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## PROPOSAL FOR A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN AMERICAN INDIAN STUDIES

David Draper

One of the most pressing problems encountered in the Indian community, the severe lack of American Indian professionals, calls for an organized effort in encouraging Native Americans to pursue postgraduate education. This lack of professionals is proportionately greater than in any other ethnic minority. The graduate program in American Indian studies is viewed as a necessary step in alleviating this problem. For example, there are now over forty Indian community colleges that require staffing by qualified Native American teaching specialists.

Further, a structure needs to be established to encourage interdisciplinary approaches in American Indian research. Traditional disciplinary boundaries are recognized as being limited in their understanding of Indian culture. Political, economic, and religious structures, for example, are not easily isolated in traditional Indian cultures. The graduate program would encourage understanding of American Indian cultures from a holistic perspective.

Of interdisciplinary importance is the potential for bringing discrete disciplinary methodologies to bear on a single research problem. Many disciplines have developed their own respective research strategies that are perpetuated only in that discipline. One of the strengths of this graduate program would be the application of interdisciplinary approaches to the solutions of contemporary Indian issues and/or problems.

The graduate program would also provide impetus in the evaluation and critical assessment of existing methodologies utilized in American Indian research. For example:

1. The relationship of the research undertaken by the "outsider" compared with that accomplished by the "insider" needs to be more fully explored.
2. Much of the research of the past needs to be reexamined in view of recent developments in theory and methodology.

3. Much of the research of the past has not been tested in context for its validity.
4. How often have the respective Native American societies been approached in terms of their own research needs and research priorities?

It is hoped that the M.A. program will address itself to these issues and problems and make significant contributions to the development of American Indian studies as an academic discipline. Specific contexts for accomplishing these goals will be outlined below.

Few established disciplines have focused on contemporary problems and issues of the native American. Although the achievements of traditional disciplines (e.g., ethnography, museum collections, anthropology) are not considered as being without merit, the potential contribution to the involved Indian populations has not been explored fully.

One of the existing difficulties in American Indian studies stems from the isolation of individuals interested in promoting Native American scholarship. The potential derived from establishing a context for the interaction of Indian scholars cannot be underrated. It is expected that the presence of an M.A. program would attract highly qualified faculty/scholars, not only for permanent positions but in visiting capacities as well. The stimulus and motivation provided by extended interaction (fostered by a permanent program/center) would, we feel, greatly enhance future achievements in American Indian studies.

The establishment of the M.A. program would not only provide for additional faculty lines here at UCLA, but would also increase the opportunities for inviting scholars to participate in visiting positions.

Further, there exists a need for a flexible program that will serve the needs of students with academic orientations, but that will be responsive to those students wishing to pursue the application of academic resources in practical, applied contexts. It is anticipated that the applied focus will, in the future, be expanded to include internship programs to provide additional training for those students desiring to pursue positions in service organizations.

Interrelated with other goals of the Center, the graduate program will serve as a catalyst for the areas of publications, faculty development, and research. Outstanding student and faculty papers shall be collected and published to fill the need for textbooks on various American In-

dian subjects. Promising students will be identified and encouraged to seek faculty positions upon graduation. Research projects at the Center can employ and train these students.

Lastly, the establishment of an M.A. degree in American Indian studies will be unique for institutions of higher education in America; no such program currently exists. Although graduate programs exist for studies relating to other minority groups, we believe it essential to initiate graduate curricula for the American Indian communities.

The degree proposal is being designed for the maximum benefit of both Indian and non-Indian students who wish to pursue study and research in this area. With this initial M.A. degree in American Indian studies, a great potential emerges for attracting interested students on a national level.

## Resources

The UCLA administration has exhibited a strong commitment to fostering ethnic studies. As a result, the UCLA campus has many resources, some unique, for the development of this graduate program. The cooperation of the large Native American population in Los Angeles is a prerequisite for training students in field-oriented research and would be of benefit to these same students in the application and critical assessment of research methodologies.

The number of courses currently being offered in departments on the UCLA campus illustrates the support of academic units from such diverse areas as law and library science to the expressive arts. Interest has been shown by faculty members in developing additional graduate courses in their respective areas of specialization.

The existence of a library/documentation center within the American Indian Studies Center has stimulated the acquisition of additional materials relevant to American Indian research. In addition to the holdings of the University Research Library, the bibliographic and archival resources of the American Indian Studies Center library are particularly impressive.

The Faculty Development Program further exhibits the support of the UCLA administration for potential ethnic scholars. Working under senior faculty supervision, these junior faculty are aided in developing course offerings and in using their released time for their own research projects. These developing scholars

will make a valuable contribution to the graduate program.

The executive vice-chancellor recently committed several institutional faculty lines for the purpose of strengthening ethnic studies. This policy makes possible the recruitment of faculty by the Center at all levels of the academic ladder.

The academic, counseling, and financial services available to Indian students through the Graduate Advancement Program exhibit further support of the university for ethnic programs. We believe, however, a separate fellowship program is needed for Indian studies. In order to attract young scholars, we will be exploring the possibility of nationally advertised and competitive awards for predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows who would involve themselves in research and/or teaching through the Center. These fellows would not only benefit the Center and themselves, but through daily contact with other Indian scholars would also establish a network with potential for nationwide impact.

Curriculum at UCLA is always administered by departments who already have titled courses with variable content. These may be used to introduce new course offerings with new content in these courses requiring only the approval of the respective faculties. The AISC plans to encourage departments and faculty members to sponsor new courses on American Indian subjects.

The Council on Educational Development (C.E.D.) currently serves an important function in promoting ethnic studies at UCLA. The C.E.D. sponsors interdisciplinary courses of high quality and high potential. Through this department courses may be tested as to feasibility, visiting professors may be brought in, and graduate students with unique qualifications may be encouraged to develop courses.

The University review process for graduate degree proposals is complex, and a year may pass before the document is approved or denied. Therefore, the M.A. program probably could not begin until Academic Year 1978-79. Because the program requires two years in residence, the first students would be graduated Spring Quarter 1980.

Meanwhile, the Center could begin recruiting faculty and initiating courses that will be pertinent to the M.A. program. The core seminars envisioned might be offered sequentially through C.E.D. during the academic year 1977-78. In addition recruitment can be initiated for

language teaching specialists. We will be offering, alternately, courses on widely spoken languages, for example, Navajo and Lakota.

Thus far the discussion has focused on the curriculum involved in establishing the graduate degree; yet the wider implications for strengthening undergraduate curriculum appear obvious. It is expected that the presence of the graduate program will promulgate expansion of course offerings and general improvement of undergraduate instruction. The curriculum committee will also encourage the respective faculties and departments to expand course offerings at the undergraduate level.

Curriculum remains a problematic area for American Indian Studies programs. We see development of an adequate curriculum as being, on the one hand, dependent on the necessity for faculty development. The lack of Native Americans with Ph.D.'s has been noted, yet might be expanded to include all qualified personnel within the academic system. On the other hand, expanding existing curriculums is essentially dependent on generating sensitive, relevant research. It is assumed that the results of this research will increase bibliographic resources through publication and will serve as a data base in the creating of new textual materials.

In conclusion the approach undertaken in developing this M.A. proposal is viewed as a unitary one, bringing together research, publications, graduate training, and curriculum development. Hence, curriculum is being considered within the broader framework of developing American Indian solutions to American Indian problems.

### **Degree Requirements**

The basic objectives we will seek in developing our potential graduate students include:

1. Developing research and writing skills
2. Developing a background in methodologies for American Indian research
3. Contributing to general knowledge of the Native American in historical perspective
4. Presenting an adequate grasp of contemporary issues and problems

Apart from the required courses, we envision a flexibility within the program that will be responsive to the needs of individual students and their respective interests. Within this broader framework we anticipate a series of foci to serve as guides in the planning of individual student curriculums. Among the possible categories we might include the following:

1. Program in Indian Historical Documents
2. Program in Community or Professional Social Research
3. Program in Community Relations Analyst
4. Program in Traditional Arts

Whereas the academic focus will serve the needs of teachers (both at the secondary and community college levels) and students expecting to pursue Ph.D. programs, the applied, internship programs will be useful to those wishing to work in community contexts (service agencies, etc.). These two categories need not be viewed as being mutually exclusive in membership. A student, for example, might wish a background in differing research methodologies in order to initiate related work in a social service organization.

Proposal of general requirements (*tentative*) for the M.A. degree in American Indian Studies:

1. Admission to the graduate program will be granted only at the beginning of the academic year. This practice conforms with the requirements of the departments involved.
2. Successful completion of nine courses will be required by students enrolled in the graduate program.
3. The student will be evaluated by a comprehensive oral examination at the end of the first year in the program. The committee members administering this examination should be selected with the approval of the graduate committee of the program. Two members of the examining committee, including the chairman, should be individuals drawn from disciplines participating in the graduate program. Whenever possible, an Indian scholar will serve on the oral committee.
4. A thesis or written comprehensive examination will be required of all candidates for the M.A. in American Indian Studies. The selection of faculty for the thesis committee should follow the guidelines outlined above for the oral examination.
5. Competency in a Native American language shall be encouraged for all candidates. The level of proficiency required of the student shall be established by the faculty members of the program who will also develop the procedures to be utilized in testing the candidate. The Center envisions developing courses, in addition to those offered in the past, in Native American languages where (1) qualified native speakers are available to develop new of-

ferings, and (2) where there is a large population that continues to use the native language (e.g., Navajo or Sioux).

6. The core requirements for the graduate degree shall include a three quarter sequence of graduate seminars. The focus of the first seminar, "American Indian Cultures: Sources for Research," will focus on research methods, including bibliographic resources and materials. The two ensuing quarters will be devoted to "Contemporary Issues in American Indian Research." These seminars, designed to be interdisciplinary in perspective, are

expected to cover the theoretical as well as practical approaches to current problems in American Indian research. It is proposed that nonpolitical problems be emphasized, such as those encountered by the Native American cultural specialist. Further, student projects will be required, thus providing the students with (1) actual involvement in the solution of contemporary issues, (2) faculty guidance in identifying issues and relevant resources available, and (3) a peer framework for discussion and a forum for the exchange of ideas.