In its low rating and recommendation for closure of the American Studies MA/PhD program, the Task Force overlooked fundamental aspects of American Studies’ excellence. Below we enumerate strengths that the Task Force metrics did not capture, and we highlight efforts for improvement. Additionally, please see the attached Appendix, which is a portfolio of 70 letters from prominent colleagues and alumni around the country, testimony from current graduate students, and other documents that provide evidence of the national stature of our program and its centrality to the university’s mission.

(a) **Longstanding Reputation for Excellence:** We believe the Task Force insufficiently acknowledges the model of interdisciplinarity that American Studies provides for advancing the university’s strategic goal for graduate education and research that fosters interdisciplinary inquiry. Iowa was one of the first institutions to offer the PhD in American Studies (in 1947), and has since been leading the program, easily within the top ten and mentioned along with Yale, Texas, Minnesota, and Michigan as one of the strongest. The ambition to formulate an interdisciplinary synthesis to illuminate the complexities of U.S. culture and its international influence is both the hallmark of American Studies and the source of its graduate program’s excellence, as evidenced in the proportionally high number of Graduate College and external fellowships held by its students, the 2009 Spierestraus Award to an AS dissertation, and especially the 12 of its dissertations published by major university presses since 1997. During this period, the AS faculty published 21 books. The loss of the AS graduate program would have two immediately devastating effects: a disaffected faculty, who have been drawn to AS because of its renowned graduate program; and the disappearance of an interdisciplinary perspective on U.S. culture in CLAS courses taught by AS TAs.

(b) **Time to degree and completion rates:** In step with the American Studies Association’s Graduate Education Committee, we are working to reduce time to degree to 6 years. Our current median of 8.3 years is comparable to the national median reported by the ASA in 2008 and reflects the special challenges of interdisciplinary research, i.e., our students must master the methodological tools of multiple disciplines, and they usually need to travel to multiple archives to complete their dissertation research. Students who make a life decision to leave with the MA should not be counted as the program’s failures. Adding graduates with terminal MA’s with our PhDs makes American Studies’ completion rate 53%, a more revealing statistic than the Task Force used. To improve PhD completion rates, we overhauled our program requirements in 2009. We instituted significant structural alterations and tightened deadlines, so that students will now track more efficiently through the program. These major changes, forged in conjunction with developments in our own field, require time to work.

(c) **Graduate Admission and Placement:** 2010 applications total 39, up from 33 last year and in line with the national average of 40 over the last 5 years. As interdisciplinary scholars, our students generally take two primary professional paths: into teaching positions in a range of departments (American Studies, History, English, African American Studies, Women’s and Gender Studies, Religion, AINS, Sport Humanities); and into a range of public sector jobs (academic administrators, museum curators, living history program directors, public historians and journalists, public policy and environmental institute directors, activists and political consultants). Placement of graduates in non-academic as well as academic positions is regarded as typical and desirable in American Studies graduate programs. Our field has always practiced public engagement.

(d) **Diversity:** Our interdisciplinary perspectives and methods have made American Studies a gateway for the development of advanced studies in the dynamics of difference in U.S. culture and society: the first dissertations at Iowa in women’s and African American studies came out of our department. Diversity of sexuality and gender identity as well as race, ethnicity, and class remains woven into the fabric of every course we teach and into the work we and our students produce. It also animates the Center for Ethnic Studies and the Arts that is housed in our department and contributes to graduate training and the development of junior faculty of color. The scholarly embrace and interrogation of diversity, along with a diverse faculty (27% racial/ethnic minority, 9% international, 18% LGBT, and 54% female) and recruitment of diverse graduate cohorts (current cohort: 18% racial/ethnic minority, 5% international, 5% LGBT, 49% female), is integral to our mission.

(e) **Joint appointments and Mentoring:** Joint appointments that bridge multiple disciplines are the structural armature of the interdisciplinary training we provide. We have a highly synergistic combination of faculty appointed at 100% (2), 75% (2), 50% (4), 25% (2), 0% (1) which we are expanding with the addition of two senior faculty (one at 100% and one at 75%) in the development of junior faculty of color. The scholarly embrace and interrogation of diversity, along with a diverse faculty (27% racial/ethnic minority, 9% international, 18% LGBT, and 54% female) and recruitment of diverse graduate cohorts (current cohort: 18% racial/ethnic minority, 5% international, 5% LGBT, 49% female), is integral to our mission.

Thus, the negative implications of a high student/faculty ratio cited by the Task Force are misleading. Moreover, our addition of two new faculty and planned implementation of a 10% reduction (from 39 to 35) in our graduate student cohort promises to reduce that faculty/student ratio. Museum Studies is being reassigned to another unit in CLAS. The incorporation of AINS, planned move of Sport Studies, and proposed move of African American Studies into American Studies will not significantly impact faculty time (except for the DEO), as those programs will still run with their own coordinators and steering committees. We will gain strength from these mergers in FTE, enrollments, and expansion of our diverse interdisciplinary training that will benefit students at all levels.