Dean’s Response to the Program Review Committee’s Final Report  
Department of Ethnic Studies  
August, 2002

As the Program Review Committee’s final report indicates, the Department of Ethnic Studies has grown in strength in recent years, is fundamentally solid, and makes many contributions to the College and the University. The department has substantially revised its curriculum so that it reflects the latest thinking in the discipline, and it has recruited outstanding faculty who are developing strong research agendas. The department and its faculty have contributed the intellectual life of the University through conferences, programs, and publications and to a variety undergraduate and graduate programs, notably American Culture Studies. It has also contributed significantly to diversity through its course offerings and recruitment activities. Inevitably, a department that undergoes rapid transition experiences growing pains and has a variety of unresolved issues that need attention. The PRC’s report calls attention to these and makes useful suggestions for addressing them.

Dr. Michael Martin’s response to the PRC final report generally concurs with the committee’s findings and recommendations. Nevertheless, his response provides broader context for several of the findings and recommendations, calls attention to several inaccurate statements, and takes issue with several findings.

I concur with the PRC’s recommendations, with the following stipulations:

In developing a mission statement, the department must articulate its multifaceted role in the University as well define the focus of its undergraduate curriculum. In doing so, it should bear in mind the PRC’s observation that the its “contributions to other programs are important, but . . . should be secondary to courses needed to support the . . . major, the . . . minor, and the general education program.”

The department must devote greater attention to its 100-level general education courses, especially ETHN 101. Currently, too many are taught by part-time faculty and graduate students. These courses play a vital role in the University’s general education program, and for many students, ETHN 101 is the only cultural diversity course they will take. Because they attract many first-year students, 100-level Ethnic Studies courses play an important pedagogical role, helping students develop important skills and conveying our expectations. They also afford an opportunity to introduce a wide cross section of students to ethnic studies and recruit majors. Given these considerations, the department should significantly increase the proportion of its 100-level courses taught by tenure track and continuing faculty. This can be done in two ways suggested by PRC: assuring that all tenure track faculty teach 100-level courses; experimenting with a lecture course with an enrollment of 100 students taught by a tenure track faculty member supported by a graduate student who collaborates with the instructor of record to lead small group discussions weekly. As suggested by PRC, the department should submit a plan for staffing its 100-level courses by December 2002.
I will ask Dr. Elizabeth Cole, Associate Dean for College Advancement, to meet with the department in September 2002 to help it develop an action plan for assessment. Although the department has undergone many changes in the past five years and these have slowed progress in this area, assessment must become a priority for the department during the 2002-03 academic year.

With respect to development of a teaching load policy, I agree with PRC that the appropriate load for research-active faculty who contribute to graduate education is five courses per year. The department should establish a workload policy that sets standards of productivity tenured faculty must meet to earn a five course load and assign a larger number of courses to faculty who do not achieve those levels of accomplishment. Its policy, however, cannot include provisions for awarding faculty a four-course load—beyond load reductions for service granted by the College. An Ethnic Studies faculty member who carries an especially heavy advising load in American Culture Studies may be awarded one of the course reductions allotted to support that doctoral program. However, that is a decision to be made by the Director of American Culture Studies in consultation with the Chair of Ethnic Studies.

I have been impressed by the department’s significant accomplishments during the past five years and look forward to working with the Chair and faculty in the coming years to assure that the department continues to grow in strength and effectively serve students at all levels.

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Donald G. Nieman, Dean                          Date

Concurred:

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John W. Folkins, Provost                          Date