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MEETING TO EXAMINE PAST, FUTURE OF ETHNIC STUDIES

Born of the anger and social corrections of the late 1960s, ethnic studies programs at the University of California have reached a mature middle age.

About 40 of the university's top ethnic studies scholars will meet at its Santa Barbara campus Dec. 2 and 3 to look back at three decades of progress and to consider ways of uniting for an even more progressive future.

The conference, titled "Celebrating 30 years of Ethnic Studies Research: A Dialogue Among UC Ethnic Studies Faculty," features many of the nation's most prominent ethnic studies researchers.

"This event is a first nationwide," said Jacqueline Bobo, chair of UCSB's Women's Studies Program and a member of the conference steering committee.

"And it reflects well on us here at UCSB that we recognized the importance of a coming together of leading scholars in this area at a critical period for ethnic studies."

The idea originated with Claudine Michel, director of UCSB's Center for Black Studies, who put together a conference steering committee intended to represent both diversity and unity.

Included were representatives of

Black studies, Women's studies, Chicano studies, Asian-American studies and Native American studies.

"Since their inception as small, underfunded, understaffed experiments, ethnic studies departments in the UC system have taken their places as first-rate centers of academic research," Michel said.

"They have broadened the scope of American academia, developing new theories and methodologies along the way.

And all the while, they have sought to maintain contact with the communities they represent through ongoing outreach efforts to improve people's lives."

Today's ethnic studies departments are vital places on college campuses with academic standards as rigorously guarded as those of any other discipline, Michel said.

The conference will include four keynote speakers and seven panel discussions.

Giving the addresses will be Cedric Robinson ("Knowledge Museums and the Stream of Consciousness"), a professor of political science and Black studies at UCSB; Norma Alarcón ("The Interminable Futures of Ethnic Studies in (Post) Modernity") of UC Berkeley; Ling-Chi Wang ("Contestation, Accommodation, and Transformation: Asian American Studies in a Research University, 1969-1999") of UC Berkeley; and Inés Ávila-Hernández ("Intellectual Sovereignities/Representational Solidarities: A Native American Studies Perspective") of UC Davis.

Discussion group categories will be "Ethnic Studies: Foundations, Linkages, and Dialogue," "Political Consciousness, Culture and Feminism," "Sexuality, Nationalism, and Cultural Formations," "Community and Education," "Research, Pedagogy, and Critical Interdisciplinary Paradigms," "Expanding the Canon: Emerging Scholars," and "Technology / Methodologies."

Working closely with Michel in the planning were Bobo, Francisco Lomelí of the Department of Chicano Studies, Gérard Pigeon of the Department of Black Studies, Denise Segura of the Department of Sociology and the Center for Chicano Studies, Inez Talamantez of the Department of Religious Studies and Nolan Zane of the Department of Asian American Studies and the Graduate School of Education.

Such close involvement with other departments was the key to attracting the conference's distinguished field of scholars, Michel said.

"Everyone is well-represented," Michel said. "We have a good mix of all the ethnic groups. It wasn't easy to get these top senior scholars from each of the disciplines to come."

Bobo agreed that working as a team was key.

"Organizing such a large event as a UC-wide ethnic studies conference and bringing together scholars of this magnitude and commitment was a demonstration of the benefits of solidarity," Bobo said.

It is Michel's hope that the conference will lead to an annual meeting of UC's ethnic scholars and will serve as a springboard for a UC-wide ethnic studies journal produced at UCSB.

This year's conference proceedings will be published.

The conference opens at 8:15 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 2 in UCSB's Corwin Pavilion and continues through dinner. Participants are back at Corwin again continue through dinner.

The conference is open to the public and free of charge.

On campus parking costs \$5 and is available at the kiosk at the east gate to the campus off Ward Memorial Boulevard.

About UC Santa Barbara

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.