In the UW Department of American Ethnic Studies we would be happy if the compiled Diversity Appraisals were to show that we are not an anomaly. Because our department is entirely devoted to offering a curriculum in the study of racial and ethnic “diversity” in the United States, and because the majority of AES majors are students of color, any current efforts and initiatives in diversity, in AES, contribute to the fulfillment of our mission and in this sense are not to us extra added efforts. Nevertheless, considering other categories of “diversity,” we in AES are not entirely alone at UW. We are similar to Women Studies, American Indian Studies, Disability Studies, and, in regard to class categories and their intersections with race and gender, the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies. (A current development of a “Diversity Minor” at UW will one day provide another unit to the ones I have named.) To identify (1) “how diversity is a . . . part of” our unit; (2) “the specific ways that diversity is integrated into” our academic mission, curricula, undergraduate student participation, faculty, and staff; and (3) “ways in which [we] have structured [AES] so that diversity is institutionalized as part of [our] criteria for success,” we would have to include nearly everything that AES is (I am of course quoting from Vice Provost Barceló’s letter requesting this report and appraisal). I will try in the following pages to provide information relevant to the three items above by addressing the seven “target areas” that we are asked to discuss. I will go on to report on projects and initiatives by which AES is continuing to carry out our mission.

1. Student access and opportunities: AES does not as yet have restrictions on declaring the major except for the University requirement of a 2.0 gpa. AES has no prerequisites for declaring the major. In this way, access is open. The time is approaching, however, for restrictions and qualifications to be considered. The number of AES majors is hovering at 300, triple the number of majors in the year 2000. Access may have to be narrowed because of inadequate staffing (e. g., advising) to serve each student and because of bottlenecks in the curriculum of required courses, or of inadequate faculty numbers to meet students’ demands for courses. Generally, all the majors are eligible for opportunities the department offers. AES majors do have the special opportunity of registering earliest for core courses that fulfill requirements and that are enrolled heavily by non-majors.

2. Student development and retention: In 2003-2003 AES was joined by Women Studies and Comparative History of Ideas (CHID) to run a writing center specializing in helping students in the composing of papers in interdisciplinary studies such as the three
sponsoring units conduct. Funding and support came from the Office of Undergraduate Education and the College of Arts and Sciences, the main expenditure being a position for one TA who helped an AES faculty member to direct the project. Due to the success of the Writing Center in its first year, the College of Arts and Sciences again has funded it, in 2003-2004. Peer tutors from the three sponsoring units assist students with their writing. Besides the benefits the clients of the Center gain, the tutors gain in experience, skill, and knowledge, as the fellow students and the papers the tutors read and help to edit are in fields that the tutors themselves are studying and learning. The location of the Writing Center rotates among the meeting rooms of the three units, following a regular schedule. Any UW student can make an appointment. I know from judging my own students’ work that the improvement is inspiring, not only in writing but also in morale and confidence—and, thus, academic performance—thanks to the Writing Center and its peer tutors. In AES, we try to show students that far from being “weak” for seeking help, they are entitled to access to, say, advising, the Writing Center, and other agencies for serving students.

A student development and retention project shared by AES and the Office of Minority Affairs, the Pacific Islander Partnerships in Education (PIPE) offers peer mentoring to promote academic success. The PIPE project itself has succeeded: in 2003 it won a Brotman Diversity Award at the UW.

According to a 2003 report prepared by a committee that Dr. Emile Pitre chaired, 47% of AES majors at the time of the study were from underrepresented minority groups such as African Americans, Native Americans, Latino/a, Pacific Islanders, and Southeast Asians including Filipino/a. This means that 53% were from well or adequately represented groups such as white and East Asian Americans. About 80% of AES majors are students of color. The bare majority of the enrollment in some African American Studies classes, in AES, is white. In any AES classroom, diversity of enrollment must be a striking feature to anyone who should come to the room from other classes at UW Seattle.

In informal surveys recently conducted in large AES classes, about 48% of the AES majors indicated that they are of the first generation in their families who will graduate from college. This characteristic affects AES in many ways, notably in the quality of intellectual curiosity and the interactions among diverse, critical points of view that the students bring with them to our courses from their backgrounds. For these students and their families, the value of public university education generally is especially high.

3. Engagement with external community: Please see the AES project with Seattle Public Schools, below.

Individual faculty members in AES are active in community affairs in ways that directly involve their scholarship, teaching, and therefore their professional expertise in AES. Dr. Connie So, a lecturer who teaches some of our heavily enrolled introductory courses, is perhaps most active. She serves as a consultant for the Wing Luke Asian Museum and for several International District committees and organizations; she is an officer of the nationally prominent, civil rights Organization of Chinese Americans. Professor Erasmo
Gamboa’s recent community activities include his lecturing at the Seattle Art Museum, speaking on KUOW Public Radio, keynoting national conferences, serving as a scholar in an NEH project in the Thorp School District, WA, and as a consultant for Latino history projects in Oregon. He is featured in and narrates “The Oregon Story: Agricultural Workers,” a documentary by Oregon Public Broadcasting that won a Regional Emmy for Best Director in 2002. Professor Gail Nomura, also an active consultant for the Wing Luke Asian Museum, serves community groups and in organizations who call on her for her expertise in Asian American history. She is on a committee, presently, discussing the status and the future of the Nisei Veterans’ Committee and Nisei Veterans’ Foundation of Seattle. Professor Elizabeth Salas is reaching a potentially vast public, external audience by writing a series of articles for www.Historylink.org, an online encyclopedia of Washington and Seattle-King County history. Her first article is on “Mexican American Women.” Professor Tetsuden Kashima is the chief scholar for the National Park Service’s project on the historical site, the Minidoka camp where many of the Japanese Americans of Seattle were incarcerated in World War II, and in this capacity he often meets with and addresses public audiences. He is also a writer and editor for the North American Post (of Seattle, it is reputedly the oldest Japanese American newspaper, still current, in the nation). Professor Kashima and Professor Nomura (above) work too with the Densho Project in Japanese American oral history. Senior Lecturer Seyed Mohamed Maulana serves as a consultant and as an interpreter (sometimes in court) in the large African communities of Swahili speakers in Seattle. Professor Lauro Flores’s acclaimed book on the artist Alfredo Arreguin (see #6, below) was featured in an exhibit and his lecture at the Bellevue Art Museum, to a public audience. Professor Rick Bonus serves as a consultant to the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs, WA and is a member of community advisory boards for the Wing Luke Asian Museum New Building Project, Young Asian Men’s Study, the Carlos Bulosan Memorial Exhibition, and for Sheer Realities, in the Seattle Art Museum. Professor Michelle Habell-Pallán has given public talks on Latina/o literature, music, and performance, including talks at the Experience Music Project and Benaroya Hall. A new colleague, Professor Sonnet Retman has also given a talk at the Experience Music Project. Professor John Walter is often invited to give talks in the wider community outside the UW campus, and he writes reviews of new books on African American subjects for the Seattle Times. Each fall I teach an eight-week course in Japanese American and multicultural American studies at Blaine Memorial United Methodist Church, on Seattle’s Beacon Hill. The participants—from twenty-five to forty of them on any given Sunday—are predominantly senior members of the community, the Nisei who themselves sometimes appear as characters or are like characters in the books we read and the histories we discuss. Our Senior Artist in Residence Sherman Alexie was the UW Commencement speaker in June 2003, where it was obvious that his audience extended beyond the campus community. In December he was the key speaker at a large public event on Human Rights Day, in Seattle. This is the most recent example of his many public addresses.

A listing of individual faculty members’ engagement with external professional communities would be considerably longer than the preceding paragraph. In the AES faculty are a former President of the National Association for Ethnic Studies and the current Past President of the American Studies Association.
In addition, AES does have an international reach through our work with international students, international Visiting Scholars, and communities where AES faculty and students have been invited or placed in programs of study, research, and teaching, in countries including South Africa, Mexico, New Zealand, Japan, Cuba, Spain, Korea, the Philippines, and Syria.

4. Staff and administrative diversity: AES has two fulltime staff members and an Administrator that reflect a diverse environment. Only because AES does not yet have a program of graduate studies, I include in this item the Teaching Assistants who support our instruction in large lecture courses. The TA allocations to departments in the College of Arts and Sciences were cut two years ago, so that as of last year AES could afford only four TAs. In the present Winter Quarter 2004, however, the College, the Office of Undergraduate Education, and the American Indian Studies Center funded additional TAs to meet urgent needs of growing enrollments in AES.

5. Faculty diversity: The total of ladder and non-ladder AES faculty, accounted for in October 2002, consisted of the following:

- 50% female, 50% male
- 81% minority, 19% non-minority
- 6% black female, 19% black male
- 12% Asian female, 19% Asian male
- 12% Hispanic female, 12% Hispanic male
- 0% American Indian
- 19% White female, 0% White male.

The figures for the total of ladder faculty in that report are:

- 42% female, 58% male
- 92% minority, 8% non-minority

AES has a total of sixteen voting faculty members at present (not all of whom teach or teach fully in AES). The diversity of this faculty assures that the structure of governance in AES necessarily is by diverse participants. Added to our Lecturers Part-Time in 2003, Lauren Divina teaches courses in Tagalog, which has been transferred from the Department of Asian Languages and Literatures to AES. Our newest colleague is Sherman Alexie, a Senior Artist in Residence, beginning this Winter Quarter 2004. Fifty-six percent of the AES voting faculty members are first-generation college graduates in their families. Of these, three are of the first generation in their families to have completed and gone beyond formal elementary school education. One AES faculty member of color has had grandparents and parents who graduated from college. As among the AES students, the range of family educational backgrounds among our faculty is wide, but with a predominance of a group that has sometimes been called “first-
generation learners” who, more for the better than for the worse, share responsibilities of being “role models” to our many students of that background.

6. Curriculum and research: AES ordinarily offers an average of 20-22 courses per quarter (Autumn, Winter, Spring). The content of all these courses is in diversity. Since 2000, research in the department has included the publication of the following books by AES faculty members:


7. Climate: The greatest grievance, worry, concern for the AES major is the lack of sufficient faculty members in African American Studies (Afram) to support the curriculum that the students need and demand for their graduation and their education in the department. In Afram we have only one fulltime senior faculty member (Professor John Walter) and one fulltime junior faculty member (Assistant Professor Sonnet Retman). We would be able to offer only two to four courses in Afram per quarter if the courses had to be taught by the two faculty members on duty in the department. In order to offer the minimum of 4 courses per quarter throughout the year that we need (and this need is growing with the number of majors) in Afram, we have to hire Lecturers Part-Time. The use of Lecturers Part-Time is a weak substitute for teaching by fulltime
ladder-rank faculty. Concerns that arise from this weakness and the uncertainties about how we will be able to offer enough courses in the future adversely affect the climate of our department. The problem is tied to the inability or unwillingness of the College and the University to hire faculty needed in African American Studies, in AES, to assure the strength of an area of studies that is fundamental to Ethnic Studies and an area of very strong interest to students both within and outside the AES major. When faculty are instead hired in other departments to research and teach what may appear to be courses useful to AES by way of cross-listings, in AES we question why the hiring was not in AES. In such cases, there is a question of interdepartmental overlap, to be sure. But further, a member of another department by and large has to be mindful of disciplinary parameters of that department, whereas AES is interdisciplinary and does require AES faculty members to develop and teach comparative American Ethnic Studies courses. Someone hired in another department and who cross lists courses with AES does not necessarily offer interdisciplinary, comparative epistemologies and methods to his or her AES students.

The lack of new faculty positions is the greatest concern. The current difficulties of UW also affect the climate of our department. Most tragic, the death of Dean Marsha Landholt is a blow to AES. Furthermore, in AES we have been proceeding with work on a proposal for a graduate program and had wanted to meet with Dean Landholt in January. While in AES we do not have to be concerned about a lack of faculty and student “diversity,” we are concerned about how our diversity counts and with whom, in the University. The loss of Dean Landholt, the change of the Dean of the Division of Social Sciences, the ongoing search for a President, even the change of administration in the Athletic Department—all these occurring at once—raise uncertainties in AES.

Still, the climate of the department is such that most of the faculty members have enough calm to be productive scholars. I believe that this is a tribute to our faculty, all of whom in one way or another have had to spend time in their careers to struggle to construct their fields of Ethnic Studies, in other words to produce knowledge under especially challenging conditions, to establish their fields in universities, and to research and produce scholarship. AES faculty today continue to work hard in university and department committees concerning diversity and governance, where the diverse participation by AES faculty and other faculty of color should be expected. The time that AES faculty give to university service notwithstanding, the books I list in the bibliography in #6, above, can be filled out with the many articles and book chapters that the ladder-rank faculty of AES have been publishing year after year. Since I became Chair in 2000, among our sixteen faculty members one has earned tenure and a promotion and two have been promoted from associate to full professor. These accomplishments, including the service that our faculty provide in the department, College, and University, have positively affected the climate in AES.

8. Current efforts or initiatives: I lift and adapt the following items from an article I have been asked to write for the OMA Newsletter.

Sherman Alexie Joins the AES Faculty
The author, social critic, and filmmaker Sherman Alexie has joined the AES faculty and is now teaching the course on Comparative American Ethnic Literature, AES 212, a requirement for the AES major (jointly listed with American Indian Studies 475 B, Special Topics). On campus and around the country people tell me that it’s a “real coup” that we’ve recruited Alexie. Alexie has said that he wants to make his educational contribution in the place where he lives, and that place for him and his immediate family is Seattle. He also wants his sons to see that their dad, a famous “independent artist,” has to go to work like everybody else, at least part of the year.

Walking back to Padelford after he gave his first lecture in the course, Alexie remarked, “Ordinarily I would be walking to my hotel now.” The chance to address the same audience throughout the quarter is new to him in his career. In the three weeks so far—and in his highly praised, deeply appreciated commencement speech last June in Husky Stadium—Alexie has devoted himself to showing how multiple and shifting points of view prompt insights into the subjects at hand. Alexie will be offering the course annually in the Winter Quarter. If the students think that they are simply enjoying his presentation without having to take notes, it’s because his method, he says with laughter that is quick in our course, is to educate without his audience having to think about the fact that they are being taught. So we learn with Sherman Alexie.

AES/Seattle Public Schools Seminars

On 5 January a series of courses began, where UW faculty in ethnic studies present topics in American Ethnic Studies to and in dialogue with teachers of the Seattle Public Schools. The project appears to some to be the first of its kind in the United States. Most of the Seattle district’s teachers have had little opportunity to take courses in American Ethnic Studies; yet on the job, in one way or another, every teacher has to engage with ethnic studies in content, in practice, or both. In early December coordinators of the project sent Seattle’s teachers a notice that two seminars would first be offered, and each would enroll 30 participants, for a total of 60. Within a day, 120 teachers applied for the initial seminars, led by Dr. Connie So and Professor Erasmo Gamboa.

Later courses, running in six-week blocks from January through June and possibly in October and November, will be led by Professors Rick Bonus, Michelle Habell-Pallán, Sonnet Retman, Tom Colonnese (of American Indian Studies), Pamela Ralston (formerly a Lecturer in AES and now and Assistant Professor at Tacoma Community College), and myself, in addition to Dr. So and Professor Gamboa, who will continue to teach in the series. While the participating teachers in the Seattle district are themselves experts in pedagogy, including the pedagogies of multiculturalism, the AES/Seattle Public Schools seminars focus on the content (knowledge, data, theories) of comparative American Ethnic, American Indian, African American, Latino/a, and Asian/Pacific American Studies. The UW Educational Outreach Program is coordinating this project together with Seattle Public Schools and AES.

Postdoctoral Fellowships in African American Studies

AES is advertising two postdoctoral fellowships in African American Studies, 2004-2005. The application deadline is 30 January. Each fellow would teach two courses in AFRAM during the year and would conduct her or his research as a member of the department. AES is
especially interested in applicants whose expertise is in African American history, anthropology, cultural studies, ethnomusicology, or studies of popular music and popular culture. These preferences indicate areas of teaching, learning, and research that we want to fill or expand into. Here and in other cases where an area of study overlaps with a discipline—for instance expertise in African American history overlaps with expertise in History—the department is looking for interdisciplinary capabilities in the candidate. American Ethnic Studies differ from disciplinary studies in Literature, History, Anthropology, etc. by being interdisciplinary. Even though the “traditional” disciplines such as the ones I have just named have become increasingly interdisciplinary themselves, institutionally they often continue to follow established standards and definitions of their disciplines to order their priorities and judge scholarly work. By advertising for and selecting postdoctoral fellows, AES is also announcing the range of our interests and the character of our interdisciplinarity.