

Indiana State University

2006 - 2007 Academic Annual Report

Department of African & African American Studies

Vision Statement

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Below is your vision statement from previous years. Please take this opportunity to review it and if necessary update it.

The Department of African and African American Studies at Indiana State University has as its mission the dissemination of knowledge concerning the peoples and cultures of continental Africa and its global Diaspora. The Department is dedicated to the highest standards of instruction at the undergraduate level, and to the ideals of academic excellence in research and scholarship in the area of its specialization as broadly defined in the foregoing paragraph. The Department is committed to an interdisciplinary approach in the investigation of the black experience, with respect in particular to the related areas of African and African American studies. The Department seeks in this way to broaden the terms of scholarly discourse and thus to contribute to the atmosphere of free discussion and inquiry within Indiana State University and beyond. The Department encourages, and relies on, its close relationship to faculty members in a wide range of academic departments, including: History, English, Sociology, Political Science, and Criminology. An essential part of the Department's mission involves service to the Terre Haute community with a population of 60,000 of which 6,000 are of African ancestry, service throughout the State of Indiana, as well as nationally, and internationally. Such service takes the form of a sustained program of activities at the Indiana State University Community Extension Center--in the form of courses for credit and for non-credit, lectures, symposia and such other initiatives, both locally and nationally--designed to benefit the community in general, but in particular the black community, socially and culturally and to contribute to the formulation and implementation of a progressive public policy concerning the black community. The Department considers it a fundamental vocation to provide the intellectual foundation for public discourse on issues of culture and society in Africa and the African diaspora, and in so doing, to help in maintaining the ideals of a more just and humane world order. The Department of African and African American Studies B.A./B.S. undergraduate program occupies an exceptional and critical role in the College of Arts and Sciences and at Indiana State University. Far more than other programs, the African and African American Studies program provides exceptional interdisciplinary links among departments, programs, faculty and students. In addition, the content of the program provides a critical vehicle for linking the predominantly Anglo-European student population of the College of Arts and Sciences and Indiana State University to the historical and cultural experience of African Americans. Accordingly, the program provides one of the most direct and essential means of interaction between faculty and students from different backgrounds and disciplines who share an interest in African and African American Studies as well as a method for creating a multicultural environment in both the College and the University. Given the predominant cultural and racial profile of the College and the University, this undergraduate program functions as a powerful and indispensable component of the knowledge community in the College and the University. African and African American Studies faculty enhance student learning by bringing major assets into the classroom: 1) their own personal experiences and knowledge of the African American and African experience; 2) faculty research accomplishments and productivity; and 3) the community service and commitment to social justice. As part of its mission statement, Indiana State University "is expected to be an inclusive academic community reflective of the greater society, serving a student body diverse in academic interests, age, gender, economic status, and ethnicity."

Nowhere does the University curriculum reflect these ideas to a greater extent than in the Department of African and African American Studies (DAAAS). It has, at the core of its philosophy, a deep and lasting commitment to the principles of diversity and inclusiveness. Our Department's role on the ISU campus is to teach not just about African and African American histories and cultures, but in a broader sense, to ensure that the identity of this institution involves a multiplicity of perspectives. The DAAAS grew from a period in history when such perspectives were not included in discussion at this institution, and the maintenance of a program such as this is critical to helping students develop an understanding of the wider world in which they live, a world which is, day by day, requiring a greater knowledge of and sensitivity to, populations of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. Indiana State University has long been proud of the fact that this campus has one of the highest percentages of African American students of any public university in the state, and that fact alone should underscore the need for such a program to exist. While the Department takes great pride in pointing to the increased numbers of majors and minors over the last several years, we see our role on the ISU campus as extending well beyond our own students, to being a scholarly academic and intellectual center for African American students and issues related to racial diversity, and to being a leader in the important discussions about race and ethnicity that are so central to American and international culture today. In addition, the DAAAS is committed to the principle of educating Indiana students. Many of our students originate from historically under-represented university populations, in particular urban areas such as Indianapolis and Gary, and most are first-generation college students. Because many of our students have emerged from educationally and economically disadvantaged areas, the Department sees as an important aspect of its mission to help them make a smooth transition into advanced academic study, and into the workforce after graduation.

Year in Review

Accomplishments

As you have heard, increasing public awareness of Indiana State University's accomplishments is crucial to building student enrollment, influencing policy makers, and developing a place of pre-eminence in the Midwest. What do you consider to be your department's accomplishments for the 2006-2007 year that will contribute to this effort? [Please list in priority order and limit to no more than 8.]

AAAS has continued to be engaged in a range of campus and community events. In 2006-2007, activities include an ethnomusicology conference organized by Dr. Prouty, participation in Human Rights Day, and a major role in the Annual Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration. Additionally, ISU's AAAS has been actively collaborating with the Women's Studies programs and other inter-disciplinary initiatives to redesign the current administrative structure of the department in an effort to enhance ISU programming. Finally, AAAS participated in a search for a tenure track faculty position that remains unfilled. We anticipate continuing the search in July, if approved.

Research and Scholarship

What is your assessment of accomplishments in the area of research and scholarship that is focused primarily on contributions to practice and discipline-based scholarship? Are you satisfied overall? In which areas do you feel your department does particularly well? In which areas do you feel your department needs to improve?

Dr. Ken Prouty was awarded a promising scholar grant and began his research this year.

Teaching

We would like to highlight innovative approaches to teaching. Has your department developed

any pedagogies or practices you'd like to share with us? Please describe briefly.

Course Scheduling/Enrollment Management

How is the department making sure that students are able to get the classes they need to graduate in a timely manner?

The AAAS faculty have work especially hard within the context of limited resources to meet the curricular demands of the program and to fulfill the graduation requirements of students. Over the past year, faculty have worked with students to schedule independent study opportunities--as well as volunteered to teach additional sections, as needed. Additionally, Instructor Terry Clark has once again taught an impressive number of students over the past year (380 students in Fall and Spring). Indeed, the entire team of faculty and instructors has met the important challenge of delivering a major, minor, and significant proportion of the GenEd diversity requirement.

Strategic Initiatives

Community Engagement I

Please summarize your faculty's efforts in community engagement this year.

AAAS has participated in Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration activities and Human Rights Day. Additionally, the faculty organized a number of African American History month activities including speakers, concerts, and other activities.