Summary Report of
Black, Race, and Ethnic Studies Expansion Feedback

Part 2:
Proposed Areas of Planning Commission Focus

Overview
In September 2020, the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and University Provost hosted two town halls on the Mellon Foundation’s gift of $3 million to the University for the expansion and reimagining of Black, race, and ethnic studies. Following the town halls, faculty, staff, and students provided feedback regarding the expansion via a Formstack survey, the deadline of which was October 2, 2020.

The Formstack survey generated 180 responses and the ethnicstudies@cuny.edu inbox collected an additional 43 responses for a total of 223 responses from faculty, students, and staff about their vision and hopes for the furthering of the discipline at the University.

This summary report focuses on the first of four questions participants were asked regarding the program expansion: “In what areas should the planning commission focus its inquiry and efforts as it formulates University-wide recommendations?”

While responses varied significantly, eight clear categories of respondent interest emerged:

1. Diversity, inclusion, and equity
2. Building capacity of existing centers and department
3. Collaboration across the CUNY network
4. Student development
5. Curriculum
6. Evaluation, assessment, and best practices
7. New programs and initiatives
8. Anti-racism

This report will summarize the details of each of these requested areas of focus, as presented in the survey responses.

Diversity, inclusivity, and equity
Understandably, diversity and inclusivity were the top priority of the vast majority of the survey respondents, who suggested related efforts for both the University-wide system as well as for specific colleges. The following is a summary of the diversity and inclusivity efforts on which respondents want the planning commission to focus.

- Increasing faculty diversity to meet needs of students of color
- Ensuring inclusivity that is not solely focused on only a portion of the groups that have been undervalued at CUNY
- Considering diaspora, transnational communities, and groups that are often overlooked even within marginalized groups
- Ensuring the HSI campuses benefit
- Ensuring equitable access by each of the CUNY campuses to the resources and opportunities offered by the grant
• Ensuring each campus will be analyzed for its diversity and inclusion efforts and ethnic studies programming
• Focusing planning commission inquires and efforts on African-American, Black Caribbean, and African alumni, as well as current students, to get feedback on their experiences at the CUNY colleges
• Ensuring leadership positions will be occupied by Black and LatinX appointees
• Prioritizing the voices of the most traditionally marginalized and asking non-experts first for the most radical reimagining possible
• Ensuring that the expansion of ethnic studies at CUNY includes Asian, Pacific, and Indigenous studies as well curriculum that includes the study of LGBTQ people of color
• Involving the front-line college assistants and HEO-line staff who have meaningful interactions with students at all points of the student journey

Building capacity of centers and departments
Many survey respondents suggested the planning mission focus its efforts on growing and bolstering existing resources at CUNY, such as ethnic studies programs and departments, faculty, and centers and institutes. The following is a summary of what these respondents have requested of the planning commission.

• Ensuring a programmatic focus, building departments, and faculty in those departments
• Growing African American, Africana, Black Studies departments
• Supporting scholars working in Black-subject areas
• Ensuring outreach towards race-informed scholarly work
• Ensuring aggressive outreach towards faculty of color who can teach in this area from a variety of disciplines and perspectives
• Allocating funds to hire tenured scholars in ethnic studies if a college lacks such
• Ensuring equitable course release for faculty who direct ethnic studies
• Supporting extant centers and institutes that have been underfunded
• Ensuring SEEK’s sustainable future
• Building out and fortifying Black, LatinX and ethnic studies departments and majors within CUNY
• Funding should go to Africana/Black Studies for programming, administrative support, and resources for majors and minors
• Ensuring the hiring of more advisors to retain students to graduate with a 4-year degree
• Expanding departments in Black studies, Asian American studies, LatinX studies, and Indigenous studies, so that each CUNY college has at least one these
• Integrating Black, race, and ethnic studies into other disciplines currently at CUNY
• Transitioning ethnic studies programs into full departments with dedicated faculty, administrative assistance and operation funds
• Strengthening existing centers and departments through workshops that can train faculty and staff to incorporate ethnic studies into existing courses
• Ensuring that CUNY centers and institutes are allocated funds in order to remain vital entities in ethnic studies expansion

Building collaboration across the CUNY network
According to many respondents, the successful expansion of ethnic studies could be achieved through establishing University-wide collaborations that connect faculty, students, and staff through the lens of the discipline. Specifically, respondents suggested the planning commission consider the following in regard to collaborative efforts.

- Focusing on partnerships between community and 4-year colleges in areas that promote careers
- Ensuring Black Studies/Africana Studies and similarly named programs/departments work collaboratively with other depts
- Supporting curricula and research at the graduate level, both M.A. and Ph.D.
- Assessing existing assets, especially in allied fields such as criminal justice and gender studies
- Finding ways to aggregate and support the commemoration of CUNY-wide pioneering efforts on Black, Puerto Rican, Mexican, and ethnic studies since the 1960s
- Incentivizing cross-program/department collaborations to disperse new knowledge developed within the Black, race, and ethnic studies clusters more broadly among the humanities
- Creating pipeline programs to move undergrads in these fields to the GC
- Consolidating existing ethnic and Black studies expertise across campuses in order to centralize the amazing cross-campus scholarship being undertaken within CUNY
- Forming collaborations with Student Affairs and College Discovery (CD) and SEEK
- Uplifting ongoing engagement in other disciplines
- Connecting with campus affinity groups such as the CUNY BFSA as well as similar campus level groups to see where the greatest need is
- Forming collaborative groups with academic departments and support service programs
- Establishing CUNY-wide conferences and task forces that include faculty and students working collaboratively

In addition, respondents suggested the commission consider collaborations and partnerships beyond CUNY, including the following.

- Outreach to secondary educators in New York City
- Developing an intro-level African American history course for NYC DOE high school
- Ensuring CUNY is more integrated with undeserved communities in New York City
- Finding ways for students and faculty to engage in community action and work for social justice in the respective CUNY college campus's diverse communities in all five boroughs
- Connecting theory into practice and offering opportunities to partner with community-based and grassroots organizations

**Student development**

Many respondents identified extracurricular services as key to the success of ethnic studies reimagining at CUNY. Specifically, these respondents cited student development services, such as mental health counseling and career-skill training. The following is a summary of related requests on which respondents would like the planning commission to concentrate.

- Establishing planning guidance of minorities and mental health
• Hiring more mental health counselors of color
• Expanding counseling and chaplaincy services for students from Black and ethnic cultures
• Ensuring civic knowledge and advocacy by technically trained students
• Establishing SEEK at the graduate student level
• Focusing on efforts to evaluate the non-cognitive factors that affect Black and brown students' ability to be successful as a CUNY college student
• Supporting student-led diversity initiatives
• Expanding leadership opportunities for historically underserved and underrepresented BIPOC students
• Expanding opportunities for student of color to work directly with the CUNY art galleries
• Networking, scholarship + leadership opportunities for historically underserved and underrepresented BIPOC students
• Supporting and mentoring Black students to develop the next generation of Black studies scholars
• Creating, expanding, and bringing to scale academic and nonacademic resources that support retention, graduation, and career success of students of color

Curriculum
The redevelopment of CUNY curricula was a common request among respondents. Notably, respondents requested the planning commission consider inclusion of writing and the arts in the core curriculum, as well as the following suggestions.

• Establishing a University-wide initiative that includes the creation of a University-level program such as "Writing Across the Curriculum"
• Focusing on curriculum development and research through existing programs and on initiatives for supporting faculty and students.
• Ensuring a literary component that makes Black and Brown literature a focal point
• Establishing writing-intensive courses that combine Black studies, for example, with intensive writing
• Explore ethnic studies requirements in the general education curriculum
• Bringing courses to the campuses that will fulfill Pathways requirements and also within 200- or 300-level courses within certain majors
• Ensuring the inclusion of the arts as it builds out ethnic studies
• Offering Black and Latino studies as a major in each of the CUNY campuses, revising and updating BLS curriculum
• More flexibility in taking upper level ethnic courses when not in the major/minor
• Ensuring other disciplines will operate through the lens of Black excellence; disciplines like history, sciences and philosophy should not be white-centric
• Curriculum building from BIPOC TEACHERS and curriculum building from BIPOC LGBT TEACHERS
• Ensuring that every area of study includes at least one class that focuses on BIPOC whether it is current or historical
**Evaluation, assessment, and best practices**
Respondents made the point that the success of the expansion of ethnic studies would be dependent on establishing outcomes, assessment practices, and metrics, such as the following.

- Making a frank assessment of how Black, race, and ethnic studies are taught by CUNY, e.g., how many classes, what level of scholarships, who is teaching them, etc.
- Identifying impediments to change at CUNY
- Developing a comprehensive account of departments, centers, institutes, and programs across CUNY
- Establishing standards and outcomes for faculty diversity, instructional dissemination, and faculty research
- Conducting an exhaustive study of stakeholders and analyzing that data in conjunction with the grant funders to provide a road map for the implementation
- Assessing support services for culturally responsive approaches
- Developing and implementing best practices to expand curricula and pedagogy on race and ethnicity, building on successful existing programs

**New programs and initiatives**
Respondents indicated that ethnic studies expansion would be augmented by creating new initiatives for students to complement their in-classroom learning, such as the following.

- Establishing CUNY-wide travel seminars and internships
- Exploring interdisciplinary programming and public engagement
- Ensuring entrepreneurship is studied and practiced within many different majors at CUNY
- Fundraising; endowments; partnerships with public, private, and non-profit sectors
- Bolstering repositories, libraries, and archives
- CUNY-wide African American Institute for Interdisciplinary Research
- Attracting guest speakers for CUNY-wide special lectures and conferences available virtually and also in person when the pandemic subsides

**Anti-racism**
Give the persevering nationwide demand for racial and social justice, it is understandable that many respondents want the planning commission to focus on real anti-racist work, thus better aligning ethnic studies with the current times as well as the discipline’s radical roots. The following is a summary of requests respondents have made to the commission on this matter.

- Addressing white supremacy as the framework for understanding race and ethnicity in the U.S. context
- Structuring the discussion around systemic racism not individual racism/anti-racism
- Enacting anti-racist actions in admissions such as SAT/ACT blind/optional
- Improving in areas of administrative anti-racist/ micro-aggression/ implicit bias trainings across campuses
- Requiring anti-racism workshops for faculty, programs regarding student success
- Anti-racism/bias training for all CUNY staff, faculty, and students
• Focusing not just on the academic elements but on the institutional elements the University needs to undertake regarding anti-racist training and initiatives
• Ensuring anti-racist permeates all of the courses and the culture at CUNY