

**African American Studies**  
**University Plan III: Action Items**  
**2009-2014**  
**October 13, 2008**

**SECTION I: Introduction**

AAST started in 1993 in the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Wyoming. Since that time AAST has grown to be an integral component of the academic experience at UW, contributing a diverse perspective to the academic discourse through the development of knowledge of African Americans and the African diaspora drawn from several disciplines. The program allows AAST minors to take interdisciplinary cross-listed courses in several fields including but not limited to American Studies, History, English, Sociology, Law and Communication. Through their course work in AAST, students not-only develop in-depth knowledge of the complex and varied heritage of African Americans and people of African descent, they also develop a rich understanding and appreciation for the significant impact and important contributions African Americans and people of African descent have had both in the United States and the global community.

Since the founding of the first Black Studies program in 1968 at what was then called San Francisco State College, programs nationwide have grown exponentially totaling 311 programs nationwide 158 of which currently offer bachelor's degrees, 21 master's and nine Ph.D's. Recent proposals at Princeton University and William and Mary College to add African American Studies majors as well as the recent approval by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education of a doctoral degree program in African American and African Diaspora Studies with an international emphasis at Indiana University Bloomington reflect the nationwide movement towards establishing African American major programs throughout our country's top institutions. As our 2009-2014 academic plan reflects, AAST at the University of Wyoming is poised to not only follow this trend, but to be at the forefront of this movement.

**Action Item 1 *Major Status***

When the AAST program at UW started in 1993 it began with one, non-tenured Director and no tenured, full-time, permanent faculty committed to teaching for AAST. Despite that inauspicious beginning, AAST has grown significantly over the years. At present AAST has three tenured faculty and several additional full-time, part-time, and visiting faculty members who consistently provide a range of core courses, which are well subscribed and contribute to many aspects of the University's academic mission. Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with several departments provide adjunct faculty with interdisciplinary expertise who contribute to the teaching, research and outreach mission of AAST. Through the addition of a tenured Director and a Visiting Assistant Professor position AAST has continued to grow and strengthen the teaching and research aspects of its program. We continue to work diligently to build the full-time, part-time and adjunct AAST faculty as evidenced by the potential for a full-time tenure-track position through a joint hire with American Studies in 2009. In addition to the growth in teaching and research, during its 15 year history AAST has performed and continues to

perform significant outreach both within and outside the University community. The outreach work performed by the AAST program helps serve the University's mission to recruit and retain qualified minority students and faculty and to provide an inclusive and welcoming environment for all types of people; a mission which grows increasingly important as Wyoming follows the national trend with an overall minority population increase between 2000 and 2007 of 24 percent with a 55 percent increase in the state's Black population, according to U.S. Census figures released in 2008.

Despite the tremendous growth AAST has exhibited in its 15 years, it remains only a Minor. Our primary goal during the 2009-2014 academic planning cycle is to join the trend across the country to complete our multi-year planning process, which includes the development of a formal proposal for a 33-credit hour major in African American Studies to be submitted to the Dean's Office, College of Arts and Sciences no later than 2014 if not sooner.

We are poised for the 2009-2014 University Plan to reflect our goal to become a Major, granting a bachelor degree in African American Studies at the University of Wyoming. We suggest our plan meets Provost Myron Allen's *Creation of the Future 2, Motif 2* (p.3) reinforcing and refining areas of distinction: "cultural assets, arts and humanities" of which we consider AAST a part.

### **Action Item 2 *Increase University Studies Program (D) Diversity Requirement Courses***

AAST is a strong contributor to the University's USP requirements for (D) Diversity and (G) Global courses. Courses such as the Introduction to African American Studies fill within days of registration. With the budget constraints of a small program, support is frequently requested from the Dean's Office in A &S to open additional D course sections. A report by the A&S Dean and Director to the Academic Dean's Council in 2008 illustrates the dearth of D courses across the campus and the ongoing need for courses to meet student needs.

In addition, curriculum changes in 2008 include AAST received approval for a new course, AAST 3130 Global Impact of African Cultures with a G and CS (Cultural Context Social Sciences) for the USP requirement.

These efforts are illustrative of AAST's plan to continue to meet the academic needs of students at UW. Our plans reflect initiatives stated in *Academic Plan II, Action Items 64, 65 and 66* (p.41): "Diversity, internationalization, and access share, as a common thread, the richness and inclusiveness of the UW community. These issues have important implications for UW's recruitment practices, outreach efforts, and resource allocation decisions. They must also play a significant role in our curriculum."

### **Action Item 3 *AAST Visiting Professor***

The AAST Visiting Scholar is an established block grant position to help strengthen the faculty and program. The position has positive long-term implications for AAST. The individual must be an active scholar and teacher to bring his or her expertise to the University. The individual

will enhance the AAST profile and interdisciplinary participation across the university. (See President Tom Buchanan's "Building Passion for Education" remarks Fall Convocation, Sept. 11, 2008, p. 7; Academic Plan II, Action Item 64; UW Update, April 2007, block grant faculty positions, p. 3; and AAST Annual Report 2005-2006, p. 6.)

We plan to petition the A&S College and Academic Affairs for this position to eventually convert to a tenure-track position in AAST as we move from Minor to Major status over the next five years. This process could include CPM or a Target of Opportunity hire.

#### **Action Item 4 *Increase Development for Excellence Fund and Endowed Lecture Series***

The African American Studies Fund for Student Excellence was established in 2007 through the UW Foundation. This new funding source will afford AAST the opportunity to provide financial awards to declared minors. The excellence fund illustrates a commitment to the program, students and University to pursue and support academic achievement and success of students.

Our plan over the next five years is to develop financial support for students, programs, and to create an AAST Endowed Lecture Series. The multi-faceted development plan includes but is not limited to:

1. African American Studies Fund for Student Excellence (enacted fall 2007)
2. African American Studies Endowed Lecture Series (proposed funding strategies)
  - a. Seek support from individuals
  - b. Seek support from local/national grants and foundations
  - c. Seek support from businesses

#### **Action Item 5 *Assessment***

AAST completed the first of a two-step approach of program assessment in 2007. The program addressed direct reports and used a rubric of student outcomes for two class assignments for students in sections of the AAST 1000 Introduction to African American Studies. The rubric was used on 75 required papers. The results were promising with papers overall (100%) able to identify and demonstrate knowledge of the significant contributions of African Americans and African descent people in America and in the world. Approximately (89%) could identify and demonstrate knowledge about major figures in African American history and (93%) of the student papers demonstrated the ability to think and to write critically about issues of race and class and issues of social justice in a social and historical context. Part two of the two-step approach to AAST program assessment will be conducted in two parts over the next two years.

#### **Action Item 6 *International Study Abroad***

Provide AAST with an international focus by continuing to offer a summer study abroad course in Africa or the Caribbean. The program has held a study abroad course in Ghana for four years, most recently in summer 2007. The program was successful and not only resulted in a valuable and meaningful cultural exchange for our students but in research presentations at conferences and an academic journal article. Plans are to develop a proposal for a biennial summer study

abroad program to visit different countries in the diaspora including Africa, the Caribbean, Europe and beyond. The Director is working in consultation with Prince Amattoe, Ghana native and UW Multicultural Affairs programmer, to develop the proposal. In addition, we would explore the possibility of international exchange opportunities in Africa and/or one of the African diaspora communities.

### **Action Item 7 *Interdisciplinary Programs***

The seven interdisciplinary programs share mutual interest in creating an interdisciplinary methods course for the long-term development of each individual program and to meet university goals. We will work with the other interdisciplinary programs to develop a procedure to pursue this curriculum, which would include creating an *Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies* course (possible 2000 or 3000 level), which would be a methods course that all of our students could take to ensure the development of their research skills and knowledge. The approach could be through a CPM request or Memorandum of Understanding agreement between programs and departments for a faculty member to teach this course.

## **SECTION II: Implementation of AAST UP III (2009-2014) Action Items**

ACTION ITEM	ACTIONS PLANNED	COMPLETION DATE
AAST Item 1: Major Status	Multi-year formal development with several components, ongoing data collection, course & program development; curriculum & faculty development; joint hire with American Studies for 2009	Five-year process, 2009-2014
AAST Item 2: Increase University Studies Program (D) Diversity Requirement Courses	Seek resources to offer additional D and G courses, as well as more course sections; submit course changes and additions forms to A&S Central Committee and USP Committee	Two-year process; 2008- 2010
AAST Item 3: AAST Visiting Professor	Support continuing this permanently funded visiting position; active search underway for the fall 2009 visiting professor; plan to petition the A&S College & Academic Affairs to eventually convert to a tenure-track position, this process could include CPM or a Target of Opportunity hire	Visiting professor search 2008-2009; permanent position request by 2014
AAST Item 4: Increase Development for Excellence Fund and Endowed Lecture Series	a.) Identify individuals who can make \$25 or higher contributions; b.) identify grants and foundations as funding sources for endowed lecture series; c.) petition and received funds	First-year identify individual contributors; 2 <sup>nd</sup> & 3 <sup>rd</sup> years identify grants and foundations; 4 <sup>th</sup> and 5 <sup>th</sup> years receive funding
AAST Item 5: Assessment	Part two of assessment; a.) exit interviews with minor graduates fall 2008/spring 2009; b.) conduct focus groups from upper division AAST courses with minors & non-minors	Exit interviews during 2008/2009 academic year for publication 2009 annual report; focus groups following two years

AAST Item 6: International Study Abroad	Proposal to develop a biennial study abroad program for countries in the African diaspora; explore international exchange opportunities in Africa and/or one of the African diaspora communities; plans underway for Ghana study abroad course summer 2009	2008-2010 academic years
AAST Item 7: Interdisciplinary Programs	Work with interdisciplinary programs to develop a procedure to create an <i>Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies</i> course (possible 2000 or 3000 level), which would be a methods course	2008-2010 academic years

### SECTION III: Follow-up of AAST Academic Plan II (2004-2009) Action Items

ACTION ITEM	ACTION TAKEN	COMPLETION DATE
AAST Item 2: Educate UW community about diversity through internal & external outreach programs	Launched AAST Book Club; February 2007 Black History Month A&S Building display case;	2006-2007 academic year
	Facilitated start of Ross Hall Book Club with AAST, AIST, CHST, IST, RELI and WMST; (former AAST Book Club)	2007-2008 academic year
	Public lecture by Ulrich Adelt, visiting assistant professor; <i>At Home on the Plains: African Americans and the Shaping of the American West</i> lecture Dr. Quintard Taylor; art exhibit African mud paintings from Kenya and Ghana with curator Godwill Reik Mock and presentation by musician and artist Day Acoli, both co-sponsored with MLK-Days of Dialogue Committee; Black History Month, February 2008 display case; co-sponsored with International Studies scholar lecture series Dr. Ibrahima Seck	2007-2008 academic year
AAST Item 5: Completion of USP course submission & develop 2000 level courses	joined new cross listed course with History, HIST/AAST 2360 which became USP D course; updated USP status for AAST 1000, 3670, 4000; changed & updated AAST 3100, 3110, 4100;	2006-2007 and 2007-2008 academic years
AAST Item 6: Explore development of major in AAST	Multi-year process starts with minor modifications to 21 from 18 credit hours; required three-course courses for major' adopted thematic tracks for minors to pair with majors; medications approved by A&S Central Committee, A&S Dean, Dean's Council, Office of Academic Affairs; The AAST website provides details ( <a href="http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/AAST">http://uwadmnweb.uwyo.edu/AAST</a> ).	2006-2007 academic year
	AAST Student Outcomes posted on website	2006-2007 academic year
	Developed curriculum to offer a 33-credit hour major; continue to build faculty with visiting assistant professor extended one year and potential for a full-time tenure-track position with the CPM request submitted in 2008.	2007-2008 academic year
AAST Item 8: Explore possibility of international exchange opportunities in Africa	Summer 2007 study abroad course in Ghana, took students for course and research, and explore talks with contemporaries in Ghana about possible exchange	2006-2007 academic year