

2004-05 ACADEMIC SENATE REVIEW OF THE  
AFRICAN STUDIES INTERDEPARTMENTAL DEGREE PROGRAM

Internal Reviewers:

Joan Silk (Chair), Anthropology, Graduate Council  
Thomas Rice, Health Services, Graduate Council  
Sule Ozler, Undergraduate Council, Undergraduate Council

**External Reviewers:**

Henry John Drewal, Evjue-Bascom Professor African and African Diaspora Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Jean Allman, Professor of History and Director, Center for African Studies, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Date of Site Visit: March 3-4, 2005

Date of Report: May 16, 2005

Approved by the Graduate Council: May 6, 2005

Approved by the Undergraduate Council: May 13, 2005

Appendix I: Site Visit Schedule

Appendix II: External Reviewers' Reports

Appendix III: Self-Review Report

2004-05 Academic Senate Review of the  
Interdepartmental Degree Program  
African Studies

1) Recommendations to the Administration

A) Recommendations of the Undergraduate and Graduate Councils

- i) The administration should work with the IDP to find a way to resolve the critical problem in African Language instruction. This solution must address the following points
  - Satisfy criteria for language instruction in order to continue to qualify for funding as a Department of Education Title VI National Resource Center and to maintain access to FLAS funds.
  - Provide greater diversity in African language offerings
  - Allow for flexibility in African language offerings to meet the changing needs of students enrolled in the IDP
  - Provide both introductory and advanced language instruction
  - Explore mechanisms to enhance enrollments in African language courses
- ii) The administration must seriously reconsider the current policies for compensating Directors of Interdepartmental Programs, including the IDP in African Studies. Current compensation for the Director of the IDP in African Studies is inadequate to sustain the program and insure its viability over time.
- iii) Enhance funding to provide opportunities for foreign students to enroll in the program.

B) Recommendations of the Graduate Council

- i) The IDP should work with the administration to provide space for MA students to congregate and interact.
- ii) The IDP should work on initiatives to develop funding to support recruitment of foreign students.

2) Recommendations to the Administration and the Interdepartmental Degree Program

A) Recommendations of the Undergraduate and Graduate Council

- i) Develop structural mechanisms to improve communication and increase coordination with African Studies Center. Consider having one individual serve in an administrative capacity in both the IDP and the ORU.

3) Recommendations to the Interdepartmental Degree Program

A) Recommendations of the Undergraduate Council

- i) Eliminate the 3-quarter language requirement for the undergraduate minor.
- ii) Attempt to increase recruitment of students into the undergraduate minor.

B) Recommendations of the Graduate Council

- i) Support 2-quarter core course requirement, perhaps offering the second quarter course in alternate years.
- ii) Continue to develop procedures for standardizing the comprehensive exam option.
- iii) Work with other units on campus to develop additional articulated degree programs, such as ones with Library Science and Information Studies, Education, Public Policy, Nursing, and perhaps even Management or Law.
- iv) Provide students with greater sense of community and involvement.
- v) Terminate the poorly defined minor within the MA program.
- vi) Develop strategy for recruiting higher number of high quality students.

## II. Report of the Internal Review Team

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Academic Senate Review of the Interdepartmental Program in African Studies took place on March 3-4, 2005. The Undergraduate Council was represented by Sule Ozler, and the Graduate Council was represented by Joan Silk and Thomas Rice. The two external reviewers were Jean Allman, Director of the African Studies Program at the University of Illinois, and Henry Drewal, Evjue-Bascom Professor of African and African Diaspora Art History at the University of Wisconsin.

During the two day site visit, the review team met with the Director of the IDP, Prof. Andrew Apter, the faculty advisory committee for the IDP, other faculty members who are associated with the IDP, students in the undergraduate and graduate degree programs, representatives from the African Studies Center, IDP staff, and Vice-Provost Geoffrey Garrett. In addition, the IDP provided the team with a thoughtful Self Review report.

The African Studies IDP has a number of important strengths. As noted by the external reviewer, Prof. Allmann, the IDP “builds upon a long and rich tradition of African Studies at UCLA – a tradition that includes a large and prestigious faculty across an incredible range of disciplines and schools, who have been devoted to African Studies for many decades.” The IDP can also boast superb library resources and library staff support, and the excellent programming of the Fowler Museum. The breadth and flexibility of the MA program in African Studies is a considerable asset, allowing students to pursue academic interests and prepare for entry into specialized academic Ph.D. programs or to pursue joint degree programs as part of the articulated program with Public Health. Both students and faculty agree that the flexibility of the program is a major strength, as long as flexibility is matched with good advising and mentoring. Finally, a major strength of the program is the appointment of Prof. Andrew Apter as Director of the IDP. Apter’s appointment will provide stable leadership for the IDP and provide a strong vision for the future development of the program.

The IDP has some weaknesses that should be addressed over the next few years. First, erosions in African language course offerings threaten the program as students are unable to obtain instruction in languages related their research interests or unable to pursue language instruction at advanced levels. Second, the connection between the IDP and ORU seems to

have deteriorated in recent years, creating a lack of synergy between the two units. Third, recent declines in the number of applicants and number of registrants suggest a worrying trend. At least one faculty member expressed concern about the quality of students enrolled in the program. Fourth, the IDP has attracted relatively small numbers of students to the undergraduate minor in African studies, despite the fact that there seems to be considerable interest (and enrollment) in courses with African content.

Overall, the committee felt that the program is poised to build on its tradition of excellence, and forge new initiatives that would revitalize the program. The appointment of Andrew Apter to a 5-year term as Chair will help to provide stability for the program and develop a compelling vision for the program. In order for these goals to be reached, the University must find a solution to the critical problem of African language instruction. African language instruction at UCLA is threatened by the retirement of core faculty in Linguistics who taught African languages. This situation jeopardizes UCLA's competitiveness in the next round of Title VI funding. In addition, the IDP must also develop recruitment efforts that are directed toward increasing the number and quality of students enrolled in the MA program and tapping existing undergraduate interest in courses with African content.

## **FACULTY**

Prof. Andrew Apter is the Chair of the African Studies IDP. Apter holds an FTE in History, but his teaching obligations are split between History and the International Institute. Apter is compensated with one-half of a summer ninth and a \$1000 stipend. (The committee was informed that this is the standard compensation for directors of IDPs within the International Institute.)

Apter brings a tremendous energy to the program and is developing a vision for its future. His goal is to develop an identity for the program that focuses on African culture and history. This reflects Apter's own academic interests, and his conviction that cultural and historical perspectives on Africa will inform students working in a broad range in disciplines. During his short time at UCLA, Apter seems to have developed an excellent network of contacts with Africanists on campus. In addition, the MA students were extremely positive about Prof. Apter's accessibility and academic guidance.

The faculty advisory board is made up of 14 faculty members from various departments within the College of Letters and Sciences, the School of Arts and Architecture, the School of Public Health, and Library and Information Services. The faculty advisory committee are staunch advocates of the program and unanimously praised Prof. Apter's leadership.

The IDP lists a much larger number of affiliated scholars in its Self Review, but it is not clear how many of these faculty are actively involved with the program. In addition, the committee noted that there are a number of faculty on campus with research interests in Africa who are not affiliated with the program. It might be productive for the African Studies IDP to make more vigorous efforts to incorporate more of these faculty into the interdepartmental program.

## **STAFF**

The African Studies IDP is now located within the administrative domain of the International Institute. As part of the reorganization of the administration of the international area studies programs, some staff positions have been consolidated. Academic counseling is now shared with a number of other programs within the International Institute. Carolyn Ramirez-Faso is responsible for graduate advising for African Studies, as well as for a number of other area studies programs. She is assisted by Amy Jamison who is a graduate of the MA program and is currently a doctoral student in History. Gaby Solomon has been responsible for undergraduate advising in the African Studies minor, but she will be leaving this position in the near future.

There was some discussion about the advantages and disadvantages associated with the consolidation of advising duties. It makes economic sense for area studies programs in the International Institute to share advisors, as most of these programs are relatively small. However, there was some concern about the effectiveness of advisors who are responsible for administering multiple programs. One of the disadvantages of having generic advisors for area studies programs (or for other programs) is that advisors are not deeply engaged in a particular field. This might make them less effective in recruiting students into the program or less knowledgeable about academic and intellectual resources relevant to particular program. The recruitment issue is pertinent because of the small size of the MA program and the undergraduate minor, a point that we address elsewhere in the report.

Despite the recent changes in the structure of administration of program and the transitional stage of the process, the staff seem to be function at high level and students seem generally satisfied.

## **GRADUATE PROGRAM**

Currently, the M.A. in African Studies (MAAS) curriculum specifies that students complete:

- A three-course African language requirement or demonstrated equivalent language proficiency
- African Studies 201
- Five courses in an area of concentration, including at least three at the graduate-level (200+)
- Three elective courses on Africa outside of the areas of concentration, including at least two at the graduate level
- A Master's These **or** a Comprehensive Examination

Typically, the curriculum takes about two years to complete. Those students who come into the program with sufficient language proficiency have the potential to finish within 12 months.

Over the last five years (1998-2002), the IDP has received about 25 applications per year, and admitted about 17 (67%) of all applicants each year. Approximately 11 of these students enrolled in the program each year. The average number of MA degrees awarded per year is 6.

Like many M.A. IDPs at UCLA, this one attempts to serve two types of students: those who will subsequently seek a Ph.D. in a discipline (e.g., history), and those who plan to work in a non-academic profession job. It is difficult to meet the needs of both constituencies at once, but we believe that the program has been successful in doing so. In addition, both students and faculty with whom we spoke tended to believe that this dual role was vital: it ensured a sufficient number of students, and students taking different career paths gained from being exposed to the other. We recommend no changes in this aspect of the program.

As noted elsewhere in the report, the teaching of African languages is the major challenge facing the IDP. Ideally, two years of language training rather than a single-year would better prepare students to work in Africa or on African issues in the United States. We do not recommend expanding the language requirement above its present three-course format, however, for two reasons. First, this would likely reduce the proportion of students completing the MAAS in two years. Second, the reduction in the number of languages now being taught at UCLA, uncertainty about the resources (human and financial) available to teach additional courses, and relatively small enrollment in current language courses makes it a bad time to strengthen the language requirement.

The current requirements for the area of concentration and for the electives appear to be reasonable. The one change that we recommend is expanding the core course (A.S. 201) from one to two quarters. (This should be an additional class requirement, not a substitute for an existing course.) In the self-report, Professor Apter proposes a two-course sequence, which we strongly endorse. (See pp. 2-3 of his report for more detail.) The first quarter would be “dedicated to intensive analysis and discussion of key positions and debates, and the second quarter ... dedicated to invited colleagues from the various departments discussing their work and research agendas.” This curriculum expansion would provide deeper core training, expose students to many more of the campus resources available in African Studies, and build a greater sense of cohesiveness and community among the students, who currently often take only a single course together. It would also allow for the re-introduction into the curriculum of bibliographic training that previously had been offered to students in the program. In addition, as noted by Professor Drewal in his report, “the program might develop a regular colloquium series (non-credit, attendance required) ... where alumni of the program, second-year students, and university faculty and visiting scholars present ... their research/writing projects” – or an alternative format that he notes, where “thesis-option MA students could be required to give a public presentation of their written work that all first and second-year students would be expected to attend.”

We were impressed with the number and quality of students who are choosing the Masters Thesis option, which is clearly the more challenging and rigorous path to take. Related to this, we were pleased to hear that students appear to have had little trouble in putting together a thesis committee – something that others IDPs grapple with. Much of the credit was given to Professor Apter, who has provided excellent guidance to each of the students, but credit

also needs to be spread to many other Africanists on campus who are willingly serving on these committees.

We are concerned, however, with potential inconsistencies in the delivery of the Comprehensive Examination for those students choosing that option. Students seem to be poorly informed about this option. In terms of standardization of procedures, the self-report indicates movements along these lines (e.g., taking the exam on a single day in two three-hour sessions, answering two of our questions) but we would also recommend that a procedure be established to help ensure that the difficulty of the exam and faculty assessment be done as consistently as possible.

One way to strengthen the productivity and stature of the graduate program is for African Studies to collaborate with more professional programs at UCLA in articulated degree programs. There has been one very successful collaboration up till now: a joint MAAS-MPH degree with Public Health. More successful collaborations would: (a) increase the numbers of students in the core class and the language classes; (b) provide potentially better-trained graduates since such students typically will be in residence at UCLA for three years and will have training in a professional discipline; and (c) provide for more collaboration among faculty and among students across the university. African Studies should not venture into more articulated degree programs lightly as they involve a great deal of time and dedication to formulate, implement, and continue to nurture them. Some areas that might be *considered* by the MAAS Advisory Committee include Nursing, Public Policy, Library Science and Education, Management, and Law. The moribund articulated degree program with fine arts (Film and Television) should be officially terminated. (It may have already been even though it is mentioned in the self-report; the program is not listed on UCLA's graduate division website: (<http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/gasaa/admissions/CONC.HTM>) although it is mentioned on the UCLA planning and budget website (<http://www.apb.ucla.edu/prof96%5Cdmd.htm>). It would be desirable if future collaborations could also include programs in the fine arts that are willing to open their doors to students interested in African Studies.

Concerns about funding for students in the MA program were expressed by faculty and students. Information provided by the graduate division indicates that 75% of the students enrolled in the program in 2002-3 received financial support, and the per capita level of support was about \$13,000/annum. The committee was informed that the IDP had received a generous allotment of unrestricted funds from the Graduate Division for the coming academic year. The level of support for students in this IDP compares favorably with the level of support for students in other programs in the International Institute. Nonetheless, this level of support is not sufficient to support foreign students, making it very difficult to recruit or offer admission to students from abroad. For an international studies program, this is a very serious problem.

## **UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM**

A minor in African Studies in the College was established the fall 2000. As a preparation for the minor students are required to take five courses. Two of these are history of Africa courses (History 10A and 10B) and the remaining three are language courses. The language course requirement has to be fulfilled by taking courses on Sub-Saharan African languages; Arabic courses do not satisfy the language requirement since Arabic is included in Near East Studies Program. The upper division course requirements are fulfilled by taking five courses among 50 that are listed for the minor (students also can petition for approval of courses not on the approved course list). The 50 courses listed are offered in a wide range of departments including Anthropology, Geography, History, Political Science and School of World Arts and Culture.

The current number of students in the minor is 11 having steadily increased from four since fall 2002. The very small size of the number of students in the African Studies Minor may be interpreted as indicating a lack of interest by undergraduates in African Studies. However, the high enrollments in the large set of courses offered by many departments suggest otherwise.

There are a couple of factors underlying the apparent inconsistency between the number of students in the minor, and the general interest in Africa as indicated by enrollments in other courses with African content. First, there is the burden of the 3-quarter language requirement which is compounded by the fact that none of these language courses count towards credit requirements of the minor. Second, there seems to be a lack of awareness among the undergraduate population that the minor exists. Third, the number of students in this IDP is in the same neighborhood as in several other area studies IDPs, indicating that this minor is not experiencing a difficulty specific to the region it represents.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In summary, the Review Committee unanimously agreed that the African Studies Interdepartmental Program is an important and viable academic unit. It is poised to capitalize on the new leadership of Prof. Apter, and to develop new initiatives that are likely to enhance the stature and reputation of the program. There is a broad consensus among the faculty and administration that the most serious problem faced by the IDP is African language instruction, and this consensus should facilitate a resolution to the crisis.

It is recommended that the program be evaluated by an internal review team again in four years. However, two problems should be addressed immediately. The IDP and Administration should work together to resolve the problem of African language instruction. In addition, the IDP and the Administration should develop a plan for improving communication and integration with the ORU. A report on plans for resolving these two issues should be submitted by the end of October 2005.

Respectfully submitted:

Joan Silk (Chair), Anthropology, Graduate Council  
Thomas Rice, Health Services, Graduate Council  
Sule Ozler, Undergraduate Council, Undergraduate Council

Date of the Report: May 16, 2005

Approved by the Graduate Council: May 13, 2005

Approved by the Undergraduate Council May 6, 2005

Appendix I: Site Visit Schedule

Academic Senate Review of the  
Africa Area Studies Interdepartmental Program  
Site Visit Schedule  
March 3-4, 2005

(All meetings will be held in Bunche 10367 unless otherwise noted)

Wednesday, March 2, 2005

7:00 Dinner meeting: Tanino's Resturant, 1043 Westwood Blvd., Westwood, 310-208-0444

Thursday, March 3, 2005

8:30 Breakfast discussion with chair (Apter)  
9:00 Meeting with Vice Provost Geoff Garrett  
10:00 Meeting with faculty advisory committee [Cosentino, Lydon, Thomas, Schuh, Djedje, Bell-Gam, Roberts]  
11:00 Meet with Azeb Tadesse and Sheila Breeding (10244 Bunche)  
12:00 Lunch  
1:00 Meet with Amy Jamison and current African Studies Minors  
1:30 Meet with current MA Students  
2:15 Meet with invited MAAS alumns  
2:45 Meet with Glenda Jones  
3:10 Meet with Gaby Solomon  
3:40 Meet with Carolyn Ramirez-La Faso  
4:00 Closed session for review team

Friday, March 4, 2005

9:00 Professor Tom Hinnebusch, Linguistics  
9:30 Professor Dominic Thomas, French and Francophone Studies  
10:00 Professor Mike Lofchie, Chair, Dept of Political Science  
10:30 Professor Allen Roberts, Director, JSC African Studies Center, World Arts and Cultures  
11:00 Professor Russ Schuh, Linguistics  
11:30 Ruby Bell-Gam, Young Research Library, Research and Instructional Services  
12:00 Lunch  
1:00 Professor Ghislaine Lydon, History  
1:30 Professor Richard Sklar, Political Science  
2:00 Professor Ned Alpers, History  
2:30 Closed Session  
3:30 Final Review Team meeting with Chair Apter  
4:00 Exit Meeting (**2121 Murphy Hall**): EVC/Provost Neuman; Exec. Dean O'Brien; GC Chair McDonald; UGC Chair Rigby; Acting Grad Division Dean Hune; FEC Representative Jeanne Arnold.

Appendix II: External Reviewers' Reports

Henry John Drewal, Evjue-Bascom Professor African and African Diaspora Arts, University of  
Wisconsin-Madison

Jean Allman, Professor of History and Director, Center for African Studies, University of Illinois

External Reviewer's Report -- UCLA-IDP MA in African Studies  
Site visit, March 4-5, 2005

Submitted by Henry John Drewal, Evjue-Bascom Professor of African and African  
Diaspora Arts, University of Wisconsin-Madison

In this report I am responding to the comments and queries raised by the Associate Deans of the Graduate and Undergraduate Councils in their memo of 2 March 2005, as well as the issues and concerns that emerged during our interviews with UCLA personnel. They are organized according to the UCLA Academic Senate Guidelines:

**Section 1: Introductory statement (to be submitted by the chair of the review team)**

**Section 2: Strengths and Achievements of the program --**

In a world of complex forces and interests, a single disciplinary approach to understanding, or for taking concrete action, is inadequate. An inter-departmental, interdisciplinary academic program is therefore to be encouraged, and this is one of the fundamental strengths of the IDP-African Area Studies MA program, as well as the undergraduate minor in African Studies. This MA program prepares a small but steady number of self-directed and highly-motivated students for PhD and professional program related to Africa. Among the specific strengths/achievements of the program are the following:

- 1) The leadership and vision of the Chair, Professor Andrew Apter. In the short time he has directed the program, he has given it more focus, purpose, and rigor. His leadership has provided a vision of excellence. He has been successful in obtaining grants and has planned a provocative and timely conference -- "Activating the Past: Historical Memory in the Black Atlantic" -- that comes out of his own scholarly work and his active networking with other prominent African and African Diaspora scholars. He is planning to develop a major database of films, photographs, documents, interviews, etc. on the Black Atlantic and develop a multi-disciplinary, cultural interpretive framework for the study of Africa and its diasporas both in the past and the present. His active engagement with many other units at UCLA (and beyond) is revitalizing this program and receiving enthusiastic responses from the several graduate students we interviewed, as well as two undergraduate minors. He has been very active in mentoring the students in the program, and hopes that such activities can be strengthened in the future (see my recommendations in Section 4). He has brought energy and commitment to this work and his presence has certainly been one of the strengths of the program.
- 2) The Chair is surrounded by a large and distinguished community of Africanist scholars in many different departments and schools at UCLA, one of the very best African Studies faculties in the nation. This resource has contributed significantly to the breadth and strength of the African Studies MA. Apter has begun to tap these exceptional resources to the benefit of the program and students.

- 3) The Deans' 2 March 2005 memo to the Councils raised questions about the admit rate and quality of students, yet judging from the interviews with past and present students, I would suggest that the quality is high, and that the program attracts a particular and important cohort that the University needs to serve – more mature students who may have taken a break in their studies before deciding their academic or professional goals. I found that such students are much more self-motivated, dedicated, innovative in their approaches to problem-solving, and open to multiple perspectives in their work. This is certainly a strength of the program, and as the curriculum develops (see Section 4 below), more such students will be attracted to the program, and will go on to successful careers in academe or the professions.
- 4) Curriculum – The IDP-MA course of study is characterized by its openness and flexibility, which I regard as a strength, especially in light of the kinds of older, more mature and focused students who are attracted to it. Often these students are “academic orphans” who, because they work in inter-disciplinary ways, are on the margins of departmental/disciplinary university structures. Such flexibility allows them to develop individualized course clusters where they can focus and deepen their knowledge in specific areas, and take either an academic track toward the PhD, or a professional track toward employment with international organizations. One of the achievements of the program has been the development of articulated programs between the African Studies IDP MA and certain professional programs, like the very successful one in Public Health. At the same time, this openness could be balanced with a somewhat more structured sequence of courses, and expanded articulated programs. These are discussed in Section 4 below.
- 5) Administration - Despite the challenges of re-structuring caused by budget constraints and the development of the International Institute, the staff of the IDP-MA program continues to be a dedicated and highly effective group. They have a strong commitment to the success of the students and the program, often taking personal initiatives in recruiting and counseling.
- 6) The linkages between the African Studies Center and the IDP are another important strength. The Director and the Chair have a good working relationship that should be encouraged and supported in concrete ways (see below). The Center's ambitious program of lectures, workshops, symposia, etc. offers the MA students (and the larger University community) a very diverse and stimulating array of learning experiences. It also supports student organizations and a long-standing and notable student publication in African Studies, *Ufahamu*. Most importantly, through its Title VI funding, it provides graduate student funding in the form of FLAS African-language fellowships – essential in this era of shrinking financial support for graduate students.

### **Section 3: Goals and Plans**

- 1) I have already described briefly the Chair's vision for the future of the program, one that he has already begun to put into place. The Program's self-study

describes this plan in great detail. I believe this is a most fruitful direction that will certainly strengthen the program. While the focus will still be on Africa, the inclusion of Diaspora concerns will broaden, enrich, and deepen the scholarly discourse as well as provide wider academic and professional options for the students. I agree with the major assessments of the program as analysed in the program's self-report, as well as its recommendations for achieving its goals. I do however have a number of other suggestions which I have listed in order of priority below.

#### **Section 4: Areas in need of attention/prioritized recommendations and rationale.**

- 1) **Language instruction** -- The most important and pressing issue has to do with the teaching of African languages. Funded by Title VI, African language instruction is crucial for graduate student funding and for the integrity of area studies programs. Students preparing for work or research in international areas must have some basic language proficiency, and only those institutions that demonstrate a strong commitment to foreign language instruction will receive Title VI funds. It is therefore imperative that UCLA make a clear and forceful commitment. The imminent retirement of the Swahili professor in the Linguistics Department, and the lack of a replacement, needs to be addressed immediately. Ideally a ladder-faculty position (or perhaps a "professor-in-residence") should be designated and recruitment begun – someone committed to the supervision and coordination of fully-trained African language instructors. Another issue involves one of the most important African languages, Arabic. It is not currently associated with the program. This should be changed, and both the African Studies Center and the IDP-MA brought fully into the Global Islam Initiative. Another possible area to explore involves "heritage" courses. There are sizeable African immigrant communities in Los Angeles and surrounding areas – Ethiopian, Eritrean, Senegalese, and Nigerian. Now many of these second-generation immigrants are in colleges and universities. It is possible that teaching languages from these countries might attract new students to UCLA. If these language issues are not addressed, not only will UCLA probably lose its Title VI funding (now on a 4-year cycle), but its graduate students will become non-competitive in applications for research grants (Fulbright, Ford, Rockefeller, SSRC, etc.) which *require* appropriate language preparation.
- 2) **Curriculum** – I believe the present two-track option (academic and professional) should be maintained and enhanced. The IDP should foster and expand its articulated programs with such units as Public Health, Public Policy, Nursing, Environmental Studies, Education and Information, Law, and Management. The program should also look into possible joint programs with the Fowler Museum of Cultural History (and Art History) involving museum internships, curatorial and conservation training (with Getty Foundation funding). While I value the flexibility inherent in the MA course of study, I see areas for structural improvement. First, I agree that the core course (201) needs to be developed as a

2-quarter course. The first part should focus on sources and resources for multi-disciplinary theories and practices (with the direct involvement of the UCLA Africana bibliographer, Ruby Bel-Gam), and the second part should introduce students to Africanist and African Diaspora faculty and their scholarly work. Second, the somewhat arbitrary division between “major” and “minor” areas at the MA needs to be re-considered. Most graduate programs only require this at the PhD level, not MA. Perhaps in the second or third quarter of study, a student should be required to provide a written rationale for her/his program of study, to be approved by the Chair and student’s faculty committee, with an indication of whether the student will take the thesis or the comprehensive exam option. This exercise can give more coherence to a student’s academic plans for breadth and focus at an early stage. Third, the thesis was the chosen option for all the graduates we interviewed and seems to be well-conceived and supervised. The comprehensive exam, on the other hand, appears to need a clearer, standardized conceptualization and administration. Fourth, the program might develop a regular colloquium series (non-credit, attendance required), say once every two to four weeks, where alumni of the program, second-year students, and university faculty and visiting scholars present (whether formally or informally) their research/writing projects. Alternatively, thesis-option MA students could be required to give a public presentation of their written work that all first and second-year students would be expected to attend.

- 3) **Administration** – While the relationship between the African Studies Center as an ORU and the IDP in African Area Studies is good, it is not as close and productive as it could be. This working arrangement should not depend upon the personalities of the Director and Chair, but be strengthened within the structure of the university. Formerly the Chair was the Associate Director of the Center, and this might contribute to a more integrated and mutually effective research and teaching program in African Studies.
- 4) **Academic advising/counseling/mentoring** – The re-structuring of the International Institute has been detrimental to this work. Formerly a person or persons knowledgeable, dedicated, and *passionate* about a particular geographical area of the world advised students working in that area. The commitment of these persons has been crucial to the success of students. Now, in an effort to consolidate and maximize limited resources, an academic advisor must serve larger numbers of students working in many different area studies programs, affecting adversely the quality of counseling services. A return to the earlier system, or a revision of the present one, would improve matters. As the Chair of the IDP-MA turns his attention to the relationship between the African Studies UG minor and the Graduate MA program, he might consider developing a multi-dimensional mentoring program – not only between faculty, staff, and students, but among the students themselves. Thus, for example MA students could work one-on-one with UG minors, and second-year MA students would mentor first-year students. We know that students learn as much from their peers as they do from faculty, and a structured student mentoring program could make a significant positive contribution to resolving the counseling problems and the issues of morale and a sense of community among program members.

- 5) **Chair support** – During this revitalization and development period for the IDP-MA program, the Chair should be given a course release in order to revise, strengthen, and integrate the African Studies UG minor with the MA program and to engage in fund-raising efforts on behalf of the graduate students.
- 6) **Student support** – First, I strongly support the self-study request for university unrestricted funds to provide financial support for the graduate students in the program, a significant percent of whom are minorities. In the face of Prop. 209, the university should re-affirm its commitment to diversity in its student body, and the African Studies MA program has demonstrated its important role in this effort. Second, in order to build a stronger sense of community, a place should be provided for students and faculty to meet. The space constraints in Bunche Hall are severe, yet a possible compromise solution would be to designate one appropriate room as a student/faculty lounge for all involved in area studies programs, to be reserved for specific times/days on a permanent basis. For example, African Studies students/faculty would have the room every Tuesday afternoon from 12-5, to be used for a variety of purposes, from informal conversations, formal colloquia, receptions for visiting scholars, etc.

I hope these suggestions are helpful in maintaining and improving the quality of the IDP-MA program in African Studies. Please contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Interdepartmental Degree Program

African Studies

University of California – Los Angeles

Site Visit March 3-4, 2005

***External Reviewer's Report***

Jean Allman  
Professor of History and  
Director, Center for African Studies  
University of Illinois

**INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM'S STRENGTHS**

As pointed out by the external reports submitted as part of African Studies' interdepartmental review of 1996-1997, area studies programs were very much under attack a decade ago, and many in the academy predicted their imminent demise. Those predictions, of course, have proven to be ill-founded, and, though generally smaller in size and more focused in their missions, area studies centers continue to play an absolutely vital role in major research institutions across the country. The very best of these programs – and UCLA ranks among them – have continued to re-imagine themselves in the post-Cold War era, consistently demonstrating the crucial and dynamic role of interdisciplinary area knowledge in addressing the more vexing problems of our times – from HIV/AIDS to child trafficking, from transnational labor migration to environmentally sustainable agriculture.

The African Studies interdepartmental program [IDP] at UCLA, though smaller than it was a decade ago, continues to offer quality interdisciplinary programming to both undergraduates and to graduate students. The strengths of the program are many, but they warrant some elaboration here, before discussing program areas in need of attention. First and foremost, the program builds upon a long and rich tradition of African Studies at UCLA – a tradition that includes a large and prestigious faculty across an incredible range of disciplines and schools, who have been devoted to African Studies for many decades. The James S. Coleman African Studies Center [ASC] is one of the most prominent in the country and is one of only nine Department of Education Title VI National Resource Centers [NRC]. With the UC-Berkeley-Stanford Consortium's loss of NRC status in the last round, UCLA hosts the only African Studies NRC west of the Mississippi. It is unlikely that the IDP could exist, much less thrive, without the foundational support of the ASC. In addition to offering a range of programming, the ASC provides FLAS fellowship money (for which many African studies MA students apply), sponsors the African Activist Association and provides support (funding, logistics and space) to *Ufahamu* – the oldest African Studies journal edited by graduate students in the country. Above and beyond the Center and an enthusiastic and prestigious faculty, the strength of the IDP rests

on superb library resources (including a full-time Africana bibliographer) and the excellent programming of the Fowler Museum.

As was further noted in the 1997 report, the flexibility of the IDP's MA program [MAAS] is considered a real asset by faculty and students alike. MA students take one core course – African Studies 201 – and five additional courses in their area of concentration. The degree of flexibility allows students to pursue a wide range of interdisciplinary topics without being overburdened by course requirements. Across the board – from students who view their MA as a terminal degree and plan to begin their careers in the private, government or NGO sector to those who intend to continue with Ph.D. work in a discipline – the flexibility of the program is considered a major strength.

In Fall, 2004, African Studies welcomed Professor Andrew Apter, formerly of the University of Chicago, as the new chair of the IDP program. Apter has clearly brought new energy and vision to the program and the results of his hard work are already evident. (A lack of vision was one of the problems cited by the previous review team in 1997.) Every single one of the MA and undergraduate minor students with whom we met sang Apter's praises. The MA students appear especially dedicated to the program and to Apter's vision. His revamping of the required 201 course, as well as his clarification of the timing and mechanisms for assembling an MA thesis committee, have clearly given many of the students the inspiration and confidence to take on the more difficult thesis option (rather than the comprehensive exam option). None of the students with whom we spoke had difficulty assembling their committee – a process noted as problematic in the last review.

## **PROGRAM'S PLANS AND GOALS, WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ACTION**

Under Apter's leadership, the IDP now has a well-articulated set of goals, with concrete plans for their attainment. The most noteworthy are as follows:

1. **Increasing student enrollments** at both the graduate and undergraduate levels. To date, and with the assistance of the ASC, Apter has worked to increase the number of admissions to the MA program and, to a lesser degree, the number of African Studies minors. Azeb Tadesse and Sheila Breeding (from the ASC) have been targeting classes with written material, as well as high school students in the greater Los Angeles area.

*Our review committee noted that the numbers at the MA level are not out of line with applications and admissions to comparable African Studies MA programs in the country. In addition, the number of students in the undergraduate minor is not indicative of the interest of students in African Studies at UCLA or of the level of undergraduate expertise on Africa. While the number of minors is low (9), there are very large enrollments in most undergraduate African Studies courses and many of the 400+ International Development Studies majors choose a regional focus on Africa. We suspect that the low number of minors might be a by-product of the African language requirement (one year of African language or its equivalent). If the program decides that it would like to increase the number of minors so that it more adequately reflects undergraduate interest*

*in African Studies at UCLA, it might be prudent to eliminate the language requirement and give students who do take an African language course credit toward the completion of their minor.*

2. **Increase course requirements for the MA.** Apter has been working in consultation with other faculty members and the Africana bibliographer toward the development of a follow-up seminar to 201 so that the MA requirements would include a two-quarter sequence. The second quarter would be taught by a faculty member other than Apter and would allow students to meet faculty members from across the campus and learn about their research agendas. The intent of the course would be to improve student cohesiveness, as well as to introduce students to faculty members who might serve as potential advisors or members of the MA examination committee.

*From my perspective, a two-quarter sequence would provide a much more solid foundation for MA students in the program. While students with a clear vision of what they intend to do and where they are headed might buck at the prospect of an additional course requirement, the probable outcomes -- enhanced student cohesion and a firmer foundation for students less certain of their direction -- far outweigh any negatives. Moreover, Apter's consultations with the Africana bibliographer (an Africana bibliography class used to be offered to students every other year) would mean that this vital part of graduate training, especially in area studies, would be restored to the required curriculum. I strongly endorse plans for this course and hope the resources can be found to make it happen.*

3. **Rethinking the terminal comprehensive exam.** Since at least the last review in 1997, there has been concern about the lack of standardization for the comprehensive exam. Apter has reviewed the exam and with the assistance of his committee has set out a clear set of guidelines. Students preparing theses have to assemble their committees well in advance of the thesis defense (nearly a year). Apter is currently working on a mechanism that would establish comprehensive exam committees at an earlier point in a student's program.

*Our committee applauds the program's efforts to standardize processes that have been somewhat problematic at least since the last review. We would also encourage the program to consider other options, besides the comprehensive examination, as a way for non-thesis students to complete their degrees. There was some discussion of the option of having students substantially revise two or three of the papers they completed in their program for examination by a committee. This should be given further consideration as an option.*

4. Because, like most IDPs, African Studies is severely short of funds, especially for the support of graduate students, the program's chair has worked very hard to **increase funding opportunities**. Again, we applaud those efforts. (As the committee was conducting its review, the chair learned that the unrestricted fellowship support for his program was increased to \$61,000 – a dramatic increase over last year's \$36,000!) In addition, the chair is working to raise funds that would provide \$5000 toward summer

thesis research for the MA students.

*Clearly the long-term health and reputation of the MAAS program depends upon adequate resources for graduate students. The real strength of a program like this one is built upon the quality and diversity of its student body. In order to be able to attract top students from under-represented groups, as well as international students, the program requires solid and consistent support for graduate education.*

5. **Articulated Degrees.** The program already has in place a vibrant articulated degree program with Public Health. From what we were able to ascertain, it is an excellent program that should serve as a model for other articulated degree programs. (While a program with Fine Arts / Theater and Television remains on the books, it was considered “dead” at the last review and certainly nothing has changed in its status. ) The chair, with the support of members of his advisory committee, is interested in developing other articulated degree programs with appropriate schools/departments. This is clearly an important initiative that has support from the ASC’s Title VI funding and warrants full support by the International Institute.

*The review committee spent a good deal of time discussing possible options for this initiative. We encourage the program to consider partnerships with the following units: Nursing, Business, Library Science and Education. We also encourage consideration of some sort of a partnership with the Fowler that might be built into Art History’s concentration in curatorship.*

## **AREAS OF CONCERN, WITH CORRESPONDING RECOMMENDATIONS**

Over the past year and a half, the program has made enormous progress in addressing areas of weakness in the graduate and, to a lesser degree, the undergraduate program. Yet there remain a few areas of concern, some of which have very long histories and others of which have been eventuated by the restructuring of international studies and the establishment of the International Institute.

1. **African Languages:** From top administrators to undergraduate minors, from African language instructors to academic counselors, there is complete unanimity on one issue – the absolute centrality of African languages to the health, longevity and future of African Studies at UCLA. At the current juncture – one in which the US Department of Education considers African language training to be its number one priority and the vitality of that training to be a prerequisite for continued Title VI funding – the viability of African languages at UCLA is seriously threatened. Enrollments are at an all time low; two long term tenured faculty members are retiring (one this summer); and their home department (Linguistics), which has a heavy theoretical bend, has said it has no interest in hiring tenure track scholars who will devote part of their FTEs to African language instruction.

*It is absolutely critical that UCLA develop a concrete plan for the future of African languages that demonstrates strong institutional commitment before the next Title VI*

*competition deadline in the fall of 2005. The US Department of Education has made it clear that instruction by native-speaking TAs will not serve as evidence of institutional commitment. UCLA needs to hire a Language Specialist and Coordinator (preferably with fulltime FTE status), as well as lecturers in at least some of the languages for which it seeks federal support (presumably the more popular languages, like Swahili). Hiring at the lectureship level, rather than committing to FTEs would allow the program to shift language emphasis in response to changing student demand (either precipitated locally by changing student demographics or by instability or insecurity in specific research areas).*

*As was pointed out to our committee by many, the real stumbling block in reinvigorating African languages is where to house an individual specialist/ coordinator, given that Linguistics is not interested. This is, indeed, a problem, but one that should not be insurmountable. All of the other “less commonly taught languages” at UCLA are housed in language and literature units. (Apparently, in their first incarnation at UCLA – pre 1968 – so too were African languages, which were located in Near East Languages and Literatures, along with Arabic.) While I understand that it might be politically difficult to place African languages in this program, Arabic, a major African language, is already housed there, and it does make institutional sense – at least to this external reviewer – that other African languages join Arabic in an existing program where they would have the institutional security of other languages on campus. We were told by one person with whom we spoke that “North Africa is owned by the Near East Program.” This should not be considered acceptable.*

*Still the bottom line remains the same – no matter where a new coordinator is housed. UCLA needs to restore and reinvigorate its African language program immediately or risk losing its Title VI support and compromising Africa-centered Ph.D. and M.A. training across the disciplines, not just in the MAAS program.*

- 2. Relations between the interdepartmental program and the ASC.** UCLA’s guidelines concerning the particular and very separate functions of ORUs and IDPs present ongoing challenges to the coordinating efforts of the African Studies IDP and the ASC. These are structural challenges that need to be addressed by structural responses. The question is how to optimize the synergy between the two units – one focused on teaching and the other on research and outreach – and to facilitate constant dialogue. In the past, the IDP’s chair also served as the ASC’s associate director. While this might appear to be an optimal solution, we did learn that there were times in the past when this system was fraught with difficulties because of the personalities of the individuals involved. Several people also commented upon the fact that chairing the IDP and serving as Associate Director, with only one course release, constituted too heavy of an administrative burden.

*Clearly, there is no easy formula for more closely integrating the ORU and the IDP in African Studies, but we heard individuals from all sides commenting on the fact that more dialogue was absolutely essential. That the IDP chair sits on the advisory committee of the ASC and the Director of the ASC sits, ex-officio, on the advisory committee of the IDP, not to mention that several faculty members and the African bibliographer sit on*

3. **Student Community and Cohesiveness.** As noted above, one of the program's major strengths is its flexible curriculum and the space it allows for students from a variety of backgrounds to pursue their varied interests. Yet one of the costs of this flexibility is cohesion among students, as each is following her/his separate curricular trajectories. Described by more than one person as "academic orphans," MAAS students would clearly benefit from extra energy (perhaps largely extra-curricular) being aimed at facilitating community building and cohesion among and between cohorts. For a few students this appears not to be a significant issue, but for others, it clearly is. During interviews with the MA students, one student mentioned support she had received from one of the programs on campus. Several of the other students had no idea support was available from this source. If nothing else, enhanced cohesion would facilitate basic communication among students.

*The review committee discussed a variety of measures that might improve cohesion among students. A required two-quarter sequence (rather than one lone course) is clearly one possibility. Others suggested an ongoing proseminar that would allow students to present their research to each other in a constructive and nurturing environment. My colleague, Henry Drewel, also suggested the importance of creating mentoring relationships, ideally one-on-one, between first and second year students, and between MA and undergraduates in the minor program. Each of these ideas, it seems to me, would greatly enhance community identity among African Studies students.*

4. **Advising and Counseling.** Finally, and certainly connected to #3 above, is the question of advising and counseling. Before the reorganization of ISOP into the International Institute, African Studies, as well as other IDPs on campus, had their own individual undergraduate and graduate advisors. Reorganization has meant that one person, Student Affairs Coordinator Carolyn Ramirez-Faso, is responsible for Master's advising for all area studies center and undergraduate advising for Latin American Studies. (Undergraduate advising has been consolidated under Gaby Solomon.)

*The impact of this consolidation on student progress and performance is not yet clear. Certainly both of the advisors now associated with the African Studies IDP are very dedicated and highly skilled. That is not at issue. But one does wonder how the specific area knowledge, the passion, and the devotion to a particular program so evident in our interview with the SAC under the previous form of organization (Glenda Jones) can be replaced or compensated for (other than fiscally) with this more generic form of counseling. Clearly, the jury is still out. The appointment of a former MAAS student*

*(Amy Jamison, now working on her PhD in History) as an assistant to Carolyn in order to address the more specific, African-content concerns of MAAS students has eased the transition from one form of organization to another. But this appears to be more a stop-gap measure than a long term, sustainable means of addressing the advising and counseling needs of students in interdisciplinary programs. It is important that the impact of this new system of advising be carefully monitored and that a more permanent and sustainable means of addressing the specific advising needs of African Studies students be developed.*

- 5. Student Attrition.** Unfortunately, the review committee did not get the opportunity to address in any depth the question of student retention and completion. The figures we have at hand, however, suggest that the MAAS program has been enrolling an average of ten students per year over the past ten years, but students completing their MA degrees are seven per year (on average) over the past ten years. These figures suggest either a fairly high rate of attrition or extended years to completion of the degree.

*Several of the recommendations already outlined here -- improving funding for students, increasing student community identity and cohesiveness, and improving access to and quality of advising and counseling – should go a long way toward addressing any problems of attrition and/or extended years to completion of the degree.*

Jean Allman

6 March 2005

## Appendix III: Self-Review Report