



**DEPARTMENT OF WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES
PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY**

**MAJOR AND MINOR IN WOMEN AND GENDER
GRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN WOMEN AND GENDER
DISABILITY STUDIES MINOR**

2019-2020

Part One—Program Self-Study Outline

Executive Summary

Self-Study 2015-2020 Women and Gender Studies Executive Summary

Changes since last review:

Since our last Periodic Program Review, Women and Gender Studies has moved from program to departmental status. We have added two shared-line full-time faculty, one tenured and one tenure track. These faculty members share teaching and service with English and Sociology, respectively. These two joint appointments have added to the stability of some of WGS's major requirement courses and provided some stability to the department as a whole. Additionally, Dr. LeSavoy, who was running the program from 2007-2018 has been tenured. Dr. Obourn has stepped in for a three-year term as chair, with current release from most service work in their shared department of English.

Since the last PPR, the department of Women and Gender Studies has added a graduate certificate in WGS (Fall 2018) and a new minor in Disability Studies (Fall 2019). The new minor in Disability Studies also brings in a new course: Introduction to Intersectional Disability Studies, WMS 302. Dr. Bek Orr, the new tenure track faculty member shared with Sociology also introduced a new course: WMS 340 Digital Sociology, cross-listed with SOC, and now teaches WMS 365 (LGBTQ Cultures), which was offered infrequently and only by part time faculty.

The delivery of our courses has also expanded. WMS 101, Introduction to Women and Gender Studies and WMS 365 are now instructed in person and online, making 66 percent of the major accessible to students who learn from a distance. WGS continues to offer WMS 330, Global Perspectives on Women and Gender, as a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Course partnered with Russia. WMS 420 (Practicum in Women and Gender Studies), the internship course required for the major, is now calibrated as part of faculty teaching load versus a course that the Director taught each semester as added to load and without compensation. For WMS 420, the department has added a social media position to its WMS 420 departmental internship placement.

Major Strengths of Current Department:

The department of Women and Gender Studies prides itself on passionate and engaged faculty, strong student engagement and placement, a strong sense of community and thus student retention, and a highly interdisciplinary and relevant curriculum that can be used toward many different areas of professional employment or graduate study.

Opportunities and Areas for Improvement:

WGS would like to increase the racial diversity of our faculty and students. WGS tenure track faculty is now 100% white, which does not serve students of color well. The department would also like to introduce more courses centering the experiences and theory of people of color. The chair, alongside full time faculty, is working toward greater chair oversight and regulation of intro courses (WMS 101 Introduction to Women and Gender Studies and WMS 271 Gender, Race and Class, in particular). We can strengthen our mission and improve our self-promotion to clarify our identity to the campus and to external stakeholders. Internally, we can continue to expand our cross-listed and interdisciplinary offerings, particularly with growth areas such as The School of Business, the professions (Nursing in particular), and the Math & Sciences. WGS would also like to continue to grow our partnerships with local business and nonprofits to expand opportunities for student practicum experiences. Finally, the department is looking to introduce assessment at the formative levels in addition to summative to evaluate how well our lower level, larger, General Education courses are laying the foundation for advanced knowledge in the major.

Weaknesses and Threats:

The primary threat to the Department of Women and Gender Studies is our small number of tenure track faculty. When the current chair steps down, they will have to return to split service with English and currently two of three tenure and tenure track faculty are sharing their teaching load with other departments. When one faculty member is on leave, this puts a great strain on the department and increases our already over-dependence on adjunct labor. The department is also missing specialization in an area essential to Women and Gender Studies, which is Transnational Blackness, Critical Race Theory, and/or Women of Color Feminisms. Bringing in an additional new hire who is not a joint appointment would add essential knowledge to the department and curriculum, stabilize and standardize some of our general education offerings, and help ensure that all students have access to supportive mentoring; and help make our department current and nationally competitive.

Student Feedback and Identified Needs:

According to feedback in both the fall 2019 WGS current student focus group and fall 2019 WGS alumni survey, students are overall very pleased with the quality of instruction and the extracurricular opportunities that being a WGS major provides. In the focus group, they specifically mentioned the value of attending local and national conferences in the discipline, and engaging in an internship semester. In our alumni survey, 85.71% of respondents were very satisfied with the quality of instruction in the department. The same number were very satisfied with the commitment of faculty to student learning. Areas of improvement that students note include: the breadth of internship opportunities and guidance in finding them; more discussion about job preparation; more collaboration with departments and student groups; increasing racial diversity in faculty and students; addressing the fact that sometimes students who are not women do not see themselves in or see the value in a WGS major; and addressing issues that arise from the fact that our intro courses are large general education courses taught primarily by adjunct faculty. Most of these concerns are at the center of faculty attention as well and addressed in the weaknesses and areas for improvement section above.

Overall, the past five years have seen growth for the department in several areas: 1) the change from program to department status; 2) the growth in number and diversity of knowledge in full-time faculty; and 3) the addition of a graduate certificate in Women and Gender Studies and a minor in Disability Studies. The WGS discipline nationally also has expanded in knowledge and importance with increasing currency in preparing students for entry in the workforce and/or further graduate study. We are now at a place where we have the opportunity to flourish in many areas, some largely self-implementable and needing the support of the institution.