

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST TO TERMINATE THE Ph.D. PROGRAM IN  
WOMEN'S STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA**

**Action Requested:** Consider approval of the request by the University of Iowa to terminate the Ph.D. Program in Women's Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

**Executive Summary:** The request to terminate the Program resulted from an assessment of the need for the program undertaken by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and a recommendation from the newly reconfigured Department of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies to terminate the program. This request was reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue "educational excellence and impact."

**Background:**

- ◇ Description of program. The Ph.D. Program in Women's Studies was approved by the Board of Regents in July 1997 and subsequently implemented by the University of Iowa. The program emphasizes a broad approach to feminist studies, focused not only on scholarship on and about women but also on the application of theoretical and methodological models to a range of cultural issues that affect both men and women. It was designed to prepare students for an academic job market and requires students to complete at least 72 semester hours of graduate level coursework, including the dissertation. The program relies on the strength of the faculty and the curriculum.
- ◇ Reason for proposed termination. After early interest in the Ph.D. program, the Department of Women's Studies had several faculty resignations and struggled to attract high quality Ph.D. students. The Department was reduced to six tenure-line faculty members with only partial appointments, resulting in fewer than 2 FTE in Women's Studies. Following a review of the Department of Women's Studies in 2006-2007, the College of Liberal Arts and Science appointed a task force to examine faculty expertise, curriculum, and student options in the broader area of gender studies. In December 2007, the Task Force recommended that Women's Studies be merged with the certificate program in Sexuality Studies. To accomplish this merger, the task force recommended that new admissions to the program be suspended to allow the Department time to merge with the certificate program in Sexuality Studies. The Board of Regents approved the suspension of admissions to the program in May 2008 (Agenda Item 3j).

During the suspension, the faculty focused on the B.A. program in Women's Studies, curriculum revision, and mentoring the already enrolled Ph.D. students. They also worked on developing a unified core curriculum leading to a revised degree and certificate program in gender studies. This resulted in the program's consolidation with the Department of Sexuality Studies and renaming the Department of Women's Studies as the Department of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies (Agenda Item 6j, April 2010).

- ◇ Impact on resources. There are no immediate cost-savings expected, although the merger of the Department of Women's Studies and the Sexuality Studies Program into the new Department of Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies will produce greater efficiency and synergy. Faculty members in the program who had previously resigned were not replaced.

- ◇ Impact on workforce. The proposed program termination is not expected to affect the workforce needs of the state.
- ◇ Alternative programming. Students interested in graduate level programming will have the opportunity to enroll in the new 25-credit hour graduate certificate program in Gender, Women's, and Sexuality Studies. Students who pursue a graduate degree in another discipline will receive theoretical and methodological training from the certificate program. Students who are interested in pursuing a Ph.D. program in Women's Studies must do so elsewhere, although there are only a few institutions that offer a "free-standing" Ph.D. program in Women's Studies.
- ◇ Student data. Between 2005 and 2008, there were 109 applications to the program which resulted in 11 students admitted to the program and two new enrollees. The Fall enrollment fell from 13 students in 2005 to five students in 2010. During that period, there were five graduates of the program.
- ◇ Effect on current students. No students have been admitted into the Ph.D. program since admissions were suspended in 2008. Currently, there are five students enrolled in the program. All have passed their comprehensive examinations; one is expected to graduate in 2010-2011. The other four students will continue to be mentored until they complete their dissertations and graduate.
- ◇ Effective date of termination. If the proposed program termination is approved by the Board, suspension of new admissions to the program will continue in effect. Termination of the program will become effective upon completion of the program by the currently enrolled four students.