

A Brief History of the Institute for Ethnic Studies

The Institute for Ethnic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln was established in the spring of 1972. The Institute had its origins in the larger social changes of the 1960s. These included the Civil Rights movement, Vietnam war protests, and demands by students of color for high-quality education. A number of initiatives were implemented at UNL to address these concerns. For example, as one of three campuses involved in the U.S. Office of Education's Tri-University Project launched in 1967, UNL participated in the recruitment of ethnically diverse post-doctoral and pre-doctoral students who could serve as role models and teachers. In 1969, members of the African American Collegiate Society presented administrators with a list of 12 demands, including the creation of a Blacks Studies Program. Changes were occurring in the curriculum in response to student demands and faculty interest. In 1968, the Departments of History, English, and Sociology joined together to teach "The Negro in American Society"; in 1970, the first Chicano Literature course at UNL was taught by Ralph Grajeda; during the 1971-1972 academic year, the Centennial Education Program allowed students to study *Lakota Sioux* culture and language in conjunction with the Rosebud Reservation.

These varied initiatives coalesced during the early 1970s with the formation of academic programs focused on issues of diversity and ethnicity. In 1971, UNL formed the Black Studies Program, which offered an undergraduate minor. Within a year, discussions were initiated between the administration and the Minority Task Force about creating an Institute to focus on issues of diversity more broadly. On April 8, 1972, the Board of Regents approved the creation of the Institute for Ethnic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Dr. Ralph Vigil, a professor of History from the University of Texas – El Paso, was hired to serve as the Institute's first director beginning in the Spring of 1973. The stated goals of the Institute were: *to give authentication to classes that taught a minority perspective in various disciplines and to recruit teachers, especially minority faculty, as role models and as individuals willing to present a cultural approach to the various university disciplines*. Three areas of emphasis were established: American Indian Studies, Black Studies, and Chicano Studies. In the Arts and Sciences Bulletin for 1976-1978, minors in American Indian Studies, Black Studies, Chicano Studies, and Ethnic Studies were listed.

Over the years, the Institute for Ethnic Studies and its constituent programs evolved as faculty with expertise in the relevant disciplines were hired. A number of reorganizations occurred over the years. Although the Institute was initially established jointly under the College of Arts and Sciences and Teachers College, the majority of subsequent hiring occurred in Arts and Sciences and currently no faculty hold formal joint appointments outside the College of Arts and Sciences. In the 1994-1995 academic year, the African Studies and Latin American Studies programs, once housed under International Studies, were moved into the Institute for Ethnic Studies and merged into the Black Studies and Chicano Studies programs, respectively. Currently, the Institute consists of three programs: African American and African Studies, Latino and Latin American Studies, and Native American Studies. Minors are offered in African Studies, African American Studies, Chicano Studies, and Native American Studies; majors and minors are offered in Ethnic Studies and Latin American Studies. Students may also major in Ethnic Studies, Native American Studies, African Studies, African American Studies, or Chicano Studies through the Individualized Program of Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences.

In the 2006-2007, 20 faculty and one lecturer had formal joint appointments in Ethnic Studies. The typical appointment is 40% in Ethnic Studies and 60% in a department (current faculty hold positions in Anthropology & Geography, English, History, Modern Languages and Literatures, Psychology, and Sociology). In addition, approximately 50 faculty members from over 20 departments across 9 of UNL's Colleges and several units at UNO were affiliated with one of the programs and participate in Institute activities through their teaching, scholarship, and outreach.

This history was prepared by Marcela Raffaelli, based on research and analyses conducted by Barbara Chesier in 2000-2001 and additional assistance from Ahati Toure in 2002-2003. The history is based on archival research and interviews conducted with individuals who were involved with the Institute for Ethnic Studies and its constituent programs over the years. A binder containing source materials for this history is located in the library at the Institute for Ethnic Studies.