2006-07 Assessment Report

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1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in AY 2006-2007?

Ethnic Studies learning outcomes for majors can be found at www.csus.edu/portfolio/prog/ethn05-06/1assess.stm. As a Department, we decided not to assess our student learning outcomes in AY 2006-2007, but instead focus on the recommendations from our last program review conducted in Spring 2006 (see www.csus.edu/acaf/progReview/prgmrevrpts.stm)

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?

a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered? (Description, data administered, results)

The External Consultant’s Report and Faculty Senate’s Program Review Committee’s Report generated 15 recommendations to improve Ethnic Studies. For AY 2006-2007, we focused on Recommendations 8, 12, and 15.

Recommendation 8: “Review and assess the student advising process.” Typically, departments see student advising as the process by which administrators and faculty facilitate the timely graduation of our majors. In Ethnic Studies, we take a much broader view. We include efforts to: 1) attract new majors as well as to improve contact with current majors, and 2) poll them about their attitudes toward the major by using SurveyMonkey.

As a result of receiving a modest grant from SSIS Dean Scott, we embarked on an outreach program for our majors. Early in the Fall 2006, I sent a letter to all 78 of them introducing myself as the new chair and asking them to update their contact information. In addition, we developed an email list of our majors and I began to communicate with them weekly, sending them job and internship notices, news of cultural and social events on campus and off, and results of local, state, and national research studies pertaining to ethnic and minority groups in America and worldwide.

I also expanded our outreach activities to include potential Ethnic Studies majors. I asked the faculty to visit our ETHN 21 classes in Fall 2006 and approximately 327 new freshmen heard our message.
In the Spring 2007, we polled our majors using SurveyMonkey, with the aim of gauging their satisfaction with advising, proposed social and cultural activities, and Ethnic Studies curriculum offerings. In general, the students expressed positive feelings about being Ethnic Studies majors. Results of this survey appear in section 2(b) under Recommendation 8.

Recommendation 12: “Offer support and mentoring to the Ethnic Studies Student Association (ESSA).” In the early to mid-1980s, the ESSA was founded. It focused on program dissemination, professional growth, and celebrating key events such as graduation. In 2002, the ESSA began to branch out more in the direction of community service and professional development. From 2002 to 2006, students attended and presented at a minimum of 10 regional, national, and international conferences. For example, some recent activities included ESSA members applying for ASI funding, and attending and presenting at three NCORE conferences (2003, 2004, and 2005). In April 2006, ESSA organized a visit and presentation at the Federal Archives & Records Center.

In the Fall 2006 I enlisted the 18 majors enrolled in ETHN 194, Research in Ethnic Studies, and convened a meeting of ESSA. Our first activity centered on attending the Etiquette Dinner sponsored by the CSUS Career Center and designed to prepare students to act as prescribed in interview situations and prevent embarrassment over innocent lapses in formal manners. About 12 majors attended the dinner in the Fall and 13 in the Spring.

In the Spring 2007, the ESSA hosted an evening showing of the video, “Farmingville: Welcome to the suburbs, home of the new border wars,” with discussion led by Lecturer Eric Vega. We were disappointed with the poor turnout.

Recommendation 15: “Redesign the Ethnic Studies program website and provide for its maintenance.” Professor Sobredo designed the original website in 2002, but no provision was made for its maintenance. As a consequence, it remained stagnant for four to five years. Since our website is our window to the world, it became our top priority for AY 2006-2007.

b) As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program’s success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

Recommendation 8: Student Advising and Outreach

Letter from Chair. Students indicated that they appreciated receiving a letter from the department chair but only a few responded with the information we requested. And only a few came in for advising. However, many factors might account for this low response rate, and given students’ positive reaction to the letter, I believe it’s important to send one out at the start of each academic year.
Email Contact. The creation of an email listserv of majors produced more responses. Students liked receiving emails and a few commented that as a result they had attended social and cultural events and found jobs. Only one major requested deletion, but she also told us she was leaving the area. We have now expanded the list to include minors and alums.

Outreach to Potential Majors. Our outreach efforts to ETHN 21 freshmen proved unproductive. As of Spring 2007, I cannot trace one new major to this activity. I am nevertheless convinced that we need such outreach if we are to increase our majors.

To advance this goal, Professor Harold Murai (Education) and I drafted a proposal to establish a new concentration (Education-Ethnic Studies) in Ethnic Studies. Currently, we have five concentrations (General, Asian American, Chicana/o, Native American, and Pan African) where students take 12 units in their concentration in addition to our core classes consisting of 28 units for a total of 36 units. At a faculty meeting we discussed the proposed new concentration and agreed that it would likely attract majors, since a recent poll of our alumni indicates that 43% are in the teaching profession. We took no further action in AY 06-07, but we expect to revisit this idea in AY 07-08.

Survey of Majors. The SurveyMonkey results showed promise. The majors indicated they wanted more social and cultural activities focused on the major and to my surprise they supported mandatory advising.

However, since only ten students responded, I wanted to make sure this data truly reflected our majors’ sentiments. I therefore convened two meetings of majors (and invited our faculty to attend as well) in the Spring 2007. I expected low attendance but was pleased with the turnout, especially on the first day. Eighteen students appeared on Tuesday and eight on Wednesday. Most of their comments reinforced the SurveyMonkey results, including their strong support for mandatory advising. As a result, at our Fall 2007 retreat the faculty spoke in favor of creating mandatory advising for our students. We will plan its implementation in the Spring 2008.

Recommendation 12: Ethnic Studies Students Association

Etiquette Dinners. No evaluation instrument was developed to ask our majors’ opinions of these ESSA events. However, the response seems positive. In conversations with students afterwards and during the year they told us they had learned rules of etiquette not taught to them by their parents or anyone else.

Recommendation 15: Department Website

Website. Our once-dormant site now ranks third or fourth among all Ethnic Studies department websites in the nation, according to Professor Kimenyi at a faculty meeting in September 2007. It meets university guidelines and includes photos of the faculty, their office hours, and a link to their individual websites. One new feature
involves links to download important university forms, an extremely helpful aid when advising our students.

c. In what areas are students doing well and achieving expectations?

Our five-year program review reported a survey of 16 graduating Ethnic Studies seniors in 2004. They responded to 11 statements about learning outcomes, using a Likert scale from strong agree to strongly disagree, and the results give us a reasonably accurate idea of current student sentiment and achievement. They are:

1. 94% agreed to strongly agreed with: “Course content I have taken in Ethnic Studies has generally provided me with the ability to contrast and compare the experiences of diverse ethnic groups.”

2. 94% agreed to strongly agreed with: “I am able to frame conclusions from a wide range of information about ethnic groups.”

3. 100% agreed to strongly agreed with: “This major has provided me with skills which enable me to effectively write about the historical experiences of ethnic groups.”

4. 100% agreed to strongly agreed with: “Course content in Ethnic Studies has enabled me effectively to talk about the experiences of ethnic groups.”

5. 87% agreed to strongly agreed with: “This major has provided me with research methods used in Ethnic Studies scholarship.”

6. 80% agreed to strongly agreed with: “I have the ability to design, conduct, and defend a research project.”

7. 100% agreed to strongly agreed with: “This major has provided me with an understanding of interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge about experiences of ethnic groups.”

8. 100% agreed to strongly agreed with: “This major has helped me better understand the meaning of key concepts used in Ethnic Studies scholarship.”

9. 100% agreed to strongly agreed with: “This major has improved my understanding of the nation.”

10. 100% agreed to strongly agreed with: “The Ethnic Studies major has provided me with a higher level of understanding of roles of slavery and colonization in shaping the social experiences of people of color.”
11. 94% agreed to strongly agreed with: “The Ethnic Studies major has helped me develop a sophisticated understanding of the social histories of people of color.”

d. What areas are seen as needing improvement within your program?

In our five-year program review, students voiced concern about the availability of classes, and alums indicated two areas of concern: provision of technical skills and of communication skills.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?

Yes.

a) If so, what are those changes?

To address students’ desire for more readily available classes, we adopted the following principles on September 8, 2006:

- Tenure-track faculty should, as much as possible, have a rotating teaching schedule each academic year: MWF/MW one semester and T/TH the next.
- As much as possible, the Department should offer all courses on a rotating basis (MWF/MW one semester and T/TH the next) during the academic year.
- The Department should rotate ETHN 118, 132, 151, and 172 equitably and prevent them from competing with each other.
- The Department should offer ETHN 110, 130/131, 140, and 170 in the evening at least once during the academic year.

In response to alums’ concerns about technical and communication skills, I partnered with ESSA to create the Ethnic Studies/ESSA Research Symposium for AY 2006-2007. The symposium featured the research of our majors enrolled in ETHN 194, Research in Ethnic Studies, in the fall and spring semesters. All ETHN 194 students complete a paper based on original research and deliver an oral presentation in class. Classmates assigned a score (1 to 5, with 5 being excellent) to each presentation. I reviewed the scores and determined the winners, who presented their papers again in a symposium attended by other majors and faculty. A reception took place afterwards, and photos of our student-scholars now fill the bulletin board in front of our department office.

In addition, I slightly modified the requirements for students enrolled in ETHN 195, Field Work in Ethnic Studies. According to the requirements, student must keep a diary of their activities and write a reflective paper which they turn in at the end of the semester. As the instructor of record for AY 2006-2007, I asked each student to submit two letters from the site supervisor, one mid-term and one final. These documents helped me determine whether they were benefiting from this experience.
At the end of the semester, I had students turn in a portfolio consisting of their reflective paper, diary, and the two site supervisor letters, with attachments noting their contributions at the sites. I store the portfolios in my office for students to refer to.

b. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?

It is too early to tell if our principles for greater class availability are achieving the expected results. We will monitor this situation by asking students if they feel the problem still exists.

It is similarly difficult to ascertain ETHN 194 students’ opinions about the added responsibility of delivering their papers at a symposium. Students expressed anxiety before giving their presentations and I assured them that their feelings were normal even for seasoned scholars. Afterwards, most expressed relief and were proud of their accomplishments.

We do know that students have not reacted negatively to these slight changes in ETHN 195. New students who inquire about this class seem to appreciate reading former students’ portfolios. I have noticed an improvement in writing quality from the fall to the spring semester. I can only surmise that once they see top-quality portfolios, they want to make theirs equal to or better than these models.

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics, course alignment?

During AY 06-07, Ethnic Studies did not engage in any other assessments.

Course alignment activities did take place during AY 06-07. Each semester, faculty teaching ETHN 11 (Introduction to Ethnic Studies) and ETHN 100 (Ethnic America) meet to share and discuss their course syllabi, readings, guest speakers, and videos. The faculty seemed to enjoy exchanging their classroom experiences.

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?

For AY 07-08, Ethnic Studies will review its mission, vision, and goals statements. In addition, we intend to develop a matrix connecting our student learning outcomes (www.csus.edu/portfolio/program/ethn05-06/1assess.stm) with the Ethnic Studies core curriculum (ETHN 11, 100, 110, 130/131, 140, 170, 194, and 195).