

## **American Studies Program report recommending transfer and stabilization in SCGSJ**

### **OVERVIEW**

This report recommends reorganizing the American Studies Program by moving it administratively out of the Department of History and American Studies (est. 2017) into the School of Culture Gender and Social Justice, and stabilizing or even enhancing it there. AMST embodies all the signature themes identified by President Seidel: it is a well-established interdisciplinary, inclusive program distinguished by its entrepreneurial development of interdisciplinary, public, and international opportunities for students, faculty and communities, poised to roll out remote access to degrees and highlight digital productions in student and faculty work.

#### **It is inadvisable to eliminate the program.**

- AMST has achieved and sustained a national and international reputation for quality.
- AMST has achieved a level of regional strength vital to state service.
- AMST is unique in the state and region and contributes to UW's distinctive character.
- Elimination would result in substantially negative impact on education, economic, cultural, and societal concerns in Wyoming.
- Elimination would result in significant loss of revenue derived from endowments.

#### **Reorganization by transfer to SCGSJ is recommended.**

- AMST and SCGSJ in its allied programs have sufficient overlap in subject matter, approach, disciplinary method and objectives to enhance their quality by consolidation.
- AMST's clarity of identity and function will be increased by transfer to SCGSJ.
- Faculty and directors of both AMST and SCGSJ approve and desire this change.

#### **Stabilization within SCGSJ is recommended.**

- Present and probable future demand justifies stable or increasing levels of support.
  - i. Fall 2020 admissions data shows number of inquiries for AMST MA (19) is above UW mean (18); current MA cohort (19) is highest in 5 years.
  - ii. Number of declared BA majors has increased 500% since 2017 to 53.
  - iii. Student credit hours in lower division (60), upper division (98.18) and graduate level (70.90) per FTE are appropriate for AMST subjects and approaches.
  - iv. US Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts 4-20% growth by 2029 in a wide range of jobs potentially available to AMST BA and MA graduates
  - v. Number of faculty decreased 42% since 2017.
  - vi. According to data organized in the Office of Graduate Education, courses taught by AMST faculty currently fill at a rate of 92-98% (89% average since 2018).
- The strength of AMST's national and international reputation, regional strength and state service are high.
- AMST demonstrably contributes to the strategic vision of UW.
- AMST excels in what land grant universities typically offer in interdisciplinary humanities.
- AMST ongoing planning and current initiatives include contributing courses toward new degree in SCGSJ; shared degree with MFA; shared graduate recruiting and GAs with ENR; shared Coverdell Peace Corps Fellowship program application with ENR; central participation in an emerging Public Humanities degree initiative; virtual exchange and shared AMST degree development with University of Lyon-2, France.

## BACKGROUND

The American Studies Program was established in 1954 by a significant gift from William Robertson Coe to offer BA and MA degrees supported by Coe's endowment. The program was intended to build new generations of interdisciplinary professionals addressing important contemporary issues in American life and education. It could not be more relevant today.

It is the only program in the region established during the first generation of American Studies programs after World War II, and remains unique in the state and in the region in offering both BA and fully endowment-funded MA degrees distinguished by its emphases in public engagement and international recruitment and program development. AMST is supported entirely by endowment resources for all program activities, from copier toner and the phone bill to BA and MA internship scholarships and GAs. It has no state support budget or dedicated staff. Few American studies graduate programs (PhD or MA) anywhere in the US fund as many newly admitted graduate students each year as UW's MA program does (4-7), which makes it an attractive graduate program for international students as well as applicants from across the US and Wyoming. The program has a nearly 70-year record as an active learning community with interdisciplinary degrees and innovative curricular and program development across UW, in the community and abroad.

The AMST program has sustained a national, international, state and regional reputation for quality over many decades. Many of the program's supporters, including leaders in the field and in organizations, have written letters this November to [progrevw@uwyo.edu](mailto:progrevw@uwyo.edu) on behalf of the program.

AMST personnel have been instrumental in developing important international collaborations, including an annual graduate student/faculty symposium shared with American Studies programs at Radboud University, the Netherlands, and the University of Duisberg-Essen, Germany; the establishment of a GA in the MA program reserved for the biennial winner of the British Association of American Studies (BAAS) undergraduate research award; faculty exchanges with the University of Hamburg; graduate student attendance at international conferences with faculty; hosting many Junior Fulbright Scholars; and now able to offer a virtual exchange and develop a shared degree with American Studies at the University of Lyon-2, France. AMST has hosted students from over 15 countries as students in its degrees, and international students typically make up at least 16% of the MA cohort.

Nationally, AMST personnel have had leadership roles in the scholarly associations of their fields, including the International Committee and Committee on Programs of the American Studies Association; organizing and convening significant groups on independent folklorists, historic preservation, and creative writing at the American Folklore Society; and serving as Secretary of the National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies. AMST faculty have published books with important university presses in the field, including NYU, Rutgers, Iowa, New Mexico, North Carolina, Michigan and Pennsylvania.

Regionally and locally, the long record of AMST collaboration with organizations includes ongoing relationships with the Wyoming Arts Council and Wyoming Humanities Council, Heart

Mountain Interpretive Center, the National Park Service, Laramie Main Street Alliance, Alliance for Historic Preservation, Laramie Interfaith, Laramie Plains Civic Center, Feeding Laramie Valley —organizations with vital roles in communities' economic, social and cultural lives. AMST research and public programming projects developed with communities and organizations across Wyoming have taken place in 21 of Wyoming's 23 counties. AMST supports the missions and activities of organizations with regular intern and GA placements, and project development. AMST indeed shares an APRS position with the Wyoming Arts Council funded by AMST endowment resources, WAC, and A&S. This APRS is a public folklorist dedicated to research in and for Wyoming communities, including hunting traditions, community halls, fiber arts, historic dude ranching traditions in Grand Teton National Park, and (when Covid-19 permits) oral histories in Kemmerer, WY, documenting the impact of the collapse of the coal economy. Each of these projects has included BA and MA student internship, GA, or field study class opportunities. The APRS position also includes a signature AMST class, AMST 4300/5300 American Cultures in the Public Sector, which is the backbone of AMST's emphasis on public projects and preparing students for work and grant writing in a wide range of public organizations, and central for an emerging Public Humanities degree initiative (Rachel Sailor, primary contact) housed in the Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research, proposed to bring humanists together for exciting shared curricular development from across A&S and UW.

AMST's core identity as an interdisciplinary, inclusive and entrepreneurial program, together with its endowment resources, allows activities like these to flourish and grow with significant impacts across UW as well.

In AMST interdisciplinary capacity, flexible BA and MA degrees include student interest and professional development goals in coursework across UW, integrated in a small number of core courses in AMST modeling interdisciplinary practice. Both degrees accommodate existing and emerging needs engaging social justice, public health, historic preservation, law, education, the environment, museums and collections, and community organizations. AMST faculty are all interdisciplinary contributors to programs across campus, and in public projects in Laramie and the state. They direct interdisciplinary programs (AMST, AADS and LTST). They cross-list courses and teach directly in AADS, CW/MFA, ENR, GWMST, LTST, INST and NAIS. They are active in high-profile interdisciplinary efforts like the development of the Wyoming Institute for Humanities Research (and the new Public Humanities degree initiative there), the Provost's Spatial Sciences Task Force, the current Trustees'/Research Office Crossing Boundaries AMK Ranch Task Force, the emerging development of a cross-unit Public Humanities major, pending plans with the Haub School to recruit AMST/ENR MAs and share GA funding and prepare an application with ENR as partners for the Coverdell Peace Corps Fellowship Program, and develop shared Masters degrees with the MFA and potentially other public-facing degrees at UW.

AMST works on behalf of its students by cultivating relationships with colleagues across UW, and those who wish to be available to teach AMST courses (when they are able), or serve on AMST MA committees as either chairs or members of AMST, or be ready references for courses attractive to AMST BA or MA, have become members of the AMST Adjunct Faculty.

In AMST inclusive capacity, AMST was the first unit at UW to offer a “cultural diversity” course in the mid-1990s. The program’s commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion includes working toward meaningful inclusion in the University Studies Program (USP) as well as in A&S course requirements and, importantly, hiring. Two AMST faculty have shared lines in SCGSJ and direct LTST and AADS. AMST sponsored a major public symposium event in 2018 highlighting Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) experiences and programmatic needs, as well as other events and speakers (some postponed due to Covid-19) addressing issues central to inclusion. AMST places GAs regularly in SCGSJ classrooms, supporting the delivery of signature inclusive curricula at UW. Many AMST courses are cross-listed with SCGSJ programs; all courses in those programs count in AMST degrees, and at least 2 are required from SCGSJ in the AMST BA. Classes offered by AMST personnel are inclusive by design in content and delivery. AMST has welcomed a 500% increase in BA majors (to 53) since 2017, well over half students of color, many 1<sup>st</sup>-generation. The MA has 16% students of color, 16% from outside the US. AMST and SCGSJ are poised to recruit interested students into the MA from degrees and minors in SCGSJ as well as the AMST BA, and collaborate on hires when possible in the future.

This entrepreneurial, interdisciplinary, and inclusive outlook supports AMST digital efforts as well. AMST began planning two years ago to make access to core courses in the BA and MA accessible online. This will better serve practicing professionals and place-bound students off campus. The Covid-19 period necessitated remote instruction and accelerated use of digital resources and digital student work, confirming the program’s ability to do so effectively. Many program activities – student presentations, exhibitions, and faculty members’ and students’ national and international conference attendance—moved online. AMST is well-positioned to fully develop remote access to degrees, regular AMST digital programming for students and the community, and increased emphasis on digital products (web sites, online exhibits, blogs, database resources, art and music, for example) in student work.

Academic program review in 2016-17 calling for elimination of the AMST BA resulted in the expectation that AMST recruit at least 30 majors by 2020. AMST recruited over 30 majors by January 2018, and has welcomed over 50 since 2017, an increase of 500% in 3 years. The recruitment plan well under way is perhaps unusual in that it emphasizes student need and potential rather than subject content areas. AMST recruits through its emphasis on mentoring and student interest and career development in cultural study immediately relevant to students and communities, including students at risk, returned military service veterans, and the wave of new majors coming through AMST’s close collaboration with the Academic Director and his staff in Athletics.

As the program has adapted to the rapidly growing number of BA students, it has turned to vigorous recruiting into the MA. This fall, the program welcomed a new class of 8 students (the largest in several years), 2 of them part-time, with another likely to join the MA in January. The program expects to reach more international students through faculty program development with international colleagues (including the new virtual exchange with Lyon, and using the model of the program’s agreement with the BAAS to cultivate another award of this type with another international organization), more practicing professionals in the state or elsewhere (teachers, those in non-profit organizations, collections and museums, for example) on a part-time basis



with remote access to core MA courses (AMST 5500 and AMST 5510), and more direct recruiting of promising undergraduates from the majors and minors in SCGSJ. Our goal is to increase the applicant pool, and maintain at least 6-7 fully endowment funded admissions with at least 3 part-time students entering the program each year to reach or exceed 10 new admissions each year by 2022.

All the program accomplishments, recruiting and inventive capacity have been maintained since 2017 with effectively 3.5 faculty FTE. The program has worked without significant investment from the state since 2009 and 2010, when AMST was permitted to hire 2 tenure-track faculty. Those lines were split AMST with AADS, and AMST with LTST. The last 1.0 FTE hire with a fully state-supported salary in AMST was 1997. Apart from faculty salary and a portion of the APRS position (which benefit a wide range of UW units and public initiatives), the program has no state investment at all.

Elimination would result in a weakening loss of the oldest, largest, and most successful interdisciplinary program in the humanities at UW and its significant contributions in developing new initiatives including shared recruitment, shared degrees, collaboration in GA placement, and existing and potential public partnerships. Elimination would result in a loss to an increasing number of undergraduates who thrive in AMST often for the first time in school. Elimination would result in significant loss of revenue, specifically longstanding endowment resources intended to support AMST and its BA and MA degrees as a program. Elimination would result in the loss of a significant pending estate bequest to the AMST program for its degrees and activities.

Reorganization by administratively relocating AMST into SCGSJ and sustaining or even enhancing it there is desired and approved by faculty and directors of both AMST and SCGSJ. The 2017 merger with History was not sought by either History or AMST; AMST had been autonomous up to that point after its removal from History by UW Presidential effort over a two-year period 1980-1982. Reorganization and stabilization of AMST in SCGSJ would bring AMST degrees, endowments and personnel into SCGSJ alongside the other interdisciplinary programs already in that school. Though this reorganization would not affect the economics of operation, it would allow AMST and SCGSJ to work even more closely together toward shared curriculum, recruitment, programming, and eventual hires, and enhance a visible cultural studies and social justice nexus at UW with AMST's connections to the MFA and ENR and the public as well.

## RECOMMENDATION

Move the American Studies Program administratively into the School of Culture Gender and Social Justice and stabilize--even enhance--American Studies there.

## APPENDICES BELOW

Appendix 1:	Program data (3 pages)
Appendix 2:	AMST Adjunct Faculty (1 page)
Appendix 3:	Job growth data for AMST/Humanities degrees (1 page)
Appendix 4:	Internship placements 2014-2020 (2 pages)
Appendix 5:	GA placements 2015-2020 showing large number outside AMST and UW (3 pages)
Appendix 6:	Program Personnel and CV's (47 pages)
Appendix 7:	Selection of letters of support for AMST (75 pages: organizations, UW, national, international colleagues; current BA and MA students; BA and MA alumni) <i>available through <a href="mailto:progrevw@uwoyo.edu">progrevw@uwoyo.edu</a></i>