

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE
REVIEW OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM, DEPARTMENT OF
AFRICOLOGY**

COMMITTEE:

GREGORY JAY, PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH (CHAIR)

CHERYL AJIROTUTU, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY

JOSEPH RODRIGUEZ, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

SEPTEMBER, 2009

Introduction:

The review of the undergraduate program in Africology was conducted during Spring of 2009. This report is based on data obtained from the Department's self-study (submitted in Fall 2008) and interviews with faculty members (5/8/09), students and alumni (6/9/09), and Associate Dean Rodney Swain (4/15/09). The Review Committee Chair also toured the physical space and offices of the Department.

The Department of Africology has a forty-year history, beginning with the Center for Afro-American Studies, its incorporation as a department in Letters and Science in 1971, and its adoption of its current name in 1994. The undergraduate program features two tracks: (A) Political Economy and (B) Culture and Society. In terms of its national profile, the Department is distinguished by its focus on the African diaspora (rather than simply on African-American society and culture) and a faculty of international background and training.

The Africology undergraduate offerings fall into two distinct categories: (1) lower-division courses that meet General Education and Cultural Diversity requirements, and (2) upper-division courses related to the major and affiliated or related degree or certificate programs. Enrollment data for the ten-year review period show that category 1 courses constitute a consistent average of over 80% of total undergraduate enrollments for the Department. While this documents the Department's vital contribution to diversity education at UWM, it may also show the cost of that service when one looks at the relatively smaller course offerings and enrollments in category 2 courses.

The UW System and Board of Regents have approved the creation of the PhD program in Africology, effective Fall 2009. This approval testifies to the Department's outstanding academic achievements and the importance of its program. At the same time, implementation of the PhD program will doubtless cause issues for the undergraduate program in the areas of resources, staffing, office and meeting space, faculty appointments, etc. Thus at times in this review these issues will be addressed, despite the fact that this is not a review of the PhD program itself.

Faculty

Standard A: Faculty and Instructional Academic Staff are qualified and in sufficient numbers to provide relevant quality learning experiences.

Current Africology faculty includes ten tenure-line appointments: four assistant professors, four associate professors, and two professors. There is also one academic staff instructor on definite appointment who holds the PhD. All faculty are highly qualified, with an impressive output of books and articles across an interdisciplinary range. At the time of the last review, in 1998, the Department had seven faculty. While this growth has allowed the Department to better meet both its

service and disciplinary goals, it has not yet funded the curriculum adequately. A current frozen search in Political Economy is especially unfortunate, since enrollments in that track have stalled because of an inability to offer a full range of classes. Implementation of the PhD will mean an even greater demand on faculty time. The Department's new instructional plan includes lowering teaching loads to two courses per semester, in recognition of the added time demanded by graduate research and instruction. The imminent retirement of the Department's two most senior research scholars presents a special challenge: unless these individuals are replaced by senior appointments, the Department's ability to staff its major and doctoral program will be seriously undermined.

Conversations with students and alumni testified to the faculty's dedication, often including advising and mentoring beyond the regular scope of faculty responsibility. Students spoke of the Department as a "family," and noted the many hours faculty gave to individual students, suggesting that this is a program where undergraduate education is highly valued, and the success of all students made a top priority and achievement. Because enrollments in Africology courses of students from underrepresented groups exceeds their the average found in other campus courses, this supportive approach contributes in a meaningful way to UWM's Access to Success agenda, particularly the retention of underrepresented students.

Standard B: At least 25% of total tenure/tenure track faculty time is committed to the undergraduate program.

Yes. All current faculty also teach sections of Africology 101, "Black Reality," the Department's core, and most popular, offering. This may be more rotational when the lecture course system for teaching 101 is implemented as planned.

Students

Standard A: There are adequate numbers of qualified students for meaningful cohorts to meet learning objectives.

Total annual Department enrollments at all levels numbered approximately between 1600 and 2000 in the period 1999-2009. Africology has not, however, kept up with the growth of student credit hours (SCH) in L&S (note: the 2007-2008 self-study makes a statistical error on L&S enrollments, p. 16). From 1997-2007, L&S SCH grew by more than 50 percent while Africology's fluctuated but ended up growing less than 10 percent. Similarly, in terms of majors and minors, Africology's numbers have remained flat with only a total of 56 majors from 1999-2006. The 1998 Recommendation #5 stated that the Department "should continue efforts to increase the number of majors." These efforts have not been successful.

Of the majors, many more students prefer the Culture and Society (B) track than the Political Economy (A) track, an opinion echoed by students in the focus group interviewed. From 1999-2006 there were 10 Option A and 46 Option B majors.

Africology's lower division courses have generally enrolled well. However, very few of these students then continue on to take upper division courses in the Department; this gap represents a missed opportunity that could be addressed systematically through better recruitment. Africology's upper division courses enroll an average of only 12-15 students compared to History, English, Anthropology, and Economics, which enroll in the 20s-40s in upper division classes. There has been no increase in majors when compared to data in the 1998 Review.

While these represent small cohorts relative to some other departments, the experience of students testifies to very meaningful learning experiences. Students interviewed consistently spoke of the strong emphasis on "critical thinking skills" in these courses and of the collaborative atmosphere in which students worked together to achieve excellence.

Nonetheless, the Department should take steps whenever possible to increase enrollments in the major and in the upper-division courses (see recommendations).

Curriculum

Standard A: There is an organized, coherent sequence of course work that prepares students to meet the educational goals of the program, secure appropriate employment, and pursue graduate study.

The two tracks in Political Economy and Culture and Society offer the range and depth of courses to meet the educational goals of the program. However, the 1998 Review stated that "the distribution of students in the two optional fields of study is disproportionately in favor of the Culture and Society option." During the current Review period, student enrollments continued to favor the Culture and Society track. Thus the Department has not met the goal of the 1998 Recommendation #4 to address the disparity between the options.

Present and future staffing challenges suggest difficulties in keeping the Political Economy track viable and growing. Given this twenty-year period of consistent data, it is not clear that maintaining two tracks in the major benefits the department or students to the degree that it justifies the allocation of resources. A quality major might be accomplished by a single degree curriculum combining courses from both present options.

Standard B: Learning outcomes reflect expected workforce competencies.

Though small in number, the Department's graduates have a notable record of success in graduate study and employment, including admission to top graduate programs and to medical school. All four students at the interview session were employed full-time or enrolled in graduate programs, and all testified that the Africology program had prepared them with the research and critical thinking skills necessary for their careers.

Resources:

Standards: There are sufficient resources to meet program needs (1) For assisting students; (2) To provide for program stability; and (3) For facilities and space within the university.

Department resources for assisting students are almost non-existent, beyond the extra support provided by faculty members outside of class. The Department is not resourced to appoint a faculty member or academic staff member as the student adviser or to provide staff support for program operations; however, the office of African-American Student Academic Services and the College's Office of Student Academic Services are available. Recent faculty hires have achieved some program stability, though this is threatened by imminent retirements. Like most UWM departments, Africology has a small S&E budget that covers basics but does not support extracurricular programming, scholarships, or travel.

Current space (office, meeting, classroom) resources are problematic at best, given the awkward retrofitting and dilapidated condition of Mitchell Hall's antique floor plan. The addition of the PhD program, with its needs for graduate student space and more faculty offices, may present challenge that cannot be met in Mitchell. The Department faculty members were, however, unanimous in declaring their desire to remain in Mitchell. The Review Committee, on the other hand, was not persuaded, and believes the Department would be better served by the provision of newer office and meeting space in a more central campus location.

Evaluation:

The Department has designed and implemented a course evaluation system across the curriculum, utilizing an instrument that produces both quantitative and qualitative measures. Quantitative scores in the self-study for the review period were good to high, showing consistent student satisfaction. In addition, faculty have instituted a review process involving visitation to each other's classes.

Department self-evaluation is documented in its "Action Plan for Growth: 1997-2000," which lays out a careful plan for enhanced teaching and learning; most of the action items in the plan were accomplished, although enrollment targets for the major were not met. The document shows a strong culture of self-evaluation in the Department.

Summary and Recommendations:

The undergraduate program in Africology provides an essential curriculum component for UWM and should be continued. It provides a major element of UWM's Cultural Diversity General Education offerings and a unique major focused on the African Diaspora. Here are recommendations for strengthening the program:

1. New faculty positions must continue to be awarded to the Department if the implementation of the PhD program is not to compromise the staffing of the undergraduate program. While one of these should be in Political Economy, others should be in the area of Culture and Society where student enrollment demand centers. Senior retirements should be replaced at commensurate levels.
2. L&S should award the Department a full-time academic staff appointment for program management, especially considering the added administrative burdens presented by implementation of the PhD. This will make it possible to resource the Department's initiatives in marketing, student services, program administration, and communication.
3. The Department and L&S administration should continue to work with Academic Affairs to complete a realistic space plan that will provide an adequate number of faculty offices, room for graduate assistants, and access to meeting and classroom space, whether in Mitchell Hall or another location.
4. In order to create a more attractive and coherent undergraduate program, the Department should undertake a review of the two-option major and consider the possible benefits of merging these into a single major with courses drawn from both of the current options. The new PhD program will have the two options, which makes sense at the graduate level where specialized research is conducted. Fully staffing both options at the undergraduate level would present substantial resource challenges; a combined major will be easier to staff as faculty with different research interests come and go. Given enrollment trends, resources are better directed towards the Culture and Society area at the undergraduate level, and this investment in turn will help create continuity with the new PhD.
5. New initiatives to increase the number of upper-division enrollments and majors should be planned and implemented, with time-lines and benchmarks. The Department should design and implement a plan for recruiting more students from those already enrolled in their lower-division offerings. It should also pursue more collaboration with other units and degree programs, with the intention of having them include Africology courses to meet some of their requirements. Current courses should also be examined to determine which have higher student interest, and those courses scheduled more often.