The Future of Women's Studies (Continued)

Gayle Kimball
Barbara Bellows Watson
Charlotte R. Tatro
Barbara Rakow
Maria Fernandez

See next page for additional authors

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Authors
Gayle Kimball, Barbara Bellows Watson, Charlotte R. Tatro, Barbara Rakow, Maria Fernandez, Elizabeth Diggs, Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Catherine E. Portuges, Susan Phipps-Sanger, Toni McNaron, and Juanita H. Williams

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THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES (continued)

from the CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, CHICO

Women's Studies at Chico developed from courses offered by women in their different departments, gathered to form a minor degree program in spring, 1973. Two specifically women's studies courses were designed at that time: a team-taught Introduction to Women's Studies (draws around 80 students a semester), changes women students' expectations and horizons by projecting models of achieving women) and a Senior Research Seminar designed to integrate the students' major and minor. Both are taught by the Women's Studies Coordinator. Student demand has led to the development of new courses whose content received a great deal of student input: Women's Health, Women in the Working World, Women in Art, Minority Women and the Re-Entry Program for Mature Women. There are now 20 courses offered through the Women's Studies Program. Students are designing special degrees on the B.A. and M.A. level in areas such as Women and Counseling, Psychology and Art.

We would like to house the Women's Studies Coordinator, Woman's Advocate, and Re-Entry Coordinator in one central area, along with the Women's Center, whose coordinator is paid a token salary by the Student Government. (The Women's Center provides students with information, a meeting place, C-R groups, a small library, etc. It also sponsors Woman's Awareness Week, a lavish yearly event with multiple speakers, workshops, self-help health demonstrations, films, etc.)

The Women's Studies Coordinator is administratively housed in the Department of Ethnic and Women's Studies, formed in 1975 (with Black, Chicano and Native American Studies). She teaches four Women's Studies courses in addition to performing administrative functions. A group of faculty, staff and student women are currently pressing for a half-time position for a Woman's Advocate to innovate women's programs and safeguard women's interests campus-wide.

We are also seeking a half-time position for a Woman's Re-Entry Coordinator who would teach the Re-Entry course, recruit community women and facilitate re-entry for women returning to the classroom after many years away.

Gayle Kimball, Coordinator

from the CITY COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK

The Women's Studies Program is now in its third year and is gradually gaining ground both in curriculum and in wider acceptance among faculty and students. One of our faculty members has become an assistant vice president of the college, and others have become victims of the budget cuts and other forms of attrition. Several new courses have been added. Our largest step forward has been the creation of a major in women's studies that is now under consideration by the college. We hope to have it accepted in time for enrolling students by September 1975. As we have proposed it, the major calls for students to supplement their women's studies courses with enough disciplinary courses to provide competence in the information and techniques of one area of concentration, such as psychology or history or literature.

The program has offered two new interdisciplinary electives this year, both taught by Joan Kelly-Gadol, Professor of History: Marxism and Feminism in the fall semester, Fear of Women, Witchcraft and the Family in the spring semester.

Our introductory course, Women's Role in Contemporary Society, has had a steadily growing enrollment. We plan to offer one section in summer session and three sections in the fall. The clamor of students wanting to register for this course in February, after both sections were full, was one sign of a change at City College, formerly an all male institution and still very much shaped by that tradition.

We still have no prospect—less than ever, in fact—of having any staff appointed to the program. Our faculty are all borrowed from departments, with part-time people brought in to teach courses we could not otherwise provide. The budget crisis at the City University may endanger even these small sums used to bring in part-time faculty. The small discretionary fund allocated to women's studies for program support has just been withdrawn, like all other allocations from the City College Fund, which has run out of money.

In the long run, we would like to see the insights gained from women's studies incorporated into the regular curriculum and into the behavior of faculty, students and administration, but we expect the need for interdisciplinary teaching and learning sponsored by the program to continue. Research is one area in which we see great needs.

Our institutional set-up is mixed. That is, some women's studies courses are initiated and controlled by the program and are interdisciplinary in subject matter; some are initiated and controlled by traditional departments or ethnic studies departments, with varying degrees of consultation and cooperation with the program. The advantage is that the resistance of powerful departments to women's studies courses in the present, highly competitive situation is much reduced. The independent program gives us some autonomy and a small power base, as well. The disadvantages are obvious: departments often find themselves without anyone to teach an essential women's studies course and may not care very much about filling that gap if there is any conflict with other interests. The cooperation of the departments has been greatly helped by the fact that their women's courses have usually helped by the fact that their women's courses have usually registered well at a time when many others have been declining. It remains to be seen whether that level of interest will be maintained under the increasing economic pressure our students feel to stick to courses that have a direct vocational usefulness.

Barbara Bellows Watson, Director

from FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Here, the most important variable contributing to the support and longevity of women's studies programs is continued community involvement. For that reason, more and more of our programs are being conducted off campus in the community: at local banks, senior centers, schools, and recreation and meeting rooms of churches, apartments and condominiums. The Institute for Women presents programs, conferences, workshops, seminars and courses planned for women by women. Presentations are held at sites convenient for the participants. For example, a conference on the Role of the Administrator's Wife (for the American Association of State Colleges and Universities) was held at the Americana Hotel in Bal Harbour, Florida. A program offering creative job search techniques for women was held at the Dade County Women's Detention Center (jail). A legal seminar exploring the topic of "no-fault" divorce with a panel of eight judges and attorneys was held in the community service room of a local bank. Three hundred women attended this program.

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THE FUTURE OF WOMEN’S STUDIES (continued)

For the second year, the Institute for Women is holding a women’s studies seminar to explore the topic, The Impact of Women’s Studies on Television. Panelists are four prominent female television personalities representing the four local Miami stations. Resume workshops sponsored by the Institute for Women are held bi-weekly on campus or in the community. Participants learn to prepare effective, hard-selling resumes, and many success stories have been reported by women who attended the workshops.

Horace Greeley suggested that “young men go West.” The Institute for Women advises women’s studies programs to go west, east, north and south. For continuing support, get out female television personalities representing the four local the interdisciplinary liberal arts Women’s Studies Pro- attended the workshops.

and many success stories have been reported by women who education; in an economically depressed urban environ­

ment; with a working class, job directed student body; the interdisciplinary liberal arts Women’s Studies Pro­

gram has grown in two years from 33 students in three courses to 323 students in ten courses. The administration and board of trustees have approved a proposal for a full BA major, and we hope it will be approved by the state board of higher education by September. The success of the program can be explained by three factors, two internal and one external.

First, the Women’s Studies Program was home grown. The curriculum was designed by a collective of six faculty, four students, a secretary and a dean who worked together for six months, hashing out political, educational and personal con­licts in the long intense meetings typical of the feminist move­ment. Most of the faculty members were already teaching women’s studies courses, all were feminists, most had been in C-R groups and were active in the women’s movement. We agreed on one thing from the beginning: the program should be feminist in method and content. There was a strong dif­ference of opinion, however, about which was more impor­tant. The “method” people accused the “content” people of merely infusing some feminism into patriarchal structures, and the “content” people protested that nothing but sister­hood and good feelings would leave women ignorant of female history, biology, struggle and culture. The intense theoretical arguments were resolved when we got down to deciding on specific courses and sequences in the curriculum. We were all finally satisfied that the content was substantial and the form open.

Last spring we were given one full time faculty line, to hire a person who would teach three women’s studies courses and serve as coordinator. The decision to offer the position to one of the original members of the collective, although many others were considered, undoubtedly avoided many of the problems that have created disension at some schools when an outsider was given the job. New students and faculty have joined the Women’s Studies Collective, and some have left, but there has been enough continuity (nine of the original twelve, and four new women) to sustain our original purpose and energy. So the integrity of our grass-roots growth has been maintained through two crucial phases of the development of the program: its conception and the first year of existence.

A second important factor in our growth is integration with the college community and with the Jersey City community. Members of the collective come from nine different departments: psychology, biology, English, history, theatre, reading and language arts, sociology, political science, art. Faculty, students, staff and administrators worked together on a basis of collective equality from the beginning. We never had to fight for the principle of collectivity and non-hierarchy because we all believed in it, instituted it as our modus operandi, and were never seriously challenged. The Dean of Interdis­


plinary Studies, Doris Friedensohn, is a member of the collective. Once the program was approved by the Committee on Curriculum and Instruction of the College Senate, the de­

cisions made by the collective about staff, budget and cur­riculum were final. Next year, the organization of the college will be different and the Women’s Studies Program will be under the supervision of the vice president for academic affairs, who is a man, but who has been helpful so far.

The Women’s Center and the Women’s Studies Program have been closely linked from the beginning. The co-directors and secretary of the Women’s Center are members of the Women’s Studies Collective, and the women interested in women’s studies originally came together through the center. Our offices are adjacent and many activities are co-sponsored. Contacts with the Jersey City community through the center will provide possibilities for action projects and internships for women’s studies majors.

The third factor that contributed to our success was external and fortuitous: the time was right and a new administration favored the program. The ideas of the women’s movement had been in the air long enough for all but the most entrenched sexist to overcome their basic anxieties. Programs such as those at SUNY/Buffalo and SUNY/Old Westbury were demonstrably successful and the individual women’s studies courses we had offered were popular with students.

In spite of all this official approval and internal esprit, we were expected to run the program this year (21 courses) on a budget of $600. When the Women’s Center was given $2400, we combined funds and divided them equally (feminist co­operation—or sabotage—however you want to look at it). This left us still poor, but viable. We didn’t feel as grossly slighted as it might seem, because the entire college is in desperate financial straits. We are one of only three programs scheduled for a budget increase next year.

We now offer 12 interdisciplinary women’s studies courses, and 11 electives cross-listed with women’s studies and another department. Courses included in the Women’s Studies Program must be approved by the collective; while the course is being offered, moreover, the instructor must participate in the collective. Women’s Studies majors will be required to take 20 hours of interdisciplinary courses and 16 hours of electives. Our curriculum is designed to give students knowledge of the condition of women (Women and Work, Family, Religion, Education, Politics—five different courses); the body and mind (Female Sexuality and Psychology); feminist theory (Feminism, Radicalism, and Social Change); and action to change society (action projects, internships, independent study). Students also participate directly in decisions con­cerning the program, through the Colloquium, a one-credit (continued on page 25)
course where instructors and majors meet bimonthly to evaluate all aspects of the program. Any student may join the collective as well.

There are usually a few men in every course, except for Women’s Lives, but when one man registered for a Women’s Lives section this semester, he was not asked to withdraw. His contribution to the class has been insignificant, but he hasn’t detracted much either. We have had no experiences of disruptive male students, and most are enthusiastic about the different spirit of women’s studies classes. Next spring we will offer a section of Men’s Lives, taught by a man.

One of our major concerns has been to maintain good classroom morale, which is no easy task at a school where half the registered students may be cutting by midsemester, and those who do attend are apt to be glassy-eyed with hostility and boredom. Women’s Studies has been able to avoid the worst of this malaise because all our courses are electives, but we would like to make classes terrific and not just better than most. All women’s studies courses are observed twice each semester by two members of the collective and then discussed at a special meeting. Instructors of the introductory course, Women’s Lives (students may teach this after they have taken it), meet once a week to discuss readings, class discussions, journals and problems in their sections.

Although our program has grown with no major set-backs, we will need foresight and clarity to maintain the integrity of the curriculum. There is tension between those who wish to emphasize female experience (women’s history, women writers, female biology and psychology, etc.) and those who would include more about images of women reflected by the male culture.

If the program is approved as a major, our control over which courses are approved for women’s studies will have more significance and give us more power. We could begin a comprehensive evaluation of sexism in the teaching and curriculum of every department, and publish the results. Majors in action projects could work in the community on day-care, food co-ops, establishing C-R groups, etc. We could offer more courses on such topics as lesbianism, car mechanics, self-defense, contemporary women’s culture. We could hire more feminists. Students could be graduated with the knowledge and experience to work for the realization of feminism in both the assumptions of individuals and the structure of society.

Elizabeth Diggs, Coordinator

from the UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Women’s studies began at the University of Maryland before an organizational framework existed. Individual instructors interested in feminist issues and the changing sex roles in modern society taught pilot courses in the undergraduate Honors Program to explore these new ideas. In the meantime, young faculty members in various disciplines, whose graduate research had focused on women, persuaded their departments to permit them to offer courses in their areas of expertise. Thus, early courses dealt with the history of women in American society, the sociology of sex roles, women and the law, women in literature. All these instructors were working separately, however. The University of Maryland is an enormous institution, and most of these faculty members were not even acquainted with one another.

A major student focus on the area of women’s studies came about in the spring of 1972 when the Department of History decided to discontinue the highly popular course in women’s history. Following student agitation, not only were the course and the faculty member reinstated, but the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs appointed an ad hoc committee to study the possibility of developing a program in women’s studies. Meeting over the summer of 1972, this committee of faculty members and graduate and undergraduate students began to explore options, and, during the following academic year, sponsored a series of nine public lectures by faculty members in women’s studies as a means of attracting attention to this new area of education.

Finally, at the request of the Dean for Undergraduate Studies, and with the assistance of a small grant for a graduate research assistant, a formal document, Women’s Studies Program Proposal, August 15, 1973, was published in mimeographed form by the committee, now known as the Advisory Committee for Women’s Studies. This document called for the establishment of a full-time administrative position of Coordinator for Women’s Studies, a position to be held by a faculty member with the rank of associate professor. Although no budgetary line existed for such a position, arrangements were made, following screening by a search committee, to establish a half-time position of Coordinator, beginning with the spring semester of 1974. The incumbent is a tenured assistant professor. In the University’s administrative framework, she reports to the Dean for Undergraduate Studies.

Women’s Studies, as a group of course offerings, continues as an informal interdisciplinary program. Courses are staffed and scheduled by individual departments—some 19 departments or administrative units having so far participated. This approach has offered the advantage that women’s studies as a discipline has not become isolated from the rest of the University community and that courses could develop even though a budget for such a program had not been included in the formal budget of the University, adopted a year earlier by the state legislature. It offers the disadvantage that little leverage is possible in dealing with individual departments which for one reason or another may not care to participate.

At the present time, the Advisory Committee is hoping to have adopted a formal proposal for a Certificate in Women’s Studies—a 21-credit interdisciplinary minor based on a core group of courses (12 hours) from four of the following departments—Economics, English, Government and Politics, History, and Sociology.

Virginia Walcott Beauchamp, Coordinator

from the UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS/AMHERST

In trying to define goals for the Women’s Studies Program, we discovered that our goals and our process are meshed; many goals are implicit in the process we have gone through in the past years and in the procedures we have developed for dealing on a day-to-day basis with students in the program. As an open program, we offer an opportunity to participate in a non-hierarchical structure which is woman affirming in both process and content. While encouraging flexibility, we are concerned with developing and maintaining high academic standards, stressing acquisition of technical skills, as well as fostering personal growth and self-knowledge. We support an individualized program promoting independent thought and action while at the university, in order to equip students for life out-
THE FUTURE OF WOMEN’S STUDIES (continued)

side. We intend to meet students’ needs by providing services for those who are clear about their goals as well as providing some guidance for those who are still exploring.

Our program was established in fall 1974 as a pilot project leading to the proposal for a full major in 1976; at present, we offer a minor concentration and a major. This arrangement provides an opportunity for students to formulate an individually designed plan of study in consultation with a faculty sponsor—which may include regular courses offered at the university and in the Five Colleges, independent study and field work on campus and in the community. In our first year, there were close to 100 courses offered through a variety of departments at the university and in the Five Colleges. Our program offers both an introductory and an advanced interdisciplinary seminar to help students integrate their course of study. Opportunities for practical field work experience in a variety of placements are arranged to suit the students’ needs. Within the context of a large university, the Women’s Studies Program is committed to the creation of a highly personalized experience emphasizing ongoing contact between faculty sponsors and students. Individual members of the advisory staff are available to counsel students at any stage of their program. Participation at all levels of the program is encouraged by the Policy Board, the decision making body, composed of faculty, staff, undergraduate and graduate students and community resource persons.

Our program also participates actively in the Five College Women’s Studies Committee and the monthly Five College Women’s Studies Faculty Seminar. This involvement enables us to share our own commitment and expertise with those of faculty and students from Smith, Mount Holyoke, Amherst and Hampshire Colleges. The faculty seminar creates a forum for discussion of women’s studies scholarship; the Women’s Studies Committee works cooperatively to promote and institutionalize the advancement of women’s studies in the Five College area. For example, this year the committee proposed and obtained a three year faculty appointment for women’s studies. Together we are building frameworks and methodologies for integrating women’s experiences and scholarly disciplines, and working to create the incentive and expertise necessary to effect change in the university, the colleges and the larger community.

Catherine E. Portuges, Coordinator

from the UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The Women’s Studies Program at the University of Minnesota is presently in the second year of a three year experimental period. We have developed a variety of courses, and although aware of how very much we have left to accomplish, we are proud of the progress we have made in five quarters. It is exciting. Beginning next fall we hope to offer a B.A. degree (currently our “majors” are actually interdepartmental), but the viability of such a plan, indeed the status of our entire program, depends upon decisions to be made in the spring of 1976 by the Dean and governing bodies in the College of Liberal Arts. Will our budget be increased? Will our monies be harden? Will we be able to hire more “core” staff to teach in and to administer the program? Will we be as autonomous as other academic departments? The answers to those questions will play a critical role in shaping the program and in determining how far we can go toward meeting our objectives.

Last spring the faculty-student committee which governs our program wrote a statement of purpose which describes the following objectives: The Women’s Studies Program has as its overriding theme the study and significance of women. With the desire that women be recognized as serious participants in all aspects of human effort, the program’s objective is to establish a balance within the areas of intellectual life.

has participants who are engaged in a passionate study of self in an effort to create new forms of energy and power, to be active developers of a distinctive and positive concept of womanhood and to integrate emotional and intellectual endeavor.

has supporters and participants of diverse philosophical and political backgrounds. To serve a broad constituency, it is necessary for the program to accommodate these multiple perspectives.

has its roots in the women’s movement. The strength of the program is dependent upon both the continuance of a women’s movement and the support of the academic institution. recognizes that a vital role is played by the University in the assimilation and transmission of values; therefore, it is important that the program question or augment those values.

is involved in experimentation with new methods of sharing knowledge. With the use of many possible methods of learning, continuous evaluation of the program and its efforts is imperative.

is committed to encouraging research on and study of women within all disciplines.

is eager to increase the exchange of ideas with women in the larger community.

believes that women’s studies students will challenge those social forces which adversely affect the struggle for self-development and self-determination.

Concretely we would like to carry out these objectives by:

working with established departments to offer more courses on women as producers and subjects of knowledge.

devising our own relatively contained, interdisciplinary curriculum. By providing a necessary vocabulary and a familiarity with the history and issues in white, non-white, American, and foreign cultures, we hope to create an intellectual home for some students.

serving as a clearinghouse for scholars involved in feminist research.

providing competent counseling for persons wishing to combine a special disciplinary focus with an interest in woman-oriented study.

organizing informal academic forums (bag lunches, seminars, retreats) for the entire community to discuss women’s studies. These would allow more skeptical individuals to understand our program better and would provide us with important feedback as well as new information and perspectives.

While some people argue that programs like ours are part of compensatory education, necessary only until regular departments turn their own resources to teaching the significance of women within their fields of study, we believe that women’s studies constitutes a genuine discipline, understood as we now understand English or history or physics. Our system of analysis may be characterized as the use of a feminist perspective as the basis for raising questions, organizing data, formulating hypotheses, and drawing tentative conclusions. Our method of approach will be invariably interdisciplinary, since the issues raised simply cannot be addressed by focusing on one aspect of study or

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artistic production. As should be the case with any "discipline," the inclusion of women's studies within liberal arts curricula affords the chance to broaden those curricula and actually to discover new ideas.

As important as the ideological and structural considerations about the "what" within women's studies programs are the "how" and "why": questions about pedagogical choices, about research presentations, and about implications for the lives of all involved. To follow some of our brother disciplines, especially in these times of financial difficulty, and lecture to 1000 students on the psychology of women or on women in the world of literature would do little that is new and may not be worth doing at all. However, our refusal to follow certain traditions within the liberal arts means that we create tensions within the very units to which we must turn for support. That tension may be healthy for the institution, but it can be extremely tiring for those within the women's studies programs who prefer to use their energies for studying and communicating. Furthermore, that tension can become difficult for the established structures to tolerate precisely when our courses succeed most, that is to say when the material studied and researched calls into question long-held assumptions. Perhaps the most basic question to raise around this topic is whether any intellectually rigorous and genuinely feminist women's studies program can hope to receive serious attention from the college which houses it, when to do so invites students and faculty to bite the hand that feeds them by confronting underlying theories of knowledge, prevalent modes of educating, and fundamental relationships between thought and action.

Susan Phipps-Sanger, Administrative Assistant-advisor
Toni McNaron, Coordinator

from the UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA

The Women's Studies Program at the University of South Florida is in its third year and is flourishing in course offerings, student interest and enthusiasm, if not money. Our basic program has three full time permanent faculty lines and we have been able to get money for temporary adjuncts to teach special courses, such as Women and Work and Men and Sexism (taught by the husband of one of our regular faculty—is this a first?). Also, we cross-list courses which originate in other departments, if we wish to do so. (A description of our program was published in the Women's Studies Newsletter of summer 1974, for anyone who wants to read about the nuts and bolts of it. I feel safe in saying, as Florence Howe did about women's studies at Old Westbury, that at South Florida it is an accepted part of the curriculum.)

In general, as faculty we are discipline oriented, and count on the substance and style of the courses—and on ourselves—to raise consciousness and to get people moving and thinking. Concern has been expressed in some quarters about women's studies being co-opted by the establishment and settling down into dowdy respectability, finding ultimately that it has to fight the male academic way to get what it needs to keep going. To a degree, the concern is justified. In fact, when women's studies becomes a department or program, then it accepts the same status as any other department or program, and if it wishes to get students, money and attention, then it must adopt a strategy which will produce those results. What strategy depends somewhat on the particular university which houses it.

I have come to believe that a posture of radical feminism is not likely to get an academic program of women's studies into the average state university. The way to women's studies in schools like ours has been led by "marginal" people who have identities both in the establishment and in the constituency to be served. The way this applied to us was that we were all in the university teaching other things; but in 1972, having an identity in the university was critical to getting support for what we wanted to do.

What is the future of women's studies? I think that the apogee of women's studies will be reached in the next five years. By that time I would expect that every school which will ever have women's studies will have it. After that, who knows? Perhaps my granddaughters who will be in universities in the next 15 to 20 years will learn about women and what they have done in the same context as they will learn about men. Here, women's studies is moving in the direction of integration with other departments, although I still believe that the separate identity is very important, especially in the first few years. When women are half the faculty, as women are half the student body, then we can expect not to need women's studies. When women are equally represented in all the disciplines, then women will teach and learn for themselves who they are, what their history is and how they can move in the direction of controlling their own lives, independently and competently.

Juanita H. Williams, Director

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