

African American Studies Department  
Chair's Response to the  
Program Performance Review External Review  
April 19, 2023

It is my pleasure to write this response to the helpful report prepared by the African American Studies Department's Program Performance Review External Team. During their visit on February 28, 2023, review members Benjamin Cawthra (Professor of History, CSU Fullerton), Ula Y. Taylor (Professor African American Studies, University of Berkeley), and Charles Toombs (Professor of Africana Studies, San Diego State University) met with Dean Sheryl Fontaine, Associate Dean Jessica Stern, African American Studies tenure-track faculty and lecturers, undergraduates, and Ethnic Studies office staff. At every meeting, the External Reviewers asked thoughtful questions about the program, listened carefully to students, faculty, and staff, and offered excellent suggestions for future years.

The External Review Team Report contains the following six recommendations for the department. I have shared the report with the African American Studies faculty, and we concur with most 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 there be a clear Area F budget. They understand that Ethnic Studies receives \$900,000 annually and that \$200,000 will be used for space, but they are unclear how much African American Studies can expect for the annual budget based on the disbursement of state funds. The Ethnic Studies chairs recently met with the Interim Provost, Amir Dabirian to get a clearer understanding of the budget, and it was communicated that \$900,000 is base line funding for all three Ethnic Studies departments. We will continue to have open communication regarding the budget in the upcoming years.
2. We strongly agree with the External Review Team's recommendation that we reduce the required number of students for 400-level courses from ten to six and allow the enrollment from the Area F courses to make up for this difference in FTES.
3. We strongly agree with the committee's recommendation that we increase staffing and hire someone to focus on the budget as the department continues to grow and offer Area F courses. This is especially urgent since we are losing our Human Resources recruiter specialist, Joanna Rowe, and we still need to find an ASC I. We also agree that staff should have strong communication with the department chair.

4. The committee asked to take a tour of the Institute of Black Intellectual Innovation (IBII) and we explained that most of the events were virtual, or organized through a network of community partners, but does not occupy a physical space. We plan to discuss issues of space with the Interim Provost regarding a move of the Ethnic Studies departments to a larger space.

5. We agree with the Performance Personnel Review Committee that IBII should receive baseline funding. IBII is a cross-campus initiative that offers critical programming and curriculum underscoring the university's strategic plan of enhancing diversity on campus and offering students a global education.

6. We agree with the Performance Personnel Review Committee that faculty should have connections to the professional organizations within the discipline, such as the National Council on Black Studies, and the Study of African American History, Life, and Culture. This fall one of our lecturers, Tula Strong, and Dr. Natalie Graham will take a group of students to the Study of African American History, Life, and Culture conference in Jacksonville, Florida.

I appreciate the time and careful attention that Dr. Benjamin Cawthra, Dr. Ula Y. Taylor, and Dr. Charles Toombs paid to our department during their visit. I am pleased to hear that the External Review Team found the African American Studies Department to be a "hard working department that is more collegial than competitive with each other." I was pleased to see the work of AFAM faculty, especially of myself and Dr. Graham, in providing stable leadership within the department being 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.