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Structure and Staffing of Programs

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TO OUR READERS

With this issue, we inaugurate a series on *The Future of Women’s Studies*, featuring contributions from programs around the country. We have had 20 responses thus far, and we print here a variety of the ones received earliest. We will print others in a double Summer/Fall issue, when we plan to feature the State University of New York’s system, in which we reside, as well as our neighbor, the City University of New York. Programs that have not yet responded may, of course, do so now. We will also include in that issue, a 16 page review of high school English and history texts in a special supplement.

With this issue, too, we should like to announce the beginning of a new effort: to interest people across the country in becoming *Contributing Editors* of the Newsletter. We envision a network of editors who will both solicit and edit articles of local origin and national import. Those wishing to volunteer should name a geographical responsibility (an urban area, a state, or a region); an institutional (university, secondary school, etc.) and/or intellectual (literature, textbooks, introductory courses, etc.) area of expertise and concern. If possible, we shall begin listing *Contributing Editors* in the next issue. (When you write, please tell us about yourself—or enclose a vita—and send us a recent sample of your work in women’s studies.)

Finally, we’d like to mention our view that within the next year there will probably be occasion for the Newsletter either to expand into a 32-page quarterly or into more frequent publication. That is, we have more good material than we can publish, even without the proposed network of *Contributing Editors*. If we are to grow in size, we must also grow in support. While the appearance of *Who’s Who and Where in Women’s Studies* seems to be provoking a surge of new subscribers, we trust that our loyal supporters will continue to urge others to take subscriptions. We need to more than double the current number of subscribers (approaching 2,000) in order to pay at least one staff salary. Right now the subscriptions pay only for the costs of production and mailing. And while we’re on the subject, we must confess to a striking error in *Who’s Who*. There are 4,224 teachers of women’s studies, not the 2,990 originally reported in the Introduction. If all (or even most) subscribed, we could pay our way.

STRUCTURE AND STAFFING OF PROGRAMS

Florence Howe

[This is the first in a series of brief essays on various aspects of women’s studies. In the Summer issue, Ms. Howe will write on curriculum. We welcome responses, in the form of letters or essays, to Ms. Howe’s views.]

In the sixties, I surveyed the free university movement which had spawned in its brief lifetime of some three years upwards of 300 parallel or counter-institutions on or near campuses as diverse as San Francisco State College and the University of Pennsylvania. That movement did not accomplish its short-range goal: to effect change at host institutions. Indeed, those free universities either faded away or were effectively disbanded by their host institutions. On the other hand, the long-range effects of the free university movement may be observed a decade later, not only in field studies programs and internships, but in such “relevant” curricular developments as black studies, ethnic studies and women’s studies. After six years, women’s studies courses are taught on over 900 campuses; on 112 campuses women’s studies courses have been organized into “programs.” In general, such programs have profited from the free university movement; they have not imagined that they could effect change simply by setting a good example in their own separate little corner of the campus. Rather, programs have operated from the premise that total separatism is counter-productive. To effect change, one needs at least two bases of power and a great deal of energy: first, among a broad student constituency that insists upon a women’s studies program for its needs; second, among the university’s own personnel that can forcefully press not only for resources necessary to the continuation of the women’s studies program, but for change in the wider institution. Thus, for some years now, pioneers organizing women’s studies programs have used terms like “networks” or “inter-departmental” to describe the organizational structure best suited to accomplish complex goals. Early models were pro-

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vided by SUNY/Buffalo and SUNY/Old Westbury where, inside an American Studies Program, feminist faculty taught some women's studies courses themselves, and invited others on their campuses to join them in offering others. At California State University/Sacramento the model became a program that had at its center several positions controlled by a Women's Studies Committee, which was in turn made up of tenured and nontenured faculty members from a sizable number of departments in the humanities and social sciences. These faculty members also taught women's studies courses. At the University of Pittsburgh, still another variety of network was proposed and (partly) instituted: the creation of five new positions—for faculty members to be hired half-time in traditional departments, half-time in women's studies. Three of those faculty were hired in 1972—in English, history, and psychology—and one of them, the coordinator Mary Louise Briscoe, was awarded tenure this year in the English department. But the other two lines remain unfilled.

Professor Briscoe's tenure decision is one bright spot in an otherwise dreary season of tenure decisions. Given the tendency of institutions to place non-tenured faculty into the coordinator's spot in women's studies, the question of tenure will remain a consequential one for some time to come. The problems are obvious: an individual willing to divide her time between her discipline and women's studies cannot, it is alleged, be "serious" about her discipline. Indeed, she may not have the time or inclination to do traditional scholarly research and writing. She may instead be designing new courses, involving herself in acquiring the skills and knowledge of a second discipline. Or she may be engaged in ground-breaking scholarship that lies outside the traditional or her original disciplinary purview. We can all cite examples here: the young literary medievalist from Harvard who, in her first years of teaching, began to publish scholarly essays on nineteenth century women's medical history and literature; and long lists of literature teachers who have taken a year or more to read research in sociology and history in order to develop women's studies courses. The key question then becomes who is qualified to judge the teaching as well as scholarly productivity of such people, let alone their contribution to the campus and community? Traditional departments and committees on tenure will tend, understandably, to view women's studies faculty through their own discipline-tinted glasses. And at this point, there are no other procedures for tenure.

Obviously, then, one might counter, the route to go is the departmental one: argue on the campus for a Department of Women's Studies that will solve not only the problem of tenure (and thus continuity), but also the associated problems of budget, control of the curriculum, majors, and so forth. Some women's studies programs seem to be making that choice: see, for example, South Florida State University's report ("Administering a Women's Studies Program") in the Summer 1974 issue of the Women's Studies Newsletter. Such a decision may temporarily solve some of the more exasperating problems described by women's studies programs reporting in this issue on their futures. But it also may create an organism vulnerable both to isolation and to excision. It is, in other words, more difficult to isolate and excise a network than a department, particularly in its early stages or when its faculty size and constituency among the student body are relatively small.

But the future of women's studies is not only a matter of short-range survival and growth. As important is its long-range ability to change educational patterns, not only on campuses but in other classrooms. Educational history suggests that departments tend to narrow rather than broaden the areas of concern with which they might have begun: certainly, their chief aim becomes to acquire majors, rather than to effect change in the institution more generally. While it is no doubt important to educate women's studies majors, and while I would support the growth of graduate women's studies programs, it is as important, I believe, to reach those students in general education courses in such departments as history, English, psychology and sociology. Theoretically at least—and I am willing to admit that theory is often easier than practice—it is the network, not the department, that is best able to promote such change.

First, the network or "program" is not a department: it cannot be accused, therefore, of nondepartmental protocol; its business is to effect change, not to enlarge its fiefdom. Second, feminists with appointments in two worlds, once they are tenured, should make of primary concern the changing of courses in their disciplinary departments. As I shall suggest in a later essay, the future of women's studies lies not only in developing a strong curriculum inside the program, but also in organizing other programs for the retooling of elementary and secondary school teachers, as well as of college and university faculty.

If I do not favor the departmental route, what advice can I offer to programs hard-pressed for budget and tiring of the battle simply to maintain what they have gained? Keeping in mind that advice is easier to give than to receive, I shall make two suggestions. On some campuses I have visited this year, and from some correspondence (continued on page 3)
THE FUTURE OF WOMEN'S STUDIES
from the UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON, SEATTLE

Because the degree which our students receive reads, "B.A. General Studies," students have asked for some means to show on their transcript the women-oriented courses they have taken in their Women Studies concentration. Thus, beginning in summer 1975, many of the courses that would have been listed under General and Interdisciplinary Studies (GIS) will now be listed under Women 290 or Women 490. These new numbers are for special topics in Women Studies and augment our three (only) permanently numbered courses: Women 200 (Introduction to Women Studies), Women 310 (Women and the Law) and Women 499 (Special Problems—Independent Study). In addition, there are new and upper division courses being developed by faculty in various departments, and some of these will be given permanent status in those departments. Thus, "majors" in women studies will have not only an increase in women-numbered courses to choose from, but they also will be able to select a wider range of women-focused courses offered in traditional departments. Students who want to develop a specific "disciplinary" approach to the study of women will have an opportunity to do so beginning autumn 1975.

In spite of our low budget, and with slim chances for substantial increases, we have been able to restructure the program in order to promote this growth in course offerings. This has been accomplished by intensive and frequent meetings of students, staff and faculty, and because of increased support from various departments. During the past three months, we have met in small groups as often as three times a week to work out the details of change. There have been two weekend planning retreats (one for "students only," during which time the Women Studies Student Union was formed).

Even though we are able to report these accomplishments, we must add that we see these as being the minimum needed to maintain our program in its current status. There are other things we need to be able to do if we are to reach goals we have set. Our goals are essentially of two types: 1) those concerned with local specific desires, and 2) those concerned with broader global objectives. In the first, we expect to be able to offer more upper division and some graduate courses in the near future. Whether or not we seek to move to degree-granting status (at the undergraduate or graduate level) is going to depend on 1) the results of the feasibility studies we are currently conducting, and 2) the administration's willingness (or ability) to provide us with a substantial increase in funding. We have many students asking for both a degree in women studies per se and a graduate program in women studies. In the latter case, we are now considering how we might function as a coordinating center for graduate students who want/need support in using a feminist approach to the study of women. Again, we are just beginning to formulate ways we might accomplish this, but our concern for graduate studies has high priority.

Woven into the above concerns are others which are intended to allow us to be more responsive to both university and local community needs. In this we are seeking ways to establish better working relationships with other campus divisions concerned with women's issues, as well as departments whose members have expressed strong interest in helping us further develop our program (e.g., Psychology, Social Work, and the Department of Psychiatry), or those who wish to have more involvement in our program (e.g., international women, Third World women, staff women). We are also attempting to close the distance

STRUCTURE AND STAFFING (continued)

I have had, it seems clear that some feminists are simply tired. Perhaps, therefore, we need to remind ourselves of several old lessons: no one can sustain the energy movements require without periods of rest—or at least distance—from them; and the corollary—when people inside movements grow tired, they stop extending themselves to other people. Thus, tiredness may cause the network to tighten or harden into a clique. Programs should have sufficient leadership among their constituency so that organized periods of rest and study are possible for them. A second piece of advice follows in part from the first. Some feminists find that more restorative than a holiday is a visit to another campus or to a women's studies conference. What we need often are opportunities to exchange views and experiences with other feminists. Women's studies faculty and students have had relatively few opportunities to discuss such institutional problems as I have noted here. We have not had enough of such meetings locally or regionally, and we have had none nationally, at least in part because we've been too busy with our own campus concerns.

I think that we need the support now of a national network of women's studies programs, perhaps joined together in an association capable of organizing such conferences and effecting rapid communication among us. For example, we need to talk about strategies for dealing with the question of tenure for women's studies faculty. If traditional departmental tenure is impossible, and if we do not want to turn women's studies into a separate department, what other structures might possibly meet our needs? We need to talk about funding, about curriculum and about other matters of concern not only to women's studies but to a developing body of scholars engaged in interdisciplinary study, scholarship and teaching. □

1See The Conspiracy of the Young by Paul Lauter and Florence Howe (World, 1970).
2Long-range effects may be traced as well to the proliferation in the late sixties and early seventies of new, experimental campuses ranging from SUNY's College at Old Westbury to Washington's Evergreen State College and Illinois' Sangamon State.