

**External Review Report**

7<sup>th</sup> Cycle Program Review  
Department of Latina and Latino Studies  
San Francisco State University

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## **General Overview of the Program (based on self-study and campus visit)**

After reviewing the self-study materials that the LTNS faculty recently completed, we conducted a two-day site visit of the department and had the opportunity to meet with faculty, office staff, students, and a former graduate student who is a part-time lecturer. Based on these conversations and materials, we gained an understanding of the program, its history, successes, strengths, as well as areas for potential growth.

The strength of the program is the undergraduate major, which the faculty purposely developed to meet the diverse needs and interests of the students. The wide array of offerings and emphases in the program are impressive, especially given the limited number of faculty teaching in the department.

A standout facet of the program is the extensive work faculty have done to provide service learning opportunities for their students. In addition, the major offers dynamic programs directed at preparing students for successful professional lives in specific fields.

A major strength of the program is the faculty's ability to work collectively. They have created a vibrant program and found ways to do an impressive amount of work (in terms of the student population served) despite their small size. The faculty are supportive of their chair and committed to working with her to achieve their collective vision for the department. They are now initiating the process of envisioning the next steps the department can take to best meet the needs of the students beyond what they have already built.

## **Evaluation of Program Quality**

### **Program Planning**

The self-study clearly demonstrates the faculty's collective analysis of their on-going work and represents the first step toward more in-depth program planning. The ability of the entire tenure-line faculty to participate in self-evaluation augurs well for more targeted future planning. The self-study accurately describes the amount of work faculty invest in providing students a program of study that is rigorous and that prepares majors for graduate school and professional success. The self-study also demonstrates that faculty have been over-extended as a group and are in need of additional faculty lines.

### **Student Learning and Achievement**

The most impressive data included in the self-study are the graduation rates of the students who are enrolled in the LTNS programs (minors, majors, and secondary majors). The numbers suggest that, despite the high enrollments, the faculty successfully engage students in their classes, as well as support students' overall academic success. Given the demographic shifts on campus and the university's HSI status, it would benefit the university to allocate resources to support the successful work of the faculty in this area.

The students were deeply appreciative of the faculty and the program. They spoke in glowing terms of the faculty's dedication to their success. During our classroom session, the students gave poignant examples of how they came to consciousness in the department's classes and demonstrated their excitement in learning the discipline of Latina/o Studies. They consistently mentioned acquiring knowledge in the Latina/o Studies classes not available to them in other departments. The students' comments reflected a deep intellectual engagement in their classes and they made explicit connections between the knowledge acquired and their future careers and plans for graduate school. The most consistent request from students was for additional classes in areas of interest not currently covered in the curriculum. They expressed frustration at not having additional sections to enroll in classes they needed for the major.

### **The Curriculum**

The breadth and quality of the curriculum is impressive given the small number of faculty. There seems to be little overlap of faculty's areas of expertise in research and teaching. The three areas of emphasis in the department address the interests and needs of the diverse student population the program serves. Enrollment suggests that each of these areas generates student interest, and the faculty have done an admirable job of covering both entry-level courses and specific facets of a given area of emphasis.

The program's curriculum takes an intersectional approach, attentive to different class experiences, regional differences, cultural differences, sexual orientations and identities of students and their communities. An intersectional lens provides intellectual support for students' backgrounds while simultaneously creating opportunities for students to apply their acquired knowledge and skills beyond their own experiences.

The faculty supplement the class offerings with enhanced learning opportunities outside

the classroom. The students seem especially appreciative of the academic-based trips offered by the department. The students find these experiences essential to their intellectual growth and academic success—they can “see” their knowledge come alive through these opportunities. Students consistently mentioned the community service learning courses as pivotal in their undergraduate education. The faculty have designed an outstanding set of community work experiences that are directly linked to the students’ academic work in the program. Especially noteworthy is Clinica Martín Baró. Students mentioned this placement as having a profound influence over their choice of careers and in making links between their chosen professions and their commitments to working with their communities.

The service component of the major is especially significant for first generation college students who may have difficulty linking their academic experiences to the realities of their communities in traditional departments. Giving students the opportunity to bring their education to the communities they grew up in reenergizes them to pursue their degrees, build their sense of purpose, and ultimately fully engage their academic strengths.

### **Faculty**

The faculty reflect the diversity of the field of Latina/o Studies and cover history, humanities, and social sciences, as well as specific applied areas such as education and health care. Each of the faculty have engaged in community-based projects that are connected to their research and teaching. These projects provide students with extra-curricular opportunities to enhance their learning in the department. The diversity of opportunities for student engagement with faculty is impressive. There is no doubt that faculty spend countless hours developing these community/research connections that become a powerful resource for students. The students highlighted the faculty’s commitment to building a sense of community in their classes and establishing substantive relationships with them. Many of the students mentioned that this feeling of “home” was not usual in other departments and several mentioned switching from other majors as a result of the receptive atmosphere created by LTNS faculty.

The faculty are active as scholars producing work that is prominent in the field of Latina/o Studies. Their prominence in the academic field of Latina/o Studies centers SFSU as a critical site in the discipline. The academic excellence of the faculty directly benefits the program and ultimately the students it graduates.

Working in an emerging discipline, faculty are multi-tasked with implementing a curriculum as the discipline develops. It is important to remember that Ethnic Studies as an academic area, and its various disciplines (e.g., Latina/o Studies, Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, and American Indian Studies) is a recent addition to the academy. It is to be expected that there will be continual revamping as the discipline develops. The university should acknowledge the extra work involved in building the discipline as the department continues planning for the next phases of its development and requests necessary resources.

Of foremost importance for maintaining the successful trajectory of the program, is to increase the number of faculty lines. The sheer amount of faculty output in teaching, service learning, developing the discipline and program, and new initiatives, take a toll on the faculty and staff. The amount of work faculty are investing in supporting students inside and out of class is not sustainable. There is an urgent need for more hires in key areas that are essential to the program and its development.

### **Resources**

The resources of the department are extremely limited. Perhaps the most difficult challenge the department faces appears to be a campus-wide issue: they do not have control over their own budget and cannot plan ways in which they can strategically manage enrollment and staffing to increase course offerings. The department has identified specific needs for hiring tenure-line faculty, but since the budget allocation to the department is not linked to enrollment, they are unable to implement any plan for faculty hires.

Another significant challenge is the lack of an operating budget for the department. Aside from salaries, the annual program expenses are paid from funds generated from students who enroll in classes through the College of Extended Learning. There are no resources for the department to engage in any activities to support students outside of classes and there is no department-level funding for faculty travel.

Another significant drawback for the department is that it operates with only a half-time office coordinator who often covers needs of other departments during the times she is designated to support LTNS. Given the interest and growth in LTNS, it makes sense to make this position full-time.

### **The Program's Conclusions, Goals and Plans**

The LTNS program has identified several critical areas of need, particularly with regard to tenure-line hiring. Each of the identified needs seems appropriate and any of these would clearly be beneficial to the department.

In our conversations with the faculty, we suggested that they identify a specific timeline and plan for addressing the needs highlighted in the self-study. This plan should identify the primary and initial area of the program to build, followed by other areas for growth, linked to current and projected needs based on the upcoming retirements of current faculty members.

## **Commendations of Strengths and Achievements**

The LTNS faculty are to be commended for implementing a broad and in-depth curriculum that engages students through: intellectually rigorous coursework in three key areas of the field (Arts & Humanities, Behavioral & Social Sciences, and History), community-service learning courses that prepare students for their professional lives, and extra curricular opportunities for extended student learning through mentoring, projects, and trips.

The faculty commitment to students is intense and admirable and we were able to see multiple ways in which the faculty commit countless hours to supporting students: requiring challenging assignments that demand significant faculty support in completing and then grading, providing opportunities for students to get additional training for their professions and/or graduate school (such as publishing in a literary journal that the department produces), and coordinating student fundraising for program-sponsored trips so that first-generation college students can travel abroad.

In the report and in our meeting with students, they expressed significant intellectual engagement in and enthusiasm for their work in the department. Students also had specific recommendations for enhancing their experiences in the program, primarily through increased class offerings.

The LTNS department has a shared vision for the program and commitment to student success that, along with student engagement and enthusiasm, is its greatest strength.

## **Recommendations and Strategies for Program Improvement**

Below are our recommendations to help the department achieve the goals conveyed in the self-study and in our conversations with faculty:

-The department has effectively designed and implemented a strong program in Latina/Latino Studies that is a model for the CSU. The program is especially effective in responding to the diversity within the Latinx community. The success of implementing the program, however, is highly dependent on increasing the number of tenure-line faculty.

The faculty need time and space to clarify their short term and long term goals through a specific plan with a timeline and benchmarks. A faculty retreat, funded by the university, would be an effective way for the faculty to build on the self-study and this review process and finalize a plan for the next six years of program development and growth. The plan should focus on the critical areas for the program development and the faculty hiring that is required to meet those needs.

-The department would benefit from the university's commitment to faculty growth in LTNS that is based on: past tenure-line staffing, growth in enrollment, anticipated growth in enrollment and student demographic shifts, and anticipated retirements of faculty. One possibility would be for the department to have stretch hires, permitting new hires before faculty are fully retired, which would allow for the experiences and insights of retiring faculty to be transferred to those who will be responsible for continuing the work of retirees. Recently, other CSU campuses have made explicit commitments of resources to the growth of Ethnic Studies departments, recognizing that they are central to engaging students of color and first-generation college students. The recent work of the CSU Taskforce on Ethnic Studies has affirmed this critical role of programs like LTNS and been used to support the development of similar programs on other CSU campuses.

-Implementing a transparent process of budget allocations at the university and college level would be extremely helpful in the department's planning. Providing the college and the department control over their staffing budgets would greatly contribute to their effective management and planning, allowing the department to adjust course offerings and class sizes to best meet student needs and to maximize the diversity of course offerings. An addendum to budget transparency should acknowledge and compensate for the department's additional faculty service, the work entailed in maintaining the service learning component to the major, and the extra-curricular educational activities provided by the faculty.

-Our meetings with a number of campus administrators made it apparent that identifying existing campus resources to fund current departmental activities would also be a fruitful step in supporting the department. This would strengthen current programs and increase the integration of successful departmental activities into other campus programs, thereby enhancing their success and better meeting campus goals. La Clínica Martín Baró, for example, is a cornerstone to the department and the university, and would benefit from an infusion of resources and a long-term funding commitment from the university. The

program in Mexico could be supported by the study abroad office. Linking this program to existing resources would facilitate more students participating without incurring debt or engaging in significant fundraising work. Ideally, faculty should be compensated for the demanding work involved in these activities and extra-curricular projects. The LTNS faculty's dedication and time commitment to ensure student engagement and success needs to be acknowledged with appropriate course-release time and other necessary resources.

-The department should consider creating Visiting Lecturer positions, pooling some of the funding for lecturers into specific positions that might permit the hiring of faculty as pre-recruitment for future tenure-line openings. These positions could be connected to specific areas for growth identified in the final program plan. The university's supplemental funding for this type of initiative (if needed) would ultimately pay off in strengthening the department.

-The College Development Officer's role is essential in generating resources for the department since department staff do not have the capacity to do extensive alumni development, and since there are many local alumni who are very appreciative of what the department provides students and local communities. The Development Officer's expertise is essential to procuring funds for key activities in the department that would be attractive to alumni.

-Another potential source of funding are grants designated for HSIs. The LTNS department's activities are well-aligned with the goals of some of this HSI funding and could be a central component of an HSI grant-funded, campus-wide initiative. The LTNS model and programming could also help other departments learn from their experience and expertise to better meet the campus goals for retention and graduation. The new Latinx Student Center could also be connected to the work in LTNS. Faculty-in-residence opportunities in the center for LTNS faculty could provide a venue for the research and expertise of the faculty to shape the work in the center, address student needs, and enhance student engagement and success.

-Given the workload and the likely expansion of the department given the increasing number of Latinx students, the Office Coordinator position for the program should be full time. Greater collaboration and coordination within the college across programs and among staff seems necessary for the smooth implementation of all programs within the college. The Academic Advisor position is also vital to the department and its support of majors and minors. Funding should be identified to make this a permanent position (which could be done through other programs and grants in the university).

Many of these recommendations require a commitment of resources. We want to highlight the fact that we have seen many examples in the CSU of universities finding the resources to support the proposed ideas within existing budgets through funding in both student and academic affairs that is intended to cover related projects and expenses. We recognize that there are always budgetary limits, but creative approaches are possible when there is a

sincere commitment to departments like LTNS, which are so vital to the ability of the university to achieve its mission.