

Introduction: Arlene Avakian began working at the program when the department began and retired in 2011. Prior to retirement she agreed to work, in collaboration with one of our alums and graduate students, to compile a narrative history of the department, its origin as a program, the twists and turns, changes and challenges along the way. The final draft of this document was finalized in early 2012. History keeps moving of course and many changes have happened since including increased faculty numbers and more! Many thanks to Arlene Avakian and Erika Arthur. Below is the history they wrote. Read it all or click to the section that most interests you.

Note: WOST is an abbreviation for women's studies.

A WORKING HISTORY OF WOMEN, GENDER, SEXUALITY STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST¹

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>The Setting: Political Activism in 1970s Western Massachusetts</u>	3
<u>The First Committees to Establish Women's Studies</u>	4
<u>Strategy Debates: What's in a Name?</u>	6
<u>A Proposal Emerges in 1973</u>	8
<u>The Program is Approved: Now to Find Funding and Establish A Structure</u>	9
<u>Students Enroll: Planning and Development Continue</u>	11
<u>Campus Programming Expands on Women's Issues</u>	12
<u>Enrollment Grows Straining Limited Resources</u>	14
<u>Going from Pilot to Permanent: The Struggle</u>	15

¹ We call this narrative a working history because although we had some documents to work with, much of it is based on the recollections of people involved in the early days of the program; our memories are not what they used to be and some of what we discussed happened more than three decades ago.

<u>The First Faculty Positions</u>	16
<u>Challenges of Feminist Pedagogy and Practice</u>	17
<u>Feminist Organizing: The Occupation of the Collegian</u>	18
<u>Racism, Black Women and the Teaching of Women’s Studies</u>	19
<u>The Staff Fights Exploitation</u>	20
<u>Curriculum Development and Expansion</u>	20
<u>Scholarship and Organizing</u>	21
<u>Marking the First Decade</u>	23
<u>Combating Racism on Campus</u>	24
<u>Faculty and Staff Changes, Scholarship Advances</u>	25
<u>1988 Program Review</u>	26
<u>Occupation of New Africa House</u>	27
<u>1990: the Program and the Field Continue to Grow</u>	28
<u>Faculty Changes</u>	30
<u>The ALANA Letter Precipitates Curricular Changes</u>	30
<u>Faculty and Staff Arrivals/Departures and Innovations</u>	32
<u>The Graduate Program is born and Organizing Continues</u>	33
<u>Innovative New Directions: Intersectionality</u>	35
<u>Beyond the U.S. Borders</u>	36
<u>2005 Program Review</u>	37
<u>Co-Mentoring Project with Bennett College for Women</u>	38
<u>Five College Feminist Sciences Studies</u>	39
<u>Marking 35 Years: Women’s Studies Program Becomes Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Department</u>	41
<u>Arlene Avakian Retires, National Search for Chair</u>	42
<u>Office Improvements</u>	43
<u>Looking Forward for the Field</u>	43

The Setting: Political Activism in 1970s Western Massachusetts

The Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Program at UMass Amherst (formerly called Women's Studies -WOST) grew out of the rich terrain of feminist organizing, anti-war activism, and an array of other social change work that took place in the 1970s in western Massachusetts, the country, and the world. A pilot version of the program was officially inaugurated in 1974, but like all intellectual and political projects, its roots run much further back. Women and their allies in the university and the broader community had been holding meetings, offering courses in their own departments, facilitating workshops at community centers, and deliberating about how to translate the feminist movement(s) they were part of into an academic setting. All of this groundwork eventually resulted in a pioneering women's studies program that has survived and thrived through its own versions of the tensions, rewards, frustrations, and transformations experienced by the larger movements in which it germinated.

The 1970s in western Massachusetts offered endless opportunities for political engagement, especially in the realms of women's rights and feminism. Over 400 different lesbian and feminist groups are known to have existed in the area from 1968 to 1978.² In the early and mid-1970s, when WOST was taking form, one could get involved in the broader community with the Valley Women's Center in Northampton (1970) which became the Valley Women's Union when many of the original staff left to join the Everywoman's Center on the UMass campus in 1972. Women could choose to join one of a number of consciousness raising groups, participate in a group establishing a free health clinic, or an auto mechanic collective. For sport, and socializing, there was the Mary Vazquez Softball League (1976), the weekly Lesbian Gardens coffee house, or the Common Woman restaurant. On campus there were various caucuses organized by women faculty in departments of which the English department's Ladies' Tea and Mau Mau Society (1970) was only one. These groups often formed along lines of ideology or political allegiance and their variety illustrates the fact that Western Massachusetts was fully engaged in the expansive project that was women's liberation, from abortion service provision to socialist feminist theory, from women's literature to politicized lesbian sexuality.

² Finding aid for Valley Women's History Collaborative Records (MS 531). Special Collections and University Archives, W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts Amherst. <http://www.library.umass.edu/spcoll/ead/mums531.htm> (accessed 11/5/10)

The First Committees to Establish Women's Studies

In 1971, a group of representatives from the Five Colleges and some community representatives met at the Valley Women's Center for the first meeting of the Five College Committee on Women's Studies/5 College Women's Studies Seminar. Zillah Eisenstein, then a graduate student, served as the representative for UMass. The group's purpose was to coordinate communication among various faculty interested in Women's Studies and to encourage curriculum development. Coming out of this meeting, the committee produced a list of 5 College Women's Studies courses.³ The existence of this publication, produced each semester thereafter, is a good indication that even without an official program in place yet at any of the colleges or at the university, some faculty were recognizing that their curricula needed to include the experiences of women and analyses of sex roles.

Also in 1971 Professor Lee Edwards of the UMass English department proposed to the Faculty Senate that a Committee on the Status of Women be formed. In April of that year the committee was approved by the senate. Its initial purpose was to gain a broader understanding of women's experiences on campus, particularly regarding hiring; promotions and salaries; the tenure process; the establishment of a University Day Care Center; admissions of undergraduate and graduate women; financial aid; continuing education and counseling for women who were negotiating their educations and careers as well as marriage and/or children; and possibilities for part-time employment.⁴ Early members of this committee included several people who went on to help establish the Women's Studies program, including Edwards, Dee Appley, and Arlyn Diamond.

The Committee's first report proposed several actions for remedying the discrimination faced by women faculty and professional staff on campus and acknowledged that there was much more work to be done regarding part-time and non-professional staff and students. Several of the proposals had to do with hiring processes and ways to address the under-representation of women. Significantly, they asked that a new Associate Provost be appointed to direct an office whose mission would be to equalize the status of women on campus. In presenting this report to the Faculty Senate, Lee Edwards notified the other senators that the

³ Ann Ferguson papers, Box 6, Special Collections and University Archives, UMass Amherst Library.

⁴ UMass Faculty Senate, Minutes of the 174th Regular Meeting, p. 9.

committee wished to revise their request for this new position so that it would address not only the status of women, but minorities as well. The group had been in conversation with members of the administration who had apparently suggested such a change.⁵ After some debate about the use of the pronoun “she” in the motion, as well as a question about whether men should count as minorities in the Home Economics and Nursing schools, the motion was delayed.⁶ The motion to include “minorities” in the job description of this position was defeated at the next meeting of the Senate and further debate ensued about the provisions of the committee’s report pertaining to parental leave and hiring practices. Lee Edwards took this opportunity to bring feminist arguments about the challenges of balancing family and career to the table. Using a classic anti-affirmative action argument, one senator suggested that the *best* candidate for the job should be hired regardless of sex or race. Other senators voiced their support for affirmative action policies like those proposed by the Committee on the Status of Women based on the history of discriminatory hiring on campus, both regarding white women and “minorities.” Finally, the Committee’s main motion was passed and an Associate Provost position was granted in order to improve the conditions of women at UMass.⁷

⁵ UMass Faculty Senate, Minutes of the 182nd Regular meeting, p. 12.

⁶ UMass Faculty Senate, Minutes of the 182nd Regular meeting, p. 15.

⁷ UMass Faculty Senate, Minutes of the 183rd Regular Meeting, pp. 9-14.

Strategy Debates: What's in a Name?

The visionaries of the women's studies program at UMass spent a significant amount of time in early planning meetings discussing whether they should strive to establish a separate department, whether it should be called Feminist Studies or Women's Studies, and what role politics and social action should play in the program.⁸ There were at least two groups of women working on the possibilities of a Women's Studies Program at UMass in the early 1970s. In the spring of 1972, a group of university women from several departments – faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates – held a Women's Studies/Feminist Studies planning seminar.⁹ This seminar resulted in a questionnaire that was circulated to measure whether there was interest in a feminist studies/women's studies program.

Some women who were interested in starting a program, especially those who identified as socialist feminists and who advocated for the radical transformation of the capitalist economy and society, feared that their alternative visions for liberation and education would be compromised if they had to work within the traditional structure of the university. Members of this group, which included one faculty member, Philosophy professor Ann Brentlinger (now Ferguson), preferred the name "Feminist Studies" because they felt that "Women's Studies" could more easily be co-opted. They wanted to radically challenge the entire system of university education and the concept of learning more broadly. These ideas were in line with other alternative education efforts underway on campus, including free classes conducted by students and faculty in a yurt in the Southwest Residential area.¹⁰

On the other hand, the group of faculty, staff, and students who knew they wanted to create a women's studies program within the existing academic structure, for better or for worse, had to strategize about what language and approaches would facilitate the greatest likelihood that the University would recognize the legitimacy

⁸ AF papers, Box 6, Fem Studies folder, Women's Studies/Feminist Studies Seminar document, March 8, 1972.

⁹ Seminar was attended by Nancy Akillian, Martha Amesbury, Dee Appley, Melanie Bennett, Paula Fortes, Paula Milner, Kristine Gudmand, Elaine Hitchcock, Cindi Hunter, Jeanne Klekotka, Mary McCall, Margaret Molloy, Marcia Naseck, Rosalie Norris, Donna Osowski, Frances Panzica, Betsy Peet, Debbie Sharp, and Pat Yates. AF papers, Box 6, Fem Studies folder.

¹⁰ Ann Ferguson interview, 1/21/11.

of their project. This latter group is the one that eventually submitted a proposal for a program to the Faculty Senate. Dedicated from the start to further the aims of the women's movement for liberation rather than merely writing women into the existing records, WOST had to balance an evolving and not always unified political mission with the necessity of gaining recognition from the university as a legitimate academic program. The delicate art of compromise is woven throughout the history of WOST at UMass.

Another effort underway in the spring of 1972 provides a sense of the political climate on campus. A coalition made up of the Faculty Senate Women's Caucus, the Student Senate Women's Caucus, the Southwest Women's Center, the Orchard Hill Women's Center, and the Women's Committee of the School of Education presented a proposal to the Committee on Buildings and Grounds requesting that UMass's new library be named in honor of Sojourner Truth, the formerly enslaved abolitionist and women's rights activist. The group states in their proposal, submitted in April, that "[t]welve buildings out of 132 [on campus] are named for women, none of whom are black. This is a miserable proportion."¹¹ An article in the *Collegian* the month before states that a "Women's Lib." group wanted to name the library after Mother Jones, the radical labor organizer, who was white. One can speculate that perhaps in the ensuing month there were conversations about race, gender and politics, and that the organizers decided to propose Sojourner Truth rather than Mother Jones. Of course, eventually the library was named after W.E.B. DuBois, whose papers are now housed there. But the fact that this group attempted to amplify the history of women, particularly black activist women, using the very infrastructure of their campus, indicates that feminist organizers during this period felt that changing the way institutions confer legitimacy was an important organizing strategy.

¹¹ AF Papers, Box 6, "Women – 1973/4 Political Docs Fem Studies Syllabi, etc. Folder"

A Proposal Emerges in 1973

By November of 1973, the Women's Studies Subcommittee of the Faculty Senate Committee on the Status of Women submitted a proposal for a Women's Studies Pilot Program to the Committee on Academic Matters, the Faculty Senate committee responsible for new academic programs.¹² The Everywoman's Center provided crucial support for this proposal. Ann Jones held a three-year terminal appointment which was split three ways between the Everywoman's Center, the English Department, and the Southwest Women's Center. Her main project for the EWC was to work on the Women's Studies proposal. EWC staff person Ann McCord also spent time managing some of the Committee's secretarial tasks and scheduling meetings.

The carefully crafted document the Women's Studies Subcommittee submitted proposed a two-year pilot project. It suggested two avenues for students to participate in a Women's Studies program: a major, granted through the auspices of BDIC, [Bachelor's Degree with Individual Concentration] and a certificate to supplement their other major work. This pilot program laid the groundwork for a permanent program with a major and certificate minor that, upon approval, would start in the fall of 1976. The initial proposal suggested that the new program should be housed near the Everywoman's Center and should have representatives from the residential women's centers serve on the Women's Studies Policy Board. The Policy Board would consist of three students, three faculty sponsors, two university staff members, two community resource people, and the Program Coordinator.

To make the argument that students would have enough courses to complete the major and minor, the proposal included the list of descriptions of courses on women already offered at UMass and the 5 Colleges and noted the 24 faculty who had already made commitments of courses they would teach that could be counted as women's studies courses. This list included faculty from English, Education, Philosophy, Comparative Literature, Anthropology, Psychology, History, and Political Science. Also in order to bolster the argument for the program, the proposal noted

¹²The Women's Studies sub-committee consisted of Deborah Felton (student), Ann McCord (Everywoman's Center staff), Jean Leppaluoto (Associate Provost for Affirmative Action), Jean Elshtain (faculty), Arlene Ryan (graduate student, now Arlene Avakian), Mary Ellen Delaney (student?), Ann Jones (faculty), and Maurianne Adams (faculty). AF papers, Box 6, "Women's Studies 1st Proposals 1974 & History Thru 1978" Folder.

the growth of Women's Studies in U.S. colleges and universities from 1971 through 1973, drawing reviewers' attention to the larger significance and national context of the proposal.

The Program is Approved: Now to Find Funding and Establish A Structure

March, 1974 was a big month for women at UMass. During the week of March 11-16, campus women organized a National Women's Poetry festival. The lineup was impressive. Adrienne Rich, Susan Griffin, and Robin Morgan, as well as a number of other prominent feminist poets, read from their work as hundreds of people gathered to hear these important and powerful voices. During the festival, on March 14, the Faculty Senate approved the experimental two-year pilot Women's Studies program, one of the first of its kind in the country. This was a huge victory for campus women and their allies who had been working tirelessly to push the proposal through. It was also a victory for the burgeoning field of Women's Studies and the feminist movement more broadly. One more institution of higher education had granted that the study of women's lives and the structures that govern them was a worthy endeavor. It would be seen over the next several years though, that the fight for recognition and the infrastructural support that comes with it was far from over.

Approval by the Faculty Senate was an important first step; then came the vital task of securing funding. Since no funds were allocated to the new program, the Policy Board met to strategize about how to get the money they needed to accomplish their goals. They decided to write a letter to the Provost stating that if they were not granted funding, they would "loudly" close the program. Suddenly, 4 Teaching Assistantships were granted to the program. Two of the TAs were combined for the Academic Coordinator position, for which the Policy Board hired Cathy Portuges, who worked half-time in a non-faculty position. The other two TAs were converted to staff positions and were filled by Arlene Avakian and Dale Melcher (then Weinstein). Dale had been hired as the community/internship coordinator, an important position that exists to this day and exemplifies Women's Studies' commitment to praxis.

The program was initially administered under Jean Leppaluoto, Associate Provost for Affirmative Action, whose newly-established office did not come with a budget beyond what was needed for their operation. Before the semester was over, it

became apparent that this placement within the office of a new Associate Provost would not lead to growth and in the fall of 1974 the decision was made to move Women's Studies to Special Programs. This collection of 16 programs included a variety of academic and non-academic units, including Continuing Education, International Programs, Orchard Hill Residential College, Southwest Residential College, BDIC, University Without Walls, Legal Studies, Everywoman's Center, Project 10, the Inquiry Program, CCEBS¹³, Upward Bound, Outward Bound, the Honors College, the Bilingual Collegiate Program, and now Women's Studies. Just as the planning committee had hoped, the program was to be housed near the Everywoman's Center: in the hallway right outside their door! Eventually the WOST program would move into the 17x22 foot room next door, 508 Goodell. Carrying on the long political tradition of accomplishing great things from cramped quarters, the program would operate from there until 1978.

¹³ The Collegiate Committee for the Education of Black Students later became the Collegiate Committee for the Education of Black and Minority Students.

Students Enroll: Planning and Development Continue

In the 1974-1975 academic year there were fifty major and certificate students enrolled in the newly-approved Women's Studies Program.¹⁴ Cathy Portuges's position changed to full time, though this was still not a faculty line, as she had not yet finished her PhD. Also that fall, Arlene Avakian helped start a Graduate Women's Studies working group, which successfully organized a well-attended day-long conference, but failed to create an ongoing network. It seemed that women graduate students were already too overwhelmed with their own work and lives to commit to such a project. In November, 1975, the first issue of the Women's Studies Newsletter was published: two yellow sheets of paper folded in half, with a handwritten title at the top, "Women's Studies Newsletter Vol. 1 #1." In December of that year the Academic Matters Council granted a one-year extension to the Women's Studies Pilot Program so that it would have more time to become established. Another extension was granted a year later.

A Women's Studies Retreat was held late in 1975 to address, among other things, concerns brought by lesbian students about their experiences in the classroom and inclusion of lesbian sexuality in the curriculum. According to Dale Melcher, it was students who brought lesbian sexuality into the spotlight because faculty members who were working to establish the program within the university felt that it was not a safe subject for them to broach.¹⁵

In the early years of the program, the Policy Board, the Women's Studies program's main decision-making body, was open to the public; anyone could attend meetings. Notes were sent out via campus mail and kept interested faculty and students apprised of developments. This structure exemplified the founders' desire that Women's Studies belong to the community. But it became clear early on that in order to have continuity in their conversations from meeting to meeting, they needed a consistent group of people to show up. Later, when Women's Studies had grown from a team of just four TAs to having its own faculty and staff whose careers depended on the decisions of the board, they decided that the governance structure needed to change once again. In order to equitably value the labor of Women's Studies faculty and encourage professional reciprocity, they decided that

¹⁴Special Report of the Academic Matters Council concerning The Women's Studies Program, Faculty Senate Doc. No. 78-032, March 9, 1978, p. 5.

¹⁵ Dale Melcher interview, 11/8/10.

professors with appointments outside the department should never outnumber Women's Studies own faculty and staff on the Policy Board. Throughout this period, and to this day, the Women's Studies program at UMass has made student and staff involvement in decision-making processes a priority, which is not the norm in other university departments. And while the department now has five and a half full time equivalent faculty, it continues to rely on the generous donation of time and effort by faculty in other departments who serve on departmental committees, even chairing them; sponsor undergraduate students; and serve on graduate students' committees. The work of these faculty members is done as an overload to the service they do in their own departments and is generally not credited towards tenure, promotion, or merit.

Campus Programming Expands on Women's Issues

In 1976, with funding from the Danforth Foundation, UMass faculty organized a Women's Studies Colloquium Series called "Fantasy and the Female." According to the Women's Studies newsletter that spring, events included a panel on Fantasy's Role in Literary Expression with Lee Edwards, Arlyn Diamond and Joyce Berkman; a talk by Margo Culley and Elizabeth Martin on medieval women saints; and a workshop with the Omaha Magic Theater. Performance artist and UMass graduate Judith Katz also brought her piece, "Temporary Insanity" to Bartlett Auditorium in May. Women's Studies also helped spread the word, in the spring of 1976, about a Rape Awareness conference hosted by the UMass Rape Task Force and the Family Planning Council of Western Massachusetts. The evening presentation of that conference was given by Susan Brownmiller, author *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*.¹⁶

March 6-12, 1977 brought a notable International Women's Week program. The renowned jazz singer Betty Carter performed at the Fine Arts Center. Carter had started her career singing with bebop giants Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker and throughout the seventies served as a mentor to many younger musicians who would go on to have successful careers of their own. Civil rights activist and writer Grace Lee Boggs, American Indian Movement activist Madonna Gilbert, educator and champion of low-income black students Barbara Sizemore, and many others spoke about their work. Workshops on health, international issues, politics, spirituality, and self defense were offered throughout the week. There was a

¹⁶ Women's Studies Newsletter Vol. 1 #3, April 1976

children's program and a women's international film festival. The other colleges in the area also participated in the week's activities by hosting speakers and workshops, including a Socialist-Feminist Symposium at Hampshire College.¹⁷

¹⁷ AF Papers, WOST 77 folder

Enrollment Grows Straining Limited Resources

The program was steadily growing at this point, with about 45 majors and 45 certificate students enrolled, and approximately 1500 students each semester took Women's Studies courses taught in other departments.¹⁸ But support from the university was not generous. The National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs had determined that UMass' investment in Women's Studies had been parsimonious compared with other institutions and the program had received the least adequate space and resources of all the Special Programs that had recently been reviewed. According to the Advisory Council, the UMass Women's Studies program was one of just a few they had studied that did not have its own faculty slots.¹⁹

¹⁸ Julie Eagle, "Controversy surrounds Women's Studies," *Daily Collegian*, April 12, 1978, p. 10.

¹⁹ Florence Howe, "Seven Years Later: Women's Studies Programs in 1976," prepared for the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs, cited in Special Report of the Academic Matters Council concerning The Women's Studies Program, Faculty Senate Doc. No. 78-032, March 9, 1978, p. 2.

Going from Pilot to Permanent: The Struggle

In December, 1977 the review of the pilot program began in the Faculty Senate Academic Matters Council. In March, 1978 the Council recommended to the Faculty Senate that Women's Studies be approved as an independent major and that its mandate be extended for five more years. The Council based its recommendations on Women's Studies' appeal to older students, its counseling competence, and its "desirable effect on the faculty and student body."²⁰ But more hurdles remained before Women's Studies could really move through the bureaucratic process. Once the Faculty Senate approved the proposal, it needed approval from the Provost before it could go forward. Acting Provost Jerry Allen held the proposal on his desk beyond the mandated 90-day clock, despite repeated memos from Cathy Portuges, Women's Studies' Academic Coordinator, requesting information about its status.

After much discussion among both faculty and students, supporters of the program held a day-long teach-in, using one of the strategies they had learned in the movements out of which Women's Studies had sprung. Some students had been ready to take more drastic action, but faculty argued that other less extreme action ought to be taken first to raise awareness and let the administration know that the program had wide support. The event was held in the Student Union Ballroom and many faculty from the university and the Five Colleges attended and spoke in favor of the program. In addition to the founders of Women's Studies, Lee Edwards, Arlyn Diamond, and Margo Culley, many other faculty also lent their voices: librarian Paula Marks, Professor Doris Abramson from the Theater Department, Professors Johnnetta Cole and John Bracey from the Afro-American Studies Department, Professor Ann Ferguson from Philosophy, Professor Joyce Berkman from History, and Marilyn Schuster from Smith College. Many students also spoke about the importance of the program to both their intellectual and personal lives. A band played between speakers and people came and went throughout the day. Eventually the proposal made it through the highest levels of the university bureaucracy and was approved and Women's Studies passed yet another milestone.

²⁰ Megan O'Reilly, "Fac Sen sets Wo Stu's fate," *Daily Collegian*, March 9, 1978.

The First Faculty Positions

In 1978, Women's Studies hired its first faculty members. One of these positions was the result of a proposal written by the Five College Women's Studies Committee which had been meeting regularly since at least 1974. Five Colleges, Inc (the consortium of the five institutions in the Valley) had a program that would fund a three year terminal appointment for faculty in developing fields who would have responsibilities for teaching at each of the institutions. The proposal was successful and after a national search Janice Raymond who had expertise in Medical Ethics was hired. She was based at Hampshire College, where she taught a course on eco-feminism and at UMass she taught Women's Studies advanced seminar with a particular focus on lesbianism. Eventually, Raymond became full-time at UMass. In addition, after an extensive national search, Susan Yarbrough was appointed to Women's Studies' first joint tenure-track position with Legal Studies. In the fall of 1978 she taught Women's Studies' introductory seminar focusing on women and work. She also taught women and law in Legal Studies. Folklorist Mary Ruth Warner was also hired that fall into a half-time lecturer position. She began by teaching "Women and Folklore" and went on to teach "Women and Music: Afro-American Traditions" the following spring.²¹ At this point, about 90 students were enrolled in WOST and more than half of all majors were over twenty-two years old. A number were in their late twenties or thirties and some were single mothers. Women's Studies minors were usually traditional on-campus students.²² There were neither male students nor "minority" students enrolled.²³ Also in 1978, the Women's Studies office moved out of its small room and into its current home, 208 Bartlett. In 1980, Leila Ahmed was hired as a half time, non tenure track lecturer.

In general throughout this period, Women's Studies provided an intellectual, political, and professional "home" for feminist faculty who were marginalized in their own departments, not rewarded for their politically engaged scholarship, and who sometimes encountered outright hostility toward their work.²⁴ Through the practice of cross-listing courses by affiliated faculty, Women's Studies also strengthened efforts to bring feminist analysis into other departments. However,

²¹ Women's Studies Newsletter, Fall 1978

²² A. Ryan in *Alumnus*, October-November 1978 – Ann Ferguson papers, Box 6

²³ Special Report of the Acad. Matters Council, AF papers, Box 6, "Women's Studies 1st Proposals 1974 & History Thru 1978" Folder

²⁴ Ann Ferguson interview, 1/21/11

involvement with Women's Studies often had to be a labor of love for many faculty whose time serving on committees and teaching independent Women's Studies courses (not cross-listed) was not recognized by their home departments and therefore had to be done on top of their departmental responsibilities.

Challenges of Feminist Pedagogy and Practice

In the early days of the program, teaching feminist courses, particularly those cross-listed with the faculty member's home department, offered particular challenges and benefits. Ann Ferguson commented on the resistance to philosophy by women's studies students. In the early years of the program, the women's movement was fresh in many students' minds and lives. They came into the classroom with existing awareness of feminist issues and politics. Many were engaged in activism. These students brought their feminist perspectives to their fellow students who had not necessarily enrolled in the course because of its attention to women, sex roles, or feminism. Also, they often called attention to male students' entitlement and domination in the classroom. At the same time, many Women's Studies students (who were overwhelmingly women) were suspicious of theory, a required course that Ann Ferguson sometimes taught. They were often more interested in the "real-world" applicability of the concepts and information they were learning. Many of these students were preparing for jobs and careers in health or counseling fields and did not see the utility of theory. In addition, due to male dominance in the fields of philosophy and political science, as well as the unequal training young men and women received in high school, many male students had more background in abstract theory. They therefore had more of a predilection for it as well as more developed skills. Upon recognizing this pattern, Professor Ferguson tried to incorporate more experiential teaching methods that might draw in some of the Women's Studies students whose interest in theory was weak.²⁵

²⁵ Ann Ferguson interview, 1/21/11

Feminist Organizing: The Occupation of the Collegian

In the late 1970s, the Letters to the Editor page of the *Daily Collegian* was often filled with debates about the legitimacy of feminism, the status of the ERA, and rape on campus and in the community. One November, 1978 issue of the newspaper nicely illustrates the tenor of these conversations. Letter titles included: "Women still being raped," "Student feminists 'paranoid,'" and "Feminists are angry, not appreciative."²⁶ Also that fall, *Collegian* Women's Editor, Julie Melrose, Women's Studies major, shared with the newspaper's readers the benefits of the women's studies classroom. "Women's Studies students know that our subject matter is directly relevant to our lives," she wrote, and "the sexist language and ideas that constantly assault those with feminist consciousness in many classrooms are absent." In the traditional classroom, she noted, men were free to "think out loud" and present partially formed ideas, while women felt pressure to keep quiet unless they were experts on a subject. Not so in Women's Studies classrooms, which at this point were usually all women. In Melrose's experience, the sexual tension usually found in co-educational settings was also absent.²⁷ In the spring of 1978 the *Collegian* was also the site of feminist discourse and struggle when university women organized a sit-in in order to gain more coverage of women's issues in their campus media outlet. Activists, including many women's studies students and one faculty member, occupied the newspaper's office for a number of days. While their demand for dedicated ad-free women's pages in every issue was not met, they made national and international news, gaining support from leading feminists, including Robin Morgan and Gloria Steinem, and French feminist Simone de Beauvoir. Undeterred, the students published their own paper, *The Valley Women's Voice*, which was distributed monthly in the area.

²⁶ "To the Editor," *Massachusetts Daily Collegian*, November 7, 1978, p. 6.

²⁷ Julie Melrose, "A Woman's Education," *Massachusetts Daily Collegian*, September 15, 1978.

Racism, Black Women and the Teaching of Women's Studies

In March, 1979, with help from Afro-American Studies Professor Johnnetta Cole, Arlene Avakian organized a path-breaking two-day symposium, *Racism, Black Women and the Teaching of Women's Studies*, in order to address the "lack of formal scholarly attention to Black and Third World women's issues" in Women's Studies.²⁸ Avakian had sat in on classes in the Afro-American Studies Department and had been in conversation with faculty there about the limitations in the Women's Studies approach to issues of race.²⁹ The conference brought together faculty and students from UMass and the four colleges and featured a keynote address called "Dynamics of Racism," by Michele Russell, an African American community organizer and theorist, and workshops and talks by Andrea Rushing, Amherst College; Gloria Joseph and Jill Lewis, Hampshire College; Johnnetta Cole, UMass; and Nana Seshibe, a UMass graduate student in the School of Education, from South Africa. This conference marked the beginning of a decades long effort, sometimes highly contested and not always successful, to bring women of color and integrative feminist analysis to the center of the Women's Studies program.

²⁸ Symposium Pamphlet, Women's Studies archives.

²⁹ Arlene Avakian, "Women of Color in the Center: Transforming Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies," 5.

The Staff Fights Exploitation

Also in 1979, Dale Melcher and Arlene Avakian were involved in a class action lawsuit, initiated by Allen Davis from University Without Walls, against the university to gain proper compensation and benefits for work they were performing as university staff. Although holding full-time and long-term appointments, "03 staff" were classified as temporary/outside contractors, without benefits. The lawsuit was settled out of court and was successful in that these positions came to be compensated as permanent with benefits and the university could no longer hire 03 workers for more than three consecutive years.

Curriculum Development and Expansion

Meanwhile the curriculum was expanding. In the fall of 1980 Margo Culley, professor in the English department, developed and offered a new course, "Issues for Women of the 80s." It enrolled close to one hundred students and fulfilled a core requirement (the set of requirements that preceded general education). By the mid 80s the course had a new number and name, WOST 187, "Introduction to Women's Studies", general education requirement designations of I (interdisciplinary) and D (diversity), a capacity of 150 students, and two teaching assistants funded by the Provost's office. A few years later, the capacity was raised to 300 and the program was able to hire five teaching assistants. It was taught every semester to rave reviews and long waiting lists.

Courses addressing the intersection and race and class were expanded by an important grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) written by Margo Culley and Johnella Butler, chair of Afro American Studies at Smith College. The two-year faculty development project called *Black Studies/Women's Studies: an Overdue Partnership* included a Five College Women's Studies and Afro-American Studies faculty seminar which met bi-weekly for a year to discuss the points of connection and disconnection between the two fields and to develop courses that included perspectives from both fields. This project played a major role in solidifying important relationships that helped facilitate Women's Studies ongoing attention to the intersections of race and gender.

In April 1983, the FIPSE project culminated in a landmark conference that brought together faculty from the Five Colleges and scholars from around the country in

order to share with a wider audience the insights gained throughout the project and to encourage greater dialogue. Faculty had developed curricula, taught courses, and investigated issues of pedagogy and presented them in workshops throughout the day. More than 200 participants attended the conference, which took place at UMass. Bernice Reagon, June Jordan, Bettye Collier-Thomas, and Johnnetta Cole, then Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education at UMass, gave talks, and former Congresswoman and presidential candidate Shirley Chisholm gave the closing remarks. The registration fee was ten dollars, including lunch.

Another FIPSE grant in the 1980s brought women's issues to the Five Colleges. UMass women's studies faculty had been meeting with colleagues in the Five Colleges through the Five College women's studies committee since the beginning of the program to strategize about bringing courses and programs to their institutions as well as to discuss developments in the field. With enormous help from Lorna Peterson, the Associate Coordinator of Five College Inc., the committee wrote a successful grant for a series of five major conferences, each one held on one of the campuses but organized by committees of faculty with expertise in the area from all of the institutions. The conferences addressed vital areas of the new field, including gender and history, women and difference, sexuality, and activism. This very stimulating and intense interaction among Five College Women's Studies faculty over a period of two and a half years enabled the development of the Five College Women's Studies Research Center (FCWSRC). The Center opened in 1991 on the Mount Holyoke Campus and is dedicated to encouraging engaged, critical feminist scholarship from diverse perspectives. Along with hosting Five College faculty lectures, seminars, and conferences it accepts up to fifteen scholars and activists each year for three to eight months and provides a focal point for the more than 350 feminist scholars in the Five Colleges.

Scholarship and Organizing

In October, 1983 Women's Studies, along with the department of African American Studies and the Social Thought and Political Economy Program, organized yet another innovative conference, "The Sixties Speak to the Eighties." The gathering was intended to bring together activists and scholars involved in the Civil Rights movement, the New Left, and the women's movement to show the foundational importance of the Civil Rights movement to the subsequent movements for social

change. Students, faculty, and community members attended workshops and speeches by activist and journalist Ann Braden, CORE founder James Farmer, Sue Thrasher of the Highlander Center, and SNCC activist Jim Forman, among others.

Since the beginning of the program, Women's Studies faculty and staff have managed to balance their responsibilities on campus with scholarly and political engagements throughout the country and internationally. They made their marks in the field and carried the UMass Women's Studies name with them to conferences, meetings, and demonstrations all over the world. In 1984 alone, Leila Ahmed presented a paper on the "History of the Women's Movement in the Middle East: 19th Century to the Present" at the UNESCO Conference; Cathy Portuges presented two papers at the MLA Conference on Simone de Beauvoir; and Jan Raymond attended the Feminist International Network on the New Reproductive Technologies in Sweden.³⁰ Students earned a disproportionate percentage of university honors. Faculty were also regularly nominated for and won the distinguished teaching award. Women's Studies newsletters throughout the eighties and nineties reported proudly on faculty, and staff's wide travels and broad accomplishments.

³⁰ WOST newsletter Feb 1985

Marking The First Decade

In April, 1985 Women's Studies celebrated its ten-year anniversary by inviting alumnae back for a weekend of workshops, discussions, reminiscences, and festivities. Johnnetta Cole spoke on a panel with Marysa Navarro and Catherine Stimpson on the subject of "Women's Studies in an International Context." Bev Rohlehr and her band provided the music and attendees enjoyed an art exhibit by Lisa Baskin called "The Past...Our Future." A generous donation by a UMass alumna who had graduated before the Women's Studies program was developed made the event possible. She made the gift so that future students could enjoy the benefits of a program that had not been available for her.³¹

In 1985, Dale Melcher, longtime Women's Studies staff, was the campus coordinator for the Tenth Annual Summer Institute for Union Women which the program co-sponsored. One hundred forty-five union women attended. That same year, Arlyn Diamond, one of Women's Studies' founders, was elected president of the faculty union, the Massachusetts Society of Professors (MSP).

³¹ WOST newsletter, February 1985.

Combating Racism on Campus

In March of 1986, a large contingent from western Massachusetts attended the March for Women's Lives in Washington, DC. One hundred seventy students, faculty, staff, and community members traveled to the capital in support of reproductive rights.

That same year, a racially motivated fight erupted in the Southwest housing area at UMass which some characterized as a riot of white against black students. African American student Yancey Robinson was seriously injured. Chancellor Joseph Duffy asked Frederick Hurst, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, to investigate the riot. The Hurst Report outlined racial discrimination on campus and made recommendations for change.³² Among those changes were a number of committees that were charged with addressing racism in various aspects of campus life. In 1987, Arlene Avakian, John Bracey (Afro-Am), Meyer Weinberg (Horace Mann Bond Center), and Bailey Jackson (Education) were appointed to the Faculty Working Group on Racial Awareness and Cultural Diversity. This committee was charged with helping faculty develop new courses or revise old ones that addressed peoples of color and racism.³³

³² WOST newsletter Summer 1987

³³ WOST newsletter Summer 1987

Faculty and Staff Changes, Scholarship Advances

The mid-eighties also brought growth and change to the Women's Studies program in the realm of faculty and staff. Sandra Morgen, an anthropologist, joined the core faculty, Kathy Peiss was hired jointly by History and Women's Studies, and Arlene Avakian gained faculty status when she was made a Lecturer. Cathy Portuges resigned from her longtime position as director and Jan Raymond replaced her as Director for the 1986-1987 school year.³⁴ In the first months of 1987, Women's Studies said farewell to Dale Melcher who took a position at the Labor Relations and Research Center on campus. Karen Lederer was hired to replace her.³⁵ In the fall of 1987, Lee Edwards moved into the directorship for a three-year term.³⁶

Arlene Avakian and John Bracey collaborated on another project in 1987, along with Joyce Berkman and Ann Gordon of the History Department, the African American Studies Department, and the Lydia Maria Childs Papers Project. "Afro-American Women and the Vote 1837-1965," held in November 1987, brought together the top historians from across the country whose work addressed African American women. The conference challenged common assumptions among historians about African American women and suffrage. For example, the conference beginning date is 1837 to mark a suffrage meeting of Black and white women that predates the more usual 1848 date of the Seneca Falls conference where no Black women were in attendance and suffrage was an issue added by Elizabeth Cady Stanton against the wishes of other organizers. The ending date also signifies that for the great majority of African American women, the date of the passage of the 19th amendment giving women the franchise was meaningless since they lived in the Jim Crow South where neither African American women nor men were able to vote. Selected papers from the conference were edited by Ann Gordon, Arlene Avakian, John Bracey, and Joyce Berkman, and published by the UMass Press.

³⁴ WOST newsletter Jan/Feb 1987

³⁵ WOST newsletter Jan/Feb 1987

³⁶ WOST newsletter Summer 1987

1988 Program Review

In 1988, Women's Studies, like every other program in the state system, underwent the Board of Higher Education-mandated Regents Review, which consisted of a self-study and a review by scholars in the field. Women's Studies reviewers were Catherine Stimpson, Patricia Hill Collins, and Sara Evans. The very positive review recommended continued work to develop a graduate program, and stated that the program needed more faculty and TAs as well as better space. Of course hiring and space were constrained by the budget, though with the "overwhelming" growth of Women's Studies course enrollment, more TAs were hired during the next academic year.³⁷ By the late eighties, the idea of a graduate program seemed to be a logical next step in the growth of the UMass program and the growing trend in the field. In 1989 the Faculty Senate approved a proposal for a graduate minor in Advanced Feminist Studies, but it was another eight years before a graduate program got off the ground due to financial and staffing issues.

³⁷ WOST newsletter Fall 1989

Occupation of New Africa House

In the spring of 1988, more racist attacks on campus spurred “Black and other Third World students” to occupy New Africa House. The Women’s Studies Policy Board held an emergency meeting to discuss racism on campus and adopted a statement of solidarity. They called for a two-day moratorium on business as usual in order to have a campus-wide conversation about racism and sexism on campus and how to respond to it.³⁸

³⁸ WOST newsletter Fall 1988. “Black and other Third World Students” is the terminology used in the newsletter.

1990: The Program and the Field Continue to Grow

On the technological front, Women's Studies got its first computer, an IBM, in mid 80s, and two years later the first newsletter was produced on it rather than on a typewriter. Enrollment continued to grow during this period. In 1990 there were 579 students on the waiting list for the introductory course and 51 majors. There was also a resurgence of student activism on campus, and Women's Studies students were among the leadership of groups like the Lesbian Bisexual Women's Union, the Progressive Organization for Women's Rights – POWER, and People for Choice.³⁹

In January 1990, on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the program, Women's Studies Chief Undergraduate Advisor Karen Lederer interviewed Women's Studies core and associated faculty members on where they thought the field and the program were going. Leila Ahmed, Arlene Avakian, Sandi Morgen, Lee Edwards, Kathy Peiss, Jan Raymond, Joyce Berkman, Margo Culley, Ann Ferguson, Sara Lennox, and Lorna Peterson (Five Colleges, Inc.) all weighed in about the past, present, and future of Women's Studies at UMass and beyond. Their responses contained "threads of both pessimism and optimism." One thing that was clear was that women's studies had grown enormously in the eighties, both on campus and nationally. According to the narrative Lederer crafted from the interviews and published in the spring 1990 newsletter, the decade had begun with 200 programs and ended with 500. Women's studies had begun primarily in the social sciences and English and had spread out to permeate and transform all corners of academia.⁴⁰

Another theme that ran throughout the interviews was institutionalization. Lederer noted: "As Women's Studies becomes more and more institutionalized and traditional models of academic success are followed, the programs have less of a connection to community groups outside the University." She went on, "Will Women's Studies change the institution, or the institution change Women's Studies? Both things will no doubt happen, and in a strange way, these dilemmas mark our success."⁴¹ All of Lederer's interviewees also mentioned the attention UMass Women's Studies had paid to issues of race, class, culture, ethnicity, and sexual

³⁹ WOST newsletter Spring 1990

⁴⁰ WOST newsletter Spring 1990, p. 6.

⁴¹ WOST newsletter Spring 1990, p. 7.

preference. This emphasis had made the program a host of important allies in departments across campus and the country. Women's Studies had also just hired Joy James for a position in Black Women's Studies, a move that some of the respondents thought further demonstrated the program's commitment to emphasizing race.

Enrollment in Women's Studies courses had also skyrocketed. As of 1990 the program had more majors and minors than ever before and students in other majors were taking Women's Studies classes in unprecedented numbers. This fact brought new pedagogical issues to the surface. Faculty wondered about how to teach a group of students that included both those who had enrolled out of genuine interest and those who were there simply to fill requirements. Also, according to Lederer's narrative, Women's Studies students at this time came to the program already possessing more political and scholarly knowledge of feminism than they had in the past. They were engaged with all kinds of activism, from abortion rights to organizing against budget cuts.⁴² Faculty respondents predicted that this trend of student activism would continue into the future as the campus continued to struggle with major budgetary issues, and the sense of apathy that had dominated in the eighties gave way to what felt like renewed vigor on several important fronts in the early nineties.

⁴² WOST newsletter Spring 1990, p. 8.

Faculty Changes

In 1991, Women's Studies director Lee Edwards became the Associate Dean of the College of Humanities and Fine Arts and was soon named Dean, the first time a woman was appointed as a Dean. Daphne Patai filled in as Interim director of Women's Studies. Sandra Morgen left the department and Vicki Crawford was hired. The Five College Women's Studies Research Center opened its doors in the fall of 1991, making the valley an even richer hub of feminist scholarship.

The ALANA Letter Precipitates Curricular Changes

While the program had made strides in its inclusion of race into the curriculum, it had neither successfully displaced gender from the center of its analyses, nor had it addressed racism among its faculty, students, and staff. In the summer of that year, a group of ALANA (African, Latina, Asian, and Native American) faculty, staff, and students delivered a letter to the Women's Studies program that outlined the ways that they felt the program fell short for people of color on campus. The authors of the letter acknowledged that individuals and groups within the program had been working to address issues of race and racism, but nonetheless felt that Women's Studies was not a "comfortable and encouraging environment" for ALANA students and faculty. Most ALANA students, they wrote, had experienced both subtle and overt racism from European American faculty and students in the department. Overall, they felt that the curriculum remained primarily focused on middle class white women's experiences and did not facilitate ALANA students' desire to learn about women of color and non-Eurocentric theories.

While Women's Studies had made progress by hiring more faculty of color in recent years, and had required students to participate in workshops on racism, the authors of this letter said, there was still a great deal of work to be done for the program to live up to the ideal of inclusiveness implied by its name. They offered two concrete solutions at the end of their letter. The first was that Women's Studies should continue its efforts to hire people of color for all types of positions and that students of color should be involved in every step of the hiring process. Their second recommendation was that Women's Studies should support student-led colloquia so that students, particularly women of color, could have opportunities to learn from one another and take active roles in their education. The authors also requested that their letter be published in the Women's Studies newsletter, which it

was, in the fall of 1992.⁴³

This letter served as one of the main catalysts for the curriculum re-evaluation and structural changes Women's Studies undertook that fall. A Curriculum Committee, consisting of core and associated faculty, developed a draft of a new curriculum, to replace the one that had been in use since the program's founding. They presented it to students for comment and it was subsequently approved by the Executive Committee in the spring of 1993. At the heart of the new curriculum was Women's Studies faculty, staff, and students' desire to address "issues of racism and multiculturalism." As Leila Ahmed, Women's Studies Director at the time, wrote,

The America in which contemporary feminism arose in the sixties and the Women's Studies Programs it gave rise to in the seventies, has changed. Feminism too has changed. It has become more sophisticated and, above all, critically aware of the interlocking relation between racism, classism, and sexism, and of assumptions about the cultural primacy of the American and specifically the Euro-American cultural vision.

Among the major revisions the committee made were the replacement of the Foundations of Feminism course with a Critical Perspectives on Feminism course; the development of a Theorizing Women's Issues course to replace the older theory course; and the replacement of the Cross-Cultural course with two required courses on Women of Color.⁴⁴

⁴³ WOST Newsletter, Fall 1992, p 2-3.

⁴⁴ WOST newsletter, Fall 1993, p. 1.

Faculty and Staff Arrivals/Departures and Innovations

Along with these important shifts in the curriculum and structure, the years 1992 and 1993 also brought the Women's Studies program change in the realm of staff and faculty. Ann Williams, who had been secretary for five years, left the program to work with Lee Edwards in the Dean's office. Leila Ahmed became permanent director. Arlene Avakian was awarded tenure and Alex Deschamps became coordinator of the Minor program. Linda Hillenbrand was hired as secretary.⁴⁵

Shortly after she was hired in 1994, Hillenbrand began to bring the program into the electronic age by working on a web page and email lists. By 1998 we were one of the first academic programs on campus to have a full fledged website, and the next year we had four listservs for our various constituencies including current students, the Five College Women's Studies community, alums, friends of the program as well as women's studies colleagues across the country and the world. Including current and past course listings, newsletters, hundreds of links and resources on women's issues, and archival materials, the web site has become an important resource for students, faculty, staff and the community.

⁴⁵ WOST newsletter, Spring 1994, p. 2.

The Graduate Program is Born and Organizing Continues

In 1993, after several years of grappling with how to implement a Women's Studies graduate program, Ann Ferguson issued a "Draft of a Proposal for a 5 College Graduate Program in Women's Studies." In 1995, when Ann Ferguson became Women's Studies director, she continued to channel a great deal of energy into getting a program up and running. In 1996, with the support of Dean Lee Edwards and Graduate Dean Charlena Seymour, Ann Ferguson and Marta Calas (SOM) co-taught a graduate seminar in order to lay some groundwork for the full program. Many years of thinking and hard work paid off in 1997 when the Advanced Feminist Studies Graduate Certificate program admitted its first cohort of ten students. Greatly aiding the efforts to institute the Graduate Program was the position of Graduate Program Coordinator held by Nancy Patteson. Ann managed to have this position, originally a Research Assistant, converted to a 03 staff assistant (without benefits) and finally in 1998 it became a fully-funded professional position, recognized by the SEIU.⁴⁶ Having Nancy Patteson work with the Graduate Program was pivotal in making possible the long-held vision for a graduate component of the Women's Studies Program. Jan Raymond served as the first Graduate Program Director.⁴⁷

Ferguson was also tireless in organizing conferences and talks. In November, 1995, she worked with a faculty organizing committee including John Bracey, Manisha Sinha, Arlene Avakian, Joyce Berkman, and Horace Boyer to plan the conference "Black Studies/Women's Studies: 1981 and Today." It served as an opportunity to revisit the work of the FIPSE funded faculty development project of the early eighties. The conference keynote was Beverly Guy-Sheftall, founder of the Women's Resource and Research Center and Professor at Spelman College and Emory University. Linda Hillenbrand and Nicola Poser, a graduate assistant, provided vital administrative support.

Ann also initiated "Women of Vision in Action," a reunion of UMass women activists, which was held in September 1997 and was collaboratively organized with the Everywoman's Center to celebrate the twenty-five year anniversaries of both EWC and the Council on the Status of Women. Beverly Guy-Sheftall returned to Amherst once again to give a keynote address, "Feminist Activism and the

⁴⁶ Eric Hamako, "Notes on Women's Studies AFS Graduate Certificate Program," 3/25/08.

⁴⁷ WOST newsletter, Fall 1997, p. 2.

Academy." About 200 people came from across the country to reflect on the activism they had participated in while they were undergraduate and graduate students at the university. Participants reconnected with old friends and recounted the founding years of these critical pieces of women's history on campus. In order to help sustain the Women's Studies department and the Everywoman's Center through the budgetary uncertainty that seemed to be an ongoing struggle in public higher education, two new organizations were formed at this reunion, Friends of Women's Studies and Friends of Everywoman's Center.⁴⁸ Over the years that Ann was Director, the program sponsored many lectures series, talks by faculty on and off campus. She and Nancy Patteson were also involved in the New England Land Grant Council of University Women which held a conference at UMass in 1998. Part of the work of the Council was to develop Vision 2000, a response to the American Council on Education's Commission on Women in Higher Education recommendation that every campus develop an agenda for women. Written collaboratively by the Council as a general vision statement proposing recommendations to address issues of gender inequity at the six New England land grant institutions, Vision 2000 was reviewed by UMass Faculty Senate Councils and Committees and the nine recommendations were endorsed, in principle, by the Faculty Senate in April 1998.

⁴⁸ WOST Newsletter, Spring 1998, p. 1.

Innovative New Directions: Intersectionality

In the mid-1990s, two important new courses were added to the Women's Studies curriculum that provided students additional angles from which to engage with the intersections of race, class, and gender. Alex Deschamps first taught her Women of Color and Activism course during the 1994-1995 school year.⁴⁹ In 1996, Arlene Avakian started teaching her course, The Social Construction of Whiteness and Women. That fall, she and her students attended and presented at a conference on whiteness in New Jersey. The following spring they presented their work to the UMass community and at another conference at Wheelock College.⁵⁰ This course continued to be well-enrolled every time it was taught for the next ten years.

In the late 1990s and moving into the 21st century, Women's Studies continued to respond to changes in the field, all the while keeping its roots firmly planted in feminist activism and maintaining its focus on women of color. The program made a commitment not only to hiring scholars of color, but hiring faculty of color whose scholarship was on women of color and race, an important distinction that has had an enormous impact on the direction of the UMass Women's Studies curriculum and on students' experiences. The hiring of biologist Banu Subramaniam made real Women's Studies' desire to bring feminist science studies, with particular emphasis on the interactions of race and gender, to the center of the program. When they were hired in the fall of 2003, sociologist Miliann Kang and historian Dayo Gore further bolstered the department's commitment to issues of race and ethnicity and brought new interdisciplinary perspectives to the program.

⁴⁹ WOST newsletter, Fall 1994.

⁵⁰ WOST newsletter, Fall 1997, p. 6.

Beyond the U.S. Borders

Women's Studies also sharpened its dedication to looking beyond the borders of the United States by highlighting the contributions made by transnational feminist activists and scholars. Alex Deschamps' courses on Caribbean women and transnational development exemplified this commitment. Also, in 2004 Ann Ferguson collaborated with faculty at the University of Havana to organize a women's studies conference in Cuba. Thirty UMass faculty and students traveled to Havana to participate. The program also kept pedagogy and advising at its heart. Faculty and instructors repeatedly received nominations and awards for their teaching and Karen Lederer won the prestigious Outstanding Staff Advisor Award, recognizing her outstanding advising skills and the individualized attention to the undergraduate majors and minors she advised.

June Jordan, a Caribbean American poet, activist, scholar, and teacher, died of breast cancer in the summer of 2002 she left a legacy of passionate political and creative work. That fall, Women's Studies collaborated with the Black Student Union, the Women of Color Leadership Network, and the Office of ALANA Affairs to organize a memorial event in her honor, out of which came a powerful conference just over a year later. In February 2004, Arlene Avakian and the department collaborated again with these groups, along with New World Theater, and held a "Revolutionary Convening," a conference based on Jordan's life and thought. It aimed to bring together artists, activists, and scholars to foster conversations about the contemporary socio-political landscape. The conference proved to be a memorable event that included inter-generational, inter-disciplinary panel discussions about current political struggles and revolutionary pedagogy; theater, music, spoken word, and poetry performances; and a keynote address by Sonia Sanchez. Several participants had personal connections to Jordan during her life and offered recollections of her spirit and commitment. This conference reaffirmed Women's Studies' dedication to bridging existing divides between art, politics, and scholarship and working collaboratively to amplify innovative voices on the UMass campus and beyond.⁵¹

⁵¹ WOST Newsletter Spring 2004, p. 3.

2005 Program Review (AQAD)

The Academic Quality Assessment and Development Review (AQAD) was mandated by the trustees in 1999 and Women's Studies came up for review in 2005. Designed to help departments assess their current performance and make plans for the future, the AQAD review involved intense self-study coupled with outside evaluation by prominent scholars in the field. The UMass Women's Studies review team included Beverley Guy-Sheftall of Spelman College, Bettina Aptheker of the University of California at Santa Cruz, and Lynn Weber of the University of South Carolina. Women's Studies faculty, staff, and students spent the semester leading up to the review preparing for the process.⁵² The team reviewed the program very favorably. Guy-Sheftall, Aptheker, and Weber noted that UMass Women's Studies had achieved impressive success with very few resources. They also remarked that the program's curriculum was "unique" in its emphasis on intersectionality and commended Women's Studies for attaining an ideal that many departments across the country attempted, but failed to meet. Their recommendations were not surprising: Women's Studies needed more faculty, more space, and faculty offices that were not scattered throughout campus.⁵³

⁵² WOST Newsletter Spring 2005, p. 1.

⁵³ WOST Newsletter Fall 2005, p. 1.

Co-Mentoring Project with Bennett College for Women

Further validating its successes, in the fall of 2006 Women's Studies was awarded a grant from the Mellon foundation in order to continue a faculty co-mentoring project with the Africana Women's Studies program at Bennett College for Women in Greensboro, North Carolina, a historically black college. Faculty from UMass and Bennett met at a mini-conference in Washington, D.C. in September to discuss potential collaborative teaching, faculty development, and student support projects. They called this endeavor "Voices of Resistance Learning Communities." This partnership eventually blossomed into a multi-year project out of which lasting relationships were formed. In 2009, faculty and staff from UMass and Bennett gave a presentation on their collaboration at the National Women's Studies Association Conference in Atlanta. Also in 2006, the Center for Teaching funded a Teaching and Learning Development seminar so Women's Studies faculty could improve the teaching of the program's core course, Women's Studies 187. Most importantly, participants in this seminar were focused on developing pedagogical methods for teaching the intersectional approach to teaching women's studies.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ WOST Newsletter Spring 2007, p. 1; Fall 2007, p. 1-2; Fall 2009, p. 2.

Ann Ferguson Retires

After serving for two consecutive terms as Director, Ann Ferguson retired in 2007. Faculty wondered how the program would survive without Ann's prodigious energy and tireless work on many projects including founding the Graduate Certificate Program, organizing a number of important conferences, and connecting to activism around the many issues on campus and in the state. Her work with the Graduate Certificate Program went far beyond its initiation. She served as GPD for many until her retirement and during her tenure she was the reader on virtually all the students' research papers. She was aided in this work by members of the committee most of whom were in other departments and some, like Joyce Berkman and Marta Calas, have been serving on this committee since the beginning of the graduate program. In May of the year before her retirement, women's studies and the philosophy department hosted a two day conference in her honor: "Feminist Philosophy Conference in Celebration of the Career and Legacy of Ann Ferguson." Feminist philosophers from across the country attended, some of them also founding mothers of the field. Also on the occasion of her retirement Ann founded the Ann Ferguson Scholarship Fund, for low income graduate students returning to school, in honor of her mother Elizabeth Ferguson and made the initial donation of \$10,000. Most importantly for the future of the program she was able to convince the Dean to allow the program to search for a tenure track position in gender and sexuality since she had brought half of her faculty line into Women's Studies when she became director.

Five College Feminist Science Studies

Also that year Arlene and Banu, working with faculty at Mount Holyoke and Hampshire Colleges, wrote a successful proposal for a Five College Faculty position in feminist science studies, to be housed at UMass but shared with Hampshire and Mount Holyoke Colleges. These positions increased the total number of full time equivalents in the program by one whole position. Sarah Richardson filled the feminist science studies position and Svati Shah the one in sexuality, but both delayed coming to campus until they had finished their post-doctoral appointments. Sarah Richardson left UMass to teach at Harvard University after only a year in her position, a loss for the department but a measure of the caliber of scholarship UMass Women's Studies had attracted. Svati Shah stayed on, won a

Lilly Teaching Fellowship on her first application, and developed pedagogical strategies to bring sexuality studies to the center of the curriculum.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ WOST Newsletter Fall 2010, p. 1.

Marking 35 Years: Women's Studies Program Becomes Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies Department

In 2009, after years of discussion, the Women's Studies Program officially changed its name to Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies (WGSS). Affiliated and core faculty recognized the fact that the field had changed since the program's founding. It had become clear that rather than a singular focus on women's experiences and oppression, women and gender should be studied in relation to race, class, and sexuality. These categories are now conceptualized as dynamic, historically specific, and mutually constitutive, and cannot be understood in isolation from one another. To a great extent, the UMass Women's Studies program had been teaching this integrative approach for many years and it was simply time to change the name accordingly. But, like the AQAD review, it was also an opportunity to take a close look at where the program stood and where it might go, and especially to examine the state of the curriculum and make sure that intersectionality was addressed across the board.⁵⁶ In particular, it was an opportunity to more explicitly address sexuality and masculinity in the core courses. These courses' names were changed at this time in order to reflect this shift: Introduction to Women's Studies became Gender, Sexuality, and Culture; Critical Perspectives became Gender and Difference: Critical Analyses; and Theorizing Feminism became Theorizing Gender, Race, and Power. And in 2009 Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies became a department rectifying the historical anomaly of its status as a program.

Two thousand nine also marked the thirty-fifth anniversary of Women's Studies at UMass. Amid a serious financial crisis on campus, in the state, and nationally, Women, Gender Sexuality Studies was able to celebrate its anniversary, its name change, its new status as a department, and the arrival of two new faculty members. Banu Subramaniam organized a series of panels based on famous questions that had been asked by feminists throughout the years. Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman?", Tina Turner's "What's Love Got to Do With It?", Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", and Audre Lorde's "Can the Master's Tools Dismantle the Master's House?" were addressed by UMass and Five College faculty and graduate students and generated lively discussion and debate. Beverley Guy-Sheftall, Judy Norsigian, Mary Hawkesworth, and Jasbir Puar spoke on a panel at the department's February birthday party and reflected on the state of the field and possible future trajectories. Over one hundred alumni and friends of the program

⁵⁶ Program Revision Approval Form RR, Office of the Faculty Senate, September, 2009.

from across campus and the Five Colleges gathered to celebrate the remarkable accomplishments of the Women's Studies Program. At the event, John Bracey, professor of African American Studies, recalled receiving a visit from Dale Melcher and Arlene Avakian in the early days of the Women's Studies program and being asked to speak about Ida B. Wells in the class they were teaching about women's lives. Bracey was struck by these white women's attention to race and recognized this as the beginning of an important alliance between Afro-Am and Women's Studies. Ann Ferguson very generously offered a Feminist Activist Award for one undergraduate and one graduate student in honor of this anniversary.

Arlene Avakian Retires, National Search for Chair

In 2010, Arlene Avakian announced that she would retire the next year. Despite financial hardship at the university level and beyond, strong support from Dean of the College, Julie Hayes, helped the secure approval for an external search to replace Avakian as chair of the department. Thirty-five scholars applied for the position and, after a difficult process of whittling down the list, four were chosen to visit campus for interviews and job talks. Professor Laura Briggs, an historian, was chosen as the new chair. Briggs joined the WGSS faculty from the University of Arizona, where she was head of Gender and Women's Studies and Associate Dean. Her scholarly work explores reproductive politics in a transnational context, with particular emphasis on the U.S. and Latin America.

Concurrent with the chair search, WGSS conducted a search for a Five College Feminist Science Studies position. The job went to Angela Willey, who received her PhD in Women's Studies from Emory University in 2010. She will teach at UMass and Hampshire College in the fall of 2011, and Mount Holyoke College in the spring [of 2012]. Willey's work looks at the production of normal and abnormal bodies in discourses on the nature of monogamy. Discussion has been underway in WGSS about the prospect of developing a feminist science studies institute within the department; Willey's presence makes this goal all the more palpable.

In the spring of 2011, friends and colleagues worked to come up with a fitting farewell for Arlene Avakian that would serve to honor the vastness of her contributions and celebrate her retirement. In April scores of people gathered at a reception and dinner and had the opportunity to hear speakers reflect on Avakian's commitment to teaching about racism, whiteness, and white privilege; her pivotal

impact on the field of feminist food studies; her brilliance in the kitchen; and her fiery and uncompromising approach to personal, political, and professional matters. Colleagues, university administrators, a local state representative, friends, and former students spoke about the inspiration Avakian provided throughout her three and a half decades at UMass and the critical ways she had shaped Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies at UMass and beyond.

Office Improvements

Long overdue renovations to the WGSS offices that took place over the summer of 2011 mean that the [in 2012] current office staff - Karen Lederer, Linda Hillenbrand, and Nancy Patteson - and the department chair will no longer be piled on top of one another. While working in such close quarters has been a positive thing in some ways – the activities of the office are well-integrated when everyone knows what others are working on – the renovations will afford staff and students a level of privacy and concentration that was lacking before. Faculty offices are still spread throughout Bartlett Hall and perhaps one day the department will have one centralized space. This is a dream harbored by many in WGSS as it could contribute to more frequent conversations among faculty about what they are working on and could potentially foster more scholarly collaboration. But even with floors and long hallways between them, current faculty express gratitude for the high level of collegiality in the department.

Looking Forward for the Field

While opposition to feminism and racial justice is alive and well, WGSS and the study of women, gender, and sexuality more broadly, are not simply oppositional forces anymore. When asked about the future of the department, both Banu Subramaniam and Svati Shah, current faculty members, remarked on the fact that the field has gone beyond such an antagonism and has developed its own momentum. Professor Subramaniam added that the department must use to its full potential the power that has come with that transition, something that does not always happen in groups that are used to functioning under duress. Professor Shah also observed that the department is on firm institutional ground and that this solid foundation is a result of the earlier strategic work of the program's founders. Shah added that a flowering of interesting research and teaching has come out of this institutionalization. As Dale Melcher recently recalled, when Women's Studies

began at UMass, all the major texts of the Second Wave would fit on one shelf.⁵⁷ Now, WGSS's own faculty members are contributing to a vast and growing literature. At the same time, the roots of resistance from which the program grew are still vibrant. Community involvement and activism are emphasized as strongly as ever, and make engaged scholarship possible.

⁵⁷ Banu Subramaniam interview, 11/15/10; Svati Shah interview, 11/23/10; Dale Melcher interview, 11/8/10.