

Developing African Studies



This initiative seeks to build a foundation for institutional development in African Studies. This is an opportune moment to focus on sub-Saharan Africa and its shifting global connections. Accelerated urbanization, new mineral discoveries, and land grabs for agriculture and conservation are reshaping African cities and rural areas. New investment from China, Brazil and India and the continued privatization of state resources are bringing capital and development, but also concerns about neocolonialism and the limits of democratization. The explosion of mobile internet access has created a generation with unprecedented connections to global media and African diasporic communities in Europe and the USA, as well as forms of political and economic organization that bypass state-controlled institutions. These transformations are reflected in movements in music, art, literature and religion that are producing hybrids of global and distinctively African elements. Existing hierarchies around gender and sexuality, age and generation, ethnicity and identity, and labor and capital face challenges and contestation in the courts and on the streets, with uncertain outcomes.

Currently, UCR finds itself in a paradoxical situation: while it touts its diversity, it neglects the world's second-largest and second-most-populous continent. UCR has one of the largest percentages of students of African descent among the UCs, with the highest graduation rate, alongside the fewest course offerings and faculty working in African Studies of any UC campus except Merced. These shortcomings compromise our teaching and research, our students' knowledge of the world, access to external funding, and our aspirations to AAU membership. The CIS supported initiative focusing on sub-Saharan Africa and its shifting global connections aims to start to remedy this situation.

Our efforts aim to build the groundwork for expanding African Studies in the curriculum, through an undergraduate major/minor and a graduate designated emphasis; developing faculty and student exchanges and increasing recruitment of African students; and developing proposals for expansion of Africanist faculty at UCR.

Initiative Members (African Studies Steering Committee)

Ademide Adelus-Adeluyi, Assistant Professor, History

Jody Benjamin, Assistant Professor, History

Derick Fay, Associate Professor, Anthropology

Anthonia Kalu, Professor, Comparative Languages and Lit./Gender and Sexuality Studies

Kara Miller, PhD Candidate, Anthropology

Yolanda Moses, Professor, Anthropology

Makeda Parker, Lecturer, Dance

Jade Sasser, Assistant Professor, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Alison Scott, Associate University Librarian for Collections and Scholarly Communication

Kenneth Simons, Director, African Student Programs

Patricia Smith-Hunt, Librarian and Subject Specialist for African and African-American Studies

Activities

For 2016-2017, the efforts of this CIS workshop will focus on three areas:

- 1) hosting a seminar series aimed at
 - a) bringing leading Africanist scholars to campus,
 - b) bringing in individuals to provide guidance in program building (e.g. NSF Program Officers, directors of African Studies centers elsewhere, etc.), and
 - c) providing a forum for Africanists at UCR to present their work and become acquainted with one another's work;
- 2) identifying and building networks between existing Africa-related resources on campus, including developing linkages with our African student organizations, in order to identify speakers and curricular innovations (e.g. African language instruction) that support their interests;
- 3) building affiliations between UCR and a select group of 4-5 African universities;

The efforts will continue to lay the groundwork for expanding African Studies in the curriculum, through a graduate designated emphasis, and an undergraduate major/minor; developing faculty and student exchanges and increasing recruitment of African students; and developing proposals for external support for African Studies and expansion of Africanist faculty at UCR.

For more information visit: africanstudies.ucr.edu

This project is funded by a Humanities Interdisciplinary Projects (HIP) Award. The Center's annual HIP Awards support projects of varying format and focus in the humanities fields or cross-college collaborations with a humanities emphasis. The Center's Advisory Committee seeks to fund interdisciplinary work across the academic community with potential appeal to a wider public audience. Examples of projects HIP awards may support include, but are not limited to, seed funding for larger grant proposals, cross-college and cross-school collaborations and workshops, conferences, symposia, and public lectures.