



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON

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July 27, 2015

To: Robert Stacey, Dean  
Judith Howard, Divisional Dean, Social Sciences  
College of Arts and Sciences

From: David L. Eaton, Vice Provost and Dean

Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Planning

RE: Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies 2014-2015 Review

This memorandum outlines the recommendations from the review of the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies (GWSS) B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. degree programs, and graduate certificate programs in Feminist Studies and Sexuality and Queer Studies. Detailed comments can be found in the documents that were a part of the following formal review proceedings:

- Charge meeting between review committee, department, and administrators (October 7, 2014)
- Department self-study (January 5, 2015 )
- Site visit (February 2-3, 2015 )
- Review committee report (February 23, 2015 )
- GPSS report (March 3, 2015 )
- GWSS response to the review committee report (April 4, 2015 )
- Graduate School Council consideration of review (May 21, 2015 )

The review committee consisted of:

Victoria Lawson, Professor, UW Department of Geography (Committee Chair)  
Lynn Thomas, Professor and Chair, UW Department of History  
Jigna Desai, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Gender, Women  
and Sexuality Studies, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN  
Eileen Boris, Hull Professor and Chair, Department of Feminist Studies,  
University of California, Santa Barbara, CA

A subcommittee of the Graduate School Council presented findings and recommendations to the full Council at its meeting on May 21, 2015. Specific comments and recommendations regarding the department and its degree programs include the following:

### **Program Strengths**

The review committee concurred that the department is a “gem,” and has a stellar reputation both within the University and externally.

- It is one of the best of 18 departments nationally with doctoral programs in Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies or Feminist Studies.
- The department is an “example of rigorous and engaged scholarship, innovative teaching, magnetic curriculum, thoughtful mentoring, and leadership in civic and university engagements.”
- It has progressed from “an experimental program to a vibrant and autonomous department.”
- GWSS maintains a strong reputation as a pioneering program in transnational feminisms, with strength in the area of women of color, primarily Chicana and Indigenous feminisms, the latter area too often missing from comparable programs.

### **Challenges**

The review committee highlighted GWSS’s strengths but noted existing challenges it faces with the undergraduate and graduate programs.

#### **Undergraduate Program:**

- Major challenges include the need to continue attracting undergraduate students to GWSS courses and to develop the major and minor curricula into more enriching and satisfying educational experiences.
- Due to recent shifts in feminist studies, a stronger emphasis on sexuality studies is imperative. The department name change reflects the change in the field as does the recent faculty hire. The committee suggested that sexuality studies be integrated throughout the undergraduate curriculum and to add new lecture courses with innovative titles that would appeal to student interest.
- Undergraduate students expressed the need for career counseling and alumni relations to connect them with job opportunities and assist with the selection of internships and mentorships. Increased staff time and advising is required to addressing these issues.
- The committee recommended that the department increase the undergraduate advisor position to at least 75% to expand career counseling and alumni relations and student advising.

#### **Graduate Program:**

- The greatest challenges for the graduate program include graduate student funding, curriculum revisions that address “current trends in feminist studies and student interest, professional development opportunities, and enhancing technical support and infrastructure for those engaged in multi-media and public scholarship projects.” The review committee recommended that the College of Arts and Sciences and the Graduate School increase funding in the next two years to affect an increase in the number of quarters for TA/RA support.
- The committee encouraged GWSS to “rethink the core sequence of graduate classes to reflect recent shifts in feminist studies,” they recommended that the faculty “develop and offer more courses on sexuality” in response to student demand, c) increase professional development opportunities for students, and d) seek funding from the Student Technology Fee Committee “to develop a computer lab for editing and producing digital media and documentary films.”

#### **Faculty Hiring and Development:**

- GWSS’s greatest challenges include the lack of junior faculty, the presence of only two full Professors, and limited funding to compensate faculty who assume leadership roles.

- An Assistant Professor search has not occurred in the last ten years which adds to the challenge of developing curricular innovations important to moving GWSS forward. With the dynamic and rapid change occurring in the field and the eventual retirements of senior faculty, there is a critical department need for new junior faculty.
- Another challenge the committee identified is the “larger UW institution.” They noted that “it must adjust its research and tenure and promotion culture to meet the shifting nature of research and knowledge production.” The GWSS faculty provide “a new model for new modes of engaged scholarship and scholarly production.”
- The review committee recommended that GWSS be authorized to conduct two searches over the next three years at the Assistant Professor rank in the areas of black feminisms and African diaspora, with thematic foci in theory, queer/trans\* studies, and/or science, health, technology, and women’s studies.

### **Areas of Concurrence and/or Disagreement**

The department’s response to the committee’s findings and recommendations include the following.

#### **Undergraduate Program:**

- Integrating sexuality studies in the undergraduate curriculum. The department has formed a planning committee and taken other steps to address the issue. Additional hiring would be necessary to meet the demand since this is the direction in which the field has moved in the decade since the last search for a tenure-line assistant professor occurred.
- Advisory position. The department agreed with the recommendation regarding the undergraduate advisory position and has requested funding to increase it to 100%.

#### **Graduate Program:**

- Graduate student funding. The department agreed with the recommendation but has requested that the College of Arts and Sciences support 36 rather than 27 quarters of TA/RA support.
- Curriculum revision to address current trends in feminist studies that reflect current thinking on interweaving theory, method and geohistories. GWSS agreed and plans to take action on this issue in the 2015-2016 academic year.
- The department agreed about the need to develop and offer more courses on sexuality in response to student demand and is seeking external funding “to pursue this work across the university’s global and area studies programs.” GWSS reiterated the need for a tenure-line in this area to address the recommendation.
- Professional development. The department noted existing courses that are offered, a proposed course for 2015-2016, plus a colloquium to develop intellectual community.
- Seek Student Technology Fund (STF) funding to develop a computer lab for editing and producing digital media and documentary films, and work with UW Libraries, UW-IT, the I-School, and the Simpson Center for the Humanities to provide students and faculty with skill development in editing and production techniques. The department noted that academic units are not eligible to apply for STF funds and other funding attempts have had limited success, leaving a continued need for funding in this area.

#### **Faculty Hiring and Development:**

- GWSS be authorized to conduct two searches at the Assistant Professor level in the areas of black feminisms and the African diaspora, with thematic foci in theory, queer/trans\* studies, and/or science, health, technology, and women’s studies. GWSS agreed with the

recommendation for two tenure-level hires and reiterated the need for a third search in Feminist Digital Humanities.

- Adjust UW's research, tenure and promotion culture to meet the shifting nature of research and knowledge production. GWSS agreed and endorses adoption of the National Women's Studies Association guidelines.
- GWSS faculty who assume leadership roles within and beyond the academic unit should be compensated with summer salary. GWSS welcomed the recommendation and noted that it would like to appoint a Director of the Graduate Certificates in Feminist Studies and in Queer and Sexuality Studies

Adjunct Faculty:

- The committee encouraged the College and University leadership to recognize the adverse consequences of ABB and introduce counter-measures, such as cross-departmental course development awards, to promote collaboration rather than competition between units, and allow GWSS to integrate more adjunct faculty into its instruction and mentoring life. GWSS agreed and noted the importance of counter-measures to the adverse effects of ABB.

Advancement:

- Determine how Advancement staff can better highlight GWSS's educational mission of social justice and diversity which embody the University's goals for the twenty-first century. GWSS agreed and hopes that Advancement will highlight GWSS' exemplary work.

**Graduate School Council Recommendations**

The Graduate School Council concurred with the review committee's recommendation that the Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies exhibits several ongoing strengths and that the next review should occur in ten years (2024-2025).

Further, the Council recommended that support be given to the greatest extent possible for the recommendations contained in the review committee report, with which the Department agreed.

We concur with the Review Committee and Council's comments and recommendations.

c: Gerald Baldasty, Interim Provost, Office of the Provost  
Patricia Moy, Associate Vice Provost for Academic and Student Affairs,  
Office of the Provost  
Priti Ramamurthy, Professor and Chair, Department of Gender, Women  
and Sexuality Studies  
Ed Taylor, Vice Provost and Dean, Undergraduate Academic Affairs  
Members of the GWSS Review Committee  
Members of the Graduate School Council  
Augustine McCaffery, Senior Academic Program Specialist, The Graduate School