



Women's Studies

A department in the College of Humanities and Fine Arts offering the B.A. in Women's Studies.

■ The Review Process

This was a standard AQAD review. Reviewers were:

Bettina Aptheker (University of California, Santa Cruz)

Beverly Guy-Sheftall (Spelman College)

Lynn Weber (University of South Carolina)

■ Main Issues

Overall, the visiting team found the department to be “a very strong program with no fundamental or critical weaknesses,” and with “many strengths ... that provide significant opportunities” for future development. The team noted the department’s standing as one of the first Women’s Studies programs in the country, and one of the first to have tenure-system faculty lines. The program is also distinguished by its “recognized emphasis on the intersections of race, class, and gender,” and by the “wide variety of fields that it covers.”

Because of its long history and focus on intersectionality, the team observed that the department has been able to attract “strong students and a highly qualified faculty.” The team praised the department for its success in “actually achieving a diverse faculty that is harmonious and that can work together,” and noted the strength of recent hires in feminist science studies and post-colonial and Third World studies. The department has come out of a period of “instability and loss of faculty ... stronger and poised for further growth.” The curriculum was found to be “solid, with an intersectional, race, class, and gender approach integrated throughout — an ideal that is sought in many programs throughout the country but rarely achieved at the level we saw here.” The department’s graduate certificate program is “solid and consistent with other women’s studies graduate curricula across the country,” and offers attractive opportunities for students in traditional graduate programs.

The team offered several specific findings and recommendations:

- Noting that interdisciplinary programs must always “make strategic decisions about what they are able to cover,” the team nonetheless found the department to be “exceedingly well-balanced with one exception: sexuality and queer studies,” a “growing and vital area of feminist scholarship.” The team recommended a new faculty line in this area as soon as possible, preferably at the senior level to balance the ratio of junior to senior faculty.
- The team “enthusiastically” endorsed current plans to hire a faculty member in the area of women’s health, which would “complement the development of feminist science studies while enhancing a field of wide interest on the campus.”

- The team recommended succession planning in anticipation of the retirement of two senior faculty members.
- The department's "completely inadequate space" was found to be "appalling," and the team urged relocating Women's Studies as a high priority.
- As part of the self-study process the department had raised the question of developing a Ph.D. program in Women's Studies. The team expressed the view that while the graduate certificate is strong, it would be "premature" to move toward a Ph.D. "without substantial resources from the university and sufficient intellectual clarity about how the program would be structured."

■ **Results of the Review**

The Dean reported "substantial agreement" among all parties regarding the department's status and plans. She indicated that it is "overwhelmingly likely that most of the funds required for new faculty positions will have to come from dollars that are already located in the program," but that the areas identified by the team for hiring were "well-chosen." With respect to departmental space, the Dean stated that the situation is clearly "not ideal." She noted other space needs in the College, and indicated willingness to work with appropriate campus officials on the whole set of College needs. The Dean also reported agreement between herself and the department that action on a Ph.D. program be deferred for the time being.