



LSU A&M FACULTY SENATE RESOLUTION 20-05

Confronting Anti-Blackness by Ensuring Undergraduate Access to Antiracist Curricular Offering

Sponsored by Faculty Senators Profs. Sonja Wiley and Cassandra Chaney

Whereas in the wake of the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Philando Castile, Stephon Clark, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Atatiana Jefferson, Alton Sterling, Elijah McClain, and too many other Black people, the nation's largest protest movement in recent history unfolded across the country to demand an end to the institutionalized racism and the pervasive anti-Blackness that injures and kills;

Whereas this is a moment in which the country is engaging in a long-delayed reckoning with the ways it has been built on anti-Blackness, and in which Louisiana, Baton Rouge, and our university are challenged to confront the potency and destructive power of anti-Blackness in everyday life;

Whereas LSU has committed itself to the truth that Black lives matter and has further dedicated itself to becoming an anti-racist institution [1];

Whereas students are expressing the desire to be more well prepared for the world in which they will live and work, including the students of the Black Student-Athlete Association who have advocated for expanded curricular discussions related to social and racial injustice[2];

Whereas LSU strategic plan seeks to inculcate cultural adeptness as a core value, and that its pillars all involve, in some way, grappling with the legacies of systemic and structural racism;

Whereas dismantling and disrupting racism demands conscious and intentional decisions about how we center antiracism in our curriculum;

Whereas research suggests that the overwhelming majority of high school students in the United States are not instructed in the true history of African enslavement, in the role of slavery in American history, and in its continuing effects in American social life, nor are students adequately instructed on the important contributions of African Americans to Louisiana and American history[3];

Whereas statistics tell a stark story of the way the study of African Americans' contributions to Louisiana and American history is under-represented in higher education. The percentage of LSU students identifying as Black or African American has grown from 8.8% in Fall 2009 to 13.3% in Fall 2019, with

14.5% of Degree-Seeking First Time Freshmen (N=887) identified as Black or African American in Fall 2019, and that our increasingly diverse freshmen classes will continue to increase the share of students identifying as Black or African American, in line with national demographic trends in the race/ethnic composition of future cohorts of college attendees, coupled with a heightened attentiveness to recruiting more diverse pools of students. At the same time, African Americans are 34% of Louisiana's population. And yet, there are no public colleges or universities in Louisiana that currently offer an independent BA in African & African American Studies (AAAS) [4]. LSU is in the process of seeking to be the first, in making the Program in African and African American Studies a department, and a curricular commitment to the study of Black and African American history and experience would cement LSU as a leader in the state;

Whereas, as the Statement from the Consortium of Chairs and Directors of Black Studies in the Southeastern Conference, which was drafted this summer points out, "Black, Africana, and African Studies continue to be the most viable academic solutions to this crisis and the ongoing national and global crises continuing to undermine our entire educational system," and that "our systems must invest rather than continue to divest the kind of real support that matters, because as Black Lives Matters, #blackstudiesmatter" [5];

Whereas the Integrative Learning Core builds students' proficiency in areas including global learning and in intercultural knowledge and competence, but does not guarantee that students will be challenged to confront the anti-Blackness so central to United States history, and its palpable legacies as they manifest in the present [6];

Whereas AAAS2000 supplies students with opportunities to studying Black experience in the US, and equips students with the tools for identifying and combating anti-Blackness, which has played such a specific and immense role in the history of the state of Louisiana and our university, and thereby helps students begin the process of identifying and combating the many forms of intersecting oppression that characterize 21st-century United States life;

Whereas the spring 2020 Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap Report, produced by a robust committee of faculty, staff, and students, recommends a diversity and inclusion core requirement for all degrees [7];

Whereas a subcommittee of the Academics group from the summer 2020 Inclusion, Equity, and Diversity leadership retreat and task force deliberated this recommendation in consultation with faculty experts, including faculty experts on the subjects of race and racism;

Whereas other universities are in the process of deliberating or implementing required courses that center on ending anti-Black racism (e.g. Yale and the University of Pittsburgh)[8];

Whereas the Office of the President and the Office of the Provost have expressed their support for this resolution, and have committed to supplying the necessary resources for its implementation;

Now therefore be it resolved that the LSU Faculty Senate endorses requiring that AAAS 2000 be one of the courses each undergraduate completes in satisfying their ILC obligations.

[1] LSU Together: <https://lsu.edu/together/>

[2] Please see Appendix A, a statement from the BSAA in support of this resolution.

[3] Southern Poverty Law Center, “Teaching the Hard History of American Slavery” at <https://www.splcenter.org/teaching-hard-history-american-slavery>

[4] Tulane University, a private university, is the only institution in Louisiana that offers an independent major in Africana Studies. Still, half of the courses which count toward the Africana Studies major at Tulane are found in departments, programs, and schools outside of the department, which make it largely a coordinating body that is dependent on other academic units. Currently, there are about 20 students pursuing a liberal arts degree with a concentration in African and African American Studies at LSU. Between 40 and 45 students have declared AAAS as their minor and a dozen students are working towards the graduate minor in Africana Studies.

[5] Statement from the Consortium of Chairs and Directors of Black Studies in the Southeastern Conference, June 3, 2020: <https://www.lsu.edu/hss/aaas/newsextension/floyd-protests.php>

[6] LSU “Purpose of the ILC”: <https://lsu.edu/oie/ilc/background/index.php>

[7] LSU Diversity and Inclusion Roadmap Report, p. 11: <https://www.lsu.edu/together/docs/roadmap-to-diversity.pdf>

[8] “James Jones, hoping to encourage African American history course requirements, joins board at ABIS” (Sep. 18, 2020) at <https://yaledailynews.com/blog/2020/09/18/james-jones-african-american-history-joins-board-at-abis/> and “New Anti-Racism Course Aims to Inspire Paths of Scholarly Activism and Black Study” (Aug. 20, 2020) at <https://www.pittwire.pitt.edu/news/new-anti-racism-course-aims-inspire-paths-scholarly-activism-and-black-study>

Appendix A

Statement of the LSU Black Student Athlete Association in support of requiring AAAS 2000 be completed by all LSU undergraduates.

November 6, 2020

Back during the Summer of 2020, one of our Black Student Athlete Association (BSAA) executive committee members, Xavier Mulugata, brought up the reasons as to why African & African American (AAAS) classes should be a general education requirement that needs to be offered to every single student, along with Maths, Science, English, and the like. Since then, we have made it one of our top

priorities to push for more accessibility to AAAS education, and now here we are: supporting the request by the Faculty Senate that AAAS 2000 should be taken by every LSU undergrad.

Finalizing AAAS 2000 as a general education requirement would be giving LSU undergrad students an opportunity to learn and grow, as well as give instructors for this course the opportunity to facilitate and educate young minds in this field of research, history, and discovery. We want to see change happen, not just for collegiate athletes, but also for students and educators who are interested and involved in this course and AAAS in its entirety.

We of the BSAA support the request that AAAS 2000 should be taken by every LSU undergrad.

Signed,

Domonique Davis

Akiya Thymes

Aundre Hyatt

Xavier Mulugata

Charles Lewis

Jurnee Woodward