



Proposal for Ethnic Studies Funding Western Washington University

Prepared by Students for Ethnic Studies
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I. Introduction

The students of Western Washington University (WWU) strongly believe that our institution and its offerings of academic programs must represent the historically marginalized communities of the state. In the 2018-2019 academic year, enrollment statistics showed a population of 4,195 students of color out of 16,121 students, with students of color reflecting only 26% of the entire student population. Historically, academic programs have had consistent gaps in perspective from populations that have dealt with discrimination and bias, particularly communities of color. Many underrepresented students do not see their histories and experiences reflected in the school system nor do they have role models who share similar backgrounds and experiences.

II. Proposal

Drawing from UC Berkeley, Ethnic Studies is the critical and interdisciplinary study of race, ethnicity, and indigeneity with a focus on the experiences and perspectives of people of color within and beyond the United States. We recommend the adoption of an Ethnic Studies program at WWU. Students, regardless of their background, should have a solid educational foundation in understanding the experiences of different ethnic groups in the U.S., including the historical injustices they have endured. Ethnic Studies is not divisive. It allows for students to develop a critical understanding of the problems in their world, including finding ways to pursue decolonization, freedom, and liberation. It is meant to help students bridge gaps between groups, which leads to stronger academic outcomes, healthier communities, and social engagement. Specific to WWU, WWU's Council Report on Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, many students of color find a hostile climate at WWU, with the pattern of race-based discriminatory and violent incidents that have occurred. We believe Ethnic Studies is vital to addressing problems regarding campus climate for students of color.

III. Experience

Students of WWU initiated conversations in 2017 to revitalize the College of Ethnic Studies, with an Associated Students ballot referendum in 2018 that 82% of the student voting population voted to pass. Since then, Students for Ethnic Studies and faculty mentors have worked to build support for Ethnic Studies on Western's campus through conversations and forums with key administrators and the student population to discuss visions for curriculum, structure, student support, and funding.

IV. Evidence

We concur that implementing an Ethnic Studies program will have a direct impact on the Woodring College of Education. WWU's teaching program underlines guiding principles

that include preparing teachers who are committed to a sustainable future for all generations, promoting social and economic justice, and engage schooling and community member action research. Ethnic Studies at WWU will prepare emerging educators to teach students of color throughout K-12 education. An Ethnic Studies program will allow graduates to incorporate narratives and histories of those who are marginalized. In Washington state, 45% of students in K-12 schooling are students of color while 89% of K-12 teachers are white.” WWU reflects this demographic with 70.9% of white students on campus. WWU’s education programs cannot commit to their guiding principles without a plan of study for Ethnic Studies in their curriculum for white educators to understand privilege, prejudice, and discrimination. With the recent passage of SB 5023, which concerns an Ethnic Studies curriculum for public school students, recent graduates are now required to teach Ethnic Studies throughout K-12 schooling, yet have no contact with the curriculum in higher education.

In 2015, the Legislature passed Senate Bill 5433 requiring the inclusion of tribal sovereignty curriculum be taught in all schools. The use of the curriculum has been endorsed by all 29 federally recognized tribes. WWU has a predominantly white faculty of 80% and a comparatively small amount of Indigenous and Native faculty, especially within Woodring. WWU cannot adequately prepare future educators to teach this curriculum when there is no financial support for Indigenous and Native scholars to teach it. Western currently offers EDUC 311 - Understanding Washington State Tribal History, Culture, and Government: Since Time Immemorial Curriculum, however, this class is only one credit and is not offered every quarter. For the amount of students that come through Woodring, which Western claims can be up to 100 new students per year, there should be a mandatory course regularly offered with more time and funds allocated, especially for an important course like this. A Department of Ethnic Studies would employ Indigenous and Native scholars who could help regulate and support Since Time Immemorial curriculum courses.

V. Funding

We request funding by June 1st 2020, the end of spring quarter at Western. With the remodel and a rebuild of Western’s STEM building and Carver Gym, we believe Western Washington University would benefit from funding towards building Ethnic Studies, as an integral step to continuing its cultivation of holistic and engaging educational opportunities.. We propose an amount of \$550,000 to be allocated towards an Ethnic Studies department, with room for growth, over a course of five years at Western Washington University. The five hundred and fifty thousand dollars will be allocated in two main criteria:

Purpose	Funding Allocation
5 Tenured-track Faculty (\$100,000/per faculty hire)	\$500,000
Program/Department Start-up Budget	\$50,000
Total Funding	\$550,000

