



CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, H-314

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October 9, 2023

To: Dr. Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences and Dr. Jessica Stern, Associate Dean of Student Relations

From: Dr. Monica D. Hanna, Chair, Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies

Subject: Chair Response to Dean's Summary and Evaluation of the BA in Ethnic Studies, Chicana/o Studies

Dear Dean Fontaine and Associate Dean Stern,

Thank you for your summary and evaluation of our program for the Chicana and Chicano Studies Program Performance Review. We appreciate your insights and recognition of the significant role our department plays within our campus community. As you note in your message of July 28, in the wake of our 50th anniversary at CSUF, the Chicana and Chicano Studies Department finds itself at an exciting point marked by growth and opportunity. We continue to build on our legacy of fostering student success and producing engaged scholarship, while building our capacities to serve the full student body at CSUF and serve as a center of Chicanx and Latinx scholarship and creativity within the region, the latter aided by the institution of the Latinx Lab for Storytelling and Social Justice. Even just since our spring self-assessment and review, we have seen positive growth in the department, with our number of majors growing to 42 at the Fall 2023 census (up from 31 at the Spring 2023 census), and our tenured faculty ranks growing to 5 (with a positive early tenure decision as well as a promotion to full coming for our faculty over the summer) while our 3 untenured colleagues make strong strides toward tenure. We also continue to build our capacity for GE service, particularly in Area F, while also working to bolster our curricular structure to best serve our growing number of majors and minors. As one example, we have been working with our faculty members and campus affiliates to create a consistent offering and rotation schedule for our education-focused courses; we have also been working with our partners in the College of Education on Chicana/o Studies requirements/prerequisites for the credentialing program and majors/minors within the college. Our new advising model is also one that has been particularly successful so far, as with a full-time professional advisor on staff, we are able to increase our outreach, begin working more intentionally on recruitment, and better serve our students overall by offering a “one-stop shop” for their advising needs. These are just a few indicators of our current positive trajectory. Below, I share a few thoughts on our strengths, areas for growth, and needs from administration at the college and university level for support of our growth.

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Curriculum is a major focus for our department that is a growth area for us. We had a successful curriculum retreat over the summer, during which we revised our mission, vision, and SLOs, which is now going to start shaping our assessment work. We have identified key areas of short-term and long-term focus, including course updating, course scaffolding, course rotation, and building structures within the department for better communication, accountability, and collaboration. Taking into account recommendations that emerged from the PPR process will be helpful as we continue to consider updates to our major requirements and work through curricular proposals. In particular, we will need to address scaffolding needs within the major.

We are open to and interested in collaborating on training in-service and future teachers of Ethnic Studies in the region. Currently, one of our lecturers is working with the dean's office in developing training and potentially a certificate. We would like to have additional information on the scope of the collaboration and the mechanics of this certificate moving forward to best understand how the department will participate and support.

We are also open to working with the dean's office to make target while supporting with the continuing development of the Area F GE requirement. Indeed, we appreciate the understanding of the dean's office in working with us to maintain 35-seat caps for our courses while building capacity for greatly expanded numbers of Area F sections. One recommendation from your letter is raising caps to 40 as a way also to accommodate courses that might be smaller if they are targeted only to majors. While we are certainly willing to work on creative ways to raise caps (looking at courses that can bear higher caps and testing our K-2 options for Area F, for example), we also want to make sure to maintain a recognition that Area F courses are different than others because of their content and because we are seeing at least some students who are hesitant or resistant about Ethnic Studies course requirements. As such, it becomes more challenging to expand the number of seats while working through topics that can be particularly challenging to some of our students. We look forward to working as a team to come up with a plan that takes into account these realities while also addressing the needs that we have to serve our large student population. On this topic, I will also note that our courses have continued to be popular, even among students not taking our courses only for requirements, and we have seen very strong fill rates; indeed, it is an exciting moment when we have to not worry about our courses filling, but rather we have to focus on protecting spaces within our courses for majors and minors because our courses fill so quickly.

Our department's growth has certainly required lots of support, and we have appreciated the support we have received in many different forms during this period. There are some areas where we will need continued support moving forward. One of those is staffing. After a very

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challenging academic year in 2022-23, when we had no ASCII at times and a wonderful fill-in ASCII at times who nonetheless was only working for us on part-time basis, while the chairs conducted several rounds of searches for a replacement, we were ecstatic to welcome a new ASCII in August. This is such a relief and a wonderful first-step, but it is not enough, as an ASCII and an ASAI for three departments in a growth phase means that those staff members have too much on their plates. It is becoming clear, as we anticipated, that we still need more staff to serve the needs of three ES departments growing their majors/minors, faculty ranks, courses, and community impact. Our PPR external review suggested we have one ASCII for each department, while the wonderful retired annuitant who helped us out when we were working on hiring the new ASCII suggested we hire an ASCII to bolster the staff. Our department is open to discuss a variety of options for our future staff configuration, and we are very eager to work with our college and university partners to find a feasible solution very soon, as we have found out the hard way that without administrative support, our best plans cannot become a reality.

We also anticipate hiring additional faculty in the short-term, and we will work as a department to identify our areas of greatest need.

Similarly, we know that we need to do preparatory work to be able to be ready to move forward with future options related to faculty office space as our needs expand. Ethnic Studies chairs will need to work together and we anticipate forming an ad hoc committee that brings together faculty from our three departments to identify our primary needs in relation to future office space (and hopefully some classroom space as well). In the short term, we will need to work with our campus partners to identify office space for our lecturer colleagues somewhere on campus.

In a time of administrative change and its attendant uncertainties, it is very helpful to have the dean's office state clearly in the 7/28/23 letter the understandings that we share about the use of Area F funds. It has been a pleasure collaborating with the dean's office with its current leadership and we look forward to continuing our collaborative work as we undergo the upcoming leadership transitions.

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