February 29, 2016

Dear SF State Community,

I would like to thank the students of the College of Ethnic Studies for the opportunity to meet with them last week and for sharing their key issues. I want to reaffirm my personal commitment to the College of Ethnic Studies and to reiterate that there will be no reductions of funding for courses or lecturers as we evaluate the budgetary needs of the College. SF State’s legacy and support of the first (and only) independent College of Ethnic Studies is a point of pride for all of us.

My leadership team is reviewing the list of concerns provided by the students. As I shared last Thursday, the University’s governing structure does not allow me, as President, nor any administrator, to make categorical, unilateral decisions on matters that must be handled through faculty governance in departments and colleges. Aligned with the inclusive environment of Ethnic Studies, shared governance engages the University community within a collaborative system. The students’ interests, with which I empathize, must be assessed through this framework.

As the academic and administrative leader, the Dean is responsible for facilitating college programs through University processes. The Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies will work with faculty and students to shepherd a review, with faculty support and discussion in the appropriate venues, such as the Academic Senate. Restructuring programs, majors and departments, for instance, is completely within the purview of the department and college, with the faculty owning the curriculum.

SF State is still recovering from system-wide budget cuts and consistent underfunding of the California State University by the State. However, our five values of Equity, Community, Resilience, Courage and Life of the Mind will see us through the decisions that will enable the College of Ethnic Studies to continue to thrive and serve our students for decades to come.

The University will increase the allotment to the College of Ethnic Studies by $200,000 in 2016-17 to allow planning by the faculty, staff and students, as guided by the Dean. In addition, I will seek a commitment to engage fundraising more fully by the Dean and faculty.

In order to increase budget transparency, each academic college will be asked to form a Budget Advisory Committee made up of students, faculty and staff. In liaison with the University Budget Committee, a campus-wide assessment of our financial infrastructure will guide our path forward.

Sincerely,

Les Wong
President