



Area F: Ethnic Studies for All

by Elizabeth Norvell, San Diego City College

Last December, the Woodland Community College Ethnic Studies & Chicana/o Advisory Committee sponsored the Fall 2020 California Community College Ethnic Studies Summit. Moderated by Dr.

Melissa Moreno, the summit began with an acknowledgment of the Patwin people, stewards of the land on which the summit was taking place, and in memory of all the Ethnic Studies educators and community leaders who came before those participating in the summit on that Friday afternoon. The summit combined celebration with education around the passage and implementation of AB 1460 (Weber).

Signed into law by Governor Newsom on August 17, 2020, Section 1 of AB 1460 (Weber) states:

- (a) Ethnic Studies programs have come about from students of color demanding them. On November 6, 1968, a coalition of student groups at San Francisco State University demanded the university institute an Ethnic Studies program.
- (b) Ethnic Studies is an interdisciplinary and comparative study of race and ethnicity with special focus on four historically defined racialized core groups: Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina and Latino Americans.
- (c) Studies have found both students of color and White students benefit academically as well as socially from taking Ethnic Studies courses. Ethnic Studies courses play an important role in building an inclusive multicultural democracy.
- (d) A report of the California State University Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies, commissioned by the Chancellor's Office, recommended Ethnic Studies become a general education requirement throughout the California State University System.

Section 2 of the legislation (now added as Section 89032 of California Education Code) goes on to summarize its intent "that students of the California State University acquire the knowledge and skills that will help them comprehend the diversity and social justice history of the United States and of the society in which they live to enable them to contribute to that society as responsible and constructive citizens." To that end, the law mandates as of the 2021-22 academic year each California State University (CSU) campus provide courses in Ethnic Studies and that the CSU Council on Ethnic Studies collaborate with the CSU Academic Senate to develop

core competencies. Finally, AB 1460 decrees as of the 2024-25 academic year, the CSU "shall require, as an undergraduate graduation requirement, the completion of, at a minimum, one three-unit course in ethnic studies" without raising the total number of units required to graduate with a baccalaureate degree.

The sense of camaraderie, collaboration, and an emphasis on work still to be done among the California State University and California Community College (CCC) faculty made evident their vision for the expansion of the discipline of Ethnic Studies throughout both systems of higher education during the Summit. Central to this vision was the presentation of the five core competencies that define and distinguish an Ethnic Studies course from a Multicultural or Social Justice course. These competencies are as follows, with bolding as presented at the Summit:

1. Analyze and articulate concepts such as race and racism, racialization, ethnicity, equity, ethno-centrism, eurocentrism, White supremacy, self-determination, liberation, decolonization, sovereignty, imperialism, settler colonialism, and anti-racism as analyzed in any one or more of the following: Native American Studies, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Latina and Latino American Studies.
2. Apply theory and knowledge produced by Native American, African American, Asian American, and/or Latina and Latino American communities to describe the critical events, histories, cultures, intellectual traditions, contributions, lived experiences and social struggles of those groups with a particular emphasis on agency and group affirmation.
3. Critically analyze the intersection of race and racism as they relate to class, gender, sexuality, religion, spirituality, national origin, immigration status, ability, tribal citizenship, sovereignty, language, and/or age in Native American Studies, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, and Latina and Latino American communities.
4. Critically review how struggle, resistance, racial and social justice, solidarity, and liberation, as experienced and enacted by Native Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans and/or Latina and Latino Americans, are relevant to current and structural issues such as communal, national, international, and

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transnational politics as, for example, in immigration, reparations, settler-colonialism, multiculturalism, and language policies.

5. Describe and actively engage with anti-racist and anti-colonial issues and the practices and movements in Native American, African American, Asian American, and/or Latina and Latino American communities, and a just and equitable society.

The five Ethnic Studies Core Competencies were approved in November by representatives from the Ethnic Studies Council, the Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU), and the CSU Chancellor's Office. Those competencies were adopted by the full ASCSU at its November 5-6, 2020 meeting. At the time, it was still unknown if the CSU Ethnic Studies requirement would be implemented as a graduation requirement or as part of the CSU General Education Breadth pattern, and if so, whether as an upper- or lower-division requirement.

According to a November 2, 2020, article in EdSource, the CSU Chancellor's Office was "leaning strongly toward" suggesting to the Board of Trustees the new requirement be instituted as a three-unit lower-division course as part of CSU General Education Breadth pattern. CSU Associate Vice Chancellor Alison Wrynn was reported in the article to have stated making the course lower division would allow CCC students transferring into a CSU with an Associate Degree for Transfer in a high-unit major to be able to fulfil the Ethnic Studies requirement and graduate within the 60-unit limit mandated by SB 1440. EdSource quoted Wrynn saying, "We believe that this fits better at the lower division, and that it's a good starting point for our students in terms of a requirement." Amid controversy, the CSU Board of Trustees ultimately approved the new requirement as a lower-division GE Breadth requirement, now known as Area F Ethnic Studies.

On the community college side, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) approved two resolutions related to Ethnic Studies at the Fall 2020 Plenary Session. Resolution 9.03 Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement stated the following regarding studies related to the impact of Ethnic Studies courses on student development:

- » All students benefit academically when they are reflected in the curriculum as well as socially from taking ethnic studies courses, and

- » Students learn to deconstruct internalized ideas of unworthiness or deconstruct internalized racism and oppression and become empowered, and
- » Such courses can play an important role in helping students identify and address issues impacting our society, such as systemic racism, generational trauma, sexism, and homophobia.

The Resolution states that in light of AB 1460's passage, adding an Ethnic Studies course to the CSU system's graduation requirements and expected growth in demand for Ethnic Studies at the CCCs, it be resolved the ASCCC work with the CCC Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) to recommend California Code of Regulations Title 5 Section 55063 be amended to include an Ethnic Studies graduation requirement starting with the Fall 2021 term.

The second Resolution, 9.04 Clarify and Strengthen the Ethnic Studies General Education Requirement, resolved the ASCCC work with the CCCCCO to amend Title 5 Section 55063 (b) to remove language that at least one of the existing General Education categories include Ethnic Studies offerings and to "establish an Ethnic Studies general education requirement by adding an additional fifth area general education area to Title 55063 (b), Ethnic Studies."

A few days after the ASCSU Ethnic Studies Core Competencies and ASCCC Resolutions 6.03 and 9.04 were adopted, the competencies were included in the revisions to the policy on CSU General Education Breadth (formerly known as EO 1100-Revised) as a lower-division requirement with the caveat that "CSU campuses may certify upper-division ethnic studies courses to satisfy the lower-division Area F requirement so long as adequate numbers of lower-division course options are available to students."

As a CCC Articulation Officer (AO), I attended the December 4th Ethnic Studies Summit for several reasons. First and foremost, it is my job to work with discipline faculty to assure that the course outlines of record (COR) that I submit for general education review on behalf of my college, whether for CSU General Education Breadth (or in the case of the UCs, Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum, or IGETC), satisfy published requirements for approval. Once submitted, the CORs are reviewed by a team of trained reviewers from both segments, the CCCs and the CSUs and/or UCs. As AO, I lead the way in my college's responsibility to prepare students to meet our transfer partners' general education requirements.

Second, as a faculty member at San Diego City Community College, a highly diverse, urban campus with strong programs in both Black Studies and Chicana/o Studies dating back to the 1970s, I was excited and curious to witness the coming together of Ethnic Studies faculty to collaborate on the implementation of this historic legislation. ASCCC Resolutions 9.03 and 9.04 had been brought to the ASCCC Plenary by the City College Academic Senate president, and I was looking forward to seeing and listening to faculty presenters from San Diego Mesa College's Black Studies and Chicana/o Studies departments along with all the Ethnic Studies faculty from across the state. Although I had assisted the Ethnic Studies faculty from both campuses to integrate and maintain their course outlines in compliance with Title 5 in the early- and mid-2000s as an adjunct curriculum writer, the Summit offered a valuable deep dive into the discipline as a whole, past, present, and future.

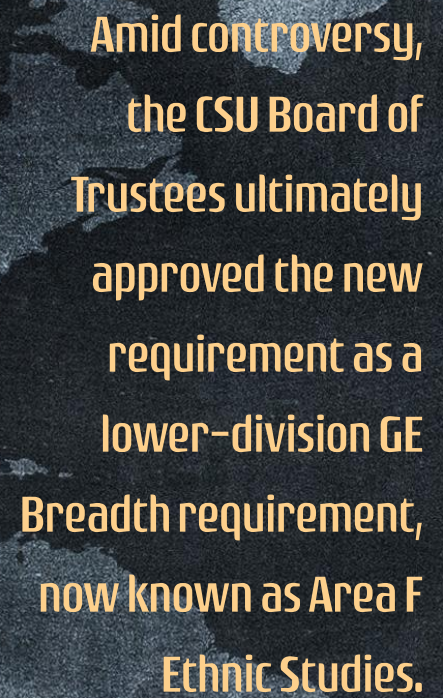
The real challenge is for those community colleges with few or even no Ethnic Studies courses currently in their inventory. Many colleges around the state have been moving quickly to create or modify CORs to meet the Ethnic Studies requirements. This brings up a sticky situation as community colleges may have had to rush through curriculum development processes to meet the February 5, 2021, submission deadline for Area F review.

It is always a challenge to quickly implement legislative changes in higher education. In this case, the requirement for compliance with Area F published on December 3, 2020, in the CSU General Education Breadth Requirements Policy Stat ID: 8919100 (formerly EO 1100), states courses that are approved to meet the Area F requirement "shall meet at least three of the five core competencies" listed below. Based on all previous practice, this wording indicates a discipline reviewer of CCC CORs submitted for approval for Area F would assess the entire COR to assure three out of the five competencies were found and integrated throughout the COR from the course description to the course objectives, content, assignments, evaluation methods, and selected texts, as required by Title 5 Section 55002 and explained in the *CCCCO Program and Course Approval Handbook* and the ASCCC's *The Course Outline of Record: A Curriculum Reference Guide*.

In a CSU Chancellor's Office training held on January 20, however, AOs were advised the reviewers would be looking for three out of the five core competencies to

be written word for word as they are found in the CSU General Education Breadth Requirements Policy State ID: 8919100 in the Student Learning Outcomes or in the Student Learning Objectives listed on the COR without any reference to the content of core competencies being reflected holistically throughout the document, as is standard practice. It has also brought up the dubious practice of assessing Student Learning Outcomes as part of a general education review. Student Learning Outcomes are not found in Title 5; rather, they are part of Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) accreditation standards. Student Learning Outcomes may change year to year based on how faculty choose to assess student progress in order to refine student success in chosen areas. This guidance has brought up questions among AOs regarding whether or not Ethnic Studies discipline faculty will be involved in the review process for Area F submissions.

Implementing higher education legislative policy is always a challenge and is always stressful. The truly positive piece of the Area F implementation process is the already-established collaboration and partnership between CCC and CSU Ethnic Studies faculty. Most assuredly, the discipline faculty are communicating with one another and with the CSU Chancellor's Office. Why would they stop at this point? What was crystal clear at the Summit was the dedication of the Ethnic Studies faculty from both segments of higher education to benefiting all students both academically and socially by providing them with at least one Ethnic Studies course along their journey through California's system of higher education. ■



Amid controversy,
the CSU Board of
Trustees ultimately
approved the new
requirement as a
lower-division GE
Breadth requirement,
now known as Area F
Ethnic Studies.