

Program Suspension Proposal: Bachelor of Arts in Women’s Studies

The University of Maine undertook a review of its degree programs in the 2009-2010 academic year. President Kennedy charged the Academic Program Prioritization Working Group (APPWG) with evaluating and prioritizing all UMaine academic programs, stating that “the goal of this process will be strong support of our highest priority degree programs funded by a reduction in those ranked as our lowest priorities” (President’s Charge to APPWG). In its final report, APPWG recommended suspension of the “Women’s Studies major and graduate concentration and (exploration of) alternative models of offering degree, concentrations, minor or other forms of focused study.” President Kennedy accepted this recommendation.

Five-Year Summary of Program Enrollments

There is one faculty member who is assigned full time to the Women’s Studies program. There is also one FTE professional staff member assigned to Women’s Studies. The latter position carries out many of the responsibilities of a faculty member (e.g., teach, mentor, research). Most Women’s Studies courses are taught by adjunct faculty members or by regular faculty members from other departments as overloads.

A summary of the Women’s Studies majors and degrees awarded over the past five years is included in the following table. Number of majors is based upon fall head counts.

Academic Year	Majors	Degrees
2005-2006	27	13
2006-2007	22	8
2007-2008	23	7
2008-2009	15	6
2009-2010	22	7

Rationale

The College of Liberal Arts and Sciences determined that a decrease of 25 FTE faculty lines by the end of FY 2014 will be necessary to meet budget reduction targets. This faculty reduction will include the loss of one faculty line in Women’s Studies. Given the small number of full time faculty assigned to Women’s Studies, it does not appear that the degree program, as currently configured, can be offered with one less faculty member.

It has been argued that an investment of one faculty hire would be enough to sustain the Women’s Studies degree program. However, a faculty hire in Women’s Studies would come at the cost of a much-needed faculty hire in another program. The goal of the APPWG review was to prioritize academic programs and the reality is there are many degree programs in CLAS that are higher priority and have significant needs for faculty positions.

The suspension of the Women's Studies major is unlikely to impact enrollment at UMaine. Very few students come to the University of Maine to study Women's Studies (i.e., in a typical year the number of first semester, first-year Women's Studies majors is 0 or 1). Most Women's Studies majors are double majors. Non-majors make up the majority of the Women's Studies student credit hours. Of the Women's Studies SCHs taken for the five-year period from fall 2004 through spring 2009, 93% were from non-majors.

Many Women's Studies courses meet general education requirements. Non-majors benefit from Women's Studies courses. Maintenance of the major requires the expenditure of resources that might otherwise be used to make Women's Studies courses available to a larger number of non-majors.

Suspension of the Women's Studies degree program is proposed so that a program review can be conducted and a focused consideration can be given to models for study in this area. The program has been directed to carry out a self-study in accordance with the University of Maine System policies and procedures regarding program review. A site visit will be conducted during the 2010-2011 academic year and the site visitor will be presented with specific questions to address. Example questions include, "Can a quality program in Women's Studies be offered at the University of Maine without the investment of new resources and the anticipated reduction in faculty?" "If yes, what are alternative models for offering the major?" "What is the best way to utilize the Women's Studies resources available at UMaine?"

Faculty Assignment During Suspension Period

There will be no change in the assignment of faculty in Women's Studies during the suspension period.

Impact of Program Suspension on Current Students

Current students will not be impacted during the program suspension period.

Timetable

Suspension of the Women's Studies BA program will commence in January, 2011. No new students will be admitted to the program while it is under suspension. The program will be considered for reinstatement or elimination by June 30, 2012. During the suspension period, the program will have the opportunity to use the results of the program review, including the site visitors' report, to develop a plan for the Women's Studies major.

Meetings/Discussions Regarding Proposed Suspension

The Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and the Director of the Women's Studies program have met several times to discuss the proposed suspension of the degree program. At each meeting, the Director has made her

intentions clear to maintain the Women's Studies major and has indicated that she will work with her advisory board to develop a plan to maintain the major with a reduced faculty.

The first draft of this program suspension proposal was shared with the Director of the Women's Studies, an AFUM representative and the chair of the Faculty Senate's Program Creation, Review, and Reorganization Committee on September 1, 2010.

On October 29, 2010, the Dean met with James McClymer, AFUM Representative. McClymer raised questions about the timeline, noting that the December 30, 2011 timetable might not allow for the program to make changes based upon the program review. He suggested that the deadline for deciding whether to eliminate or re-instate the major be extended to June 30, 2012. As a result of this meeting, the proposed date at which the program will be considered was changed from December 31, 2011 to June 30, 2012.