American Studies
Departmental Diversity and Inclusion Plan
September 1, 2016

The Department of American Studies has a robust commitment to diversity and inclusion.

It also has a long history of being a campus leader on this front. When it was created out of the Program in American Civilization, its founding document called for establishing the first Asian American and Latino Studies positions to join already established positions in the still-new fields of Women's Studies, African American Studies, Labor History and popular culture. Following this origin point, for the past thirty years the department - its faculty and its students - has played a leading role in producing important scholarship on class, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. Scholarship by its faculty and the sizeable number of doctoral students they have trained has played a significant role in the shaping of American Studies as a critical method that is interdisciplinary, intersectional, and attentive to race, gender, and difference in local, national, and global contexts. More formally, in its “Standards and Criteria for the Comprehensive Review,” the department confirms that it is “strongly committed to diversity, broadly conceived to include demographic, intellectual, methodological, and subfield diversity. In its reflections on future hiring, curriculum development, student recruitment, and many other matters, it takes this strong commitment into account.” American Studies has, then, long been a leader on campus when it comes to creating new understandings of difference and power, to the broadening of “the pipeline,” to mentoring undergraduates from marginalized communities into graduate degree programs, and to doing the same for doctoral students, and, more recently, for postdoctoral fellows and faculty.

With this history in mind, in this document the department takes up the subjects of diversity and inclusion intersectionally, as they relate to people of color, citizens and descendants of sovereign indigenous nations, and historically underrepresented and marginalized communities - including LGBTQI, low income, undocumented, and first generation college students, and people living with disabilities. In this plan, we use the acronym “HUGs” to reference the aforementioned people and groups, understood, once again, intersectionally.

Process

In the wake of the administration’s call for a departmental DIAP – and mindful of the charge to be as inclusive as possible – the Chair established in February a committee composed of two graduate students, three faculty members, and one staff person. All three faculty ranks were represented. With the exception of the Chair and the staffperson, all members of the committee were from HUGs. Graduate student members were compensated for their time of service.

The committee meet weekly to discuss its work, and used the categories of the university-wide DIAP as loose model. Several google surveys were pushed to graduate students and undergraduate students. Survey results consistently revealed a positive appreciation of the
work of the faculty inside and outside of the classroom, while also encouraging a more robust rotation of speakers and workshops and stronger cross-departmental initiatives, especially with cognate units on campus.

After several weeks of work, the group shared drafts of the report publicly and staged a sequence of meetings with undergraduate concentrators, graduate students in the MA and PhD degree programs, and, eventually, the full faculty of the department.

The final draft of the document was approved by the faculty on May 10, 2016, by unanimous vote using a secret ballot.

People

The department is already diverse well beyond the university and national standards for the social sciences or the humanities.

The department presently has 17 tenure stream or permanent faculty members, 1 Senior Lecturer, 2 postdoctoral fellows, 2 visiting assistant professors, and a Director and Associate Director who teach and advise the students in our MA program.

(One of the postdoctoral fellows will be joining us as a tenure-stream; in this document, he is not yet counted among the tenure-stream faculty. There are two additional postdocs at the JNBC, and they are discussed in that center’s DIAP, not here).

Of the 17 tenure-stream faculty, 10 are women and 10 are HUGs.
Of the 6 Assistant Professors, all are women and 5 are HUGs.
Of the 6 Associate Professors, 3 are women 4 are HUGs.
Of the 5 full Professors, 2 are women, and 1 is a HUG
Of the 2 visiting assistant professors, both are women and 1 is a HUG
Of the 2 postdoctoral fellows, 1 is a woman and 1 is a HUG
Of the Director and Associate Director of our MA program, 1 is a woman and 1 is a HUG

The department manages two distinct undergrad concentrations: American Studies and Ethnic Studies.

In American Studies, from 2011 through 2015, more than half of the undergraduates were HUGS and well over half were women.

In Ethnic Studies, the gender ratio was similar: most graduating concentrators were women and almost all were HUGS.

The department also has two graduate degrees: a doctoral degree and an MA degree, both in American Studies. (Data on the Public Humanities students is factored into the JNBC DIAP).
In the MA degree, well over half of the students were women, and nearly all were HUGS.

In the doctoral degree, in most years, well over half of the students were women, and well over half were HUGS.

The department has two staff people, one of whom is a woman.

In short, the department – pursuing diversification on its own for years – has already made considerable strides.

It aims to maintain – and improve upon – this record.

**Faculty**

On this front, the ultimate goal of the department is not only to recruit faculty from HUGs but also, assuming excellence in scholarship and teaching, to retain and promote them. Therefore, the surest measurements of success are to be found in those areas: recruitment, retention, and promotion.

The department, generally, commits itself, when approaching all new, replacement, and target (or pre-select) hiring opportunities, to the recruitment of HUGs who have demonstrated the potential for broad, cross-concentration teaching excellence in American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Public Humanities.

More specifically, when it comes to recruitment, we recommend:

A. That the department should fill, as soon as possible, its existing vacancy – a joint position with English, historically focused on African American literature and culture. This field is extremely important in American Studies and Ethnic Studies. Our recent external review singles out African American studies as an obvious gap.

B. That the department pursue, as aggressively, as possible, its existing tenure-track hiring priorities:

1. Native American Literary and Cultural Production, a position that aligns closely with the emergent campus-wide Native and Indigenous Studies Initiative, that would fill a vast campus gap, and that would further augment a recent department strength.

2. Queer/Trans/Sexuality Studies, a position that is absolutely central to the national field of American Studies, and that is extremely compelling for our students (as revealed by our survey), that would stitch together departmental and campus-wide research interests into a singular cluster, but which is not yet represented in our faculty.
3. Asian American Studies, with a focus on Southeast, West, and South Asia, another position that would augment a great, historic strength of the department.

4. Environmental Justice, a position that is linked up with existing faculty strength and connected, as well, to two themes in the university’s strategic plan: “Sustaining Life on Earth” and “Creating Peaceful, Just, and Prosperous Societies.”

C. That the department, working with the JNBC, pursue a Professor of Practice in Public Humanities, perhaps in close partnership with the Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice.

D. That the department work with Africana Studies to develop a proposal for a cluster hire of three new faculty members (additions to the current roster, and not pre-retirement appointments) in areas of historical overlap, including perhaps history, literature, and digital humanities. These need not be joint appointments.

E. To ensure diversity at every rank, the department should actively work to recruit, through the Target of Opportunity program or the Humanities Initiative, senior faculty who are HUGs.

F. That, when considering any new, retirement, and replacement hires, the department should look, wherever possible, to fill faculty positions with HUGs.

And when it comes to retention and promotion, we recommend:

A. That the department will provide the mentoring and resources necessary to aid the progress of tenure-track HUGs faculty (and, indeed, all faculty) towards contract renewal and tenure. Concrete efforts that may assist in helping tenure-track faculty succeed include, for instance, inviting senior scholars to campus to offer feedback on a faculty member’s book manuscript and personal conversations with senior faculty members about teaching, grant writing, book proposals, and the like.

B. Parallel efforts will be undertaken to ensure that HUGs faculty at the Associate Professor rank are also helped, assisted, and otherwise encouraged to move towards eventual promotion to Full Professor. The Chair will determine that faculty who are HUGs in the middle rank have adequate mentoring and sufficient resources to be promoted to the full Professor rank.

C. That the department actively seek, as best as possible, to mitigate the structural position of contingent, junior and mid-rank faculty, especially HUGs.
D. The department will be mindful of the hidden labors often taken up by faculty who are HUGs, and will work with these faculty members to find an appropriate balance between research, teaching, and service. When and where appropriate, the Chair will limit the service it asks of its HUGs junior faculty, and will assist HUGs faculty members of all ranks, as needed, to ensure that service outside of the department - including work with students that is not captured under “teaching” - is limited, too. The Chair, along with senior members of the department serving on annual and reappointment review committees and tenure and promotion committees will continue university-wide discussions to ensure that service is equally recognized at the university level as an important factor for tenure and promotion to Associate and Full ranks.

Graduate Students

The department commits itself to a comprehensively diverse and inclusive graduate learning environment in its MA and the PhD programs. The department will work to recruit graduate students from HUGs, to ensure a receptive environment for said students to thrive, to retain those same students, and to ensure, as best as it can, that they make timely progress towards the completion of degree. It cannot mitigate all challenges, but the department can certainly develop specific strategies to precipitate greater diversity, inclusivity, and equity internally.

To diversify the MA and PhD cohorts, we recommend:

A. That the department will work with the Graduate School to offer additional financial assistance to prospective master’s students with demonstrated financial need who identify as HUGs.

B. That the department will work with the Graduate School, whenever possible, to admit qualified and successful master’s students who are HUGs into the PhD program.

C. That, wherever possible, the department will work with the Graduate School to actively and strategically recruit prospective graduate students from HUGs into the PhD student body, in numbers that are greater than the current demographics of the program. We propose, as well, to coordinate annually with other cognate departments in pursuit of a multi-departmental cohort of HUGs graduate students.

To create a more inclusive environment for current MA and PhD students who are HUGs, we recommend that:

A. While working with the Graduate School, the department should organize specific programming to prepare all eligible students for diversity fellowships and related opportunities, alert HUGs graduate students to relevant professional and academic opportunities on campus, create a collective set of resources for soon-to-be HUGs
PhDs, and more generally provide mentorship support for HUGs graduate students in a systematic and organized way.

B. The department should recognize the special constraints that international students face while in graduate school. The department should encourage the Graduate School to organize specific programming for international students around external funding for conferences and research-related travel that is often unavailable to non-U.S. citizens, nationals, or permanent residents (many of the diversity fellowships mentioned in the previous recommendation would, for example, be unavailable to international students). We recognize that historically universities have often used international faculty and students as empty symbols of diversity, and the latter as an exploitable revenue stream. The department will militate against this trend, and will ensure that its international graduate students are treated fairly and equitably. It acknowledges that international students often have unique needs and require additional support.

C. The department should work with the Graduate School and the campus to establish a formal and transparent system for graduate students to report grievances, so that it might designate staff and/or faculty who are familiar with university discrimination/harassment and grievance policies.

Undergraduate Students

We recognize the importance of diversity in the classroom, not only in student composition but also in the scholars we include on syllabi and the sites of knowledge production we prioritize.

And so, the department plans to:

A. Have each instructor of an undergraduate course distribute a mid-semester, online course evaluation to students that specifically addresses diversity and inclusion in the classroom, and include new questions about diversity and inclusion in the standard, end-of-semester evaluation. The mid-semester evaluations are for the instructor’s use, but, in the case of untenured faculty, may be shared in confidence with the Chair.

B. Work to recruit HUGs students into all of its undergraduate concentrations, to ensure that the teaching and learning environment is constructively, supportively engaged. A recruiting plan should be developed by the department during the summer 2016 retreat, implemented during the AY 2016-2017, and assessed at the end of the academic year for revisions.

C. Work to provide an inclusive environment for its undergraduate concentrators. To that end, it will continue its relationship with the Sarah Doyle Women’s Center, the Brown Center for Students of Color, the LGBTQ Center, and build a relationship with
the forthcoming First Generation College Student Center that offer vital services to and advocacy for undergraduates from diverse backgrounds. The goal, in the end, is to make these relationships both much more visible and much more meaningful.

**Curriculum**

Our courses incorporate issues of diversity and inclusion through the interdisciplinary analysis of culture, literature, gender and sexuality, migration, race and ethnicity, violence, urbanization, and the intersections of identity, power, privilege, and difference. Across the concentration in Ethnic Studies, for instance, our curriculum offers a range of courses that cover the subfields of Latinx Studies, Native American Studies, and Asian American Studies, often through the intersection of race, gender, sexuality, class, and many other categories. Our pedagogies reflect attention to diversity and inclusion in the classroom itself, and many of our courses include community engagement and praxis. The required junior seminar, for example, includes work in the public humanities as a vital and unique part of the American Studies concentration at Brown. Each faculty member teaching this seminar will define how the public focus of his or her scholarship will form the basis for the course, whether it is public policy, memorialization, community studies or civic engagement, to give four examples.

We propose, therefore:

A. That the department will host an annual forum, potentially in conjunction with the Sheridan Center and with cognate departments, such as Africana, TAPS, MCM, English, and/or History, focused on curriculum as it relates to matters of diversity, inclusion, and pedagogical practices. Our attention to the curriculum will be mindful of both diverse and underrepresented perspectives, as well as inclusive pedagogies in the classroom.

B. That the department will maintain designated advisors in American Studies and Ethnic Studies to ensure that the curriculum, though often overlapping in its course offerings, serves the distinct needs of the individual concentrations.

C. That the department will work with its faculty, postdocs, and the Graduate Consortium during the summer 2016 retreat to refine a list of best practices for an inclusive classroom, including, for example, pronoun usage on syllabi and in the classroom.

D. That the department will investigate the idea of collaborative teaching across disciplines, fields, and subdisciplines, with an eye on intersectionality and interdisciplinarity.

**Community**
In its interactions with local organizations and communities, the department must remain critical and self-aware. We are members of an elite institution. The perception of our prestige opens doors, and we must hold ourselves accountable for how we use that privilege. Effective community engagement is based on building and maintaining relationships. When we engage locally, we have to be prepared to continue our commitment beyond the end of a project. We must also acknowledge, and possibly compensate, our local partners for participating in the process of co-creation. We will do all of this, of course, in close collaboration with our colleagues in public humanities.

At the same time, many members of the department directly engage local communities through volunteer, advocacy, research, teaching, and leadership capacities. Often, this works happens through the John Nicholas Brown Center for Public Humanities. We use our knowledge to support community arts, language acquisition, youth empowerment, immigrant rights, gender and sexual justice and much more. These are important opportunities for our staff, students, and faculty to experience community founded upon the sharing of resources and responsibility rather than conditions of alienation and exploitation that sometimes characterize institution-community relations. Many of these efforts take place in communities of color.

Mindful of our position, we propose:

A. The department will invite members of local communities - those may extend beyond the parameters of Providence, given the territorial boundaries of nearby tribal nations - to attend departmental events and lectures through individual, organizational, and institutional outreach efforts.

B. The department will also move some of its events off campus in order to build programming with community partners, forge new relationships with the public, and to support existing institutional spaces around Providence.

C. The department will continue its collaboration with Providence public high school teachers and administrators to establish Ethnic Studies in the curricula.

D. The department will apprise the public of our ongoing engaged scholarship, as well as efforts and opportunities to build community engagement through a dedicated page on our website.

E. The department will explore a more formal coordinating structure and possible financial support for community-based internships, partnerships, and collaborations for its undergraduate concentrations.

F. The department will provide mentorship for Presidential Postdoctoral Fellows and welcome them into its community. It will connect with the Vice President Academic Development, Diversity, and Inclusion to ensure that the department is a receptive home for HUGs postdocs brought to campus.
Programming

The department, its faculty, its fellows, and its students regularly interface with issues of difference and diversity through programming. A substantial proportion of the department’s budget is allocated each year to bringing speakers to campus and supporting other efforts to do the same.

To focus and spotlight these efforts, we propose that:

A. The department will seek to endow and will annually sponsor a named speaker series (like the Huggins Lectures at Harvard) on race, ethnicity, sexuality, and difference more generally. It will partner with a press to see that these lectures are published. The speaker series organizing committee will include a member of the Graduate Consortium.

B. The department will regularly seek to bring HUGs scholars to campus who can serve as additional mentors to faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students. This should an intentional and regular feature of department life, becoming a fully-formed departmental speaker series.

C. Each Spring, the department will sponsor a graduate student colloquium featuring the research of Brown American Studies PhD Candidates. This full day event will provide advanced students with the opportunity to formally present their work and will serve to further build a community of scholarship and inclusion within the department. Funds should be allotted for refreshments, posters, programs, and compensation for a graduate student coordinator.

Accountability

The department believes that regular and repeated self-study, with the results shared publicly, is an important part of any effort to make structural and affective adjustments aimed at improving diversity and inclusion.

To that end, the committee proposes:

A. That the Chair will conduct annual, anonymous surveys of department faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, and staff, distributed over the winter break. These surveys are for the use of the Chair in composing the annual report, and shall not be shared publicly.

B. That the Chair will produce an annual report on the long term diversification and inclusion goals of the department, delivered in hard copy and electronic copy at the
end of the academic year to the faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, and staff.

C. That the department’s public face (e.g., its website) will include copies of these annual reports. This page on the website should also display regular updates on the department’s progress toward reaching the goals outlined in this plan.

D. That the department will hold an annual forum that invites faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students, undergraduates, and staff to openly discuss questions and concerns diversity and inclusion and regarding the department’s progress toward the goals outlined in this plan.

E. That the Chair will meet with each of the DUGs once a year and the Graduate Consortium once a year to discuss diversity and inclusion.

F. That the department will share any diversity data it receives with faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, and staff.

G. That the department will revisit this plan each year, as a part of its discussion of the annual report. This plan is a living document, and regular revisions ensure that it is kept up to date.