

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo African American Studies BA

The 2022-2023 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the African American Studies BA program in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) concluded with a culmination meeting on March 1, 2024.

The following people attended the meeting: Amir Dabirian (Provost), Merri Lynn Casem (AVP for Undergraduate Studies and GE, AVPUSGE), Jessica Stern (Interim Dean, HSS), Carl Wendt (Interim Associate Dean), Siobhan Brooks (Department Chair), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost congratulated the program for successfully completing the PPR process and thanked the department for all the accomplishments. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The department plays an essential role in the General Education curriculum.
- The department is a leader in engaging students and communities in high-impact practices, such as the 2018 Black Disability Symposium, and its plans to provide all majors and minors with internship/service-learning experiences. A great example is AFAM 321 (Activism, Engagement, and Community Development), which leverages alumni connections to offer student internship opportunities.
- The department is committed to intellectual growth and civic engagement, as seen through its new mission statement, collaboration with the Institute of Black Intellectual Innovation, and its continued relationship with the African American Resource Center. The department plays a significant role in supporting the campus Black community.
- The department and its leadership are committed to maintaining a collegial environment of scholars who are deeply committed to the intellectual growth of students, faculty, and the surrounding communities.
- The department leadership has provided stabilization and support to meet the new Ethnic Studies G.E. requirement, such as hiring new tenure-track faculty and lecturers.
- Despite the small size, the program has done an excellent in conducting student learning outcome assessment.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the accreditation process were discussed as follows:

1. Enrollment growth:

- The program FTEs have grown, particularly in upper-division courses. However, major classes tend to be small, and relatively speaking, requires more funding to support these small classes.
 - The Chair shared that the department is working to change pre-requisites for 300-level classes and exploring the possibility of capping specialty courses (e.g. at 400 level) to prioritize AFAM majors.
 - The AVPUSGE shared that there is now a “batch” process of changing prerequisites, which would help with the department’s effort.
 - The Dean stated that Area F funding could help support low-enrolled major courses, and the college is committed to one class per semester for majors.

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- The external reviewers recommended the program to continue growing the number of majors.
 - o The Dean recommended the program to consider more double majors, and the Provost offered help from his office on marketing needs to reach out to potential students.
 - o The Chair agreed that more majors are desired, but the challenge is that she is the only tenured faculty in the department. As such, more faculty are needed to enable the department to have the bandwidth to grow majors.
 - o The Dean and the Provost recommended the department to consider hiring at the Associate Professor level (as opposed to Assistant) and explore the use of Area F funding to hire beyond what the college baseline funding could support.

2. GE:

- The Chair shared that the department would like less “GE identity” and focus more on faculty specialties. Faculty hires are often influenced by GE needs or other external factors that make it difficult for the department identity.
- The Provost recommended the department to explore embedding AFAM classes into the curriculum of other majors or minors. The AVPUSGE’s office can help facilitate the conversations cross majors for this purpose.

3. Resource needs:

- The Chair voiced great needs for staffing support. She is having conversations with other ethnic studies departments, but would like more autonomy over this matter.
- The Provost acknowledged the staffing needs, and suggested the department to explore the use of Area F funding for staffing support. He stated that space is needed too for additional staff, and he is currently exploring ways to move HSS departments to optimize space in the building.
- The Chair expressed concerns over the uncertainty of Provost office’s commitment to the IBII baseline funding. The Provost explained that the goal is to use a combination of philanthropy and state funding to support IBII, and the university is committed to support IBII through a sustainable manner.

The Dean commended the faculty for their hard work and their contribution to the campus community. The Provost concurred and concluded the meeting by thanking the Chair for her leadership.