To: UCSD Undergraduate Council  
CC: UCSD Undergraduate Council Senate Analyst  
FROM: Department of Ethnic Studies, in collaboration with students Syreeta Nolan and Alisha Saxena  
RE: Disability Studies Minor Proposal  
Date: April 26th, 2021

Contact/Director: Dr. Kianna Middleton  
Program Location: Ethnic Studies Department, Division of Social Sciences

Executive Summary/Mission and Purpose

This academic year hosted some major landmarks for the disabled community, including the 30th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the mainstream recognition of the Crip Camp documentary on disability justice in America, and the release of Being Heumann: An Unrepentant Memoir of a Disability Rights Activist by Judith Heumann, an internationally recognized disability rights activist. There were also some major successes at UCSD for disabled students this year as well, including the establishment of the Disability Justice Commission in ASUCSD, the disability external review audit at UCSD, and the execution of the UC San Diego Spring Break 2021: Disability Awareness Track series, which was planned by Syreeta Nolan. Yet, despite all these victories and celebrations, this pandemic proved to exacerbate unaddressed challenges and create unique roadblocks for disabled students engaging in the higher education experience at UCSD. As a result, disabled students at UCSD have reported feeling even more invisible, marginalized, misunderstood, and underappreciated by our campus community.

UCSD prides itself on the following definition of diversity, equity, and inclusion, which claims to include considerations of disability.

**Diversity** refers to the variety of personal experiences, values, and worldviews that arise from differences of culture and circumstance. Such differences include race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and geographic region.

**Equity** is the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all students, faculty, and staff...while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of marginalized groups.

**Inclusion** is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued.

Yet, after analyzing the syllabi of DEI approved courses, few included any discussions of disability in their curriculum, let alone were dedicated to disability studies. Not only is this problematic, since UCSD claims to include considerations of disability within the DEI curriculum, but this lack of educational inclusivity has also contributed to non-disabled stakeholders at UCSD failing to understand how to engage in anti-ableism and authentic disability inclusion in all aspects of campus culture.

**Request**

To approve the implementation of a Disability Studies Minor and Ph.D. concentration* in Disability Studies at the University of California, San Diego.
Rationale/Justification

The National Center for Education Statistics found that 19.4% of undergraduate students nationwide reported experiencing a disability. Yet, despite the prevalence of disability in America, with the CDC finding that 25% of all adults also report experiencing a disability, UC San Diego, and the UC system as a whole, has fallen short in its recognition, treatment, and inclusion of disabled students. Syreeta Nolan, a UCSD student who also serves in the University of California Student Association as the Underrepresented Students Officer, delivered the following testimony at a UC Board of Regents meeting.

“The Americans with Disabilities Act celebrated its 30-year anniversary this past weekend, and so, I want to share my experiences as an invisibly disabled student at UCSD. My chronic pains uniquely impact my daily life as a UC student. **But I am not JUST a disabled student.** I am a Black, Bisexual, Christian, disabled woman who is a minority within a minority, who deals with a compounded burden because of my **intersectional** identities. **I am disheartened by the UC making myself, and other disabled students, a line on their diversity statement, with minimal performative actions to satisfy their consciences.** So today, I call on the UC to honor the ADA by providing much-needed funding for disabled students across the UC to help develop a sustainable community through disability cultural centers which will support us for years to come, prepare us for graduation and successful careers, and support our intersectional identities. I advocate for the disabled community because I feel invisible, silent and unseen, and the time has come to be heard. Take action to offer us the institutional support that we desperately need. Thank you.”

While it is true that disabled students exist in every community, their intersectional identities are often overlooked. Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw coined the term **intersectional disempowerment** to describe the compounded burdens of oppression which are associated with intersecting identities, and the lack of acknowledgment of the disabled identity has greatly contributed to this at UCSD. For instance, there are many cultural centers, student organizations, and even academic programs that focus on specific communities, but few of those discussions have ever included disability. This 2020-2021 academic year was the first year that Associated Students, a space that is meant to be representative of student needs, worked on hiring permanent ASL and closed captioning support for disabled students and establishing a Disability Justice Commission that would be committed to hiring disabled students to create a more representative space.

We believe that UCSD would experience many benefits by implementing this minor, including an:

- ★ Improved recognition of intersectionality, intersectional disempowerment, and the unique barriers to the disabled student experience in higher education
- ★ Increased awareness of, and commitment to, anti-ableism across all campus stakeholders and entities
- ★ Expanded collaboration with leading disability studies researchers at other universities, such as Dr. Lisa Schur and Dr. Douglas Kruse who direct the [Program for Disability Research](http://www.rutgers.edu/) at Rutgers University, which can encourage grants and groundbreaking research from our university
  - ○ Rutgers’ program has received over $2 million in grants (including the federal government!) and ranks **#1 in the world** for Disability and Employment Research
- ★ Enhanced relations between disabled students and professors via increased frequency of conversation about anti-ableism and the disabled student experience facilitated by this minor
- ★ Amplified intra- and inter-community development to promote disability inclusion and justice
- ★ Initiated movement to promote greater disability inclusion, education, and justice across the UC
Currently, there is no infrastructure for non-disabled students to confront internalized ableism and learn about disability history, inclusion, and justice. UCSD students are changemakers who plan to create positive, meaningful change at a small and large scale. Their enhanced understanding of disability studies can improve the sociopolitical, economic, and cultural inclusion of our disabled communities internationally via small-scale and large-scale advocacy, regardless of their academic discipline.

Examples of this include:

★ Standing up for disabled employees in the workplace
★ Fighting for the passage of certain policies championing disability rights
★ Guiding science and academic discourse away from the medical model of disability and towards the social model of disability
★ Including conversations of disability in community-based discussions
★ Asking disabled people for their disability pronouns and being intentional with rhetoric choices
  ○ ex. some people prefer to be referred to as individuals with a disability, while others prefer being referred to as disabled individuals
★ Recognizing that disability is not a monolith, which could benefit science, the arts, politics,
★ Making disability justice and inclusion a norm, or a guaranteed human right, as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The implementation of this minor will have large-scale impacts for the campus climate at UCSD. Students who take courses in this minor or declare the minor will be better equipped to remove harmful practices that have existed for far too long, instead replacing them with ideas that promote disability inclusion and justice. Disabled students will be able to work towards developing a community via this minor and the Disability Cultural Center, which will be discussed in the next section of this report. Faculty will be more aware of why there continue to be so many barriers in the disabled student experience in higher education, and will be able to understand how to contribute towards a solution. Employees will be empowered to review administrative practices on campus and ensure that they are accessible and inclusive to disabled students.

Disability Cultural Center

Disabled at UCSD, a student advocacy group, has been in conversation with administrators to establish a Disability Cultural Center, which will support intra- and inter-community development for disabled students at UCSD. Their identities are not adequately discussed, if discussed at all, in the pre-existent resource centers across campus. This center would not only increase the frequency of discourse on disability, via programming, support groups, ally education, and other initiatives in collaboration with the Disability Studies Minor program, but would also serve as a crucial resource for students who acquire their disabilities while at UCSD. One unique aspect of the disabled identity is that it is not only congenital, but can also be
acquired; this has contributed to the increased prevalence of disability across the globe, with the World Bank reporting that over a billion people, or 15% of the global population, experiences a disability. Furthermore, this center would provide crucial academic and career support for disabled students; The Bureau of Labor Statistics found that 28.5% of disabled college undergraduates were employed, compared to 78.5% of non-disabled students. This striking disparity can be reduced via a proper support system, which the establishment of the Disability Cultural Center, and its partnership with the Disability Studies Minor program, could provide. See the infographic on other reasons the Disability Cultural Center needs to be established at UCSD.

Disability Scholar in Residence

To support the minor and Ph.D. concentration* in Disability Studies at UCSD, we will be working to develop and sponsor Disability Scholar in Residence to support the work of building stronger relationships between UC San Diego and our diverse disabled communities and also introducing students, faculty, staff, and community to disabled leaders who will teach, present, and meet with administrators, faculty, staff, and students about a key theme or topic every academic year for a minimum of one academic quarter. The program will include an opening and closing luncheon in addition to weekly or monthly events on and off campus that foster better understanding of disabled identities, history, struggles, and contributions globally. The Community, Staff, and Student Advisory Council (CSSAC) in consultation with Core, Adjunct, and Affiliated Faculty (CAAF) will meet to recommend a minimum of three disability scholar in residence candidates. A sub-committee of the CSSAC and CAAF will meet in May of every spring quarter to review the three proposed residents and make a selection for the following academic year.

Curricular Requirements

The Disability Studies Minor provides a comprehensive understanding of the histories, lifeways, and cultures of disabled communities across the United States with comparative examples from disabled communities across the world. Drawing on course offerings in Anthropology, Communication, Economics, Education, Global Health, Human Development, Linguistics, Literature, Urban Studies, and other departments, students gain an interdisciplinary understanding of disabled identities, communities, and experiences. The minor is open to ALL students from ALL majors and colleges. Among the benefits of the Disability Studies Minor include:

- A stronger understanding of disabled history, identity, and culture in California, the United States, and globally
- A stronger understanding of disability as a diverse identity, rather than a monolith, which intersects with various other identities
- A critical examination into the legal status of disabled individuals, particularly under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN-CRPD)
- An essential introduction to urgent contemporary issues affecting disabled people, such as ableism, intersectionality, universal design, legal autonomy, health, education equity, employment and labor outcomes, and economic status
- An engagement with written, visual, oral, auditory, tactile, and other forms of instruction that encourages growth and strength in student writing, reading, comprehension, and critical thinking skills
- Unique preparation for future graduate and professional work with disabled communities
- A commitment to anti-ableism in our local, state-wide, nation-wide, and global communities
The Courses

**Lower Division Courses (2 courses/8 units)**
- GLBH 20: Introduction to Global Health
- LIGN 7: Sign Language and Their Cultures
- LIGN 8: Language and Cultures in America
- LIGN 9GS: Sign Languages and Deaf Culture in the U.S. and France
- LIGN 1A/1AX, 1B/1BX, 1C/1CX, 1D/1DX, 1E: ASL Conversation and Analysis
- BILD 36: AIDS, Science, and Society
- BILD 38: Dementia, Science, and Society
- BILD 44: Scientific Perspectives for a Changing World
- FMPH 40: Introduction to Public Health
- FMPH 50: Primary Care and Public Health
- SOCI 40: Sociology of Health-Care Issues

**Upper Division Courses (5 courses/20 units)**
- COMM 108D: Politics of Bodies - Disability
- USP 147: Case Studies in Health-Care Programs/Poor and Underserved Population
- ECON 134: The US Social Safety Net
- SOCI 114: Just a Joke? Sociology of Humor
- SOCI 140F: Law and the Workplace
- PSYC 128: Psychology of Reading
- PSYC 171: Neurobiology of Learning and Memory
- GLBH 171R: Global Mental Health
- LIGN 146: Sociolinguistics in Deaf Communities
- LTCS 155: Health, Illness, and Global Culture (review)
- TDGE 134: Disability and Performative Exploration - Struggle for Inclusion
- VIS 100A: Design of Public Culture (review)
- CGS 100A: Conceptualizing Gender - Theoretical Approaches
- CGS 111: Gender and the Body
- EDS 115: Cognitive Development and Education
- EDS 116: Equity-Minded Education
- ETHN 108/MUS 151: Race, Culture, and Social Change
- POLI 100W: Politics, Policy, and Educational Inequality
- ECON 139: Labor Economics
- ECON 140: Economics of Health Producers
- ANBI 118: Technology on the Go: Mobile Tools for Human Biology
- BICD 136: AIDS Science and Society
- SOCI 113: Sociology of the AIDS Epidemic
- ETHN 106: Life, Death, and the Human
- ETHN 142: Medicine, Race, and the Global Politics of Inequality
- RELI 132: Topics in Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy
- SOCI 185: Globalization and Social Development
- PHIL 139: Global Justice
- PHIL 141: The Meaning of Life
Core, Adjunct, and Affiliated Faculty (CAAF)
David Serlin, Faculty Advisor for Transdisciplinary Disability Studies (TDS) Group
Brian Goldfarb, Faculty Advisor for Transdisciplinary Disability Studies (TDS) Group
Kianna Middleton, Assistant Professor for UCSD Ethnic Studies Department
Matthew Herbst, ERC Making of the Modern World (MMW) Program Director

Community, Staff, and Student Advisory Council (CSSAC)
Syreeta Nolan - UCSD alumna, founder of JADE and co-founder of Disabled at UCSD
Alisha Saxena - UCSD alumna, disability justice researcher and co-founder of Disabled at UCSD
Matthew Herbst - UCSD professor, director of the Making of the Modern World Program
Director of the Disability Cultural Center at UCSD

Relationship/Impact of Proposed Minor on Existing Academic Programs

The proposed minor would not have any projected negative impact on existing minors or majors on campus. We anticipate that it will take some time to build and develop the program but there is already tremendous excitement across disciplines on campus as indicated by the number of programs and departments represented by our core, adjunct, and affiliated faculty.

Evaluation Plan

The core, adjunct and affiliated faculty will meet with the appropriate staff and program advisers to develop a rubric for programmatic assessment based on student learning outcomes (SLOs) and exit surveys by graduating minors. General evaluations of faculty teaching evaluations will be performed by the Director once a year in June and comprehensive evaluations of program enrollment, exit surveys, faculty, student and staff satisfaction will be performed every three years by a committee chaired by the director of the program that will draw from members of the core, adjunct and affiliated faculty in the program.

Academic or Administrative Resources
Ideally the university would provide the director of the program with one course release per quarter of the academic year to conduct student advising, course rotation selection, and program development and planning activities. Additionally, it would be important as an institutional commitment to provide at least one dedicated staff to act as the DSM Coordinator, and at least one dedicated staff to act as the Executive Director of the Disability Cultural Center at UCSD. While we will have to work to develop funding for the disability scholar in residence program we would welcome support from UCSD and from outside organizations to create the necessary resources for this program.

*Doctoral Students who complete three or more upper division/graduate level courses will earn a Ph.D. designated emphasis in Disability Studies*