Brief History of the UW System’s Cultural Diversity/Ethnic Studies Graduation Requirement

The history of the three-credit, cultural diversity/ethnic studies graduation requirement stems back to the UW System’s “Design for Diversity” plan that was in effect from 1988 to 1998. In that document, seven UW System goals were listed, and Goal 2 stated: “Educate all students for an increasingly multicultural society in Wisconsin, our nation and the world.” Later in the document, under a section dealing with “The Institutional Environment,” it stated that in addressing this environment, emphasis should be placed on the following:

1. Requiring organized instruction or programs on race and ethnicity as part of every student’s undergraduate educational experience; and integrating ethnic studies into existing courses.

(The “Design for Diversity” document, with the sections cited above, can be found at: http://www.uwsa.edu/oadd/design/webd4d.pdf)

In 1998, when “Plan 2008” succeeded the “Design for Diversity,” Goal 6 of the new plan stated: “Foster institutional environments and course development that enhance learning and a respect for racial and ethnic diversity.” (See: http://www.uwsa.edu/oadd/plan/index.htm) In the “Eleven Principles of Plan 2008,” the following was stated:

8. The Design for Diversity three-credit graduation requirement on historically under-represented U.S. racial/ethnic groups (African American, Latino, Asian American, and American Indian) remains unchanged. Course requirements on international issues, women, gay, bi-sexual, lesbian, or trans-gendered groups are complements to the graduation requirement and yet may not be substitutes for the requirement. Additional institutional course requirements are complements to the Design for Diversity requirement and may be developed at an institutional level to enhance the caliber of the educational experience.

(The “Eleven Principles of Plan 2008,” with the section cited above, can be found at: http://www.uwsa.edu/oadd/plan/11prncpl.htm)