**Annual Departmental Assessment Report**

**Department or Program:** *Ethnic Studies*

**Academic Year of Report:** *2018*

**Department Contact Person for Assessment:** *Laura Pulido*

**Section 1: Learning Objectives Assessed for this Report**

For each major in the department, list the learning objectives that were assessed during this period.

*[Major 1]: Ethnic Studies Bachelor Degree*

1. Learning Goal 1

*For this assessment we focused on ES’s Learning Assessment #6 – Original Research. The full text of the assessment is as follows:*

*“Engage in original research by completing a senior research paper that reflects and utilizes a comprehensive understanding of ethnic studies methodologies and theories, synthesizes and applies knowledge from earlier ethnic studies coursework, and attends to the details of evidence and argumentation in knowledge production.”*

**Section 2: Assessment Activities**

*I am beginning my second year as department and as a member of the UO community. When I first joined the Ethnic Studies department I quickly learned about the problems with Learning Outcome #6, particularly as they were manifest in the two courses intended to realize this goal. Numerous ES faculty had taught one or two of these classes and they all had participated in the process by mentoring students going through this process. However, because I did not understand what this assessment was all about until May of 2018, I did not implement a formal analysis. When I assumed the headship of the department in September 2017, it was clear that the ES faculty had been struggling with this learning outcome for several years. At our Fall 2017 faculty retreat it was decided that we would devise a solution by the end of the academic year.*

*What is the problem? The problems with Learning Assessment #6 are numerous. First, it is a very difficult task. Indeed, relatively few UO undergraduate majors require an original piece of research for all students in order to graduate. Second, neither ES or the larger institution does an adequate job of preparing students for the task. In the current configuration, students are required to take one upper-division theory class (ES 301) in their junior or senior year, and then take a sequence of two courses: ES 498 (Interdisciplinary Research Methods) and ES 499 (Proseminar) in the Winter and Spring of their senior year, respectively. The idea was that students would identify and conceptualize an original research project in ES 498 and then execute it and write it up in ES 499. The reality is, however, that ten weeks is simply not enough time to complete either task in a satisfactory manner. Most undergraduates have a difficult time identifying a coherent research question, operationalizing it, consulting the relevant literature, and articulating an appropriate methodology in ten weeks. Likewise, they have a difficult time conducting the research, completing the literature review, and writing an acceptable paper in ten weeks.*

*The end result was that with a few exceptions, the students produced very poor quality work and were incredibly anxious. As department head, I saw first-hand the level of stress and worry that this requirement triggered, because the stakes were so high. For example, I had multiple students crying in my office.*

**Section 3: Actions Taken Based on Assessment Analysis**

*The ES faculty debated most of AY 2017-18 on how to respond to this problem. We first looked at other Ethnic Studies programs to see if they required a similar project (UC Berkeley; UC Riverside; UC San Diego; CU Boulder) They did not. Second, we explored a wide-variety of alternatives, including: group vs individual projects; assigned projects; allowing a greater diversity of ‘projects’ instead of just a research paper; more client, or community-based projects; adding an additional preparatory course; etc. In the end we decided to abolish the requirement of an original piece of research as well as ES 498 and 499. Instead, students will be required to take two 400/500 level ES courses of their choice. Because the 400 level courses are all more rigorous and require significant writing, we decided that this would meet a revised goal of critical thinking and writing.*

*Such a modification constitutes a change to the major. We have taken the first step, a memo to our divisional dean. Our dean has approved (and commended) our decision and is forwarding it along in the approval process.*

**Section 4: Other Efforts to Improve the Student Educational Experience**

*We have created a position of Director of Undergraduate Studies. Previously in ES all faculty were responsible for advising our majors. While this did promote regular faculty contact with students, the drawback was that not only were faculty sufficiently unfamiliar with UO requirements, but the student records were extremely inconsistent. This latter issue was a major problem in terms of effective advising. To address this problem we changed how ES’s discretionary course releases are allocated and decided to give a course release to one person who now does all advising. We hope that this will result in more consistent advising quality and record-keeping. This change was implemented in September 2018.*

**Section 5: Plans for Next Year**

*I realize that you would like for us to focus on a different Learning Outcome, but given the significance of the change we are making, I think we need to focus on Learning Outcome #6 for the next year or two. Steps we will take: 1) revise this learning outcome in official documents; 2) get student feedback about the proposed change to the major; 3) assess to what degree the ES Undergraduate Research Symposium may contribute towards the goal of independent research; 4) assess what kind of undergraduate work is being performed in the 400/500 level ES electives students will be taking. I think it would be irresponsible of ES to jump to another learning outcome in the immediate future.*