MEMO

July 22, 2010

To: Jeff Hecker, Dean
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

From: Ann Schonberger, Director
Women in the Curriculum and Women’s Studies Program

We are requesting that you remove the graduate concentrations in Women’s Studies from the list of programs to be suspended or eliminated. We think that they can be maintained at a minimal cost, far outweighed by their intellectual importance to UMaine graduate students and their future employability.

Here are our reasons:
1. Not only are we the only source of graduate work in Women’s Studies in Maine, but we are also the only source in northern New England.

2. Students who have chosen the concentration at the doctoral or masters level are often students already here in graduate degree programs, but there are also some excellent students who chose our graduate school because of the availability of the Women’s Studies concentrations. (One example is Heather Lakey, who graduated from COA, then earned a masters degree in Philosophy at the U. of Oregon. She came back to Maine to earn an IPhD, concentrating in Philosophy and Feminist Theory here at UMaine. Peggy Solic will earn an MA in History in August and also chose UMaine because she could do the concentration. A new History student will enter this fall with that goal.)

3. Since we developed our concentrations in Women’s Studies, the English Department has developed a concentration in Gender Studies, another option to enhance their masters degree. They require WST 510, our advanced course in feminist theory. We would want to maintain that course in any case.

4. The current job market in higher education, as well as in social services, values the addition/inclusion of Women’s Studies to more traditional fields. A list of all our graduates is appended to this document. Here are some examples of recent graduates who were competitive for their positions because of their Women’s Studies concentrations.
   a. Shannon Risk, Asst. Prof. of History at Niagara University, was told she was chosen over the others interviewed because of her Women’s Studies concentration. (She sent you a letter in March with the details.)
   b. Julie-Ann Scott, Asst. Prof. of Storytelling and Performance at U. North Carolina/Wilmington will start this fall and teach a course on women in that area.
   c. Erin Severs has just gotten a position teaching developmental writing at Mohawk Valley Community College, partly on the strength of the paper she wrote for WST 580.
d. Susan Iverson, who teaches in Higher Education at Kent State, credited her hiring to being able to bring women’s issues into her field of expertise.

e. Regina Rooney has just been hired as a regular employee at Spruce Run as Resource Development Coordinator, a position that involves considerable grant writing, making the best use of her English and her Women’s Studies training.

5. Based on the information we have on the work lives of our undergraduate majors and minors, we think the graduate concentrators who do not seek work in higher education or social services will be competitive for jobs in a wide variety of fields, especially business and international affairs.

6. A wide variety of faculty serves on committees for students in the Women’s Studies graduate concentrations. For those in departments without graduate programs (eg. Sociology and Philosophy), this has been a good opportunity to work with graduate students, work which might help our college retain such talented colleagues.

7. Given all the benefits of the availability of our Women’s Studies concentrations at the masters and doctoral levels, the cost is very minimal. At the current pay levels, the cost would be $5134.

   WST 510 $3300 (Elizabeth Nieman)
   WST 520 $1834 (Renate Klein, one half)
   Total $5134

The rest of the work on the graduate courses is built into Mazie’s job description (one half of WST 520 and working with the students who sign up for WST 580, which is a practicum assisting in WST 101). For next year we have $5000 promised from VP Eckardt. In the years following we can get that amount of money from one of two places. Either we can take it from our own line of section money ($23,986), or, if we stop having WIC grants, we can take the money out of that line ($9565).

In summary, we think the Women’s Studies graduate concentrations are a very important educational component to preserve, especially when that can be done so economically. We hope you agree.

Cc: Dan Sandweiss, Scott Delcourt