

# A Resolution Regarding the Revitalization of Ethnic Studies at Western Washington University October 2019

**WHEREAS**, In 1968, Black students initiated the effort to improve curriculum to be more inclusive, to recruit more Black students and to hire more Black faculty. After a year of negotiations and compromises with administrators and trustees, the Black Student Union, along with other groups in the Radical Coalition, succeeded in starting a college for Ethnic Studies officially on Oct 9th 1969<sup>1</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, because of lack of funding and support from the University, the College of Ethnic Studies was dissolved while majority white programs continued to flourish; and,

**WHEREAS**, the city of Bellingham holds an extremely racist history since the advent of settler colonialism in the area<sup>2</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, Western Washington University occupies the stolen land of the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe, and was built to uphold to white supremacy; and,

**WHEREAS**, there are 28 active hate groups in the state of Washington, according to the Southern Poverty Law Center<sup>3</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, incidents and attacks perpetrated by white supremacists have occurred on Western's campus and involved Western students. The most recent events include but are not limited to: white supremacists infiltrated campus in April 2014 with a banner that read "Diversity = White Genocide" which resulted in the "Diversity Is" rally<sup>4</sup>; and in 2015 online hate speech directed at a Black AS President led to the closure of campus<sup>5</sup>; and in 2018 racist and bigoted graffiti was found on campus<sup>6</sup> and met with a the lack

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<sup>1</sup> Consolacion, Chelsea. "The Tip of an Iceberg: A look at Western's Past and Potential Future for the College of Ethnic Studies." *Klipsun*. Fall 2019, Vol 50, Issue 1.

<sup>2</sup> <https://wp.wvu.edu/timeline/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.splcenter.org/hate-map?state=WA>

<sup>4</sup> <http://blogs.seattletimes.com/today/2014/04/hundreds-march-at-wvu-in-support-of-diversity/>

<sup>5</sup>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2015/12/01/arrest-made-in-racist-threats-that-shut-down-a-college-campus/>

of response from the University, leading lead to a sit in and community forum<sup>7</sup>; and in 2019 propaganda stickers from the hate group Patriot Front were found on campus<sup>8</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, research evidence shows that well-designed and well-taught ethnic studies curricula have positive academic and social outcomes for students, and that required diversity courses have an even greater positive impact on white students than on students of color<sup>9</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Western Washington University's mission statement says previously stated, "*Diversity is immeasurable and [we] practice inclusion within the classroom, beyond the classroom, and throughout our community*"; and,

**WHEREAS**, Western Washington University's mission statement currently says, "*Commitment to equity and justice, and respect for the rights and dignity of others*"<sup>10</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, Western Washington University's Strategic Plan states that, "*Western acknowledges that, as an institution, it has failed to meet the needs of people of many races, ethnicities, creeds, socioeconomic classes, gender identities, sexual orientations, and disability statuses. WWU will contribute to redressing these inequities by transforming policies, structures, and practices to ensure meaningful inclusion.*"<sup>11</sup>; and

**WHEREAS**, the President's Council on Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice 2018 report states, "*An ethnic studies program would contribute to the education of all WWU students. It would also offer a curriculum that would be particularly valuable to students of color... The ethnic studies work group should be representative of university constituencies and should report quickly. Delay will reinforce a perception that WWU does not support the educational needs of students of color.*"<sup>12</sup>; and

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/crime/article222967785.html>

<sup>7</sup>

<http://www.westernfrontonline.com/2018/12/10/at-community-forum-students-demand-administrative-action-regarding-systematic-racism-at-western/>

<sup>8</sup>

<https://komonews.com/news/local/police-investigate-after-white-nationalist-group-posts-racist-stickers-at-wwu-campus>

<sup>9</sup> Sleeter, Christine. "The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies." 2011.

<http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/NBI-2010-3-value-of-ethnic-studies.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <https://president.wwu.edu/mission-statement-and-strategic-plan>

<sup>11</sup> <https://provost.wwu.edu/strategic-plan>

<sup>12</sup> <https://president.wwu.edu/files/EISJ%20Final%20Report%201-28-19.pdf>

**WHEREAS**, the current Comparative Gender and Multicultural Studies (ACGM & BCGM) graduation requirement is not encompassing of the issues that continue to marginalize students of color, queer and trans students, students with disabilities, and the intersectionality within these identities<sup>13</sup>; and,

**WHEREAS**, in 2015, the Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 5433 requiring the inclusion of tribal sovereignty curriculum to be taught in all schools, an action which has been endorsed by all 29 federally recognized tribes; and,

**WHEREAS**, given that Western Washington University claims to enroll up to 100 new students to educator preparation programs in Woodring College per year and currently offers a 1 credit course: EDUC 311 - Understanding Washington State Tribal History, Culture, and Government: Since Time Immemorial Curriculum, this should be a mandatory course regularly offered with more resources and funds allocated. A Department of Ethnic Studies would employ Indigenous and Native scholars who would help regulate and support Since Time Immemorial curriculum courses; and,

**WHEREAS**, since the recent passage of Washington State Senate Bill 5023, concerning an Ethnic Studies curriculum for K-12 public school students, recent graduates are now required to teach Ethnic Studies throughout K-12 schooling, yet in the current structure will have no contact with the curriculum in higher education, and,

**WHEREAS**, WWU's education programs cannot commit to their guiding principles without a plan of study for Ethnic Studies in their curriculum for educators, [especially white educators](#), to understand privilege, prejudice, and discrimination, and,

**WHEREAS**, Students for Ethnic Studies initiated conversations in 2017 to revitalize the College of Ethnic Studies; and,

**WHEREAS**, in the 2018 WWU Associated Students Elections, 82% of the student voting population voted to pass the ballot referendum to revitalize the College of Ethnic Studies<sup>14</sup>, and,

**WHEREAS**, in Winter 2019, President Sabah Randhawa published his "Timeline of Projects to Advance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion," which references an ongoing commitment to "Develop Ethnic Studies curriculum and delivery structure,"<sup>15</sup> and,

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<sup>13</sup> AS Board of Directors "A Resolution Regarding White Supremacy and the Role of Ethnic Studies in Higher Education" August 2017

<sup>14</sup> <http://as.wvu.edu/elections/results/2018-general-elections-0430/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.wvu.edu/diversity>

**WHEREAS**, in April 2019, the WWU Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services, Melynda Huskey, sent a campus-wide email regarding the university's equity and inclusion efforts, stating "Provost Brent Carbajal has established a process and timeline for developing *an Ethnic Studies curriculum and administrative structure,*" and,

**WHEREAS**, in Fall 2019, WWU launched their Holocaust and Genocide Studies minor [proving the University's ability to create new programs](#); and,

**WHEREAS**, any institutional dialogue regarding Ethnic Studies results from the consistent pressure and reminders from students and faculty of color ~~at sit-ins and community forums~~ over the last three years; and,

**WHEREAS**, any labor involved with revitalizing Ethnic Studies has been on the shoulders of students and faculty of color [and remains largely uncompensated](#); and,

**BE IT RESOLVED**, the 2019-2020 ASWWU Executive Board formally joins the Students for Ethnic Studies Coalition to demand a College of Ethnic Studies at WWU, and commits to working alongside the Coalition to ensure its implementation; and,

**BE IT ALSO RESOLVED**, the 2019-2020 ASWWU Executive Board demands that the administration of WWU allocate funds for the creation of a College for Ethnic Studies; and adhering to the plans of structures, curriculum, faculty hiring processes, and student support services that the Students for Ethnic Studies Coalition puts forth for their ongoing vision of revitalizing Ethnic Studies; and,

**BE IT ALSO RESOLVED**, the 2019-2020 ASWWU Executive Board demands that the administration of WWU releases a public statement declaring their support and full commitment to revitalizing Ethnic Studies, alongside the Students for Ethnic Studies Coalition; and,

**BE IT ALSO RESOLVED**, the 2019-2020 ASWWU Executive Board demands that the President and Provost's Office publish a public timeline to be updated quarterly with their work progress on all Ethnic Studies related meetings and processes.

**BE IT ALSO RESOLVED**, that copies of this resolution be distributed via email to President Sabah Randhawa, Vice President for Enrollment and Student Services Melynda Huskey, Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Brent Carbajal, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs Brian Burton, WWU Faculty Senate, WWU Board of Trustees, and the WWU student body.

