

University Senate

Proposed: September 28, 2018

Adopted: September 28, 2018

By voice vote with no
abstentions

**RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH A DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN
AND AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES**

WHEREAS Columbia's Institute for Research in African American Studies (IRAAS) has become one of our nation's top-tier programs in African American studies since its founding in 1993, and

WHEREAS over the past decade, IRAAS has grown and its presence has expanded across the campus and into New York City, and

WHEREAS the institute's faculty offer a wide array of courses, and produce undergraduate majors, concentrators and master's degree graduates, and

WHEREAS in contrast to the vast majority of its peer institutions, African American Studies at Columbia are housed in an institute and not an actual department, and

WHEREAS the institute has little power to independently shape the intellectual project of African American Studies in the Arts and Sciences through dedicated faculty hires, and its faculty are not fully enfranchised in the faculty governance process, deficiencies that would be remedied with departmental status, and

WHEREAS Without a department, Columbia stands to lose stature amid a rapidly gaining field of contenders, and

WHEREAS by creating a department, Columbia would reclaim its historical place in the field, being located near the community of Harlem, a historic cultural and political heart of the Black Diaspora,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate approve the creation of a Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the proposal be forwarded to the Trustees for appropriate action.

Proponent:

Education Committee

(see reverse)

Proposal to Create

an

AFRICAN AMERICAN AND AFRICAN DIASPORA STUDIES DEPARTMENT

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Executive Summary

African American and African Diaspora Studies is a vibrant, interdisciplinary intellectual enterprise that has transformed the way we think about the United States and the world. The scholarship produced by these fields has enhanced and expanded traditional academic disciplines. Currently African American Studies at Columbia is housed in the Institute for Research in African American Studies (IRAAS). Since its founding in 1993, IRAAS has been recognized as one of our nation's preeminent programs in African American Studies. We propose that the University now establish an African American and African Diaspora Studies Department within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. IRAAS will continue to function as a research and programming unit within the new department.

Without autonomy in hiring, without a supported doctoral program, and without support for a viable capital campaign, African American Studies at Columbia cannot be expected to continue this impressive trajectory. African American and African Diaspora Studies should be institutionalized as a Department with the ability to appoint its own faculty. A strong African American and African Diaspora Studies Department will play a vital role in training students to be engaged and informed global citizens, conducting research that helps to foster a greater understanding of the challenges that confront us, and building and sustaining strong community ties both within and outside of Columbia.

The new African American and African Diaspora Studies Department will continue to draw its distinctive urban focus from its home in New York City, and proximity to Harlem, one of the intellectual and spiritual homes of the global black world. Our faculty and curriculum offer strengths in diasporic urbanities, political and religious thought, social justice and cultural studies. Through the new department of African American and African Diaspora Studies the University will place itself in the forefront of robust scholarly work that addresses vital intellectual, social, and cultural issues while offering a model of excellence, collaboration and innovation in teaching and scholarship.