

A Holistic Emphasis: The UCLA American Indian Studies Research Center

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Few other institutions carry on the research, community service publications and student relations from the perspective of Natives studies a does the UCLA American Indian Studies Center (AISC). No mainstream discipline undertakes the research of American Indian cultures and histories from the perspectives, methods, ethics and interests of Native communities. The discipline of Native studies is unique in its perspective and approach, although few Indian studies programs take a Native perspective, since most are loose assemblies of faculty from mainstream disciplines who teach a course or two on topics related to American Indians. Several American Indian studies departments and programs across the nation are very strong. Most, however, are focused on teaching and curriculum. The UCLA American Indian Studies Center is distinguished by its program of research, community outreach, publications, library, and student community. No other institution, department or program can focus on the latter issues in the way that the Organized Research Unit (ORU) structure of the UCLA AISC can. The ORU structure allows a platform for accomplishing a wide variety of activities that are not usually within the purview of departments. At UCLA, the ORU structure enables the Center to implement a Native view of research, policy, community engagement and education that is less possible in academic departments and programs where the scope of work is more narrowly defined. The unique ORU organization combined with the commitment to Native research and community perspectives enables the AISC to engage in many significant projects that are appreciated by academics and Native communities across the country.

The core goals and objectives of the American Indian Studies Center are to conduct research relating to American Indians, generate relevant research grants, publish books and the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, provide academic counseling and support to students, cooperate with and support academic programs in American Indian Studies (AIS), actively assist the American Indian community, maintain a reference library, and administer postdoctoral and predoctoral fellowships and research awards through the Institute of American Cultures. Our strong emphasis will continue to be on contemporary experience and issues within tribal communities, rather than on pan-Indian identifications or urban Indian experience. We attempt to balance a national focus with attention to underserved and often overlooked California tribes. Underlying our choice of emphasis is an acknowledgment of the existence of hundreds of diverse tribal communities—communities that are poorly understood and that have distinct social, cultural, economic, political, and legal needs by virtue of their status as indigenous nations colonized by a major world power.

The American Indian Studies Center is an Organized Research Unit (ORU). Its mission is to promote research, community service, student retention, and education. The Center's goals are accomplished by assisting campus departments with recruiting American Indian faculty and supporting research by students, staff and faculty. The Center acts as focal point for scholars, staff, students and community members who are interested in research, education, and issues about Native Americans. Institute of American Cultures grants, external grants, committees and teaching brings students and faculty to the Center from a variety of departments.

The Center has five administrative units: administration, research, publications, library and student/community affairs. The director has a 33 percent appointment to the Center, while the rest of his appointment remains with his department. The director is responsible for the overall direction of the Center. Most of the director's time is concerned with fundraising, grant writing, community activities, research and grant administration and implementation. The Management Service Officer (MSO) reports to the director, and has direct management responsibility for the administrative assistant, student affairs officer, and accounting personnel. The student affairs officer is responsible for student recruitment and retention, and provides day-to-day administrative support to the Interdepartmental Program (IDP) in American Indian Studies. The MSO manages day-to-day operations in the Center, has signing authority over the budget, and works with student organizations and manages most logistical issues within the Center. Grant administration, some grant budget writing, contract management and general administrative support for events, fundraisers, student activities are generally managed by the MSO.

The director has administrative responsibility for the librarian (an academic appointment), the research coordinator (an academic appointment) and publications coordinator, which is a professional series appointment. The research coordinator is responsible for writing grants, developing grant writing

and research among faculty, staff and students. Administrative details for IAC fellowships and grants are managed by the MSO and accountant, but research issues are attended to by the director or research coordinator. The publications coordinator is responsible for managing journal and book production, as well as inventory and publications sales and services. The director is the editor of the *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* and general editor of many of the books published by the Center, but these positions are not necessarily part of the director's job description; the director volunteers his time and efforts at the editorial tasks. The director manages most relations with faculty, the faculty advisory committee, some relations with the IDP, and some with student organizations. The librarian is responsible for managing the library, making collection selections, and supporting students and research projects. The director works with staff, students, faculty, community members and the ethnic studies development officer to generate grants, work on fund raising, carry out research and community projects and participation. Student groups work with the student affairs officer, the MSO and when occasion demands, with the director.

Many activities are carried on at any one time within the Center: numerous grants, community projects, student activities and projects, research, recruitment and retention activities, book and journal production, as well as teaching and curriculum development. The pace is very fast, and one may easily have the impression that the activity outpaces our resources and administrative capabilities. Nevertheless, the Center is a very creative and active place, where students feel at home, and resources are made available for faculty, students, staff and community members who may wish to take advantage of them.

History and Background

The initial beginnings of the Center date to 1969-70, when students and community members asked UCLA to create curriculum and a research center concentrating on Native American history and culture. Many Native students at UCLA and community members believed that UCLA was not conducting research, or disseminating accurate information about Native American issues, history and culture. In 1970, Chancellor Young secured a five-year Ford Foundation Grant for support of the Center and the three other ethnic studies centers, Asian American, Afro-American and Chicano. Much of the mission of the Center was created at this time. The Ford grant supported research, grant writing, a library, publications, and curriculum development. In the early 1970s, the student affairs position was secured from the university, and was designed to focus on student retention and student recruitment. In the fiscal year 1975-76, UCLA agreed to assume financial support for the four ethnic studies centers, including the American Indian Studies Center. Also in 1975, in association with the new UCLA commitments to the four ethnic studies centers, the Institute of American Cultures (IAC) was created to distribute research grants and fellowships in ethnic studies. All four ethnic studies centers participate, and each year, by

means of competitive review processes, each center awards: one postdoctoral fellowship; one predoctoral fellowship; and a series of research grants to faculty, student, postdoctoral fellow applicants. Over the past 25 years, the fellowships and grants have been major sources of research support in the Center. In 1975, the Center was endowed with five faculty FTE (full time equivalents) and is charged with faculty recruitment and development of Native scholars and scholars working in the Native studies field. In 1982, the Center faculty created the IDP in American Indian Studies masters' degree program and developed a series of core courses. The IDP is endowed with few resources and no space, therefore the Center has provided administrative and resource support to the IDP. IDP students study and often work in the Center, and the student affairs officer has increasingly taken on many of the IDP's routine administrative duties. The faculty members are appointed in academic departments and agree to participate in the IDP and ORU. Faculty do not have appointments directly to the Center or IDP. In the mid-1990s, the Center and IDP faculty created a minor in American Indian Studies through the IDP and in the past few years the faculty have been developing a major, which we hope to implement in the next year or two, pending administrative procedures and approvals.

At present the Center is divided into five operational units. Administration integrates, supports, and monitors basic operations in all units. Publications disseminate research findings through production of a quarterly academic journal, books, monographs, videotapes, and other media. The student affairs officer recruits and counsels students, helps identify community needs, and seeks community guidance on research and education issues, and provides administrative support for the IDP in American Indian Studies. The library serves as a resource for students and scholars by maintaining a collection of books and periodicals on American Indian subject matter, and helps support research projects and grant development. The research department administers internal and external grants, and carries on and stimulates collaborative research projects. The American Indian Studies Center is dedicated to culturally appropriate research, information distribution, and community service for and about American Indians. Over the past two decades the Center has become nationally and internationally recognized as one of the foremost American Indian Studies programs.

Community, Teaching and Research

There has been some fear that most Indian studies programs are geared primarily to students services and that service orientations have often overwhelmed scholarly activities. The UCLA experience argues for inclusion of student organizations, peer counseling, and encouragement of student and faculty in regular social gatherings, research and Nation-building projects. The synergy created by bringing students, faculty and community leaders together far outweighs the concerns of ghettoization. The inclusion of student services

in the Indian/Native Studies organization allows for easier and more holistic management of resources and fosters development of an Indian studies community. We believe that American Indian faculty and staff share a community responsibility to advise, mentor, and nurture Indian undergraduate and graduate students from across the university, regardless of their major. At UCLA, there has been much success.

Taking the time to work with large numbers of Indian students or do community outreach work can detract from the research agenda. Research, outreach and Nation building projects should involve Indian Studies students so that teaching, mentoring, research and Nation building will mutually support one another, rather than detract from each other when they are considered separate specialized domains of activity. We encourage faculty to balance their community Nation-building efforts with their professional progress. In Indian Studies departments that control faculty promotion and tenure, Nation-building service, student mentoring and scholarship, and academic promotions should be one in the same. Faculty with interdisciplinary appointments or appointments outside of Indians Studies will have more difficulties balancing service, research and writing. Community service and outreach are often not rewarded adequately in mainstream institutions. Nevertheless, American Indian studies requires a holistic approach through the integration of research, community, education and a clear understanding that research must represent Native interests, address Native policies, and make education relevant to Native contemporary context. No other discipline or department other than American Indian Studies has such a charge, and few institutions have the ORU platform from which to accomplish the research, policy and education tasks that are the unique subject matter of American Indian Studies.

The American Indian Studies Center is the community base for American Indian students and those students interested in Native American issues at UCLA. There is no other place for Native students to gather, and the Center provides rooms, computer equipment, and administrative support to all Indian or non-Indian students who wish to join and participate in our research, education and cultural community. The AISC's brown bag presentations are opportunities for faculty, postdoctoral fellows, students, staff, and IAC grantees to report their research and engage in discussions with members of the Center's intellectual community. These brown bag lunches have become a revered tradition within the Center. Part of our student retention plan has been to provide a social and community environment for students. Student organizations such as AISA (American Indian Student Association), WIND (Women of Indian Descent), RAIN! (Retain American Indian Students Now!), AIR (American Indian Recruitment), and the Native graduate student organizations all meet and carry on their business and activities within the Center. At the Center, students plan lectures, conferences, fund-raising events, peer counseling meetings, regular organization meetings, recruitment drives, the annual Native students' graduation banquet, and the annual UCLA Pow-wow. Students are invited to attend hiring meetings

and are invited to participate in important policy decisions about the Center. Furthermore, the Center provides administrative and space support to the IDP in American Indian Studies, which has had over the years a scant budget and no space allowance. The IDP masters' students also congregate, study, and carry on organizational activities at the Center. In addition, Ph.D. students from various departments across campus become involved in the Center, especially when their research interests involve American Indian topics.

Every year the student groups sponsor and carry on several activities and projects both on and off campus. For example: mentor/undergraduate activities, bowling retreat and softball retreat, a book drive—700 books donated to benefit the Heman G. Stark Youth Correctional Facility, mentor/volunteer at the Los Angeles American Indian Clubhouse, Census 2000—Native American spokespersons and volunteers, Journey of the Sacred Hoop volunteers, Democratic National Convention/ Native American Caucus volunteers, UCLA Pow-Wow 2000 financial contributions & volunteers, Navajo Nation Supreme Court Oral Argument volunteers, UCLA Yellowthunder Scholarship Gala volunteers, Brown Bag lecture series—various presentations volunteers, 2000 MA thesis presentations, UAII (United American Indian Involvement) Sobriety Run volunteers, College Motivation Program volunteers, American Indian Recruitment Education Forum volunteers, and on campus Fry Bread Sales—proceeds donated to AISC Graduation Banquet.

The student activity within the Center has led to considerable interaction among the staff, some faculty, and undergraduate and graduate students. Interaction on a daily basis among the graduate and undergraduate students has had a positive effect on the undergraduates. Not only do the undergraduates meet and carry on activities with graduate students, the graduate students also serve as role models for the undergraduates. The Native undergraduates at UCLA have high graduation rates and many enter into professional or graduate school upon graduation. Native college graduation rates nationally average about 20 percent while the Native graduation rate at UCLA is in the 74-75 percent range. For many years the students associated with the Center have shown considerable maturity and leadership. They have often extended more limited actions of the UCLA administration in such areas of Native student recruitment and retention. Student participation in the Center has been one of the high points of the whole UCLA American Indian Studies experience.

Student and postdoctoral fellowship participation has been consistently high during the past 15 years. Since 1985 the Center has sponsored 16 postdoctoral fellows and 22 predoctoral fellows; 128 graduate students were supported with small research grants; 88 students were hired as Graduate Student Researchers; 189 students were hired in a variety of paid positions such as work study, assistant editor, clerical, library assistant, teaching assistant, and other positions; and at least 22 students were supported to attend conferences.

The Center and Native Communities

The Center's commitment to public service and to Native communities extends beyond the dissemination of the work of the Center. The Center distributes its work through the journal, book publications, conferences, visiting groups, visiting scholars, and conferences. Furthermore, students and faculty are actively engaged in community projects, research, policy analysis, community organizations, the Los Angeles Indian community, California Indian tribes, and with Indian organizations at the national level. The Center's mission as an Indian studies center requires extensive contact and engagement with Native communities. This aspect of the Center is seen in many projects and programs. Projects HOOP and Peacemaker are extensively involved in tribal communities and tribally controlled community colleges around the country. Project Spirit Bear is an effort to create pipelines of students from Native communities in California, the Native population in Los Angeles County, and other parts of the nation. The Tribal Legal Development Clinic provides assistance to tribes in California and across the nation for creating stronger legal codes, tribal courts and tribal constitutions. Community-based research and policy analysis has been a major initiative within the Center.

For many years, the Center has been involved in American Indian communities and the issues that affect them. The Center provides a valuable service to both the Indian community and the general population, both in California and nationwide. The Center sponsors national conferences, workshops, lectures, and symposia and offers a forum of scholarly exchange and opportunities for social interaction with American Indian students, staff and faculty. The Center also enters into partnership projects with the Los Angeles area American Indian Community. The Center's community service is also shown through its faculty's research projects and reports. Staff and faculty members are similarly involved in various community services and organizations. The Center also reaches out to the Indian communities in California, as well as the general population, with its annual Powwow, now in its fifteenth year. This event attracts both Indian and non-Indian members of the Los Angeles area, and all over California. Several graduate and undergraduate student associations are involved in providing valuable public services. The American Indian Student Association, American Indian Graduate Student Association, American Indian Law Students Association, WIND, RAIN!, and AIR are all actively engaged in Center research, recruitment and community activities.

The UCLA American Indian Studies Center is an example of an institutional arrangement where Native perspectives, academic research, teaching, policy analysis, community service, and student retention and recruitment can live well and productively together in a university community. The holistic arrangement at the UCLA Center reflects Native cultures and world views, and allows for easier construction of a Native intellectual and student community within the confines of a large university.