

UMBC'S DEPARTMENT OF AFRICANA STUDIES
ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW - 2013
UNDERGRADUATE COUNCIL REPORT

The Africana Studies Department offers a B.A. degree in Africana Studies in either the Standard Major or with a Concentration in Community Involvement, as well as a minor in Africana Studies. The program awarded its first B.A. degrees in 1975. In the five years preceding the review, the department granted an average of three B.A. degrees. During that same time, the department averaged fourteen minors each year and provided undergraduate courses to a much larger portion of the student body.

A. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

The Africana Studies Department has identified a range of goals for their students in the areas of course instruction, student research, and personal and community development. In order to assess the effectiveness of students' progress toward those goals, the program evaluates the achievement of measurable student learning outcomes including knowledge about the people of Africa and its diaspora, the ability to conduct independent research and write a critical research essay, and a grasp of community change strategies. In order to assess these achievements, the program examines 1) student grades and their evaluations in introductory courses, 2) instructors evaluations of senior capstone or independent research projects, 3) supervisors' evaluations of students' community field placement work, and 4) senior exit surveys.

B. STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE; PROGRAM MODIFICATIONS; PROGRAM CHANGES

The Africana Studies Department reports that there have been three reviews of course offering in the past two decades resulting in the addition of new courses to the curriculum. However, the program has not been significantly revised in the last 30 years. They look forward to restructuring the program and the curriculum following the APR. At the time of the review, the department was considering refocusing their efforts on three areas: African Studies, African-American Studies with a concentration on Education and Race Relations, and Community Leadership. Such efforts would require additional regular and adjunct faculty.

C. UNDERGRADUATE CURRIULUM

Majors in Africana Studies must choose one of two paths. Those who elect to take the Standard Major option are required to take 36 credits, including 15 credits of core requirements, 15 additional upper-level credits, and 6 hours of directed research. If they would like to take on a second major in another department, the required credits for the Standard Major in Africana Studies will be reduced to 30. As an alternative to the

Standard Major option, students may choose to undertake the Concentration in Community Involvement in which the upper-level electives and the 6 hours of directed research focus on "community problem-solving." Minors in Africana Studies must complete 18 credits of work in the department, half devoted to core courses and half to upper-level electives.

The Africana Studies Department lists 67 courses in the catalog, of which half are cross-listed by other departments and a quarter of which offer GEP credits. A third of these listed courses were not taught in the five years prior to the APR, largely because of a shortage of regular faculty members and limited funds for adjunct instructors.

D. RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES FOR UNDERGRADUATES

All Africana Studies majors are required to undertake a six credit independent project. For the Standard Majors, this entails a directed research project on a topic within the field of Africana Studies that is of particular interest to them, while those with a Concentration in Community Involvement are required to undertake an internship in the community. At the time of the APR, none of those projects led to public presentations or publications.

E. UNDERGRADUATE ADVISEMENT

Each regular faculty member, of whom there were three at the time of review, provides advising to an average of 21 students, including students from outside the department. The regular faculty member who serves as the department's advising coordinator does an initial review for new majors and minors, and then matches students with a faculty advisor. The department chair conducts graduation reviews.

F. COUNCIL OF MAJORS; UNDERGRADUATE HONORS; AWARDS; RECOGNITION

The Africana Studies Council of Majors has been active in organizing campus events, which the department has supported with its stretched budget. In addition, the department encourages students to become involved in a range of organizations on and off campus focused on issues related to Africana Studies. The department grants student who graduate with a 3.5-3.74 GPA the Africana Studies Faculty Award for Academic Achievement. Those who graduate with a GPA at or above 3.75 receive the W. E. B. DuBois Award for Academic Achievement.

G. FACULTY DEVELOPMENT; TEACHING QUALITY

The department encourages high quality teaching, providing mentorship to new instructors and encouraging instructors to participate in on-campus teaching workshops. The chair reviews course syllabuses and monitors SCEQ scores, investigating and addressing concerns that may arise.

Each regular faculty members (of which there were three at the time of the APR) typically teaches five courses in a year, accounting for approximately one third of the roughly 2000 credit hours generated annually by the department. Increasing the number of faculty would enable regular faculty members to teach a wider range of courses in their areas of expertise.

H. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS; SUMMARY EVALUATION

The external reviewers and the Dean's report agree that Africana Studies is a vital department at UMBC. In order to see it thrive, they agree with the department that hiring new regular faculty and substantially re-thinking the curriculum and strategic plan going forward is essential, and they offered a range of views and suggestions about how to do so.