

Black Studies Minor Request Denied by PSU Faculty Senate

by Jerry Garner

A plan by the Black Studies Department at PSU to offer a minor in Black Studies has been rejected by the University's Faculty Senate. Dr. Darrell Millner, head of the Black Studies Department, has requested that the Faculty Senate consider his request seeking approval for his department to issue a minor. The Faculty Senate rejected the minor proposal on the recommendation of the University's curriculum committee.

Besides denying a minor approval for Black Studies, the Faculty Senate also turned down minors requests for Women Studies, Linguistics, Professional Writing, Dance, and Urban Studies and Planning. The committee recommended minors approval in Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Foreign Languages and Literature, Geography, Geology, International Studies, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Sociology, and Speech Communication.

In a memo to the University Faculty Senate dated January 22, the committee recommended that the Senate deny Black Studies and the other departments minors. The curriculum committee said the departments were denied minors approval because "Certificate programs were considered to be so close to being a minor themselves that there was no need to have a minor within such programs."

The Faculty Senate's decision denying Black Studies as a minor was a mistake according to Dr. Millner. "Approving a minor for Black Studies would allow the department to continue its evolution into a contributing partner in the University community and encourage the continued growth of interdepartmental and interdisciplinary cooperative support. It would provide an option and opportunity to PSU students of all colors, backgrounds and disciplinary interests to expand their interracial knowledge and interaction," said Dr. Millner.

Dr. Millner said granting the Black Studies department a minor could have been implemented without any additional cost to the University or the students. He is also critical of the method by which the Faculty Senate denied Black Studies a minor. Millner said he wasn't given a chance to discuss the merits of the Black Studies proposal before a Faculty Senate meeting held Feb. 9. "I left feeling very bitter about the arbitrary way that both the Senate and its subcommittee on curriculum have responded to the Black Studies department proposal."

In another memo to Roderic Diman, Chair of the Faculty Senate, dated Feb. 10, Millner voiced his disappointment regarding the Senate's actions. "As chairperson of the Senate, it is your responsibility to assure that fair, equitable, and non-discriminatory treatment is available to all segments of the University, Black Studies included. It is very clear that the irregularities directed at our proposal violate those principles of treatment."

Millner said he was given assurances by Diman and former curriculum committee chair, Barbara Sestak, that he would have an opportunity to discuss the minor proposal at the Feb. 9 meeting. Furthermore, Millner said he was puzzled as to the reasons the proposals for the Linguistics and Professional Writing minors, which the Senate said were in the same category as Black Studies, were allowed to be discussed at the Senate meeting.

Millner has voiced his concerns to PSU's President Sicuro regarding the actions of both the Faculty Senate and the curriculum sub-committee. He



Dr. Darrell Millner, head of Black Studies Department at PSU, accused Faculty Senate of irregularities in handling minor proposal request. Photo by Richard J. Brown

said this is a Feb. 10 memo to Sicuro: "As I understand it, the Faculty Senate is a deliberative body that makes recommendations on curriculum and other policy matters to you for final decision. Due to the arbitrary and discriminatory manner in which the Black Studies proposal for a minor has been treated by the Senate and its curriculum sub-committee, I request that you suspend any further action on minor recommendations forthcoming until such time as an investigation of the irregularities described in the at-

tached memo can be clarified and rectified." Millner told Sicuro that continuation to process the minors of other departments and allow them to become a part of the next catalogue copy, while the Black Studies proposal is being held hostage, "will do irreparable harm to the Department's ability to attract and serve students."

Millner said in January he requested a meeting with Sicuro; Executive Vice President Margaret Dobson; and Dean Paudler, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to discuss the minor proposal. He said he was told by Dobson that Sicuro preferred not to be directly involved in the Faculty Senate. Millner recalls that he told Sicuro in a Feb. 10 memo that under normal circumstances such a stance is preferable. "Unfortunately, this situation has become abnormal due to the special negative treatment and irregular procedures that have been directed at the Black Studies proposal. I do not believe it's in the best interests of the University to allow such a miscarriage of process to occur in such a sensitive area."

Millner was told by Sicuro through Dean Paudler that his request would be handled through normal channels. In response to Sicuro's statements, Millner said in the Feb. 10 memo to Sicuro, "It is my belief that Black Studies at PSU has more than a 'normal' role as far as academic departments are concerned. It has a special relationship to external community relations that do not apply to more traditional units."

Millner believes a minor in Black Studies would enhance the needs of both Black and white students at the University and help ease racial tensions. "We are fundamentally interested in helping to solve the racial problems that have plagued the country for too long. These larger problems will not be solved with an exclusive focus on making Black students better able to survive the potential damages of racism."

HUD Celebrates Black History Month

Secretary Samuel R. Pierce, Jr., today announced activities sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development to celebrate Black History Month.

"This year's theme - The Afro-American and The Constitution: Colonial Times To The Present - proclaims the historical contribution that Black Americans have made to our great nation," Secretary Pierce said.

Black History Month activities will kick-off February 3 and continue through February 27.

"This year, Americans will be celebrating the 200th anniversary of our constitution. In conjunction with this special celebration, HUD will be focusing its activities on the impact of this monumental document in the areas of housing, education, employment and family," the HUD Secretary added.

Secretary Pierce encourages HUD employees to take part in this month's events which will include authoritative speakers; forums and panel discussions on: the Constitution in education, employment and housing; the Constitution and the Family; the Constitution and drug testing in the work place; a free concert; and a play on Black America, performed by the Shepherd Elementary School, Washington, D.C.

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