Proposal for a

Bachelor of Arts Degree Program in

Black Study

Date: March 18th, 2024
Updated: March 20th, 2024

Submitted by the Department of Black Study
I. Name of the academic program and the department(s) or unit(s) that will administer the program.

Name of the academic program: **B.A. in Black Study**

Department that will administer the program: **Black Study**

II. A thorough justification, including the motivation for the creation of the program in terms of student interest and professional or academic importance.

Currently, in the UC system, UCR has the largest number of students who identify as Black/African American: Black undergraduate enrollment is **1,265 students**. And even though UCR boasts a relatively high **graduation rate for Black students**, it is evident that this rate is despite the many facets of historical and contemporary antiblackness on campus. Black students, **staff**, and faculty consistently report on a campus climate that is hostile and unwelcoming, one in which quotidian micro and macro aggressions are widespread. Perhaps as a reflection of this negative campus climate, Black enrollment in CHASS, as we show below, has significantly decreased in the last decade.

At UCR, Black people are present as workers, students, and faculty, but they have yet to become an integral part of its curricular, academic, and research infrastructure in a sustained way. The Department of Black Study and its curricular offerings will help address this long-standing problem by providing courses and programming that responds to community demands and fills gaps. Undergraduate students in the Department of Black Study will obtain a rigorous and valuable Liberal Arts degree that enhances their critical thinking, writing, speaking, and creativity. Trained to combine theory and practice, Black Study graduates will become teachers, lawyers, doctors, artists, activists, professors, and researchers at public and private policy think tanks. A Black Study minor also offers an excellent complement to majors offered in CHASS as well as in other schools such as Education, Engineering, Art, Business, and Natural Sciences.

The UCR difference, signaled by our title Black Study, emphasizes “study” as a verb and stresses the engaged and embodied practice of this ever-morphing transformative project. The project name invokes Black Studies, UCR’s short-lived department, but is a departure from it as the singular Black Study, signifies profound shifts.

As a verb, Black Study stresses collective activities that are simultaneously corporeal and theoretical, practical, and speculative. We propose a curriculum that is a multi-, extra- and transdisciplinary body of knowledge emerging from historical and contemporary African, African American, and diasporic Black experiences. It encompasses but significantly exceeds conventional curricular frameworks of Black Studies, African American Studies, Africana Studies, and traditional disciplines in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Humanities, and the Arts.

Our curriculum emphasizes insurgent African and Black diasporic queer, transgender, and feminist transdisciplinary approaches to a global framing of Black experiences. Black Study is an abolition project. Drawing on autonomous practices rooted in articulated Black Radical Traditions, such as Cooperative Zones, Hush Harbors, Marronage Enclaves, Mutual Aid, and Transformative Justice, our approach is not
an outcome or destination but rather a collective experimental methodology of liberation. In rigorous research, analysis, creative practice, applied scholarship, and close partnership with transformative grassroots organizations, our courses critically address and seek to overcome all forms of antiblackness while encouraging and training our students on strategies to imagine and prefigure an altogether new world.

We are deeply engaged in the long duration of Black people’s ways of being and theories of knowing -- Black epistemologies -- in the African continent and its diasporas: Blackness beyond the veil of antiblackness, Blackness as being and becoming. At the same time, our curriculum approach is future-oriented and as such, informed by collective past experiences, yet drawing from futurities where the embodied experientials of spirituality, queerness, and gender expansiveness are intentionally celebrated.

The Department of Black Study at UCR, and the major proposed here, will serve to advance UCR as a world-class research university. Black Study is an epistemological living corpus that requires an overdue scholarly infrastructure in the public university. Such infrastructure addresses the long historical exclusion of theoretical, methodological, historiographic, artistic, and pedagogical practices engendered by the peoples of Africa and its Black diasporas.

**III. Relationship of the new program to existing programs.**
The Department of Black Study will work with and not against existing programs and departments. While stressing its relative autonomy regarding programming, curriculum, hiring priorities, and horizontal decision-making practices, the Department of Black Study will also recognize the autonomy of other units. Such coexistence models already exist at UCR: for example, the Departments of English and of Comparative Literature; the Department of Hispanic Studies, Chicano Studies minor, and the new Latino and Latin American Studies Research Center. Too often, a scarcity mindset pits university stakeholders against each other when, in fact, they can enrich one another. With a unique Department of Black Study, UCR could recruit and retain not only excellent faculty doing cutting-edge research and creative activity but also recruit and retain undergraduate and graduate students eager to learn Black epistemologies. This growth would bolster areas such as Ethnic Studies and African Studies, among others, as we agree on the shared importance of Black studies from Africa to the diaspora. We understand Black diasporas as including but exceeding those displaced in the Amefricas, as Black Brazilian feminist Lélia Gonzalez terms it. At the same time, we recognize that these fields are not the same. To presume otherwise erases their different intellectual histories, constituents, and objectives. To overgeneralize Black people, Black thought, and Blackness is to reify antiblackness.

As we evaluate how these distinctions and potential transdisciplinary collaborations may overlap in our curriculum, we have already begun to cross-list some of our courses. There are several cross-listed courses active in our curriculum, including requests we have approved from SEHE and the Department of Education to require Black Study courses for their majors, and others are currently under review. Given the shifts in graduate student funding and the need to be creative about how TAs are funded, Black Study will also consider proposing a collaborative partnership that offers increased opportunities for graduate students in Media and Cultural Studies, Dance, and Ethnic Studies to start, to teach in Black Study.
It should be noted that because our department's makeup is almost entirely joint appointments at this time, our intention is to build up our curriculum with courses taught and created by Black Study faculty to ensure we can build our enrollment numbers, which is made more challenging with joint appointments.

Perhaps less obvious, due to the transdisciplinary nature of our classes, the Department of Black Study will work with existing performing and fine arts departments to share classroom and production spaces. Our faculty already has strong relationships with UCR Arts, Dance, and Art and have initiated discussions on how we may collaborate on courses (e.g., cross-listing and space) and programming.

Rather than establishing sharp differences between Black Study and other important versions of Africana Studies, African American Studies, African and African Diaspora Studies, and Black Studies, we affirm our specificity in two ways. First, Black Study inhabits dynamic confluences, intersections, relationships, interstices, and productive tensions between the fields above, as well as various disciplines in the traditional Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts, Education, Medical Sciences, and Natural Sciences. Black Study is unapologetically and concomitantly multi-, trans- and extra-disciplinary; its practitioners seek dialogue across and beyond institutional boundaries, pursue collaborations and bridges rather than division, embrace cross-pollination instead of isolation and exclusivity, engender synthesis instead of antithesis.

Secondly, as a department that uniquely centralizes embodiedness, we celebrate a curricular emphasis on practice through the arts. Beyond mere review, appreciation, or survey, Black Study offers several praxis and transdisciplinary creative practice courses. These courses are placed not only in our “Arts” track but also exist as methodological alternatives to exploring natural science, political organizing and community mobilization, and religion and spirituality.

IV. The proposed curriculum.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES, ARTS, AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

REPORT TO THE RIVERSIDE DIVISION
May 21, 2024

To be adopted: Fall 2024

Proposed Changes to Black Study Major

PRESENT: PROPOSED:

Major
The Department of Black Study emphasizes “study” as a verb and stresses the engaged and embodied practice of teaching and research that
is simultaneously diasporic, local, communal, planetary, historical, contemporary, and future oriented. It is therefore, necessarily transdisciplinary in scope, straddling various disciplines in the Social Sciences, Humanities, STEM, and the Arts. Black Study transdisciplinarity is anchored in an intersectional lens, maintaining both symmetry and dissonance to seriously engage Black epistemologies, Black metaphysics, Black temporality, and Black social, cultural, and spiritual life. Rooted in articulated Black Radical Traditions, such as Cooperative Zones, Marronage Enclaves, Mutual Aid, Transformative Justice, and Abolition, the Department of Black Study is a collective experimental methodology of liberation in action, study, and future-making. Black Study requires both an engagement with (a) broad perspectives on possibilities and challenges Black people experience in the African continent and its diasporas across timescapes; and (b) specialization tracks that will deepen one’s understanding of such challenges and possibilities. The Black Study undergraduate experience offers transdisciplinarity as a value and intentional methodology, excavates multidirectionally in scope, and yet is specific, specialized, and rigorous. Through thorough research, analysis, creative practice, applied scholarship and close partnership with transformative grassroots organizations, Black Study students and community critically address and seek to overcome all forms of antiblackness while imagining and prefiguring an altogether new world.

**University Requirements**

See Undergraduate Studies section.

**College Requirements**

See College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences, Colleges and Programs section.
Major Requirements
The major requirements for the B.A. degree in Black Study are as follows:

1) Lower-division requirements (16 units)
   a) BLKS 001
   b) BLKS 002
   c) BLKS 003
   d) BLKS 004

2) Upper-division requirements (40 units)
   a) BLKS 191A or BLKS 191B
   b) BLKS 192A and BLKS 192B (Senior Capstone)
   c) BLKS 193
   d) Twenty-four (24) additional units. Students must take at least six (6) courses from two of the streams below.

   STREAM ONE: Critical Study in Black Lives.
   BLKS 019 / RLST 019, BLKS 101, BLKS 111, BLKS 114, BLKS 115 / RLST 115, BLKS 118, BLKS 142, BLKS 145
   STREAM TWO: Arts, Cultures, and Imagination.
   BLKS 024, BLKS 114, BLKS 120, BLKS 121, BLKS 122, BLKS 123 / SFSC 123, BLKS 124
   STREAM THREE: Behavioral Sciences, Social Sciences, and Pasts.
   BLKS 118, BLKS 131, BLKS 132, BLKS 135, BLKS 142
   STREAM FOUR: Building Black Liberation.
   BLKS 024, BLKS 120, BLKS 124, BLKS 135, BLKS 144, BLKS 151, BLKS 155

Justification:
The B.A. degree consists of 56 units with requirements focused on the major social factors and movements impacting Black peoples in the African continent and its diasporas, as well as courses along the following themes: i) Critical Study in Black Lives; ii) Arts, Cultures, and Imagination; iii) Behavioral Sciences, Social Sciences, and Pasts; iv) Building Black Liberation.
Learning Outcomes
Upon completion of the program, students will be able to:
1. Apply transdisciplinarity as theory and practice to address the social, cultural, and political in the making of Black futures;
2. Describe/Explain the tracks of Black Study as a holistic and epistemic discipline that studies the breadth of Global Black histories, presents, and futures;
3. Apply anticolonial ethics in engaging in research, in practice, and with communities;
4. Demonstrate ability to complete new and unique creative projects;
5. Develop and Demonstrate critical thinking and analysis in reading and reviewing theory, art, and embodied praxis;
7. Construct informed research-based arguments;
8. Develop and Demonstrate proficiency in writing.

Major Requirements (B.A.)
1. Lower-division/General requirements (4 courses, 16 units)
   a. BLKS 001 Introduction to Black Study I: Black People Domestically and Globally Now. 4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Introduces social issues and movements impacting Black peoples globally. Studies creation of possibilities to navigate issues (e.g., AIDS and other pandemics, food and nutrition insecurity, state terror and industrial incarceration, residential segregation, exposure to environmental toxins, and health and education inequities) to create vibrant futures. (Active, Effective Fall 2023) (a course change has been accepted to add discussion sections to this course for AY 2024-2025)

   b. BLKS 002 Introduction to Black Study II: Imagined and Embodied Futures. 4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Engages critical appraisal of artistic forms, political organizing efforts, embodied praxis and resistance formations, and theoretical prisms that imagine and propose alternatives to antiblackness. Examines Black interventions through time and technologies focusing on transgender, queer, and feminist perspectives-building on what Cedric Robinson terms the Black Radical Tradition. (Active, Effective Fall 2023) (a course change has been accepted to add discussion sections to this course for AY 2024-2025)

   c. BLKS 003 Introduction to BLKS Study III: Black Ways of Knowing, Doing, and (B)eing Otherwise. 4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Engages epistemology, the nature of knowledge and how knowledge relates to the concept of the human. Explores what counts as knowing and knowledge through Radical Black Study. Seeks to understand not why black lives matter but why black life matters. Examines what Cedric Robinson calls The Terms of Order. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

   d. BLKS 004 Introduction to Black Study IV: Praxis, Innovation, and Imagination. 4 Units, Lecture, 1 hour; laboratory, 2 hours; studio, 3 hours; individual study, 2 hours; screening, 1 hour; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): none. Engages in art making as critical research and strategy in liberatory world-making. Examines Black futures as radically imagined by artists and as a point of
departure for interdisciplinary creative projects. Encourages an embrace of the personal, ancestral, sacred, political, and beyond. (Under review)

2. Upper-division requirements (4 courses, 16 units)

   a. BLKS 191A OR BLKS 191B:

   BLKS 191A - Black Study Transdisciplinary Research Methods I: Gateways to Inquiry - 4 Units, Seminar, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Introduces interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research approaches to study questions to attend to the lives of Black folk around the world. Covers traditional and experimental methodologies focusing on contemporary research practices and methods deriving from Black diasporic epistemologies. Prepares for the beginning stages of research for senior projects. (Course title change - “Transdisciplinary” added - Under Review) (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

   BLKS 191B - Black Study Transdisciplinary Research Methods II: Practicing Inquiry - 4 Units, Seminar, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Engages practical use of research practices, methods, and epistemologies introduced in BLKS 191A. Facilitates student design of research questions and projects for senior capstone project as well as further exploration of the role of researcher. Focuses on research development skills and field-based concentrations. Helps identify relevant theoretical frameworks and bibliographies. (Course title change - “Transdisciplinary” added - Under Review) (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

   - Note that this course is designed for students with more advanced/ready experience in research and do not need the introduction course or for those who need or want additional research training and mentorship.

   b. BLKS 192A AND 192B: Senior Capstone. 4 units; Seminar, 3 hours.

4 Units, Seminar, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): BLKS 191A with a grade of C- or better, BLKS 191B with a grade of C- or better; or equivalent; restricted to class level standing of senior; or consent of instructor. Facilitates initiation of a transdisciplinary capstone project drawing on methods and practices learned in the Black Study major. Applies research and critical writing methods, performance and embodied praxis, and knowledge of visual cultures and media. Provides mentorship for research, writing, and revision processes. (Course number change - from BLKS 193A BLKS 193B - Under Review) (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

   c. BLKS 193: Black Study Inland Empire Community Initiative 4 Units, Seminar, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): BLKS 001, BLKS 002, BLKS 003; restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Introduces community engagement including prevention of social problems and promotion of well-being in diverse contexts. Critically examines how to define and propose solutions to social and institutional problems. Covers empowerment, resilience, diversity, cultural competence, and social action. Involves service learning through community organizations in Inland Empire communities. Course is repeatable to a maximum of 8 units. (Course number change - from BLKS 195 - Under Review) (Active, Effective Fall 2023)
3. Additional courses chosen from two of the tracks below (6 courses, 24 units).
Note that due to the nonlinearity of transdisciplinarity, some of the classes are included in multiple streams. Students will choose which curricular track toward which the unit will count.
(Students will not be permitted to count a course toward multiple tracks):

Courses – Track 1:

A) **Critical Study in Black Lives**
This track looks at critical theories, and practices of gender, sexuality, race, and blackness and explores the major theories informing Black Study, with an emphasis on the interlocking forms of oppression as offered by Claudia Jones’s concept of Black women’s triple oppression in 1949, the Civil Rights Congress’ “We Charge Genocide” in 1951, and the Combahee River Collective Statement in 1977.

**BLKS 019: Black Religion in the United States**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; discussion, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): none. Introduction to religion in the experiences of Black people in the United States. Topics include Black religion in the social imagination, in ritual, the arts (e.g., African American spirituals, literature), Black Nationalism, social change, and queernesses in Black religion. Engages primary sources for examining religious contributions in society. Cross-listed with RLST 019. (Active, Effective Spring 2023)

**BLKS 101: Critical Theories of Gender, Race, and Blackness**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Examines critical theories on the intersections of gender, race, and Blackness. Explores analytical and political implications of such theories and interrogates relations to traditional disciplinary canons and existing forms of political organizing. Probes continuities and ruptures between our planetary contemporary political moment and the cognitive apparatus that transatlantic slavery realized. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

**BLKS 111: Troublesome Possibilities: Reality, Black Aliveness, and Becoming**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activities, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Examines critical terms and concepts central to Black study and its connection to Black becoming, Black aliveness, and Black life. Topics include antiblackness, the fungible, fugitivity, slavery's afterlife, neoliberalism, miserablism, social death, microaggressions, Black spirituality, the dark feminine, Trans and Queer epistemologies, unfreedom, interlocking oppressions, racial capitalism, and Black rhetoric. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

**BLKS 114: Black Healing Traditions**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior, or consent of instructor. Explores healing traditions as religious experience and technologies for countering oppressive social conditions and human precarity; Examines role of black healing traditions in disrupting normative ideas of Black Religion and liberation; Interrogates commodification of black healing in the U.S.; Students investigate contemporary black healing as reflected in the communal imagination. (Under review)
BLKS 115: Black Religion, Resistance, and Moral Imagination
4 Units, Lecture, 4 hours. Prerequisites: restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior. A survey of various figures and communities that have resisted hegemonic primary resources, literature, oral histories, and contemporary artistic and cultural productions. Examines moral visions of Black and collective resistance and thriving. Cross-listed with RLST 115. (Active, Effective Spring 2023)

BLKS 118: Black Political Thought
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; extra reading, 1 hour; activity, 2 hours. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Examines approaches and evaluates what is at stake in engaging and producing Black political thought. Focuses on the Black experience in the context of the United States but also covers African and Caribbean thinkers. Topics include freedom, democracy, liberation, futurity, community, radical imagining, and state-sanctioned violence. Cross-listing with POSC will go into effect WI 25. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

BLKS 135: Incarcerated Black Radicalisms
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. This course engages the political and cultural work of incarcerated Black radical and proto-radical intellectuals in the 20th and early-21st centuries. We will examine how this Black intellectual lineage catalyzes reevaluations, destructions, counter-occupations, abolitions, and/or transformations of the U.S. nation-state, including its durable regimes of (antiblack) domestic and global war. (Under Review)

BLKS 142: Blackness and Carcerality
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): or consent of instructor. Examines the history, contemporary dynamics, key social theories, and social movements focusing on the criminal justice system. Addresses the vast apparatus of surveillance and punishment that constitute its lesser-known aspects including schools, hospitals, immigration detention centers, and various technologies. Cross-listing with ANTH 142E will be active in WI 25. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

BLKS 145: Black Language in Schools and Society
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; discussion, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Explores linguistic, sociolinguistic, and sociopolitical dimensions of Black language in the United States. Considers the relationship between Black language and Blackness. Critically interrogates the role of Black language in classroom instruction, schools, and society. Encourages liberatory learning engagements and centers the lived experiences of Black language speakers. Cross-listed with EDUC 145. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

Courses – Track 2:

B) Arts, Cultures, & Imagination
Engages the multiplicity of theoretical invention and political insight necessary for, contained in, and enhanced by artistic practice. Drawing from the unique concentration of Black innovative and critical
practitioners of dance, theatre, film, music, art, and literature at UCR, this track explores the epistemological bases, the social challenges, and the futures engendered in the imaginative and performative realms.

**BLKS 024: Black Social Dance & Movement(s) 1**
May be taken for 2 or 4 units: Workshop, 3 hours; activity 4 hours, or workshop 3 hours; activities, 9 hours. Prerequisites: upper-division standing or consent of instructor. Practice-based studio course that explores the fundamentals of Black and African Diasporic social dance, and practices that utilize embodied organization (parades, protests, etc). Focusing on a range of dance and movement forms this course engages presentational and non-presentational forms that are inextricable from Black cultural and political life. Incorporates videos, field trips, and guest visits, in addition to studio time. Can be repeated for a total of 8 units. (Under Review)

**BLKS 114: Black Healing Traditions**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior, or consent of instructor. Explores healing traditions as religious experience and technologies for countering oppressive social conditions and human precarity; Examines role of black healing traditions in disrupting normative ideas of Black Religion and liberation; Interrogates commodification of black healing in the U.S.; Students investigate contemporary black healing as reflected in the communal imagination. (Under Review)

**BLKS 120: Black Feminism and the Sacred**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior or senior, or consent of instructor. Examines black feminist personal, political, and academic approaches to studying and enlivening the sacred; Considers new questions a black feminist lens raises, disrupts, un-tethers, and builds; Investigates ethics, race, gender, sexuality, class, the arts, aliveness, and futurity supplemented with student-led explorations of contemporary black feminist expressions of the sacred. (Under Review)

**BLKS 121: The Body & Flesh in Black Thought**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Explores theories of the flesh and the body in Black thought to understand the multiple ways that Black bodies signify in the world. Examines flesh, epidermalization, embodiment, and other concepts that consider both antiblack perspectives and theories rooted in and routed through Black radical imagination and praxes. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

**BLKS 122: House Dance and Futurist Cypher Technologies**
4 Units, Workshop, 3 hours; activity, 3 hours. Prerequisite(s): upper-division standing or consent of instructor. Engages Black and Queer improvisatory social and spiritual practices to study the diasporic technologies of the circle. Presents the ring shout as foundational to unlocking the structures, the sacred, and the corporeal liturgies embedded within Black trance-inducing social dance forms. (Course number change from BLKS 112 under review)
BLKS 123: Reclaiming the Dark: Black Life is Speculative Fiction
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Explores alternative states of being, doing, and imagining in, around, and through Black life and culture. Covers writers, artists, and activists such as Octavia Butler, Toni Morrison, Cedric Robinson, the Combahee River Collective, N. K. Jemisin, Adrienne Maree Brown, Kevin Quashie, Nnedi Okorafor, and Ursula K. Le Guin. Cross-listed with SFCS 123. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

BLKS 124: Black Social Dance & Movement(s) 2
May be taken for 2 or 4 units: Workshop, 3 hours; activity 4 hours, or workshop 3 hours; activities, 9 hours. Prerequisites: upper-division standing or consent of instructor. Advanced practice-based studio course that explores the fundamentals of Black and African Diasporic social dance, and practices that utilize embodied organization (parades, protests, etc). Focusing on a range of dance and movement forms, this course engages presentational and non-presentational forms that are inextricable from Black cultural and political life. Incorporates videos, field trips, and guest visits, in addition to studio time. Can be repeated for a total of 8 units. (Under Review)

Courses – Track 3:

C) Behavioral Sciences, Social Sciences, and Pasts
Engages (a) historiography, theories of history, and the various his/their/herstorical archives, aiming to comprehend the past as it is reflected in and inflected by our current social challenges and aspirations; and (b) relevant debates and findings emerging from Ethnic Studies, African American, Africana, and Black Studies, and traditional disciplines such as Anthropology, Economy, Political Science, Psychology, Social Work, and Sociology, among many others.

BLKS 118: Black Political Thought
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; extra reading, 1 hour; activity, 2 hours. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Examines approaches and evaluates what is at stake in engaging and producing Black political thought. Focuses on the Black experience in the context of the United States but also covers African and Caribbean thinkers. Topics include freedom, democracy, liberation, futurity, community, radical imagining, and state-sanctioned violence. Cross-listing with POSC will go into effect WI 25. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

BLKS 131: Blackness in the Social Sciences
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Explores how different disciplines within the social sciences have approached Blackness and how Black social scientists have impacted the theoretical and analytical frameworks of these disciplines. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

BLKS 132: Black Diaspora(s)
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Focuses on how diverse histories of colonialism,
nation state building, enslavement, and social relations around Blackness combined with historical trajectories of regional social, political, and economic development create regional experiences of Blackness. Traces forms of being and modes of resistance among diasporic Black communities to understand broader Black diasporic experience. Course is repeatable as content or topic changes to a maximum of 8 units. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

**BLKS 135: Incarcerated Black Radicalisms**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; extra reading, 1 hour; activity, 2 hours. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. This course engages the political and cultural work of incarcerated Black radical and proto-radical intellectuals in the 20th and early-21st centuries. We will examine how this Black intellectual lineage catalyzes reevaluations, destructions, counter-occupations, abolitions, and/or transformations of the U.S. nation-state, including its durable regimes of (antiblack) domestic and global war. (Under Review)

**BLKS 142: Blackness and Carcerality**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): or consent of instructor. Examines the history, contemporary dynamics, key social theories, and social movements focusing on the criminal justice system. Addresses the vast apparatus of surveillance and punishment that constitute its lesser-known aspects including schools, hospitals, immigration detention centers, and various technologies. Cross-listing with ANTH 142E will be active in WI 25. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

Courses – Track 4:

**D) Building Black Liberation**
engages the multidisciplinarity of activism, community mobilization, and service that cultivates an approach to movement and social justice works as: 1) embodied praxis; 2) an archive of global liberation efforts and future-making strategies; 3) an inquiry into the theories and practices of policy. The required course “Community Internship” will not only reinforce the department’s rootedness in social movements but also enhance the student’s understanding of the theories and practices of community organizing.

**BLKS 024: Black Social Dance & Movement(s) 1**
May be taken for 2 or 4 units: Workshop, 3 hours; activity 4 hours, or workshop 3 hours; activities, 9 hours. Prerequisites: None. Practice-based studio course that explores the fundamentals of Black and African Diasporic social dance, and practices that utilize embodied organization (parades, protests, etc). Focusing on a range of dance and movement forms, this course engages presentational and non-presentational forms that are inextricable from Black cultural and political life. Incorporates videos, field trips, and guest visits, in addition to studio time. Can be repeated for a total of 8 units. (Under Review)

**BLKS 120: Black Feminism and the Sacred**
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior or senior, or consent of instructor. Examines black feminist personal, political, and academic approaches to studying and enlivening the sacred; Considers new questions a black feminist lens raises, disrupts, un-tethers, and builds; Investigates ethics, race, gender, sexuality, class, the arts,
aliveness, and futurity supplemented with student-led explorations of contemporary black feminist expressions of the sacred. (Under Review)

BLKS 124: Black Social Dance & Movement(s) 2
May be taken for 2 or 4 units: Workshop, 3 hours; activity 4 hours, or workshop 3 hours; activities, 9 hours. Prerequisites: upper-division standing or consent of instructor. Advanced practice-based studio course that explores the fundamentals of Black and African Diasporic social dance, and practices that utilize embodied organization (parades, protests, etc). Focusing on a range of dance and movement forms, this course engages presentational and non-presentational forms that are inextricable from Black cultural and political life. Incorporates videos, field trips, and guest visits, in addition to studio time. Can be repeated for a total of 8 units. (Under Review)

BLKS 135: Incarcerated Black Radicalisms
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; extra reading, 1 hour; activity, 2 hours. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. This course engages the political and cultural work of incarcerated Black radical and proto-radical intellectuals in the 20th and early-21st centuries. We will examine how this Black intellectual lineage catalyzes reevaluations, destructions, counter-occupations, abolitions, and/or transformations of the U.S. nation-state, including its durable regimes of (antiblack) domestic and global war. (Under Review)

BLKS 144 Artist Healers: Trans Indigenous Medicine and Art Intersections
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; extra reading, 1 hour; activity, 2 hours. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Examines a range of contemporary live performance makers and healers (centered in trans-indigeneity) who call us to question the construction of norms, binaries, borders, and being. Focuses on healing modalities and positioning wellness and political and critical engagement as partners in accessing a radical imaginary. Cross-listing with MHH will be active in WI 25. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

BLKS 151: Afrological Improvisation
4 Units, Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. Examines afrological improvisation, a diasporic artform and essential element of jazz. Presents key concepts, pertinent bibliography, and basic discography on jazz since 1950. Covers styles and performers which enables placement in political traditions that draw from Black collective knowledge and engage formations of state, society, and empire. (Active, Effective Fall 2023)

BLKS 155: Black Trans World-Making
4 Units: Lecture, 3 hours; activity, 2 hours; extra reading, 1 hour. Prerequisite(s): restricted to class level standing of junior, or senior; or consent of instructor. A gathering of radical Queer imaginaries of Black Trans, Nonbinary, and Intersex Artists and Activists. We explore radical creativity to combat dangerously violent anti-trans cultures, while traversing the Spiritual, empowered, soft, speculative and mysterious of embodied intelligences, and inspired mobilization efforts. Open to artists and writers in all disciplines. (Under Review)
V. A list of faculty who will be involved in the program, including those teaching, advising, and administering.
Elyse Ambrose, Assistant Professor, Black Study and Department for the Study of Religion (50% appointment)
Kim Yi Dionne, Associate Professor, Black Study and Political Science (Cooperating Faculty)
Anthony Jerry, Assistant Professor, Black Study and Anthropology (50% appointment)
Imani Kai Johnson, Associate Professor, Black Study and Dance (50% appointment)
Desireé Melonas, Assistant Professor, Black Study and Political Science (50% appointment)
Vorris Nunley, Associate Professor, Black Study and English (50% appointment)
Dylan Rodriguez, Professor, Black Study and Media and Cultural Studies (50% appointment)
João Vargas, Professor, Black Study and Anthropology (50% appointment)
Sage Ni’Ja Whitson, Associate Professor, Black Study

Administration
Sage Whitson, Chair

VI. Interdisciplinary Programs

N/A

VII. Projected enrollment

The projected enrollment at the start of the program is a conservative estimate of 30 majors and minors.

VIII. Name of Degree, anticipated number of degrees

The name of degree will be B.A. in Black Study, and we anticipate 60-70 degrees awarded when the Department stabilizes.

IX. Potential Impact of New Program on Existing Programs

Nearly all of the department's courses are taught by Black Study faculty, so the new program will not substantially impact other departments.
We would like to add that the courses that have been cross-listed thus far have resulted in increased enrollment for those departments and we anticipate that this positive impact will continue in our collaborative works.
X. Resources Required for Start-Up and Operations

Faculty -
Black Study has 9 faculty - seven with 50% appointments, one cooperating faculty, and one 100% appointment. We seek to hire one FTE per our UCOP grant (search currently underway) to begin July 1, 2024. We will seek to hire 1-2 PPFP scholars over the next year as well. Our current cooperating faculty member is in Political Science, and many other faculty in other departments have expressed interest in becoming affiliated or cooperating faculty. Our existing courses already include cross-listings with Political Science, Speculative Fictions and Cultures of Science, Department for the Study of Religion, Education, and Anthropology. Our new course proposals include cross-listings with Society, Environment, and Health Equity, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Medical Health and Humanities. Lastly, we are planning a Lecturer search this spring to supplement the many course releases awarded to our very active faculty.

Teaching Assistants -
Black Study will require 2 TAs in its first year to support the facilitation of our first two introduction courses, BLKS 001 and BLKS 002 (with more to be hired should enrollment dictate). We anticipate that these classes will easily attract at least 75 students across the College.

Staff -
Black Study will require the personnel infrastructure of most established departments. The CHASS Dean has allocated a part-time (24%) FAO shared with SEHE, and we have an enrollment manager, an undergraduate advisor, and temporary analyst. Our newly hired administrative assistant III started late February. We will seek to increase our FAO’s part-time allotment to be at least equitable to that of other established CHASS departments and to create a permanent analyst position.

Computer facilities and library resources -
No new resources are required.

Space -
The new department will require two additional faculty office spaces AY 2024-2025, and one shared office for lecturers and PPFP mentees. The CHASS Office of the Dean has identified potential offices in INTN for that purpose. We anticipate the need for two more office spaces in AY 2025-2026. All other BLKS core faculty are current faculty members, who, while jointly appointed, can use existing office facilities. However, it would be preferable to move faculty and staff offices over time in order to consolidate BLKS faculty in the same building and floor. Black Study faculty currently meet in a conference room in INTS shared with SEHE. Also, because of our practice-based and transdisciplinary courses, we will require access to arts studios and facilities and are currently in discussion with Associate Dean Kiril Tomoff to secure this resource.
Plans to Acquire Resources -

We will maximize our capacity through collaboration among all the faculty involved in the departmentalization process. We are working with the UCR Foundation Development and CHASS Development officers to identify grant opportunities to fund course development, undergraduate community engagement, research within the major, and developing a low-residency MFA. With our emphasis on futurity and the fact that Foundation funding is concurrently growing with that of the field of Afrofuturism and Black Speculative Arts studies, we anticipate increased opportunities for financial resource.

With UCR Foundation, we have established a departmental fund into which donations can be made over time by alumni of the program as well as by other donors interested in supporting the department, its students, and faculty. We plan to participate in this year’s annual Give Day with hopes to grow our participation and impact yearly.

This summer, we will teach two introduction courses - BLKS 001 and BLKS 002 - which will bring in 52% each of the revenue to the department. BLKS 001 has already been approved to be taught as an online course and will be offered, for the first time, this summer in that form.

Black Study has applied for a MLA Pathways Step Grant for 2024-2025 to support our community engagement courses, to develop new partnerships with activists and arts organizations, and to nurture existing ones. We have established an arts fellowship (The Salt Roads, named after the acclaimed book by Nalo Hopkinson, famed writer and former UCR colleague) will be partially funded by Chair, Sage Whitson AY 2024-2025. We will seek, via temp funds and extramural engagement, sustainable funding for the fellowship in subsequent years.

**XI. Internal and External Letters of Support**

**Internal Letters of Support**
Marilyn Grell-Brisk  
Assistant Project Scientist  
CE-CERT  
University of California, Riverside

Derick A. Fay  
Associate Professor and Acting Chair  
Department of Anthropology  
University of California, Riverside

The Department of Dance  
University of California, Riverside
Jeff Sacks  
Professor and Chair  
Comparative Literature and Languages

David Lloyd  
Distinguished Professor and Chair of English

Melissa M. Wilcox  
Professor and Holstein Family and Community Chair of Religious Studies  
Department Chair, Department of Religious Studies

Byron D. Ford  
Professor of Biomedical Sciences  
Associate Dean for Medical Education  
UCR School of Medicine

Monica J Carson  
Professor and Chair of Biomedical Sciences  
S. Sue Endowed Chair in Glial-Neuronal Interactions  
University of California, Riverside  
School of Medicine

Juliet McMullin  
Interim Dean, College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences  
Professor, Department of Anthropology  
Co-Director Center for Health Disparities Research

Members of Performing Difference  
Center for Ideas and Society Faculty Commons Working Group  
Donatella Galella, Associate Professor, Theatre, Film, and Digital Production  
Crystal Baik, Associate Professor, Gender and Sexuality Studies  
María Regina Firmino-Castillo, Assistant Professor, Dance  
Kimberly Guerrero, Assistant Professor, Theatre, Film, and Digital Production  
Tamara Ho, Associate Professor, Gender and Sexuality Studies  
Emily Hue, Assistant Professor, Ethnic Studies  
Imani Kai Johnson, Assistant Professor, Dance  
Anusha Kedhar, Assistant Professor, Dance  
Anthea Kraut, Professor, Dance  
Liz Przybylski, Assistant Professor, Dance  
Judith Rodenbeck, Associate Professor, Media and Cultural Studies  
Setsu Shigematsu, Associate Professor, Media and Cultural Studies  
Melissa M. Wilcox, Professor, Religious Studies  
Deborah Wong, Professor, Music
External Letters of Support

Charles R. Hale
SAGE Sara Miller McCune Dean of Social Sciences
College of Letters & Science
UC Santa Barbara

Mark Anderson
Professor and Chair
Department of Anthropology
University of California, Santa Cruz

Damien M. Sojoyner
Associate Professor
Department of Anthropology
University of California, Irvine

Black Leadership Alliance Council at the University of California

XII. College Faculty Approvals

12. Approvals from program faculty, College faculty (if the new proposal affects a college regulation), and the appropriate Executive Committee should be obtained before forwarding the new program to the attention of the Senate Analyst for CEP.

Proposal for the new undergraduate major in Black Study approved by Faculty Senate May 24, 2022 and approved by the Chancellor June 2, 2022
a. Program faculty
Elyse Ambrose, Assistant Professor, Black Study and Department for the Study of Religion
Kim Yi Dionne, Associate Professor, Black Study and Political Science (Cooperating Faculty)
Anthony Jerry, Assistant Professor, Black Study and Anthropology
Imani Kai Johnson, Associate Professor, Black Study and Dance
Desireé Melonas, Assistant Professor, Black Study and Political Science
Vorris Nunley, Associate Professor, Black Study and English
Dylan Rodriguez, Professor, Black Study and Media and Cultural Studies
João Vargas, Professor, Black Study and Anthropology
Sage Whitson, Associate Professor, Black Study (and was also in Dance at time of approval)

b. Chairs associated with the courses included in the new curriculum
andré carrington, Speculative Fictions and Cultures of Science
Jennifer Syvertsen, Anthropology
Fuson Wang and Carla Mazzio, Medical and Health Humanities
Melissa Wilcox, Department for the Study of Religion

c. List of chairs whose approvals are pending a faculty vote in Winter 2024
Jennifer Merolla, Political Science (with regards to crosslisting approvals to take effect in Winter 2025)

Appendix A
Letters and Memos of Support
March 29, 2021

Dear Dean McMullin and Professor Vargas:

I write to express my support for the efforts underway to found a Department of Black Study at UC Riverside. I have read the “pre proposal” with great interest, drawing both on my own scholarly commitments with Black Studies, and on my current role of Dean at UC Santa Barbara. In this latter role, I provide leadership and guidance for our own Department of Black Studies, which offers important areas of convergence and future collaboration with the Department that you seek to found.

As the pre proposal text attests, this historic moment provides a unique and urgent context for this effort: from the heightened awareness of racially structured societal inequities that disproportionately impact Black populations, to the steady stream of antiblack violence and related patterns of harm, to the astounding upsurge of Black-led mobilizations, which contest these systemic conditions, and in so doing, open pathways for more just and equitable societal conditions for us all. Although UC Santa Barbara and UC Riverside acted in sync to form their respective Departments some 50 years ago, in response to that prior moment of enabling conditions, we learn from the pre proposal document that forces at UC Riverside converged to keep the Department from persisting and flourishing. Historically constituted openings to meet these needs do not occur often; it is exciting to think that another such moment has emerged.

The Department of Black Studies at UC Santa Barbara is a vibrant space for Black-centered pedagogy, research, and publicly engaged intellectual work, which echoes in many respects the aspirations laid out in the pre proposal. Together with the Center for Black Studies Research (CBSR), the Center for Publicly Engaged Scholarship (CPES), and many other divisional and campus units, the Department has stepped up to engage the acute and chronic intersecting crises of the moment, from the racially disparate impact of the pandemic, to the rise of white supremacist political currents, to environmental racism, to the longstanding plague of antiblack police violence and mass incarceration regimes. As the pre proposal also emphasizes, these units also foreground Black cultural and political creativity, which generates alternative visions for societal organization, and innovative praxis that offers principles and paths forward to guide processes of societal change. The yearlong “Race to Justice” series, organized by UCSB Arts and Lectures, and guided by an advisory committee drawn from our Black Studies community, has offered us a steady stream of inspiration—in the face of dire adversity—along these lines. We can now look forward to a much-deepened relationship of collaboration with UC Riverside, building on our distinctive features, as well as the foundation of common ground that we share.

One further comment is in order, regarding the pre proposal’s stated goal of forming a doctoral program, which would make UCR a leader among the UC campuses of Southern California. We strongly support this initiative, as an essential component of any tier 1 research University, as a crucial step in forging a vibrant Black Study intellectual community, and to widen the “pipeline” for future scholars and teachers in this tradition. At the same time, this element of the pre proposal document reminds us that graduate education is an absolutely critical goal for our own Black Studies department as well. We view our goal, and the one you have outlined, as mutually reinforcing; in addition, we see exciting possibilities for collaboration along these lines—perhaps even thinking together about innovative “next generation” graduate training.
programs, which might more fully address the needs and aspirations of future generations of Black intellectuals, and more directly engage the conditions of societal crisis that produced the need for the Black Study department in the first place.

We wish you all the best in your endeavor, and look forward to further exchange as your efforts unfold.

Yours Sincerely,

Charles R. Hale
SAGE Sara Miller McCune Dean of Social Sciences
College of Letters & Science
Marilyn Grell-Brisk, Ph.D.  
Assistant Project Scientist  
CE-CERT - UC, Riverside  

25 March, 2021

Dear Dr. Grell-Brisk:

It was a pleasure to hear about your participation in the effort to start a Department of Black Study at UCR. As Dean of the Bourns College of Engineering, I can attest to the fact that our college has not experienced the success in recruitment and retention of Black students that we desire. We have worked with our Council of Advisors and our NSBE student organization to develop an endowment that will help provide specific professional development resources for Black students such as attending workshops and conferences as well as support an operating budget for their many activities. The NSBE leadership has been advising us during weekly meetings on how to be more effective in our recruitment and retention of Black students.

Across the UC system there is far too little participation of Black students in engineering, even though there are high paying jobs available to engineering graduates. Depending on the goals of the faculty in a future department of Black Study, there could be many opportunities for us to collaborate; and the presence of this department could provide a more welcoming atmosphere for future Black engineering students. Ideally, some of these students will continue on for a Ph.D. in engineering and contribute to the pipeline of Black engineering leaders in the academy. We continue our efforts to hire more Black faculty who serve as role models.

I am strongly supportive of your efforts. Please be aware that I need to be respectful of the faculty-driven process and the role of the academic senate in the development of new degree programs and departments and thus I cannot directly advocate for a new department in another college. I look forward to the opportunity to participate in future discussions if the faculty working on this proposal feel this would be helpful.

Sincerely,

Christopher S. Lynch  
Dean Bourns College of Engineering  
William R. Johnson Jr. Family Endowed Chair
March 30, 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

I am writing to offer my strongest support for the creation of a Department of Black Study at UC Riverside. The proposed department will articulate with initiatives underway in the Anthropology Department, draw together disparate scholars and students across the university and address longstanding needs and concerns on the campus. It also will facilitate recruitment and retention of Black faculty and students, and generate critical scholarship and pedagogy. Moreover, the proposal articulates a unifying, relational position on Black Study that will position UCR as innovative and transformative, “encompass[ing] but exceed[ing]” conventional disciplines and interdisciplinary models for the field. The proposed department and the scholarly community that it represents deserve the full support of the university, and I hope that you will look favorably on the proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Derick A. Fay, Ph.D.
Associate Professor and Acting Chair
Department of Anthropology
University of California, Riverside, USA
March 26, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to express my support for the creation of a Department of Black Study at UC Riverside. The creation of a department focused specifically on Black Study fulfills a longstanding need and will make UCR visible at the cutting edge of transformative scholarship, pedagogy and praxis concerning the Black Diaspora, critical race theory, and anti-blackness. Based on my graduate experiences of involvement in a program with a focus on the African Diaspora, with a high concentration of Black faculty and students, such a department will serve to enhance community, belonging, success and retention among faculty and students.

Sincerely,

Mark Anderson
Professor and Chair, Department of Anthropology
University of California, Santa Cruz
March 31, 2021

**Dear Dean McMullin,**

The Department of Dance writes to express its enthusiastic support for the urgently needed Department of Black Study at UCR, recently proposed by the UC Riverside Black Study Initiative (BSI), composed of Inland Southern California community members, staff, students (undergraduate and graduate), and faculty.

The development and resourcing of a Department of Black Study at UCR would be a catalyst for necessary changes on campus and across the UCs in order to fully center and support Black Innovation and Knowledge Production and to ensure that Black voices are a guide for interdisciplinary, intercollegiate and interdepartmental curriculum design and implementation. Such a department will be a critical force on campus, the region, and across the UCs; a center for community building and abolitionist practices and thinking and a home for Black students, staff and faculty who continue to feel marginalized and silenced. While we recognize there are initiatives across campus to hire more Black faculty and to appeal to and retain Black students, a dedicated Department of Black Study will demonstrate and more fully enact UCR’s uncompromising pledged commitment to its Black community members, will address past and ongoing grievances of antiblackness and antiblack violence, and will be a powerful step in preventing the continued exodus of Black faculty and students from UCR which has included esteemed scholars Fred Moten, Ashon Crawley and Jayna Brown, among others.

Last summer there was a campus-wide fury to respond to the racial and social justice uprisings spreading across the globe in response to the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, as well as the much less publicized murders of Black Trans folks like Tony McDade and Nina Pop. There was a host of university, college and department pronouncements against state-sanctioned violence and the murder of Black people by the police. In particular, there was immediate response to the *UCR Demands to Administration - Call to Action* that members of the Black Student Union, ASUCR, Sisters Affirming our Socio-Cultural Identities,
and Queer Alliance, and a number of other student organizations sent to Chancellor Wilcox and the UCR administration on May 31, 2020. The list of demands student community members called for included “The campus-wide support for the Black student community regarding accountability, educational equity, and increased support services.” We see accountability, equity and support services to include the building and resourcing of a Department of Black Study which, as the “Black Study at UCR” proposal states, would “Bring together a diverse group of dynamic scholars and practitioners of Black Study already at UCR…” and whose self-governing structure would privilege those students, faculty, staff, and Black progressive community members in promoting its own well-being, research/curricular agendas, and advancement.

We too responded to the students’ Call to Action and included our own commitment to “CENTER Black voices, ideas and research, and work diligently to decolonize the academic canon and the epistemological and methodological praxes in our field and related disciplines, as well as in our graduate and undergraduate curriculum design.” As a faculty largely comprised of Black, and other historically marginalized persons, including Latinx, South Asian, LGBTQ folks and persons of Indigenous descent, an equally diverse student body and staff, and whose curriculum is indebted to African diasporic practices, Black scholarship and theory, we see this as an opportunity for our own department to strengthen its research and curricular endeavors and to be in partnership with a department dedicated to Black Study. With so many faculty and students (many who are not Black), in our department and at UCR, interested and employing Black scholarship, theory, and creative practices, and for there NOT to be an academic department dedicated to this field of research, is a huge contradiction.

As part of UCR’s ongoing efforts to do more than pay lip service to diversity slogans and cliche publications that list our national rankings for social mobility, supporting and fully resourcing a Department of Black Study is a decisive step in the right direction towards a university that embodies and enacts its core values.

As part of these university wide efforts, the Department of dance full-heartedly and without reservation supports a Department of Black Study at UCR.

Sincerely,
The Department of Dance
March 31, 2021

To: João Costa Vargas  
Professor, Department of Anthropology

From: Jeff Sacks  
Chair, Comparative literature and Languages

Re: Department of Black Study

This is to forward the Department of Comparative Literature and Languages’ enthusiastic support for the creation of a Department of Black Study at the University of California, Riverside.

Given the hegemonic and persisting forms of antiblackness, anti-immigrant xenophobia, and racism, and the long histories of violence, coercive social practice, intellectuality, and material-legal institutions, since the founding of the American state and prior to it, the formation of a Department of Black Study appears to us as at once as an intellectual and social imperative.

We wish to underline that this initiative has significant relevancy for a Department of Comparative Literature and Languages. Because Black Study occasions a re-thinking of the forms of thought and intellectual practice in modernity, it compels a renewed attention to the basic categories that attend the practice(s) of reading in literature studies, which is also to say, a renewed attention to terms we understand ourselves to have properly understood, for example: “language,” “reading,” “poetry,” “relation,” “history,” “philosophy,” “religion,” “the social,” and many others.

We are concerned not only about the marginalization and exclusion of Black thought, literary production, poetics, cinematic intervention, philosophy, and criticality from the University and from departments of Comparative Literature, but also with the ways in which the social forms for intellectual life and practice, in America, can tend to remain derivative of antiblack, racialized terms for social understanding.

For example, in his work Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition (1983), Cedric Robinson explained this linkage:

In America, the accommodation of Western historical consciousness to racial ideologies created a particular chain of social misperceptions and historical distortions that endured into the present century [the 20th century]. Not only was popular thought affected but the very foundations of that American academic thought which first began to mature in the nineteenth century was suffused with racist presuppositions [our emphasis—JS]. The emerging American bourgeoisie, in its mercantile, manufacturing, and plantocratic aspects, was purposefully and progressively achieving its first stages of ideological coherence. The intellectual grounding came to absorb the past of those peopling America as well as their present. The result was the construction of the historical legends that obscured
the origins and character of the republic and the social relations upon which it rested. (p. 76)

Because they enable us to understand the social form of American institutions and “academic thought,” and because they illumine the study of race and antiblackness on a global scale in diverse contexts—“Capitalism we less a catastrophic revolution (negation) of feudal social orders than the extension of these social relations into the larger tapestry of the modern world’s political and economic relations” (p. 10), Robinson wrote—a Department of Black Study, and the modes of thought and sociality it creates, significantly contribute to the discipline of Comparative Literature and the Department of Comparative Literature and Languages at UC, Riverside.

The Department of Comparative Literature and Languages, its undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty, will substantially benefit from its collaborations with a Department of Black Study. The forms of thought, critique, and social understanding, which emerge in Black Study, provide a nexus for the critical interrogation of social life; without a Department of Black Study, the College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences remains significantly incapacitated in its desire to produce knowledge about, and also to change, the world in which each of us lives.

Faculty in the Department of Comparative Literature and Languages work in and with a wide variety of languages and literary traditions, including African, Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Latin, Vietnamese and others. Our work spans periods and media, and so the intervention of the Department of Black Study opens numerous pathways for critical engagement and interaction in our writing, teaching, reading, and scholarship.

In our own department, we are in conversation regarding initiating a major in African Literatures and Languages, and we view the initiative to form a Department of Black Study as a complementary one to our own; while the disciplinary and intellectual terms are distinct from this proposed major, and while the forms of scholarly and pedagogical practice are also distinct, there are moments of mutual overlap and nurturing, and we therefore view this initiative for a Department of Black Study to be in sync without our short- and long-term pedagogical goals, intellectual project, and hiring plans.

We wish to underline the following passage in the proposed frame for this department, forwarded by the conveners of this initiative:

Drawing from Black transformative, queer, trans, and feminist epistemologies, the department will house and nurture rigorous research, pedagogies, curriculum, and artistic practices that are historically-grounded, dialogically engaged in local and global communities, abolitionist, and future oriented. Black Study encompasses the social complexities, interconnections, and discontinuities that mark the African continent and its diasporas in varied times and spaces. Bringing together a diverse group of dynamic scholars and practitioners of Black Study already at UCR, its self-governing structure will emphasize the participation of students, faculty, staff, and Black progressive
community members in decision making regarding all department matters, including admissions, hiring, promotion, tenure, and programming.

Our work and teaching intersects with the frames suggested here; further, we are of the view that the sorts of interaction and intervention that will open with the formation of this new department will lead to collaborations, which we—from our present vantage point, where this department is at once much-needed and still-absent—are not able, yet, to imagine.

Finally, we wish to underline that Black faculty and students at UC, Riverside are significantly harmed by the absence of a Department of Black Study on our campus. The organizers of this initiative write that:

The latest demand for a Department of Black Study at UCR originates in the 2020 mass transnational mobilization for Black Lives. It dates back to 1968, when the UCR Black Student Union pleaded the case for a Black Studies department. The institutional absence of such a department has contributed to repeated waves of Black faculty departures for other universities, the alienation of Black students and staff from UCR, and a generalized climate of antiblackness.

We affirm this assessment and we share the concern that Black faculty, students, and staff—and faculty, students, and staff of color—have been significantly impacted in manifestly negative and ongoing ways because of the absence of a Department of Black Study at UC, Riverside. The initiative to create this new department, therefore, is at once socially and intellectually urgent, and we very much hope that the various institutional bodies that review this proposal will view it with the same enthusiasm, and with same sense of timely urgency, that we do.
March 29, 2021

Dear Dean McMullin,

The Department of English enthusiastically supports the proposed formation of a Department of Black Study at UCR, believing that it will synergize productively with the research and teaching agenda of our own and other departments in CHASS, will greatly enhance the experience of all students, and especially that of Black students who have long sought the establishment of such a department, and will help to bring UCR’s intellectual and departmental profile into line with the most progressive of UC campuses, most of which already have distinct departments of Black, African American or African Diaspora Studies. Moreover, the distinctive way in which a department specifically of Black Study promises to put UCR on the leading edge of developments in the field.

As you know, the establishment of such a department is long overdue and grows from a long history of demands and from an equally long history of racism at UCR that caused the dismantling of a Black Studies program and major in 1982. The latest demand for a Department of Black Study at UCR originates in the 2020 mass transnational mobilization for Black Lives. But it dates back to 1968, when the UCR Black Student Union pleaded the case for a Black Studies department. The institutional absence of such a department, and the history of hostility towards it, have contributed to repeated waves of Black faculty departures for other universities, from which our own department recently suffered, with the loss of three senior and nationally known Black faculty whom we have yet to replace completely, and to the alienation of Black students and staff from UCR within a generalized climate of antiblackness.

Drawing from Black transformative, queer, trans, and feminist epistemologies, the department promises to house and nurture rigorous research, pedagogies, curriculum, and artistic practices that are historically-grounded, dialogically engaged in local and global communities, abolitionist, and future oriented. Black Study encompasses the social complexities, interconnections, and discontinuities that mark the African continent and its diasporas in varied times and spaces. Imagined in such a way, it is clear to us that a Department of Black Study would intersect with and richly inform the work that we already seek to do in English in studying and teaching about the racial formation of culture from the early modern period to the present. Collectively we have an ongoing commitment to race critical research and anti-racist pedagogy and strive to realize this in our practice. Having a strong and active Department of Black Study can only enhance the work that we seek to do across diverse periods, distinct and intersecting racial histories, and bodies of literature.

Black Study is a transdisciplinary body of knowledge emerging from historical and contemporary African, African American, and diasporic Black experiences. It encompasses but significantly exceeds conventional curricular frameworks of Black Studies, African American Studies, Africana Studies, as well as traditional disciplines in the Social and Behavioral Sciences, Humanities, and the
Arts. As Black Study emphasizes insurgent African and Black diasporic queer, trans, and feminist transdisciplinary approaches to a global framing of Black experiences, it also sets a bar and a model for other scholars to engage with and drives all of us to a sharper conceptualization of the field of race and other intersecting histories of differentiation and racial injustice. While we believe that the establishment of a Department of Black Study is unquestionably and in itself the right thing to do, we also welcome the stimulus it would give to our own thinking and teaching.

We look forward to any further opportunity to vote more formally on this matter, but in the interim are pleased to express our support and our confidence in the colleagues who have shaped this proposal.

Sincerely,

David Lloyd
Distinguished Professor and Chair of English
March 29, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

The faculty of the Department of Religious Studies unanimously and enthusiastically support the creation of a Department of Black Study at UCR. Black Study is a critically important aspect of our own field, and like many departments on campus we have found ourselves unable to retain faculty members in this field because of precisely the structural challenges pointed to in the petition for the creation of this department – structural challenges that the presence of a well-supported, well-staffed, and thriving Department of Black Study would help to address not only for its own faculty but for scholars of Black Study across the campus.

In the recent past, two scholars of African American religions have been hired at UCR – one in our department and one in English – who left our campus for other positions prior to receiving tenure. Both were leading-edge figures in their fields when they were hired, and both continued meteoric ascents as scholars after their departures from UCR. One went from here to Harvard, and from there to a deanship at Wake Forest; he was recently featured in Henry Louis Gates, Jr.’s documentary on the Black church. The other, one of a small number of leading scholars merging queer studies and Black study in religion, went to the University of Virginia; his second book was just selected as a finalist for the prestigious Lambda Award. While both of these scholars left UCR to pursue excellent opportunities elsewhere, both were looking for those opportunities because UCR was not a place they wished to stay over the long haul. Had the proposed Department of Black Study been in place, there is a reasonable chance they would have chosen differently.

Because of the departure of the first scholar, the second had no colleagues directly in his area of study. Because of both their departures, our undergraduates seeking to study Black religious traditions must seek out independent study courses with those of us qualified to teach them. Graduate students seeking specifically to pursue Black study in religion do not even apply to our department. Just as the lack of a Department of Black Study has had a snowball effect that has reinforced a climate of anti-Blackness at UCR, the creation of such a department would have a snowball effect in combatting that climate. For our students, for our colleagues, for the betterment of the university, and to move UCR forward into the academic future, we join our voices with those of our colleagues in urging that this department be created.

Sincerely,

Melissa M. Wilcox
Professor and Holstein Family and Community Chair of Religious Studies
Department Chair, Department of Religious Studies
March 30, 2021

Black Study Initiative  
University of California, Riverside (UCR)  
Riverside, CA 92521-0418

RE: Creation of Black Study Department  

Dear Black Study Initiative Committee Members,

I, Byron Ford, Ph.D., want to express our support for the creation of a Black Study Department at UC Riverside. I am Professor of Biomedical Sciences and Associate Dean for Medical Education in the UCR School of Medicine.

The innovative nature of the Black Study Department will allow UC Riverside to become a national leader in supporting and promoting Black scholarship and matriculation. By developing opportunities for collaboration between UCR’s STEM and Humanities colleges, the Black Study Department will serve as a community focal point to bring together scholars supporting Black scholarship from across the university.

Further, I would be interested in understanding how the designated emphasis in Black Study can be applied to our needs. I am most interested in helping to identify or connect researchers in our department/school that are focused on or whose research interests could align with Black Study.

In conclusion, I am strongly committed to your effort to bring a Black Study Department to UCR. Such a department would demonstrate that the university values its Black scholars and prioritizes Black scholarship. Further, the Black Study Department provides an exciting opportunity to showcase the incredible talent of UC Riverside’s faculty and students.

As a Black faculty member at UCR, I highly anticipate the wonderful work to come.

With best wishes for success,

Byron D. Ford, Ph.D.  
Professor of Biomedical Sciences  
Associate Dean for Medical Education  
UCR School of Medicine
March 30, 2021

Black Study Initiative
University of California, Riverside (UCR)
Riverside, CA 92521-0418

RE: Creation of Black Study Department

Dear Black Study Initiative Committee Members,

I wish to express my support for the creation of a Black Study Department at UC Riverside.

The innovative nature of the Black Study Department will allow UC Riverside to become a national leader in supporting and promoting Black scholarship and matriculation. By developing opportunities for collaboration between UCR’s STEM and Humanities colleges, the Black Study Department will serve as a community focal point to bring together scholars supporting Black scholarship together from across the university.

Further, I would be very interested in understanding how the designated emphasis in Black Study can be applied to our needs. I am most interested in three areas being discussed:

1. Being a part of developing and/or enhancing research training opportunities for individuals in our department/organization that are interested in a Designated Emphasis in Black Study
2. Disseminating information and marketing of the DE in Black Study to our department/organization
3. Helping to identify or connect researchers in our department/organization that are focused on or whose research interests could align with Black Study

In conclusion, I am strongly committed to your effort to bring a Black Study Department to UCR. Such a department would demonstrate that the university values its Black scholars and prioritizes Black scholarship. Further, the Black Study Department provides an exciting opportunity to showcase the incredible talent and innovative scholarship in an area of need by UC Riverside faculty, fellows and students.

With best wishes for your success
Respectfully,

Monica J Carson, PhD
August 1, 2021

UCR Academic Senate
Elizabeth Watkins, Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

Re: Proposal for the Department of Black Study

It is my pleasure to write with enthusiastic support for the establishment of the Department of Black Study. The development of this proposal is in response to student demand as well as campus and national strategic plans. The proposal has also garnered support across campus, students, staff, and faculty in CHASS, including the unanimous support of CHASS’s Executive Committee in May 19, 2021. Importantly, it has also received unprecedented support from the broader Riverside community. I unequivocally agree with the Executive Committee and the multitude of other endorsements and encourage its support by the Academic Senate and the campus leadership.

The inspiration for the new department proposal is a combination of the highly successful UCOP sponsored Blackness Unbound Faculty Commons Group and a necessary reckoning of social and institutional antiblackness. The proposal was developed through an inclusive process initiated by the Black Studies Initiative which included over a year of engaging and listening to students, staff, and faculty. It should also be noted, that UCOP continues to support the initiation of this new department as evidenced by UCOP’s Advancing Faculty Diversity Program award of $500,000. This award will support the hiring of four new faculty who would share joint appointments and individual appointments in the Department of Black Study.

The completed proposal is well developed and provides a strong curriculum from which our students would benefit. As the authors of the proposal note, Black Study, is not a noun but rather a verb that reveals the inclusive, collective, relational, and inter/trans disciplinary research and educational pedagogies. The proposal builds on CHASS’s existing strengths in Black, African, and African American Studies through coursework in departments such as Ethnic Studies, History, Political Science, Anthropology, and English. The proposal development committee is also in conversation with Engineering and other STEM fields. These collaborations will continue to foster transdisciplinary research and potentially increase the number of diverse students in the STEM fields. To extend the opportunities for collaboration the committee is also developing new courses that embody the innovative vision of Black Study. The proposal and its FAQs sheet addresses many of the questions regarding its enhancement of existing departments and why this is the time to initiate the Department of Black Study.

I’d like to briefly address the budgetary impact question. The Department of Black Study would be a grounding department in a new administrative unit that would increase enrollment and bring in extramural research funds through collaborations in the Humanities and STEM fields. In anticipation of this proposal, CHASS Dean’s Office has developed a plan to reorganize our administrative units. We have calculated that a new administrative unit would cost approximately $200,000 per year (FAO, Financial Analyst, and Student Support Staff). Note, that in any condition, CHASS would have to create this new unit in the next year or two to address severe understaffing. Our plan is that the Departments of Black Study, Environment,
Sustainability, and Health Equity, Ethnic Studies, and newly extramurally funded research centers would be served by the new administrative unit. Another question with regards to budget is the impact of having faculty with split departmental appointments in CHASS. The design of the Department of Black Study with one perhaps two full time faculty and several split appointment faculty is a successful model that we have seen before, specifically in 2012 with the School of Public Policy. The combination of new courses and cross-listed courses will ensure the integrity of the new department’s curriculum and continued support for existing departments. In the short term, existing departments might request an additional lecturer if more than two faculty move 50% of their appointment. Given the proposed curriculum, approximately five lecturers may be required in existing departments which would cost approximately $50,000 per year. In the long term, new hires will occur in departments where faculty have transferred from as well as in the Department in Black Study. As noted above, UCOP has already supported the hiring of new faculty and split appointment faculty for the new departments. Importantly, Department of Black Study will be highly attractive to UCOP President’s Postdoctoral Fellows (PPFP). With the hiring incentive of five years of salary coverage and CHASS’s intentional recruitment of PPFP will only strengthen our ability to support our existing and new departments. The new Black Study department, with its anticipated increased enrollments and potential for extramural funding, more than justifies the expense of creating a new unit and split faculty appointments for the first few years and in the long term.

The proposal is innovative in its ability to bring together existing and new strengths into a cohesive departmental plan that centers the active learning and research that reaches across boundaries and provides the knowledge, critical thinking, and collaborative practices that faculty, staff, and students, particularly Black faculty, staff, and students need to be innovators of a society that refuses antiblackness. We are uniquely poised to make UCR a leader in the area of Black Study. Waiting until there are “better times” would only serve to lose the momentum and disenfranchise faculty who are motivated and inspired to meet the needs of our students, communities, and the broader society. I enthusiastically support the creation of a Department of Black Study. It is time for CHASS and campus to clearly demonstrate our innovation and relevance to larger societal concerns not only through the work of individual researchers, but also through the infrastructure of departments that can foster that innovation particularly for Black students, staff, and faculty.

On behalf of the College, thank you for your consideration of this exceptional and timely proposal.

Juliet McMullin, PhD
Interim Dean, College of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences
Professor, Department of Anthropology
Co-Director Center for Health Disparities Research
October 24, 2020

Dear Chancellor Wilcox and Interim Dean McMullin,

We are members of the Performing Difference Faculty Commons group who embody and study minoritized difference from performances on stage and screen to performances of everyday life. Founded in 2018, our working group fosters research and relationships across campus so as to sustain and retain our community of scholars and artists.

We write to be in solidarity with the Blackness Unbound Faculty Commons group and to echo their statement dated June 5, 2020: “We call upon the university to invest in the bodily safety, psychic integrity, and empowered futurity of black students through immediate and actionable policy changes.” We urge campus leadership to divest from policing, given the documented harm of these state- and university-authorized violence workers. To create a safer environment, the campus must redirect funding to support Black students, staff, and faculty directly. Finally, we affirm the need for formalizing Black Studies at UC Riverside, and we appreciate Dean McMullin’s dedication to this effort.

Changing campus cops’ costumes is not enough. Creating a campus task force with no experts in police violence is not enough. Liberation requires real transformation.

In solidarity,  
Members of Performing Difference

Donatella Galella, Associate Professor, Theatre, Film, and Digital Production
Crystal Baik, Associate Professor, Gender and Sexuality Studies
María Regina Firmino-Castillo, Assistant Professor, Dance
Kimberly Guerrero, Assistant Professor, Theatre, Film, and Digital Production
Tamara Ho, Associate Professor, Gender and Sexuality Studies
Emily Hue, Assistant Professor, Ethnic Studies
Imani Kai Johnson, Assistant Professor, Dance
Anusha Kedhar, Assistant Professor, Dance
Anthea Kraut, Professor, Dance
Liz Przybylski, Assistant Professor, Music
Judith Rodenbeck, Associate Professor, Media and Cultural Studies
Setsu Shigematsu, Associate Professor, Media and Cultural Studies
Melissa M. Wilcox, Professor, Religious Studies
Deborah Wong, Professor, Music
October 13, 2021

Dear Dean Williams and Academic Senate,

I write to express the enthusiastic support of the Department of English for the proposed formation of a Department of Black Study at UC Riverside. We anticipate that this proposed new program will offer important opportunities for collaboration that will enrich our existing programs in English, and that it will enhance the intellectual experience of students across CHASS. Collectively we have an ongoing commitment to race critical research and anti-racist pedagogy and strive to realize this in our practice. Having a strong and active Department of Black Study will enable us to extend this work across cross-disciplinary collaborations and will augment the work that we seek to do across diverse periods, distinct and intersecting racial histories, and bodies of literature.

The proposal for this initiative eloquently demonstrates why such a program of study is urgently needed at this historical moment. At the same time, the proposal also explains why establishing such a program is long overdue, the culmination of decades of work and commitment that has been insufficiently recognized and sustained by administrative structures and budgeting priorities. Our campus prides itself on serving a diverse and under-represented student body, and our institutional shortcomings in relation to Black students and faculty are starkly revealed by the distressing statistics in the proposal that document failed efforts to recruit and retain Black faculty and sustain a thriving Black student population. The English Department regularly recruits graduate students working across diverse fields of enquiry related to Black epistemologies, speculative aesthetics, archives and performances studies, and literary modes, and our efforts to build in this essential area of study have been hampered by the loss of two faculty specializing in Black culture, who separated after failed retention efforts. Thus, the proposed program in Black Study will not only offer us opportunities to form new collaborations with colleagues across disciplines, but it will enhance our own efforts to research and teach issues of racial formation from the early modern period to the present.

Establishing this program in Black Study will also demonstrate the University’s commitment to the larger public good and its responsiveness to contemporary social movements that are demanding concrete action to redress the systemic injustice of structural conditions of racism that shape American (and global) life. An effective public university has a responsibility to dedicate itself to producing knowledge that serves the needs of the wider community, and the proposed program in Black Study does not simply add another alternative to existing university curricula, but asks indispensable questions about the epistemologies and practices that guide us in our research overall, calling on us to reimagine them from the point of view of centering Black experience as we reconsider our histories, aesthetic categories, and philosophical commitments. Such knowledge is precisely what is required to produce engaged and informed citizens capable of taking leadership roles in a changing world, and what is needed to ensure that UC Riverside is positioned at the forefront of cutting-edge developments in the humanities and social sciences. It is all the more
important that we do this work on our campus because—as the proposal notes—UC Riverside enrolls the highest number of students who identify as Black/African American across the UC system.

The English Department strongly endorses this proposal not only due to these institutional and cultural contexts, but also because we see immense value in the planned curriculum and governance structure for the program. The curriculum sets a bar and embodies a model for other scholars to engage with and offers methods and theories that provide a sharper conceptualization of the field of race and other intersecting histories of differentiation and racial injustice. Drawing on diasporic queer, trans, and feminist transdisciplinary approaches to a global framing of Black experiences, it envisions and creates an infrastructure for connecting students and the off-campus community; it promises to integrate the content of Black Study with training to become teachers or lawyers or doctors and thus to reshape those fields via anti-racist praxis; and it continually emphasizes the connections between scholarship and practice in the training that it will provide its students. We concur with the proposal that this initiative to train the next generation of leaders promises to benefit the wider community in myriad ways as it contributes to the vital project of combatting anti-Blackness and inventing civil society anew.

We look forward to any further opportunity to vote more formally on this matter, but in the interim are pleased to express our support and our confidence in the colleagues who have shaped this proposal.

Sincerely,

Sherryl Vint
Professor and Chair
October 14, 2021

Dear Colleagues,

I write to express the Creative Writing Department’s support for the creation of a Department of Black Study at the University of California, Riverside. As chair of this department, I am honored to add our voices to the chorus celebrating and endorsing the proposed department’s stated aim to “seek dialogue across and beyond institutional boundaries, pursue collaborations and bridges rather than division; embrace cross pollination instead of isolation and exclusivity; engender synthesis instead of antithesis.” This comprehensive approach to scholarship that foregrounds the embodiment of Black intellectual traditions, and to furthering our campus’s—and the country’s—antiracist goals, is welcome and exciting and long overdue, not just when considering the recent nationwide Black Lives Matter movement, but also when considering the country’s centuries-long practice of racially motivated violence and discrimination, both overt and covert, explicit and implicit.

We in the Creative Writing Department at UCR look forward to the swift formation of a Department of Black Study, as we are eager to collaborate with and support it as soon as possible. Given its thoroughly and persuasively formulated pre-proposal and FAQ, we believe that it will strengthen and broaden the academic environment of our campus, giving students, faculty and others the opportunity to learn and effect meaningful change here and in the communities of which we are a part.

Sincerely Yours,

Josh Emmons
Chair, Creative Writing Department
August 26, 2021

Dear Black Study Advisory Committee:

I am writing a letter in support of the establishment of a department of Black Study at UC Riverside for several reasons. 1) It is time to revisit the Ethnic Studies Department structure; 2) It is important to create a stand-alone space for Black faculty, staff and students within UCR, and 3) It is important to bring together interdisciplinary Black faculty across the university to make sure that the university and community will benefit from the research, curriculum and scholarly engagements already being carried out in various parts of the university.

I remember reading about the demise of the Black Studies program back in 1985 or so. It was a pattern that was seen all over the United States. In the 1980s, 1990s and into the 21st centuries, ethnic studies programs and departments have been underfunded and marginalized. Started initially as the academic answer to political social justice movements, there was never a centering of Black epistemologies, for example in the academy. This is an opportunity for a transformative department that speaks to the 21st century needs of Black students, faculty and staff along with community members.

Second, this department could provide a stabilizing space, for the deepening of existing Black epistemic ideas and practices as well as the creation of new global ones. Given the deep history of racism in the African diaspora, it is important that there is an institutional Center from which both evolving academic and policy work can be created and disseminated.

Third, it is critical that time and energy will be spent bringing together Black and other faculty to plan together how an interdisciplinary Black Studies curriculum can build synergies with other existing and proposed Africana programs. For example, as an anthropologist, our faculty have committed to supporting an African Diaspora option for undergraduate and graduate students in our department. In addition, there is a work group of faculty who have been working on an African Studies program. Those faculty should be invited at this stage to decide how they may want to be involved moving forward. I am excited about the possibility of cross listing courses with this new department; and perhaps developing new ones with other partners.

Please feel free to involve me as chair of the curriculum Committee of the Anthropology Department in any way that you see fit.
Best,

Yolanda T. Moses
Professor of Anthropology
Former Associate Vice Chancellor
Diversity and Inclusion
October 13, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this letter as my personal support for the formation of a Department of Black Studies at UCR. Our country’s history has a particular and foundational relationship to race, and specifically to the history of Black people. Our systems of governance, economics, education, and culture are all intrinsically tied to this historical context, and so it is an educational benefit - and perhaps imperative - to offer a Department of Black Studies dedicated to exploring and expanding those intrinsic ties. Writers like Ta-Nehisi Coates, Michelle Alexander, and Isabel Wilkerson have given recent voice to just how wide-reaching the tenets of Black Studies are. A comprehensive and contemporary education around economics, or performing arts, or history, or political science in the U.S. demands a dexterity around these tenets.

We are moving toward a more common cultural literacy around critical race theory, and as our students come to campus better prepared to study concepts of culture and identity through this very lens, it is our responsibility as an institution to provide thinkers and researchers engaged with disciplines in Black Studies. The Department of Black Studies will provide dedicated professors and course work which will benefit students across many disciplines, and bring a potential for cultural community experiences like visiting lectures or performances. While splintering the Department of Ethnic Studies poses its own long-term institutional questions about who gets represented and how, one might consider the nurturing of the Department of Black Studies as a possibility model, a pilot for what this sort of specialized discipline might look like within the system in this new decade. Perhaps it will be instructive for other such departments in the future.

Sincerely,

Professor Jim Isermann
Art Department
Dear Colleagues,

It is a pleasure to write in support of the Department of Black Study at the University of California, Riverside. UC Riverside is the ideal home for the Department of Black Study as the purposefully broad scope of the department encapsulates the main tenants of a world class research university such as UCR. Further, given the global political, social, and economic dynamics of Southern California (and Riverside County in particular), there is a natural coalescence of intellectual and strategic goals between the Department of Black Study and that of UC Riverside as an institutional leader within the region. Perhaps more so than any University of California campus, UC Riverside is a prime location to house and develop such an important and vital undertaking. Over the past 30 years, Riverside County and the surrounding communities including San Bernardino County have become home to a diverse Black population who have family, political and community ties ranging from West Africa to South and Central America to the US South. This relatively recent development is complimented by the strong scholarly record of current UC Riverside faculty who have been at the forefront of pushing the theoretical and methodological paradigmatic boundaries of Black Studies. Such a coupling provides for a strong foundation for the Department of Black Study and without a doubt the department will be one of the preeminent sites of Black Study in the world. Please take this letter as my unconditional support for the Department of Black Study and I look forward to engaging with colleagues within the new space in the near future.

Sincerely,

Damien M. Sojoyner
Associate Professor
Department of Anthropology
University of California, Irvine
To the Leadership of the University of California, Riverside

The Black Leadership Alliance Council at the University of California (BLAC@UC) is pleased to lend its support to the proposed Department of Black Study at the University of California Riverside (UCR).

As a collective of Black Affinity Group leaders from across the University of California, we are committed to the elevation and support of Black students, faculty and staff. As an academic collective that will integrate multidisciplinary and intersectional research, the Department of Black Study would allow for robust collaboration among Black faculty on an undergraduate and graduate level. Beyond academics, we believe that the thoughtful and organized governing would be inclusive and welcoming to UCR’s students, staff, alumni and the community.

As a department that existed at UCR until budget cuts in the 1980s mandated its closure, we see the restoration and reimagining of this department as a beginning step to enhancing the Black experience at UCR. The restoration of the Department of Black Study is an expansion of the work that is occurring throughout the University of California, such as UC Santa Cruz and UC San Diego, which recently established a minor in Black Studies and major in Black Diaspora and African American Studies respectively. As an institution which highly values cutting edge research, reestablishing an official department with official undergraduate and graduate pathways would place UCR at the forefront in this important area of study.

Among many things, 2020 taught America the importance of amplifying Black voices so that we can all move forward together. We humbly believe that the Department of Black Study at UCR is a feasible and pivotal step in the right direction.

Respectfully Submitted,

Black Leadership Alliance Council at the University of California (BLAC@UC)