

April 17, 2023

To: Dean Sheryl Fontaine, College of the Humanities and Social Sciences
Associate Dean Jessica Stern
Chicana and Chicano Studies Department Chair Monica Hanna

Re: External Review of the CSUF Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies
committee
Margie Brown-Coronel, Associate Professor of History
California State University, Fullerton
Dolores Inés Casillas, Professor of Chicana and Chicano Studies
University of California, Santa Barbara
Anita Revilla, Professor and Chair of Chicana and Chicano Studies
California State University, Los Angeles

Dear Dean Fontaine,

With this memo, we present our Program Performance Review (PPR) and assessment of the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies based on our visit to campus, extensive interviews, and written materials provided to us. During the visit, the three faculty reviewers (Drs. Brown-Coronel, Casillas, and Revilla; also ‘the committee’) met with Dean Fontaine, Associate Dean Jessica Stern, Department Chair Monica Hanna, and Vice Chair Eddy Alvarez. We also met with representatives from the tenure-track and tenured faculty, lecturer faculty, students, and support staff. Questions that guided these meetings included, what brought you to the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies, what is working well for you, and what are some challenges that must be addressed. Everyone we spoke with was forthright and enthusiastic. This report includes many instances of achievement of the whole department. The department has accomplished a great deal and plays a critical role in the college and department. With that, all stakeholders were clear on that this review process was important for considering possible changes to continue on the path of transformation and success. The committee has divided up the review and report into four key sections: Curriculum, Community Building, Faculty, and Governance/Operations.

CURRICULUM

The PPR clearly showed students majoring in Chicana and Chicano Studies Department often do not arrive at CSUF to major in Chicana and Chicano Studies. Rather, they “find” the major and have transformative academic and personal experiences that then compel them to pursue the major. Students assert that they gain not only academic empowerment but also personal fulfillment in their courses. Students attain a degree in Ethnic Studies with a concentration in one of the three areas of focus, Chicana/Chicano, African American, and Asian American Studies. The department enjoys their connection to African American and Asian American studies, and they readily encourage students to take courses across Ethnic Studies departments. In the array of classes, students shared that they have sharpened their critical thinking skills, they understand the significance of alternative and different perspectives, and they can deploy research skills to ask and answer difficult questions. Students shared they are also more confident, comfortable, and feel they “have a voice” in spaces beyond their major classes. Many majors go on to serve their communities and be change-makers in the region. Students have a stronger sense of identity and role in society because they majored in Chicano/a Studies. For these reasons, the department should feel exceptionally proud.

The review also revealed points to reflect and re-envision the design and structure of the curriculum moving forward, particularly given the great changes that the university's Area F requirement and the movement to include Ethnic Studies in the high schools.

Primarily, Area F requirement brings more visibility to the department, which has led to increase enrollment of both major and GE enrollment. The requirement also has the potential also to strain the department by this increase in demand. Plans should be in place to build capacity for more students and also preserve the unique experience of majors. The following are areas to explore as the department moves forward and grows:

Overlapping courses: Students articulated challenges of having all or majority of Chicana and Chicano Studies courses qualify for General Education (GE) requirements. As a result, courses unintentionally overlap (even lower to upper division) in material and background to accommodate students who have never taken CS/ES courses. Reclassifying upper-division courses to have pre-requirements for enrollment would further develop students' content knowledge and skills. This would also help create an academic plan to take courses in a particular order, to avoid repetition or backtracking. The Department could also consider designating or creating courses specifically for majors.

Low unit major: Because the Chicana and Chicano Studies major unit requirements are much lower than the unit requirement for graduation, students expressed concern over how to fill in the remaining required units. Some suggested increasing the number of major courses/units to graduate.

Course restructuring and alignment: Like many departments, Chicana and Chicano Studies has inherited a curriculum that is now outdated. With four relatively new faculty, the department has an exciting opportunity to align courses with new faculty expertise in such a way as to sustain relevancy. Curriculum redesign and course development could be an exciting opportunity as a department priority. We understand that the Department is in the beginning stages of discussing curriculum revisions and additions. Restructuring and synchronizing the curriculum would be particularly important to prepare students to meet the needs of the statewide ethnic studies requirement.

Advising: Further development in undergraduate student advising is also an opportunity to envision a new curriculum that centers the goals and strengths of the major. One suggestion would be to develop an advising strategy that goes beyond one faculty member and is collectively implemented. This would help students navigate a program of study and gain exposure to multiple faculty members.

Possible MA certificate: There is an interest in offering a Chicana/Latina graduate certificate, especially to help MA recipients be prepared to teach at the community college level. A faculty member indicated, "We have many strengths, but they aren't represented in the current curriculum." There is a desire to develop their strengths in Central American Studies and Jotera Studies, with a discussion of creating minors in these areas.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING

The Department demonstrates a strong commitment to crafting an academic and personal space within classrooms and campus activities that emphasizes building and sustaining a sense of community. This is significant in light of the overall post-pandemic climate where students are returning to campus after years of social and cultural isolation. The Department should be commended for its dedication to building an inclusive department community.

Students: Indeed, one of the Department's clear strengths was the type of classroom communities built throughout the semester. Students commented on how they felt "at home" in courses that addressed working-class, non-English-dominant families as cultural assets rather than deficits. Assignments, as

described by both students and faculty, were applied, rigorous, and creative forms of assessment (podcasts, zines, oral interviews, museum visits, and more). Many referenced the department as a “home away from home.” Further, Alumni have done extremely well using their degrees in the fields of work, including writing, publishing, health professionals, social work, and non-profit workers. One faculty said, “We create leaders because as they study movement, they realize they have to take the lead... We plan the seeds for the outcome of leadership and decolonial work.”

Faculty Governance: In the spirit of community and collaboration, the department includes all faculty across ranks in its faculty governance. This is very admirable. Faculty indicated that they struggled to accomplish change in the department early on because of the lack of time and small number of faculty. This resulted in faculty feeling overextended. With new faculty in the department, there is concern about the involvement of untenured faculty in heavy administrative tasks. For instance, drafting tenure and promotion guidelines are major department tasks led by senior faculty and include untenured faculty as committee members. On the one hand, including junior faculty offers transparency and inclusion, but risks assigning untenured faculty with extensive administrative service of weekly meetings to update personnel guidelines. Instead, we recommend that the senior faculty update the guidelines, and invite junior scholars to give feedback twice a semester.

Mentorship: There are clear, rich examples of peer mentorship among the junior faculty. They function together as more of a cohort given their close hiring dates. They consult each other with curricula and are actively engaged in creating courses and minors within the department (for example, Central American Studies). Faculty expressed mixed comments on the usefulness of campus mentorship resources, in particular, from the Faculty Development Center. Given CSUF’s commitment to recruiting and retaining a more diverse faculty body, we recommend considering a mentorship program that intentionally addresses First-Generation faculty of color (and LGBTQ faculty) experiences which includes addressing campus administrative services (governance, library) as well as campus microaggressions.

The Department does not formally assign mentors to junior faculty. In lieu of a formal mentoring program for junior faculty, perhaps assigning junior faculty a mentor from either inside or outside the department would alleviate the cultural taxation of faculty inside of the department. Faculty recommended more onboarding activities within the department and faculty mentors of color to support their integration into the university.

FACULTY

The committee met with tenure-track faculty, tenured faculty, and lecturer faculty separately. All faculty expressed great pride and enthusiasm about the department, its growth, and its future. The department includes a very strong group of eight fulltime faculty members that cover a broad scope of fields (five with interdisciplinary backgrounds).

Four new faculty hired since 2020 represent a new generation of Chicana/Latina scholars at Fullerton and in the broader field. Trained to be specialists in race and ethnicity, their research includes but is not limited to: healing wellness, Queer Chicana/Latina people, Jotera studies, musicology, punk culture, Central American studies, and the impact of COVID-19 on Black and Brown communities. Tenured faculty cover areas including political theory, decolonial theory, racialization, gender (masculinity) studies as well as urban, regional planning, community health. Certainly a key strength of the department, the faculty are excited about breadth and depth of the department and how those elements can inform and shape the (re)structuring of the major, the strategic plan, and function of the department.

Further testimony of the strength of the department is the recent Mellon Foundation Grant awarded to Chicana and Chicano Studies faculty in 2022. This \$1.2 million award from the Mellon Foundation funds “The Latina Lab.” Faculty are excited about the grant they received to implement the Latina Lab on

campus. Several programs (revised and updated curriculum, summer institutes, an online digital archive, and research symposia) are connected to that work, and there is much enthusiasm from faculty and students. The lab uses storytelling as a method of promoting social justice and challenging structural racism. This is an exciting opportunity to align the Latinx Lab vision and achievements with the overall strategic plan of the department. The committee agrees with faculty desire to see junior faculty more integrated into the Latinx Lab grant projects as an effort to support both scholarly and teaching goals.

TT/Tenured Faculty: Faculty discussed the challenges of becoming TT faculty during the pandemic. Hired in the middle of the pandemic with the limits of distance/virtual modes, some struggled to feel grounded and connected to campus. Others continue to deal with students and students' families being affected by the pandemic. Carrying out research during the pandemic also posed challenges, forcing junior faculty to switch research modalities midway through their data collection. Faculty are still recovering and struggling as a result of the pandemic. The committee recommends that these factors are taken into consideration with reviews, service expectations, and expected outcomes of faculty.

Currently, the department is revising its department personnel standards (DPS). The committee supports faculty suggestions to ensure that revisions include public scholarship as quantifiable scholarly and creative achievements. Further, along with DPS revisions, the committee recommends that the department leadership to establish mechanisms to support junior faculty through the review process, particularly in cases of early tenure.

Part time (PT) faculty: The committee met with four lecturer/part time faculty members. PT faculty range from long term contracts to recent hires. Their expertise include education, Ethnic Studies, Chicana/Latina studies, English, writing, oral communications, gender, and Black Latinx identity. PT faculty shared that while their initial appointments assigned them to particular classes, they've appreciated the recent flexibility and opportunities with course offerings, teaching schedules, and medical accommodations. PT faculty are very much interested in teaching new classes, for example one suggested an Indigenous Literature course. Others shared insights on how to re-envision Chic 101 by including the reading *Rethinking Ethnic Studies*. Overall, the new PT felt supported by the chair and TT faculty. They felt authentically embraced by the whole department.

Some areas for growth for PT faculty include the following:

1. onboarding process to become familiar with course assignments/scheduling as well as timeline (specifically deadlines) and eligibility for review and range elevation.
2. training and collaborative opportunities to share syllabi, assignments, learning outcomes, resources as well as programming and curriculum planning ideas. This would benefit the whole department, especially with intense need for planning around Area F courses.
3. Inclusion in some department business, such as occasional department meetings to foster the already strong community environment. PT faculty also expressed an interest in teaching online courses to relieve the heavy load of carrying five in-person course.

GOVERNANCE and DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS

Procedures: The community building in the department is among one of its strengths. The collective spirit shown in the review materials and shared among students, faculty, and staff is, indeed, admirable. To preserve and nurture this community as well as to set in motion actions to achieve the important goals outlined in the strategic plan, the review committee highly recommends establishing procedures and practices. As the department grows with new faculty, it has an opportunity to create transparency, consistency, and a record of decisions made by the department. Setting up procedures to facilitate the excessive amount of work for a small department can also alleviate the 'meeting burnout' that faculty expressed.

The review committee suggests the department prioritize clarifying and instituting procedures for the following areas: course assignments and releases, advising and committee assignments, and email/communication procedures. For example, a transparent rotation on course assignments and schedules, such as the graduate level course would serve and benefit the department and students. Courses releases and advising responsibilities should also follow a procedure (rotating assignment, election, etc) agreed upon and set by the department.

While summer retreats build community and collegiality, the review committee recommends preserving summer time scholarly and creative activities, especially for junior faculty to make progress toward tenure requirements. Should the department unanimously agree to summer service to the department, additional pay should be given. With a clear strategic plan in hand, the committee recommends a timeline of manageable goals that can be aligned with department meetings. This will bring sharp focus and intention to department meetings.

Communication: Based on feedback of varied email practices and communication styles, the committee recommends the department adopt guidelines for emails and department community agreements. While email communication has benefits, over-abundance of email can be distracting and inefficient for carrying out department discussions and business. Please see Appendix A for a sample email policy and community agreement from the campus of one of the reviewers.

Service of both TT/Tenured Faculty: For TT faculty, the highest priority should be their research and teaching, and meetings and service must be minimal. The committee recommends no more than two departmental committees for junior faculty. Weekly committee meetings have been productive but taxing. The committee recommends no more than two faculty meetings per month unless absolutely necessary.

Staff: Discussion with staff revealed the concern over the increased administrative demands that have come with the new Area F requirement. The Department staff are performing more than their share of work. At the time of the review, the Department was down one full-time staff, and quite honestly, it showed. Staff voiced strong concern about having such few staff shared across three different departments. The review committee recommends that each department have a designated ASA and ASC to manage department operations as well as enrollment responsibilities. Further, Area F may present more majors in each department, further demonstrating the need for additional administrative support.

Space: The Department has inherent challenges in regard to shared staff and shared common spaces. Lecturers share cubicles in shared spaces which raises concerns over privacy during office hours. Students do not have a designated space to work or hold events. We imagine that this is a challenge for many departments, but for a student population largely characterized by their commute and first-generation college experiences, a designated space to call their own would help build a “cohort” or communal sense of belonging for the majors. For classrooms and class sizes, some faculty recommended smaller class sizes and teaching in the same building instead of all over campus.

SUMMARY

Overall, the review process demonstrated the Department’s top-tiered quality of student teaching and mentoring coupled with an impressive faculty community with creative and rigorous research profiles. As a smaller department with now a very demanding responsibility to carry the area F general education requirement, the committee recommends college and university support in the form of additional staff. It would be a loss to the university should the department be consumed by administering Area F on minimal resources at the expense of its momentum and growth as a critical department to the campus community and beyond.

APPENDIX A

Sample Email Communication Policy

Email guidelines:

As we communicate with each other via email, let's be sure to contribute to a generative space versus a taxing space for our listservs. Remember:

- Because we value everyone's voice in this Department, we must be willing to hear everyone's voice even when we are not in agreement.
- Please present your own opinions/ideas and avoid speaking for other individuals and/or groups.
- Be aware of the space you take up via email; step up or step back.
- If you make a request by email, know that you might not get a response immediately or at all. It may need to be addressed in person.
- Please take time to listen and reflect before you respond, especially when you disagree with a position
- Avoid statements that can cause conflict, contestation, hurt, and/or fear by email and instead address these issues directly in person (zoom/phone).

CLS COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

We agree to engage in productive dialogue by adhering to the following norms:

1. We will make an effort to use good judgment and care when expressing disagreement.
2. We will listen attentively and respond with compassion and care.
3. We will avoid shaming, personal attacks, accusations, and speaking over others.
4. We will be mindful of our use of time and space in the conversation.

We agree to create healthier workspaces by acknowledging the following:

1. We will make an effort to reconcile past hurt and anger to avoid re-harming.
2. We will commit to resolving difficult conversations.
3. We will express our frustrations and grievances with a focus on resolution.
4. We will work towards confianza and prudencia regarding sensitive discussions.