

## Nearly 2,000 Petition UC to Reject Antisemitic Admissions Proposal

Academic Council  
University of California  
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607-5200

*SENT VIA EMAIL*

**RE: Nearly 2,000 UC Stakeholders and Supporters urge rejection of proposal for ethnic studies "H" admission requirement**

March 28, 2022

Dear Academic Council Chair Horowitz and members of the University of California Academic Council,

We are nearly two thousand individuals, including over twelve hundred University of California stakeholders - UC students, family members, alumni, faculty, staff, donors and California taxpayers - as well as hundreds of other concerned citizens.

We understand that it is highly unusual for the public to petition the UC Academic Senate. However, you are about to consider an ill-conceived and dangerous [proposal](#) (revision to Senate Regulation 424.A.3) that calls for adding a highly controversial ethnic studies course to the longstanding A-G admission requirements. We firmly believe this proposal: 1) is the direct result of a small group of activist-educators determined to circumvent state law and manipulate the UC governance process to push a widely rejected and antisemitic curriculum for their own political and financial gain; 2) has absolutely no educational merit or justification and may even harm students academically; and 3) will unleash hatred and bigotry, especially antisemitism, into California's public, charter and private schools. The adoption of this proposal will impact every high school in the state and nearly every child for years to come. We cannot remain silent: **we strongly urge you to reject this harmful proposal.**

Here are several important details that members of the Academic Senate may be unaware of, but should **carefully consider** before making any decision about this proposed new admission requirement:

**1) The proposal is politically motivated and directed, and seeks to circumvent state law in order to ensure that a highly politicized curriculum - rejected by tens of thousands of Californians, state legislators, the Governor and the State Board of Education - will be**

**taught in every high school in the state, and that almost every California student will be forced to take it.**

The UC ethnic studies admission requirement was proposed by a UC Berkeley undergraduate who was also identified as a "Student Activist" in the [minutes](#) from the 10/2/20 BOARS meeting, just days after Governor Newsom had [vetoed](#) an ethnic studies high school graduation requirement bill (AB 331) because of his concern over which version of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum (ESMC) would be the one approved by the State Board of Education. Of particular concern for the Governor was the highly politicized, overtly antisemitic first draft of the ESMC, which he had [deemed](#) "offensive in so many ways, particularly to the Jewish community" and vowed would "never see the light of day." The same student activist who proposed the new ethnic studies admission requirement had been involved in a campaign organized by the first-draft ESMC authors [demanding](#) that the State Board of Education adopt their draft, which SBE had roundly rejected after it evoked enormous outrage from the public, state legislators, and the Governor.

Considered in this light, it is clear that this proposal was an attempt to use UC's admission policy to circumvent the legislative process: By requiring a course in ethnic studies for UC admission, not only would every public, charter and private high school be compelled to offer an ethnic studies course for its UC-bound students, but, even in the absence a legislatively-mandated ethnic studies graduation requirement, a UC admission requirement would likely push most schools - including private schools not covered under the state mandate - to require that students take such a course.

An equally important activist goal of the proposal, however, was to make sure the course criteria accompanying the new admission requirement would align with the rejected first draft of the ESMC, thus ensuring that every public, charter and private high school - even religious schools that firmly reject the first draft's ideological tenets, moral valuations and coerced political activism - would be compelled to adopt the curriculum if it were required for UC admission. If achieved, **such curricular coercion would be in direct violation of the California Education code, which protects the autonomy of local school districts and private schools in developing appropriate curricula for their students.**

The proposal's first goal - forcing all high schools to offer an ethnic studies course and establishing a de facto ethnic studies requirement in the absence of any legislative mandate - was advanced when BOARS voted unanimously at their November 2020 [meeting](#) "to amend the California high school subject requirements with a non-additive one-semester [ethnic studies] course".

The proposal's second goal - forcing every high school in the state to adopt the discredited first draft of the ESMC in contravention of state law - was advanced by the "faculty working group" [selected](#) by the Committee on Committees in February 2021 "to develop policy guidance for academic content that would qualify an A-G course for the Ethnic Studies designation." The chair of that working group, UCSC Critical Race and Ethnic Studies Director Christine Hong, and four of the other five members of the group had, like the proposal's student activist originator, publicly supported the discredited first draft of the ESMC and demanded that the SBE adopt it as the model curriculum for CA high schools. In addition, one member of the working group, UCSD Lecturer Tricia Gallagher-Guersten, is on the [Leadership Team](#) of the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Coalition (LESMC), an educational consulting group founded by the first-draft ESMC authors after the rejection of their draft by the SBE, in order to independently market that draft, or an even more highly politicized and antisemitic "Liberated" version of it, to school districts throughout the state, along with their consulting services. Both Christine Hong and fellow working group member UCSD Ethnic Studies Chair Andrew Jolivet have used their departmental websites to promote the LESMC curriculum and consulting services (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), and Jolivet has participated in [webinars](#) promoting the first-draft ESMC and the Liberated group.

Not surprisingly, the ethnic studies [course criteria](#) developed by the faculty working group and presented as part of the proposal are very similar to the "[Guiding Principles and Values](#)" of the first-draft ESMC-inspired Liberated curriculum, and incorporate their same ideological tenets, moral valuations and jargon, and the same demand that students engage in behavior that pursues partisan, political goals. However, in basing the approved course criteria on the rejected first-draft ESMC or Liberated curriculum, the faculty working group not only flagrantly defied the wishes of the public, the Governor and the SBE, who had rejected the first draft in 2019 because of its politically-charged, overtly antisemitic content; they also contravened the legislative intent of the ethnic studies graduation requirement bill that Governor Newsom signed into law in October 2021 (AB 101), which explicitly directed school districts to avoid using the first draft or a similar version such as the Liberated curriculum in developing their district's required ethnic studies courses. Nevertheless, in November 2021 BOARS approved these course criteria and sent them to the Academic Council for review.

Tellingly, in a [webinar](#) held in December 2021, LESMC co-founder and first-draft ESMC co-author Theresa Montano implied that her group had played a pivotal role in BOARS' decision-making, boasting that the proposed UC course criteria were "based on the learning outcomes that the original team [i.e. first drafters] of the Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum founded, and those are the principles that we use in Liberated Ethnic Studies." During the same webinar, Montano also denigrated state legislators for "capitulating to a majoritarian lens...in our case the Jewish Legislative Caucus," who were responsible for adding the guardrail language to prevent schools

from adopting the antisemitic Liberated curriculum, and Montano scoffed at the guardrail language, claiming it "means nothing."

It's important to point out that Montano and her LESMC colleagues - who have been aggressively marketing the Liberated curriculum and teacher training services to school districts throughout the state and have already landed several lucrative contracts - stand to realize enormous financial gain if every high school in the state is compelled to offer students a UC-approved course that relies on a Liberated-like curriculum.

**As UC stakeholders, we are outraged and appalled that a small group of activists seeking to circumvent state law and contravene the will of the public, state legislators, the Governor and top education officials, have been allowed to hijack UC's faculty governance process for their own political and financial gain.**

**2) There is absolutely no academic justification for adding an ethnic studies admission requirement to the long-standing A-G subject areas, and there is reason to believe that such a requirement may actually harm students academically.**

The primary purpose of the A-G courses required for UC admission, which were established in 1931 with one additional subject area added in 1999, is to ensure that entering freshmen are academically prepared for the rigors of a UC education. There is absolutely no justification in either the ethnic studies proposal itself or in any publicly available minutes of the BOARS meetings at which the proposal was discussed, for how a course in ethnic studies, particularly as it is conceived in this proposal, would contribute to the academic preparedness of all UC applicants, and no argument made for why an ethnic studies course should join the very well-established A-G courses in being a UC admission requirement. **Given the momentous nature of adding a new admission requirement to the current lineup of well-established, time-tested A-G subject areas and the additional burden it will put on students seeking UC admission, it is highly irresponsible for the academic senate to approve this proposal without publicly justifying exactly how taking a course in ethnic studies will prepare a student for the academic rigors of a UC education.**

In addition, in sharp contrast to the course criteria specified for the current [A-G courses](#), which are concise descriptions of pedagogically sound and universally accepted bases of knowledge and sets of analytical skills that students must master to be considered academically prepared for UC coursework, the highly controversial and politicized ethnic studies course criteria for the proposed new "H" requirement are neither pedagogically sound nor universally accepted. **Moreover, because the proposed "H" requirement is "non-additive" and intended to replace one of the current A-G courses that been deemed an essential indicator of academic success at UC, if this proposal is passed, students will not only be forced to take an ethnic**

**studies course without any proven academic benefit in order to be eligible for UC admission, they may well have to forgo taking a course that *would* provide considerable academic benefit.** In light of the catastrophic [educational losses](#) inflicted on students by the pandemic in subjects crucial for academic success, such as Math, Science, English and History - subjects that make up the UC A-G requirements - it is unconscionable to add to students' burden an ethnic studies admission requirement that will likely set them even further behind as they struggle to make up what they have lost.

**3) The version of ethnic studies that will serve as the basis of this admission requirement will incite bigotry and hatred in California classrooms, particularly against Jewish and Zionist students.**

The proposed ethnic studies course criteria, like the first draft of the ESMC and its Liberated cousin, are firmly rooted in "critical" ethnic studies, a narrow conceptualization of the field that draws from ideologies that divide society into oppressed and oppressor groups based primarily on race, and, as part of its disciplinary mission, uses the classroom to coerce students into adopting a set of narrow political beliefs and political activism. The moral valuation inherent in "critical" ethnic studies that encourages lionizing the "oppressed" and demonizing the "oppressor" directly and substantively harms many students in required ethnic studies classes, who, by virtue of their race, socio-economic status, gender, religion, etc., may well find themselves subject to opprobrium and hostility for being members, or perceived members, of an alleged oppressor group.

While the tenets of "critical" ethnic studies will have a dangerously divisive and harmful impact on many California students, they are particularly threatening to Jewish students. Viewed through the lens of "critical" ethnic studies, Jews are perceived as "white" and "privileged," squarely on the oppressor side of the race-class divide. At a time when anti-Jewish sentiment, hostility and violence has reached truly alarming levels, a required ethnic studies class encouraging students to view Jews as "white" and "racially privileged" is tantamount to putting an even larger target on the back of every Jewish student.

In addition, the well-known anti-Zionist bias of the discipline of "critical" ethnic studies and the widespread anti-Zionist advocacy and activism — particularly the promotion of the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement — of its scholars and teachers in their classrooms and other professional spaces, will incite further hatred of Jews and harm to Jewish students. Several empirical [studies](#) at the college level have shown strong correlations between faculty who use their classrooms to express support and advocate for anti-Zionist causes, including BDS, and anti-Semitic incidents that target Jewish students for harm, including physical and verbal assault, vandalism, bullying and harassment.

Indeed, it was the overt anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist content of the first draft of the ESMC that motivated members of the Legislative Jewish Caucus to publicly [state](#) that the curriculum would "marginalize Jewish students and fuel hatred and discrimination against the Jewish community." And it was concern over the first draft's antisemitic content that contributed to the Governor's veto of AB 331, the original ethnic studies graduation requirement bill, in 2020. Similarly, it was alarm over the even more overtly anti-Jewish and anti-Zionist [content](#) of the first-draft- based Liberated curriculum that compelled state legislators to add guardrails to AB 101 in order to discourage local school districts from adopting either the first-draft ESMC or the Liberated curriculum.

Please understand that if you approve this ethnic studies admission requirement with its Liberated course criteria, and students at every public, charter and private high school in the state are forced to take a "critical" ethnic studies course, you will be responsible for unleashing enormous bigotry and enmity - especially antisemitism - into California classrooms, and threatening the safety and well-being of many students.

The decision you are about to make is of paramount importance to us, as it will directly affect our children, our communities and our state for years to come.

**We strongly urge you to reject this politically motivated, academically vacuous, and extremely harmful proposal.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

**The undersigned 1,838 signatories, including 1,238 University of California Stakeholders (students, parents of students, alums, faculty, staff, donors, CA taxpayers)**

*\*\*Signatories Removed in Online Version\*\**

Cc: Members of the Academic Senate Assembly  
UC President Michael V. Drake  
UC Board of Regents