national conferences.

#### **Program Level Assessment**

A Learning Outcomes Assessment was distributed to sixteen graduating Ethnic Studies seniors in 2004. The sample size is too small to make any significant generalizations. Recognizing this fact, the department is planning to conduct a survey with majors currently enrolled in Ethnic Studies courses.

#### **Recommendation:**

- Include focus group interviews in the program level assessment.

**Rationale:** Statistical data are greatly enhanced by qualitative data. Focus group interviews will provide greater depth to the responses provided by a survey.

#### **Course Level Assessment**

Faculty members assess student work in a number of ways. First, evaluation of student performance is done traditionally through grading of papers, projects, examinations, and class participation. Second, students evaluate their professors through course evaluations conducted each semester. Third, some professors include peer assessments as part of the evaluation process.

A number of faculty have participated in workshops on grading rubrics presented by the Center for Learning and Teaching. Several faculty members include these rubrics in their syllabi; consequently, students are aware of the criteria that will be used in grading their performance.

Recommendation:

- Engage the entire faculty in a discussion on grading rubrics.

Rationale: This is a department that shares information with one another readily. Sharing rubrics with one another will help the department reach further consensus on learning objectives. Such a discussion is also a good starting point for a departmental level assessment of student outcomes.

### **III. Graduate Program**

A temporary "Special Major" in Ethnic Studies was launched in Fall 2003 with ten students admitted into the graduate program. An additional nine students were admitted in Fall 2004. In Fall 2005, however, the department decided to place a hold upon admitting any new students into the graduate program while it examined the effectiveness of the program.

Three core courses were proposed and approved for the thirty unit Master's program: Ethnic Studies 200: Ethnic Studies Theoretical Perspectives; Ethnic Studies 201: Ethnic Studies Research Methodology; and Ethnic Studies 202: Foundations in Ethnic Studies.

Although such a program meets a decided need in the area (the closest graduate programs are at UC Berkeley and California State University, San Francisco), the department is wisely engaged in the process of seriously examining its graduate program.

Recommendations:

- Provide reassigned time for faculty in the graduate program.

Rationale: Development of a graduate program demands a level of commitment that is difficult to sustain when faculty are teaching a 4/4 load. Faculty are already stretched to capacity with their academic, professional, service, and personal demands. If the graduate program is to continue, faculty involved in the graduate program require reassigned time to not only develop and teach the courses but also to supervise and mentor students as they engage in their own research and writing. Reassigned time, however, also places strain on a department in terms of its ability to teach required courses.

- Develop new courses.

Three courses do not a graduate program make. Consequently, developing a more comprehensive curriculum is essential for a first-rate graduate program.

If these criteria cannot be met, I strongly recommend that the graduate program continue to be placed on hold.

## **IV. Information Competency**

One of the University's learning goals is "Information Competence," the "ability to make effective and ethical use of information resources and technology for personal and professional needs" (Self study, p. 21). Thus, the University seeks to teach students to differentiate among data, information, and knowledge by providing students with the necessary skills to research a topic, document sources appropriately, and disseminate findings in a lucid manner.

The issue of academic integrity is one with which many institutions are struggling. My own institution, for instance, has recently subscribed to the service "Turnitin" as a means to deal with plagiarism. The library is a logical place to deal with information competency.

### **Library Resources**

I met with Kathryn Blackmer Reyes, Ethnic Studies Librarian on Friday, May 12<sup>th</sup>. Kathryn is an excellent resource in the fact that she is specifically trained in Ethnic Studies. As a consequence, Kathryn possesses a depth and breadth about the subject matter. Kathryn most often uses a service that provides recent titles from which she makes selections. Using her training in Ethnic Studies, reading reviews, and obtaining faculty recommendations, Kathryn is developing the Ethnic Studies collection. Kathryn does an excellent job in maximizing an ever-dwindling budget by waiting until the last possible date to purchase materials. By waiting, she is able to check whether materials she wishes to add to the collection have been purchased by another librarian, and this strategy enables her to maximize the library's budget for Ethnic Studies.

### **Recommendations:**

- Integrate library research skills in more courses.

**Rationale:** During our interview and in her report dated May 12, 2006, Kathryn Blackmer Reyes indicated that students in upper-division Ethnic Studies courses frequently lack sufficient skills to conduct basic research. While students are exposed to basic research skills in some lower-division courses, particularly Ethnic Studies 21, there is a notable lacuna in upper-division courses. This is not a problem unique to Ethnic Studies or the University as a whole. Too often, students believe that using the search engine "Google" is equivalent to actually doing library research. Thus, many students have no familiarity with the major databases in their field. Kathryn noted that a number of courses (Ethnic Studies 132, 194, 195) consistently have students utilize the library but she has noticed that students lack the ability to effectively use available databases.

I recommend that more upper-division courses embed bibliographic instruction and basic research skills in their learning objectives. This recommendation can be achieved by utilizing Kathryn who can work with the faculty and using instructional classrooms at the library to teach such necessary skills.

Recommendations:

- Designate a department library liaison.

Rationale: Although faculty do make suggestions for purchases, the majority of decisions on collection development are made by Kathryn. Designating a department library liaison can provide more effective means for coordinating the Ethnic Studies collection.

- Involve Kathryn Blackmer Reyes more.

Rationale: By inviting Kathryn to one department meeting at the beginning of each semester, a process of closer cooperation and coordination between the department and the library can be established. New acquisitions can be highlighted and requests for new purchases can also be made.

I recommend for the university as a whole to involve the librarians more. For example, they can be included in Student Orientations at the university and departmental/program levels. Such an inclusion will elevate the importance of library and information literacy across campus.

- Include the policy on academic integrity in the syllabus.

Rationale: A number of faculty in Ethnic Studies and affiliated programs include statements on plagiarism and academic integrity in their syllabi. Uniformly including the policy in all syllabi (across campus and not just in Ethnic Studies) would reinforce the importance and seriousness of academic integrity to all students.

## Conclusion

I enjoyed meeting with Dr. Lee, members of the Review Committee, Ethnic Studies faculty, staff, students, community members, and local residents. I hope this review provides information that the Ethnic Studies Department may use to continue its excellent academic program.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the external reviewer for the Ethnic Studies.

Respectfully submitted,  
Judith Liu  
University of San Diego