

THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY  
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR



BAKERSFIELD

June 8, 2020

CHANNEL ISLANDS

CHICO

Steering Committee of the CSU Ethnic Studies Council  
c/o Dr. Kenneth Monteiro

DOMINGUEZ HILLS

Professor  
San Francisco State University  
1600 Holloway Avenue  
San Francisco, California 94132

EAST BAY

FRESNO

Dear Dr. Monteiro:

FULLERTON

HUMBOLDT

This letter is in response to your communication of May 15, 2020 to the Committee on Educational Policy of the California State University Board of Trustees. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I write to address several statements contained in your letter, reaffirm the process by which the proposed Ethnic Studies and Social Justice requirement has been and shall continue to be considered, and uphold the CSU's long history of championing this vital and essential field of study.

LONG BEACH

LOS ANGELES

MARITIME ACADEMY

**Consultation Protocol for CSU General Education Requirements**

MONTEREY BAY

NORTHRIDGE

As set forth in the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA), the CSU Office of the Chancellor (CSUCO) consults with the Academic Senate of the CSU (ASCSU) with regard to CSU general education policy. As the official faculty voice of the CSU on academic matters, it is the role of the ASCSU to consult with disciplinary groups and to consider and advance their input to the CSUCO. This protocol was recently reinforced in ASCSU resolution AS-3425-20. While the CSUCO may engage with academic disciplinary groups on topics related to academic programs and majors, it does not formally consult with academic disciplinary groups on matters of general education policy.

POMONA

SACRAMENTO

SAN BERNARDINO

SAN DIEGO

SAN FRANCISCO

SAN JOSÉ

As the appropriate faculty consultative body, the ASCSU invited members of the CSU Ethnic Studies Council (Drs. Stone and Karenga from Cal State Long Beach) to the September 2019 meeting of the ASCSU's Academic Affairs Committee for an extensive discussion of a proposed resolution in support of an ethnic studies requirement.

SAN LUIS OBISPO

SAN MARCOS

SONOMA

STANISLAUS

Subsequently, the CSUCO developed a May 2020 proposal for the Board of Trustees, framing the requirement to encompass both ethnic studies and social justice. This more comprehensive focus, beyond the purview of a sole academic discipline, was proposed based on the March 2020 resolution of the ASCSU (AS-3420-20) as well as CSUCO consultation with the 23 campuses, which sought a broader requirement. The consultative process of shared governance was carefully and thoughtfully followed as designed.

### **Approval for Discipline Requirements Versus General Education Requirements**

The proposed Ethnic Studies and Social Justice requirement is not a disciplinary requirement; rather, it is a general education requirement. Thus, there is a different standard for approval. A hallmark of general education, in the CSU and nationwide, is that no one category is the domain of a single academic discipline. For example, biology faculty alone do not decide which courses fit within the Life Science category (B2), nor do mathematicians alone decide which courses are approved for the Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning category (B4). Instead, general education coursework is shaped at the campus level by faculty across disciplines, in order to ensure a broad scholarly foundation for all students, and to maximize cross-disciplinary offerings in most, if not all, categories. This is accepted practice, not only in the CSU, but nationwide, and it has proven successful in encouraging students to explore new disciplines.

The CSU General Education Breadth requirements in both written and oral communication, mentioned in your letter, provide an example of the benefits described above. At CSU Northridge, for instance, courses in Asian American Studies, African American Studies, Central American Studies, Chicana/o Studies and Queer Studies meet either the oral communication or written communication requirement. This is true on a number of CSU campuses, as well as among California's community colleges.

### **Report of the CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies**

While the CSU Board of Trustees received the 2016 report from the CSU Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies as a valued contribution from the CSU community, the board did not officially accept, approve or endorse the document.

The Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies was charged with three tasks:

1. Provide an overview of the origins and histories of ethnic studies programs in the CSU within a national context.
2. Identify the trends in the campus' programs within the context of institutional support and the national climate, particularly over the past 8-10 years.
3. Propose systemwide recommendations that are responsive to the mission of the CSU and to the needs of our students, California and society in general. This includes examining our degrees, majors and minors/concentrations, as well as the resources, staffing, administrative infrastructures, and cost

effective and equitable approaches that sustain and advance ethnic studies while enhancing program quality and inclusive excellence.

This charge did not, directly or by implication, indicate that policy would be established based upon the group's recommendations. In fact, I stated in my response to the task force, consistent with feedback from the 23 campuses, that I [did not accept](#) all of the task force's recommendations. I conveyed that certain recommendations remained within the purview of the campuses, and that I would not take system action on curriculum or faculty hiring.

While not all recommendations were accepted, the report did lead to activity at campuses throughout the state and support for the growth of the ethnic studies discipline. [Feedback on campus actions](#) taken as a result of the report demonstrates the depth and breadth of this support.

At the same time, communication from the task force appeared to support broadening the scope of ethnic studies to include other underrepresented groups. In his January 30, 2016 letter conveying the task force report to the chancellor, then-CSU Bakersfield President Horace Mitchell, chair of the Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies, issued a call for including "other forms of diversity education and appreciation" in such a requirement. The current proposal for an Ethnic Studies and Social Justice general education requirement is in keeping with this position.

"Ethnic studies has a critical role to play in realization of the CSU mission, with a particular focus on, 'To prepare students for an international, multi-cultural society.' We believe that educational requirements and campus cultures grounded in ethnic studies and other forms of diversity education and appreciation (emphasis added) can make significant differences in our students' understanding of how multiple world views intersect in our local, national and global societies, and how to anticipate and address some possible consequences of the diversity of perspectives and lived experiences among members of our society."

With due appreciation for the service and consultation of the task force, the submission of the report represented the conclusion of the group's work.

### **The Path Forward**

I share the council's aspiration to "reaffirm the shared university mission of promoting critical understanding, due appreciation and fruitful engagement of the diverse cultures, realities, needs and demands of our students, their communities, society and the world."

The current proposal for an Ethnic Studies and Social Justice general education requirement certainly merits board consideration as a bold, thoughtful and inclusively crafted advancement of the above ideal. Inspired by the Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies, informed and expanded by the ASCSU in consultation with the Ethnic Studies

Council, and framed with feedback from our 23 campuses, the board proposal represents the antithesis of the legislative interference our university has adamantly resisted and that we simply cannot support. The current proposal is also consistent with the California Community Colleges' Transfer Model Curricula (TMC), which frame ethnic studies disciplines within "Social Justice Studies." While upholding the CSU's long-held value of ethnic studies, respecting the four historic disciplines defined in Assembly Bill 1460, and encompassing other historically oppressed groups, this proposal offers broad latitude for implementation through continued shared governance at the campus level.

It is fitting that the proposed general education requirement in Ethnic Studies and Social Justice represents the first substantive change to CSU General Education Breadth in 40 years. The adoption of an Ethnic Studies and Social Justice requirement ensures that the CSU can support the success of all students today, and better prepare them to lead tomorrow. This is a goal all stakeholders share and, as such, the proposal will be considered for adoption at the July 2020 board meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Timothy P. White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Timothy" being more prominent than the last name "White".

Timothy P. White  
Chancellor

TPW/aw

c: CSU Board of Trustees  
CSU Presidents

Dr. Loren J. Blanchard, Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs

Dr. Robert Keith Collins, Chair, Academic Senate, California State University

Dr. Shirley Weber, Assembly Member, District 79

Dr. Charles Toombs, President, California Faculty Association

Dr. Karen Nakai, Chief of Staff

Members of the CSU Ethnic Studies Council Steering Committee