August 29, 2016

Dear AFS Student:

Welcome! It’s an exciting time to be part of the department of Africana Studies at Stony Brook University. This year we are experiencing a period of transition and growth that will greatly benefit our students and the Africana Studies unit as a whole.

We are currently revising our curriculum to include new areas of concentration such as Health and Disease and Environment and Development, and adding new courses to our roster, such as the Hip Hop Intellectual Tradition and Social Justice and Human Rights. I’m also pleased to announce that we’ve promoted Dr. Mark Chambers as a Visiting Assistant Professor, and we’re in the midst of a job search for positions in Africana/African American Literature and Political Science in Africana Studies.

The department’s fall and spring programming schedule promises to be as captivating as it was last year. In addition to continuing to host our Africana Studies Presents series of lectures from Stony Brook faculty and invited guests, we’re offering a new film series, a poetry reading by Mahogany Browne, and a discussion led by the Stony Brook University chapter of Black Lives Matter.

Our faculty have been engaged in important projects. Currently, Dr. Asare is working with the Discovery and Digital Archives team at the Melville Library (Shafeek Fazal, Heath Martin), to restore and digitize over 100 VHS tapes recorded in the 1980s and 1990s. These tapes include recordings of lectures by notaries such as Sonia Sanchez, Angela Y. Davis, Amiri Baraka, Betty Shabazz, and many others, as well as footage of campus protests and student cultural events.

Last year we had tremendous success with our outreach efforts in the Long Island Community. During the spring semester, I was fortunate to develop a mentoring program in partnership with the Tri County Youth Agency of Huntington, NY. Many Africana students, and others who take our classes, volunteered to work with these students. Over the summer, Dr. Miletzky and Dr. Chambers joined me in providing three days of instruction for this group. Another exciting community service project spearheaded by our faculty is the new writing competition for High School students in Long Island developed by Dr’s Harris and Chambers.

Students remain at the center of our program and I’m so pleased we will continue to support the Black Student Union, host the first Africana book club, and facilitate the development of a student support group for underrepresented female students.

We hope you’ll attend our programs or just drop by and see us if you happen to be in the Social and Behavioral Sciences building.

Tracey Walters
Chair, and Associate Professor of Literature
Department of Africana Studies