

**Reflection Report**  
**Bachelor of Arts Degree in African and African Diaspora Studies**  
**2004/2005 – 2007/2008**  
**March 26, 2008**

**Introduction**

The Bachelors degree in African and African Diaspora Studies (AADS) began in fall 2004 as a brand new program. At the time it was inaugurated, the program was housed in the Department of History and Philosophy, with responsibilities for promotion, recruitment, and advisement resting with the department. In the last two years, the Director of the Center for African and African Diaspora Studies (CAADS), a unit of the Institute for Global Initiatives, has taken over those responsibilities. Due to the illness of the Center's Director, the position of Assistant Director of CAADS was created in fall 2007, with co-responsibility for coordinating the major. As of the writing of this report, the documents to formally transfer the major from the History Department to the office of the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences are going through the approval process at the college and university curriculum committees. The program coordinators working with other affiliated faculty members are currently reviewing a draft shared faculty governance document for the program. The first jointly appointed (with Psychology) tenure track faculty member was hired in fall 2007, and there is a search currently on-going for an AADS-English tenure track faculty line. Given the very brief background above, it is therefore important to keep in mind that although the AADS major has officially been in existence for about three to four years, it is only now that the structures necessary for the desired growth and productivity is being put in place. A sustained availability of resources will be necessary for the program to continue that desired growth and productivity.

**1. Provide Evidence of how the program objectives identified in the degree program proposal are being met.**

Six specific objectives were identified in the degree program proposal. Each objective will be outlined below, followed by a brief illustration of how that objective is being met:

- I. *To educate students through interdisciplinary and comparative methods, on the rich network of relations, linkages, exchanges and connections between Africans on the continent and African-descended peoples in the Diaspora.*

The AADS program consists of a rich interdisciplinary curriculum that weaves together the complex and comparative historical and contemporary cultural, literary, artistic, political and social experiences of Africans on the African continent and peoples of African descent in the Americas, Asia, Europe and elsewhere. This is of particular importance to our students as they prepare to engage other citizens of the world in an increasingly complex interdependent world. Students are prepared for this in courses

such as: AADS 2100 – Introduction to AADS; ENGL 2300 – African and African Diaspora Literature; AADS 2260 – Research Methodologies; HIST 3334 – Africans in the Diaspora; GEOG 3350 – Geography of Sub-Saharan Africa, HIST 3357 – Africans in Asia, and others. Cultural programs, lecture series and conferences organized as part of last year’s Year of Kenya and this year’s Year of the Atlantic World offer additional learning opportunities about “*the rich network of relations, linkages, exchanges and connections between Africans on the continent and African-descended peoples in the Diaspora.*”

II. *To prepare students for the challenges of the workplace such as multiculturalism, ethnic pluralism, diversity training, and race issues*

The AADS program prepares students for a multicultural workplace through course works in courses such as: HIST 3358 Africans in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIST 3357 Africans in Asia; ANTH 3310 Cultural Diversity in the US; PSYC 2110 Interacting Effectively in a Diverse Society; PSYC 3355 Cross-Cultural Psychology; PSYC 3385 Ethnic Minority Psychology and SOC 3314 Race and Ethnicity. Students are also required to take at least a three hour credit course of internship and/or study abroad in an African country. Where possible, students can combine a study abroad with either internship or service-learning in the host country. To date, students have taken advantage of such opportunities in KSU-sponsored study abroad program at the University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

III. *To provide students with knowledge and skills in liberal arts relating to Africa and African-descended peoples*

Contemporary political, economic, cultural and artistic issues concerning Africa and between Africa and the rest of the world are critically examined in courses such as POLS 4455 African International Relations; POLS 4454 Politics of North Africa and the Middle East; SOCI 4434 Emerging Social Issues in Africa; MUSI 3411 Survey of African-American Music; ARH 3800 African American Art; ARH 3570 African Art; ENGL 3600 Topics in African Diaspora Literature; FREN 4432 Topics in French and Francophone Literature since 1800; HIST 3333 and HIST 3355 African American History 1865 and 1865 to present, respectively; and others. Through engaged classroom discussions, research papers and class presentations, students acquire substantive knowledge of the critical issues of concern to Africa and the African Diaspora. They also acquire the necessary analytical skills to make sense of the complexity of these issues within a broader global context.

IV. *To engage students in intellectual dialogues to gain psychological and sociological perspectives on the behaviors, attitudes, lifestyles, and cultural heritage of people of African descent*

Students in the AADS program engage in intellectual discourses of the competing theoretical perspectives and cutting edge research on the issues of identity and personality of the people of African descent. Some of the courses that engage students in this

dialogue include ENGL 3500, ENGL 3600, ENGL 4401 and FREN 4432. Each of these courses deal with varying topics in African American; African Diaspora; African; and Francophone literature; respectively. They are complemented by Sociology and Psychology courses such as: SOCI 4434 Emerging Social Issues in Africa; PSYC 3355 Cross-Cultural Psychology and PSYC 3385 Ethnic Minority Psychology.

- V. *To educate students to excel in careers that require individuals with a global perspective and appreciation for human diversity*

The very nature of the program requires students to approach every issue from a global perspective. By definition, the African Diaspora is global – the subject is people of African descent in Africa, the Americas, Europe and Asia. Very few academic programs combine such breadth and depth. Very few have such emphasis on interdisciplinary, inter-cultural and human diversity at its core. Graduates of this program are better placed than most to operate effectively in a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations, profit and non-profit career paths.

- VI. *To build on KSU's integrated general education program, and thus to provide high quality, interdisciplinary education that prepares students for graduate school*

The rich cross-fertilization of disciplines – History, Psychology, English, Geography, Political Science, Anthropology, Sociology, Music, Visual Arts and Foreign Languages – that is central to the AADS program prepares graduates well for further post-graduate study in Law, Business, Higher Education, The Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences. The AADS major is unique in both its geographical and disciplinary breadth and the extent to which it delves deep into the relevant discourses within each discipline. This builds on a general education core that introduces students to a broad range of disciplines and world views.

## **2. Provide evidence that the program is meeting the justification and needs outlined in the degree program proposal**

The justifications outlined in the degree program include:

- To fill gaps and correct misrepresentations, which exist in textbooks, school and college curricula, and public knowledge about Africa and peoples of African descent.
- To meet the demands of employers, including government, businesses, multinational corporations (MNCs), and non-government organizations (NGOs) located in the Atlanta area and the southeast for graduates with expertise in African business culture, political economy, and investment climate.
- To broaden KSU's liberal arts education to reflect its immediate environment and communities; and thus, to strengthen KSU's curriculum with the inclusion and integration of African and African Diaspora Studies.

- To integrate African, African American and Caribbean courses into one coherent and dynamic major.
- To correct the conceptual idea that Africa is a continent without civilization or lacking in significant literary or historical achievement.

Many of the courses that currently exist in the AADS degree program did not exist before the creation of the program. In addition to the new courses created for the program, the major brings coherence and focus to existing courses on African and African American studies previously scattered across campus among several disciplines. The courses that make up the major are not restricted to only formally declared AADS majors, they broaden and contribute to the comprehensive liberal arts education available to all Kennesaw State University students. As the only degree program of its kind in the University System of Georgia, the program contributes significantly to the university's mission of providing a comprehensive nationally recognized liberal arts education to the northwest Georgia and Atlanta region which it serves. It also contributes to the achievement of KSU's Quality Enhancement Program, which focuses on educating a globally engaged citizen.

Students have had the opportunities to participate as volunteers and attendees in international conferences organized by the Institute for Global Initiatives and co-hosted by the Center for African and African Diaspora Studies – such as the 2007 International conference on Kenya; 2007 USAfrica Investment Conference: Building the Bridge and Bridging the Gap; and the 2008 Southeast Africanist Network Conference on Africa and the Americas: Cultural Representations and Social Movements. All of these conferences were hosted on the KSU campus and had participation by students. The AADS program also provides the critical academic structure for existing student organizations such as the Model United Nations; Model African Union, and the African American Student Alliance.

**3. Identify any challenges that have arisen around program delivery, costs, or facilities (if any). If Challenges are identified, indicate specific action plans and timetable to address them, including resources needed to accomplish these plans.**

The main challenge this for program is that of creating an identity for it. When the program was created, it was initially housed in the Department of History and Philosophy. It languished there for the first couple of years, without much support in terms of recruitment and advisement of students, active promotion of the major and coordination of the core group of faculty members who teach courses in the major. This adversely affected visibility of the major among students and faculty alike.

With the creation of the Center for African and African Diaspora Studies (CAADS), The Director of CAADS took on the role of coordinating the major, while it formally remained in the History department. Brochures for the major and minor (in African-American Studies) were designed and distributed campus wide. The core faculty teaching in the program now meets regularly to review the curriculum, discuss and plan program-related activities. As a result, faculty advisors have been assigned in each of the

three concentration areas (Literature, History and Social, Cultural and Political Issues), of the major, new courses (AADS 2100 and AADS 2260) have been created and added to the curriculum, and we are working closely with student groups such as the Model African Union, African American Student Alliance, the International Student Association and the African Students Association, to co-sponsor campus events and give the program more visibility. The AADS major is now one of the Interdisciplinary programs, albeit the only Bachelors degree granting major, under the direct supervision of the office of the Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. Coordination of the program still resides with the Director and Assistant Director of CAADS – which is a unit of the Institute for Global Initiatives. The paperwork to formally transfer the major from the department of History and Philosophy to the office of the dean is currently working its way through the curriculum review processes. While this atmosphere of lack of a permanent departmental home, with the attendant resource scarcity, creates challenges of identity, visibility, recruitment and program stability, it has not deterred the group of dedicated faculty members committed to making this one of the leading programs for African and African Diaspora Studies in the country.

Kennesaw State University has probably the strongest concentration of scholars in the southeastern United States devoted to the study of Africa and the African Diaspora. In the last year alone, one faculty member was successfully hired in a tenure-track joint appointment position with the department of Psychology. Another was hired in the English department to teach post-colonial African Literature. There is currently an on-going search to fill a tenure-track position with joint appointment in AADS and the English department. We hope for more of such collaborations with other departments.

To address the challenges of systematically involving faculty members in the administration of the program – in the absence of a home department – a shared governance document is currently going through reviews by the teaching faculty, and we expect the document to be voted on and adopted very soon. Likewise, an agreement has been drafted by the AADS teaching faculty which when signed by individual faculty members, and approved by their respective department chairs and deans, would formally affiliate them with the degree program. The ideal situation for the long term will be for the recruitment of faculty trained specifically in interdisciplinary, with specialization in the African Diaspora, and housed full time with the program.

We expect these on-going steps, in the long run, to create a firmer bond between AADS faculty members and the program, as well as a stronger, clearer, more visible identity and a more consistent advocacy for it among students.

**4. Indicate whether enrollment in the program is on track (based on projected enrollment in degree program proposal). If enrollment is below projections, specify the action plans and timetable to address productivity.**

Given the discussions above about the historical and situational context of the Bachelors degree in African and African Diaspora Studies, it is clear that the program is just now (in the 2<sup>nd</sup> five years phase) being positioned for a take-off. While we have had two graduates from the program so far, the program is gaining increasing visibility and

momentum among students and faculty, and consequently, we are seeing an increase in the number of students expressing interest in and declaring AADS as their major, or a minor in African American Studies. A conservative estimate right now is that we may currently have about ten to fifteen declared AADS majors. With the recent creation of the Bachelors degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, we have seen a few students either already declared or planning to declare AADS as one of their two major concentrations.

To improve recruitment and enrollment in the major, the brochure has been revised and distributed to all AADS teaching faculty and is readily available to students across campus. The program will be aggressively promoted at recruitment and majors fairs, incoming student orientations, student organizations fairs, and in area high schools. We also intend to design learning communities around AADS courses in order to improve enrollments in these classes. At recent Black History Month events, where the major was promoted and discussed by panel presenters, a wide range of students expressed interests in knowing more about the degree program and in possibly declaring a major or a formal minor. We are confident that with the growing student body and increasing diversity in our student demographics, the AADS degree program is well positioned to blossom and take its place among the other thriving academic programs at this university.

## **Conclusions**

On paper, the Bachelors degree in African and African Diaspora Studies was inaugurated in fall 2004. However, de facto functioning of the program should be appropriately dated in 2006. Given the challenges and the growing pains of the last two years, the program has made impressive strides to position itself for sustained growth. We are continuing to assemble an impressive community of scholars dedicated to the study and teaching of various aspects of Africa and the African Diaspora – twenty-one at the last count. These scholars are productive in their scholarship and represent all the humanities and social sciences disciplines. Their number at KSU is one of the highest among USG institutions. Kennesaw State University has developed active and productive partnerships with several African universities, such as the University of Cape Coast and University of Ghana; Universities of Ibadan and Lagos, and Nnamdi Azikiwe University in Nigeria; Universite Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal, and the Hassan II University in Morocco. These partnerships have resulted in the exchange of visiting professors with these institutions and regular study abroad trips for KSU students, including AADS majors. These undoubtedly add strength and versatility to our course offerings and campus life. Finally, the location of KSU in the Metro Atlanta area affords our students unique opportunities for internships, service learning and research with the diverse government, civil society, business and non-profit organizations that are active in the African and African Diaspora life and community.