

December 8, 2015

**PROFESSOR ALLAN HAVIS, Provost  
Thurgood Marshall College**

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for Thurgood Marshall College (TMC)

Dear Professor Havis,

In an effort to finalize past years' reviews, the Undergraduate Council has discussed the Thurgood Marshall College 2010 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council apologizes for the delay in the final memo, but supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the College.

The Council looks forward to reviewing the College again in the 2017-2018 academic year. At that time, our goal is to learn about the College's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the College for its engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Cook, Chair  
Undergraduate Council

cc: R. Continetti  
T. Javidi  
R. Rodriguez  
B. Sawrey  
M. Sidney

## **Committee on Educational Policy – Undergraduate Program Review of Thurgood Marshall College**

**Introduction:** In 1963, former UC President Clark Kerr stated: “The improvement of undergraduate instruction in the university will require the solution of many sub-problems: how to give adequate recognition to the teaching skill as well as to the research performance of the faculty; how to create a curriculum that serves the needs of the student as well as the research interests of the teacher; how to prepare the generalist as well as the specialist in an age of specialization looking for better generalizations; how to treat the individual student as a unique human being in the mass student body; how to make the university seem smaller even as it grows larger; how to establish a range of contact between faculty and students broader than the one-way route across the lectern or through the television screen; how to raise educational policy again to the forefront of faculty concerns. Increasingly, also, the better institutions will need to keep in mind that many of their undergraduate students will be going on to graduate school, and therefore that they need individual attention as pre-graduate students.”

UCSD’s response to the above concerns is to create six colleges, with the intention that its undergraduate students develop a sense of a smaller community within a large university of over 20,000 undergraduates. Thurgood Marshall College is the third college created at UCSD. Its mission statement states: “Thurgood Marshall College develops the scholar and citizen. Thurgood Marshall College stands for academic excellence, community, diversity, educational & leadership opportunity, public service, social equality and justice. “

**Administrative Structure:** Provost Allan Havis acts as administrative and academic head of Thurgood Marshall College. He is assisted by an MSO who oversees all the financial aspects of the college along with a Dean of Student Affairs and a Dean of Academic Advising. There is also a Dean of Residential Life who reports to the Dean of Student Affairs. Thurgood Marshall College has an Executive Committee and a Curriculum Committee. Composed of faculty and a few students, the primary role of the Executive and Curriculum Committees has been to oversee the core curriculum and the General Education requirements. The administration appeared to be very efficiently run.

**Advising:** The almost 4,000 Thurgood Marshall College students are advised by 5 academic counselors. Although the advisors seem to be very successful, one wonders about the 800 to one ratio and whether it is possible to effectively help each student choose their General Education requirements. In interviews with the Thurgood Marshall Advisors, they expressed concern about reaching the student who is having difficulty in college, but who makes themselves unreachable by email or regular mail. Overall, the Review Team found the advisors to be successful at what they do.

**Dimensions of Culture:** The core curriculum of Thurgood Marshall College is the three quarter Dimensions of Culture (DOC) sequence. As stated in the recent faculty review of DOC “DOC was explicitly designed to have students confront complex and controversial issues regarding the social and political implications of inequality and

asymmetries of power associated with historical and contemporary racial, ethnic, class, and gender hierarchies. “

The creators of DOC had ambitious goals:

- a. Students would learn tools to view the world from the perspective of diversity and social justice.
- b. Students would develop communication and writing skills that could be used in their careers.
- c. Students would bond socially by working on the course assignments in common housing areas.
- d. Students would be allowed to take additional courses in Public Service to reinforce what they learned in the DOC sequence.

The course is integrated with the writing program. For two quarters, students attend two sections each week (section size about 12) and the extra time is spent on writing assignments that are coordinated with the course content. Each quarter of DOC aims to enable students to think in a well informed and critical way about some aspect of social justice, the identifying theme of Thurgood Marshall College. The first quarter, Diversity, explores social stratification and cultural identity. The second quarter, Justice, studies structures of law and power. The third quarter, Imagination, discuss questions of cultural representation. The course content integrates social sciences and the humanities and its teaching faculty come from both the social science and humanities divisions.

Established in 1990, DOC had deteriorated by the mid-2000s, and came to a crisis in 2007, when there were protests by some TAs and students over the quality of its content and pedagogy. Under the leadership of Provost Allan Havis, a faculty committee and a student committee were established to diagnose the problems with DOC and to suggest improvements. The two reports, published in 2008 [http://marshall.ucsd.edu/pdfs/Curriculum\\_Committee\\_Report\\_on\\_DOC.pdf](http://marshall.ucsd.edu/pdfs/Curriculum_Committee_Report_on_DOC.pdf) and [http://marshall.ucsd.edu/pdfs/ACE\\_DOC\\_Report.pdf](http://marshall.ucsd.edu/pdfs/ACE_DOC_Report.pdf) were thorough and thoughtful and led to some major changes. The key recommendation was to appoint a new DOC director from among ladder-rank faculty, who would recruit other ladder rank faculty to develop a new curriculum. (One problem had been that DOC – in common with some other core-curriculum/writing programs on the campus – had come to be directed and taught by lecturers rather than ladder rank faculty.)

In the end, two senior faculty, Robert Cancel from Literature and Robert Horwitz from Communications, were appointed to serve as co-directors. Cancel and Horwitz had been associated with DOC since its beginnings in the 1990s, and now they worked to reinvent it while maintaining continuity with its founding traditions. They managed to recruit a strong team of mostly ladder rank faculty, three for each quarter, with several others held in reserve for future academic years. In collaboration with the newly recruited teachers, they developed new syllabi for each quarter, the aim of which was to make the courses more accessible and more engaging for first year students. Considerable thought was given about how to integrate the various parts into a unified whole.

This academic year (2009-10) is the first year of the new DOC. The CAPE reviews for the first two quarters are somewhat mixed, ranging from 99% to 70%, but very good for a required lower division course that is being taught for the first time.

There seems to be an extraordinarily good esprit de corps among the directors, teaching faculty, and TAs. There are weekly meetings among faculty and TAs. Because of the high level of coordination, the faculty in the winter quarter was able to redirect their lectures to address the campus protests over the recent racist incidents.

Directors, faculty, and TAs from the DOC program remarked on the openness and responsiveness of their collaboration. TAs felt that the Directors were willing to adopt their recommendations. They received weekly handouts on how to run their sections. One TA said that “I have learned as much from teaching in DOC as from my own graduate program.” Students who took DOC liked the selection of topics, and also thought that the relative brevity of the program (only one year) was a plus.

In short, the reinvention of DOC has been successful. The directors need to be commended for the enormous amount of work they have put into the reinvention, and the Provost and the DOC oversight committee should be praised for their leadership. The challenge in the future will be to maintain the program’s freshness and relevance. To avoid the slow deterioration that befell the first DOC, the program will need ongoing review and revision from its faculty and constant energy will have to be expended to maintain the current level of engagement with faculty, TAs and staff. The two directors committed themselves to three years and next year will be their third year. It will be hard to find successor directors with their outstanding level of commitment and skill, and without suitable incentives it will be hard to recruit a steady stream of new, younger faculty under the pressures of the current budget crisis. The university needs to give adequate support to maintain the good work that has gone into the reinvention of DOC.

**Proposed Changes in General Education Requirements:** In addition to the DOC sequence, Thurgood Marshall College students are required to take 2 humanities courses, 1 fine arts course, 3 natural science courses, 2 mathematics courses and 4 courses noncontiguous with their major. Thurgood Marshall College students found it difficult to choose these courses because their choices seemed to lack any coherent theme.

To address this lack of coherence, the Executive Committee is proposing that the General Education requirements be reshaped around “bundles” of courses. A typical bundle would revolve around a common theme and would consist of 6 courses similar to the requirements of a minor. Sample titles of bundles are Environmental Sustainability, Global Societies, Public Service and Civic Engagement, and Diversity in the World Marketplace.

This is a timely development, and the change from a rather limited set of alternatives to a new theme-based plan that includes both lower- and upper-division classes reflects developments that are taking place across the UC system. Although bundling themes represented in the proposal are only place-holders, taken it seems from a Harvard study on the topic, they are pointing in the right direction. These bundles will allow students to pursue General Education courses that are related to each other thematically, and it will allow them to represent this work by a certificate on their transcripts at graduation. This is an exciting proposal.

The Review Team was impressed that the College Advisors were as energized about this plan and as committed to its implementation as the Executive Committee itself was. The Review Team was also excited that faculty, in the Executive Committee and beyond, students, and other members of the College are committed to this change. There

seems to be the desire in the College to put this plan in place and to take on the hard work that will be necessary to give this proposal a chance of succeeding at UCSD.

The Review Team suggests that this proposal be developed with some specific concerns in mind:

First, the bundles themselves, or thematic groupings of classes, should be organized around topics that have specific UCSD and Thurgood Marshall College resonance. As one member of the Review Team put it, these bundles should respond to campus strengths and college traditions. There needs to be faculty “buy in” across the campus, for classes from every sector will be included in these bundles.

Second, the Review Team feels that since the DOC program is essentially (and for good reason) US-oriented, new thematic bundles should, where possible, address global issues and/or place US concerns in a global context.

Third, where possible, bundles should include capstone courses, internships, or other classes that facilitate assessment of learning outcomes. Since WASC has made such concerns central to our mission at the University of California, it makes sense to build assessment tools into new programs.

Finally, as Thurgood Marshall College begins the transition to this new system of General Education, it may be necessary to request funding for more work-study student support. The Review Team feels that such a request would be in the best interest of a successful transition.

**Addressing Issues of Social Justice-** Thurgood Marshall College should be acknowledged for addressing the needs of underrepresentation at UCSD. As part of its mission, Thurgood Marshall faculty took on the challenge of creating the Preuss Charter school, an on campus school dedicated to creating a larger pool of qualified educated students who were classified as “at risk” by the public school system. The Preuss Charter School is now ranked as one of the top ten public schools with many of its graduates going to some of the best universities in the entire country.

Only a few months ago, the UCSD campus was shaken by several racial incidents that drew negative publicity to the campus. The “Compton Cookout”, the discovery of a noose in Geisel Library and a Ku Klux Klan hood on campus drew national and international coverage.

Through these crises, Thurgood Marshall College provided a forum for students, staff, and faculty to examine the incidents and propose solutions. The DOC faculty immediately restructured their readings to address the issues around the Compton Cookout. The Dean of Student Affairs Mentha Hynes- Wilson helped Chancellor Fox to moderate a university wide Town Hall meeting. The Chair of Thurgood Marshall College’s African American Studies Minor Dan Widener addressed the Academic

Senate. Students taking the DOC course could see their assignments and perspectives translating into a useful way to deal with a crisis.

### **Challenges for the Future:**

**Transfer Students-** Almost half the population of Thurgood Marshall College consists of transfer students. The transition from a community college to UCSD can often be intimidating for transfer students. Thurgood Marshall College advisors mentioned that transfer students miss out on much of the college experience since they have not taken the DOC sequence and they are under pressure to fulfill their major requirements in two years. To facilitate the transition from community college and also to give transfer students a sense of belonging to Thurgood Marshall College, the Review Team encourages transfer students to take DOC 100, a shortened version of the yearlong DOC sequence.

We applaud the Thurgood Marshall College Mentor program which allows over 100 transfer students to be matched with a professor close to the transfer students' major. The faculty mentor meets with each student ten times during the year. Although this program has limited financial resources, we encourage expansion of the program.

The university has recently created a transfer student housing complex <http://hdh.ucsd.edu/thevillage/> which will certainly enhance the transfer student experience.

**Support for Writing Programs and Methods of Inquiry-** Several Thurgood Marshall College advisors cited the reduced funding of the OASIS writing program as having a detrimental effect on undergraduates. There is currently no campus wide resource center where students can get help with writing. The Review Team recommends the creation of a campus wide writing resource center.

Thurgood Marshall College also supports the Methods of Inquiry course. Created by Emeritus Biology Professor Willie Brown, Methods of Inquiry students learn analytical thinking strategies routinely used by professional scholars, historians, and social planners. Data has shown that students taking this course consistently improve their grade point average. We would like to encourage further funding for this very worthwhile enterprise.

**Communication –** Students and parents are communicating more and more through the use of websites. Thurgood Marshall College maintains an excellent website <http://marshall.ucsd.edu/>. There are extensive explanations of how students can become involved in college activities, how parents can support their students and how Marshall College was created. Especially helpful is the virtual advising center where students can submit their questions or arrange appointments for advising.

In interviews with students, it became clear that most incoming students are unaware of the impact of the **choice of college** on their college experience. While this is not a problem unique to Thurgood Marshall College, the Review Team recommends that prospective UCSD students should be directed to college websites as a way to begin to make informed decisions about their choice of college.

Most faculty on the Executive Committee were unaware of the extensive data collected by the 2005 Undergraduate Student Satisfaction Committee which cites the key role of colleges in the undergraduate experience. In speaking with the Thurgood Marshall College Deans, we encourage the Executive Committee to open up lines of communication with the advising staff and the Dean of Student Affairs.

**Conclusions:** Our review committee was impressed by how successful Thurgood Marshall College has been in achieving its goals. Over one and a half days, we interviewed the Provost, Acting Provost, Deans of Academic Affairs and Student Affairs, the Executive Committee, directors of the Dimensions of Culture Program, associated faculty, students, and TAs. It was remarkable how all these groups were united into a single community.

One measure of the success of a college is to see how many students move out of Thurgood Marshall College and how many move into Thurgood Marshall College. The data shows that in recent years, 15 UCSD students moved out of Thurgood Marshall College and over 200 UCSD students have moved in.

Another measure of effectiveness is an extensive alumni survey taken by the 2005 Undergraduate Student Satisfaction Committee <http://studentresearch.ucsd.edu/satisfaction/>. This survey reports that Thurgood Marshall alumni express satisfaction with their experience roughly commensurate with the experience of alumni at the other colleges.

The Executive Committee and Curriculum Committee should be applauded for reinventing and reinvigorating the DOC sequence and the GE requirements. This has been and will continue to be a labor intensive effort, but it seems to have created the kind of excitement necessary to motivate the entire Thurgood Marshall College community.

### **CEP Review Committee of Thurgood Marshall College**

Jim Lin CEP lead discussant, Grad Vice Chair, Department of Mathematics

Richard Madsen, Chair, Department of Sociology

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