

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

ACTION REQUEST: Approval to Establish an Academic Department
NAME OF DEPARTMENT: Department of Afroamerican and African Studies
EFFECTIVE DATE: September 1, 2011

The College of Literature, Science, and the Arts requests approval to reorganize its Center for Afroamerican and African Studies into a Department of Afroamerican and African Studies.

The Center for Afroamerican and African Studies (CAAS) celebrated its 40th anniversary in March 2010. Since its inception in 1970, CAAS has grown in size and stature and is currently one of the leading centers for the study of Africa and its diaspora.

From the late 1990s to the present, several important changes have taken place in CAAS. First, the Center received enhanced program status giving it authority to hire and tenure faculty. Since 1995, CAAS has undergone a significant increase in its budgeted faculty through an energetic phase of hiring and a successful record of mentoring as well as tenure and promotion. While African studies has always been a central focus in CAAS, this period witnessed growth and consolidation through the efforts of the South African Initiatives Office and the African Initiatives Program (funded by the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies). These CAAS-administered programs have brought over forty junior scholars from South Africa to CAAS and have provided crucial support for research and travel for over 190 Michigan Africanist graduate students across the campus.

The continued commitment to African studies in CAAS led to various curricular reform efforts to ensure that all CAAS majors and minors were able to meet the requirement of completing their coursework in the field. The Center's undergraduate curriculum was redesigned in academic year 2000-2001 to situate the study of the African diaspora within a global analytical framework, with an emphasis on the interactions between African studies, African-American studies, Afro-Caribbean studies, and increasingly Afro-European studies. This led to a shift in the curriculum from an interdisciplinary organizational structure to one based in areas and cross-areas. This shift preserved a degree of openness and flexibility, and guided discussions of new faculty hires and new initiatives. CAAS has also continued to explore the possibilities of graduate studies in terms of joint Ph.D. programs, graduate certificates, bridge programs with other units, and CAAS-based MA programs.

Through this series of curricular reforms and due to a successful record of hiring, mentoring, and promotion since the late 1990s, CAAS now has in place a strong group of committed faculty able to provide the necessary leadership to further strengthen the unit. The faculty continue to make stellar contributions to the field, to their students, to the college, and to this university.

As CAAS moves toward a new era of institutional development marked, for example, by the establishment of the African Studies Center in 2008, departmentalization is the next logical step.

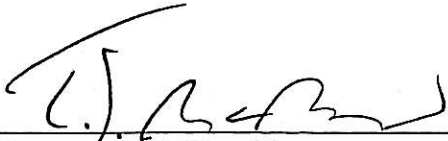
The shift to departmental status will fortify their undergraduate program, develop graduate studies beyond their two graduate certificate programs, and facilitate the recruitment, promotion, and support for a diverse range of scholars and instructors. It will also serve to improve internal controls for this growing and maturing unit.

The dean and executive committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts carefully reviewed the recommendations of the center's long range plan and came to an agreement that the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies should be given departmental status. The executive committee approved a motion to forward this request to the regents on May 19, 2010. We anticipate no financial costs associated with this change.

We are very pleased to recommend that the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies be reorganized into the Department of Afroamerican and African Studies, effective September 1, 2011.

Recommended by:

Recommendation endorsed by:



Terrence J. McDonald
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
Professor of History and Dean
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts



Philip J. Hanlon, Provost and
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

February 2011