

# Regents Program Review Report, 2004

## Women's Studies Program

### Kansas State University

#### *College, Department, and Date*

College: Arts and Sciences  
Department: Women's Studies Program  
Date: October 19, 2004  
Prepared by: Cia Verschelden, Associate Professor and Director

#### *Degrees Offered by Department*

CIP 050207 B.S. in Women's Studies  
B.A. in Women's Studies  
Minor in Women's Studies  
Graduate Certificate in Women's Studies

#### *Mission, Centrality, Uniqueness*

Women's Studies is an academic discipline that uses the social construction of gender as the framework for understanding the social and cultural milieu in which women live. This framework includes an examination of gender in the context of diversity, including the variables of class, race, age, ethnicity, nationality, and sexual identity. The mission of the Women's Studies Program is to stimulate an on-going campus-wide examination of diversity issues focused on but not limited to gender, provide students with a critical framework with which to examine themselves and their society, promote interdisciplinary research that incorporates the social construction of gender, and prepare students for careers and/or graduate study in a variety of disciplines and professions.

The Women's Studies Program serves the general student population through the provision of our "service" course, Introduction to Women's Studies, which is counted as Western Heritage in the humanities distribution requirements in the College of Arts & Sciences and is approved for University General Education credit. This course serves approximately 600 students each academic year. In addition, we offer through our Women's Studies faculty and faculty in our 14 affiliated departments, a series of upper-level courses that address the critical issues for both women and men, from both a U.S. and an international perspective. Study of the subjects that are covered in these courses contribute significantly to the wider efforts at KSU to educate ourselves about issues of diversity in human culture and society.

Within the Kansas Regents system, we join KU and WSU in offering an undergraduate degree. The general approach of Women's Studies as an academic discipline is itself unique. Women's Studies courses require students to read, write, discuss, and think critically. In addition, they invite and sometimes require that students link knowledge to social action appropriate to the needs of either the University or the local community. Materials drawn from the arts, humanities, social sciences, physical and biological sciences, and human service professions, as well as from people of different genders, social classes, races, ages, ethnicities, nationalities, and sexual identities require students to examine how the social construction of gender has affected both their own choices in life and the broader issues of the distribution of power and resources in society. The instructional methods used place emphasis on the active involvement of students and explicitly value knowledge gained through life experiences in addition to the academic knowledge base of the discipline.

### ***Quality of Faculty***

Teaching and learning are the top priority of the Women's Studies Program. We have striven to hire faculty who are strongly committed to student learning and to the affirmation of students. All of our faculty, including our two regular instructors, have doctoral degrees in their fields, which are English, sociology, history, education, and comparative religions. Evaluation of teaching is done each semester by a combination of student ratings and reflection by the instructor. Teaching effectiveness, evidenced by student learning, is one of the central factors in merit evaluation of faculty. Faculty devote much time to the on-going development and improvement of the method and content of their courses. Our faculty have been and are engaged in research projects and in the publication of their findings: recently in an edited volume, *Community and the World: Participating in Social Change*, a book manuscript dealing with adolescent literature for girls, and a research project with families who have "open adoptions," with an emphasis on the relationship between birth-mothers and adoptive-mothers.

### ***Quality of Students and Enrolment***

In general, our secondary major and graduate certificate students tend to be high quality students. They have exerted themselves to get an "extra" degree on top of their primary major and are open and desirous of interdisciplinary exposure. These students tend to be creative, open to learning, able to consider various perspectives, and interested in the ideas of others. For secondary majors, the average ACT score between 1999 and 2003 was 25.

With regard to Regent guidelines for minimum numbers of students and graduates, the B.S./B.A. degrees were first offered in the Fall of 2004. We expect to exceed the minimum numbers within the first three years. Two students graduated in December of 2004 and we have several set to graduate in May of 2005. As of January, 2005, we have 15 majors, over 50 minors and 13 secondary majors (an option that is now no longer available).

### ***Employer Demand***

Thus far, students have combined their Women's Studies degree with another major, so it has been used to enhance their employability. Graduates often work in women-related organizations like women's shelters, community service agencies, women's advocacy groups, human resources, etc. and in other kinds of jobs that require a liberal arts degree from a college or university. Knowledge about and competency around gender issues and other types of human diversity is welcomed by all employers. Many of our students will continue on to graduate school in law, public policy, education, and other related fields. Many of our graduate students become interested in teaching in Women's Studies and the graduate certificate greatly enhances their employability in this area.

### ***Service Provided to the Discipline, the University and Beyond***

Professional service activities of the Women's Studies faculty apply our various areas of expertise to the furtherance of the feminist principles of equality and social justice. We work in a variety of settings in the community, the state, the region, and in international venues (for instance, work with women's cooperatives in Nicaragua). Our service includes: 1. membership on Program, College, and University committees; 2. interviews with local and regional media; 3. community service organizations and activities; 4. editorial reviews of professional and research journals and book reviews; 5. presentations and publications in professional journals.

### *Cost Effectiveness*

We are 4 ½ FTE faculty and a .4-time office person. We have five computers, a copy machine, a TV, a VCR, and a DVD player. We teach 600 students a year in our introductory course and 200 or so more in our other WOMST courses.