

February 1, 2018

PROFESSOR DAYO GORE, Chair
Department of Ethnic Studies

PROFESSOR SARA CLARKE KAPLAN, Director of Undergraduate Studies
Department of Ethnic Studies

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for the Department of Ethnic Studies

Dear Professors Gore and Kaplan,

The Undergraduate Council discussed the Department of Ethnic Studies 2017 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the Department. The Council's comments centered on the following:

The Council was pleased to learn that the Department piloted a one-day training for new teaching assistants that included training on how to deal with issues of conflict and hostility that may occur in the classroom. The Council looks forward to hearing about the results of that pilot program. We also offer the suggestion of partnering with the Ombuds office for future training of instructors, as they assist those who seek resolution of academic or administrative issues and disputes.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Department in Winter 2019. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Department for their engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Sam Rickless, Chair
Undergraduate Council

Attachment

(1) Undergraduate Program Review Report and Responses for Ethnic Studies

cc: F. Ackerman
C. Padden
J. Eggers
R. Horwitz
J. Moore
R. Rodriguez
M. Sidney

Undergraduate Program Review
Department of Ethnic Studies
May 17-18, 2017
Review Committee Report

Established in 1990-1, the UCSD Department of Ethnic Studies is renowned in the field for its commitment to interdisciplinary, transnational, and intersectional methodologies. Prioritizing a rigorous and student-centered approach to training undergraduates, the Department faculty invest a great deal of time in their 72 majors and 68 minors, many of whom are students of color, first-generation college students, and students from low-income households. The rigor of their undergraduate training is demonstrated, for example, by the fact that the Department has reshaped its curriculum to require that every major pursue an independent research project as a part of their capstone sequence. Further, the Department serves the university by offering several lower division and upper division courses that fulfill general education requirements and the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) requirement, instituted in 2010. The Department's courses also fulfill diversity requirements for a number of other academic programs. The Department contributes to the field at large and to the profession by training undergraduates who are extraordinarily well prepared for graduate and professional programs, with over 40% of undergraduates reporting that they plan to go on to post-baccalaureate programs.

The Review Committee was very impressed by the Department's arguably unparalleled commitment to student success, and by their holistic advising and mentoring relationship to their undergraduates, which is an immensely labor- and time-intensive mode of teaching. Aligned with the foundational principles of Ethnic Studies as a field, which contends that knowledges and methodologies are never divorced from the historical and material contexts in which they are developed, articulated, and disseminated, the faculty in the Department understand their role as contributing to the broader conditions that determine student success. As a result of this unique commitment to undergraduate teaching, morale in the department seems high, despite the disproportionate service and teaching burdens borne by the faculty. In what follows the Review Committee will highlight some specific features that contributed to the positive impression just summarized.

The Department has been very effective in incorporating recommendations from the prior review, conducted in 2009-2010, in particular the recommendation that it extend outreach to other units, in order to strengthen its international and transnational focus. Since the last review, the Department has increased its institutional collaboration, and now houses the Critical Gender Studies Program, the Black Studies Project, the

International Institute, and the Critical Refugee Studies Collective. They have also made important hires of faculty whose scholarship and teaching are transnational in focus. The Department also conducted a curricular review that resulted in a major revision leading to the above-mentioned capstone series. The last review mentioned the significant imbalance between tenured and untenured faculty. Through the successful tenuring of junior faculty and the hiring of a faculty person at full, this imbalance has been corrected, and there are only three junior faculty in the department at present. Finally, the Department has prioritized building its strengths in indigenous studies, which has historically been difficult to develop and sustain. Though enrollments in these courses are low, this seems due to students' lack of familiarity with the topic. Department faculty expressed confidence that these numbers will rise over time.

The student-centered approach to mentoring and training, what we termed an artisanal approach in marked contrast to the larger institutional tendency toward mass production, is foundational to the Department's teaching mission. One faculty member described the education they provide their students as a liberal arts experience in a polytechnic university. Their approach means both taking into consideration the personal circumstances of individual students in advising and mentoring and making important collective interventions into university conditions with underrepresented students in mind. The students we interviewed were unanimous about their high levels of satisfaction with the Department, a sentiment that is reinforced by the survey data and the overall course evaluation scores that are significantly higher than the campus average. The undergraduates provided earnest and heartfelt anecdotal evidence of the benefits of such individuated attention from departmental faculty, TAs, and staff who enabled them to complete their degrees and in many cases inspired them to continue on to graduate or professional programs. As one student observed, "Ethnic Studies is where overworked, underpaid, underappreciated students finally find a place to belong."

Majors and minors had no complaints about their ability to get into classes or about the range of classes available in any given quarter or year. The Review Committee commended the fact that all lower division courses which, as we describe below, are onerous and challenging, are taught by ladder rank faculty. Because students develop such close relationships with their teachers, Department faculty end up writing a disproportionate number of meaningful letters of recommendation. Students recounted asking Department faculty for letters of recommendation even when applying for STEM internships, positions, and schools because they felt that the detailed and substantive letters that Department faculty could write for them were more persuasive than boilerplate letters from their STEM faculty. Because of these relationships, the Department can boast of good placement rates in graduate and professional schools. Students were also effusive about the accessibility of alumni, and faculty facilitation of

connections with alumni. Their relationships with alumni have a very positive impact on students' perceptions of future careers with an Ethnic Studies degree. The efficacy of the Department's pedagogical methods was perhaps best demonstrated by the keen analytical capabilities, eloquence, and self-confidence of the majors and minors themselves, who had a remarkable sense of assurance about the relevance of their educations and their ability to succeed in the workplace or in graduate school because of the major. The Department's success is particularly impressive given that the student population is exceptionally diverse, with many first generation college students, parenting students, low income students, immigrant students, and so forth, which leads to unique challenges that other departments might not necessarily face. These support activities do place high time burdens on faculty, however, which we address below.

In view of the UC directive to reduce time to degree, the above-average time to degree for Ethnic Studies students merits discussion. In recent years time to degree for Ethnic Studies freshmen has been hovering around 15 quarters, compared to 13.0 quarters for Social Science freshmen in 2014-15. (The numbers of transfer students in Ethnic Studies in recent years are too small to make reliable comparisons.)

The first point to be made regarding this fact is that Ethnic Studies is too small to affect the UCSD average, or even the Social Science average, for time to degree. We should therefore address the time to degree issue not with regard to UC directives, but with regard to the welfare of Ethnic Studies students.

The second point is that Ethnic Studies students are disproportionately first-generation college students and disproportionately from low-income families. The 2014-15 Profile of Degree Recipients shows that first-generation Social Science freshmen take 0.6 quarter longer to completion and low-income Social Science freshmen take 1.1 quarters longer to completion than high-income freshmen. It is possible, therefore, that a large fraction of the 2 quarter difference in time to degree between Ethnic Studies freshmen and Social Science freshman is explained by the high proportion of Ethnic Studies freshmen that are first-generation and low income rather than by the nature of the Ethnic Studies major. A proper multivariate analysis would be helpful.

That said, our interviews left little doubt that a major - if not the most important - factor in the longer time to degree for Ethnic Studies freshmen is the tendency for students to declare Ethnic Studies as their major relatively late in their undergraduate careers, rather than when they enroll at UCSD. None of the six Ethnic Studies majors we interviewed had declared the major at time of enrollment, and data confirm that their experiences are typical: of 133 Ethnic Studies majors admitted to UCSD since Fall 2012, only 15 declared Ethnic Studies as their major at time of admission. The reasons

are that Ethnic Studies is not a high school subject and not a major with an obvious career path. Students who choose to major in Ethnic Studies typically enter UCSD intending to major in something else, which accounts for the large portion of Ethnic Studies majors who are double majors. Ethnic Studies students discover the subject is right for them after taking lower and even upper division courses.

In fact, we would argue that for many Ethnic Studies students the alternative to an Ethnic Studies major and longer time to completion is not shorter time to completion but dropping out of UCSD entirely. In other words, Ethnic Studies seems to be providing a valuable service to the university by preventing the attrition of underrepresented and otherwise non-traditional students. Moreover, for these students Ethnic Studies is not an easy major that allows them to earn a degree, but a rigorous major that has led to surprising career success for Ethnic Studies alumni. We were impressed by the confidence the students we interviewed showed regarding their post-graduate options and by the information the department provided regarding the careers of their alumni.

In sum, we do not see the above-average time to degree of Ethnic Studies freshmen as a concern, but rather as a consequence of Ethnic Studies serving disproportionately first-generation, low-income students who discover their interest in Ethnic Studies late and find it to be a rigorous and satisfying alternative to what might otherwise have been a disappointing UCSD experience. If the university continues to see time to degree as a concern for Ethnic Studies freshmen, it should conduct a multivariate analysis that includes socioeconomic factors and an indicator for whether a student has changed majors.

Like most other Social Science departments, Ethnic Studies has experienced a substantial decline in majors in recent years. The decline in Ethnic Studies majors from Spring 2012 to Spring 2016 has been less steep, however, than for Anthropology, Political Science, Psychology, or Sociology. Moreover, the trend is in the right direction: majors have rebounded from their low of 47 in Spring 2015 to 65 in Spring 2016 and 72 in Spring 2017, unlike other declining Social Science majors for which rebound is not yet evident.

The decline in Ethnic Studies majors has been especially steep for transfer students. We discussed ways to improve this situation with faculty and staff. (None of the undergraduates we interviewed were transfer students.) Our recommendations are below.

Thanks to the large size of ETHN 1-2-3, low enrollment is not an issue for Ethnic Studies. In fact, based on 2015-16 data Ethnic Studies ranks fourth out of ten Social

Science departments in total enrollment per ladder-rank FTE, behind Political Science, Psychology, and Economics.

Both faculty and TAs expressed concern over the structure, workload and classroom environment of the ETHN 1-2-3 series and other DEI-requirement courses. The DEI courses attract a large number of non-majors/non-minors (including non-humanities/social sciences majors) and challenge students to confront structural racism, sexism, ableism, etc. in contemporary society, which DEI courses in other departments may not necessarily do. That is, DEI courses in other departments may advance a weak multicultural model that does not push students to confront their own implication in structural conditions of power and inequality. This creates a situation that is volatile and sometimes hostile. In ETHN 1-2-3, faculty and TAs report persistent issues with toxic classroom environments, including occasional racist incidents (e.g., hate speech written on a chalkboard) and frequent hostile speech and aggression by individual students in both lecture and discussion sections. Women instructors perceived more hostility than male instructors. There was agreement that instructors, both TAs and faculty, in general have little or no training on how to defuse these situations. For upper division DEI courses, instructors find it challenging to teach to groups with a very broad range of backgrounds, with majors/minors mixed with students just obtaining DEI credit (one instructor questioned whether other departments would allow students to jump into an upper division science class without the requisite lower-division background, for example). Instructors found the pass/no-pass grading of DEI-required courses leads students to engage minimally in the course material, and students are not restrained from behaving aggressively toward their instructors by their concern for their GPA.

Several faculty reported feeling overwhelmed by the workload required for the ETHN 1-2-3 courses, which have class sizes of 300-400 students and a team of \approx 10 TAs (a very different model compared to other ETHN courses) without advanced training. A "rotation" model has been established to share the load, with the intention of junior faculty only teaching the course 1-2 times before tenure and never in the first 2 years. However, several junior faculty reported having to teach the ETHN 1-2-3 sequence multiple times while other senior faculty defer/use course release. The junior faculty expressed concern about how the typically low CAPE scores for these courses influence their promotions, and several faculty identified the ETHN 1-2-3 sequence as a "retention issue". However, ETHN 1-2-3 was also seen as an important source of many Ethnic Studies majors and minors who might have otherwise been unaware of this field of research; and the size of the class is necessary to support TAs given the current resource allocation system.

Recommendations: The committee sympathizes with the significant time, energy, and emotional investment of teaching the ETHN 1-2-3 sequence, and note that large survey courses are now the norm for most departments on campus. Though the rotation system seems to be a valuable attempt to address how to share course teaching among faculty in a fairly distributed manner, the concerns raised by junior faculty should be investigated and addressed. Ideas for reducing teaching workload through, e.g., external guest speakers, could be supported at the department and administrative levels. There would, of course, need to be resources to compensate external guest speakers for their labor. Co-teaching with affiliate faculty might also be an option, but, again, would require resources to buy faculty out of their departmental teaching obligations. A repository of course materials (syllabi, assignments, etc.) could also be curated by the department to reduce the initial investment of first-time instructors for this course. The committee lauds the department's policy that only ladder-rank faculty teach these challenging courses, and that protects junior faculty from teaching the course in the first few years.

As pertains to the hostile environment in the ETHN 1-2-3 classroom, given the very important role these (and other) lower-division DEI courses play in the University's strategic plan to address equity and inclusion issues, the committee recommends that resources be provided for instructor training on defusing hostility in the classroom. Despite the department's expertise in this area, these resources should support an external trainer or, more ideally, an expansion of the department's tenure-line faculty, as the solution of simply compensating faculty for their work through course releases will not work. Several faculty noted that they have banked course releases that they cannot envision using because courses need to be taught. We note that the recently-developed Teaching and Learning Commons is likely ill-suited for this training given its focus on diversity (as opposed to social justice) issues. It may be necessary to conduct an investigation of the classroom environment to properly assess the current situation in the class and devise appropriate solutions.

TAs also noted that the scheduling of current teaching workshops is not ideal, in that they happened over the course of the year, after which there was a summer break, and then they started teaching ETHN 1. They felt that a weeklong intensive training in late summer, early fall (perhaps 0 week) would better prepare them for teaching.

Issues related to student backgrounds in DEI-requirement upper division classes could be solved by introducing course pre-requisites, although this has already been ruled out in the previous review. An alternative may be the requirement of instructor approval, although this may lead to unintended student selection biases. Issues attributed to the engagement of those students taking the DEI-requirement courses pass/no-pass could

be resolved by requiring the course to be graded. This could motivate a higher level of engagement with these particular students, but it may be necessary to investigate how that will affect course enrollment.

TAs and faculty both cited the need for better staff support for the ETHN 1-2-3 series and for TA coordination. Though some of the issues cited by TAs regarding the difficulties of negotiating the course software system seem to be a result of a transition in the undergraduate academic advisors, others seem to be persistent and should be resolved by additional staff support. The system currently in place is that one of the TAs in each ETHN 1-2-3 course is designated the "lead" TA, and is given a small additional monthly stipend to perform various duties, including sometimes negotiating the deficiencies in the course software system. This seems wholly inadequate, and we recommend that the department be given additional resources so that they can hire a dedicated GSR to serve as TA coordinator or additional staff or perhaps both. Faculty and TAs also requested better guidance around expectations regarding what kinds of work TAs are expected to do. Though union contracts determine some aspects of this, some TAs report working more than 20 hr/week, including one TA who said she spends about 8 hours a week prepping for her sections alone, which seems excessive. TAs requested better communication about what exactly they were supposed to be covering in sections (some seemed to be preparing to present entirely new standalone content for their sections whereas others were simply facilitating discussions of material covered in lectures). Further, faculty reported not being sure about "TA culture" and what was appropriate to ask TAs to do and what was not. The fact that some faculty expected their head TAs to deal with IT issues while others did not signals a need for a more consistent and clear set of expectations across the department. A staff coordinator could help facilitate these discussions and ensure consistent dissemination of information to new faculty and TAs.

Overall, the contingent faculty seemed satisfied with their experience of the department, a situation that can be largely attributed to the fact that they are hired on yearly contracts, given a choice of classes to teach, and are not expected to teach the difficult ETHN 1-2-3 courses. Lecturers who are not drawn from the ranks of current and former graduate students felt that greater integration into department activities would be helpful.

Faculty, TAs, and even undergraduates consistently commented that they felt overburdened by various uncompensated service to the department and university. For faculty, this was manifested in both TA training activities, which are conducted on a volunteer basis; and campus service on committees, centers, and programs above and beyond the typical faculty service load. Importantly, course releases allocated to faculty

for campus service are consistently banked, as there would otherwise not be enough instructors for the department's teaching requirements (resource limitations presumably limit the use of lecturers to cover the shortfall). These issues were again noted as being relevant to faculty retention. TAs also report overwork (see above) and that this is one reason TA training is not fully attended. Undergraduates commented that one factor in their longer times to degree was significant service in student organizations focused on equity and diversity. Faculty raised the concern that allocation of resources to Ethnic Studies failed to account for the level of service the department contributed to the campus in the core principle area of equity, inclusion and diversity.

The committee agrees that the department seems to be understaffed in comparison to its teaching and campus service commitments, and would benefit from additional resources in the form of permanent staff (e.g., TA coordinator above) and/or additional faculty members so that at minimum course releases can be properly honored. We suggest that campus resource allocation to the department take into account both the higher level of committee service of Ethnic Studies faculty (particularly as it is aligned with the campus core principle of equity, diversity and inclusion), as well as the significant number of Ethnic Studies minors (roughly equal to the number of majors) which increase the advising burden for academic staff and faculty.

Although the number of Ethnic Studies majors overall is on the increase, the number of transfer student majors has not recovered from the recent decline that afflicted most Social Sciences. One way to increase transfer student majors might be to make better use of staff time in recruiting visits to community colleges. Staff reported that the standard practice of tabling was ineffective because few students visited their tables. A potentially more effective strategy is to make presentations in classes where there are likely to be students specifically interested in Ethnic Studies; the incoming Undergraduate Coordinator reported success with this strategy for her former department, Chinese Studies. In short, identifying promising community college classes and gaining instructor approval to make presentations about Ethnic Studies would be a better use of staff time than tabling.

Another way to facilitate an increase in transfer student majors is to negotiate more articulation agreements with the community colleges. The main obstacle to these agreements is that the community colleges typically do not teach "Ethnic Studies" in the relational and transnational way that the Department prioritizes, but rather offer courses focusing on specific ethnic groups. Along with the difference in focus comes a difference in theoretical approach to the subject matter. Faculty observed that allowing students to use articulation agreements to skip a lower division course will have the effect of putting transfer students into courses for which they are not adequately

prepared. However, we believe this obstacle is not insurmountable, and that the work necessary to harmonize the community college approach to the subject matter with the UCSD approach is worthwhile because the target populations for Ethnic Studies are well represented in the community colleges. It is a matter of communication between UCSD faculty and community college instructors, especially in Southern California. We understand that the department is making efforts in this direction, particularly through a consortium of Ethnic Studies departments in the San Diego area that is working to facilitate better communication with area community colleges, and we encourage the department to increase these efforts. Some of the department alumni who may be teaching in community colleges may be very useful in this regard.

We also encourage Ethnic Studies to do formal outreach to international students. A side-benefit of the department's transnational approach to Ethnic Studies is that their major is more attractive to the international students who now make up a substantial fraction of UCSD undergraduates. We make this recommendation recognizing that international students are even less likely than domestic students to declare Ethnic Studies as their major upon enrollment. They are more likely to add Ethnic Studies as half of a double major, or to declare an Ethnic Studies minor (as did the one international student we interviewed). This recommendation is therefore more attractive if minors can be included in the resource formula for Ethnic Studies. Compensation for minors could fund some of the recommendations above.

We would also like to mention two very minor issues brought up during our interviews. First, it appears that course catalog descriptions and especially cross-listing need to be updated, since students were enrolling in certain upper-division classes with incorrect expectations regarding course coverage. Second, TAs would like the department printer to be moved out of the faculty common room, or would like the department to purchase a dedicated TA printer.

By way of conclusion the Review Committee wishes to thank Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs Barbara Sawrey for her guidance, Marie Sidney from Academic Affairs for her meticulous organization and execution of the two-day review process, and Alexandrine Tea of the Academic Senate for her expert assistance during our interviews and meetings.

Respectfully submitted,

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