

STRATEGIC PLAN: WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES AT TCNJ

The Women's and Gender Studies Department is an inclusive and dynamic learning community dedicated to preparing students for a lifetime of critically engaged learning and citizenship. Founded in 1972, TCNJ's Women's and Gender Studies Department is one of the largest in the country, and a national exemplar for its innovative programming. Serving students across the College's seven schools, the department provides a major, a minor, and five concentrations; a teaching track; the Women in Learning and Leadership Program; the largest share of the College's Liberal Learning courses in gender; and a graduate certificate in Gender Studies. A campus leader in promoting interdisciplinarity, Women's and Gender Studies interfaces with a broad range of scholarly disciplines in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and professions, as well as with other fields of interdisciplinary studies.

OUR MISSION

The mission of the Department of Women's and Gender Studies is to empower students as advocates and agents of social justice for their communities, workplaces, and the wider world. Using feminist and queer theoretical perspectives, WGS courses attend to factors of social difference, such as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, class, ability, religion, and nationality. By critically analyzing cultural assumptions, social norms, and the systems that structure societies, Women's and Gender Studies aims not only to produce new knowledge, but also to question and reshape what counts as knowledge. Central to our focus is how ideas and practices about gender and sexuality mold identities, institutions, nations, and global exchanges.

Women's and Gender Studies courses pair academic rigor with civic engagement and range in scope from the local to the transnational. As an interdisciplinary liberal arts field, WGS provides students with a framework for developing and integrating a broad range of skills in the social sciences and humanities. These skills include effective oral and written communication, strategic approaches to research, critical analysis of documents and data, research strategies, interpretation of cultures and discourses, and the application of ethical thought.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

The following initiatives are intended as a framework to guide ongoing and development activities of the WGS Department from the Fall of 2011 through the Spring of 2016. The faculty will review the initiatives annually to assess progress, reevaluate our priorities, and plan implementation.

I. CURRICULUM: Academic Program and Student Learning, Advising, and Internationalization

Interdisciplinarity

For the Graduate Certificate program in Women's and Gender Studies, approved in June 2011: develop and offer graduate courses, beginning with Gender, Culture, and Society, Gender Equity in the Classroom, and Men and Masculinities: Literary Perspectives. Pursue articulation agreement with Rutgers. Conduct publicity/outreach to attract students. Coordinate course development and outreach with the Graduate Program in English and the School of Education.

Work with Education chairs and faculty to clarify and coordinate double major programs and to promote and interpret the programs to prospective double majors.

Develop new coursework targeted to the WGS/Education double majors.

In connection with the identity issues described below under "Community," identify gaps in our curriculum and develop new interdisciplinary courses as needed. For example, given the links between academics and activism in WGS, a course in Reproductive Health/Rights: History, Theory, Policy, Advocacy may be valuable.

Update concentrations, seeking suitable new courses across disciplines to add to the lists of options.

In conjunction with the International Studies Program, develop a concentration and/or minor in Global Gender Issues .

Invite new collaborations with faculty in other departments (e.g. Sociology/Anthropology, Psychology, Political Science) to develop and/or cross-list courses.

Explore team teaching possibilities.

Experiential learning

Launch the approved Feminist Methodology course (2011-12).

Develop and assess blended learning options (ongoing).

Implement international field study and research experience (underway).

Increase opportunities for mentored student research.

Assess offerings of CEL II, consider adding new offerings; consult with the Bonner Center on expanding opportunities for community engagement.

Curriculum Assessment

Evaluate syllabi of WGS courses that serve multiple purposes (Liberal Learning, majors/minors); establish common course descriptions and some common readings for

each, document these in checklist/rubric form to be made available to instructors and to serve as a basis for assessing individual syllabi. Reduce repetition of readings, define common content across sections, and define differences between courses. This effort began in 2010-11 and we anticipate completing it in 2011-12.

Evaluate the relationship of the gateway course Women, Culture, and Society to the broader discipline of WGS. Consider development of an alternative gateway course in Gender and Sexuality Studies.

Evaluate the capstone and consider alternatives to the current open-topic academic research paper format. Proposed alternatives include organizing each capstone section around a particular theme (e.g. education) or incorporating an activist element in every capstone section (similar to the WILL capstone).

Develop tools for assessing student achievement in core concepts of the major.

Evaluate non-WGS courses that are cross-listed with WGS in relation to the standards of intensity and rigor, in collaboration with faculty from the courses' home departments (eg Africana Women in Historical Perspective).

Determine which courses (if any) should be taught only by core faculty (e.g. Feminism in the Workplace).

Advising

Improve advisement for student internships to direct students to challenging opportunities, including international internships (rather than falling back on routine assignments). Develop creative strategies for advisement (other than waiting for a student to show up for appointments). Revise the webpage on internship as an advisement tool for both faculty and students to consult.

Internationalization

Integrate international components into courses still lacking in this area (e.g. Women, Culture, and Society; Politics of Sexuality; Gender and Popular Culture; Men and Masculinities)

Seek and promote study and experiential learning opportunities for our students beyond New Jersey, both in the US and internationally. Some courses (e.g. Gendered History of Food) lend themselves to Maymester travel experiences.

(See also Interdisciplinarity and Advising.)

II. COMMUNITY

Identity

Because WGS is a constantly evolving, dynamic discipline, our department engages in ongoing discussion and debate about our particular identity. These discussions are integral to all of our ongoing efforts in all areas of curriculum and community. Based on developments in the field, at TCNJ, and in our department, we will undertake a process for re-evaluating the content and purpose of our academic offerings, and assessing the character of our intended audience and the demographics of our real audience. In addition, we will give consideration to our role in the campus community, especially with regard to LGBTQI students and their allies.

In relation to the above considerations, we may consider a name change for the department. To begin, we will do a survey of what other programs and departments around the country call themselves and what their academic focus is.

Alumni relations

Regularly maintain contact information for graduates--both majors and minors (ongoing).

Maintain the FaceBook page Women's & Gender Studies at TCNJ as a lively gathering place for WGS alums (ongoing).

Maintain a record of graduates' success stories; publicize select stories on the department's website.

Continue to invite alums to campus to present on topics related to their specializations, and on jobs and careers.

Community Outreach

Analyze potential demographics for new majors, and develop and implement focused strategies for recruitment of majors and minors. E.g., conduct outreach to selected campus organizations (PRISM, WILL, Vox), and to non-WGS classes dealing with related topics. Call on current majors and minors to assist in recruitment outreach. Send letters from the department to non-majors who do well in WGS courses inviting them to consider the major.

Organize and carry out regular outreach to adjuncts to integrate them more fully into the WGS mission and community.

Review the department's website for anachronism, community usefulness, and diversity.

Work with Career Services to enhance resources for WGS students, particularly in NGO, governmental, political, and social service careers.

Reach out to local communities in publicizing WGS events, such as Women's History

Month.

Invite guest speakers from the region and the global context (ongoing).

Leadership and governance

Take a leading role in promoting a safe campus climate for LGBTQI students; advocate for a center; create a website (ongoing).

Continue to encourage faculty and staff to take roles in school- or college-wide governance, and support and recognize colleagues in these roles.

Faculty development

Reduce dependency on adjuncts and enhance department offerings through new full-time hires. Our priorities are, first, African-American women's history; then law, girls' studies, and cultural studies.

Support faculty in developing new knowledge and skills, e.g., facility with new technologies for research and pedagogy.

Mentor new faculty, foster their success.

Implement the revised WGS disciplinary standards document.

III. RESOURCES\

Fund raising and development

Seek funding for:

LGBTQI resources

Student travel to conferences and other experiential learning opportunities

An endowment for the Women in Learning and Leadership Program

Visiting speakers

Research

Technology and classroom space

Pursue updated equipment in all classrooms; all Bliss classrooms should be SMART classrooms. At least one Bliss classroom should have video-conferencing capability.