Closeup: Long Beach Women's Studies Program

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LONG BEACH WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

The record of the Center for Women's Studies at California State University, Long Beach, is one of small, undramatic gains over a period of three years. As at other schools which have tried to develop women's studies programs, the administration has been reluctant; unlike many other schools, so has State University, Long Beach, is one of small, undramatic enrollments. Our other concrete women's nature and roles. In the subsequent year and a half, we developed several new courses which drew substantial interest has not issued in cohesive group action.

But a small group of faculty members and some students who first met in spring 1970, eventually contacted most of the other women faculty, urging the development of women's studies courses and the revision of existing courses to eliminate sexist material and include more acceptable versions of women's nature and roles. In the subsequent year and a half, we developed several new courses which drew substantial enrollments. Our other concrete gains were few.

Then in winter 1972, we had a call from the associate dean of curriculum. What, he wanted to know, was going on in Women's Studies; the president of the university wished to make a speech emphasizing such curricular innovations. Ah ha! we thought. The administration cares. It was time to press for administrative support for a program, in terms of funding, released time for a coordinator, office space, secretarial aid. We constituted ourselves the Ad Hoc Committee on Women's Studies and met regularly during the spring, this time with more student participation, to develop a program proposal.

Meanwhile we went from administrator to administrator—the dean of the School of Letters and Science, the dean of educational policy, the academic vice-president, and finally the president himself—to ask for some firm evidence of support. Little was forthcoming. They wanted courses, all right, so long as no one had to pay for them. Money was tight, we were told; and besides, look at all the other programs that had been developed by dedicated faculty with no additional outlay of funds. However, we were placed under Special Programs, a sector with departmental status which supervises the development of interdisciplinary minors and certificate programs. The Director of Special Programs has been helpful; he provided us with guidance, some secretarial aid, and a mailbox. He even attempted to find us an office, to no avail.

At this point many of the women initially involved began to wonder if the effort was worthwhile: too many women had done too much volunteer work for too long with too little compensation. It seemed ironic that the effort to develop a women's studies program should simply perpetuate this tired pattern. Besides, several of us felt that

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allocate six units to offer the first interdisciplinary women's proposal. We decided on a seminar in the Position of Women in Contemporary Western and non-Western cultures. It would be team-taught by a historian and a political scientist, and others developed course proposals in their own departments.

In mid-spring we were asked, along with other new programs, to appear before the chancellor’s representative on academic planning. We requested placement on the State College and University Master Plan as a degree major; we were advised instead to work toward a minor. That seemed good enough to us; at least we now had some official standing. We dropped the “ad hoc” from our name. But at a spring meeting with virtually every relevant administrator on campus, we were once again, with great good will, denied funding, released time, and office space.

So matters stood in the fall of 1972. Then we learned that the associate dean of educational policy was willing to allocate six units to offer the first interdisciplinary women’s studies course. We had three days to draw up a course proposal. We decided on a seminar in the Position of Women in Contemporary Western and non-Western cultures. It would be team-taught by a historian and a political scientist, and would be offered in the spring by the School of Letters and Science as an experimental class. The curriculum committee approved, with some advice: we should not call it “The Position of Women”—that was too suggestive. “Status” was substituted instead.

As we needed a more formal structure in order to offer additional interdisciplinary courses, we decided to call ourselves the Center for Women’s Studies and drew up a constitution. The constitution, approved by the Director of Special Programs and ratified by the membership, provides for a coordinator and assistant coordinator, a steering committee with mandatory student representation, and an advisory council consisting of all interested members of the Center.

We decided to publicize the new course and the Center, along with other courses related to women’s studies. In gathering data for our brochure, we discovered that our earlier efforts in contacting faculty members and encouraging course proposals had not, after all, been unproductive. There were now close to twenty courses that we could list. Courses were also listed in the spring schedule of classes under the new heading “Women’s Studies.” Some courses are traditional, but altered to focus, at least in part, on women. Some are special topics courses which will concentrate on women as their “special problem” for a semester or two. Others, like the two-semester History of Women in the Western and non-Western Worlds, have regular departmental status. The departments represented include Anthropology, Asian Studies, Education, English, History, Home Economics, Physical Education, Psychology, and Sociology. Many faculty members indicated their willingness to act as advisers to women students in their fields.

The Center for Women’s Studies, then, is primarily concerned at present with the academic aspects of a Women’s Studies program. But it provides also the first cohesive campus structure for communication between women and men who care about the progress and problems of women. And out of the courses themselves comes the promise of a more activist orientation. One class, for example, is organizing a Women’s Week for spring 1973 which will include speakers, workshops, theater, and media presentations; the students hope to generate enough enthusiasm to create a Women’s Resource Center on campus. Another class is producing a pamphlet detailing counseling facilities available to women on campus and diagnosing additional needs.

The Center will also provide a locus for concerted political action or pressure, such as watchdogging the implementation of the Affirmative Action program, or generally prodding the administration to be more responsive than it has in the past to the needs of women on the campus and in the community.

We still have no funding for the hiring of new personnel, no released time for a coordinator, and no room of our own. But we do have a curriculum with variety and strength, an official standing in the institutional structure, and an increasingly large group of committed faculty and students. We have, as the ad says, come a long way; as it forgets to tell us, we have a long way to go.

Deborah S. Rosenfelt

**GIRL AM I HAPPY**

Sylvia H. Hudes, principal of Seven Locks School in Maryland, writes of “the immense responsibility implicated in guiding the minds of young people,” and of her sensitivity to it, adding:

“To insure at least a small measure of human dignity to each student, our children are encouraged to write a personal journal of experiences, kept daily.” One rewarding composition, by second-grader Karen Polis, she has shared with us.

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Christmas Day
On Christmas day I woke up bright and early and rush for my toys. I found out Saint Nicholas has come at last. And in my stocking was a candy cane. Girl am I happy

By Karen
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