

Two-Year Progress Report

Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies (BA)

March 2022

Background

The SMF program review was conducted in March 2019. The next cyclical review for this program is scheduled for 2024-2025.

Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies (SMF) offers a BA, Minor, and Diploma. The goal of SMF is to promote interdisciplinary scholarship and research in topics such as gender, sexualities, relationships, and families. In the course offerings, special attention is devoted to developing an ethical perspective and considering issues of social justice in order to develop autonomy and professional capacity for responsible citizenship. Instructors strive to create learning environments that respect academic freedom, encourage higher order learning and skills development, and promote inclusivity and anti-oppressive practices. Students are encouraged to think critically and self-reflectively about material and apply it to the social world.

External reviewers found that the programs (BA, Minor, and Diploma) delivered by the Department of SMF at St. Jerome's University (SJU), which is federated with the University of Waterloo, were in good standing. The SMF program is also quite a distinct program at SJU, where it is one of the few programs without a counterpart on the main University of Waterloo campus (i.e., an unshared program).

The Reviewers noted, *"The Department of Sexuality, Marriage, and Family is the only of its kind in Canada. As reviewers we were truly impressed by the uniqueness of the program, and what we mean by this is that this program stands alone in relation to other similar programs."* They commented that they see "huge potential for growth" as a distinct scholarly field and that more than ever, a program like SMF is needed. One area of potential growth is a graduate program. Overall, it was identified that the long history of a severe faculty shortage has hampered efforts to grow the SMF program. It was acknowledged that, "This program has only survived due to the unparalleled commitment of its skeleton teaching staff—truth be told, many others would have left (and perhaps this explains why so many have left). We are quite worried that if one member should for any reason be unable to teach that the program would, in essence, collapse, which would be a huge loss most immediately to students currently enrolled in the program, but also the very rich potential for future development within the program."

The following strengths of the program were noted:

- The Department is a small one, but is vibrant and close-knit, with students that match its faculty's enthusiasm, positivity, and dedication to social justice.
- The interdisciplinary nature of the faculty allows topics and issues to be addressed critically from a number of intersecting perspectives, and motivates students to think critically about the world around them.
- SMF plans are incredibly unique when compared with programs at other schools, as SMF is the only program in the country that combines studies of sexualities, relationships, and families.
- The SMF Department also prides itself on its ability to foster and support student research. The SMF Research Symposium is a unique opportunity for undergraduate students, in particular, to both attend/experience, and actively participate in an academic research conference.

The following challenges of the program were identified:

- In terms of faculty, the Department has experienced both gains and losses since the last review, and at the time of this self-assessment is still fraught with resource deficiencies. This has had an impact on SMF's ability to sustain and grow the program.
- The SMF Department has continued to broaden its reach and visibility on campus and in the community, and continued to offer special events/lectures/workshops to support students. That said, sustainability is a concern at this time. The faculty are understandably feeling depleted and tired, which will certainly have impacts on the quality and range of services or experiences the Department is able to offer moving forward.
- The Department has had difficulty retaining faculty whose primary discipline is in the Humanities. While interdisciplinarity does not require integration across the social sciences and humanities, having both areas represented in SMF faculty may be a worthy goal. Existing faculty are clearly social science researchers and instructors, many of whom are also interdisciplinary in their approach to social science more generally.

Enrollment over the past two years

	Honours	General (4 yr)	General (3 yr)	Minors	Diploma	Co-op	Graduate Students
2021-2022 (CURRENT YR)	32	3	1	30	1	18	N/A
2020-2021 (LAST YR)	29	5	1	22	2	6	N/A

March 2022

A total of seven recommendations were provided by the reviewers.

Progress on Implementation Plan

Short Term Recommendations

- 1. We recommend that Sexuality, Marriage, and Family Studies undertake a review of its name, a concern that was brought up by nearly everyone. But we are not recommending a wholesale change, as most people mentioned a discomfort only with the use of “marriage,” but not “sexuality” or “family.” As such, our recommendation would be to pluralize sexuality and family, and find an additional word to better reflect the vastness of the relationships studied and considered in the courses.**

Status: In progress

Details: At our department meeting on September 17, 2021 it was resolved that we will be conducting a facilitated fall retreat in 2022 with relevant stakeholders (i.e., faculty, staff, and students). The retreat will be led by Jane Allison (<https://www.dovetailcommunity.com/about-jane>) and will also include participation from senior leadership at St. Jerome’s University. The retreat will culminate in a recommendation to be approved by the department, the SJU Senate Council, and relevant committees at the University of Waterloo (UGAG etc.). As part of this process, we have slated to have an informal “launch” of our new name in 2023 to coincide with our 10th year spring Research Symposium with formal UGAG changes to be implemented in 2024.

- 2. We recommend that a long-serving contractual lecturer¹ position be formalized so as to ensure the long-term stability of the program. This formal role should be at the Lecturer level or at the Assistant Professor level, in the latter case, where professional and clinical experience is recognized as being similar to the PhD qualification.**

Status: Incomplete

Details: Some limited progress was made in “formalizing” this position. In May 2019 this individual was appointed into a two-year Definite Term Appointment at the rank of Lecturer, which marked a departure from the previous approach of a series of term-limited Contract Academic Staff appointments for individual courses taught, plus a stipend for overseeing the SMF Practicum program. This appointment was paused before its completion when the lecturer took a leave of absence beginning September 2020 and is scheduled to end April 30, 2022, with the member returning May 1, 2022 on a proposed full-time two-year Definite Term Appointment. Efforts to formalize this into

¹ The name of the lecturer has been redacted for privacy reasons.
March 2022

a permanent full-time position is expected, but the additional two years will allow the member to complete some additional education and for the potential creation of a new type of teaching position category that can only be done when the full-time Collective Agreement is negotiated. The current full-time Collective Agreement expires April 30, 2023.

- 3. We recommend that at least two new hires – 100% SMF – be added to the faculty complement (one could presumably organize this as 4 at 50% SMF). Over the past years, we note that many faculty members have left SMF, some for administration,...others for different positions,...others have renegotiated their contracts after hire,...and another has been on extended medical leave. In total, we estimate these losses at at least 200%, which is how we have arrived at a figure of two full-time hires.**

Status: In Progress

Details: We are pleased to report that administrative approval to recommence the search for a new SMF hire was made December 2021 for a tenure track Assistant Professor for July 2022. This “reconvened” search follows a rather unfortunate series of events that resulted in our first hiring attempt being cut short in March 2020 due to the pandemic. Previously, a faculty hire was approved by the VPAD and President in fall 2019. A search committee was convened, the position advertised, and a fulsome process was conducted to the point of short listing two candidates. Their interview days were planned for the week of March 16, 2020. The Friday before their scheduled interviews the university was closed due to COVID and Administration elected to put the hiring process on hold. There were many overtures seeking to have the process reopened, but ongoing concerns about the impact of COVID on the budget were given as the primary reason for ongoing resistance to get this hiring process back on track, until this past fall 2021 when it was resumed. That said, the recommendation was that SMF needs two new hires. While completing this first is very welcomed, we are aware that we still need a second hire as we continue to experience ongoing leaves of absence amongst faculty (e.g., medical, parental, sabbatical etc.). At this juncture, we are eager to welcome a new SMF colleague, with great hope that the second hire will not be too far behind (1 year, or at most 2 years from now), while recognizing that this requires administrative approval while the institution is still grappling with the financial implications that the pandemic has wrought.

- 4. We recommend that the University in conjunction with the Department undertake discussions about certification and certificate programs. We note in the review, for instance, that the department is short of one course to fulfill a certification requirement.**

This should be resolved and addressed. Students and post-degree students desire more formal certification recognition and this could contribute to the growth of the program.

Status: In progress

The department has been working on developing two kinds of opportunities for accreditation/certification and expanding our teaching to offer certificates in various programming areas.

- I. ***Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE)***: accreditation with the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR). NCFR will grant provisional status as a Certified Family Life Educator (CFLE) to students who complete courses in 10 content areas. Until 2019 we lacked courses in the areas of family law/family policy in order to pursue accreditation. In 2019, we added two new courses that fill the content gap needed for departmental accreditation (SMF 250: Family Policy and the Law and SMF 350: Love and the Law). Next up is to apply for NCFR accreditation of SMF courses in 10 content areas. As a step in that process, we must have at least one faculty member who is a member of NCFR and has their own full status as a Certified Family Life Educator. Dr. Denise Whitehead completed the review process and exam and became certified in August 2021. This year we will submit our course syllabi for external review in the 10 content areas. It is expected that this process will be completed by June 2022. Once SMF is accredited, students who complete courses in the 10 content areas will be able to apply for *provisional* CFLE status without having to write the required exam. Full CFLE status is achieved with additional work experience.

- II. ***Continuing Education and Professional Development Courses/Certificates***: SMF faculty have developed several ideas for additional education, training, and certificates. A proposal was submitted in late 2019/early 2020 to the then SJU VPAD and SJU President outlining various opportunities that were ripe for development. Not much has happened since then (partly due to the pandemic and lack of full-time faculty). SMF has identified the need for additional education and training in sexuality and relationships among human service providers and mental health professionals. The proposal recommends workshops, courses, and post-degree certificate programs to address gaps in the current academic climate for post degree certifications and respond to a need for “continuing education” opportunities and specializations for professionals. We welcome the opportunity to work with the new SJU administration (new President appointed July 2020 and new VPAD appointed August 2021) to create and launch these certificate courses or programs. Of course, this will only be possible once a critical mass of SMF faculty has been established. As reviewers noted, the

short-term goal must be to maintain our current responsibilities to existing students while we work to expand our resources, re-structure, and vision for the future. This can only be done when we cease to have ongoing issues with lack of teaching/faculty resources within SMF.

- 5. We recommend that SMF and the University establish an “Ambassador’s Program.” We were thoroughly impressed by all of the students we met, and they are, in many ways, the best advocates for SMF because they are choosing to be there, they are excited about their work and studies. These students would go to High Schools or Recruitment events.**

Status: **Complete**

We are delighted to report that there was a student-initiated revival of the SMF Student Society (SMFSS) in February 2020. As the reviewers noted, our students are the department’s best ambassadors for recruiting new students to the program and building the community and relationships that make studying in SMF a positive learning experience. Students have always been actively engaged in the department, but formalizing the SMFSS has provided a wonderful conduit for student events that often involve faculty. Similarly, when faculty want student participation, such as at future student recruitment events, channeling that message through the Society facilitates that outreach. In Winter 2022 they have been given designated office space on campus, close to other offices housing St. Jerome’s student leadership teams – a natural fit as we often have SMF students who are also committed to leadership at SJU.

Long Term Recommendation

- 6. We recommend that the University in conjunction with the Department begin to undertake discussions about a graduate program; however, this is, we stress, a *long term* goal once the faculty complement has been established. In our discussions with students, a meeting at which we ran out of chairs and had 20 students, 100% of them in our straw poll desired a graduate program in SMF and if afforded the opportunity would stay at St Jerome’s for the graduate program. Moreover, we understand from discussions that a similar program at Guelph receives some 400 applications, and yet only 8 students are admitted. It seems to us that there is a potential here to develop a Master of Arts in the long term, before the next review, and even thinking in the long long-term, perhaps a PhD program could be established, especially given how many people are turned down by Guelph. We do not see this as St. Jerome’s University becoming a “second choice,” but rather as offering something unique that fills a gap and a need.**

Status: **Incomplete**

Discussions about graduate programs in SMF are not new. Many program reviews (at least three) have suggested creating a graduate program once departmental resources are sufficient to do so. The type of graduate program the reviewers heard about from students (with references to the University of Guelph), is a clinical one, which is of interest to those students who desire to work as counsellors, psychotherapists, or social workers. We have a diverse group of students in SMF, a subgroup of whom are interested in research-focused graduate programs rather than clinical ones. Our general discussions of graduate programs connected to SMF have thus involved considering two possible streams: a research stream in sexualities and relationships research, and a clinical stream with a focus on relational and sex therapy.

Given the responses above, particularly with respect to the stalled hiring process, the advancement of a graduate program is still out of reach. That said, we continue to be optimistic that SMF will receive full support from our administration to forge ahead with the two full-time assistant track appointments and securing permanent full-time employment for our Definite Term Appointment Lecturer.

- 7. We would also recommend, with the development of a graduate program, that SMF may look outward and consider appointing “adjunct faculty,” who are able to contribute to the teaching of the program and undertake some ‘supervisory’ roles in thesis courses.**

Status: **Incomplete**

See #6 above.

Updated Implementation Plan

	Recommendations	Proposed Actions	Responsibility for Leading and Resourcing (if applicable) the Actions	Timeline for addressing Recommendations
1.	Renaming SMF Department	Facilitated Fall 2022 retreat to decide on new name, to be followed by steps at SJU and UW to officially implement name change	Dr. Denise Whitehead, as SMF Acting Chair	Implementation of new name informally by June, 2023, with formal UW adoption by September 2024.
2.	Securing permanent full-time employment for contract Lecturer	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Renew DTA contract for two years – 2022-2024 2. Establish permanent full-time position starting May 1, 2024 	Dr. Denise Whitehead as SMF Acting Chair in coordination with Office of the VPAD at SJU	FT DTA Contract renewal for two years to be completed by April 30, 2022, ending April 30, 2024. Efforts to secure permanent full-time contract to secure position for May 1, 2024.
3.	Adding 2 new full-time tenure track appointments	Revived Fall 2021 for Hire #1.	Dr. Denise Whitehead, SMF Acting Chair will serve as Chair of the search committee	Alternative: Hire #1 to start July 2022 Hire #2 in discussion (aiming for 2023 or 2024 depending upon budget)

4.	a) CFLE Accreditation b) Post-Degree Continuing Education, and Professional Development	CFLE: Submit course syllabi in 10 content areas for NCFR/Peer Review process Resume planning in consultation with the VPAD office	Dr. Denise Whitehead re CFLE certification Dr. Toni Serafini as the lead with support from the VPAD office	CFLE accreditation to be completed by September 2022. 2-3 years to implement
5.	Student “Ambassadors”	Continue to support our SMF Student Society, including providing office space	SMF Chair in conjunction with departmental faculty	Office space provided February 7, 2022

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: _____ **2024/2025** _____
Date

Signatures of Approval:



March 21, 2022

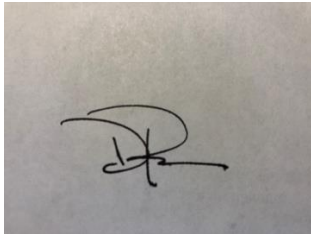
Chair/Director _____ Date



March 21, 2022

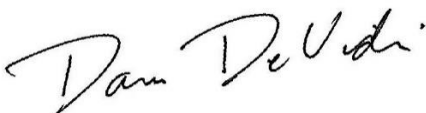
AFIW Administrative Dean/Head (For AFIW programs only) _____ Date

Note: AFIW programs fall under the Faculty of ARTS; however, the Dean does not have fiscal control nor authority over staffing and administration of the program.



17/viii/22

Faculty Dean _____ Date



June 10, 2022

Associate Vice-President, Academic _____ Date
(For undergraduate and augmented programs)
March 2022

Associate Vice-President, Graduate Studies and Postdoctoral Affairs
(For graduate and augmented programs)

Date