

## Message from the Editors

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But doth suffer a sea change  
into something rich and strange.  
*The Tempest*, Act I, Scene ii,

In Fall of 1969, the nation's first College of Ethnic Studies was established at San Francisco State College (now University, SFSU), leading the way for establishing Ethnic Studies programs at colleges and universities throughout the United States. Over fifty years later, on August 17, 2020, California Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1460 (AB 1460) requiring all students enrolled in the twenty-three California State University (CSU) campuses to take a three-unit class in Native American Studies, African American Studies, Asian American Studies, or Latina and Latino Studies (Weber, 2020). These courses fulfill the new General Education (GE) Area F: Ethnic Studies. This new law made the CSU system the first system of higher education to mandate Ethnic Studies as a university graduation requirement (CSU, n.d.). AB 1460 came amid a growing push for Ethnic Studies in public education following Black Lives Matter protests, attention to the rise of anti-Asian violence, and calls to dismantle systemic and unconscious racism—starting in schools. This was a defining historical moment, truly a “sea change,” for Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies; this profound transformational shift altered education to the point that it no longer resembles what it once was.

While the passage of AB 1460 was a tremendous victory, it was only half the battle. Implementing the new law was indeed “rich and strange” with multiple challenges as well as opportunities. This includes long-term institutional and profound personal change for those most actively involved. This Special Issue focuses on how

Asian American Studies departments and programs in the CSU were intensely engaged in this truly historical and defining historical moment. The efforts by Asian American Studies in the CSU have resulted in higher visibility for existing departments and programs, new tenure-track hiring lines, and even the creation of new Asian American Studies programs where none had existed before. There was also a significant “ripple effect” from AB 1460, particularly with similar legislation aimed at requiring Ethnic Studies in the California Community College (CCC) system and in California’s secondary schools. The nation is watching what is going on in California.

**Part 1: Forging Ahead** begins with the various ways Asian American Studies practitioners worked to implement AB 1460. Lo, Harlow, and Fong detail how students from California State University, Sacramento (Sacramento State) were central to and propelled the fight for Ethnic Studies, and ultimately the passage of AB 1460. This article also discusses the impact of ETHN 14: Introduction to Asian American Studies (GE: Area F) and highlights how students became empowered when they took the course and came to see themselves as agents of social change. The article by Sacramento and Le describes how CSU East Bay developed an Ethnic Studies Pedagogy Faculty Learning Community (FLC) to infuse Asian American Studies across disciplines; the FLC’s main objective is to engage faculty in advancing their Ethnic Studies pedagogies and align courses with the learning outcomes of the new requirement. Next, we learn from Hom, Kafai, and Pacleb about their praxis in building an interdisciplinary curriculum to amplify the presence of Asian American Studies at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona. This was done by approving cross-listed course proposals and securing resources to support Ethnic Studies faculty. The following article by Kwan, de Bourbon, and Cox discusses how Asian American Studies (AAS) and Native American and Indigenous Studies (NAIS) faculty at San José State University (SJSU) built coalitions to respond to pressures from the university for a quick response to AB 1460. Key points in their effort were: (1) the promises and pitfalls of General Education in a neoliberal university system, (2) strategies for coalition alliance between the programs of AAS and NAIS, and (3) opportunities for growth and expansion.

**Part 2: Challenges and Opportunities** offers insightful as well as critical perspectives on the implementation of AB 1460. ChorSwang Ngin provides an ethnography on the founding of the Department

of Asian and Asian American Studies (AAAS) at California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA). Ngin was a pioneer in the creation of AAAS in 1993 at Cal State LA when neither Asian Studies nor Asian American Studies existed. The building of collegial relationships across many disciplines on campus over the years, especially with Pan-African Studies (PAS), Chicano/Hispanic Studies (CHS), and Latin American Studies (LAS), was vital to AAAS when it was threatened with suspension in 2010. The support that was built paved the way for the founding of the College of Ethnic Studies at Cal State LA in 2020, and with the passage of AB 1460, AAAS was able to hire four faculty members to finally achieve some stability. In contrast with Ngin's broad historical overview, junior faculty who are on the frontlines of teaching the courses that fulfill the AB 1460 requirements offer their contemporary critical reflections. Nguyen (SJSU), Buyco (California State Polytechnical University, San Luis Obispo), Lin (CSU Long Beach), Makhijani (CSU Northridge), Nojan (SJSU), and Yamashita (Sacramento State) identify the conflicts, tensions, and contradictions that have emerged both within the classroom and in the institutions where they work. Beyond the campus and the classroom, another perspective is offered by Villavicencio and Macapugay, both members of the California Commission on Asian Pacific Islander American Affairs (CAPIAA). The two commissioners take a systemwide approach and argue that both the Stop AAPI Hate movement as well as the movement to require Ethnic Studies were pivotal for the California Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Student Achievement Program. This historic investment of eight million dollars in ongoing funding to the CCC and eight million dollars in ongoing funding to the CSU will serve underserved AANHPI higher education students. Villavicencio and Macapugay offer a reflective analysis of cross-stakeholder collaboration to formulate the Community to Capitol advocacy framework as a guide for future state-based advocacy.

**Part 3: Critical New Spaces** analyses AB 1460 and how the CSU was uniquely poised to be the first system of higher education to require Ethnic Studies for all students. However, there were important areas that were missed by both the faculty advocates inside the CSU as well as state leaders who pushed for the legislation. To be clear, the CSU system fought hard against AB 1460, and the Ethnic Studies requirement would not be a reality if not for legislative action. Bui (University of California, Irvine) provides thoughtful observations as someone who is from outside of the CSU, but is involved

in the national, community, and student-led movement for Ethnic Studies in the state and across the nation. He discusses several factors in how and why the CSU was able to establish the nation's first Ethnic Studies graduation requirement. Specific factors include: (1) academic senate faculty participation in governance, (2) engaging student activism and apathetic faculty, (3) forging inter-institutional collaboration across school systems, (4) fighting for faculty unions and political associations, (5) reducing over-professionalization of the field, and (6) challenging administrative surveillance and infringement on academic freedom. While the passage of AB 1460 was indeed historic and monumental, Mostiller and Cunanan compare and contrast teaching an introductory Asian American Studies course at a comprehensive public state university (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona) and a private, predominantly white private institution (Gonzaga University). The authors bring together their shared experiences teaching Asian American Studies and Ethnic Studies in these two very different institutions. The next two articles in this part raise important questions, challenges, and points of contention with who were *not* included in AB 1460: Wong-Campbell (Ohio State University) and Johnston-Guerrero (University of Denver) focus on the fact that AB 1460 gives attention to the four historically defined racialized core groups in Ethnic Studies, but is silent on the role of Critical Mixed-Race Studies in advancing its mandate. The authors conducted a thorough content analysis of CSU academic catalogs and found there were few courses explicitly mentioning multiraciality across the system. Similarly, Sataraka (CSU Bakersfield) draws attention to the lack of recognition of Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (NH/PI) communities and proposes Critical Pacific Islands and Oceanic Studies as an important curricular intervention, raising serious concerns about the risk of continual NH/PI erasure.

**Part 4: Ripple Effect** shows the direct impact of AB 1460 on Assembly Bill 101, which led to the California Ethnic Studies high school graduation requirement. The mandate will take effect starting with the graduating class of 2029-30, although high schools must start to offer courses starting in the 2025-26 school year. There is an important thread that runs through this section. We start with Gow (Sacramento State), Buenavista (CSU Northridge), Jasmine Nguyen of Diversify Our Narrative (DON), teacher of twenty years and cofounder of Educate to Empower Virginia Nguyen, Tintiangco-Cubales (SFSU), and Umemoto (UCLA) who discuss the future of high school Ethnic

Studies in California and raise provocative questions, including: Given that more than sixty percent of teachers in California self-identify as white, and many have never taken an Ethnic Studies class, who will teach this new Ethnic Studies curriculum? Who will create the textbooks and lesson plans that will be used in these courses, and how do we ensure they remain rooted in foundational Ethnic Studies principals? Next, Lee (Sonoma State) and Fu (Cal State LA) draw attention to the challenges they faced as they co-authored the high school curriculum on Asian American activism for a forthcoming textbook about Asian American and Pacific Islander Studies. Significantly, the authors expose how collaborative projects between university professors and high school instructors can unintentionally reproduce power inequities by privileging researchers' content knowledge over the pedagogical expertise of high school instructors. In striking contrast (down to the papers' titles!), Concordia (Santa Barbara Unified School District Ethnic Studies program coordinator) and Tintiangco-Cubales (SFSU) emphasize the need for teachers and community practitioners to explore what they argue is necessary to the Ethnic Studies curriculum content for students in their school classrooms. These articles address how university instructors can collaborate more effectively with high school instructors and contribute to Asian American Studies curriculum development in ways that actually engage high school instructors' curricular and pedagogical expertise. However, the last article in this part by Fabionar and Mills of the University of San Diego cautions against the "flattening," or watering down, of Asian American Studies in emerging curricula and instructional practices that can take place in some school districts the authors have observed. Fabionar and Mills discuss four forms of flattening—subsuming, reducing, decontextualizing, and omitting—and offer recommendations for responding to these tendencies. Taken together, the articles in Part 4 highlight the challenges of implementing an Ethnic Studies requirement in primary schools, with many similarities to the implementation of AB 1460 in the CSU.

**Part 5: Self-Care** was specifically included because we are realistic about the difficulties of major curriculum change in education, especially a curriculum as politically charged as Ethnic Studies. Daus-Magbual (SFSU), Desai (CSU East Bay), Donnell (SFSU), Kang (University of California, Berkeley), and Yoo (SFSU) draw attention to the growing interest in FLCs as a tool to build community and increase teaching effectiveness for faculty in institutions of higher

education. This article explores the positive impact of an Ethnic Studies FLC at SFSU on increasing faculty capacity to improve pedagogy and better serve undergraduates who are first-generation, low-income, or who may come from underrepresented Asian American and Pacific Islander groups. Based on open-ended comments from surveys, the following areas of need emerged: (1) expanding faculty capacity to support students holistically, (2) developing pedagogies of care in the classroom, and (3) creating spaces for faculty to thrive and cultivate community. The last article in this volume by Moon, a certified Mindfulness, Meditation, and Yoga teacher, and Fong of Sacramento State acknowledges the emotional stress of and overwork by Asian American Studies faculty, especially in the CSU. This article provides helpful mindfulness and self-care strategies to better adapt to changes, build strong personal and professional relationships, and recover from setbacks. Mindfulness and self-care encourage maintaining a healthy relationship with oneself, and this translates into a more focused, attentive approach to the multiple demands of academic life.

What about the future?

We know this volume is only a brief snapshot in time. The implications of AB 1460 in the long-term are definitely to be seen and adapted to, but with this “sea change,” Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies departments and programs are beginning to evolve with unexpected alterations in circumstances, attitudes, or perspectives. In the meantime, there are lessons we can glean here and now.

First and foremost, policy matters. AB 1460 was authored by Assemblymember Shirley Weber, who was a professor of Africana Studies at San Diego State University. It is clear Ethnic Studies as a graduation requirement would not have happened without legislative action. Second, AB 1460 implementation was difficult, messy, and uneven, but necessary. All CSU campuses were not the same. Some CSU campuses had strong Ethnic Studies and Asian American Studies departments and programs, but most did not. Some CSUs were able to keep all Ethnic Studies General Education Area F courses within their own departments or programs, while others chose to cross-list their courses with other departments. Yet, faculty did the best they could in the situations and campuses they were in. Third, the commitment from faculty despite the challenges was inspiring. For example, co-editor of this special issue, Dr. Yvonne Kwan, is an Assistant Professor who

worked tirelessly on the Ethnic Studies requirement and often bravely challenged antagonistic senior faculty on her campus at SJSU. Through it all, she was still recommended for tenure and promoted to Associate Professor. Fourth, self-care for faculty in the middle of this struggle is more important than ever. All three editors of this special issue sat through hours of Zoom meetings with Asian American Studies colleagues across the state who were deep in the middle of implementing AB 1460. Many meetings were filled with complaining, frustration, and often tears before any successes were realized. It was at one of these meetings we decided the efforts needed to be documented and there was a need to have at least one or two articles dedicated to self-care. It was vital that we were able to support each other, share our struggles, provide a space for people to vent, and eventually offer the opportunity for many to reflect on their experiences. The culmination is this special issue.

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