

From: [Campus Climate Proposal form](#)
To: [Libby Peterek](#); [Carrie Olson](#)
Subject: New submission from Campus Climate Proposals
Date: Thursday, April 21, 2016 2:03:49 PM

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What is your affiliation with UW-Madison? For group submissions, please respond for main contact.

- Academic Staff

Describe the concept. If already in use here or elsewhere, please indicate this.

I propose the University explore the expansion of the ethnic studies requirement into a series of several small, dialogue-based seminar courses focused on the following topics:

- Institutional racism (past and present) and white privilege
- Ethnic minorities in Wisconsin
- Religious difference, religious change
- Immigration (past and present)
- Gender, sexuality, LGBTQ

The learning goals of this new series of courses would be fully developed by the appropriate committees with campus-wide engagement, but would be similar to the goals of the current ethnic studies requirement, which are to “increase understanding of the culture and contributions of persistently marginalized racial or ethnic groups in the United States, and to equip students to respond constructively to issues connected with our pluralistic society and global community.” The goals of the existing requirement are noble and would serve as a good starting point, but the recent history of communities of color on campus make it clear that the existing courses are not having the desired positive effect on campus climate.

Wherever possible, these topics should focus on the people and places of Wisconsin (e.g. red-lining in Milwaukee vs. red-lining in other US cities). Topics may be added or revised in the future. These five topics need not necessarily correspond to five courses – they may be combined into fewer courses, provided that the learning goals are met. Furthermore, the expanded requirement should stipulate that this series of courses be taken EARLY in every undergraduate student’s career (i.e. within the first two years on campus), so the benefits of such learning can be shared to improve the campus and community in all facets of each student’s Wisconsin Experience.

How would this affect cultural change on campus?

The current ethnic studies requirement is lacking in two respects:

- Limited in time/scope: While the range of courses available to represent a significant range of underrepresented perspectives, the fact is that any one student is only likely to take one of these

courses, and exposure to the experience of one ethnic minority group or community does not guarantee students will seek out information on the experiences of other communities. One course simply does not offer enough time and space for students to “develop an understanding and appreciation for the complex cultural and physical worlds in which they live.” (<http://www.wisc.edu/about/mission/>)

- Limited in depth: A large lecture course may be the most efficient way to learn ABOUT diverse cultures and communities, but it is hardly a conducive environment for students to critically examine THEIR OWN cultural backgrounds. The issues surrounding identity, power and privilege, and biases are incredibly complex and can only be truly learned about in small, stable groups based on trust and dialog. A one-off workshop, online training, or even a single class is not enough to bring about the type of deep learning required to change our students and campus. Students taking courses in the new series should learn from each other’s experiences, with guidance and facilitation by the instructor.

For new ideas, how would you propose piloting this idea to see if it would work? If the idea is already in use at UW-Madison, how would you propose expanding or altering this program for greater impact?

Existing ethnic studies courses should be analyzed to determine which, if any, meet the learning goals of the proposed series, and which could do so with some revision. A pilot of the expanded requirement could be made in one or a few Schools/Colleges before rolling out to the entire university.

What resources would be needed to implement your suggestion?

Without question, the resources to offer additional courses required of all undergraduate students would be substantial. However, it is important that the institution send a message to the campus community that such an investment is central to achieving its institutional mission to help students become thoughtful members of a society that grows more diverse every day. Implementing a proposal such as this would have far-reaching impacts on all students and departments, and therefore should be studied in depth before moving forward.

The chancellor should empower a working group to consider this proposal and make recommendations within a fixed time-frame of one year. This working group should produce and present a public report after one year, and should also release monthly status updates to the campus.

The working group exploring this idea should consist of representatives from the faculty, academic and university staff from various offices (advising community, Registrar’s office, etc.), and graduate and undergraduate students. All of these representatives should receive compensation for their considerable service, which could be in the form of a course release for faculty and instructional staff, cash bonuses for other staff, and scholarships for students.