The ASA Survey of Departments and Programs, 2007: Findings and Projections

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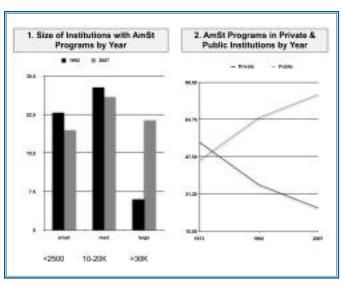
In 1994, D. Melissa Hilbish wrote that based upon data from a survey of American Studies programs, "American Studies is a growing, healthy, active field" (7). Is that still the case? With the beginning of the twentyfirst century, program leaders gathering at annual "directors' workshops" desired pragmatically to have quantitative data to answer that question, and philosophically to assess the trends and directions of American Studies' intellectual landscape. Along with these needs was a concern by program leaders to address changes in the field as it globalized and diversified, as well as shifts in administrative strategies. Many universities were implementing assessments of academic units and asking for benchmark data; the material from American Studies appeared sorely dated. Working with the ASA Executive Director's office, the Committee on American Studies Programs and Centers initiated a survey in fall 2006 that concluded in January 2007. It was the first electronically administered survey of programs and it also included for the first time programs outside of the United States (25.8 percent). Using the program listings in the ASA Guide to Resources as a basis for identifying programs, data was collected from 114 program representatives and analyzed with surveymonkey software. The return rate was impressive for organizational surveys of this kind at better than 60 percent.

John F. Stephens as Executive Director and I as Chair of the Committee on American Studies Programs designed the survey instrument, which was reviewed by an advisory committee composed of Andrew Ross of New York University, Lauren Rabinovitz of the University of Iowa, and Hans Bak of the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. Susannah Gardner of Hop Studios acted as technical consultant and the Women's Caucus met with me before the survey. We wanted to be able to make longitudinal comparisons and therefore drafted questions based on previous surveys conducted by Robert Walker (1956), Charles Bassett (1973), and the American Studies Association in 1992 (see Walker 1958; Bassett 1975; Hilbish 1994; see also McDowell 1948). In addition, we drafted new questions of concern to program leaders that addressed faculty diversity, globalization of the field, strategic planning goals, and relations to other programs

such as women's studies, ethnic studies, and cultural studies. The lengthy instrument was divided into categories of general information, undergraduate education, and graduate education. Sections addressed issues identified in the 1992 ASA survey of (1) Institutional Demographics, (2) Administration and Structure, (3) Faculty and Curriculum, and (4) Goals and Mission. I presented preliminary findings of the survey at the directors' workshop organized by Janet Davis of the University of Texas at the 2007 American Studies Association meeting in Philadelphia, and the discussion with program leaders and a representative of the National Research Council there was useful in preparing this report.

Institutional Demographics, Administration, and Structure

Surveys before 1960 identified the profile of American Studies programs at small private liberal arts institutions, but the pattern changed by the end of the twentieth century. The number of programs at private institutions declined from 54 percent in 1973 to 35.4 percent in 1992. In the 2007 survey, 74.8 percent of the responding institutions identified themselves as public institutions. A noticeable shift is also apparent in the location of programs in institutions defined as large (over 30,000 students). In the 1992 survey, only 6 percent of American Studies programs checked this category, but in

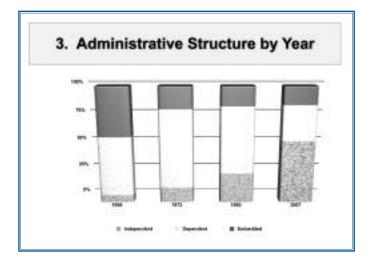


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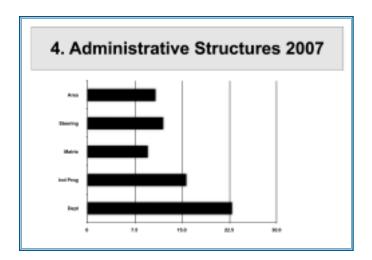
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2007, the figure grew to 21.3 percent. The predominant category is still the medium-sized institution of between 10 and 20,000 students; in 1992, 27.8 percent of programs were located in this group and the figure dropped slightly to 25.9 percent in 2007, probably because many of these medium-sized institutions became "large," a number of international programs are located in large universities, and the addition of programs in large comprehensive institutions. The number of programs in small institutions dropped from 22.9 percent in 1992 to 19.4 percent in 2007.



To measure the administrative structure of American Studies programs, the 2007 survey adapted categories from the 1992 survey, which in turn was based on models outlined in McDowell's 1948 study. The 1992 survey indicated that American Studies programs were administered as an (1) independent department/program containing tenure-track lines specifically in American Studies, independent budgets, and curricular control and autonomy; (2) interdepartmental program with at

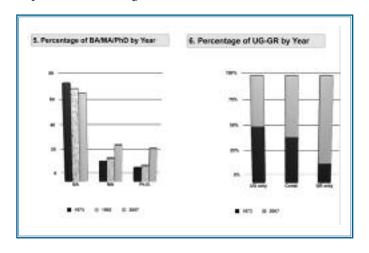


least one course in American Studies, and some control over staffing and budget; and (3) other, typically a program located within a discipline of the social sciences or humanities. For the 2007 survey, we clarified the types of programs. We labeled the first category "independent" and differentiated between program and departmental status. We called the second category dependent," because the program's offerings rely on the cooperation of other units of the institution, although there may be a "core" faculty and courses. We replaced the catch-all "other" category with the label of "embedded," and sought detail on the type of embedment, whether in an interdisciplinary unit such as international studies or a traditional department such as English. Traced longitudinally, the administration of American Studies programs has shown a marked trend toward independence. For the first time since surveys of programs were initiated in the 1950s, the predominant administrative structure is an independent department or program with 38.6 percent of the total. In 1992, the predominant pattern was the dependent program with 52.7 percent, but that dropped sharply in the 2007 survey to 21.6 percent. The embedded program declined from 14.7 percent in 1992 to 10.8 percent in 2007. This is a marked contrast to survey results in 1956 when 33 percent of American Studies programs were embedded and only 5 percent were considered independent. When respondents were asked for clarification on the administrative structure, the department was dominant for the first time. Other models mentioned, moving from the most popular to the least were: (1) the independent program with full-time faculty and curricular autonomy administered by a director, chair, or coordinator from within American Studies; (2) program governed by a steering committee of faculty from multiple units and is administered by a chair or director; (3) an program defined as a specialization or area within an interdisciplinary or disciplinary department; (4) and a matrix program in which advisers oversee individualized programs of study constituted from multiple units of the institution.

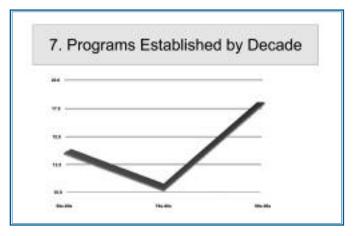
In the United States as in the world, when an American Studies program was embedded, it was likely to be in English, and affiliations of faculty to other departments were most commonly in history and English or literature departments. But a difference in the designation of American Studies was noticeable in responses from programs outside the United States. In the United States, the label of "American Studies" was overwhelmingly dominant, but a variety of other forms of study was apparent in other countries: Anglo-American Studies,

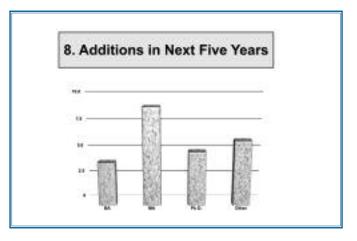
North American Studies, Western History, International Relations, and Language and Culture. Many international programs were directly comparative such as Russian and American Studies. Still, when asked to define the scope of American Studies, respondents underscored that American Studies in their programs comprised studies of the United States, and a few international programs specified "United States Studies" as a concentration. Programs in the United States tended to have a regional linkage that international programs understandably did not. Some of the options within American Studies programs in the United States are New England Studies, Southern Studies, Southwest Studies, and Great Plains Studies. Two continuities between international programs and programs in the United States were the linkage to a "center" as an archival/research or curricular unit and the designation of a core and affiliated faculty. One quarter of all respondents identified a center associated with the program and 65.7 percent of programs had faculty divided between core and affiliated (or associated) faculty.

On average, the typical American Studies program had 5.2 full-time core faculty members. Doctoral departments expectedly had a higher number of core faculty members (9.4) and the number of affiliated faculty ranged from as few as 5 to as many as 80. Part-time faculty are regularly used by most programs; on average, programs claimed to have 1.25 part-time faculty members, or 24 percent of their teaching offerings. Most programs were led by a "director" usually a faculty member appointed by a dean who granted course release and/or financial compensation for serving as program leader. Departments, following academic convention, were usually led by a chair or head. A number of respondents identified themselves as coordinator, but the responsibility described for the post could be equivalent to a director or chair with budgetary and curriculum responsibility with staff support or a sub-administrative role of a "professor-in-charge."



In early surveys, most American Studies programs were undergraduate. That is still the case, but a noticeable trend is the growth of graduate programs. In 1973, 10 percent of American Studies programs reported giving the doctorate, and in 2007, 25.7 did. The number of programs giving the B.A. decline from 75 to 67.6 percent between the 1973 and 2007 surveys. Along with this growth in the graduate side is a rise in the number of institutions whose American Studies program offers only a graduate degree. In 1973, only 3 percent restricted themselves to graduate degrees, but in 2007, that figure rose to 12.7 percent. Apparently, a number of undergraduate programs added graduate programs, because the percentage of institutions reporting that they offered both undergraduate and graduate degrees rose from 17 to 21.2 percent. The patterns identified in the 2007 survey suggest that the majority of new American Studies programs have been on the graduate side. Overall, the number of new programs continues to show a steady increase. The 1990s and early twentieth century have been boom times for the creation of new programs. The largest number of programs responding to the survey reported being formed in the last decade. The other concentration of programs was established during the 1950s and 1960s. When asked to forecast programmatic plans in the next five years, one third of all respondents





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responded that their programs planned to add majors, minors, or certificates in the next five years. Overall, the largest initiative was foreseen in the creation of master's degree programs, followed by an "other" category which includes minors, concentrations, options, and certificates. Six institutions reported that they were actively working on adding a doctorate in American Studies to their offerings.

Although most program leaders reported being optimistic about the future of American Studies at their institutions, they rated a number of challenges to their success. In both 1992 and 2007, the top two responses were the same: budgetary concerns and inadequate faculty size. Nonetheless, fewer program leaders noted these issues in 2007 as they did in 1992, when 44 and 40 percent were most concerned with them, respectively, compared to 32.1 and 29.2 percent. One notable difference between the response to this question in 1992 and 2007 is the concern for lack of majors. In 1992, 32 percent of program leaders viewed it as a challenge, below budgetary concerns and inadequate faculty size. In 2007, it dropped to fourth, and 27.9 percent of the program leaders also listed "lack of majors" to be the least problematic issue for them. Another situation that has apparently improved is the extension of release time for faculty teaching American Studies. We solicited comments from program leaders to give background on their ratings. A frequent response was that program leaders viewed American Studies as a discipline rather than a composite field and they faced a challenge in convincing larger traditional, larger departments of this view. Changing perception was also on the minds of program leaders who wrote that they also worked to establish the expertise of American Studies faculty, because they

9. Challenges to AmSt Leaders

1992 2097

1. Budgetary Concerns (H4) Budgetary Concerns (SC.1)

2. Inadequate Peculty Size Inadequate Faculty Size (29.2)

(40)

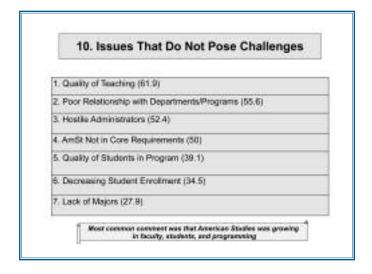
3. Lack of Majors (32) Inadequate Staffing (28.2) (AST)

(Ast of Majors (32) Inadequate Staffing (28.2) (AST)

(A Lack of Release Support Time for Teaching AMS (32)

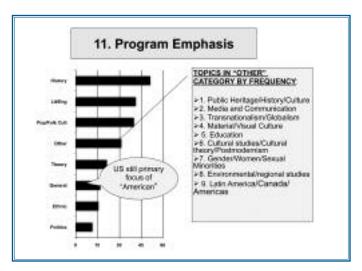
5. Inadequate Staffing (30) Lack of Pleancial Support for Students (22.5)

encountered a view in other units that "anyone can teach about America" or "being interdisciplinary is old hat." Expanding their independence as an administrative unit and convincing colleagues in other units of their distinction were on the minds of many program leaders. Part of this independence is their self-perception that American Studies was no longer decidedly a humanities field but was a bridge discipline, or an "interdiscipline," as one program leader described it, between humanities and social sciences. Having acknowledged that American Studies was growing in prestige on their campuses along with their number of faculty, students, and outreach activities, some program leaders expressed concerns about managing growth, and whether they had adequate staff and facilities to keep up with demand.



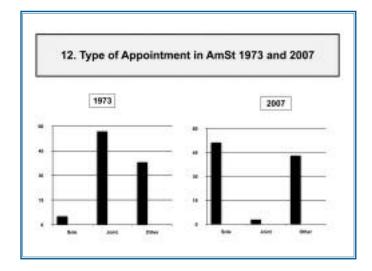
Faculty, Curriculum, and Mission

Although program leaders noted changes in the scope of American Studies in the last decade, when asked to state their programs' emphasis, the majority responded with the same focus declared in 1956—history and English/literature. The most notable difference, however, was the 35.7 percent who claimed primary attention to culture. Many specified that this cultural attention was to popular and/or folk culture. Related to this concern was the 15.7 percent of program leaders who declared a focus on ethnicity, especially with reference to ethnic culture. Among topics that were hardly mentioned as emphases in previous surveys but were given special attention in the "other" category were, in rank order, public heritage, media and communication, transnationalism/globalism, material/visual culture (and arts), education, and cultural studies.



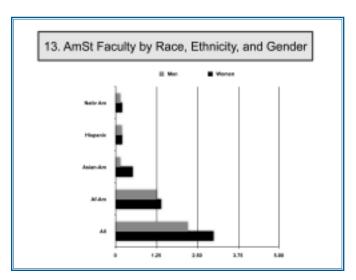
One means of projecting future trends in program emphasis is to examine the results of our question to program leaders asking what specialization they would request if they were to write a job posting today. The top ranked answer was in ethnicity and religion. Most program leaders considered a general position in ethnicity and race desirable, followed closely by designations of expertise in Hispanic or Mexican-American studies. Some respondents noted needs in religion, and the neglect within the program of certain areas prevalent in other programs of the institution such as Jewish studies and Mormon studies. Several commentators wanted more cooperation (or to have American Studies serve as an umbrella unit) with African American studies, Asian-American studies, Latin American studies, Mexican-American Studies, and Native American Studies but noted that on their campus, they tend to be independent units.

The study of ethnicity and race as part of inquiry into social forces is also related to the second most commonly stated specialization of social science, including, according to respondents' comments, ethnographic methodology, politics and economics (especially in international programs), and sociology (with attention to class and community). The specializations that follow are relatively close together in frequency. In rank order, they are historical perspectives (with more attention to twentieth century topics and cultural history), globalization and transnationalism (usually stated as entailing a comparative perspective or an area approach such as "Atlantic World" or "Pacific Rim"), material and visual culture (often in relation to the study of arts and architecture and application to museums), public practice (including areas designated as heritage studies and public heritage, culture, history, folklore), literature (particularly in noncanonical areas), popular and folk culture (with subfields mentioned for music, performance, sports, and consumer and regional culture), gender studies (including issues of sexuality and masculinity, as well as women's studies), and science and technology (stated typically as social and cultural perspectives benefitting programs in



institutions with high profiles in science and engineering profiles; a related area in this category was environmental and nature studies).

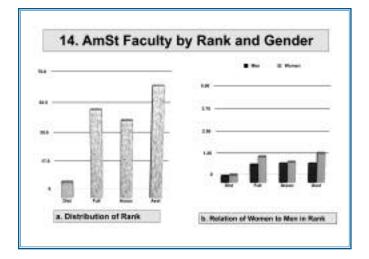
Faculty appointments within programs have changed dramatically since 1973 to the point that the majority of all appointments in American Studies are totally within American Studies. In 1973, only 5 percent of programs had faculty who had full-time appointments in American Studies; in 2007, the figure rose to 51.3 percent. Related to this trend is the collapse of the "joint appointment," a strategy mentioned by program administrators in earlier surveys to add offerings and participating faculty to their curriculum. In 1973, 57 percent of programs reported having faculty with joint appointments; in 2007, the figure was 3 percent.



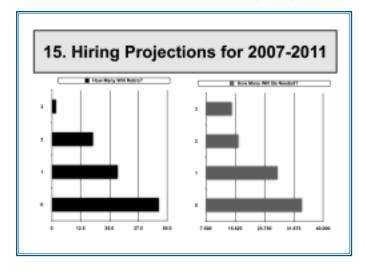
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Another notable change in the American Studies professoriate is the representation of women. Results of the 2007 survey showed that women dominated every professorial category. In 1973, women taught in 58 percent of programs; in 2007, the figure was 97.1 percent. The 2007 survey also revealed that the American Studies professoriate is increasingly diverse, with the largest representation of a minority being African American. In 1973 ethnic minorities taught in 32 percent of programs; in 2007, the figure was 47 percent. Among programs in the United States, the figure is 60 percent. According to the 2007 survey, women dominate all professorial ranks, especially at the assistant professor level (by a ratio of 1.6:1) reflecting a trend of hires in the last decade. Women are also well represented at the full professor level by a ratio of 1.4:.94 of women to men, and more



programs reported having women in endowed or distinguished chairs than men. Reflecting the growth of American Studies in the last decade, the American Studies professoriate is concentrated in the assistant professor rank with 64 percent of all faculties being designated as

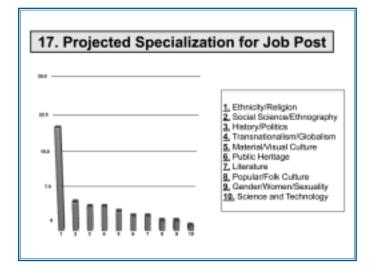


"junior" or "assistant." Evidence from the 2007 survey reveals that a large proportion of these junior positions are new hires. On average, 1.5 positions in American Studies programs were not replacement positions, but were newly created. The evidence also indicates more mobility for faculty than reported in earlier surveys. Almost 30 percent of programs reported hiring 1 or 2 faculty members in the last five years; 10.4 percent hired three or more. Those faculty who vacated a position, according to the survey, resigned to take another position. Most programs reported being able to replace vacated positions; 1.7 positions in a program were replacement hires in the last five years. In contrast, in the 1973 survey, only 1 total hire was made per program, and 49 percent reported no American Studies hires. In 2007, the percentage of programs making no hires slid markedly to 37 percent. An increasing number of programs insisted on the American Studies degree as a condition of hiring. In 1973, 70 percent of program leaders reported hiring someone without an American Studies degree, but that percentage dropped 10 points in 2007.

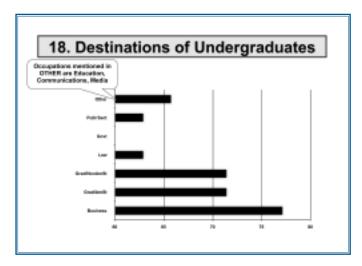
The 2007 survey asked program leaders to project hiring patterns based on retirements, vacancies, and the acquisition of new lines. Close to 30 percent of respondents expected one retirement in the next five years and 17.9 percent projected 2. In contrast to 1973 when 40 percent of leaders did not expect to be able to create any new lines, 66 percent of programs reported needing 1 to 3 faculty members in the next five years. Program leaders were optimistic about the job prospects of their graduates, and noted the expansion of the non-academic job market for American Studies graduates. Program leaders noted that although the master's degree was considered sufficient for such positions in the twentieth century, in the twenty-first century the Ph.D. was increasingly advantageous for advancement in such positions. To be sure, most graduate programs were still geared toward college teaching as a career path, but program leaders noted more student demand for public sector work, indicating that it was a primary career choice, rather than an alternative to college teaching. A few programs mentioned having applied areas in their curriculum such as museum studies, public practice (public heritage, public history, public folklore, historic preservation, archives and records management, cultural resource management), and media and digital technology. Totaling the number of positions expected, it is possible to project over 1000 positions designating American Studies training as a prerequisite over the next five years. If this is the case, it appears that the number of Ph.D.s produced will not exceed the demand, assuming that

American Studies programs increase their rate of hiring candidates with American Studies degrees.

A factor in the perceived demand for American Studies backgrounds that program leaders stated put their graduates at an advantage over graduates from traditional disciplines is the integrative or interdisciplinary skills desired to teach in core curricula. Over 30 percent of program leaders mentioned that undergraduate American Studies courses counted toward a campus-wide general education or core curriculum requirement. This included introductory courses serving as surveys of American culture and diversity or arts and humanities surveys that are serve as interdisciplinary models. Besides providing a critical service role in college-wide curricula, American Studies programs reported a rise in the size of their pool of majors. In 1958, a typical undergraduate program in American Studies graduated an average of 7 students; that number increased to 9.7 in 1973 and rose to 13 in 2007. The ratio of women to men in programs was over 2 to 1 (8.4 women to 3.8 men). The largest minority representation was from African Americans who constituted 7.6 percent of majors. Undergraduate programs reported a number of special features that make choosing American Studies as a major attractive: internships, exchanges with institutions abroad (whether an international institution or one in the United States). collaborations with local museums and organizations (for faculty, facilities, and field experiences), study tours, and service learning opportunities. Program leaders mentioned an expansion in their roles from scheduling and budgeting to community outreach and programming, including organization of lectures, conferences, films, concerts, and exhibitions. A number of program leaders commented that this was a way that American Studies maintained a high profile as a relatively small unit within a large institution. To the question of where holders of American Studies degrees go, program leaders



reported that the largest contingent went to graduate school, equally divided between American Studies and non-American-Studies programs. The next largest contingent went into business, followed by law and public service. A large "other" category included occupations in education (some program leaders mentioned that a number of majors sought teacher certification to coincide with their degrees), communications, and media.



In contrast, holders of graduate degrees were less likely to go into business than they were to college teaching and public heritage (including museums, historical sand preservation societies, and cultural agencies) and information sector (libraries and archives) work. A holder of a master's degree in American Studies was more likely than a doctorate holder to already be in secondary education or planning on advancement there (many program leaders in the United States mentioned state teacher requirements for advanced educational credits which teachers take in American Studies). Holders of the doctorate, according to program leaders, went into college teaching and public heritage work. Graduate programs in American Studies reported granting on average 4.1 master's degrees and 3.7 doctorates annually per program. In an average entering doctoral class of 9.4 students, the ratio of women to men was 2 to 1. This is in stark contrast to the ratio in 1973 when seven of every eight doctorates went to men. In 1973 the number of students who entered graduate programs in American Studies with undergraduate degrees in American Studies was negligible, but in 2007, this number rose sharply to place just behind undergraduate backgrounds in literature and history. Also noticeable was a rise in the number of undergraduates who entered American Studies with backgrounds in art history and anthropology (fourth and fifth on the list, respectively), while the number of students with backgrounds in politics and government declined.

| Ph.D. | M.A. |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1.College Teaching | College Teaching |
| 2.Museum/Archival | Secondary Education |
| 3.Library and Information | Museum/Archival |
| 4.Business | Library and Information |
| 5.Non-Profit/Public Sector | Non-Profit/Public Sector |
| 6.Secondary Education | Business |

To provide qualitative data regarding the perception of American Studies by programs, respondents to the 2007 survey were asked to provide descriptions and mission statements for their American Studies programs. As was evident in 1992, keywords of interdisciplinary and holistic were frequently mentioned in the 2007 survey, but overall, these keywords were surpassed in frequency in 2007 by "cultural," "diversity," and "broad." A significant number of comments described American Studies as a discipline or independent field with its own theories and methods rather than touting its interdisciplinary character. Program statements frequently distinguished between themselves and traditional disciplines by noting attention to "non-text-based forms and practices," vernacular and popular culture (including keywords of folk, ethnic, mass, and everyday), educational innovation (mentioned as examples were distance education, alignment with emerging areas such as cultural studies, and explorations of citizenship models). A number of programs cited the distinction of American Studies being oriented toward communities, cities, and regions as laboratories and outreach opportunities. Several programs mentioned the interpretation of American experience in American Studies to "scholars in other fields and to people outside the academy."

The description of mission and goals by program leaders illuminated patterns in the United States and international programs. No matter where the location of the program, mission statements tended to mention integrative and global goals. But U.S. programs mentioned "culture" or "cultural" more, and tended to draw attention to non-text based inquiry (practices and ideas) along with regional and ethnic concerns. International programs emphasized often expressed interest in texts, particularly when accompanied by preparation for work in translation and language education. Although many international programs in American Studies, according to their leaders, grew out of literature and language

study, one frequently finds in the survey a different trajectory as an area study with concerns for integration of politics, society, and economics. Programs in Asia often organized United States studies as part of Anglo-American or "Western" history, whereas European programs frequently mentioned North American Studies. When programs in the United States mentioned global connections, it tended to be North America (although a few program leaders mentioned an orientation toward the Americas with attention to Latin America and the Caribbean), ethnic (with some programs having subfields in Asian-American, Native-American, and African-American studies), and regional (especially in New England, the South, West, and Southwest, although some programs affiliate with centers in the Midwest, Northwest, and Mid-Atlantic).

In sum, the results of the 2007 survey lead to affirmation of Hilbish's conclusion in the 1992 survey that "American Studies is a growing, healthy, active field." The signs of this growth include the increasing independence of American Studies units, creation of new tenure lines, expansion of public heritage work for American Studies graduates, and organization of new American Studies centers and programs/departments. Program leaders report a number of intellectual as well as administrative changes in American Studies since Hilbish's statement was made. Indeed, many program leaders worried in 2007 about managing growth and realignment of their programs. American Studies is reportedly more global and at the same time more localized than in 1992. It is also more diverse ethnically and varied in subject matter, although more programs in the 2007 survey than in previous surveys report focusing on cultural issues. Having added international respondents to the 2007 survey, the situation is no less robust internationally, although political concerns that provide a context for support of American Studies are often cited as a challenge in places such as the United Kingdom and the Middle East. At the same time, growth of interest in the United States is cited in areas such as East Asia and the formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe. Program leaders report being confident that the growth of American Studies measured by the number of faculty and students as well as by intellectual activity is likely to continue in the next five years.

Summary of Major Findings

1. Demographics, Administration, and Structure

a. Although the majority of programs are situated in medium-sized (10-20,000 students) public institutions, the largest rise since 1992 has

- been in large (more than 30,000 students) comprehensive universities.
- b. For the first time, the model of the independent department/program is the dominant structure and the number of units having departmental status is at an all-time high.
- c. One quarter of all programs have linkages with an American Studies center or archives for research and outreach.
- d. One third of all programs plan to add degrees, minors, options, and certificates between 2007 and 2011. The program most likely to be initiated is a master's degree program. Although there is a slight decline in the number of undergraduate programs, the number of doctoral programs has expanded. Several new doctoral programs, typically growing out of existing master's degree programs, are being planned for the period 2007-2011.

2. Faculty

- a. The most dramatic change is in the rise of full time faculty lines in American Studies since 1973 and the decline since then of the "joint appointment."
- b. For the first time, women compose the majority of all American Studies faculties and dominate in each of the ranks, including the creation of more distinguished and endowed chairs. The highest ratio of women to men is at the assistant professor rank.
- c. The largest ethnic minority is African American, followed by Asian Americans.
- d. Most American Studies faculty members are at the assistant professor rank, indicating a large young cohort hired in the last five years.

3. Hiring Trends

- a. The rise in the number of American Studies faculty is due to newly created tenured or tenure-track positions.
- b. The number of retirements expected is down from the previous ASA survey, but academic leaders anticipate 1.5 more hires per program in the next five years.
- c. Program leaders expect the prospects to be good for academic hires in the next five years. Ethnicity/religion and social science/ethnography

- are the most likely fields of need for American Studies programs.
- d. Programs report valuing non-academic/publicheritage jobs in American Studies but did not report significant preparation in curriculum for these fields.

4. Mission and Goals

- a. Fewer programs than before organize their mission around interdisciplinary character, and more report goals of critically analyzing cultures), localism/regionalism, globalism/transnationalism, and diversity. More programs/departments than before describe American Studies as a separate discipline.
- More programs identify outreach, community, and public component as objectives than ever before.
- c. International and U.S.-based programs are similar in holistic, global goals, but are differentiated by emphasis on text, sociopolitics, culture and crossnational interest. Although the combination of history and literature is still mentioned as a foundation of study, distinctive in the 2007 survey is the focus of a majority of programs on culture (especially popular culture) and societal issues (race, ethnicity, and gender).
- d. A consistency from past surveys is the perception of American Studies as primarily an inquiry into the United States.

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