

## THE DAILY TEXAN

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## VIEWPOINT

The Future  
Of AAS

Controversy, tension and passion have the hallmarks in the development of UT's Asian-American Studies program.

And for good reason — the movement to create the Asian-American Studies Program is a movement to finally include an entire category of historical and cultural experiences that are uniquely American, yet have been largely excluded from the discourse of American history at the University.

This Eurocentric attempt to erase and ignore the role of Asian Americans in the history of this nation isn't often challenged. But at the University, it was students who took the lead in breaking through this one-sided approach to the traditional way of American storytelling.

It is exactly this struggle and its achievements that make the story of the Center for Asian-American Studies so meaningful.

Students have been, are and will continue to be crucial to the creation and development of this program. The students who brought so much emotion and energy into forming the Asian-American Studies program have transformed the experiences of future UT students for the better. The value of this program is immeasurable.

And the program isn't just for Asian Americans. Each student who sets foot on the campus stands to benefit from the Asian-American Studies program. The existence and establishment of AAS aims to finally introduce an important narrative that has been ignored in the American classroom for far too long. As new and more diverse viewpoints and discussions are forged on this campus, the educational atmosphere only stands to gain.

The road to the establishment of this program has not been an easy one. While faculty and the students involved have disagreed, both groups share a vested interest in the success of the program.

AAS is now in good hands, and the future of the program is a bright one. Interim director Mia Carter and former interim director Arthur Sakamoto, who continues to play an integral role in the development and hiring process, have only the best interests of the program at heart. And both have endured hard times during their tenures of leadership. Despite biting criticism and what sometimes seemed an uphill battle, their dedication to the program hasn't faltered.

Carter has reserved three of six seats on both the steering and search committees for students. While some students remain unsatisfied with the level and quality of student input within the program, it's rare for influential UT committees to give students equal representation.

UT President Larry Faulkner created six faculty hiring spots for the program, two of which have already been filled.

But the hunt for a permanent director who is an Asian Americanist has produced very little. Because Asian American studies is only a budding field in academia, experienced Asian Americanists are not as easy to come by as historians or mathematicians. But locating a director is fundamental to the success of the program, and administrators should constantly keep that in mind.

But at the same time, the newness of Asian-American studies leaves so much room for invention — UT's Asian-American Studies program is poised to become the most important and renowned program of its kind in the southwest.

And with continued faculty and administrative support along with student input, there's no reason UT's Asian-American Studies program can't become the best in the nation.