

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
COMMITTEE ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION
(Final; Action)

EQ.24.03 Resolution on Safety and Accessibility for Academic Units, as well as Cultural and Resource Centers in Ethnic, Gender, and Women’s Studies

WHEREAS the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign has publicly committed to advancing community, accessibility, and inclusion in its teaching, research, and service missions; and

WHEREAS the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign is nationally recognized for excellence in programs related to ethnic, gender, and women’s studies and has also been ranked among the top campuses in the United States for supporting students with physical disabilities; and

WHEREAS since the late 1960s the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign has developed nationally respected academic programs in African American Studies, Gender and Women’s Studies, Latina/Latino Studies, Asian American Studies, and American Indian Studies, reflecting the institution’s commitment to scholarship, education, and community engagement in these areas; and

WHEREAS the University has also established a network of cultural and resource centers—including the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center, La Casa Cultural Latina, the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, Native American House, the Asian American Cultural Center, the Women’s Resource Center, and the Salaam Middle East and North Africa Cultural Center—that serve as essential hubs of support, belonging, and engagement for students from historically underserved communities; and

WHEREAS the academic units in ethnic and gender and women’s studies at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign currently comprise approximately 60 faculty and staff who offer in excess of 100 different undergraduate and graduate-level courses to students from a variety of colleges and majors; and

WHEREAS the cultural and resource centers serve thousands of students, faculty, staff, and alumni each year and play a critical role in student retention, belonging, and campus engagement across every college; and

WHEREAS University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign graduates in ethnic and gender and women’s studies have taken leadership positions in a variety of sectors from local political leaders to civil rights and immigration lawyers, activist organizers, nonprofit directors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, and employees at top technology firms; and

WHEREAS these academic programs and cultural and resource centers seek to address inequalities and history that prevent people from reaching their full potential, the ethnic and gender and women's studies programs and cultural and resource centers make a valuable contribution to the University of Illinois' goals of increasing access, removing barriers, enhancing understanding and promoting inclusion; and

WHEREAS documented conditions in the facilities housing these units include water leaks and flood damage, recurring power outages, inadequate security infrastructure, peeling paint, and outdated technology systems that compromise safety and effective teaching and service; and

WHEREAS current facilities prevent students, faculty, and staff with mobility challenges from accessing classrooms, offices, and public spaces, creating barriers inconsistent with the University's accessibility commitments and potentially in conflict with ADA standards; and

WHEREAS the condition of these facilities has been ignored for far too long while other units and facilities have received significant contributions from donors and campus funding; and

WHEREAS it is inconsistent with values of inclusion, access, community promoted by both the University of Illinois System and the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign when departments focused on access, civil rights, and community on campus and around the world be consistently relegated to facilities that are unsafe, insecure, and inaccessible; and

WHEREAS poor working conditions demoralize faculty, staff, and students, as they struggle against pests, mold, and the elements, in office space and classrooms, and inadequate facilities undermine the recruitment and retention of talented students, faculty, and staff and weaken the University's ability to sustain nationally respected programs in these fields; and

WHEREAS it is imperative that University faculty, staff, students, and guests have space in the ethnic and gender and women's studies departments and cultural and resource centers that are accessible, safe, secure, and functional; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign Senate calls upon the administration to:

1. Prioritize the planning, funding, and construction of a new facility to house the academic units in ethnic, gender, and women's studies in the 1200 block of West Nevada Street in Urbana.
2. Prioritize the planning, funding, and construction of new facilities for the cultural houses and resource centers in the state of disrepair described above in the 1200 block of West Nevada Street in Urbana.

3. Immediately identify and secure temporary facilities that meet minimum standards of safety, security, accessibility, and technological infrastructure for units currently housed in unsafe or inaccessible buildings.
4. Ensure the funding and repair of all other cultural houses and resource centers across campus.
5. Provide an annual report to the Senate outlining progress toward addressing these facility concerns and identifying concrete steps and timelines for improving safety and accessibility for the affected units.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

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