

VII. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Academic and Student Affairs Committee

Establishment of the Department of American Indian Studies

RECOMMENDED ACTION

It is the recommendation of the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences that the American Indian Studies Program be established as the Department of American Indian Studies effective March 30, 2009.

BACKGROUND

American Indian Studies has been a presence on the University of Washington campus since 1970 after student protests for more diversity in curriculum, faculty, staff and students drew attention for increased diversity programming. During its first ten years of existence, American Indian Studies offered classes that were listed under the course offering of various University of Washington academic departments. In 1982 American Indian Studies gained formal recognition as a Center, with formal affiliation with the Department of Anthropology. This relationship continued until October 1, 2003 when American Indian Studies was granted Program status. This change in status followed a period of growth within American Indian Studies wherein, through special support from the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Provost, the unit's faculty increased by 100% from four faculty members to eight faculty members. At the same time that American Indian Studies made its request for change in status from that of a Center to a Program the unit also informed the Dean of its intention to develop an American Indian Studies major. For the next four years, the American Indian Studies faculty carried forth an intense curriculum transformation, developing over forty new courses, and completed all procedures required for gaining an American Indian Studies major. On August 6, 2007, President Mark A. Emmert informed American Indian Studies that a Bachelor of Arts degree in American Indian Studies had been approved. This approval was back dated to Fall 2006 so that students who had completed the requirements of the major could graduate with the degree in 2007. American Indian Studies has had degree granting status, then, since Fall 2006 and twelve students have graduated with a BA in American Indian Studies. Currently, thirty students have declared the American Indian Studies major, and we have seventeen minors. The majority of the instruction that American Indian Studies provides is in a service capacity for students who are completing their general education requirements. The following table displays American Indian Studies SCH production for the past four years.

Year	SCH Enrollment
2008	5,687
2007	5,837
2006	4,569
2005	4,862

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American Indian Studies also fulfills a special function in terms of Native student recruitment and retention. Working closely with the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity, American Indian Studies helps to recruit Native students to the University of Washington and supports their efforts once they are here. Sheila Edwards Lange, Vice President for Minority Affairs and Vice Provost for Diversity, reminds us that the two primary questions native students ask when they make visits to the University of Washington campus are:

- (1) "Is there an American Indian Studies Program at this university?"
- (2) And, "How many Native faculty are at the University of Washington?"

The close relationship between American Indian Studies, which houses half the Native faculty at the University, and the Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity, supports the overall diversity mission of the University of Washington.

Washington State ranks sixth in U.S. states in terms of Indian population. It shares a primary position, along with Arizona, with twenty-six federally recognized tribes or federations. This local diversity of Indian Nations and cultures allows American Indian Studies excellent opportunities for research and community involvement. Accordingly, the University of Washington ranks among the top twenty-five American Indian-serving universities in terms of the number of Native undergraduate and graduate students. The UW campus itself is a center of Native population and academic achievement. In addition to the majors and other interested undergraduate students, American Indian Studies is also a hub for twenty-eight graduate students. Five of these students are involved with the Native Voices Program. Native Voices is a center in which students and faculty create documentaries and conduct media research that contributes to the understanding and strengthening of indigenous peoples and communities. Native Voices documentaries have won numerous awards and have been screened at Sundance, the American Indian Film Festival, the Museum of the American Indian, the Museum of Modern Art, and other notable venues. Twenty-three of the graduate students are participants in the joint National Science Foundation IGERT Program, shared by American Indian Studies, Engineering, and Forest Resources. Their Ph.D. work addresses issues of sustainable energy, especially on American Indian reservations.

American Indian Studies has also enjoyed other recent scholarly achievements. Associate Professor Alexandra (Sasha) Harmon is the editor of *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest* (University of Washington Press, 2009) and her monograph *Wealth, Indians, and Morality in American History* will appear in 2010 from the University of North Carolina Press. Assistant Professor Charlotte Cote was recently granted tenure and will be promoted to Associate Professor in Fall 2009. Her book *Honoring the Spirits of Our Whaling Ancestors: The Revitalization of Makah and Nuw-Chan-Nulth Whaling Tradition* will be published by University of Washington Press in 2009. Professor Marvin Oliver's monumental bronze sculpture, *Sister Orca*, was installed in Perugia, Italy in June 2008, increasing his international reputation.

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On December 15, 2008 Arts and Sciences Dean, Ana Marie Cauce, in a letter to Registrar Todd Mildon stated, “The establishment of the American Indian Studies degree , together with the many curricular, scholarly, and service contributions of the faculty of American Indian Studies, have convinced me that it is entirely appropriate that American Indian Studies move to Departmental status.”

Within the University of Washington’s statement on its role and mission one finds this statement, “The primary mission of the University of Washington is the preservation, advancement, and dissemination of knowledge.” Further within the statement one reads, “As an integral part of a large and diverse community, the University seeks broad representation.” These themes are amplified in President Emmert’s website message titled, “Making Strides on Diversity.” President Emmert asserts, “An education experience that fails to expose students—majority and minority—to multicultural perspectives or that does not include interaction in a diverse community simply cannot measure up.” He goes on to say, “In addition to issues of academic quality, we must pursue diversity because it is one of the most basic components of the University’s historical mission. Land-grant universities were founded on what at that time was a very radical notion, that higher education should be made available to a much more diverse segment of society than just the children of the elite. To carry out this mission, we have a moral and legal obligation to serve and support all our citizens.” Through such statements, the University of Washington makes its regard for and commitment to diversity absolutely clear.

Furthermore, as President Emmert has stated, a goal of the University must be to expose students to multicultural perspectives and interactions. A fully developed American Indian Studies Department will allow students to join in the process of preserving, advancing, and disseminating the knowledge of, and about, Native peoples.

It is important to note that no additional resources will be necessary in order for the American Indian Studies Program to move to Department status.