

Unit Response Report to AFST APR (2015) Africana Studies Program

June 26, 2017

Opening Comments and Acknowledgments:

This Report addresses the Africana Studies Program's 2015 Academic Program Review. We would like to thank Dr. Finnie Coleman, Associate Professor, Department of English, American Literary Studies; and Crystal Davis, former Unit Administrator for Africana Studies, for their thorough coordination of the departmental preparation for the review and careful stewardship of departmental programs. With respect to the UNM APR process, we would like to thank Ms. Bessie Gallegos, Ms. Nancy Middlebrook, and Dr. Greg Heileman for the attention and knowledge that they devoted to the review. Lastly, we appreciate the thoughtful consideration and careful work of the members of the Review Team: Dr. Ula Taylor, Associate Professor, Department of African American Studies, University of California Berkley; Dr. James Stewart, Professor Emeritus, Labor Studies and Employment Relations, Pennsylvania State University; and Dr. Irene Vasquez, Professor and Director, Department of Chicana/o Studies, University of New Mexico.

The review team concluded that despite institutional indifference, the commendable efforts of the faculty and staff have produced an excellent education for UNM's most deserving students. And, given structural limitations, the faculty has sought to promote a solid research environment for students and themselves. The review team believes that a critical alignment of institutional resources will enable Africana Studies at UNM to fully realize its potential and become a leading department in the nation.

That said, since the revised action plan spreadsheet was not available to the review team when they held their site visit, this response will address the review team's formulated response specific to: 1) the collective assessment of the program, 2) faculty performance, 3) instruction of students, 4) the resources and facilities, and 5) resources and facilities.

I. Overall Assessment of the Program

The review team report recognizes Africana Studies at UNM as an evolving unit that advances interdisciplinary scholarship across the humanities and the social sciences. Speaking to this point, the review team acknowledges that Africana Studies at UNM is poised to leverage such collaboration with other entities both within and outside of the College of Arts and Sciences. This intellectual constellation offers unique opportunities to develop a model of Africana Studies that serves as a hub of research and learning innovation in the Southwest and that can provide much needed expertise on issues facing societies across the globe. Unfortunately, the impression that emerged from the extensive external review is that the program has been marginalized by a culture of disregard and indifference towards Africana Studies, particularly the lack of a strong administrative champion. The review team concludes that the minimal efforts undertaken by the administration have hampered the growth and expansion of the unit and appear to have had the goal of preserving the status quo at best or, at worst, to blatantly disregard the evolution of a vibrant academic discipline.

II. Faculty Performance

- A. Lack of Professional Development and Research Support: The review team found that the shortage of professional development and research support has forced regular faculty members to seek out informal mentoring and rely upon themselves to identify resources to support their scholarship.
- 1) Response: Africana Studies is committed to improving faculty professional development and research support via sponsoring and attending workshops sponsored by the Division for Equity and Inclusion on professional development and strategic publishing for faculty of color.
 - 2) Response: Faculty are considering the idea of intra/inter-departmental/program co-authored articles and other publications as well as independently identifying funding sources to support research, and regular attendance at professional conferences.
 - 3) Response: Africana studies leadership is seeking out opportunities that could be funded as special projects out of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Office of the Provost such as, support to attend/present research at conferences, scholarships for students to assist faculty with research, and support for study/research abroad.
- B. The Overreliance on Part-Time Faculty: The review team discovered that overreliance on part-time faculty has hindered the stabilization of course offerings and leaves those faculty further marginalized in the larger scope of professional development and support for their research activities.
- 1) Response: The successful completion of the 2019-2021 hiring plan includes converting Lecturers to tenure track positions, hiring a tenure-track professor with a degree in African American/Africana Studies, and hiring post-doctoral students. These hires will diminish the over-reliance on PTI's, stabilize course offerings and usher emerging scholars into professional teaching and research positions.
- C. The Swahili Language Course: The review team stated that the Swahili language course is crucial to the execution of its curriculum, yet its offering is hampered by what appears to be a lack of cooperation from other departments, which forces the program to rely upon part-time faculty.
- 1) Response: Africana Studies is coordinating the completion of the program's curriculum revision. This process generally includes developing an outline of the proposed revision, establishing a curriculum revision committee and completing the appropriate forms (A, B, and C). Specific to Swahili, the revision proposes changing Swahili from two 3-credit hour courses to two six-credit hour courses. Since Swahili is considered a critical language, this makes it more attractive/beneficial to International Studies students who have a 12-hour language requirement for degree completion. This also positions FLL to partner with Africana Studies in searching for a joint appointment tenure-track or tenured position in Swahili.

III. Student Performance

- A. Student Recruitment and Program Visibility: The review team reported that students recognize that demands on the Lecturers and the lack of tenure-track faculty negatively impact the program's visibility.

- 1) Response: The successful completion of the 2019-2021 hiring plan includes converting Lecturers to tenure track positions, hiring of a tenured track professor with a degree in African American/Africana Studies, and hiring post-doctoral students. These hires will diminish the over reliance on PTI's, stabilize course offerings and usher emerging scholars into professional teaching and research positions.
- 2) Response: Africana Studies is in the process of re-branding to increase visibility. The program is developing outreach materials, working toward a comprehensive and viable social media campaign, promoting a new curriculum with a more direct path to graduation, and tracking and publicizing student, faculty and program successes.
- 3) Response: Africana Studies is refining our integrated advisement processes by incorporating our assigned advisor from the College into our curriculum revision and rebranding efforts. This will assist in promoting the program with a clear and consistent message.

B. Program Enrollment: The review team confirmed appropriate enrollment rates and the number of majors and minors. However, other programs and departments receive the lion's share of credits generated as a result of the program's process for cross-listing courses. These conditions have discouraged the cross-listing of courses by some faculty.

- 1) Response: Coordinate the completion of the assessment of student learning plan, which includes reviewing and revising the broad program mission and goals and clearly defining student learning outcomes.
- 2) Response: Africana Studies is in the process of re-branding to increase visibility. The program is developing outreach materials, working toward a comprehensive and viable social media campaign, promoting a new curriculum with a more direct path to graduation, and tracking and publicizing student, faculty and program successes.
- 3) Response: Africana Studies is refining our integrated advisement processes by incorporating our assigned advisor from the College into our curriculum revision and rebranding efforts. This will assist in promoting the program with a clear and consistent message.

IV. Resource and Facilities

A. Staffing and Accommodations: The review team reported several key limitations that stifle the potential for a fully vibrant academic culture: 1) an elevator as primary access, 2) stairwell doors are consistently locked, 3) limited office, classroom and meeting space, and 4) the lack of appropriate technology.

- 1) Response: Since the time of the review team's report, Africana Studies has lost a Unit Administrator, two tenure lines, one tenure-track line and the possibility of an additional tenure-track line. Africana Studies has completed the most recent hiring plan and staffing request to include one Administrative Assistant III, one tenure hire Ph.D. in African American/Africana Studies, three Post-Doctoral positions, and the conversion of four Lecturer II positions in Africana Studies to four tenure-track positions.
- 2) Response: While access to the Program's space via stairwell and elevator is limiting, it is necessary in order to secure the valuable holdings in Africana Studies. That said, the classroom is currently under renovation for expansion and investment has been made to upgrade the technology.

V. Recommendations for Strengthening Africana Studies

- A. Faculty: The review team recommends the following: 1) university administrative resources be provided to enable faculty to complete a comprehensive strategic plan correctly align w/a general understanding of field, yet tailored to the specific strengths of the program, 2) hone in on the experiences of Blacks in the Southwest, 3) initiate departmental workshops on internal development and strategic publishing, and 4) bridge the divide between Africana Studies and the larger Black community.

1) Response: This area has not specifically been addressed

2) Response: The proposed revised curriculum includes a course on *Blacks in the Southwest US* as one of the core requirements for a degree in Africana Studies.

3) Response: See A. 1-3

4) This divide has been addressed, at least initially, by hiring a native New Mexican who has strong ties to the Black community to lead the program. Africana Studies is also committed to tying various aspects of programming into the community and also becoming more visible at, and supportive of, other local and statewide programs and events.

- B. Administration: The review team advocates the following: 1) provide a clear road map on what is required to shift the Africana Studies program into a department; 2) make an operational investment to transform Africana Studies structurally from a program to a department; 3) A hiring plan that includes at least four tenure-track faculty, one of which should have a Ph.D. in African American or African Diaspora Studies; 4) transition black faculty in the program to tenure-track appointments; 5) re-invest in post-doctoral funding; 6) improve coordination of, and review protocols for, cross-listings; 7) address the problem of limited space and student access; and 8) formally acknowledge and commend the work of the past Directors and deposit their oral histories in the Morrissey Research Hall and the UNM main library.

1) Response: Most of these administrative recommendations have already been responded to throughout this document. A careful and direct approach to addressing these matters will occur throughout the new director's three-year term.