I. The Importance of Ethnic Studies

By the end of the century, Latinos, Asian Americans, and African Americans will compose over one third of the population of the United States. These groups have had vastly different experiences from those of the Caucasian majority, and how they act and interact will have a fundamental impact on the direction this nation takes. Therefore the study of Asian American and Latino cultures takes on enormous academic importance. If Princeton is to maintain its role as a leader in undergraduate education, it must fully accept these developments and incorporate them into its curriculum.

In advocating Asian American and Latino Studies, we do not want to be trapped within the framework of particular margins of identity politics. Asian American and Latino Studies are not simply the study of two racial/ethnic communities, two cultural niches. We do not want to promote academic ghettoization by any means. One of the many purposes of Asian American and Latino Studies is to seek to understand and forge alliances across minority, postcolonial, and feminist discourses. We see ethnic studies not only as a study of the diversity within our own communities, but also as a means through which to understand the larger societal issues affecting not only the U.S., but the world.

Additionally, the establishment of Asian American and Latino Studies will improve the situation of all students, especially that of minority students at Princeton. Although student organizations do their best, the academic establishment barely recognizes the issues of identity and adjustment that minority students face when arriving on campus. Without courses focusing on race and ethnicity, the Princeton experience, for many, remains hollow. Our unique cultures and histories must be taught here, for as long as they are ignored, our struggles and contributions are easily forgotten.

*Note: "Latino Studies" refers to the study of people of Latin American ancestry living in the U.S., including culture, politics, literature, sociology, history, etc.

II. The Latino Studies Effort

In the 1986-1987 academic year Latino students met with President Goheen to discuss the absence of ethnic Latino faculty. President Goheen stated that it was neither fair nor reasonable to expect students to continue this initiative without active administrative involvement. The result was the appointment of a faculty committee to create three professorships, currently held by David Carrasco, Miguel Centeno, and until 1994 Jorge Klor de Alva.

It should be noted that while the hiring of a number of Latino faculty was implemented, the only professor qualified to teach issues dealing with Latino cultures in the United States was Jorge Klor de Alva.

To our knowledge this was the first meeting with the President by what came to be known as the Latino Task Force. The Task Force continued its efforts to bring Latino Studies to campus until 1991. Those efforts included 2 meetings each year with the President to discuss the issue, as well as countless meetings with the Deans of faculty, department heads, and Provost, with little measurable success.

The issue was taken up again in 1994, with undergraduate students meeting various university officials (the Provost, Dean of the College, President, Dean of the Faculty, department heads) about the deficiency in Latino Studies course offerings and faculty at
Princeton. Despite the creation of various task forces and committees, there has been little concrete advancement towards a stronger Latino studies curriculum.

Thanks to student efforts, there will be a student-initiated seminar next semester — the only course which deals with Latino Studies offered in the Fall of 1995. At this time we are told that the University is looking into the hiring of 2 senior faculty with expertise in Latino Studies. While there is not yet a concrete commitment, this is encouraging news from the administration.

III. The Asian American Studies Effort

On 15 November 1988, shortly after the arrival of Harold Shapiro as President, Asian and Asian American students met with him and stated emphatically their goal to have Asian American studies taught on a permanent basis at Princeton. In the fall of 1989 students succeeded in convincing Professor Betty Lee Sung to offer a student-initiated seminar in Asian American Studies. Since then a number of university reports have also supported the development of Asian American Studies.

The 1990 Report on Asian Pacific American Students by Paula Chow and Eva Gossman urged the university to encourage departments to offer courses focused on the Asian Pacific American experience. In 1993 the report of the Asian American Student Task Force recommended that the university create a tenure-track position in an academic department or program for a specialist in Asian American Studies. With no response to the demands, the Asian American Student Task Force reiterated the recommendation in an open letter to the Board of Trustees.

The 1994 Report of the Committee on Diversity and Liberal Education recommended that Princeton represent scholars with expertise in emerging fields of study such as Asian American and Latino Studies more fully on its faculty. For the spring of 1995 students were able to arrange for the American Studies Program to sponsor Franklin Odo to teach AMS 318: Asian American History. Over the course of several meetings with faculty and administrators during the 1994-95 school year, much has been promised, but still no permanent efforts have been made.

IV. Demands

Through our experience, we have come to realize that students can not do the administration's job forever. Every four years a group of students graduates, destroying the continuity and collective memory necessary to maintain a concerted student effort.

A. Library Holdings

The current library holdings are inadequate; there are approximately only 200 books focusing on Asian Americans and 300 books focusing on Latinos. We demand an immediate increase in the number of holdings.

B. Faculty

We recognize the progress that the university has made in the acquisition of Latino Faculty. The search committee led by Professor Arcadio Díaz to find a replacement for Jorge Klor de Alva has identified several prospective candidates; we request that the university grant tenure and senior faculty status to at least two of them.
Currently there are no permanent faculty with expertise in Asian American Studies. We demand that the university immediately launch a search to hire two tenured faculty who are specialists in Asian American Studies. In light of the current utter lack of faculty in the field at Princeton, we feel it is imperative to hire two full-time visiting faculty until the tenured positions are filled. We expect at least four courses focusing on Asian Americans, one of which would be an introductory lecture course, to be offered in the 1996-1997 school year.

Additionally we request the creation of four tenure-track faculty positions, two in the area of Latino Studies, and two in the area of Asian American Studies, to be filled immediately.

One of the newly hired faculty shall be the Director of the Ethnic Studies Center.

C. Center

The primary obstacle to progress has been the reactive rather than proactive nature of administrative response. The solution lies in the creation of a Center for Ethnic Studies whose goals would include the attraction and retention of new faculty and the expansion of course offerings. This would require office space, mechanical resources, work-study students, and a permanent administrative assistant.

V. Summary of Demands

- 4 tenured faculty (2 in Asian American Studies, 2 in Latino Studies)
- 4 tenure-track faculty (2 in Asian American Studies, 2 in Latino Studies)
- 2 full-time visiting professors in the interim to teach courses on Asian American Studies
- 4 courses on Asian Americans to be offered in the 1996-1997 school year
- Significant increases in Library holdings
- The creation of a Center for Ethnic Studies, to be headed by one of the newly hired faculty

VI. Conclusion

It is the University's responsibility to figure out the means by which to achieve these results. We stand ready to work in cooperation for as long as necessary, but only after the commitment has been made and we are certain that the effort is not in vain.