

**Final Assessment Report
Academic Review**

Women's Studies

A. Introduction

1. The Centre's Self Study was considered and approved by the Governance Committee of Senate on February 11, 2009.
2. The Review Committee consisted of two external reviewers: Linda Christiansen-Ruffman (Saint Mary's University) and Gurli Aagaard Woods (Carleton University), and an internal reviewer, Susan Spearey (English Language and Literature).
3. The site visit occurred on April 13 – 16, 2009.
4. The Reviewers' Report was received on January 8, 2010.
5. The Centre's response was provided in March, 2010.
6. The decanal response, from Dean Tom Dunk was received on November 1, 2010.

The academic programs offered by the Centre, which were examined as part of the review included a single or combined major program in Women's Studies, with either a Humanities, Science or Social Science Discipline, leading to a pass or honours degree and a Certificate in Women's Studies

It should be noted that the review commenced under the terms and conditions of Section III: 20 of the Faculty Handbook which pertained in 2009-10 and concluded under the revised terms, which were approved by Senate on May 16, 2010.

B. Strengths of the Program

The reviewers' report states:

From an external point of view, the Reviewers are more than satisfied that the description and analysis of the Women's Studies Program, and its current condition, as presented in the *Self-Study*, are valid. The Goals and Learning Objectives are articulated clearly and concisely, and they are academically sound and appropriate. The Centre for Women's Studies has developed excellent pedagogical practices and a carefully crafted curriculum centred around important core requirements, well-developed courses and sequenced learning to ensure that its program delivers its Goals and Learning Objectives. The result is that the Centre for Women's Studies at Brock University offers a very strong undergraduate program.

The report goes on to say "the Reviewers rate the program as outstanding in terms of its comparability with similar programs elsewhere and its success in providing excellent graduates" and summarizes as follows:

The Reviewers are very impressed by many aspects of the Women's Studies Program at Brock, especially the program's strong core course sequence, its attention to curriculum coherence and its pedagogy as well as the highly interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary focus and its balancing of Humanities and Social Science courses. Also of note are the expanded community practicum, the very high satisfaction ratings of the program by the students and the impressive feminist pedagogical practices of many of its faculty members.

The reviewers recommended, unanimously, that the Women's Studies Program at Brock University be placed in the Outcome Category of a **B**.

C. Opportunities for Improvement and Enhancement

The reviewers provided nine discrete recommendations relating to areas which they felt warranted attention. These are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Program Support

That Brock University, and particularly the Administration and University Senate, take all necessary steps to continue to support Women's Studies as a full, legitimate and respected program at the university, and to provide more adequate human, spatial, administrative and fiscal resources to support the Centre's Women's Studies program and activities so that it may truly become a multi-faceted, functionally diverse and geographically located Centre within the university, and so that the program may be in a position in the longer term to participate in the expansion of Brock's graduate offerings.

The Centre, in its response, notes that “the Centre needs to be appropriately resourced.”

Dean Dunk’s response to the reviewers states that:

Senate is currently debating a draft Strategic Plan that enforces the place and significance of the inter – and/or multi-disciplinary spaces at Brock. As the reviewers point out *Brock 2014* celebrates these values and as one embodiment of inter- or multi-disciplinarity [the Centre for Women’s Studies] implicitly at least has and will continue to receive the support of the Administration and presumably of Senate. Of course, as the Academic governing body of the university, Senate is independent. Administration can encourage support for Women’s Studies but it cannot force Senate to do so.

ARC can find no evidence that the Centre has suffered from the neglect of either Senate or the administration (recognizing the unique challenges facing academic units which are both interdisciplinary and reliant on “good-will and collegial relationships”).

Implementation Plan

Senate and the Administration cannot implement this recommendation as suggested.

Support for a particular program and its profile within the University are desired by every unit but must be deliberated within the context of the University as a whole and against the limits which govern Senate and the Administration’s authority to intervene.

Recommendation 2: Administration’s Role

a) That the senior levels of administration encourage all faculties and departments to continue to support Women’s Studies as an interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary program and encourage all faculties, departments and programs across the university to collaborate with Women’s Studies to develop courses and options for students that serve the mutual interests of both academic units. This process should happen as far as possible through the collaborative and collegial mechanisms that have been developed over the years at Brock University such as lending administrative supports for the director and treating courses cross-listed with Women’s Studies as a priority. The commitment of directors, faculty, administrators and support staff from across the university to the Women’s Studies Program and the Centre for Women’s Studies at Brock have built this program and contributed to its coherence and its excellence. The senior administration and Senate need to work with one another to ensure in this spirit that the Centre for Women’s Studies has the resources it requires.

The Centre's response states that "interdisciplinary programs have been increasingly marginalized, with the past two years presenting very specific challenges with drastic budget cuts that target small programs. Given this context, a clear commitment from the Administration and Senate to support the Centre for Women's Studies is crucial." Dean Dunk reports that "[The Faculty of Social Sciences] will continue to do what it can in this regard but will need new additional resources to improve the situation of [the Centre]."

In ARC's view, the issue identified by Women's Studies is not one of interdisciplinarity but of the University's support mechanisms for extra-departmental programs or centres. Further, there is no evidence to suggest that small programs (and Women's Studies in particular) have been "targeted" by budget cuts or specifically marginalized. It is anticipated that strategies and policies which emanate from the development of Brock's new strategic plan will address the matter of appropriate support for all units.

Implementation Plan

Senate and the Administration cannot implement this recommendation as suggested. Support for a particular program and its profile within the University are desired by every unit but must be deliberated within the context of the University as a whole and against the limits which govern Senate and the Administration's authority to intervene.

b) That administrative mechanisms be developed that would encourage departments to be supportive of Women's Studies and provide flexibility for Women's Studies professors from across all faculties and departments with specialized expertise to teach Women's Studies courses housed in Women's Studies on load rather than as an overload, if they so desire, and to encourage and recognize the contributions made by participating members who are not officially cross-appointed.

Dean Dunk's response notes that: "The current institutional structure at Brock as embedded in the Faculty Handbook and the BUFA Collective Agreement gives Departments and Centres powers over the development of their programs and courses. If inter- and multi-disciplinary spaces, and [the Centre] as an example of such a "space," are

to be encouraged, either [the Centre] will have to be directly given additional resources, or incentives will have to be created to encourage units to collaborate with CWS.” He then goes on to state: “Within [Social Sciences) efforts can be made to look for opportunities for collaborations with [the Centre] if new full-time positions are made to the Faculty. There may also be opportunities for cross-appointments if faculty members who resign or retire from other units are replaced. However, there are many needs within all the units in [the Faculty] and some are more pressing than those of [the Centre].”

For ARC, this also seems to be part of the larger issue(s) associated with extra-departmental programs or centres and will be addressed as part of the strategic planning process.

Implementation Plan

Senate and the Administration cannot implement this recommendation as suggested.

c) That senior administrators take steps, especially in times of cutbacks to the university, to ensure that the needs of Women’s Studies be addressed because of the under-resourcing of Women’s Studies in comparison to other academic units and its need to keep a strong faculty complement. Among the steps that might be considered by the Academic Vice President to attain this objective are the commitment to ensure that Women’s Studies expertise continues to grow both within each discipline and within the cross-appointed program faculty of the Centre for Women’s Studies; the commitment to replace Women’s Studies expertise within departments; the commitment to add new multidisciplinary expertise in Women’s Studies throughout each faculty of the university as part of new hiring processes; and/or the reallocation to Women’s Studies of faculty positions after retirement from other departments.

Dean Dunk asserts that “The claim that [the Centre] is under-resourced in comparison to other academic units is asserted without any supporting evidence. Data suggests that it is not true” and that “Resources are extremely tight across [the Faculty] and the situation faced by [Women’s Studies] reflects the general situation of the entire Faculty.”

Accordingly, ARC is not disposed to accept this recommendation.

Implementation Plan

The recommendation has not been accepted and will not be acted upon.

Recommendation 3: Positions

That the official faculty complement be expanded by 5 cross-appointed positions (or 2.5 faculty equivalent members) by 2014 in order to support the expansion of interdisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary programs that is laid out in the Brock 2014 academic plan and the expansion of the burgeoning field of Women's Studies, and with a view to further institutionalizing resources that are in fact already part of this program, diversifying the multidisciplinary, cross-disciplinary and interdisciplinary character of the program by cross-appointing members from other faculties and/or building cross-disciplinary strengths for co-majors while still maintaining the interdisciplinary balance of offerings within the program

In its response, the Centre notes that: "Hiring from outside of the university would allow us to assess our areas of need and hire for these rather than shape the program on existing expertise. In particular, there is an urgent need to obtain a .5 FTE position in Humanities as this would allow us to generate a real balance between Humanities and Social Sciences."

In his response, the Dean states:

The creation of five cross-appointed faculty positions requires new resources for the Faculty of Social Sciences, although where synergies can be achieved as faculty members who leave Brock are replaced this will be done. A Canada Research Chair Tier One in Gender, Work, and Community Well-Being is to be appointed July 1, 2011 pending success of the application to the CRC program. This individual will be homed in the Department of Sociology but cross-appointed to [Women's Studies]. This will contribute (albeit in a small way) to the teaching needs of [the Centre] The individual's research profile and program will enhance the reputation of [Women's Studies] and encourage collaborations across the university.

ARC sees an apparent disconnect between the Centre's perception of greatest need (a 0.5 appointment in Humanities) and provision of a 0.5 appointment in Social Sciences. This is due to the availability of a CRC appointment but leads to questions relating to the longer-term staffing plans for the Centre.

Consequently, ARC would ask that the Deans of Humanities and Social Sciences consult on the development of an appropriate plan for the future staffing needs of the Centre.

Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with the Dean of Social Sciences, the Dean of Humanities, and the Provost and VP, Academic. Further, the Provost and Deans are jointly responsible for its implementation. ARC asks that the parties provide a report on the staffing plans for the Centre by the end of the 2012-13 academic year.

Recommendation 4: Space

- a) That the university designate at least two more offices in addition to those that will become available in 2009-10 as well as a larger meeting space to the program, and that the cross-appointed faculty and administrative staff have adjacent offices.**
- b) That Women's Studies faculty and administrative staff work in conditions commensurate with those of the faculty and administrators in other programs and departments, surrounded by each other and within their own space.**
- c) That at least one office space be dedicated entirely to the Women's Studies program for TAs and part-time faculty, and that specific office hours be assigned to each TA and part-time instructor so that it is possible for instructors and TAs to have one-on-one, and if need be, confidential consultations with individual students.**

The Dean's response indicates that:

The university space "plan" as explained by Jack Miller sees the Department of Sociology, the Centre for Labour Studies, and [Women's Studies] being moved into a renovated Taro Building in the wake of the proposed new building for the Faculty of Business. Thus, there is no obvious solution to the bigger space issues in the immediate future. The final specific suggestion of Recommendation Four deals with office space for TAs. The recent allocation of two more offices has alleviated some of this pressure.

In ARC's view this is a long-standing issue which applies generally to all extra-departmental programs or centres and, indeed, is part of larger issues relating to the space needs of all academic units. The Committee is not confident that the University's space needs are being addressed appropriately. There is a need for an ongoing, regular, formal consultative process and/or mechanism

Implementation Plan (Second Priority)

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with the Provost and VP, Academic, who is responsible for its implementation. ARC asks that the Provost provide a report on the space plans for the Centre by the end of the 2012-13 academic year.

Recommendation 5: Support Staff

That a full-time Administrative Assistant position be dedicated exclusively to the Women's Studies program.

The Centre's response (agreed to by the Dean) is:

In consultation with our new Administrative Assistant (who started on September 14, 2009), we have determined that a full-time position dedicated exclusively to our Centre is not warranted at this time. Our Administrative Assistant feels that her workload is adequate and that being "shared" between Women's Studies and Labour Studies represents a fair workload and the equivalent of a full appointment to a discipline-based department.

ARC concurs with both the Centre and the Dean.

Implementation Plan

The recommendation has not been accepted and will not be acted upon.

Recommendation 6: Curriculum

a) That especially if re-implementation of the Honours thesis is not feasible, a "capstone" course be created at the fourth-year level to pull all the different strands of the field together for Women's Studies Honours students and majors.
b) That the cross-appointed and participating faculty of the Women's Studies program reflect upon a number of intellectual options for the fourth-year curriculum in both the Honours and four-year Pass degrees, discussing the unique ways in which each option relates to each and all of the three pillars of Women's Studies, to all features of the overall curriculum, to the long-term aspirations of the students, faculty and the Centre for Women's Studies as well as to the contextual features of Brock University and its 2014 academic plan.

This recommendation calls for, in essence, a curriculum review and both the Centre and the Dean are in agreement that such a review would be desirable. As the Centre's response puts it: "[W]e are very interested in pursuing the reviewer's recommendations to

re-think the fourth year offerings. In particular, we will consider recommendations that would allow for a 4th year independent study option under the guidance of a women's studies faculty, or re-introducing a thesis option, or developing a capstone course.”

However, the Dean notes that:

I support this review of the fourth-year experience but must express my concerns about potential costs and will encourage CWS to explore cost-effective means of achieving its goals. FSS has taken steps in recent years to limit the number of low enrolment fourth year courses as part of its budget reduction exercises. Small enrolment programs present a particular challenge given that in any specific year there are relatively low numbers of honours students.

ARC considers this recommendation to have been partially accepted (vis a vis a “re-thinking of the fourth year offerings) and expects that the review will proceed with due regard for cost-effectiveness.

Implementation Plan (First Priority)

Responsibility for approving this recommendation lies with Senate. The Centre's Director and the Dean of Social Sciences are jointly responsible for providing any needed resources and implementing the recommendation. It is expected that the review will be completed, and report submitted to ARC, by the end of the 2012-13 academic year.

Recommendation 7: Program Structure

That in order to ensure the high quality and coherence of program delivery in the long term, steps begin to be taken to ensure that the program structure and/or operation enables the Centre to draw on the support and contributions of both experienced and new feminist scholars within the Centre and to clarify and possibly develop new relationships among cross-appointed faculty, participating faculty, faculty who offer cross-listed courses, other supportive faculty, and supporters in the local community

The Centre's response is: “We will continue to solicit feminist researchers across campus and to think of new ways to recruit their expertise” and the Dean (and ARC) concur.

Implementation Plan

Responsibility for approving and implementing this recommendation lies with the Centre. ARC notes that the Centre has implemented the recommendation and no further action is required at this time.

Recommendation 8: Program Title and Calendar Designation

That Women's Studies continue to be recognized as the program's name, that WISE continue as the program's calendar designation, and that no major program changes be initiated for at least the next three years until the existing cross-appointed faculty members each return from their forthcoming sabbaticals and are able to engage, along with the participating program faculty and other new and already engaged faculty in broad and full discussions about the Centre's direction in relation to the three pillars of contemporary Canadian Women's Studies.

In its response to this recommendation, the Centre states:

[M]ost members of the Centre disagree, and believe that a change in name would a) more accurately reflect the goals and activities of the program; b) expand its appeal and relevance; c) and signal its intention to remain current with important scholarly advances in the field of women's and gender studies... Consequently, most members of the Centre would welcome a fuller discussion regarding a name change and feel it is difficult to understand how the title of "Brock's Centre for Women's & Gender Studies" would in any way compromise the feminist principles and history of the Centre.

Thus, the Centre (with support from the Dean) will review the current name of the program during the 2011-12 academic year.

ARC notes the Centre's objections and considers its response as appropriate.

Implementation Plan

The recommendation has not been accepted and will not be acted upon.

Recommendation 9: Enhancing Ties within the University

That the Women's Studies Program Committee take active steps to foster links with feminist colleagues elsewhere in the university and, in the longer term, to renew engagement with all of the disciplines and potentially to develop new collaborative program relationships that are mutually beneficial.

The Centre's response reports: "We look forward to strengthening our links with other faculty members across the university, particularly with the faculty of Education, in light of the introduction of 'Women's Studies' as a 'teachable' in secondary school, and the activities of the Miss G project." Further, the Dean notes that he "and the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies have held an initial positive discussion with the Dean of Education about expanding concurrent BA/BED programming."

ARC considers that this recommendation is being investigated in conjunction with the Faculty of Education.

Implementation Plan

Responsibility for approving and implementing this recommendation lies with the Centre. ARC notes that the Centre has implemented the recommendation and no further action is required at this time.

D. Recommendations to be Implemented

The IQAP requires that ARC "set out and prioritize the recommendations that are selected for implementation." Using the specific ARC proposals enunciated above, the following priorities are proposed:

First Priority:

Recommendation 6: Curriculum

Second Priority

Recommendation 3: Positions

Recommendation 4: Space

Recommendations Already Implemented

Recommendation 7: Program Structure

Recommendation 9: Enhancing Ties within the University

E. Recommendations that Will Not be Implemented

Recommendation 1: Program Support

Recommendation 2: Administration's Role

Recommendation 5: Support Staff
Recommendation 8: Program Title and Calendar Designation

November 22, 2011
/pb