

New Program Proposal Summary
University and Community College System of Nevada
Date: January 18, 2001
Campus: UNLV

Proposed Program:
Change of Status, from Women's Studies Program to Department of Women's Studies

Brief description of program:

First established in 1978 as an interdisciplinary committee within the College of Liberal Arts, Women's Studies was reestablished in 1992 as a baccalaureate-degree-granting program housed in the Provost's office. Under the reorganization plan approved by the Regents in 1996, the Women's Studies Program was moved to the College of Liberal Arts, and the Director of Women's Studies now reports to the Dean of Liberal Arts.

A major and minor have been offered in Women's Studies since 1992. The major requires 43 credits in Women's Studies courses, including four sequential core interdisciplinary courses, 6 credits in internship and/or independent study, 18 credits of Women's Studies electives, and 8 credits of a foreign language. For a minor, students must complete a minimum of 19 credit hours, including the four core courses. The Women's Studies Program has just submitted a proposal for a graduate certificate.

Demonstrated need for program (academic, state, regional, national):

Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary field offering a unified approach to the study of the ways in which gender interacts with race, age, class, and sexual orientation to shape human consciousness and determine the social, political, and cultural organization of human society throughout history. Because gender systems exist in all cultures and many domains of life, women's studies scholars work across the disciplines and combine methodologies and theoretical paradigms in new, transformational ways. In the last quarter of the 20th century, feminist scholarship transformed the knowledge base in many disciplines. But research within existing disciplines cannot provide the interdisciplinary perspective that characterizes the knowledge base of women's studies and informs the curricula of established women's studies programs.

In the late 1960s, only a handful of so-called women's studies courses were taught nationwide. Today there are more than 600 undergraduate women's studies programs in the US alone, and in recent years many of them have become departments. The region is served by 42 women's studies programs or departments--3 each in Arizona and New Mexico, 4 each in Utah and Washington, 6 in Oregon, and 28 in California. There are two women's studies programs in Nevada, at UNLV and at UNR, which has offered a major in women's studies since 1997.

Relationship of program to department, college, division, and System:

Since 1996, when the Women's Studies Program was moved to the College of Liberal Arts, we have enjoyed de facto departmental status, as the Director of Women's Studies serves along with the College's eight Department Chairs on the Dean's Executive Committee. UNLV's Women's Studies Program is one of two in the UCCSN system; the other (and more recent) is at UNR.

Review of directly related programs within the institution:

The only other interdisciplinary degree-granting program originally housed in the Provost's office is Environmental Studies. In 1996, it was moved (as a department, not a program) to the new College of Urban Affairs. The only other program that originated as an interdisciplinary committee within the College of Liberal Arts--Film Studies--was moved in 1996 to the College of Fine Arts, as the Film Department.

Actual, not estimated, fall enrollment full-time equivalency (FTE):

1995: 33

2000: 208

Estimated 2005: 236

Actual, not estimated, fall headcount enrollment:

1995: 107

2000: 257

Estimated 2005: 500

Estimate of resources needed (personnel, library holdings, facilities, equipment):

At present, the Women's Studies Program has no faculty lines, although Michele Berger was hired in 1999 as an Assistant Professor of Political Science, with a one-third teaching assignment in the Women's Studies Program, and the Interim Provost has approved our hiring a Visiting Assistant Professor for spring 2001. When the Women's Studies Program was reviewed in 1999, the external reviewers (seconded by the Faculty Senate Program Review Committee) recommended the addition of four faculty lines over the next five years. These new faculty members will need office space and computers. Additional faculty will also necessitate increasing classified support staff from the current half-time position to at least one full-time position. At present, library holdings are adequate to support the undergraduate curriculum in Women's Studies as well as proposed new graduate courses in feminist theory, methodology, and pedagogy. As new faculty (with new areas of specialization) propose new courses, the Women's Studies librarian will be asked to evaluate library resources and order any materials necessary to fill lacunae.

Projected budget increases and additional costs to implement new program:

First year: \$83,010 (one new faculty member, increase classified support to one full-time employee)

Fifth year: \$230,682 (four faculty members, one full-time classified employee)

Source of funds:

First year: State legislature

Fifth year: State legislature

Is the new program listed in the campus academic master plan:

No, since this is not a new program but merely a change in status from program to department.

Proposal for a Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies

Women's Studies Program, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

August 25, 2000

Background and Rationale

Women's Studies is an interdisciplinary field offering a unified approach to the study of the ways in which gender interacts with race, age, class, and sexual orientation to shape human consciousness and determine the social, political, and cultural organization of human society throughout history. Noting with pride the Ford Foundation's ongoing financial support of one of his foundation's oldest programs, the Dissertation Grants in Women's Studies, Robert Weisbuch, President of the Woodrow Wilson Educational Foundation, observed that the creation of Women's Studies in our lifetime has responded to a crucial range of human concerns . . . beginning not only in the discontent of women in a society tilted away from their self-realization, but also in the worries and wishes all of us encounter in regard to our identity as sexed women and men.@

Because gender systems exist in all cultures and many domains of life, women's studies scholars work across the disciplines and combine methodologies and theoretical paradigms in new, transformational ways. Weisbuch calls it Aa model for interdisciplinarity.@ In the last quarter of the 20th century, feminist scholarship transformed the knowledge base in many disciplines. But research within existing disciplines cannot provide the interdisciplinary perspective that characterizes the knowledge base of women's studies and informs the curricula of established women's studies programs.

The Women's Studies Program at UNLV has developed a genuinely interdisciplinary curriculum informed by the most advanced scholarship and by feminist pedagogical principles. Having offered an undergraduate degree program for over a decade, the Women's Studies Program is now prepared to offer a graduate certificate program that will allow students to pursue interdisciplinary study in this flourishing field and thereby enhance their educational background and career opportunities. The graduate certificate will:

Systematically add interdisciplinary breadth to the student's program.

Develop expertise in women's studies theory and methodology.

Offer focused study of the relatively new scholarship on gender in its intersections with race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality.

Provide a professional credential to supplement other training.

Because graduate study typically centers on one discipline, students usually encounter women's studies scholarship only piecemeal or in a relatively haphazard way. The more systematic, course-centered focus of a certificate program will remedy this problem and offer a credential that can be a substantial asset in the job market. Many academic searches in a number of disciplines in the humanities, social sciences, and (increasingly) natural sciences list women's studies expertise as a desirable secondary qualification, and applicants with a graduate certificate will be much more credible than those who simply allege a background in the field.

More on Market Demand for Graduates with Women's Studies Certification

In the late 1960s, only a handful of so-called women's studies courses were taught nationwide. Today there are more than 600 undergraduate women's studies programs in the US alone, and in recent years many of them have become departments. Hence, there is now a demand for faculty to teach in women's studies departments, as well as an ongoing need in other departments for faculty with interdisciplinary training in women's studies that will qualify them to offer courses and advise students in women's studies programs that have not yet sought departmental status.

In 1998, the Graduate Group in Women, Gender, and Sexuality at the University of California-Berkeley ascertained that graduate training in the interdisciplinary field of women's studies was available at 111 colleges and universities in the US. Six universities granted PhDs (Union Institute, Emory University, Clark University, and the Universities of Minnesota, Iowa and Washington); beginning in fall 2000, students could also earn a PhD at UCLA and the University of Maryland-College Park, and for some years the University of Michigan has offered interdepartmental PhD programs in women's studies and psychology, women's studies and English, and women's studies and history. Some 46 colleges and universities nationwide grant Master of Arts degrees in women's studies, and at 47 others it is possible to earn a graduate certificate in women's studies to complement a Master's degree or PhD in a traditional discipline.

Some states offer multiple and varied forms of graduate education in women's studies. In California, for example, students can work towards the PhD (at UCLA), add a women's studies concentration to a PhD in another discipline (at the California Institute of Integrated Studies, UC-Berkeley, UC-Davis, UC-Irvine, and UC-Santa Cruz), or earn a Master's degree (at Claremont University, New College of California, San Diego State University, and San Francisco University). Next door in Nevada, however, it is currently impossible for a student even to add an emphasis in women's studies to any of the graduate degrees offered by either of the state's universities.

Although UNLV boasts a visible and successful undergraduate major and minor in women's studies, the lack of any coursework at the graduate level places this university behind national and regional trends (in addition to the plethora of options for graduate work in women's studies available in California, students may earn a PhD or an MA at the University of Washington, an MA at the University of Arizona, a graduate certificate at the University of Oregon, or a graduate minor at Oregon State University). UNLV is equal to most institutions mentioned above in resources to support a graduate certificate in women's studies. To be competitive with other institutions that attract graduate students wishing to focus on gender-related scholarship, UNLV should formalize its graduate offerings in women's studies, thereby providing an added incentive for recruitment and retention of quality graduate students in a number of disciplines.

More broadly speaking, a graduate certificate program in women's studies can help the university respond creatively to local, state, and regional needs. At a time when the understanding of diversity is recognized as essential to our strength as a nation, formalized course work in women's studies at the graduate level prepares students for careers not only in education at all levels but in social service work, health services, business, public policy, government, and nongovernmental organizations. The program is also intended for post-baccalaureate working professionals such as psychologists, social workers, nurses, librarians, and teachers who wish to obtain information and skills in women's studies to aid them in their professions.

Administration, Faculty Strengths, and Resources

While a graduate certificate in women's studies will ultimately require additional resources (chiefly additional faculty lines), it can be built on existing strengths.

1. Graduate Coordinator. This position could be filled either by the Director of the Women's Studies Program or by another faculty member affiliated with the program with appropriate reassigned time (i.e., one course per year). While the Director of Women's Studies might not seek additional reassigned time if s/he were to assume the additional duties of graduate coordinator, it should be understood that her or his teaching would necessarily be divided between undergraduate and graduate courses, necessitating additional faculty to staff required courses at both levels.

2. Faculty. At the present time, the Director of Women's Studies is the only faculty member whose entire teaching load is in women's studies (and it is a reduced load, because of her administrative assignment). Michele Berger was hired in 1999 as an assistant professor of political science, one third of whose professional obligations were to be in women's studies (including one third of her annual teaching load). Michele has designed the required graduate course in principles of feminist inquiry and will teach it on a regular basis, commencing with the fall 2002 semester. From fall 2000 through spring 2002, however, she will be off campus, completing a Robert Wood Johnson postdoctoral fellowship at UC-Berkeley. For the last three years, we have requested authorization to hire at least one faculty member, and when the Women's Studies Program was reviewed in 1999, the external reviewers (seconded by the Faculty Senate Program Review Committee) recommended the addition of four [faculty] lines over the next five years. As yet, however, no faculty searches for Women's Studies have been authorized.

Pending the addition of faculty lines, the Women's Studies Program must seek the support of department chairs to release faculty from teaching obligations in their home departments in order to teach required core (as opposed to crosslisted) courses in both the undergraduate and graduate curricula. Megan Becker-Lekrone (English), for example, has designed the required graduate course in feminist theory, but we have not yet been assured by her chair that she will be allowed to offer it on a regular basis.

3. Support Staff. At present, the Women's Studies Program is supported by one half-time Management Assistant I. In 1999, even before we proposed to add a graduate certificate program, the external reviewers, seconded by the Faculty Senate Program Review Committee, recommended changing the current clerical support position to a full time position at the MA II level. I have therefore requested the expansion of the Women's Studies

clerical support position from half- to full-time and have initiated, with Human Resources, the process of upgrading the position from MA I to MA II.

4. Space. The Women's Studies Program is housed in Wright Hall 199, a three-room suite comprising the director's office, an office/reception area for the management assistant, and a small storage room. To house the four faculty we hope to hire over five years, we will request four additional faculty offices.

5. Library Resources.

The women's studies bibliographer, Diane VanderPol, describes the library's current holdings as adequate to support the required graduate courses in theory, methodology, and pedagogy. The adequacy of library resources for any courses now on the books that might be eligible for cross-listing has already been verified. Any faculty member proposing new courses for crosslisting with women's studies would have to submit a Library Resource Evaluation form and Diane assures me that if the library's holdings are not adequate to support the proposed course, her budget is sufficient to order materials to supply the lack. The required directed reading capstone experience might pose a challenge if the library's holdings in that area (e.g., Native American women's literature) were inadequate to support the student's research. But in every case she could imagine, Diane said the necessary materials could be procured via interlibrary loan or access to online journals.

Admissions Procedures and Qualifications for Entrance into the Certificate Program

The certificate is open to graduate students in any discipline and in any college at UNLV. It is also open to non-degree seeking students who hold a baccalaureate degree from an accredited institution with a minimum grade point average of 3.0. In addition to submitting an application to the Graduate College with official transcripts of all college-level work, each applicant must show:

A minimum of 6 undergraduate credits in women's studies, preferably including courses in feminist theory and/or methodology; or demonstrable familiarity with/background in feminist theory and methodology; or satisfactory completion of WOM 301, Feminist Theories.

A minimum undergraduate grade point average of 3.00, with a grade point average of at least 3.30 in women's studies courses.

A statement of purpose describing the relationship of the certificate to the applicant's intellectual and professional goals (500-1000 words).

At least three letters of recommendation, preferably from former instructors or supervisors who can knowledgeably evaluate the applicant's ability to do graduate level work in women's studies.