

December 17, 2021

TO: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division of the Academic Senate

FROM: Victor G. J. Rodgers, Chair
BCOE Executive Committee

RE: Proposal for a Department of Black Study

The BCOE Executive Committee appreciates the opportunity to review the proposal for a Department of Black Study on our campus. Overall, the committee feels that this proposal appears to be coming from a source independent of the current African American Studies Program that is already on campus and has a 40-year history. The current African American Studies program has only about 25 majors currently with no PhD students at this time. The addition of another, directly related department or elevating the program to a department drives the question of resources and student enrollment. Further, how is the department going to be sustained? Finally, this proposal should be spearheaded by the current African American Studies Program in the Ethnic Studies Department as these senate members are held to the Call for promotion and tenure issues among other program stipulations.

There is an additional concern where the document implies endorsement by the BCOE dean, but this is not presented in the document (Please see the attached document from Dean Lynch).

Finally, I attached my personal concerns with the proposal.

Attached: Note for Dean Lynch, note from Victor G. J. Rodgers

BCOE Dean response to request for feedback from the Academic Senate on the formation of a Department of Black Study:

Dear Members of the Academic Senate,

In March of 2021, I met with Marilyn Grell-Brisk. Dr. Grell-Brisk is a researcher in CE-CERT who is passionate about UCR starting a Department of Black Study. We talked about the importance of a proposal for a new department being driven by faculty. We discussed the potential positive impact on BCOE should CHASS decide to pursue the formation of this new department. I provided a letter indicating topics BCOE has been working on to improve the Black student experience in our college, indicating that BCOE would be pleased to work with the faculty who are developing the proposal, and importantly, to make clear that BCOE cannot advocate for the formation of a department in another college. A copy of this letter is attached here and is attached to the proposal.

The proposal that came to the BCOE executive committee for comment includes my name in a way that suggests my endorsement of the existing proposal as Dean of BCOE. I was not involved in the development of the proposal, had not discussions with any CHASS faculty regarding the development of this proposal, and as I indicated in my support letter dated 25 March, 2021 cannot directly endorse a proposal to form a new department in another college unless that college has broadly endorsed the proposal and I am asked for support by the associated faculty and the dean. At that point I would review the proposal in detail and ask for input from my faculty executive committee.

I request that the proposal be modified to refer to the letter that I provided and remove my name from the body of the proposal other than to refer to the letter that I provided. I need to be respectful of the views of the many faculty in another college who will be much more knowledgeable of the details of forming a new department in their college than me, the impacts on their existing programs, and the resource constraints their college might have.

Sincerely,



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

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.

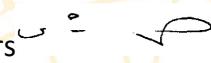
Sincerely,



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

December 17, 2021

TO: Jason Stajich, Chair
Riverside Division of the Academic Senate

FROM: Victor G. J. Rodgers 
Jacques S. Yeager, Sr. Professor of Bioengineering

RE: Comments of the Black Study Proposal

I have my concerns about the Black Study program. I have seen a history of groups attempting to capitalize on the disparity issues of others for self-gain and this appears to be just another one of those situations. This is never clearer than in the preamble that attempts to play on white guilt via the recent visualization of polite brutality in the US. More concerning is the direct implication of the universities police department without strong evidence.

In addition, as the proposal mentions, there is already an African American Studies program in the Department of Ethnic Studies, yet the faculty in this program are suspiciously absent (Paul Green for example has not endorsed this proposal). How is the current program doing with respect to recruiting and graduating of students? I further note that, despite the discussion on Dr. Carolyn Murray's history with the previous Black Studies program, she has not endorsed this proposal either.

At the University of Iowa, I was the president of the African American Council and worked with the university to keep and maintain the historic black studies program there. We were successful, but we focused on making it a win-win for all. However, this is different. It is apparently not borne from the very people whose academic careers are hinged on success in this area. However, it appears to take advantage of an emotionally charged topic to create something that is already in place, albeit the African American Studies program may need revamping. As this is not spearheaded by those in African American Studies, I get the impression that the proposed program is aimed to supplant what already exists. At the very least, all members of the African American program should have a clear voice in this matter and should lead this effort.

Other Comments:

- African American studies is over 40 years old and there are only 22 majors at present. The creation of a department would require significant UCR resources that do not appear to be justifiable.

- The name 'Black Study' is inconsistent with the naming of current programs. Once more, the title with 'study' instead of 'studies' lends itself to the stereotype of African Americans that they cannot command the English language.
- Previous members of the current African American Studies program have since asked that their endorsement be removed.

Given my observations above, and knowing the history of how these things work, this appears to be coming from individuals who may have another agenda other than supporting black people or the educational base of all of us in further understanding the plight of blacks in America.

