



Davis Division Academic Senate

Request for Consultation Responses

Departmental Status Proposal - African American and African Studies Program

February 19, 2016

Proposal received in June 2015 requesting departmental status for the African American and African Studies Program. Proposal distribution was delayed by administrative error.

FEC: School of Medicine

January 20, 2016 1:44 PM

No response at this time.

Graduate Council

February 12, 2016 1:11 PM

Response continued on next page.

February 12, 2016

To: Academic Chair Knoesen
Re: Department Status Proposal – African American and African Studies Program

The Graduate Council, substantially based on the deliberations of its subcommittee on Academic Planning and Development, forwards its recommendations for the aforementioned Request for Consultation.

The African American & African Studies (AAS) Program seeks departmental status approval. This is a sensible goal, as departmental status would enhance the stability and stature of the program at UC Davis and within the UC system. Departmental status would likely help AAS attract more undergraduate majors, as well as more graduate students to the AAS Designated Emphasis (DE). Furthermore, departmental status would facilitate fundraising and increase opportunities for pursuing competitive grants. Other ethnic studies units in the Division of Humanities, Arts and Cultural Studies have converted to departmental status. It appears that AAS is the last of such units still holding program status. The request for conversion, submitted June 2, 2014, offers additional reasons for granting departmental status. Those reasons include uniqueness of the program within UC, quality of research, and the recent hiring of two new faculty members.

However, the request for conversion is unclear on some important points. For one, it is noted three students completed their degrees with the AAS DE. Over what time period did this occur? It is common for DE offerings on campus to hold more students. Why is the number of students completing the AAS DE so low? Is this related to the low underrepresented minority demography of our students? Some of the information regarding campus enrollments is dated. For example, the ranking of UC Davis in terms of African American student enrollment is based on 2009 data. It is not clear why more recent data and careful trend analyses were not presented, as it is possible such current information could even further strengthen the proposal.

Some of the arguments expressing the need for the AAS Program could be enhanced. For example, the document implies that growth in retention/graduation rates of students of African descent at UC Davis is correlated to the development of the AAS Program. Although this is generally considered a likelihood based on anecdotal evidence, the relatively strong statement, "it is unlikely that more students from underrepresented groups can be admitted to Davis and successfully complete their course of study without committing resources to the development of ethnic studies departments and programs," was not substantiated in the document. These concerns could be alleviated by either slightly softening such statements, or backing up statements with data. Graduate

UC DAVIS: ACADEMIC SENATE
GRADUATE COUNCIL
ACADEMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Council is sensitive to the issue of a welcoming climate, and from a somewhat subjective viewpoint, it is recognized that raising the AAS program to department status could assist in improving the campus climate.

As a department, AAS would pursue five objectives including, "Revamp our Designated Emphasis to an issues-oriented curriculum that encompasses the focus in globalization and the African Diaspora." This is likely an indispensable focus area, but as this pertains to graduate education, Graduate Council would like to know more about this proposed change. In particular, how would the change address the current low numbers of students participating in the AAS DE, or is it more a statement for strengthening the academic relevance of the curriculum?

In summary, the proposed change to departmental status makes sense in many respects. More carefully detailed, up-to-date information would facilitate further review of this proposal if deemed necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kyaw Tha Paw U". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Kyaw Tha Paw U, Chair
Graduate Council

Planning & Budget

February 19, 2016 3:16 PM

CPB reviewed the Departmental Status Proposal for the African American and African Studies Program. The committee supports the departmental status proposal.

Undergraduate Council

February 12, 2016 1:15 PM

Response continued on next 2 pages.

February 12, 2016

Dear Andre:

The UGC met this morning and discussed the proposal for departmental status for the African American and African Studies Program. Herein is the UGC response to the RFC on the proposal.

The UGC recognized that the L&S EC was supportive of the proposal, as was the Interim Dean of HArCS. The UGC noted that the AAAS has excellent faculty, and that HArCS will benefit from AAAS having Departmental status. In addition, it was commented that department status will benefit to the University, and will further enhance the visibility of the program. Departmental status should aid program recruitment and retention of students, as well as fund raising.

After discussion, a motion was made expressing UGC support for the proposal to confer departmental status on the African American and African Studies Program. The motion was seconded, and unanimously supported by vote.

Respectfully submitted on behalf of the UGC.

Sincerely,

Edward P. Caswell-Chen
Chair, UGC