

UNIVERSITY of
HOUSTON

College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences
Office of the Dean

March 3, 2011

John Antel
Senior Vice President and Provost
University of Houston
203 Ezekiel Hall
CAMPUS

UC 11297 115
(FYI only)

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Dear Provost Antel,

The College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences proposes to highlight the rich comparative traditions in several of its programs through the creation of an exciting new unit, the Department of Comparative Cultural Studies. This new unit would build on the inherent critical and comparative stance towards culture by combining in one administrative unit the Department of Anthropology, the Liberal Studies and Religious Studies Programs. This new unit will enhance the strengths of each area and encourage greater interdisciplinary collaborations.

Faculty and students will gain a new space in which to debate and discuss shared projects and interests. Students in these majors and programs already explore the historical construction of culture and the way that construction is fundamental to the political, social, and aesthetic relationships that shape human communities. Scholars in the disciplines of anthropology, liberal studies and religious studies have long been students of each other's discourses. By creating a shared space of scholarly debate and student learning, Comparative Cultural Studies will allow faculty and students even greater access to interdisciplinary opportunities already inherent in the constituent disciplines.

The College will not eliminate any existing undergraduate or graduate degrees. The new Department of Comparative Cultural Studies will offer a BA/BS and minor in Anthropology, a BA in Lib Studies, a minor in Religious Studies and an MA in Anthropology. Eventually the Department will facilitate the creation of new cross programs, minors, certificates and possibly majors.

I am currently in the process of appointing a task force with representatives from Anthropology, Liberal Studies, Religious Studies, and other scholars from across the college whose work is cross-cultural and comparative in nature. Their first charge will be to develop an administrative structure for the new Department by drafting By-Laws to submit to the faculty. Secondly, the task force will develop a mission statement providing a clear representation of the Department's intellectual focus that takes into consideration its diversity, incorporating criteria for potential new programs, and articulating a vision for the students who enroll in the department's programs.

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