July 17, 2020

Dr Timothy P. White, Chancellor
California State University Board of Trustees
California State University
c/o Trustee Secretariat
Office of the Chancellor
401 Golden Shore
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Recommended Amendments to Title 5 Regarding Ethnic Studies and Social Justice

Dear Chancellor White and Trustees:

We write to oppose the recommended amendments to Title 5 regarding ethnic studies and social justice which are on your agenda for your July 21st Board of Trustees meeting. We believe that the recommended amendments undermine the work of the Chancellor’s Council on Ethnic Studies as well as the intent of AB 1460 (Weber) which is on the verge of passage out of the Legislature.

Over the past few months, California and this nation have been challenged to face a stark reality: racism is alive and heavily invested in the fabric of this nation. The tragic disparities revealed in the worse outcomes of COVID-19, and the brutal public murder of George Floyd, cry out for change in all of our institutions. Almost five years ago, the Ethnic Studies Departments of the CSU offered a reasonable solution to begin the healing and corrective actions to the racism embedded in our society: 3 units of ethnic studies. For those four years, nothing of moment has been offered.

AB 1460 (Weber) will require the California State University (CSU), beginning with the 2021-22 academic year, to provide courses in ethnic studies at each of its 23 campuses. It would also require, at minimum, a one three-unit course in ethnic studies as an undergraduate graduation requirement commencing with students graduating in the 2024-25 academic year.

Introduced in 2019 on behalf of the California Faculty Association and the statewide ethnic studies coalition, with support of the Legislative Ethnic Caucuses (Black Latino and API), AB 1460 passed out of both houses (the Assembly and Senate) with bi-partisan votes on June 18,
2020. When the Legislature returns from summer recess, AB 1460 will be concurred and sent to the Governor’s desk for signature to become the law of the land.

We realize that you now have a recommendation that does not respond to the challenges we currently face, has been rejected by the faculty, and is not supported by students. Advocates for making a course in ethnic studies a requirement for graduation have waited long enough for the CSU to act. The changes proposed by the Chancellor’s office will significantly water down the intent of AB 1460 and will result in something akin to a “diversity” requirement, which was not developed in collaboration with the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies.

We ask that Chancellor White and the Board of Trustees remove this agenda item at their July 21st meeting. It is now time for you to live up to the ethnic studies report presented by your Blue Ribbon Committee six years ago and support AB 1460, which fulfills the recommendation of the report - 3 units of ethnic studies. We invite you to join us in support of AB 1460 and make California the premiere institution in all academic areas it has the potential to become.

Ethnic studies is the jewel of the CSU. As home of the first department over 50 years ago, the departments in CSU have consistently assisted in the expansion of the discipline nationally. At this critical juncture in our history, we invite you to join the students and faculty in this historic moment and support AB 1460.

For these reasons, we urge the Board to remove this agenda item (Recommended amendments to Title 5 Regarding Ethnic Studies and Social Justice). Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Governor Gavin Newsom  
Lt. Governor Eleni Kounalakis  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond  
President pro Tempore Toni Atkins, 39th Senate District  
Speaker Anthony Rendon, 63rd Assembly District  
California State Senate  
California State Assembly

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Assemblymember Shirley N. Weber, Ph.D, AD 79  
Chair, Legislative Black Caucus
Assemblymember David Chiu, AD 17
Chair, Legislative Asian Pacific Islander Caucus

Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez, AD 80
Chair, Legislative Latino Caucus

Assemblymember Autumn Burke, AD 62

Senator Steven Bradford, SD 35

Assemblymember Ash Kalra, AD 27

Assemblymember Todd Gloria, AD 78

Assemblymember Eloise Gómez Reyes, AD 47

Assemblymember Jose Medina, AD 61

Assemblymember Chris Holden, AD 41

Assemblymember Reginald Jones-Sawyer Sr., AD 59

Senator Maria Elena Durazo, SD 24

Assemblymember Sydney Kamlager, AD 54

Assemblymember Rob Bonta, AD 18

Assemblymember Mike Gipson, AD 64
Senator Holly Mitchell, SD 30

Assemblymember James Ramos, AD 40

Senator Nancy Skinner, SD 9

Assemblymember Jim Cooper, AD 9

Senator Connie M. Leyva, SD 20