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Women's Studies Program, by Eloise Buker; first ten years

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Women's Studies Program
Eloise Buker, Director
(Gill Miller, 1999-)

This reflection on the last ten years of Denison's Women's Studies Program begins with a statement of its mission and goals, is followed by an overview of the program's history, then focuses on changes over the past decade, with some attention to future plans, and closes with an overview of the administrative structure of the program.

The Women's Studies Program offers a variety of courses and experiences in which students can learn about women to empower themselves to become effective citizens. These liberal arts courses prepare students to analyze issues concerning gender, race, and class in contemporary societies. Internships at home and abroad and regular campus symposia by Denison faculty and national recognized scholars in women's studies provide opportunities for the study of gender outside classroom settings. Students are encouraged to develop leadership skills by taking active part in campus life.

I. Denison Women's Studies Mission Statement and Goals

The Women's Studies mission is threefold. First, the program supports the general education requirement for a course in women's and/or minorities in the twentieth-century, United States. Denison was one of the first universities in the nation to require all students to take a course in women's studies or ethnic studies and so has played a leadership role in this area. Second, the program offers a major and minor in women's studies. Third, the program supports academic work in feminist scholarship for Denison faculty and students.

1. General Education Requirement for Women's Studies:

Because of the rapid transformations in American society, such courses are vital. Students need to understand changes in gender/sex roles, structures, and practices so that they can more effectively work in everyday social contexts. The courses designed to meet this goal endeavor to do the following:

(1) to enable students to learn about how gender analyses have brought new insights into disciplined understandings of sex/gender and so have developed new theories, methods, questions, issues, and insights about contemporary life in the United States.

(2) to enable students to be more effective in dealing with diverse ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, and classes issues which they will encounter in their workplace, social relationships, and politics.

(3) to enable students to recognize the biases related to gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and other prejudices that prevent United States citizens from realizing fair and effective communities.

(4) to enable students to appreciate the contributions women have made to communities within the United States.

Before the formal establishment of a women's studies program, scholarship about women has had a long, rich tradition at Denison University. In 1858, the Young Ladies Institute and forty-four women pursued higher education in the basement of the Baptist Church in Granville, Ohio. In 1887, after graduating two classes, the institute developed into The Shepardson College for Women. Shepardson had its own campus separate from Denison, although the women of Shepardson were able to recite in classes at Denison. In 1900, Shepardson College was incorporated into Denison University.¹

In addition to the long history of women students, Denison has given early support to a women's studies program. Denison documents indicate that Denison was the first college in the country to require all students to take a course in diversity to create a well-rounded liberal arts education. In May, 1990, at the tenth year anniversary of the minority studies/women's studies requirement, Johnetta Cole, President of Spelman College, recognized Denison as "ahead of many institutions and many individuals"² in terms of curriculum reform.

Curriculum: In 1981 Denison established a women's studies minor in response to growing interest in the field as an academic course of study. At this time, students had to take a total of six courses: four women's studies courses and two courses from black studies, women and development, or ethnic studies. This program was reformed to require minors to complete 24 credits which included Women's Studies 101 (Issues in Feminism); an advanced seminar in women's studies which focused on feminist theory, one course on women of color and one course from Black studies. In the spring of 1998, the minor requirements were altered to add a Cultural and Social Methods class.

In 1983 a major in women's studies was established. Prior to this date, individually designed majors were possible. In March of 1983, a proposal was made to the Academic Affairs Council by the Women's Studies Committee, made up of faculty from thirteen departments and several other consultants. The proposal written by Dr. Ann Fitzgerald, set out the following explanation for the women's studies major:

Currently the Individually Designed Major Committee serves the student who wants to create a major not formally represented in the curriculum. But since we have a vital and active Women's Studies Program on this campus--encompassing a number of courses and faculty as well as a minor--it seems a much more efficient use of time and resources to establish a formal major.

More important, establishing a major makes apparent to students

¹"A History," compiled article with information from Denison, The Story of an Ohio School, Denison University Centennial History 1831-1931, and Denison University Memorial 1907, date unknown.

²Cole, Johnetta, "Women's Studies/Minority Studies: A Necessity for Us All," Special Anniversary Joint Issue of the Denison Women's Studies Newsletter and Amandla, May, 1990.

III. Program Development: 1990-1993

The next sections focus on two periods within the last ten years. The first from 1990-1993 was a period of consolidation with fewer changes. The second period from 1993-1999 has been a period of more marked change.

Highlights in Curriculum Developments: Highlights include the following:

- (1) The introductory level course, Issues in Feminism, was changed from a credit/no credit course to a graded course.
- (2) The second major was recruited in women's studies and one minor was recruited. This was the beginning point for the development of majors and minors.
- (3) Criteria were developed for determining which courses would count as women's studies courses.
- (4) Women's studies courses were given a separate place in the course schedule so that faculty, staff, and students could see the courses more easily.
- (5) The Nan Nowik awards were used to acknowledge outstanding student work in the field. The Nan Nowik Award is given in honor of Nan Nowik an associate professor of English who served to help found the Women's Studies Program and the Women's Resource Center. The award is given for work in the following categories: 1. Feminist Activism, 2. Senior Academic Scholarship, 3. Essay, 4. Feminist Creative Expression.

Highlights in Faculty Development and Connections with other Universities:

- (1) Additional connections were made with the National Women's Studies Association, which is the professional academic organization for women's studies scholars. While at Denison, Professor Van Dyke served as Chair of the Lesbian Caucus of this organization, which is a key position.
- (2) A new mission statement was developed for the program which is reflected in the materials prepared for the Afact sheet@ and other publications.
- (3) Faculty participated in learning communities in which Denison faculty with expertise in women's studies prepared bibliography and presentations on scholarship in their areas. These presentations were developed from the viewpoint of a range of disciplinary foci. The university provided financial support to these faculty for this work. This strengthened the intellectual ties among faculty who taught women's studies courses.
- (4) Denison Women's Studies played an active role in the GLCA Women's Studies Committee. This organization itself has a national reputation and some see it as the forerunner to the National Women's Studies Association.
- (5) Faculty were encouraged to seek summer money to develop courses that would be cross-listed with women's studies.
- (6) A senior seminar that focused on feminist theory was developed for women's studies majors. The first major took this seminar.
- (7) Faculty were encouraged to attend a variety of women's studies conferences and women's studies meetings had some focus on conference opportunities.

(2) Feminist Theory was developed in 1993 by Eloise Buker as the advanced seminar, required for majors and minors. This course focuses on feminist theories which include liberal feminism, marxist feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism and postmodern feminism. This course has been taught once a year since 1993 and is presently not cross-listed with other disciplines. Since 1993 many new courses have been added to provide a range of courses for students. New courses are listed at the end of the report.

(4) The curriculum was recently revised to add a feminist methods class. Toni King developed the Cultural Methods course to serve minors and majors and taught it for the first time in the fall of 1998. This has produced two different sets of faculty conversations—those interested in feminist theory and those interested in feminist methods. Such a discussion took place in the spring of 1999.

(5) We have worked out several women's studies double major honors research projects, so that students can fulfill their double majors with research projects that make sense in both disciplines. While the director has served as primary advisory in several women's studies research projects and served as a reader on others, it is important that students be encouraged to work with the faculty who have expertise in their areas of interest.

(6) Courses are assessed with the quantitative instrument used by the university. Many faculty also add a qualitative assessment. Faculty visit each Other's courses. Syllabi are collected. Overlaps in texts are discussed. (The overlap that existed three years ago has been addressed and so majors and minors do not find themselves encountering it.) Senior majors are asked to complete an exit interview. Initially this was done through in-depth interviews but proved unsatisfactory because interviews were not recorded and information was lost. Students now respond to the same set of questions through a written assessment that is completed at the end of their senior year. However, students are encouraged to make suggestions for program development and many of these suggestions have been quite helpful. Alumni are continually contacted and asked to reflect on their educational experience in the light of their current intellectual needs. Program assessment occurs in a regular basis in an informal way.

(8) We have provided a structured outline for senior research projects. We need to continue to work in coordinating senior projects for double majors in ways that are productive and effective.

(9) Future Plans and Possibilities: The program hopes to have more team-teaching and to continue to develop new courses.

Student Support and Community Development: To recruit interested students, the director held special meetings with Admissions to explain the Women's studies major and minor, met with parents and high school counselors and created materials to distribute to explain Women's studies as a field of study. Recently three faculty attended this meeting with Admissions, which was quite productive. Regular presentations have been made by the director and faculty at honors events, faculty fairs, and other events. The program has developed a home page, admission flyers and student handbooks which includes a special section on AWho Are Our Professors, @ list of courses, research guidelines, and other materials. Faculty student dinners have helped introduce faculty and students. In the spring of 1999 all faculty teaching women's studies courses were asked for a list of students interested in women's studies; they were sent a letter inviting them to the dinner, as well as to come by the office to speak with the

Because the office manager is half-time, this responsibility is shared between the office manager and the director.

(3) The development of e-mail strings and regular communication patterns with minors, majors, and faculty announces events and encourages participation. Periodic personal letters to all majors and minors add another dimension.

(4) Future Possibilities: We are developing an alumni newsletter focused on the theme *Ahow do you apply your women's studies courses to your work?*@ We have two articles already for this from alumni and one from a current student who is studying abroad.

(5) We could offer more summer opportunities for work in the Women's Studies office. More students= are attending the NWSA and GLCA women's studies conferences to give papers. Jennifer Skillicorn attended the 1998 NWSA conference to give a paper. A panel of students presented a collective work on the body which was directed by Gill Wright Miller. In 1997, Rae Ellen Douglas, attended NWSA to give a paper with Eloise Buker and Gill Miller.

(6) A group of students attended the OSU Women's Studies celebration event of 1997. More outreach to other campuses might well involve students in productive ways.

V. Women's Studies Intellectual Work at Denison

Retreats and Assessment: Four Women's Studies retreats in 1993, 1995, 1997, and 1998 have served to guide the program both administratively and intellectually. The 1993 retreat was designed as a program review since the newly created director was from an outside program and not yet committed to Denison. We have had four retreats--three off-campus and one on campus.

Each retreat has involved about 20 faculty with one or two students in attendance. One retreat invited all majors and minors.

Symposia: Women's Studies has \$300 a year to plan symposia. This is insufficient to bring a scholar to campus. In the summers, the director has obtained additional funds from the Denison Lecture Fund, administered by Keith Boone, and from the Goodspeed Lectures, administered by David Woodyard. This has enabled the program to bring prominent feminist scholars to campus including such scholars as: Patricia Hill Collins, Sandra Harding, Jean Bethke Elshtain, Laurel Richardson, Mary Hawkesworth, Sita Ranchod-Nilsson and others. In general, two scholars with national reputations are brought to campus each year, and the director has planned a series of other symposia with scholars from Denison and Ohio State.

In 1997 we sponsored one three day faculty workshop on postmodernism in which 12 faculty wrote position papers on postmodernism and engaged in a dialogue with Michael J. Shapiro, University of Hawaii, who focused a college convocation on ethnicity and postmodernism. The postmodern workshop was given high marks because it provided intellectual leadership for the campus and showed scholars in collaboration with others. However, it also may have associated the program too closely with one approach to analysis.

It would be good to plan symposia so that themes were coordinated with another units. Suzanne Condray has volunteered to organize some symposia for the future. Focus might be developed by applying postmodern analyses to cultural studies, black studies, ethnic studies, and white critical studies. Other theoretical approaches could be explored. Some faculty are interested in a series of conversations that focus on *Awhat is women's studies*@ or

use the office space in the evenings for work on their projects but this proved to be unworkable. We have managed to gain one old computer to loan to senior students who are working on projects. In moving from Fellows what was lost was the close proximity of Women's Programs and Women's Studies. While there might be advantages in symbolizing the different missions of these units, it is also very handy to have them together. New spaces create new types of visibility. This new space has helped the workday to be more efficient.

However, faculty who teach courses for women's studies but who do not have other department affiliations need space. It would also be good to provide space for special projects that are developed by the program. More meeting space would be beneficial as well.

Connections with other Universities: For the last six years the program has continued to participate in GLCA Women's Studies activities, and Denison will host the 2000 Denison GLCA Women's Studies Conference. We regularly send faculty to the National Women's Studies Association Conferences. The director maintains connections with faculty who direct programs on other campuses and feminist scholars especially in the area of feminist theory. In particular this includes: (1) Nancy Hartsock, University of Washington (new PHD program in women's studies), (2) Shane Phelan, Women's Studies Director, University of New Mexico, (3) Suzanne Marilley, starting a new women's studies program at Capital University, (4) Sue Thomas, Womens Studies Director at Georgetown, (5) Mary Hawkesworth, Director of the Eagleton Institute on Women and Politics at Rutgers. The director served as the outsider reviewer for the Otterbein Women's Studies Program. Faculty serve on the editorial board of key feminist journals and as reviewers for such journals as *Feminist Therapy*, *Women & Politics*, *Hypatia*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, and *Feminist Teacher*. We hope to maintain our connections with the Ohio State University program. We hope to develop more connections with women's studies programs in Ohio. We have become part of a network of Ohio Women's studies programs.

Composition and Selection: The committee is composed primarily of faculty who teach in the program or who are planning to teach in the program. Normally, professional faculty from the library and the director of Women's programs serve on the committee. Committee members self-select for this responsibility. In April or May, they notify the director of their willingness to serve the next academic year. In the fall, new faculty interested in Women's studies who have just joined Denison are extended an invitation to serve for that academic year. Two students who are Women's studies majors or minors serve on the committee: one is a senior and one a junior. The junior member continues to serve if she or he wishes for the following year.

Associate Members of Women's Studies

Duties: Associate members serve to inform the campus about Women's studies events and activities and to work on committee projects when they chose. Associate members are asked to involve themselves in some activity during the year to affirm their interest in the work of the program. This might involve attending planned events, occasionally attending committee meetings, and or working with students, staff or faculty in relationship to Women's studies projects. Associate members are ask to consider their own talents and provide some service to the program over the course of the year. They receive information about all events through either hard copies or e-mail communication. They also regularly receive information about conferences through the program newsletter, bibliographic information, and updates on national Women's studies debates and concerns that come to the program through list serves, personal communication, and/or mailings. Presently there are 45 on this list, which combines with the committee to make a total of 62 who regularly receive such communication.

Composition and Selection: Faculty and professional staff who are interested in the academic work of Women's studies are encouraged to become associate members.

Special Committees

Curriculum Committee: This committee is composed of 3-4 persons who approve new on-going courses. The director sends them course proposals that appear to fit the Women's studies criteria for courses. All courses listed as Women's studies courses must be approved by the Program. The committee examines the courses, discusses them among themselves, and reports their reflections to the director. Sometimes courses are revised on the basis of their suggestions. Sometimes courses that lack sufficient focus on women and/or feminist scholarship are not approved. The director approves topics courses and one time only courses. But the director may, if time permits, ask for advice on these courses as well. The director asks the curriculum committee for advice on personnel decision that involve non-tenure track line hires, one course only appointments, and/or other matters related to courses.

Review Committee for Toni King: This committee has the responsibility of serving as a Adepartment@ to review Professor King for tenure and promotion. John Jackson and Eloise Buker jointly chair this committee as tenured members of the two programs. In consultation with

rank in their Ahome@ department. To hold this title faculty must continue to teach one course, at least every other year, that is listed as a Women's studies course. Leaves and other matters will be taken into account in calculating this. This policy is more carefully elaborated in a separate statement. The title is officially awarded by the provost on the recommendation of the program. This policy was developed approved by the President, Provost, and President=s Advisory Committee. Faculty do not need to hold this title to teach Women's studies courses.

Independent Scholar

Scholars, with doctorates who reside near Denison and who wish a university affiliation may apply to Denison for an affiliation with an academic program or department. They apply through the program and/or department to the provost to become an affiliated scholar. The application includes an academic vita. The provost then awards the affiliated scholar status which means that these scholars have access to the library and to other such resources as can be made available to them for their work. These scholars may use their affiliation to apply for grants. This relationship is on-going. The first Women's studies scholar to hold such an appointment is Dr. Marci McCaulay. There are no particular duties associated with this position but it is expected that the scholar will have some sort of relationship with the program and/or department.

Sue Houchins, AA Family Affair: Blood/Bluhd-Sisters/Sistahs"

Bernardita Llanos presents "The Women's Movement and Feminist Identity in Latin America," an R.C. Good "Learning From One Another" project

Caroline Whitbeck, MIT, ADoing Justice to Moral Problems

Patricia Hill Collins, University of Cincinnati, AFighting Words: Black Feminist Thought as Social Theory.@

Sandra Harding, University of California, Los Angeles, AIs Modern Science an Ethno-science?@

1995-1996

Kelly Brown Douglas, Howard School of Religion, Denison Alumna, Goodspeed Lecture Series, Co-sponsored with Religion

Stephanie Spears, Ohio State University, "A Paradox of Feminism: What Identity Theory Reveals About the Reluctance to Assume the Label 'Feminist'"

Joy Sperling, Associate Professor and Chair of the Art Department, Denison University, "Women, Art and Activism in the 80's and 90's"

Sita Ranchod-Nilsson, Iowa State University and Claire Robertson, Ohio State University, AWomen and Political Change in Sub-Saharan Africa: Does the State Really Matter?,@

Denison Women's Research Team, AAn Iconography of Motherhood.@

Mary Hawkesworth, University of Louisville, AMapping Gender=s Terrain: Psyche, Self and Social Relations.@

1996-1997

Some focus was on the work of the Laura C. Harris chair, Robin Bartlett.

Robin Bartlett, "Team Learning: Cooperative Teaching Strategies for a Competitive Environment."

Robin Bartlett "Implementing Team Learning: A Workshop for Denison Faculty."

Valerie Lee, Ohio State University, English and Women's Studies, "Sistah Conjurers: Black Women's Literature & Folk Medicine."

Robin Bartlett, "A Demonstration of Team Learning Across the Disciplines."

Betty D. Montgomery, "Women and Politics: The Perspective of the Attorney General on Public Life,"

Betty D. Montgomery serves as the Ohio Attorney General.

Postmodern Workshop, Michael Shapiro, University of Hawaii, AViolent Cartographies@ with Denison Faculty and position papers.

Robin Bartlett, ARace and Gender in the Classroom.@

1997-1998

A series on distinguished speakers in political science was co-sponsored by Women's Studies and the International Studies Program.

Helen Liggett, Cleveland State University, "Mannequin Moments".

Roundtable on Women and Leadership, Moderated by Monica Ayala with presentations by students:

Jessica Turk, Christina Millender and faculty: Marlene Tromp, Toni King, Anne Shaver.

Cynthia Enloe, Clark University, ASneakers: The Sexual Politics of Global Sneakers@

Janice Love, University of South Carolina, AControversies among Christians: Churches in International Affairs.@