April 30, 2024

TO: Andrea Kasko, Chair, UCLA Academic Senate
FR: Lynn Vavreck, Chair, Committee on Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools

RE: (Second Systemwide Review) Proposed Revision to Senate Regulation 424.A.3

At its meetings on March 15, 2024, and April 12, 2024, the Committee on Undergraduate Admissions & Relations with Schools (CUARS) reviewed the proposal to revise Systemwide Senate Regulation 424.A.3 and establish an ethnic studies requirement for freshman admission to the University.

We were joined in discussion by the following guests who shared their domain-area expertise: Elizabeth Gonzalez (Director, UCLA Hispanic Serving Institution); Darlene Lee (Faculty Advisor, UCLA Teacher Education Program); David Myers (Distinguished Professor & Sady and Ludwig Kahn Chair in Jewish History; Director, UCLA Initiative to Study Hate); Shannon Speed (Professor, Gender Studies and Anthropology; Director, American Indian Studies Center); Karen Umemoto (Professor, Urban Planning and Asian American Studies; Director, Asian American Studies Center); Abel Valenzuela (Interim Dean of Social Sciences and Professor of Labor Studies, Urban Planning and Chicana/o and Central American Studies); and David Yoo (Vice Provost of the Institute of American Cultures and Professor of Asian American Studies & History).

Overall, CUARS reaffirms its strong endorsement of the proposal, which marks the culmination of a decades-long commitment to ethnic studies within the UC system and on the UCLA campus in particular. Members note that the proposed criteria for the Area H requirement closely align with the standards for the ethnic studies requirement for high school graduation, as established by California State Assembly Bill 101. While members acknowledge potential challenges with implementing an ethnic studies requirement for UC admission, we note that the University is well-positioned to provide robust support for course development and articulation in collaboration with local and statewide partners. CUARS’s support for the Area H proposal underscores UCLA’s unique and longstanding leadership in these efforts. As our guests emphasized, UCLA is at the forefront of creating infrastructure needed to meet growing statewide demand for ethnic studies pedagogy following the passage of AB101. Examples of such contributions include the Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders Multimedia Textbook developed by the Asian American Studies Center, as well as K-12 teacher training modules and curricular resources provided through Center X’s Teacher Education Program. Alongside these resources, the proposed Area H criteria provide an additional curricular framework for high schools to create courses to comply with AB 101. As our campus experts explained, the statewide model curriculum for AB101 only provides example materials and is not sufficient as a resource to implement the UC requirement. The Area H criteria provide guidance on course design that will help schools implement the requirement, rather than add to the demands of implementation and professional development for teachers. The criteria thus mark an opportunity for UC to provide guidance and curricular expertise in ethnic studies, thereby supporting students’ general preparation for, and therefore access to, a UC education.
Members and guests commented that the proposed requirement and UCLA’s unique role in helping high school students fulfill the requirement may have a positive impact on recruitment and retention efforts such as the UC-wide Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution initiative, as well as UCLA’s goal to become a Hispanic-Serving Institution. By introducing students to UCLA as they work in this space, students and their families may come to associate UCLA as a community where they will be welcomed and supported. We also note that in this same way, the requirement provides an opportunity to fulfill key pillars of UCLA’s strategic plan to deepen community engagement, to expand the University’s global reach, to enhance research and creative activities, and to elevate innovative teaching.

More broadly, CUARS members underscore the significant academic, social, and cultural benefits of incorporating ethnic studies into secondary education, as demonstrated in the research accompanying the proposal. We note that while the proposed content guidelines currently focus on ethnic studies in an American context, the skills guidelines and learning objectives are generalizable and agnostic across global communities and issues. In line with the University’s mission and values, CUARS affirms the importance of ethnic studies in cultivating critical analysis, dialogue, and civic engagement among our students, as well as helping to prepare high school students for the diverse communities they are about to enter.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this proposal. Please direct any questions to committee analyst Julia Nelsen at jnelsen@senate.ucla.edu.

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     Members of CUARS