

May 9, 2016

Dear President Wong:

We the chairs of the College of Liberal and Creative Arts are adding our voices to express deep concern about the position of the College of Ethnic Studies (CoES) at our University.

We will leave questions of budget largely aside although our worry about the level of funding for that college is central to our concerns. More generally, we want to emphasize the fact that the College of Ethnic Studies is not just another college at SFSU. This College, unique certainly in the US and perhaps in the world, is central to, and evidence of, our university's commitment to social justice.

The faculty of Ethnic Studies includes a significant percentage of the SFSU faculty of color. That College's security and health is a strong draw for successful recruitment and retention of faculty of color across the university. Ethnic Studies faculty engages in important cross-disciplinary and cross-campus collaborations. Its administrators, staff, and faculty are called upon to provide important voices in university service. Students majoring in LCA degree programs take general education courses through Ethnic Studies, and often minor in programs in that college.

The existence of our College of Ethnic Studies is important – even crucial - to our being proud of teaching at SFSU. We cannot imagine our university without it.

We are troubled by the growing appearance of a university administration that does not share this appreciation for the College of Ethnic Studies. We believe SFSU administrative leadership should recognize the extraordinary degree that Ethnic Studies students, faculty and staff feel under threat and are deeply unhappy. While the problems now surfacing may stem at root from longstanding structural neglect of the College, it has been a long time since we have seen Ethnic Studies members evince such deep distrust and insecurity about the College's future.

We are concerned about the health and safety of the students engaged in a hunger strike. We take the situation that has propelled them to take this step very seriously. These are dedicated student leaders who are putting their own health in danger for the cause of their education and their university community. That students possess this kind of dedication and commitment demonstrates the unique and admirable nature of the College of Ethnic Studies, which should be deeply respected.

The current situation is bad for all of us. It is bad for California, the State government, the CSU, our Bay Area community, and SFSU's statewide, national, and international reputation. It is bad for faculty morale, not just in the College of Ethnic Studies, but also for all faculty. It is bad for student morale, again not just in the College of Ethnic Studies but also for all of us. When this College is suffering, we all suffer. We would like Ethnic Studies to be made whole and its students, staff and faculty to enjoy the support and appreciation from this University that they richly deserve.

The message that we'd most like to send to you, President Wong, is that we are all in this together. The College of Ethnic Studies is a critical and cherished part of our

community. Its value to the campus community, the Bay Area, and the indeed the national drive for a more just and equitable body politic should not be measured in FTES, budget comparisons, or outdated formulae.

We don't think every college or department should be judged purely by an economic metric applied in isolation from other values. We are an interactive community, not a collection of narrowly disciplinary academic islands. Programs should be considered, funded, and otherwise supported accordingly. The College of Ethnic Studies transcends bottom line cost-benefit rationales and represents our university societal commitment to providing opportunities to all people, and especially those who have been historically depreciated and neglected, to become constructive, creative, and socially responsible citizens.

SFSU needs to restore our community to allow all of us to work towards a future of vibrant inclusion, healthy mutual support, and cross-campus academic and pedagogical excellence. We urge you to show the strong leadership that this campus needs and make the courageous choice to work out a new approach with the Ethnic Studies faculty and students.

[Anita Silvers](#), Chair of Philosophy  
[Britta Sjogren](#), Director of Cinema  
[Christina Sabee](#), Chair of Communication Studies  
[Cristina Azocar](#), Chair of Journalism  
[Cristina Ruotolo](#), Director of Humanities and Liberal Studies  
[Dane Johnson](#), Chair of Comparative and World Literature  
[Deborah Cohler](#), Chair of Women and Gender Studies  
[Fred Astren](#), Chair of Jewish Studies  
[Gail C Dawson](#), Director of Art  
[James Quesada](#), Chair of Anthropology  
[James R Martel](#), Chair of Political Science  
[Maxine Chernoff](#), Chair of Creative Writing  
[Mohammad Salama](#), Chair of Modern Languages and Literatures  
[Philip Jacques Dreyfus](#), Chair of History  
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[Todd F Roehrman](#), Director of Theatre and Dance; Chair of Design Industry  
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