

Two-Year Progress Report

Women's Studies (B.A.)

March 2017

Background:

The most recent Women's Studies (WS) self-study was submitted January 27, 2014 and the site visit occurred March 3-4, 2014. The review team's report was received on May 8, 2014, and the program's response and implementation plan were submitted on January 30, 2015. (Note: The program's response was delayed by the resignation of its previous Director and the eventual appointment, in November 2014, of a new Director.) The Dean of Arts indicated his endorsement of the plan on February 1, 2015. The Final Assessment Report was approved at Senate Undergraduate Council on March 10, 2015, and at Senate April 20, 2015.

It will be useful to begin with some contextual information. Beginning in 2013-14, the Faculty of Arts undertook a process of finding departmental homes, for administrative purposes, for the various interdisciplinary programs in Arts. This was done, at least in part, in response to feedback received during the Arts Strategic Planning consultations in 2011-12. There was a widespread perception that these programs did not have an appropriate voice in decision-making at the Faculty level, and that while in general the oversight by whatever ad hoc arrangements were put in place when a particular program was created was adequate, they were not universally well run. Furthermore, in cases where they were well-run they were often dependent on a single champion, or a small group of champions, for their continuing wellbeing. Providing such programs with departmental homes assures that there will be Chairs or Directors (in the sense of someone selected under Policy 40 as a head of a genuine academic unit, rather than someone called "director" but with no defined role under university policy) with a commitment to the each program's well-being, because the success of that program is now part of the success of the department. It also provides departmental committees and other resources that will continue to exist long term to provide appropriate academic oversight for the programs, and so makes them less dependent on the presence of individual champions. (Of course, the corresponding challenge is to ensure that the programs maintained a suitably interdisciplinary character after they moved into a department.)

As part of this process, and after considering the results of the program review and input from stakeholders—including asking the members of the WS Advisory Board for their endorsement for this decision—and in consultation with the Provost, the Dean decided in 2015 that as of April 2016 the Department of Philosophy would become the administrative home of the Women's Studies program. In November 2015, the Dean appointed Shannon Dea, Associate Professor in Philosophy, as the Director of WS to prepare for the transition—including taking action in response to recommendations by the program reviewers, as described below. The most important such preparation was a wide ranging

consultation, led by Dea, on the shape a revised and updated WS program should have so that it won't merely continue, but will thrive in the coming years.

With the move of WS into Philosophy, there have been important changes to the organization of WS. The Women's Studies Advisory Board has been dissolved. There is no longer a Director of Women's Studies. Instead, the Philosophy Department appoints a Women's Studies Advisor (henceforth WSA), a role that involves many of the organizational and advising duties formerly part of the role of WS Director. Shannon Dea is currently in the WSA role.

This report describes the steps the program has undertaken in the two years since the approval of the Final Assessment Report to respond to the recommendations suggested by the external reviewers. The reviewers made 16 recommendations organized into three categories: (A) governance, (B) program name, mission and curriculum, and (C) resources.

A detailed proposal for the revision and updating of the WS program, including a change of its name, has resulted from the consultations led by Dr. Dea. A version of the proposed program revision was shared with the Senate Undergraduate Committee. It is not included in this final report to Senate, as the revision has not yet received Faculty and Senate approval. This approval of the Arts Undergraduate Affairs Group will be sought in November 2017. As part of thorough consultation with stakeholders, Dr. Dea has had dozens of meetings, several also involving the Chair of Philosophy, with all departments and AFIW programs currently involved in WS, and with others that are or might have been interested in being involved in the revised program. In all of these meetings, support has been expressed for the changes, and those concerns that were raised, the Department believes, have since been worked through. The proposal has twice been presented at UGAG, to general approval, so it will not arrive there as a surprise in November. As a result, Senate Undergraduate Committee was satisfied with the Department's suggestion that the pending revisions satisfy the reviewer recommendations.

Progress on Implementation Plan:

Recommendations

(A) Governance recommendations

Recommendation 1: Initiate a strategic discussion about the representation of additional Faculties on the Women's Studies Advisory Board.

Status: Not implementable as stated, but the spirit of the recommendation, and implementable parts of it, are completed or underway.

Details: The WS Advisory Board was disbanded when WS joined Philosophy. However, the spirit of the recommendation has been implemented. In the year before WS's official move into Philosophy, the Director of WS led an extensive consultation on the appropriate strategic direction for the WS program. Even before opting to accept the move into Philosophy, the WS Advisory Board took steps to assure itself that Philosophy is attuned to the need for WS to retain its interdisciplinary character. Since the amalgamation, Philosophy has taken steps that we think will prove more effective than mere advisory board membership to involve scholars from disciplines besides Philosophy in the program. In addition to the Philosophy faculty members who teach in the program, and the faculty in other departments who teach courses cross-listed with WS, WS courses are taught by sessional instructors with PhDs in History, English, and Gender Studies. As well, Dr. Anne Innis Dagg, a feminist biologist who was for many years affiliated with the Independent Studies program, has joined the program as an adjunct professor, and regularly interacts with WS students at departmental events. When an opportunity to hire a regular faculty member with teaching duties in WS arose, Philosophy worked with the Dean so that an interdisciplinary DACA was struck, with representation from three different departments, to ensure that the selected candidate would be a researcher whose work was of genuine interdisciplinary interest.

(B) Program Name, Mission, and Curriculum recommendations

Program name

Recommendation 2: Initiate a process to discuss the re-naming the program with an eye to distinguishing it from related programs at Wilfrid Laurier University and St. Jerome's University and to building a more gender and otherwise diverse student cohort. One possibility would be *Equity, Diversity, and Social Justice Studies*, which would align the program to the University of Waterloo's strategic priorities.

Status: In progress.

Details: As mentioned above, Professor Dea, during her year as Director of WS, led a broad consultation with stakeholders, including with then current and former WS Advisory Board members, the Department of Philosophy, students, and faculty with relevant research and teaching interests. One product of this consultation is a new proposed name, mission, degree-level learning outcomes, and core curriculum for WS. In her current role as WSA, Dea is leading a process of consulting with other departments on the proposed changes. The proposed changes, which have the endorsement of the Philosophy Department, were presented to the Senate Undergrad Committee, but are not included in the report to Senate as they still await Faculty of Arts approval. . As is described below, the process of consultation with other departments and programs in the university are ongoing, so that the changes do not go forward

for approval until it is clear that the new name and direction have broad support, and so the final version may yet differ somewhat from the proposal.

Mission

Recommendation 3: If renamed, engage in a re-branding exercise, which would include creating a fresh mission statement, the development of a communications plan and promotional materials for the purposes of student recruitment and retention, and the marketing of the benefits of a three- and four-year major, honours and joint honours.

Status: In progress

Details: As indicated above, the WSA is currently leading a consultation with other departments on a proposed mission change for WS. Once WS has general buy-in for the proposal, it will take the proposed plan changes, including a name change, to the Faculty of Arts' Undergraduate Affairs Group (UGAG) for approval, and we hope from there to the appropriate Senate committees. The WSA will work with the Philosophy Chair, Undergraduate Chair, and Undergraduate Committee, in consultation with the Arts Undergraduate Office, to develop and implement a corresponding communications plan.

Meanwhile, the Department is taking other steps to promote the programs. For instance, the Women's Studies Undergraduate Society, which had become dormant, has been revived with support for a dedicate faculty liaison and explicit communication to the leadership of the Society that the Department will support WS student initiatives and activities. This approach is starting to bear fruit. By using the enthusiasm of the current undergraduate students in the program to help create a better student experience for WS students, we anticipate that more students will become majors or joint majors in WS.

Curriculum

Recommendation 4: Given that many of the current students in the program are joint honours students, the strategic promotion of the joint honours is critical; consideration should also be made to the strategic promotion of WS double major and minor for students in other University of Waterloo programs.

Status: In progress.

Details: The Faculty of Arts' recent undergraduate plan-standardization project is already making it easier for students to pursue joint honours and minor plans. Further, the new relationship between WS and Philosophy has led to a number of students undertaking academic plans in both programs (either through joint majors or through major + minor). We

also anticipate that the proposed program revisions will make the value of a WS joint honours or minor much more salient to students in other programs. Among the likely revisions to WS plans is the addition of a number of courses from related programs as approved WS electives. Having additional electives available to WS students will make it easier for students in other programs to add a WS joint honours or minor and double-count their existing courses towards that plan.

Recommendation 5: Extend and clarify learning outcomes (intellectual and skills-based competencies) at each program level and identify clearer pathways through the program.

Status: In progress.

Details: The proposed new curriculum makes degree level learning outcomes and pathways through WS plans much more explicit. As noted, the Department, led by the WSA, is currently consulting with other departments on the proposed changes.

Recommendation 6: Undertake a modest redesign of the WS “hosted” curriculum, with a focus on student recruitment and retention at the 100- and 200-levels and establishing a capstone and preparatory course for three- and four-year general majors and honours students respectively. This redesign would involve adjustments to the 100-level courses, the creation of an alternative 200-level recruitment/retention course, the development of a “Research in Action” course at the 300-level, and the strategic retitling of courses as necessary.

Status: In progress.

Details: The proposed curricular redesign includes some of the recommended changes. The WSA is currently consulting with other departments on the proposed changes. An additional virtue of being housed in the Philosophy Department is access to the Department’s Extended Learning resources, including the Extended Learning Coordinator, whose presence in the Department helps make the development and delivery of high quality online courses efficient and economical. The Department has, as part of its long-term online strategy, the development strategic first and second year WS courses as soon as the new curriculum is approved.

Recommendation 7: Strengthen and integrate intersectional course content and courses that focus on colonialism, contemporary neo-colonial realities, and Indigenous feminisms; racialization, transnationalism, and the experiences of people of colour; queer and trans studies; and disability issues.

Status: In progress.

Details: As mentioned above, the WSA is currently consulting with other departments on the proposed changes. In the meanwhile, the Department is scheduling special topics courses in topics of the sort mentioned by the reviewers, and assigning them to regular faculty as part of their regular teaching load giving those most consistently involved with the program influence over how they are designed and delivered.

Recommendation 8: Consider incorporating an honours defense as a component of the capstone experience of WS honours students.

Status: Rejected.

Details: After the consultation described above, this recommendation was rejected as unfeasible. Both the existing honours thesis and the reviewers' proposed honours defense are time-consuming for faculty, and were judged, on balance, to be more time-consuming than present faculty complement permits as it would prevent faculty time being devoted to other important things (including being able to offer a wider variety of upper year courses). Philosophy some years ago dropped its undergraduate thesis requirement in order to focus supervisory activity on graduate supervision; the Philosophy undergraduate thesis was replaced with senior honours seminars for Philosophy students. If anything, Philosophy students who went to grad school were judged better prepared (and were more successful) after this change than they were before, so the adjustment was judged to be an academic benefit to students as well. The proposed WS program changes adopt this model for WS.

Recommendation 9: Undertake a review of existing cross-listed and approved courses, taking into account demonstrated student demand, consistency with the unit's program goals, mission statement, coherence, and level-specific learning outcomes, as well as the elimination of repetition of content.

Status: In progress.

Details: As part of the consultation she led, Professor Dea conducted an initial review of the kind described. The results are reflected in the proposed program changes. In her role as WSA, Dea is currently consulting with other departments on the proposed changes, and as part of that process is explicitly seeking other departments' advice on the appropriateness of existing cross-listed and approved courses.

Recommendation 10: Re-negotiate, if possible, the WS seat allocation in high demand cross-listed and approved courses.

Status: Judged no longer relevant.

Details: For various reasons (including the new course scheduling system), the pressures that led to Recommendation 10 are no longer issues.

Recommendation 11: Foster broader connections with academic units and potential affiliated faculty whose areas of research and teaching expertise may focus more on, for example, gender, equity, diversity, and social justice issues than specifically on women.

Status: Done.

Details: In discussions in anticipation of the move of WS into Philosophy, the Philosophy Chair undertook to ensure that resources will be available to support WS activities, including activities that involve cooperation across departmental and Faculty boundaries. (For instance, a proportion of the Department's visiting speaker budget is dedicated to WS activities each year, and has increasingly been used in co-sponsored events.) In the past two years WS has increased the number of active collaborations with other units on events and programming related to gender, equity, diversity, and social justice issues. Once again, it is also relevant to note the proposed program changes, which extend the program's focus beyond women to the areas identified in Recommendation 11. The WSA is presently consulting with other departments on those proposed changes and on possible cooperation between departments on teaching and learning related to social justice.

Recommendation 12: Negotiate the establishment of a new required course, Gender, Human Rights, and Equity in the Workplace, which would add further and significant breadth to the existing WatPD course offerings, would be consistent with the university's strategic priorities, and, given its relevance, would potentially increase the number of WS honours students enrolled in the Arts and Business Co-op Program.

Status: On hold.

Details: The proposed new WatPD course falls outside of the scope of the proposed program changes currently in the works. However, this is a matter of ordering priorities, not a rejection of the proposal as a bad one. Once the current initiatives have been rolled out, the Department will consider the advisability of such developing a course of the sort recommended; if it makes sense, WS could draw on Philosophy's strengths in extended learning to develop it.

Recommendation 13: Implement, if feasible, the fuller or strategic use of the course timetable, with an eye to creating more student options, increasing enrollments, and eliminating timetable conflicts among WS "hosted" and cross-listed courses.

Status: Judged no longer relevant.

Details: The new UW-wide scheduling software obviates the need (and Departmental ability) to implement Recommendation 13.

Recommendation 14: Initiate a discussion with sessional instructors and students about appropriate reading loads in WS “hosted” courses by year level.

Status: Done.

Details: Consultation with students, as noted, was part of the program redesign process. The Philosophy Department has for a few years had a Peer Review of Teaching process that is mandatory for probationary faculty, and is optional for all faculty. The process drew strong praise in the recently completed program review of Philosophy. With its move into Philosophy, these rules apply to faculty with WS teaching duties who have Philosophy as their home Department; more generally, WS has extended the peer review of teaching process to all non-tenured faculty in the program, and has moreover developed better lines of communication between core faculty and sessional instructors to ensure that courses are well-aligned with levels of study and to reduce overlap in content coverage.

(C) Resource recommendations

Recommendation 15: Negotiate the allocation of a Women’s Studies meeting space in close proximity to the Women’s Studies offices for student and affiliated faculty use.

Status: Done.

Details: When WS joined Philosophy, some Philosophy common space was reallocated as Philosophy and WS common space. When the WS administrative assistant’s job was redesigned and moved into philosophy (as a position in support of the WS program and the new Applied Philosophy PhD program), that staff member’s office was moved into the Philosophy Department. Philosophy and English traded an office to afford space in the Philosophy Department for the new Philosophy hire with teaching responsibilities in WS. The WS Student Society space, which was in a different building from either the Philosophy Department or the former WS offices, was given up in exchange for a larger space that is now shared between the WS Society and the undergraduate Philosophy Society.

Recommendation 16: To create greater continuity, as well as enhance the strength and the further growth and development of the WS program which students, affiliated faculty, and members of the Advisory Board indicated was a pressing necessity, the allocation of one full-time faculty position to the program. This faculty member could either assume the Director

position or a full-time faculty position with a regular teaching load; in either case, the faculty member would be tasked with teaching some of the WS “hosted” courses and would contribute to the labour-intensive administrative, academic planning, and promotional and outreach work of the program.

Status: Done.

Details: In late 2015, as part of the agreement by the Department of Philosophy to take on the extra work involved in administering an additional program, Philosophy received approval to make a tenure-track incremental hire with primary undergraduate teaching responsibilities in WS and primary graduate supervisory duties in the newly approved Applied Philosophy PhD program. As noted above, an interdisciplinary DACA was hired to select the appropriate candidate. In July 2016, Dr. Katy Fulfer, joined the Philosophy Department and the WS program. This is the first time in the 40 year history of the WS program that a permanent, regular faculty member has been hired whose primary undergraduate teaching duties are in the WS program.

Explain any circumstances that have altered the original implementation plan:

The original implementation plan anticipated that the new program would be approved sooner than will now be possible. As part of the consultation process led by Professor Dea in the year before WS officially joined Philosophy, a faculty member was hired on a fixed-term, 12-month contract with a 50% weighting for service (and 50% for teaching); the intention was that she would do much of the legwork involved in preparing the ground for the program changes. The implementation process was delayed significantly because this person resigned her position halfway through the year to take a permanent job elsewhere; when she left it was judged that it did not make sense to try to replace her, since a steep learning curve would make hiring another person with a six month appointment unlikely to accelerate the process. The delay was exacerbated by a number of staff changes, including the retirement of the long-serving WS administrative assistant, and a leave of absence by a member of the Philosophy Department’s support staff.

Address any significant developments or initiatives that have arisen since the program review process, or that were not contemplated during the review:

As discussed above, WS is now part of the Department of Philosophy. This new administrative arrangement was not anticipated at the time of the external review, although it was a clear possibility by the time Senate approved the Final Assessment Report in 2015.

Updated Implementation Plan:

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	Initiate a strategic discussion about the representation of additional Faculties on the Women's Studies Advisory Board	Not implementable as stated; the spirit of the recommendation has been completed	n/a	n/a
2.	Initiate renaming process.	In progress.	WSA, Philosophy Chair, Philosophy Undergraduate Associate Chair	Proposed program changes to UGAG by September 2017.
3.	Develop and implement new mission statement and communications plan.	In progress.	WSA, Philosophy Chair, Philosophy Undergraduate Associate Chair	Proposed program changes to UGAG by September 2017.
4	Strategically promote WS joint honours and minors plans.	In progress.	WSA, Philosophy Chair, Philosophy Undergraduate Associate Chair	Proposed program changes to UGAG by September 2017.
5	Extend and clarify learning outcomes; articulate clearer pathways through plans.	In progress.	WSA, Philosophy Chair, Philosophy Undergraduate Associate Chair	Proposed program changes to UGAG by September 2017.

6	Redesign curriculum.	In progress.	WSA, Philosophy Chair, Philosophy Undergraduate Associate Chair	Proposed program changes to UGAG by September 2017.
7	Strengthen and integrate intersectional course content.	In progress.	WSA, Philosophy Chair, Philosophy Undergraduate Associate Chair	Proposed program changes to UGAG by September 2017.
8	Incorporate honours defence.	Rejected.	n/a	n/a
9	Review cross-listed and approved courses.	In progress.	WSA, Philosophy Chair, Philosophy Undergraduate Associate Chair	Proposed program changes to UGAG by September 2017.
10	Renegotiate WS seat allocation in high demand cross-listed and approved courses.	No longer applicable.	n/a	n/a
11	Foster broader connections with faculty and academic units in cognate areas.	Done.	n/a	n/a
12	Negotiate establishment of new required WatPD course.	On hold.	n/a	n/a
13	Implement fuller use of course timetable.	No longer applicable.	n/a	n/a
14	Initiate discussions with instructors about reading loads.	Done.	n/a	n/a
15	Negotiate nearby WS meeting space.	Done.	n/a	n/a
16	Hire new WS faculty member.	Done.	n/a	n/a

The Department Chair/Director, in consultation with the Dean of the Faculty shall be responsible for monitoring the Implementation Plan.

Date of next program review: _____ **2020** _____
Date

Signatures of Approval:

Chair/Director _____ Date _____

Faculty Dean _____ Date _____

Associate Vice-President, Academic _____ Date _____
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)