

Expanded Synopsis of Proposed Diversity Requirement

Purpose: Provide College undergraduates with the ability to understand the perspectives of others whose views, backgrounds, and experiences may differ from their own in order to promote a better understanding of and appreciation for the complex differences they will encounter both in the United States and around the world so that they may thrive, function and lead in today's and tomorrow's world.

Evidence: The proposal details a strong empirical evidence base that diversity curricula have a positive impact on an individual's racial and ethnic attitudes, pluralistic orientation, openness to diverse viewpoints, citizenship, critical consciousness, social agency, cognitive skills and tendencies, and moral development, with some effects observed as long as 13 years later. On an institutional level, greater student participation in diversity curricula predicts greater academic skills and racial-cultural engagement in the school as a whole (even among people who did not participate in diversity experiences). Notably, meta-analyses demonstrate that though the role of diversity courses in these effects is strong and meaningful, it is enhanced by cross-group interactions.

Who: The proposal was developed by a committee with faculty from all four College divisions and a student advisory group with input from colleagues and students during townhall meetings.

Framework: Require College undergraduates to complete and pass a 4-unit course, with a minimum C grade, that takes seriously issues of diversity with respect to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, language, nationality, citizenship status and/or place of origin. These courses, across disciplines, may be traditional in format, experientially based, or centered on engaged and intensive dialogue.

Details:

1. Course must substantially address conditions, experiences, perspectives, and/or representations of at least two groups using difference frames that include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age, language, nationality, citizenship status and/or place of origin.
2. Course must incorporate analytical skills needed to develop critical and reflective perspectives on difference within domestic and/or global spheres. The course should include a focus on the structures, processes, and practices that promote inequities or conflicts as well as those that support fairness and inclusiveness.
3. Minimum of four units
4. Offered through the College or other UCLA Schools and programs
5. May also satisfy other parts of the student's overall requirements: (1) a General Education requirement; (2) a major or minor course; or (3) an elective course.

Application across disciplines: The implementation committee report found that the diversity criteria can be used to evaluate syllabi from a wide range of disciplines even though different disciplines may focus on diversity from different perspectives. For example, those in the social sciences or life sciences may be concerned initially or primarily with the factual bases of diversity, and in examining how those facts have affected and continue to affect human interactions and well-being. Those in the humanities will often focus on how difference is represented or embodied in art, whether overtly or in subtle ways that reflect long histories of representation that are taken for granted, which can make the consequences of difference in the real world seem natural or morally neutral when they are not.

When: For freshmen entering Fall 2015 and later and transfer students entering Fall 2017

Feasibility of implementing Fall 2015: An ad hoc committee assessed the feasibility of implementing the proposed diversity requirement for Fall 2015 incoming freshmen. To facilitate their work, the Chair of the College FEC solicited course syllabi from the UCLA community and received more than 150 syllabi during the summer, with submissions continuing. As described in the ad hoc committee report, courses were submitted from a range of departments, programs, and disciplines. The committee determined that there is sufficient seat capacity to launch the requirement for Fall 2015 incoming freshmen (assumed to be a minimum estimate of seat capacity since some syllabi were not reviewed, and additional syllabi have been submitted since the report).

Resources: The ad hoc committee made recommendations for resources for new course development; re-tooling existing courses; TAs; TA training; development opportunities for interested faculty; visiting lectureships for which EVC Waugh has written a letter of commitment to provide.

Formal Implementation: The responsibility for evaluating courses for diversity designation will likely reside with a Diversity Requirement Committee (DRC), an Undergraduate Council (UgC) committee, which will advise the UgC on matters pertaining to the undergraduate diversity requirement. The formal implementation cannot occur until the College faculty approve the proposed diversity requirement.

Importance of other campus activities: To achieve maximum results, UCLA must not view the Diversity Requirement as the sole vehicle for developing a more supportive and respectful community. There are synergies to be derived from enacting a complex of activities, including intergroup initiatives, that jointly will optimize the UCLA experience for all. Such efforts are underway.