The Dean’s Office has read and commends the high quality of analysis and clear articulation of goals in the African-American Studies Department’s Self-Study Report. We appreciate the evident hard work of Dr. Sarita Davis for her leadership in preparing the report. We believe the report clearly demonstrates how African-American Studies has made important contributions to the university’s strategic planning goals, and it helps shape a pathway for future sustainability and accomplishment.

We applaud the department’s progress over the course of the review period and since its most recent self-study. African-American Studies has played an important role in the university’s and the college’s efforts to become a new model for undergraduate success. The department has been a leader in developing signature experiences and urban service learning opportunities outside the classroom to allow undergraduates to conduct original research, prepare for professional life, and lifelong learning and social responsibility. Thirty-one percent of African-American undergraduate majors are first generation, and 65% are Pell-eligible students. The department has used faculty mentoring to improve the academic performance and retention of its students. The department has also contributed to the university’s and college’s goal of growing and strengthening graduate programs. Thirty percent of African-American Studies students are graduate students, and 69% of graduate students receive their master’s degree within two years of entering the program. The unit has also been involved through its service learning program, building community partnerships globalizing the undergraduate curricula.

The unit has focused on enriching its undergraduate and graduate programs. The challenge facing the department is how to more closely link undergraduate programs with employment opportunities for graduates and to advance the department’s research and sponsored programs profile. One possible disruptive innovation would be to work more closely with the College of Education to link an undergraduate degree in African-American Studies to a MAT degree, which would open high school teaching as a career path for graduates. Similarly, encouraging undergraduates to minor in a social science such as psychology, political science, or sociology may increase applications to graduate programs in these disciplines. Further, establishing minors or dual degrees in public health, criminal justice, or social work may also create career opportunities for undergraduates.

Another disruptive strategy could be for the department to identify and develop new programs in specialty areas that have greater opportunities for external grant support of research, such as a concentration that focuses on issues related to health and health issues supported by the National
Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The purpose would be to more closely align the instructional and research missions of the department with college and university goals.

In the context of Georgia State University’s revenue-neutral budgetary climate, we essentially have three options for developing the strengths of our programs: (1) redirection of resources within existing departmental budgets to maximize programmatic impact, (2) lateral redirection of resources from other units within the college where we are convinced that the value added in a particular unit is an effective way of achieving the goals of the university’s strategic plan, and (3) self-directed pursuit of opportunities for external funding. In accordance with those contextual parameters, we would like the external review team members to consider the following items:

• What strategies would the reviewers recommend to best foster collaborative research between African-American Studies faculty and researchers across campus? How should the unit seek to leverage those partnerships to produce gains in extramural grant seeking?

• Given the clear constraints of Georgia State’s present budgetary environment, what does the review team recommend as the most viable strategies for attracting senior scholars with established track records of sponsored research and for funding graduate students? What can the African-American Studies Department do to make a strong case to the dean that an investment in African-American Studies will advance the college’s and the university’s Strategic Planning Goals? How could an increase in graduate funding be linked to increases in student enrollment and to an increase in the research productivity of the faculty?

• What recommendations would the review team offer for growing and sustaining student enrollment in African-American Studies’s undergraduate and graduate programs and linking these programs with professional career opportunities? Is the self-study’s plan sufficient to achieve these aims? Are there other (or better) mechanisms for achieving this goal?

• How can the African-American Studies Department best engage and complement the university’s focus on the complex challenges of cities and globalize the university’s teaching, and research missions? What recommendations does the review team have for accelerating this engagement?

William J. Long, Dean

Donald C. Reitzes, Associate Dean

College of Arts and Sciences

Social and Behavioral Sciences