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### **Department of Latina/Latino Studies response to the External Review Report**

The department is gratified that the External Reviewers have acknowledged and praised our success at fielding a unique curriculum of instruction. Their report assesses this part of our program in the following way:

“The program’s 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 that the program serves... 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 the intellectual support for students’ backgrounds while simultaneously creating opportunities for students to apply their acquired knowledge and skills beyond their experiences... The service component of the major is especially significant for first generation 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.”

We take great pride in this laudatory assessment of our department’s ability to successfully field a comprehensive and rigorous curriculum that honors the diversity of the Latina/Latino population in the United States. We are mindful that the Latina/Latino Studies Department’s unique identity and curriculum is one that foregrounds and centers diversity. In this regard, we are a pan-ethnic population that is simultaneously multiracial, regionally diverse, generationally differentiated, of varied citizenship statuses, and profoundly marked by gender and sexual diversity. Our departmental task has been to acknowledge and honor these important lines of difference as well as to affirm what we hold in common. That has been accomplished by crafting a curriculum that critically explores these elements of our identity and also having a faculty field it that is diverse in its backgrounds and academic training. For example, our curriculum offers courses on the unique heritage and history of the Mexican, Central American, and Caribbean Latino populations as well as courses that comprehensively explore their experiences comparatively. Assessing the way important lines of differences such as gender, generation, class, and race are refracted along these group experiences is central to what we have been able to successfully accomplish. So too is having an equally diverse faculty that reflects and affirms the diversity of the Latino population that we serve. The diversity of our faculty extends to its academic training which reflects the fields of Communication, Counseling, Creative Writing, Economics, Education, History, Law, Political Science, and Sociology.

The Latina/Latino Studies Department offers SF State students a unique liberal arts BA degree and, in this regard, we are gratified that the External Reviewers have praised our success in fulfilling this aspect of our central department mission. In their “Commendations of Strengths and Achievements” section they conclude by stating: “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.”

We agree with this summary assessment. The faculty of the Latina/Latino Studies Department had multiple opportunities to meet subsequent to the preparation of the self-study report. We also met multiple times to discuss the external reviewers’ site visit and their report. After participating in this review process and reflecting on the report, we have identified the following as our top priorities:

1. Fill faculty lines that have opened due to retirements and open new lines that will complement our curriculum.
2. Staff the department with full-time administrative support and an operating budget that will allow our department to meet daily administrative demands.

### **Faculty Lines**

The faculty of the Latina/Latino Studies Department met after receiving the external Reviewers’ Report and identified areas of the program to build based on departmental needs and upcoming retirements of current faculty members. It’s imperative that we receive support for these positions because of increased enrollment combined with a decrease in faculty from 9.6 tenured/tenure-track faculty to 6.6, with an impending retirement in May 2018 that will reduce this to 5.6. This constitutes a 40% reduction in faculty during a period in time when student enrollment and the demand for LTNS classes has rapidly increased. The Latina/Latino Studies Department has one of the highest student/teacher ratios on campus. To correct this egregious misallocation of university resources, the following five positions should be prioritized:

#### Central American Studies Position

As was stated earlier, the Latina/Latino Studies department is a pan-ethnic program that serves the diverse Latino demographics of the Bay Area. In 2015, approximately 3.4 million Central Americans lived in the US – making up 8% of the 43 million immigrants in the US.<sup>1</sup> Between 1980 and 2015, the Central American immigrant population grew from about 354,000 to 3.4 million. Our department seeks to hire a new faculty member who specializes in the diverse economic, political, and cultural experiences of Central American populations in the United States. This will allow us to offer students the opportunity to examine the histories of Central Americans in California – home to one in three Central Americans, a prominent location of migrant entry, a political site of mobilization in the 1990s, and home to several universities with

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/central-american-immigrants-united-states>

U.S. Central American scholars.<sup>2</sup> The Bay Area is home to a large Central American population and it is important for us to provide our students with the tools to learn about the histories, communities, and narratives of the Central American diaspora. Our goal is to train our students to gain specialized knowledge about the diverse experiences of Central Americans, beyond just “wedging in” their experiences within existing frameworks rooted in Chicana/o, Mexican, or Caribbean experiences. At the same time, we seek to train our students to understand the histories of Latino communities in relation to each other – as diverse Latina/o groups interact and seek collective forms of empowerment together, across generations, countries of origin, gender, class, and legal status. This intervention is fundamental to involving our department and campus in broader conversations and research on transnational migration, diasporic communities, and expanding notions of *Latinidad* – what it means to be Latina/o in the US. The faculty member who currently teaches Central American courses, Professor Carlos Cordova, is a nationally recognized scholar in Central American Studies who has published on the Salvadoran American population in the United States. He is currently participating in the Faculty Early Retirement Program.

### Literature Position

Our department’s literature courses provide students with entrance to the rich literary tradition of our communities and cultures, both in the United States and in Latin America. Latina/Latino literature continues to register the challenges and changes of our communities, and is crucial to providing a venue for students to successfully heal and empower themselves as they finish their career. In addition, our literature courses all offer GE credit and tend to be some of the highest enrolled in our department. The creative writing courses are hands on, in which students learn the craft of creative writing as well as the process of engaging a wide range of literary voices and techniques. As Ethnic Studies becomes a growing part of state and national discussions for K-12 curriculum and teacher development, the hiring of a literature professor in Latina/Latino Studies could act as a significant support to prepare students to enter the teaching profession. A faculty member that can expose students to culturally relevant literature increases the likelihood that our students will be better prepared to meet the needs of the growing Latina/Latino student population in California and the nation. Our department seeks a highly qualified candidate, with ample experience in both publications and teaching, as well as established roots in the broader literary community to continue the work of promoting literary arts as a critical method of engaging our society in a way that appreciates the creative side of a transformative education. The faculty member who currently teaches our literature courses, Professor Alejandro Murguía, is a published author and poet who recently served as San Francisco Poet Laureate (2013-2017). He is currently participating in the Faculty Early Retirement Program.

### Philosophy and Humanities position

The Latina/Latino Studies department is a unique liberal arts BA degree and, as such, we offer courses on humanities, art history, Aztec philosophy, indigenous cultures of the Americas, and

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<sup>2</sup> Alvarado, Karina O. et al. 2017. *U.S. Central Americans: Reconstructing Memories, Struggles, and Communities of Resistance*. University of Arizona Press.

Caribbean spirituality. We are committed to preparing students who are multi-faceted – and who are able to develop creative and critical thinking skills through various forms of learning. While our department prepares students to examine Latina/o communities through economic, political, and historical perspectives – our communities also process and document the human experience through philosophical, religious and artistic expressions that provide new ways of understanding Latina/o identities and expand our notions of *Latinidad*. We understand that education is transformative, and our goal is to provide a home for our students who seek to heal through philosophy and the humanities. In a context of massive budget cuts for agencies that fund the arts, humanities, and other transformative forms of expression – our department needs to have a faculty member who will help our students counter the disenchantment that comes from delegitimizing long-standing forms of collective memory, modes of expression, and artistic healing. The faculty member who taught our philosophy and humanities courses, Dr. Roberto Rivera, retired in 2011.

### Latina/o Health Position

According to the US Census, as of July 2015, there were 56.6 million Latinos in the US. By 2060, Latinos are expected to constitute almost 30% of the nation's population – about 119 million people. Building on SF State's mission to be a university that is deeply engaged with the world's economies, cultures and politics, our department is determined to prepare students to address the health and healthcare needs of Latina/o communities across the US. We would be doing our SF State community a disservice by not offering students training on the health needs of Latina/o communities – and we cannot have a shortage of Latino health care providers with these demographic changes. We seek to prepare students to analyze the various health impacts that social and economic inequalities have for Latina/o communities – including poverty, inadequate access to health care and screening, exposure to workplace hazards, and adverse residential and environmental conditions.<sup>3</sup> National health indices suggest Latinos are relatively healthier than native-born Americans, including US-born Latinos. Still, Latinos are more likely to be uninsured than any other ethnic/racial group and have higher risks of developing chronic illnesses such as diabetes.<sup>4</sup> In a context of mass deportation, anti-Latino ideologies, increased collaboration between local/state police and immigration enforcement, and mass incarceration – Latina/o communities experience the effects of punitive laws as violence. Sociologists and migration scholars use the term *legal violence* to examine the physical, psychological, emotional, and economic impact of policies that are intended and framed as necessary for protecting national security. Our department is committed to helping SF State students examine how structural conditions such as deportation, poverty, and increasingly restrictive immigration regimes, affect the physical and mental health of Latina/o communities. Our priority is to hire a new tenure-track faculty member who will offer students interested in health and science fields the following skills: 1.) Identifying gaps in research on health and healthcare needs for Latinos - including mental illnesses, environmental health hazards, depression, and implementing culturally sensitive modes of care 2.) Employing an interdisciplinary framework to document,

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5044865/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.pcori.org/sites/default/files/PCORI-Improving-Healthcare-Outcomes-in-Hispanic-Communities-012814.pdf>

analyze, and propose health policies and programs that respond to the needs of different Latino communities. Long-term lecturer Felix Kury currently teaches our department's Latina/o Health courses. He plans to retire within the next two to three years.

#### Language Rights and Latina/o Education position

The Latina/Latino Studies Department seeks a candidate who can partner with existing faculty to develop a pipeline for future urban K-12 teachers to advance from the Latina/Latino Studies Department to teacher certification programs. We are particularly interested in hiring someone who examines the critical role language plays in the educational progress of Latinos, including issues of bilingualism, language policy and language rights. This new tenure-track faculty member would teach a course on Language and Transculturation as well as Critical Thinking, Introduction to Latina/Latino Studies and Educational Equity. The faculty would bring experience grounded in community responsive pedagogy, language rights, social justice and advocacy for bilingual, bicultural parents and students.

#### **Full-Time Administrative Support and Operating Budget**

The Latina/Latino Studies Department's second priority is the staffing of our Department with full-time administrative support. The current Administrative Analyst Specialist (AAS) is assigned only half-time to our department, which is problematic for us since we handle nearly twice the number of students of other departments in the College of Ethnic Studies. This is especially troubling considering the projection that student enrollment in our major and minor, as well as in our courses in general, will grow considerably in the next six years. The external reviewers agreed with this point and wrote: "Given the interest and growth in LTNS, it makes sense to make this position full-time." The reviewers also referred to the Department's lack of an operating budget as a "significant challenge."

#### **Conclusions, Plans, and Goals**

The Latina/Latino Studies department is committed to continuing our good work on behalf of our students and the University. We serve the University's mission through the collaborative pedagogy of our faculty, our commitment to equity, and our strong roots in the broader Bay Area community. However, this service requires that we replenish our faculty so as to enhance our department's ability to continue and expand on what we have successfully done. We must replace our tenured/tenure track faculty lost through retirement and we must add new faculty lines that will complement and enhance our curriculum of instruction. As our department expands and serves more students we must also ensure that our administrative staff is not stretched thin. Our department requires full-time administrative support in order to properly serve students as they navigate through the university and set out on their paths as SF State alumni with fond memories of their college experience. This will enable us to continue evolving our Department in ways that reflect and honor the ever-expanding diversity of the Latina/Latino population at San Francisco State University and in the United States.