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CLOSEUP: PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY'S PROGRAM

[What follows is an abstract, prepared especially for this *Newsletter*, of an essay that appears in *Female Studies VI*—see news briefs for announcement.]

In the winter of 1970, an all-university meeting was called to assess interest in a Women's Studies Program. The original group that gathered informally ranged in age from late teens to late forties. Some were on welfare, some gay, some straight, some students, some faculty (female and male), some community women—a composition that has remained typical in both the academic and the operational parts of our program. Our uniqueness stemmed from the amount and kind of student enthusiasm and the direction into which it was and is channelled.

At the meeting, we decided first to organize a weekly afternoon lecture series on diverse topics, related to women, and second to survey faculty interest by asking department heads for permission to teach under omnibus course numbers a variety of women's studies courses. The response to the lecture series and to the survey of faculty was enthusiastic enough to ensure course offerings and takers for the spring. During registration, we printed and distributed our own descriptive catalogue, as we have each term since.

In effect, we had begun to establish a shadow department of Women's Studies, genuinely student and faculty controlled and based on the assumption that our *modus operandi* would be "let's give ourselves something" rather than "let's make them [the administration] give us something." Now, two years later, our forty some courses have attracted over 2,000 students and community people, and as of this writing we are engaged in seeking adequate funding for a burgeoning program that has functioned for too long on volunteer energies.

Our search for money began in the summer of 1971 when we convened an Ad Hoc Committee to write an application for authorization to give a Certificate in Women's Studies (at Portland State University, comparable to an academic minor). After a year and a half the proposal for certification and funding has begun to move through the labyrinth of curriculum committees in the university that stand between it and final approval by the State Board of Higher Education.

Now that the proposal is moving, and encountering opposition from departments that fear they will have to fund the program at the cost of their own disciplinary offerings, we are learning how to be effective advocates for our needs within the budgetary structure of the university. Our experience with interim finances—this year we have \$3,000 from student incidental fee money to run an office and pay student program and class coordinators—has suggested that we need more independent financing to accomplish our goal of involving and serving the communities to which we respond.

Our program has some faculty support and involvement, but it is being carried on chiefly by the energies of undergraduates, graduate students and community people. Our tactics in developing a program organically, according to our needs and out of our own pool of resources, before asking for money has worked for us.

We feel that women's studies is neither solely a political nor solely a curricular matter. When we achieve equal status with other programs of instruction in the university, when other courses regularly include feminist analysis along with Marx and Freud, classes for women will continue their separate development so long as women need a room of their own and so long as these rooms function as a vital irritant and model for new learning.

Finally, a piece of practical advice: for those women who have had experience in the teaching of women's classes, who worry about the balance of personal revelation and curricular work, we would suggest that time be made outside the classroom or meeting or work group to allow women to get to know one another individually and collectively in informal settings. Our strength is in our personal relations, but much work needs to be done in learning skills, in developing feminist analyses, in stating coherently the problem of oppression, and in replacing an oppressive culture with examples of what a free one might be like. To do this work, individually and collectively, we need to expand our foothold in the personal, to move into the hard-headed application of knowledge to life.

Nancy Porter

CORRESPONDENCE

[There were several responses to the "editorial" remarks about the funding of women's studies programs made by F. H. in the first issue of the *Newsletter*. We print one of these below.]

From MARY L. EYSENBACH, Director of Women Studies, University of Washington, Seattle 98105:

"I am writing to raise two related subjects: dollars and jobs. . . . I agree with your position. . . . But even when colleges do this [fund women studies], as this university has done, it does not eliminate the task of looking for outside sources of funds in the same way as is expected of other departments. Therefore, I . . . would be grateful for any information which you may have available now on public and private sources of grants for research and program development in women studies.

"The second subject is jobs. The direction for women studies at this University is not to establish a separate department but to include women studies courses in the regular offerings of existing departments and to incorporate women studies perspectives in existing courses. This program can be effective only if the existing departments have or will hire people able to teach such courses.

"As an administrator of a women studies program I would like to be able to suggest to departmental hiring committees the names of persons who will also suit our women studies needs. (Obviously my suggestions would carry more weight with dollars to back them up—hence the pressing importance of the first subject.)

"Could the Clearinghouse explore the possibility of developing some form of central job market information?"

[The center at Brown U.—see news brief, this issue—proposes one such effort. Women's commissions and caucuses have been discussing similar needs for "rosters." We will attempt an informational essay on the subject in the next issue.]