Dean’s Response to the Program Review Committee’s Final Report
Women’s Studies Program
August 2006

Systematic study of women and gender has reshaped scholarship in the social sciences, arts, humanities, education and other areas during the past forty years. While these issues have become a central part of many traditional academic disciplines, Women’s Studies Programs remain critical to interdisciplinary study of women and gender, serve as spaces to bring faculty with common interests in these issues together across disciplines, foster interdisciplinary research, and offer curricula that contribute to the intellectual and personal growth of students. Even with the limited resources it possesses, BGSU’s Women’s Studies Program can boast a proud tradition of serving faculty and students and helping make interdisciplinary study of women and gender an important part of the intellectual landscape of our campus. The program staffs an important general education course, supports a major and minor, and contributes to graduate education through its contributions to the American Culture Studies Program and its graduate certificate program. While the program faces challenges in recruiting majors and minors and staffing courses, the Program Review Committee’s report underscores its many contributions to the University and its students and its potential for additional successes.

In her response to the PRC’s report, Dr. Vikki Krane, the program’s director, agrees with the committee’s recommendations. She also offers thoughtful ideas for how the program can address many of the recommendations. Her response is typical of the strong leadership she has provided for the program during the past three years and suggests the results she and her colleagues are likely to achieve in her next term as director.

I accept the recommendations of the PRC with the following qualifications and stipulations:

1. Dr. Krane has outlined a prudent strategy for recruiting additional majors and minors. I especially endorse her idea of recruiting minors by highlighting the ways a minor in women’s studies complements a wide variety of majors and can help students achieve career objectives. The College will work with Dr. Krane and her colleagues to support their efforts. I ask that she include information on the program’s recruitment efforts and their results in annual program review updates.

2. I applaud Dr. Krane’s commitment to provide greater direction for students in developing their portfolios and to experiment with e-portfolios as a vehicle for improving the quality of student portfolios. I ask that she include updates on these activities and the results of assessment in her annual assessment reports to the College. While assessment of the learning outcomes for WS 200 is important, I agree with Dr. Krane that developing greater uniformity and quality across sections of this course should be a higher priority. I ask that she prepare a brief report on how the program plans to achieve these objectives and submit it to the College as part of Women’s Studies’ program review update in summer 2007.

3. The program is well along with developing a two-semester sequence on feminism to be required of all majors. I agree with Dr. Krane that development of a separate course on
international feminism would not be realistic at this point given staffing issues, the small number of majors, and other courses already in development.

4. Pressing ahead with curriculum modifications that will assign regular course numbers to courses currently being offered as topics courses and cross-listing them with the departments of the faculty members who teach them is imperative. The College stands ready to assist in this process. I will also ask Dr. Roger Thibault, Associate Dean for Budget and Planning, to work with Dr. Krane to facilitate scheduling of these courses in a manner that serves the Women’s Studies Program and its students.

5. Recruiting faculty from areas that are currently underrepresented in the program (e.g., the sciences) is an important way to enhance the program’s interdisciplinarity. Dr. Krane has good ideas for reaching out to current BGSU faculty who have scholarly or teaching interests in issues of gender and recruiting them to serve as affiliated faculty. In considering requests for positions from departments, the College will look with favor on those that offer the opportunity to add faculty with scholarly interests in gender to departments currently lacking such expertise.

6. As Dr. Krane indicates, the College has already taken steps to provide release time for the program’s undergraduate coordinator. That came about through negotiation between the College and the program director. The College does not allow chairs and directors unilaterally to set teaching loads for their faculty. Because of the real costs incurred by granting release time, the College must have the final say in such decisions if it is to maintain control over its budget.

7. The College encourages all units to identify opportunities they may have to develop opportunities to generate external support, whether through grants, private gifts, or partnerships with community partners. Given the small size of the staff and faculty in Women’s Studies and the other issues confronting the program, I do not believe it is prudent to ask the director to develop and execute a plan for enhancing external support at this time. I do ask the director to be alert for such opportunities and to report in annual program review reports on opportunities that have been identified and are being pursued.

8. During the 2004-05 academic year, the Women’s Studies program developed an outstanding initiative to reach out to women who were pre-Title IX athletes at BGSU. The program was highly successful in renewing ties with alums who may have an interest in women’s issues, even though they were not Women’s Studies majors. The care with which this initiative was developed and executed indicates that the program has a commitment to development. The College will consult with the program director to explore opportunities for further development activities aimed at alums who were majors or who may have a special interest in women’s issues.

9. I ask the director to report on engagement opportunities and activities in annual program review updates.

10. Recruitment of students and faculty, assessment, and outreach to alumni and friends are important issues. Dr. Krane has addressed these issues in her response and the College has indicated its willingness to deal with these matters in my previous comments.

While the Women’s Studies Program faces challenges, it has a strong record of success and has made—and continues to make—important contributions to teaching and research at BGSU. The program has strong leadership and a dedicated core and affiliated faculty that,
working together with the College, can overcome many of these challenges in the coming years to assure that Women’s Studies remains a strong presence on our campus.

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Donald G. Nieman, Dean       Date

Concurred:

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John W. Folkins, Provost      Date