

**Internal Academic Review Committee  
Report on the Review of the Department of Women's Studies**

**Department of Women's Studies**

The Department of Women's Studies plays a unique and anchoring role at Queen's. The External Consultants and Review Team are uniform in their praise for the Department's strong teaching and thriving research. Women's Studies' distinctive and innovative pedagogy is at the forefront in the delivery of multi-disciplinary programs and in the development of new pedagogical methods. The faculty are to be commended for their commitment and service to Queen's and the broader community. Students and reviewers spoke highly of the dedicated faculty and staff, whose encouragement of diversity has resulted in a welcoming atmosphere conducive to feminist scholarship.

Though enrolment is stable in Women's Studies, its small size appears to have contributed to a sense of vulnerability within the Department. It is clear to the IARC that the success of Women's Studies is often reflected outside its own boundaries as curriculum in the field of women's studies is increasingly integrated into other programs such as Sociology, Political Science, English and History. The IARC wishes to affirm the strong anchoring role that the Department of Women's Studies plays for this discipline at Queen's and with this in mind, it makes the following recommendations:

**Major Recommendations**

1. UNIVERSITY ROLE: The Women's Studies program fulfills a key role at Queen's by offering students the historical and institutional background of many gender issues in society. The Review Team noted the wide variety and inter-disciplinary nature of the Department's teaching activities as demonstrated by its range of course offerings and its innovative blending of theory and practice. Women's Studies continues to stimulate new approaches and analysis in the area of gender and feminist scholarship, therefore acting as a "teaching laboratory". The IARC acknowledges this important role and commends the Department's efforts to apply these novel strategies to other, well-established programs.

*The IARC supports the vital role that Women's Studies plays at Queen's and encourages the Department to continue to disseminate its distinctive and innovative approach to teaching and research.*

2. GOVERNANCE: All reviewers agree that the faculty deserve special recognition for their service within the Department, across the University and in the larger community at the local, national and international levels. The IARC commends the faculty for its strong commitment to teaching, research and governance, both in Women's Studies and in their home disciplines. However, the IARC is concerned about the long-term sustainability of the current administrative structure, which is largely composed of joint- and cross-appointed faculty.

*To ensure effective and sustainable governance of the Department of Women's Studies, the IARC recommends that the Department and Faculty of Arts and Science work together to explore models of governance suitable for units that are largely dependent on joint- and cross-appointments for delivery of programs.*

Outcomes of the Review

*Response submitted by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Head of the Department of Women's Studies.*

**Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of Women's Studies  
Joint Response from the Department of Women's Studies  
and the Faculty of Arts and Science**

**Recommendation 1: University Role**

The Dean of Arts and Science and the Head of the Department of Women's Studies are pleased that Women's Studies' vital role is recognized and validated by the Internal Academic Review Committee. In order for the Department to continue its "distinctive and innovative approach to teaching and research," both within and outside the University, the unit will need additional faculty resources, whether they are adjuncts, non-renewables, or tenure-track appointees.

**Recommendation 2: Governance**

The Faculty of Arts and Science and the Department of Women's Studies will work together to explore models of governance appropriate for Women's Studies. While it is true that the unit is dependent upon joint- and cross-appointed faculty members to deliver its programs, it has also benefited, in the past, from the work of faculty members who were wholly appointed within Women's Studies. However, in 2004 the Department lost one full-time tenure-track member of Women's Studies to resignation. In mid-2005 it will lose a full-time renewable adjunct to resignation. Currently it is dependent upon two non-renewable appointees, whose terms end, respectively, in 2006 and 2007. It is likely that in future the unit will benefit from appointing some faculty members who are wholly located within Women's Studies.

Follow-up on these recommendations and issues will take place in the annual budget and staffing strategy meetings between the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the Vice-Principal (Academic).

Internal Academic Review  
Queen's University  
Department of Women's Studies

May 10, 2004

### **Executive Summary**

The Department of Women's Studies has established a strong and productive presence in the Faculty of Arts and Science. The department provides an intellectually rewarding and emotionally supportive environment for its students and faculty. The department enjoys strong teaching evaluations from its students and has a very productive research output. With additional resources, perhaps leading to the introduction of a graduate program, the department's contribution to the university could continue to grow.

### **General**

The Review Team for the Department of Women's Studies has read the Self-Evaluation report and found it to be thoughtful and comprehensive. We have also reviewed the External Consultant's Assessment dated November 21, 2003. As a group, the Review Team met on 3 occasions (October 9, November 11, and February 6). Our first meeting was for planning, our second meeting was with the External Consultants and our third meeting was with members of the Department of Women's Studies. At the outset, we can say that we generally support the recommendations of the report by the External Consultants, with a few qualifications.

### **Undergraduate Academic Program**

From the Department Self-Study and the Consultant's report, it is evident that the Department of Women's Studies has made, and is making, concerted efforts at developing and maintaining a stimulating academic program. The Department continues to utilize a broadly cross-disciplinary approach towards its objectives of rectifying the omission of women from traditional areas of study, examining changing gender roles, and valuing inclusive and participatory learning environments. In the 2003-2004 academic year, and concurrent with this review, the Department launched a significantly revised undergraduate program intended to facilitate the entry of students into the Women's Studies concentration as well as capitalize on the teaching and research interests of current faculty. Additionally, the range of upper year courses in Women's Studies has been broadened and the course contents clarified. While it is not possible to accurately measure the effect of these changes at this time, because these changes are fairly recent, the Review Committee has noted that these kinds of curriculum revisions are consistent with those recommended in the Consultants' Assessment. Specifically, the Consultants have suggested that courses proven to have "wide-appeal" at other universities, such as "Women's Identities" and "Health, Sexuality and Female Bodies", be offered at the first and second year

level through the Department as a means of attracting greater numbers of students. The Consultants have noted that the Department's new course, "Sex, Gender and Popular Culture", has provided a step in this direction. Both the Consultants and the Department have recognized that future faculty recruitment may provide further avenues for diversifying the complement of courses available.

While, again it is not yet possible to draw any firm conclusions about the way in which the new Women's Studies undergraduate curriculum has been received, the Department has projected an upward trend in the size of course enrolment. A review of the past five years of enrolment figures suggests that numbers of students in many women's studies courses are gradually increasing. It should be noted, however, that although the Department is naturally concerned about establishing or maintaining suitable levels of enrolment, the Department also has reason to regard its smallness, relative to other Arts and Science departments, as one of its selling features. Indeed, many students who have commented on their experiences in women's studies courses have expressed great satisfaction with the accessible atmosphere inherent in smaller class sizes. A review of the USAT data provided by the Department further suggests a level of appreciation higher than the Queen's average for the content of undergraduate courses and course emphases on ethical and social issues. Students who have graduated from a Women's Studies program report overall satisfaction with a Women's Studies degree. Although there was concern expressed by the Consultants and some students that some cross-listed courses were not "feminist" enough in their approach to women related subjects, the Department has indicated that there is no practical way to monitor the content of cross-listed courses, nor is it possible to gauge whether instructors' approaches to women's issues are appropriately "feminist" (i.e. "feminist", by whose standards?). The Department, however, has recognized the potential benefit in continuing to strengthen relations and dialogue with cross-listed faculty and their respective heads of department.

Both the Departmental and Consultants' assessments address the prospect of furthering the Department's contribution to the field of women's studies and of increasing opportunities for undergraduates through the development of a Masters of Arts degree. Currently the Department regularly offers research methods courses and Honours Theses courses, but only at the undergraduate level. A draft "Proposal for M.A. Program in Women's Studies" was written by the Department in 2001 and continues to be the basis for discussion of a future Master's program. While the Department has expressed that its priority is to maintain current activities given the reality of budget constraints, it remains hopeful that the proposal can be revived and that, through a new graduate program, Queen's Women's Studies can further its potential as a leader in feminist scholarship and teaching. The Consultants' Assessment is optimistic that the Department could have a graduate program approved by the Ontario Council of Graduate Studies within the next three years, and that current numbers of full-time and cross-appointed faculty, with the future addition of one tenure stream appointment or two joint appointments, would provide the Department with adequate resources for supporting a small graduate program. This is an issue that the Department intends to further investigate.

### **Scholarship and Research**

As the external reviewers noted, scholarship and research are thriving in Women's Studies at Queen's. The unit is currently a predominantly social science-based group, and this is one of its

distinctive strengths. Although the external reviewers recommended that Women's Studies should become more humanities based, we see no reason for this. Subject concentration is up to the members of the unit and their hiring committees to decide upon and, arguably, there are significant advantages to not being like every other Women's Studies program. Subject specialities of this unit include: gender, development and environmental values; gender identity, space and the arts; gender, ethics and planning; gender, race, colonialism and native identity; and gender, poverty and structured social disadvantage. The unit also has a strong humanities dimension with one member cross appointed to Art and an adjunct teacher with a PhD in English. In addition, if we look to the first and second degrees of full time faculty, there is a considerable representation of interdisciplinary training from English to Politics, Biology, Geology and Journalism. This is a diverse and interesting group of academics. Most of the unit members are relatively recent PhDs but there is also some depth of experience with PhDs in 1988, 1991 and 1994. In addition, some members have had significant pre-academic careers. As a group, the on-going faculty have solid research records with, amongst them, an array of published articles, important books and both academic and popular publications. There is every sign of significant engagement with both academic communities and the larger community beyond academe. There are no unproductive members in the unit. To this strength is added the considerable enrichment of the cross-appointed and affiliated members. All members have engaged in graduate supervision and some have extensive records in that regard. All members have received competitive funding and some have received considerable amounts from the most competitive sources. From a research and scholarship point of view, this is a healthy unit.

### **Teaching and Learning**

The environment in the Women's Studies department is very supportive for students. Many students have remarked on the accessibility of the instructors and the warm atmosphere of the unit. There are a variety of distinctive and innovative features of the department's teaching activities, including interdisciplinary studies, critical thinking and an appropriate melding of theory and practice. The interdisciplinary nature of the department is demonstrated in its range of course offering, including materials drawn from social sciences, humanities and natural sciences. Feminist research and pedagogy seeks to present alternative ways of doing academic work, and this analysis is well-reflected in the department course offerings including the cross-listed courses. There is also an innovative blending of theory and practice, demonstrated among other things in the community practicum found in WMNS-440. The teaching evaluations for the department are at, or usually above, Faculty and University means. These positive teaching evaluations carry even greater weight given the challenging nature of some of the course materials, covering ground that may be unfamiliar or uncomfortable for some students.

The Consultants' Assessment noted the difficulty that some students face in getting registered for cross-listed courses because the courses were full and space had not been allocated for Women's Studies concentrators. At meetings of department heads, the Dean might encourage the allocation of a few spaces for Women's Studies concentrators.

## **Service**

There is an excellent commitment to service in the department including service within the department, within the Queen's community, as well as a commitment to service within the larger community of feminists and social justice organizations outside the university. Within the university, the service contributions include service on many department and university committees. All but one of the core faculty members have joint appointments in other programs, leading to service loads in two or more areas. Nonetheless, the service contributions of the cross appointed faculty remain exceptional. Department members are also very engaged in service to the larger community, ranging in scope from the local to the international. This includes appointments as editors on national and international journals, service on the boards of various agencies ranging from children's centres to women's shelters.

## **Resources and Plans for the Future**

The External Consultants' Assessment recommends that the department hire the equivalent of one full time tenure-stream faculty member (or two joint appointments). They also recommend an additional full-time member, perhaps as a non-renewable three-year adjunct. They also recommend a staff review of the receptionist/secretary position with a view to putting more resources towards support staff.

As demonstrated above, the department has had solid outcomes even with its fairly small complement of faculty and staff. However, if the department is to grow, more resources and staff are necessary. If the department is to pursue a graduate program, more faculty members would be essential. Given the department's strengths, it is also reasonable to conclude that with additional faculty resources, the department would be well placed to launch a graduate program. In our view, the university should seriously consider allocating more resources to the department to permit hiring of additional faculty as recommended by the External Consultants. Although we recognize the additional administrative obligations of the support staff, given the unique demands on the department and its service to the larger community, we are less persuaded that there is a need for more resources towards support staff. We agree that a staff review would be in order, but we also note that when compared with other units of similar size, the support staff appears to be adequate.

## **Summary of Recommendations**

- The department should continue to monitor the success of the recent revisions to its undergraduate program and assess the extent to which these revisions are successful in attracting more students.
- The department should continue to strengthen relations and dialogue with cross-listed faculty.

- The department should continue to investigate the feasibility of establishing a graduate program.
- Although the External Consultants recommended that the department should become more humanities based, we recommend that subject concentration should remain a matter to be determined by the department, recognizing that the department may decide that there are significant advantages to remaining a unit predominately social-science based.
- The Dean should encourage the allocation of a few spaces for Women's Studies concentrators in some of the cross-listed courses.
- The department should be allocated sufficient funds to enable it to increase its faculty complement. We support the External Consultant's recommendation that the department hire one additional full time tenure-stream faculty member and one non-renewable three-year adjunct. Additional hires will increase the department's capacity to launch a graduate program and will further diversify the department's course offerings.
- The department should conduct a support staff review; however we are not persuaded that the department requires more resources for staff support at this time.

This report is respectfully submitted by:

Ms. Kathleen Cooper	Biology and Psychology undergraduate student
Prof. William Flanagan	Faculty of Law (Chair)
Dr. Anne Godlewska	Geography
Dr. Andrew Lewis	Mathematics and Statistics
Dr. Mary Ann McColl	Centre for Health Services and Policy Research
Ms. Stephanie Simpson	Staff, Human Rights Office
Mr. Wayne Zhu	History and Politics undergraduate student