The Status of Action Items from Previous Review

The major action item from the previous review was for the Department of African-American Studies (AAS) to increase faculty lines and provide funding for graduate students. The 2006 Action Plan proposed to receive three faculty lines, two tenure-track and one lecturer position. With the addition of the M.A. program in 2008, the increased faculty lines were to “maintain the quality of undergraduate degree program and add strength to the two proposed (graduate) areas of concentration—Community Empowerment and African-American culture.” The .56 Visiting Lecturer in the Department’s budget was to be converted to a .75 Lecturer. AAS added a new tenure track faculty line in 2007-2008, but was not authorized to make the additional ones after the 2008 budgetary challenges.

The 2006 Action Plan also recommended $30,000 to fund five graduate students, with the possibility of an increase commensurate with growth in enrollment. The Department was allocated $28,650 for graduate funding. We have supplemented funding graduate students through the grants from the Writing Across the Curriculum program. The M.A. program’s enrollment has increased, but the funds used to support it have not.

Major Findings in Current Review

Graduate

1) Funding for graduate students is not competitive with peer and aspirational institutions. The stipends for our graduate students in our M.A. program are less than half of those at the aspirational institutions in our self-study.
2) The recruitment of graduate students has steadily increased since its inception in 2008.

Undergraduate

1) AAS is not considered a primary designation for most incoming students. Undergraduate students rarely choose AAS as a major as freshmen. Most majors select AAS as a major after their sophomore year, particularly after taking AAS 2010, Introduction to African-American Studies.
2) A significant percentage of AAS majors are first generation and Pell Eligible students. On the other hand, there is currently no specific financial support specifically for AAS undergraduate majors. Our first endowed award, the Lucille Adams Scholarship, will be announced in 2016.
3) Only seven students choose the Education concentration (or Pre-Education track) during the review period.
General

1) The Department has experienced marginal success on sponsored research. AAS faculty members have rarely served as principal investigator on sponsored funding. One positive trend is the amount of applications for research grants has increased in the last three years. AAS is well positioned for interdisciplinary research collaboration with units on campus, including other units in the humanities and social sciences, Public Health, Policy Studies, Education, and Social Work.

2) One of the strengths of our department is service learning. Our Department, faculty, and students have been acknowledged on campus and nationally for civic engagement.

3) Some faculty expressed a lack of clarity on promotion and tenure guidelines and expectations.

4) Change the name of the department to “Africana Studies.” In recent years, international connections with the African Diaspora have increased while African descendant students from around the world have arrived on US campuses. As a result, there is now interest in broadening the identity of the discipline from “African-American Studies,” which is arguably United States-centered, to a name that reflects the field’s intellectual and scholarly interests in the social, cultural, historical and psychological experiences of the peoples of the Diaspora, including Africa, Europe, and the Americas. A growing number of departments at other institutions have adopted the name “Africana Studies” to identify for their departments.

Action Steps for Coming Cycle

Graduate

1) Department will engage in strategic activities to obtain sponsored funding towards supporting and increasing graduate stipends to levels competitive with peer and aspirational institutions.
   a) Core faculty will identify funding sources for potential sponsored funding (e.g. NIH, NEH, Ford Foundation, Teacher Quality) in FY16.

2) Department will focus efforts on increasing the applicants to the MA program.
   a) Graduate Director will concentrate efforts to target students in local and regional colleges and universities.
   b) Department Chair will organize social events at National Council of Black Studies to attract undergraduates who attend conference in FY17.
   c) Graduate Director will organize events to invite prospective students from local and regional institutions to campus.
   d) Curriculum Committee will review and revise (if necessary) graduate curriculum to access its marketability and build on the strengths of core and affiliate faculty research.
Undergraduate

1) Department will initiate marketing efforts to recruit majors with the goal of making AAS a primary choice for undergraduate students.
   a) Undergraduate Director will supervise development of new department Major Matters video in FY16.
   b) Undergraduate Director will develop video with alumni promoting career opportunities with the AAS major in FY17.
   c) Undergraduate Director will supervise renewed involvement in Incept and Panther Preview in FY16.
   d) Undergraduate Director will supervise recruitment efforts at Georgia Perimeter (GPC) campuses in FY16.
   e) Department will initiate social media campaign on careers in AAS, and department’s Civic Engagement in 2017.
   f) Department will market the AAS major with programs like Early College and Upward Bound.
   g) Curriculum Committee will review and propose revise (if necessary) undergraduate curriculum to access its marketability and builds on the strengths of core and affiliate faculty research by FY16.

2) Department will work to develop endowed awards for undergraduate majors.
   a) Department Chair with coordinate efforts with College Development office in FY16.
   b) Department Chair will build Advisory Board that meets annually in FY16.
   c) Department Chair will initiate efforts to solicit alumni support for undergraduate awards and other initiatives through direct contact and social meeting by FY18.

3) The Department’s Curriculum Committee will evaluate the continued viability of the Education concentration and make recommendation to the department by FY18.

General

1) Department will engage in strategic activities to obtain sponsored funding.
   Faculty will identify collaborations within Arts and Sciences and other colleges in the University to form or join existing research clusters for possible sponsored funding for research, instruction, or service and for Next Generation possibilities in FY16.

2) Department will work to develop internships and cooperative education opportunities for students with community partners. Department Chair and Service Learning Coordinator will work with community partners to develop internships, as the partnership with the Davis Bozeman Law firm and Foreverfamily, Inc. in FY16.

3) Department will review and revise (if necessary) promotion and tenure guidelines at next faculty retreat in FY16.

4) Department will pursue steps through College and University to change name to "Department of Africana Studies" in FY16.
Akinyele Umoja, Chair, African-American Studies
Date: 11/12/2015

William Long, Dean, Arts and Sciences
Date: 11/17/2015

Risa Palm, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Date: 3/8/16