

TO: Jennifer Summit, Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs
FROM: Amy Sueyoshi, Interim Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies
DATE: December 25, 2018
RE: Dean's Response to the External Review Report of Asian American Studies 7th
Cycle Program Review

The external reviewers have done a tremendous job completing Asian American Studies' 7th cycle review. Their thoughtful and detailed report addresses the department's incredible contribution and makes a number of important recommendations. I have categorized my comments in three general areas –student needs, faculty work and development, and curriculum.

STUDENT NEEDS

What appeared most prominently in the report was a need for more mental health support for both major and non-majors in AAS. (2, 4) Students described faculty as “therapists, counselors, healers, all in one,” and faculty reported housing homeless students, holding tutorial sessions in their own home, and giving money to students for books. (3, 5, 12) I request more formal collaboration from Student Affairs so that we better support the mental health of our students which is no doubt aggravated by housing, food, and economic insecurity. I am concerned that faculty are taking up work in areas in which they are neither trained nor compensated.

The reviewer's additionally noted that students wanted more explicit guidance on career pathways with an AAS major. (3, 13) In response to reviewers' recommendation, the department has recently made significant efforts to pair students with alumni as part of an initiative to have students feel more supported around their career pathways/explorations. In the past the department has additionally mounted a bulletin board on what AAS majors could do after graduation. AAS is also involved in a College-wide initiative to implement the social science teacher waiver program at the high school level and will be collaborating with College of Education to develop a joint program for students interested in teaching in elementary education. I encourage the department to continue implementing creative solutions as well as pursuing formal structures to better facilitate a career pathway for students. (12, 13)

AAS students' needs at the tutoring center appear to be unmet due to lack of cultural competency among the hired staff. I request that an assessment be done regarding the root of the problem and

that appropriate training be implemented. (5) If, for example, a large number of tutors are in fact API, how is it that they are not culturally competent to serve API students? Perhaps more training is needed on how to approach struggling students so as not to trigger their insecurities and slam shut the door of learning.

FACULTY WORK AND DEVELOPMENT

The Dean's Office is fully aware and concerned about the increased of class caps over the past fifteen years. (5) In fall 2018 we made a recommendation to all the departments to decrease enrollments previously set at 49 to 45 students. Particularly now since our allocation is tied to targets, departments can adjust class sizes accordingly so long as they reach their target. Thus AFRS in the CoES has bumped up enrollments in their online classes in order to have smaller face-to-face classes without impact to their overall FTES. Most importantly however, our office has determined that the departments could lower their class caps to 45 with no detrimental effect on target since we are being funded to hire more lecturers to reach our assigned target. I encourage AAS to lower their class caps as a first step in determining additional adjustments in their class size.

Reviewers pointed to an explicit need to hire a queer studies faculty member as there appears to be a lecturer both advising graduate students and guest lecturing in undergraduate courses currently. (9, 12) I urge the department to search more directly for this specific specialty rather than one more broadly on gender and sexuality studies as it has done in the past for a more direct outcome. I also strongly encourage the department to consider faculty expertise in disability studies inclusive of mental health, with a number of retirements on the horizon. (12) I agree with reviewers that AAS should continue to remain mindful of the future if not present of Asian American communities, such as gaming, as the department delineates faculty expertise in upcoming hires. (12)

AAS has done a remarkable job including and mentoring lecturers in their department, many of whom are graduates from their department. While the reviewers have noted that the lecturers state there was not even a "basic orientation," I do know that this past summer the department did hold an orientation for their new lecturers. (9) I believe the department has initiated more activity in better preparing and including lecturers as departmental faculty and urge them to continue on the course that they have set for themselves.

CURRICULUM

Reviewers suggested designating courses from the other departments in the College of Ethnic Studies as part of their major degree requirements according to student feedback. (6) Our office commends AAS faculty for cultivating AAS student desire to collaborate and build community across other ETHS departments. While the department could certainly revise their degree requirements to include 3 units or more from another department in the College, the request could also be addressed through directed advising for other graduation requirements such as complementary studies and GE. Students could be more aggressively directed to take GE in other departments of the College and/or to make certain that they are fulfilling their complementary

studies requirement through 12 units in one of the other CoES departments if it is not done so already.

While AAS has increased online curriculum to better serve a wide range of students, the external reviewers' report appeared to suggest that many students believed that the online format was antithetical to the mission of field and that the implementation of online teaching often appeared haphazard. (4, 10) I urge the department to keep a closer eye on online courses and their quality of instruction, consult with other departments that successfully hold "difficult dialogues" in an online format, and continue to facilitate learning opportunities in online teaching.

Students also expressed interest in more research opportunities, and I wondered if the existing curriculum could accommodate students and faculty working together on research projects for credit. Perhaps AAS 699 could function in that manner. I am also reminded of SOC 502 Internship Seminar in the Sociology Department where students are paired with faculty across the university to assist in research projects. A consultation with Sociology on how that course is implemented and its efficacy could be useful. The Dean's Office this spring 2019 as part of its student success initiatives also intends to fund two 160 hour internships during the summer where students will receive a \$2000 honorarium to assist on a research project with a faculty member.

There appears also pervasive concern that courses feel too basic when non-majors enroll in AAS courses with majors. And, because all but three among the fifty total AAS courses are GE, classes often enroll students who have had little to no curriculum on race. (2, 4, 6) I agree with reviewers in thinking about delimiting enrollments in major courses. (6, 13) Departments in the College are welcome to adjust classroom caps and set prerequisites for specific courses, so long as FTES targets are met. I might encourage the department to experiment with pre-requisites for one or two of the upper division GE courses to see what kind of impact it would have on enrollment depending on the pre-requisite and versus the quality of discussion. Additionally, increasing the numbers of overall majors and minors would create larger a pool of students to fill courses reserved for majors and minors without it being low enrolled.

In conclusion, Asian American Studies is doing incredible work contributing to student engagement and success, through its committed and stellar faculty as well as its AANAPISI grant. Moreover, they are radically shaping the purpose and face of higher education to better serve the reality of today's college student, working and often folks of color from immigrant or refugee families who face increased difficulties in securing socio-economic stability. I understand that resource generation continues to be a challenge. The Dean's Office remains committed to partnering with AAS in revenue generating activities such as a more detailed analysis of CEL dollars, grant writing, and donor cultivation as needed by the department.