

# FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION 16–07

## Affirming the Role of Area Studies and Diversity Programs at LSU

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Whereas LSU’s increasingly diverse student body brings a range of backgrounds, perspectives and needs to our campus;

Whereas LSU identifies diversity as one of its core Flagship 2020 goals, expressing a desire to “Strengthen the intellectual environment by broadening the cultural diversity of the LSU community” by, among other steps, expanding “supportive communities for minority, international, and first generation students”;

Whereas LSU academic programs such as African and African American Studies, Asian Studies, Arabic Studies, Hispanic Studies, Jewish Studies, LGBTQ Studies, and Women’s and Gender Studies play a vital campus and community role in cultivating such support by fostering scholarship that focuses upon the unique experiences of underrepresented communities, developing curriculum that highlights the contributions and experiences of marginalized people in public life, responding to the unique academic and social needs of underrepresented communities, challenging students in generative ways, and organizing events that address matters of diversity, inclusion, and social justice;<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> On the relationship between pedagogical outcomes and area studies, see Thomas Dee and Emily Penner, “The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence from an Ethnic Studies Curriculum,” *The National Bureau of Economic Research*, January 2016, <http://www.nber.org/papers/w21865>; Christine E. Sleeter, *The Academic and Social Value of Ethnic Studies: A Research Review* (Washington, DC: National Education Association, 2011), <http://guides.lib.lsu.edu/az.php?a=g>.

Whereas LSU auxiliary entities such as the Office of Diversity, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Women's Center, and African American Cultural Center play an equally important role in meeting the Flagship 2020 goal of diversity by pursuing policies that address the needs of underrepresented communities on campus, fostering dialogue on matters of diversity, providing essential services such as Safe Space training, and supporting student organizations that represent the interests of underrepresented communities;<sup>2</sup>

Whereas the State of Louisiana routinely faces budget crises that hold the potential to do devastating damage to LSU and other state colleges and universities;

Whereas this budget crisis occurs in the context of a national political climate that privileges the role of employment outcomes in higher education over its other important functions such as critical thinking, personal enrichment, cultural competency, and participation in civic life;

Whereas academic and campus support programs such as ethnic studies, women's and gender studies, and similar entities are often uniquely vulnerable under such economic and political conditions;<sup>3</sup>

Therefore be it resolved that the faculty of LSU affirms its support of African and African American Studies, Asian Studies, Arabic Studies, Hispanic Studies, Jewish Studies, LGBTQ Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, the Office of Diversity, the Office of Multicultural Affairs, the Women's Center, the African American Cultural Center, and similar programs as vital parts of the LSU community that must, even in times of economic hardship, be preserved;

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<sup>2</sup> On the impact of curricular and co-curricular diversity programs on campus climates, see Nida Denson, "Do Curricular and Cocurricular Diversity Activities Influence Racial Bias? A Meta-Analysis," *Review of Educational Research* 79 (2009): 805-38.

<sup>3</sup> See Estela Mara Bensimon, "Total Quality Management in the Academy: A Rebellious Reading," *Harvard Educational Review* 65 (1995): 593-611; Tina A. Brown, "Advocates Say Ethnic Studies Misunderstood, Needlessly under Fire," *Diverse*, 14 April 2013, <http://diverseeducation.com/article/52609/>; Colleen Flaherty, "Troubled Icon," *Inside Higher Ed*, 3 March 2016, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/03/03/iconic-ethnic-studies-college-san-francisco-state-says-it-cant-pay-its-bills>; Carla Rivera, "Cal State's Ethnic Studies Programs Falter in Changing Times," *Los Angeles Times*, 30 October 2013, <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/oct/30/local/la-me-college-ethnic-20131031>.

Be it further resolved that we call on campus administrators to do the following:

- Actively promote the programs identified in this resolution as central parts of LSU's institutional identity and mission through recruitment efforts, alumni relations, and other forms of publicity.
- Promptly fill vacant faculty positions in area studies programs.
- Promptly fill vacant diversity support positions, including the Director of the Office of Multicultural Affairs and Coordinator of Cross-Cultural Affairs.
- Continue prioritizing and incentivizing diversity in hiring practices across the university.