

**ACADEMIC REVIEW OF THE
WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES PROGRAM
AT CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON**

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EXTERNAL REVIEWERS:

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I. Introduction

The reviewers visited campus on March 4, 2013. We met with the Associate Dean, Sheryl Fontaine, Program Director, Rebecca Dohlinow, Program tenured and tenure-track faculty, Renae Bredin, Karyl Ketchum, and Donna Nicol, and the lecturers, Dave Christian, Jodi Davis, Priya Shaw, and Logan Easdale. We reviewed a range of documents, including faculty's vitae, syllabi, publicity materials, and the website. We also reviewed the self-study of the Program conducted in advance of our visit and observed two courses, WMST 100 and WMST 302.

The Women and Gender Studies Program at California State University, Fullerton started in 1982 as the Women's Studies Program. Since its establishment, it has grown significantly, creating tenure-track faculty lines, developing a major and a new minor in Queer Studies, and increasing the number of majors. The program also offers strong and very popular general education courses that exposes lower and upper-division students to issues of gender, sexuality, and feminism. Moreover, it has a solid internship course where students can learn from a number of NGO and community organizations focusing on gender, women and sexuality issues. In developing a minor in Queer Studies, in offering very popular GE courses, and in adding gender studies especially masculinity studies, the program has evolved from a woman-focused identity-based program to a broader field of knowledge production and activism including gender and sexuality issues. This evolution is consistent with national trends in women's and gender studies. The program has also been receptive to the needs of very diverse communities of students by working to systematically integrate issues of race, sexuality and class in its academic activities.

II. Leadership

The Program has an excellent director and a well-qualified group of faculty. Professor Rebecca Dolhinow's leadership has helped the program to grow both in terms

of its curriculum and in terms of its campus-community ties. A scholar of great achievement herself, Professor Dolhinow has been particularly able in creating a collegial environment and has been working with the Dean's office to build new, cross-college collaborations with the College of Business and Economics (CBE). She is particularly well qualified to develop a learning community with CBE on nonprofits, as her scholarship on women's activism, and neoliberalism as well as issues of women's leadership, NGOs and grassroots organizing in a transnational and global context is at the forefront of women and gender studies as a field of knowledge production and as a site of activism and social change.

III. Faculty

There are two tenured faculty and two probationary faculty. There are also two full time lecturers and four part-time lecturers in the department.

- The new Queer Studies minor has 45 affiliated faculty and administrators across all six colleges of CSUF. Queer Studies will serve as a companion minor across CSUF. The Women and Gender Studies faculty expressed enthusiasm for this new addition to the curriculum.
- Faculty members were unanimously in favor of revising the curriculum in order to rationalize the number and sequence of courses. We did note faculty concerns that, as their workloads are already heavy, the College should continue supporting a three course teaching load so faculty can invest in their research and publication while building the department in its unique contribution to numerous communities of culture and history in Orange County. We also encourage faculty to take advantage of grant opportunities provided by the Research Division, the H&SS Dean, and the Faculty Development Center to further reduce teaching loads or provide monetary support for research.

- One of the main concerns raised by faculty (tenured/tenure track and lecturers) in our meeting was “the space problem.” Faculty were concerned about not having space for lectures, discussions or meetings and receptions with students. The current allocation of office space blends core faculty with randomly included staff from other, nonrelated parts of the University. This was repeatedly identified by the faculty as problematic. Also, some of the lecturers share space in an office, which is far from the department and this minimizes the possibility of networking or socializing and exchanging information with other faculty members. One of the problems raised from the current curriculum is advising issues. The Program has already developed an excellent advising form explaining various career options for a GWS graduate. These materials could be systematically used or even posted online to facilitate advising. Faculty expressed support for improving advising tools in order to recruit more majors.
- Tenure-track faculty cited their student-centered teaching approaches, interdisciplinarity, commitment to feminist pedagogy, theory, and praxis as strengths of the Program.
- Lecturers cited their inclusion in department decision-making and pedagogical discussion as well as their academic freedom as strengths of the Program.

IV. Curriculum

A. The Undergraduate Curriculum

The Program provides a robust and diverse selection of courses. The major is comprised of 39 units; the minor consists of 24 units. These units fall under three categories: core, breadth, and electives. The existing courses are well-rounded, providing both foundational studies and academically innovative upper-division options.

Minor in Queer Studies

As a result of efforts initiated by Karyl Ketchum (Women's and Gender Studies), Kristin Beals (Psychology), John Ibson (American Studies), and Jim Taulli (Theater Arts), the Women and Gender Studies Program added a Queer Studies Minor in 2012. The minor examines the dynamics of heteronormativity, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender roles, and embodiment and the influence of these intersecting factors on our daily lives, cultural institutions, political discourses, media representations, and within the arts. It is structured along the lines of the Women's Studies minor, with 18 units, a required introductory course, and remaining electives in both the Humanities and Social Sciences. There is some entirely appropriate overlap between the electives for the two minors.

New Intellectual Directions

New areas of growth cited by the faculty include Queer Theory, Chicana Feminism, Environmental Feminist, and Health and Gender Studies. All of these would be important new directions for the intellectual growth of the Program.

V. Students

The WGS Program course offerings seem to be very popular especially with regard to general education. Unfortunately, we were not able to meet any students during our visit. Their efforts for Women's History Month, however, were clearly in evidence. We visited two classes WMST 100, Introduction to Gender Studies in the Humanities and WMST 302, Introduction to Women's Studies. Both classes were very well attended (40 to 45 students were present). The students were from very diverse cultural and ethnic background. We were impressed with the student engagement and response to the lectures.

VI. Staff

The administrative wing of the Women's Studies Program is well staffed by Sharon Howard. The committee notes that Ms. Howard's efficiency is particularly remarkable given that she is responsible for multiple programs and departments.

VII. Summary of Review Team Recommendations

A. Recommendations for the WGS Program

1. Hire additional faculty members. Ideally, there would be two junior hires, one in sexuality and queer studies to help the program build further its queer studies minor and the other in any area that is prioritized and discussed by the department faculty. Fields of hire could implement the new intellectual directions we noted above, emphasizing such areas as globalization and transnationalism, Chicana and Latina studies, critical race, immigration studies, and border studies. The program is already meeting and exceeding its target and new hires are necessary for the basic functioning of the program. Given the emerging national academic focus on masculinities as an integral component of gender studies—and given that this is an existing course offering—the Program may also want to consider hiring a well-qualified faculty member with expertise in this area.

2. Creating a graduate certificate might not be possible until further hiring takes place. So we suggest that the program postpone the certificate until there are more faculty members. This adds to the compelling need for additional faculty hires.

3. The curriculum needs to be reworked to reflect the new intellectual direction of the program as well as new developments in the field of gender, women and sexuality studies. The name change to Women and Gender Studies, and the establishment of a new Queer Studies minor, require that the Women and Gender Studies curriculum be revised and reorganized. There is a need for rethinking of the core courses, their sequences as well as the numbering of the courses, and the faculty are cognizant of the need for these changes. Along with this, the Program should create more opportunities for faculty to teach research-specific courses.

The syllabi provided to the committee demonstrate intellectually appropriate and stimulating texts and assignments. The committee observes that several syllabi require the same book (Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism*). The Program may want to give attention to reading assignments and this sort of (inadvertent) overlap. Also deserving attention are the assigned texts in WMST 302. The only required book written by a woman of color highlights abuse and poverty. This curricular choice may inadvertently recreate stereotypes that a course such as this is intended to critically interrogate. These recommendations are made with a keen awareness of academic freedom and the expertise that faculty bring to their selections of assigned texts, but these recommendations are made especially in light of the Program's stated interest in expanding its global, transnational focus.

4. There is a need for the improvement of advising in the department as well as the recruitment of new majors. We suggest that the department create an advising section online.

5. We suggest that the College support the department with funding to develop an Alumni database to approach department Alumni systematically to give lectures in the introduction to Women and Gender Studies classes. This may help the recruitment of new majors as well as the students' questions with regard to the practical application of their WGS major. Alumni members could be invited to talk about their experience of how majoring in Women and Gender Studies helped them with their carrier choices and paths in the introduction to Women and Gender Studies course or any other courses identified by faculty. Also, this database could help the program to reach out to the Alumni members for any future fundraising effort.

6. Organize a pedagogy meeting for lectures and tenure-track faculty at least once a year if not every semester so they can exchange information, syllabi as well as pedagogic tools. This point is of serious concern given the observation that the two full-time lecturers include one who is currently a graduate student and one who holds a master's degree with

questionable qualifications in women's and gender studies. Since the Program (like most) relies on lecturers, the students would benefit from ongoing integrated support in best practices and current information in order to meet the intellectual and pedagogical standards in the field.

B. Recommendations for the College and the University

1. Approve and provide funds for additional faculty appointments housed in WGS.
2. Provide internal University support for lecture series, conferences, and workshops so the faculty could continue to collaborate with other faculty members and could become more visible campus-wide.
3. Support reducing teaching load to three courses per semester. There is no way for faculty to remain active with regard to their research and publication if they teach four courses per semester.
4. Assign more space to the department and support the department to have space for offices, lectures and meetings in proximity to each other. Given the unique focus of the Program, this space ought to be designated specifically for WGS purposes and not blended with staff from other University programs.