Hello friends and colleagues,

Thank you for advancing this discussion and proposal.

It strikes me that the proposal is really about power and voice. It is an effort to raise the visibility of issues of race and racism in more explicit ways and in a way that demands respect and recognition. This endeavor has merit. Having been at De Anza for many years now, I have seen time and again how the needs of particular ethnic groups have been ignored and how power has often been exercised in the shadows rather than through more inclusive and transparent structures. This reform seems like a step in the right direction.

Could we study this matter further and better document and research the effectiveness of structures like our affinity groups? Could we perfect the structures of affinity groups to improve their inclusiveness and representation? Could we get out of our silos and cooperate more? Sure. But all of these questions could equally be raised for the entire structure of the Academic Senate and of the structures of our academic divisions that already exist.  Let us not a new-found necessity for perfection impede our progress in improving what we have. We have a college structure that is in need of greater inclusion and empowerment of people of color in general and the specific ethnic groups represented by the three affinity groups in question. This proposal is a positive step in this direction using structures and resources that we have in place. We can and should work to improve what we have. But in the meanwhile, let’s work with what we have.

It may be that including these three groups as voting members of the Academic Senate will beg the question of who else has been excluded from power and voice to the detriment of our students, our colleagues and our college as a whole. I for one would welcome that conversation when it arises. But I do not see that as a reason to oppose this proposal. To the contrary, let us in fact use this as an inflection point engage in this discussion. More liberation is better. More inclusion is better. More democracy is better.

As to the technical issues that have been raised, I believe that the Senate bylaws or constitution could be amended as part of this process as needed to accommodate Senate rules about voting membership.  The other legal objections dealing with state and federal law at this point seem too speculative to carry a lot of weight and if they apply to the academic senate and this proposal, why stop there? Why not question the entire existence of ANY racially specific structures at the college? I for one am not interested in going down that rabbit hole.

I do not chime in very often in APASA matters, but I do so here to support my colleagues in a quest for greater diversity, access and inclusion. This seems like a very positive step.

In solidarity,

Nicky GY

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