

Academic Program Review of the
Institute for Ethnic and Racial Studies
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Prepared by Academic Program Review Subcommittee:

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BACKGROUND:

The Institute for Ethnic and Racial Studies (ERS) resides in the College of Liberal Studies and offers a 24-credit interdisciplinary minor. Students electing this minor can choose between a general approach to their course of study or concentration on the history and culture of one of the four racial groups: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, or American Indians. In recent years the program has averaged six graduates a year.

The Institute submitted its self-study to the Dean's office in April 2007. There was no external review of the Institute.

SUMMARY OF THE SELF-STUDY:

Summary of Program goals and objectives:

The Institute's self-study describes its mission as follows:

It offers a rigorous interdisciplinary minor that is designed to foster an understanding of the multiracial and multicultural reality of American society. Through a systematic, interdisciplinary instructional approach the program focuses on the historic treatment and the contemporary experience of racial and ethnic minorities. The Institute is committed to providing curricular and other scholarly opportunities for UW-L students to develop knowledge, skills, and personal dispositions that will enable them to live and function with intercultural competence in an increasingly diverse nation and the world.

Summary of how the Program attempts to reach its goals and objectives and the extent to which those goals and objectives have been achieved:

The Institute's three dedicated, well-rounded faculty have provided a flexible, yet demanding, academic program for its minors, with good coverage of the four racial group concentrations. In addition, the Institute also provides support for the General Education Program through its largest enrollment course, ERS 100 Introduction to Minority Cultures in the United States, with average offerings of eight sections per semester. The recent addition of a faculty member with expertise in Hmong culture and history has also contributed to the strength of its curricular offerings.

NOTABLE STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAM:

- The productive, well-rounded faculty are a particular strength of the Institute, providing curricular opportunities for students from a wide array of backgrounds and interests.
- The Institute attracts a large number of students of color, making it one of the more diverse programs on campus. This trend will likely be enhanced in the near future as UW-L implements the Growth, Quality, and Access Program.
- The self-study indicates the implementation of a portfolio/interview-based assessment plan that should provide rich data for future goal-setting and evaluation.

NOTABLE WEAKNESSES OF THE PROGRAM:

- While the self-study provides a description of its assessment program, it is difficult to evaluate its success in the absence of either raw or summary data.
- As an “Institute”, the program currently lacks visibility and is too dependent on its General Education course offerings for students.
- Any expansion in the size of the faculty or administrative staff for the Institute will create an office space shortage.

APR COMMENTS ON PARTICULAR COMPONENTS OF THE SELF-STUDY:

Purposes of the Institute:

The Institute currently provides an important and, given current demographic trends, increasingly necessary curricular option for UW-L students. In addition, the presence of the Institute should serve as a fundamental resource for faculty across the University. At the same time, the number of graduates electing ERS as a minor remains low, especially relative to enrollments in ERS 100. The Institute’s self-study focuses on converting to departmental status. While bringing the Institute into administrative conformity with the rest of the campus, such a change in status should be preceded by a greater emphasis on communication regarding departmental resources to both students and faculty.

Assessment of Student Learning & Degree of Program Success:

The Institute currently reports an assessment program based on embedded course work, surveys, and personal essays, with future plans for a survey of ERS graduates. The self-study lacks reporting of any current assessment data, as well as a description of minor-level or course-level learning goals and objectives.

Previous Academic Program Review

The Institute responded to its 1997 review’s key recommendations by eliminating a 14-credit hour certificate and replacing it with a minor program. In addition, a problematic

lack of upper-level course offerings cited in the 2007 review has been addressed substantially through the hiring of new faculty.

Personnel

The Institute has had a recent addition of a faculty member with expertise in Hmong culture and history. The three faculty members are well-qualified and actively involved in their disciplines. The Institute lacks a faculty member with expertise in Hispanic history and culture.

Comments on Dean's letter:

The Dean's letter highlights the important and valuable academic service the Institute provides to the University. In particular, it cites the strength and productivity of ERS faculty and acknowledges the need for more investment from the College and the University. There are areas, however, in which the Dean's letter indicates that the Institute is not fully realizing its potential, thus making the following recommendations:

- Attract and enroll more students beyond ERS 100, thus increasing the overall number of minors.
- Provide a more comprehensive rationale for elevation to departmental status.
- Improve communication regarding Institute resources to both University faculty and students.
- Consider hiring a Director who would hold both typical departmental responsibilities with concurrent duties in the area of student recruitment.

APR's RECOMMENDATIONS:

Some areas to address-department should submit a progress report to the Faculty Senate/Provost's Office in three years, focusing on APR recommendations

Summary of recommendations:

1. Provide more substantial data on program assessment, including a more specific listing of learning goals and outcomes, the degree to which they are being met, and any changes aimed at furthering these goals.
2. Change the status of the Institute to that of a "program," thus bringing Ethnic and Racial Studies in line with other minor-granting programs across the University.
3. Increase number of graduates with ERS minor, especially through recruitment.
4. Improve communication of resources and campus programming with faculty not currently affiliated with the Institute, perhaps through the development of promotional materials and/or an electronic mailing list.
5. Develop a more detailed plan for both student and program assessment.