

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

STATE CAPITOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA
95814

March 16, 2016

Leslie Wong
President
San Francisco State University
1600 Holloway Avenue, Administration Building 562
San Francisco, CA 94132

Dear President Wong,

We are deeply disturbed to learn of your recent budget proposal to eliminate \$500,000 in funding from the College of Ethnic Studies. These cuts will be devastating to vital lectures, programs, courses and student services at San Francisco State University (SFSU). SFSU, the birthplace of Ethnic Studies, has recently admitted a record high number of students who identify themselves as being part of an ethnic group.

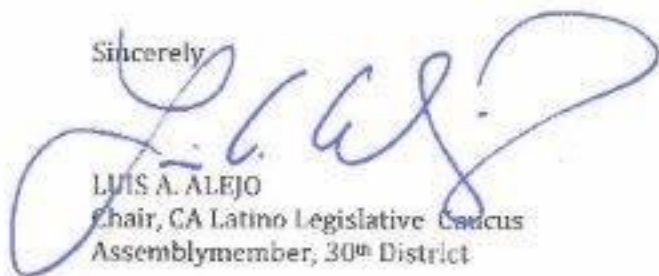
The College of Ethnic Studies was founded in 1968 as a response to the lack of access, misrepresentation, and the overall neglect of indigenous peoples and people of color within the university's curriculum and programs. SFSU created the first Ethnic Studies program and degree major in California. These proposed budget cuts would force the College to eliminate the very foundation which it was built on. The College will no longer have the ability to provide safe academic spaces for all to learn about the histories, cultures and intellectual traditions of Native peoples and communities of color in the United States.

This proposed budget cut to the College will have devastating impacts, eliminating 40 percent of its courses and resulting in the dismissal of 50 percent of its teachers and the closing of the Cesar Chavez Institute, which has served the community and helped retain students of color for more than 30 years. Also, it would result in the end of the Ethnic Studies graduate program and the shutdown of the Ethnic Studies Student Resource Center and Associated Students Ethnic Studies, which has provided services to students for more than 7 years.

The College of Ethnic Studies is needed now more than ever, as we as a state grow in our appreciation of its value in helping students of color to reach their highest academic potential. Today, we have to join together to push forward Assembly bill 2016, which aims to include Ethnic Studies courses in all our public schools in California and create the first statewide curriculum. An example of the potential of AB 2016 in our public schools is San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD), which successfully developed comprehensive Ethnic Studies courses for its high school students, thanks to the guidance and knowledge of the professors at SFSU. SFUSD's success was recently highlighted in a Stanford University study demonstrating an overall academic improvement of students who took the courses while on the verge of dropping out of high school.

By eliminating funding for the College of Ethnic Studies, you would be eliminating all of the progress that has occurred over the last 47 years. Rather than strengthening and expanding Ethnic Studies courses, your proposed actions would be a major setback to what was accomplished on your campus in 1968. That is why we are joining together to urge you to reconsider your budget proposal that would not only affect the lives of the students of SFSU, but the communities of color and school districts across the state that are depending on the leadership and knowledge of the College of Ethnic Studies.

Sincerely,



LUIS A. ALEJO
Chair, CA Latino Legislative Caucus
Assemblymember, 30th District



ISADORE HALL, III
Chair, CA Legislative Black Caucus
Senator, 35th District



DAVID CHIU
Policy Chair, CA Asian & Pacific Islander
Legislative Caucus
Assemblymember, 17th District