

Themes emerge from report of CSU Chancellor's Task Force on Ethnic Studies

Please read the full report on Ethnic Studies and the CSU Chancellor's full response at: <http://www.calstate.edu/AcadAff/ethnicstudiesreport.pdf>



By Charles Toombs
CFA Associate Vice President South
Africana Studies, San Diego State

On July 13, California State University Chancellor Timothy P. White issued his response to and made public the *CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies*.

How did the Task Force come to be? Did the CSU, out of the blue, decide it wanted to know more about how ethnic studies was faring?

CFA played a critical role in putting pressure on the CSU to convene a task force. CFA members in ethnic studies, over the years, have often brought to CFA's attention the ways in which their departments and programs struggle to survive and carry out their mission under existing institutional policies and practices.

CFA's Council of Affirmative Action, under the leadership of Dr. Cecil Canton, devoted time at Assemblies and at its Equity Conferences to extensive discussions of ethnic studies throughout the CSU. CFA members and ethnic studies faculty described in specific details the ways in which their departments and programs were faltering due to institutional neglect.

A common theme emerged: CSU campus administrators did not replace faculty members in these departments and programs who separated from the university through retirement, death, resignation, or other reasons.

In addition, campuses refused to recruit new faculty tenure-track members in these departments and programs as they were doing with other traditional disciplines. Often, when the number of faculty reached a critical loss, administrations began

discussions of restructuring, collapsing departments into programs, moving programs to traditional departments, where ethnic studies would lose its disciplinary strength and vitality.

These trends were a part of the testimonies that CFA members presented to legislative hearings, District Campus Climate Hearings, to members of the Ethnic Caucuses in the California Legislature, and other forums.

The above are examples of the CFA activism that put pressure on Chancellor White to convene the *CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies*.

Of the two recommendations in the report of the Task Force which require the Chancellor's direct action, one asks the CSU to "Allocate monies from the Chancellor's Office for hiring 50 faculty members in ethnic studies across the system with a matching contribution from Presidents to incentivize and support regular and consistent hiring" (Recommendation 2.2, Report page 37).

Chancellor White responded to this recommendation with the following: "It is inappropriate for the Chancellor to

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dictate academic hiring requirements to campuses. Rather, in keeping with the standard campus hiring process, campuses shall determine their top priorities. These campus determinations shall give due consideration to the guidance contained in this report in the context of their academic and non-academic strategic priorities, including diversifying the faculty *writ large*.”

While Chancellor White refused to support the hiring of 50 faculty members in ethnic studies, his response did send a message to campus administrations to heed the report’s carefully considered information and conclusions to advance and support ethnic studies in the CSU.

In early August, in response to the Chancellor’s Ethnic Studies Report, San Diego State University’s administration and the Senate Tenure/Tenure-Track Hiring Committee approved three tenure-track hires for 2016/17; one each in the departments of Africana Studies, American Indian Studies, and Chicana/o Studies.

In addition to hiring faculty in ethnic studies, the report includes other important recommendations, including these:

- ◆ Make ethnic studies a GE requirement on campuses where it is not; “reaffirm that a modern high-quality education demands intellectual familiarity with the content of, and critical analysis grounded in, ethnic studies.”
- ◆ Support curriculum “in ways that strengthen ethnic studies departments and programs”; support advising responsibilities of ethnic studies faculty” to reflect the university’s valuing ethnic studies as vital to its educational mission.”

Events over the last few years in America clearly indicate the need for all of us to be culturally literate and competent of different races, ethnicities, and perspectives (of what it means to live in America). Institutional racism and other “isms” continue to compromise the life possibilities for many.

CSU students, who will be the leaders in California, the nation, and the world, must be equipped with these diverse perspectives, histories, and epistemologies. ■