April 28, 2006

Dr. Carlos Navarro, Interim Chair
Liberal Studies Program
National Hispanic University
14271 Story Road
San Jose, CA 95127-3823

Dear Carlos,

I am enclosing my review of the Liberal Studies Program. I had a wonderful time visiting your campus, and as before, left filled with optimism and enthusiasm for the work being done by everyone at National Hispanic University. It is a very special place.

One of the most striking observations during my visit to NHU was how similar the conversations had become to ones at my institution – your students sound just like our students complaining that the library isn’t open late enough or the food services are not good; faculty concerns about poor student performance, heavy workloads, inadequate support are all familiar to me. This wasn’t the case in 2000 — then NHU had unique problems and issues. Now NHU has grown into a regular university with regular problems. Cold comfort, perhaps, but a major move ahead!

Please convey my thanks to Michael Mooney, Provost Avila, and President Lopez for their time and assistance. And thank you for inviting me back again.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Naomi Bishop, Assistant Director
Teachers for a New Era
External Reviewer Report

National Hispanic University
Liberal Studies Program

Naomi H. Bishop, Ph.D.
Professor of Anthropology
Assistant Director, CSUN Teachers for a New Era (Carnegie grant project)
California State University, Northridge
April 2006

On April 4-5, 2006 I visited the campus of National Hispanic University (NHU) in San Jose, California as one of two external reviewers for the Liberal Studies Department. Professor Vince Fitzgerald, Notre Dame de Namur University, served as the other reviewer and together we visited with students, alumni, faculty, administrators, and staff of NHU. Our schedule is appended to this report.

Prior to the visit, we were sent the following materials:

♦ Liberal Studies Department Self Study
♦ NHU Program Review Guidelines
♦ NHU Catalog 2005-2006
♦ Spring 2006 Schedule of Classes
♦ External Reviewers Reports (2001)
♦ Proposal for revised Liberal Studies major (2003)
♦ Course syllabi for the Gateway course (ED 300) and the Seminar (ED 490)
♦ Copy of CTC Approval letter (2004), certifying the NHU Liberal Studies Program as an approved Elementary Subject Matter Program for the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential
♦ Faculty CVs

The campus visit provided the following additional information:

Curriculum: We were invited to examine the approved course outlines for each course in the Liberal Studies major, as well as the recent document submitted to the CCTC for program approval (meeting the new SB2042 Standards). We observed three class sessions for about an hour each. I observed Linguistics 406 (Comparative Linguistics), English 401 (Multi-ethnic Children’s Literature), and Ethnic Studies 265 (Minorities in the United States). All three classes are required for the Liberal Studies major.

Facilities: We toured the new building, with visits to the Library, the Student Academic Assistance Center, science laboratories, and student lounge. We discussed the collection with the Director of the Library, the facilities for student support with the Director of
SAAC, and the science laboratory facilities with Dr. William Cruz, science faculty member.

**Personnel:** We met with President David Lopez who talked with us about the mission and vision of NHU and the recent history of the institution. We had several meetings with Acting Provost, Dr. Adriana Ayala and the Liberal Studies Department Chair, Dr. Carlos Navarro. We met with faculty and staff, including the department chairs. We spent 30 minutes each with Mary Manning, Director of the Library and George Shamshayooadeh and his staff in SAAC.

**Students:** We spent an hour with a group of seven evening students (working adults) and another hour with three recent alumna, discussing their experiences and their perspective on NHU. We observed classes in both the day and the evening program.

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**AREAS OF STRENGTH**

I am pleased to note that the areas of strength identified in my report from my external review visit in 2000 remain areas of strength in 2006: clarity of mission, efficient program design, student support, and a strong liberal arts curriculum are all evident in the National Hispanic University’s Liberal Studies program of 2006. I will briefly touch on these, as I see them today, and then add a few more observations.

a. **Clarity of Mission:** Spontaneously, students, faculty, alumna and staff alike embed their comments about NHU within the context of the mission of the institution. High expectations for achievement, a multicultural educational experience, strong support for success, and an emphasis on mentoring and role models come through clearly – in classrooms, in conversation, and in observation around the campus. There is a strong sense of satisfaction from members of this community – that the mission is a good one and it is working.

b. **Efficient Program Design:** The Liberal Studies program redesign to meet the new state standards of SB2042 has maintained the breadth and depth of the former program, while strengthening the program especially for students preparing to become teachers. Students combine NHU Core Requirements, GE requirements, and their major requirements to meet the demanding state standards for subject matter within a 126 unit Bachelor’s degree. The new program has added elements that strengthen students’ preparation for teaching, such as early field experience, a Gateway course that helps them bridge the subject matter program and their future credential program, a course in child development, and an integrative social science course with a research paper. It retains strength in the two areas of emphasis, in literature, and in the multicultural perspective.
c. Student Support: The new Student Academic Assistance Center (SAAC) provides myriad support activities and facilities that are specifically linked to the academic program, so students have access to computers, printers, tutorial software, and spaces that support collaborative work. Systems are in place to connect students in need of assistance with SAAC, including early intervention through the department chairs, faculty referrals, and the incorporation of required time in SAAC into courses. Interviews with students suggested that they feel very well supported at NHU – faculty availability, for as much time and attention as needed, was cited repeatedly by grateful students as an important source of their success.

d. Strong Liberal Arts Curriculum: As mentioned above under Efficient Program Design, the Liberal Studies major, along with the NHU Core and GE, provides a strong foundation in the liberal arts. The major is especially strong in language arts, history and the sciences. It is remarkable in such a small institution that students can receive foundational training with labs in four basic sciences. The ethnic studies/multicultural courses provide social science perspectives which are missing as traditional disciplinary courses, and students get introduced to the basics of computers and mathematics and statistics.

e. Learning-Centered Mission: On this visit I was struck by the pervasive presence of a learning-centered focus throughout the institution. The learning needs of students are central to everything that happens at NHU. In classrooms, faculty used techniques to engage student participation and responsibility for the learning that happened in the classroom. Students were asked to comment, to read aloud, to share experiences, to consider examples – all active forms of learning. In our interviews students shared their sense of the benefit they got from group projects, from close interaction with instructors, and from helping their peers. The SAAC was set up to support these forms of learning, with rooms available for groups to work together on projects, with spaces and professional support providers for individual tutoring sessions, and with close communication with faculty to encourage and support the needs of each course. The new one-unit information competence class is designed to help students learn how to learn, through finding and evaluating sources of information. The building itself is designed to support learning. Unlike the separate spaces of the portables, the building houses classrooms, libraries, support services, and faculty mentors all within a small space, that encourages interaction and contact.

A slightly different manifestation of the learning-centered ethos at NHU is the openness with which people at NHU greeted the reviewers. Beginning with President Lopez and extending through the Provost, Department Chair, faculty, and staff, there was a genuine interest in hearing our ideas, and thinking and talking about new and different ways to do things at NHU. All suggestions were first put through the crucible of their impact on the particular types of students at NHU, and then the conversation would turn to matters of practicality and funding. People at NHU were open in sharing
information as well as willing to listen. Students and alumna spoke freely, sharing their views without self-consciousness or censorship. Faculty were frank about the difficulties as well as the joys of life at NHU. There was a shared sense of looking for solutions and best practices – open inquiry which is the basis of a learning-centered institution.

f. Transformations since the last review: It is impressive to see the external reviewers’ suggestions taken seriously and used to implement change in the program. The combination of a program review followed closely by new state standards for subject matter programs provided the synergy to transform the Liberal Studies major at NHU. The revised syllabi with a common format are a significant improvement, making it possible for the department to develop assessment measures for both the students and the program in the future. The increased number of full-time faculty brings improved credibility and stability to the program, not to mention the contributions each is making to the curriculum and institution. The new field experience strengthens the major considerably, and the senior forum is a terrific idea for a small university such as NHU.

AREAS OF CONCERN

1. Faculty

NHU is to be commended for expanding the ranks of full time faculty, for developing syllabi that support faculty in meeting student learning objectives, and for developing faculty contracts. However, much still remains to be done in terms of faculty workload, faculty pay, and faculty development.

All full-time faculty at NHU have mixed administrative and teaching loads. In addition, they provide extensive student contact outside of class. My sense is that this is understood and accepted as part of the mission of National Hispanic University and as part of being a small university. However there remain too few full-time faculty lines in areas the serve Liberal Studies. Full-time faculty are the most important element in maintaining quality in an academic program. They provide continuity, a shared sense of commitment to the institution and its mission, and the skills and experience to set the standards. Those full-time faculty who have committed to NHU are in danger of burnout without some respite. This can be addressed by hiring additional full-time faculty who can share both administrative and curricular loads, by developing an opportunity for sabbaticals or research reassignment, and by providing staff support (either clerical hires or student assistants), to name a few possibilities. NHU offers junior faculty the opportunity to move more rapidly into administrative roles than is possible elsewhere. With appropriate support, this can be positive for the institution, and allow you to attract up and coming young faculty.
A university needs full time faculty with appropriate terminal degrees – in many cases, the PhD. Attracting such faculty will likely become easier as your institution grows. Retaining such faculty will require some rethinking about ways to support faculty research agendas, as well as how to provide some respite from the heavy work loads. Recruiting faculty with applied research interests is one way to support the teaching, research and community service agendas simultaneously.

The faculty pay issue was raised most consistently with respect to adjunct faculty, although the Liberal Studies Self Study document states that there are concerns regarding the stagnation of full time faculty salaries as well. Despite recent increases, the NHU adjunct faculty pay scale is still not competitive locally. This has the potential to compromise the quality of your program, not to speak of exhaust your department chairs and faculty who spend too much time recruiting, training and mentoring novice instructors who then leave for better pay elsewhere.

University faculty require ongoing renewal and development. People spoke highly of the recent workshop on assessment. As faculty are hired, especially faculty with PhD degrees who have invested time in research, it will become increasingly important to provide forms of faculty support that keep young faculty current in their field (e.g., travel to conferences; access to library services) and connected to the world of scholars. While the teaching mission is predominant, NHU is a university and needs to insure that the lead faculty in the program are well qualified and well supported.

2. Technology

At various points in the visit, we heard comments about problems with technology – that the software and hardware were not up to date, that computers funded through grants had not been delivered, and that technical support is inadequate. We did not visit the computer facilities, nor did we talk with the individual responsible for campus technology. With specific regard to the Liberal Studies program, I was impressed to visit a classroom where the instructor was teaching with PowerPoint slides, opening documents on the web to read with the class, and modeling very effectively for her students how to teach and learn with technology. The request for two Smart Classrooms in the Liberal Studies Self Study should receive some attention, although without technical support such facilities can be worse than useless.

3. Institutional Growth

We heard often about the increasing enrollments at NHU and the desire to extend that trend into the future, especially with regard to the “traditional” day student population. While the President and Provost were positive about this growth, faculty were concerned about increased workloads and students were concerned about the
swamping effect of so many 18-20 year olds, changing the culture and complexion of the campus.

The student complaints were fairly typical of those in any institution - evening students complained they were excluded from certain events or opportunities that were held in the daytime; they expressed annoyance at having to deal with immature behavior in their classrooms; they even occasionally sounded as if they felt that the original mission of NHU was somehow being diluted or changed by encouraging traditional age students to attend. There were comments about problems with class availability, now that the class schedule was spread across day and evening.

As NHU plans for growth, awareness of these student concerns will help the institution make a smoother transition into a larger and more complex community.

4. Focusing the Liberal Studies Major

There are three potential service populations for the Liberal Studies major at NHU: 1) undergraduate students seeking a BA degree that will prepare them in subject matter for a career as an elementary or special education teacher; 2) paraprofessionals working in the schools seeking 60 college credits to meet NCLB requirements; and 3) undergraduate students seeking a general BA degree in the liberal arts.

The current Liberal Studies BA major serves the first population well – your graduates will be prepared for the CSET examination and should have the content knowledge they will need in their future classrooms. The Liberal Studies AA major can serve paraprofessionals who seek credits in order to retain their jobs under No Child Left Behind, as well as students seeking a general AA degree. Paraprofessionals who complete the Liberal Studies AA degree program will be well prepared to move into the four year major program without any loss of credits. Increased efforts to encourage this would be a service to your students, extending their horizons and their earning power.

Although the review team never saw the proposed Liberal Studies major for non-credential students, we strongly supported the concept and urge NHU to move forward with this option. A Liberal Studies major for future teachers is highly prescriptive, and should be focused as much as possible on developing the kind of subject matter knowledge important for teaching. Students who don't plan on teaching careers should not be in the current Liberal Studies major, yet we encountered such students. A new Liberal Studies major designed to provide a foundation in the liberal arts is an excellent idea for a university such as yours.

It was difficult to get information on enrollment patterns – for instance, how many AA students stay for a BA? How many Liberal Studies majors go on for a credential, and how many do so at NHU? This type of information is important for both immediate and
long range planning for the Liberal Studies Department, and for assessing the effectiveness of advisement.

5. Disconnect between Liberal Studies and Credential Program

It was puzzling to see the lack of connection between the Liberal Studies Department and the Teacher Education Department. No one knew how many NHU students continued on for a NHU credential, and the credential director actually argued against students continuing. He commented that NHU Liberal Studies graduates are the weakest students in the credential program, but no mention was made of any attempt to understand this and remedy it. An opportunity is being missed to build a coherent program for training teachers, to retain your own students for post-baccalaureate work, and for maximizing the opportunities for collaboration between arts and sciences and education in the preparation of teachers.

Considerations for Future Thought

Size of the Liberal Studies major: This issue was raised in the previous review and the response of the department was to retain the current unit count. Since students enter NHU with little exposure to a college prep curriculum, requiring them to take these specific courses ensures they have appropriate skills and knowledge for a career in teaching. Clearly the faculty in charge of the Liberal Studies major are in the best position to judge this.

As the major and the university grows, there may be reasons to revisit this issue. A smaller major program provides more flexibility for students. There are two types of students who may benefit from flexibility: the transfer student and the traditional age student. Transfer students who enter NHU with college units that are not needed for their Liberal Studies major or GE (e.g. units toward an accounting major or a chemistry major), could apply those units toward graduation and not have to take extra classes. Currently, those extra units would essentially be “wasted.” A smaller LS major would allow a transfer student to apply all of his/her college units toward the degree and speed time to up graduation and reduce cost. Transfer students are frequently discouraged by how many additional units they will need, and sometimes do not choose to continue.

The traditional age student may be interested in a smaller major program because they are less goal oriented and want to experiment more widely, as is common at other universities. The opportunity to select a few electives could be attractive to them, while that doesn’t seem to be the case for your working adults. (In fact, every one of the latter whom we interviewed expressed no interest in choosing her courses – as one put it, “If you don’t trust your university to tell you what you need to take, you should find another university that you do trust.”)
All degree programs at NHU are completely prescribed, reflecting a shared institutional value that is not common elsewhere. Perhaps this is why external reviewers harp on this—it goes against our experience. I raise these issues as a contribution to the on-going discussion, not as a recommendation for any action.

Professional Career Counseling  As National Hispanic University grows, it will become increasingly helpful to students to have an opportunity for professional career counseling. From our limited conversations, it seemed that career options, and their relationship to course selection, were not as clearly understood by students as they might be. Again, with the slightly less docile traditional age population, you may find more demand for individuated career preparation.

Using Assessment for Program Improvement: Maintaining high expectations and standards is a perpetual issue for any institution of higher education. A strategic plan to increase full-time faculty in key subject matter areas and an assessment program involving both formative and summative assessment to achieve these goals can go far in helping the Liberal Studies Department address this issue. Permanent faculty commit to the institution, shape its values, and can more easily withstand pressures to reduce expectations and standards. An assessment plan allows both the faculty and the institution to know how well they are doing in meeting their goals. The assessment workshop is an excellent step toward this, as is the articulation of learning objectives on course syllabi. Next steps include developing ways to measure how well students and faculty are meeting those learning objectives and an implementation plan, including the resources to support it.

Summary

Commendations
1. National Hispanic University lives its mission—members of the NHU community are committed to the principles of high achievement and strong support for academic success within a multicultural educational setting and they act on that commitment in observable ways.

2. The Liberal Studies major program at NHU is a strong, academically coherent major program that prepares students well for future work as credentialed elementary and special education teachers. It is designed to complement the strengths and needs of the NHU student population and is administered by a team of dedicated faculty.

3. National Hispanic University has made significant changes to the Liberal Studies program since the previous program review in 2000, in response to reviewer’s recommendations and new state standards. These changes have strengthened the curriculum and the program.
4. The addition of full time faculty have enhanced the academic programs at NHU, contributing new ideas, energy, dedication and commitment to the sustainability of the institution and its programs.

Recommendations:
1. Additional full-time faculty hires in several areas of the Liberal Studies curriculum—science, mathematics, literature, and others—will help to insure curricular integrity, provide much needed administrative/advisory services, and sustain the efforts since the last review to maintain and improve program quality. A program of planned growth in the full time ranks is essential to sustain the energy necessary to provide high quality instruction to NHU's students.

2. A program of faculty development, designed by the faculty with dedicated resources, is necessary to retain high quality faculty and sustain high performance.

3. Salaries for adjunct faculty should be comparable with the surrounding market.

4. An examination of enrollment patterns that informs the advisement system will help to insure that the institution will meet the needs and expectations of its students.

5. Linkages between the Liberal Studies major program and the credential program should be explored, including the possibility of early entry for NHU students. Program content overlaps could lead to the opportunity for students to reduce total coursework for the credential.
EXTERNAL REVIEWERS SCHEDULE-- LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Dr. Naomi Bishop, California State University Northridge  
Dr. Vince Fitzgerald, Notre Dame de Namur University  
April 4 and 5, 2006

April 4, Tuesday
Late Morning—Navarro to airport for Dr. Bishop
1:00 PM-2:00 PM—Meeting with Acting Department Chair Carlos Navarro and Interim Provost Adriana Ayala (President’s Conference Room)

2:00 PM-3 PM—Campus tour

3 PM-3:30 PM—Meeting with President Lopez (third floor)

4 PM-5:00 PM—Meeting with Liberal Studies Students (room 301)

5:30 PM-6:30 PM—Class Visits

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6:30 PM-8 PM—External Reviewer Team Dinner with LS Faculty (room 210)

8 PM-9 PM—Class Visits

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<th>Eng 401 (Multi-ethnic Children’s Lit)</th>
<th>Edu 250 (Field Experience-Classroom)</th>
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<td>7:50 pm—rm. 308—Sarah March</td>
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April 5, Wednesday
9 AM-10 AM—Class Visits

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<th>ETH 265 --9 am—rm. 207—Regua</th>
<th>HIS 414 --9 am—rm. 210—Hanley</th>
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10:30 AM-Noon—Dialogue with Faculty and Administration on trends and issues in Liberal Studies—Room 301

Noon-1:30 PM—External Review Team lunch—Room 301

1:30 PM—3 PM—Meeting with NHU Department Chairs—Pres. Conf. Rm.

3 PM-4:00 PM—Meeting with Liberal Studies Students—Room 301

4:00 PM—5:00 PM—Meeting with Liberal Studies Graduates—Room 301

5:00 PM-5:15 PM—External Review Team Final Meeting and departure—SAAC

5:15 PM-6:15 PM—Exit Dinner Meeting with Provost, and Acting Department Chair