WS Retreat Night Dinner Meeting

Our Agenda

Nov. 15, 2010.

Topic for this Evening: Where do we want to see Women’s Studies at Loyola in 10 years?

Brainstorming: What do we want our students and faculty/staff to get out of Women’s Studies? What is the program’s mission?

Points to consider:
1) Stability and coherence of the program -- how can we do a better job with our scheduling? How can we improve our offerings?
2) Should Women’s Studies become Women’s and Gender Studies? (if so implications, benefits, drawbacks, etc)
3) Should Women’s Studies become a major?
4) How do we become a greater presence on campus?
5) What about a WS speaker series?
6) As WS grows, how does its relationship with the WRC change / grow?

Minutes taken by Sara Butler.

Present: Sara Butler, Barbara Ewell, Karen Reichard, Cathy Rogers, Blanca Anderson, Uriel Quesada, Valerie Goertzen, Terri Bednarz, Sue Mennino, Connie Mui.

Brainstorming responses:

1) We need more events for WS minors.

2) Inclusive language: does the university have a policy on the use of inclusive language? If not, why not? This is really problematic because the use of “he” seems to be most prevalent today. We need a brochure and a statement about inclusive language as a requirement in our syllabi. Also, would it make sense for us to have Jerry Fagin come in to do one of his takes on the “Feminine Images of God” in an effort to deal with this situation?

3) Some of the problems with relating to our students today: history has been forgotten; Sarah Palin is held up as a paragon of feminism when those who know what feminism is about know she does not fit the bill. Should we organize a discussion on famous women today and yesterday – let’s dissect them for feminism? Also, our students today are very conservative – how do we relate?

4) We need more extensive surveys of ALL students at the end of WS courses to gain a sense of how the course made a difference in the way they view women, etc.
5) LBGT: we need an explicit statement on campus about this group. Also, there does not seem to be any hiring policy about LBGT?

6) Students need to be able to declare a minor on-line. The fact that they can’t means that some students don’t declare; many don’t declare until just before graduation. LET’S MAKE IT EASY! This will up everybody’s numbers and make us more aware of who is in our programs.

Concerning potential name change to “Women’s and Gender Studies”:

FOR:
- It might bring in male students – and they also need to hear the message of feminism. Don’t we want men to be feminists too?
- It would open up dialogue and include a broader base.
- If we accept queer studies courses but don’t change our name, isn’t it discrimination?
- Most of the problems that exist for women and for gays are all tied to gender – gender is the thread that ties it all together. So shouldn’t we just name it? But we can’t ever remove “Women” from the title – gender and women’s history are two very different things.
- Housing all these efforts under one umbrella is a good idea. We will be better serving our LGBT students too (opening a door for them that will continue to be closed otherwise in this rough economy). In all reality, it would probably be best to have a LGBT center, but that’s not going to happen.
- We need to see this as an opportunity.
- Lesbian students have said that they do not feel safe on our campus.
- Remember: LGBT studies is not just about gay men – it is also about lesbians and they are frequently ignored in our current WS offerings.

AGAINST:
- Women need a place of their own.
- Will a name change alienate women? Will our female students be offended that we have diminished their importance, shifted them from the center?
- If we compare this with African and African-American studies there is no sense that students have to be black to appreciate this, or that the study of whites must be included to bring in white students. A similar change would be for them to move to studying “race.”
- Fear: what if Walter Block decides to teach a course on gender and wage differentiation?
- Does queer history get lost under “Women and Gender Studies”?
- If we become “Women and Gender Studies,” will we be stigmatized by the university because they see this as supporting gay culture?
- What do we lose by doing nothing?

Outcomes: A decision was made to send out an exploratory survey to WS committee members just to gain a sense of the prevailing perspective to decide whether we should pursue this further.
On WS becoming a major:
- Sara spoke with Jo Ann Cruz last week about what we need to do. She issued an invitation to WS to join the College of HuNS (because it needs to be housed in a college), but also made it clear that interdisciplinary programs can have chairs from any college and that HuNS and SS would have to work very closely together on all of this.
- We need a foundational course for the program. Whoever teaches it, the course must also be cross-listed in that department (to avoid the problem of students not seeing the course exists in LORA and not taking it because it doesn’t fulfill any requirements).
- The director of the program will need a stipend and course releases – so we need funding.
- Sara pointed out that, as chair right now, she is not ready to undertake all of this. The general consensus of the meeting is that it would make a lot of sense to move in this direction though.

Stability / coherence of program and course offerings:
- Sara Butler brought up the problem that students are complaining that our courses are not relevant enough – when pressed, this seems to translate out to, they want “Women in Islam” taught all the time. How can we get a hire in this area? Another serious gap in our program is “Women in American History” – how can we get this taught?
- General consensus: the Interdisciplinary Studies committee should identify gaps in all their programs and see if we can find ways of filling those across the board (i.e. can we find someone who teaches environmental studies and women in Am history?). Maybe this committee can be used to exert pressure for hires.

WRC and its role in a changing / growing program:
- The WRC has always been the programmatic arm of WS – how will this change if it becomes “Women’s and Gender Studies” – how will this change if the program grows?
- The WRC is in “no man’s land”. We feel strongly that it should be part of Academic Affairs, but we need to find a better place for it.
- What if: we tried to merge WRC and WS to become “Loyola Institute for Research on Women”? Karen would have to gain faculty status and become its director. That way it would be much easier to run a major out of an institute.
- There would certainly be room at the College of SS for this – they are very eager to encourage institutes these days.
- General consensus: we need to put out feelers. Maybe Karen and Sara should meet with Luis and Jo Ann to discuss the possibility.