

EP.09.03

PROPOSAL TO THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATIONAL POLICY

Establish a BALAS in Gender and Women's Studies, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

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Brief Description

Students majoring in Gender and Women's Studies examine the ways in which sex and gender have structured human societies and cultures, past and present. The interdisciplinary curriculum of Gender and Women's Studies explores women's and men's cultural identities and social roles in relation to race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, and globalization. The program provides both a broad and deep approach to theory, research, and multidisciplinary study.

The major in Gender and Women's Studies requires a core of fifteen hours providing a foundation in the issues, concepts, and methods in gender studies. Students select the remaining eighteen hours of electives in consultation with the GWS advisor.

Justification

Women's/gender studies is a growing interdisciplinary field that brings the perspective of gender, along with a consideration of race, class, and ethnicity, to bear on a host of intellectual problems and issues of current concern. The discipline of women's/gender studies emerged nearly 40 years ago as the academic branch of the women's movement. Since then, women's/gender studies has become an established and highly respected academic discipline that has had a profound impact on scholarship and teaching across the humanities and social sciences.

The Gender and Women's Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign is an interdisciplinary academic program that coordinates a wide range of feminist research, teaching, and public service with emphases on intersectional approaches to the study of gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality in national and transnational contexts. We are also a program with three decades of strong development. GWS has been an innovator in interdisciplinary education since the first course in women's studies was offered in 1970. The Gender and Women's Studies program now offers an undergraduate minor (since 1987), graduate minor (since 1993), and most importantly for our continued impact on teaching at UIUC, an undergraduate major (since 2003) listed among undergraduate majors in interdisciplinary studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. By centralizing gendered analysis in our curriculum, we help students to understand the centrality of gender, race, ethnicity, and sexuality in social, political, and economic life locally, nationally, and globally.

A Gender and Women's Studies major has been offered as a concentration under the "Interdisciplinary Major" in the College of LAS since 2003. Since then, enrollment and graduate rates have increased steadily, from 4 graduates in 2004 to 18 in 2007. Student response to the major, based on exit interviews and a focus group, have been extremely positive; each and every student interviewed said they would strongly recommend the major to other students. Assessment following graduation has been informal thus far, but follow-up contacts with UIUC students graduating with a concentration in gender and women's studies suggest that at least half have applied to or entered professional or graduate school. Law and social work top the list, with others entering graduate studies in fields such as English, gender studies, and psychology. GWS majors who enter the workforce immediately after college are likely to enter the non-profit sector, particularly community agencies that offer support and advocacy to disempowered or underrepresented populations. Some students have accepted positions with Teach for America and Americorps, while others are pursuing careers in business, education, and government.

Increasingly, all sectors of the workforce are impressed by the critical thinking and writing capacities of workers with degrees in the humanities, and GWS, like other liberal arts degrees, centralizes the development of those skills in its curricula. Furthermore, GWS stresses the necessity of rigor and methodological sophistication, especially in a field as new as gender studies. GWS majors thus leave college well prepared to enter a broad range of occupations.

Budgetary and Staff Implications

A. The general advising will continue to be done by the Associate Director, who currently advises students enrolled as minors and interdisciplinary majors. The Program has grown substantially over the past 5 years, increasing its FTE from 4.1 in 2002 to 7.25 in 2007. Over this same period, the number of undergraduate courses the Program offers has nearly doubled, from 11 in 2002-03 to 21 in 2007-08. The number of permanently crosslisted courses offered by other departments has also increased from 31 to 45. Thus the current faculty and courses will be more than adequate for the expected increase in enrollment.

B. No internal reallocations are expected.

C. The Gender and Women's Studies Program is well-established at the Urbana-Champaign campus, and has long-standing relationships with many other departments. In addition to 16 core faculty, the Program has 70 faculty affiliates representing nine different schools and colleges and 32 departments and programs. This broad base of feminist scholars teaches over 50 courses crosslisted with Gender and Women's Studies. The Program continues to serve as a resource for faculty and students with interests in the study of gender and/or sexuality and more broadly, acts as a catalyst for interdisciplinary approaches to education across campus. The Gender and Women's Studies Program has developed especially strong ties to the ethnic studies programs on the Urbana-Champaign campus through joint hires, crosslisted courses, and programming that addresses issues of diversity. This commitment to diversity includes working closely with the Office of

LGBT Concerns and making sexuality studies a principal component in the GWS curriculum.

The response of other units on campus to the interdisciplinary major has been positive; instructors teaching crosslisted courses are eager to have GWS majors in their class and unit heads view the Program as a vital resource for faculty and students who want to integrate feminist scholarship into their research and studies.

D. The University of Illinois Library at Urbana-Champaign has the most comprehensive single collection for women's studies in the state and region. The annual budget for women's studies materials is approximately \$25,000. This money is used to purchase books, AV, serials, and other resources when requested. In addition to its vast collection of monographs and periodicals, the library subscribes to several important databases for women and gender studies including GenderWatch, Contemporary Women's Issues, Women's Studies International, and LGBT Life. These databases provide access to the citations and full text of journals, magazines, newsletters, reports, proceedings, books, chapters, and dissertations.

The Women and Gender Resources Librarian has worked closely with the instructors who teach the Senior Seminar for the Interdisciplinary major in GWS, and will continue to provide the services to enhance the curriculum for the new major. No other additional resources are required.

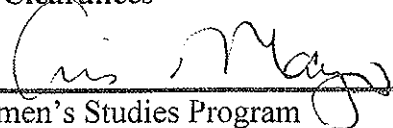
Guidelines for Undergraduate Education

Gender and Women's Studies, situated in the tradition of Liberal Arts and Sciences, is dedicated to developing core skills and competencies that define the humanities and social sciences. GWS courses centralize critical thinking skills, including critical evaluation of evidence and argumentation, critical evaluation of reasoning and methodology, and critical evaluation and application of moral and ethical beliefs and practices. The core courses in the Major in Gender and Women's Studies offer students an understanding of heterogeneous human cultures through a comparative approach to cultural and social diversity, with an emphasis on transnational studies and U.S.-based racial, ethnic, gender, and sexual diversity.

The major in Gender and Women's Studies carries on the traditional forms of inquiry of liberal arts and sciences as they apply to issues of gender and sexuality, understanding that these key social categories are also informed by social class, race, ethnicity, religion, and disability, among others. GWS offers a wide array of courses, some of which are disciplinary in nature, designed to provide students with specific disciplinary methodologies with which to study gender and sexuality. Other courses are interdisciplinary, introducing students to various gender- and sexuality-related critiques of traditional methodological and disciplinary practices.

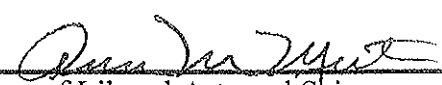
The Gender and Women's Studies major is excellent preparation for students who plan to pursue graduate or professional school, or for students seeking jobs in the public and private sectors, including social services, public policy, advocacy, creative arts, counseling, marketing, and other fields which address women's and family issues.

Clearances



Gender and Women's Studies Program

Date



College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

5/1/08

Date

Provost

Date

Proposed Effective Date: Fall, 2009