

# Duke UNIVERSITY

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Date: January 12, 2016

To: Dr. Sally Kornbluth, Provost, Duke University  
Dr. Keith Whitfield, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Duke University  
Dr. Valerie Ashby, Dean, Trinity College of Arts and Science, Duke University

From: Dr. Linda M. Burton, Dean of Social Sciences, Duke University *Linda M. Burton*

Re: Proposal for Name Change for the Program in Women's Studies

I write to formally submit the required materials for consideration of a name change for the Program in Women's Studies. The program is requesting that their name be changed to the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies. Supporting materials for this request include the attached letter from the Program Chair, Dr. Priscilla Wald, and the required narrative outlining the rationale for the change.

As I understand the process, the materials are required to be discussed and approved by the Program in Woman's Studies faculty and the Dean of Arts and Science's governing body as initial steps. Both units have unanimously approved the name change. With this level of approval now complete, the Faculty Handbook indicates that the Provost and Vice Provost for Academic Affairs represent the next level of review. If they grant approval, then the materials are submitted by them to be reviewed by the Academic Programs Committee (APC). If the APC recommendation is positive the Provost forwards the proposal to the Executive Committee of the Academic Council (ECAC) for its consideration and recommendation. ECAC then reviews the proposal and schedules a presentation of the materials to the Academic Council. If approved, the Council forwards the resolution to the Provost, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, and the University Secretary for presentation to and approval by the Board of Trustees.

I apologize if the lengthy delineation of the process noted above is a bit much, but I hoped it might cut down on the time you might spend looking up this process in

the Faculty Handbook. I thoroughly support this name change and hope that you will too.

Thank you.

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*[Faint handwritten signature]*

December 23, 2015

Linda Burton

Social Science Dean

Duke University

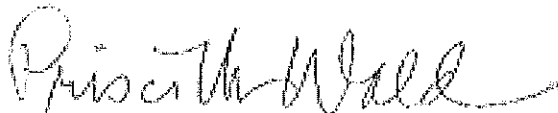
Durham, North Carolina

Dear Linda:

I write in strong support of the change of the name of the Program in Women's Studies to the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies. I was not present at the initial deliberations and decision to make this change, but I know that the steering committee, comprised of the primary members of the Program, discussed the change extensively and that the final change has the unanimous support of that group. The change reflects the changes that have happened in the field of Women's Studies, and it is consistent with changes that are happening in departments and programs nationally. We all feel that it better registers the work we do in the program both in our scholarship and in our classrooms.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Priscilla Wald

Margaret Taylor Smith Director of Women's Studies

## **Proposal to change of the name of the Program in Women's Studies to the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies**

The Program in Women's Studies at Duke University proposes to change its name to the Program in *Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*. The title of women's studies is a legacy term that represents of the context and commitments of the field's origins. The proposed name better captures the realities of the Duke program and of the field in general and will make the program's identity more legible to the university community.

### **Background**

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, "Women's Studies" began as an activist-led effort to challenge forms of knowledge that perpetuated the subordination of women to men. Scholars aimed to rectify several problems: the widespread neglect of women in established scholarship, the near-monopoly of male researchers in producing research on women, a bias that had harmful real-world effects (e.g., in psychiatry), and the resulting androcentric bias that characterized prevailing understandings of human history, human nature, culture, and society. This new field differentiated itself from existing disciplinary scholarship on women through a critical emphasis on systemic power inequality. While it drew on methods and theories from a wide range of disciplinary traditions, Women's Studies defined a new body of interdisciplinary scholarship organized by an explicitly feminist analysis of gender as a systemic social formation. Such interdisciplinary feminist analysis radically transformed the study of women's lives and identities, with far-reaching effects in public life (for example, recasting conceptions of rape) and in the academy, where it transformed discipline-based studies of women, gender, and sexuality. At the time Women's Studies first developed as a field, the term "gender" was not yet in circulation beyond discussions of grammar or particular medical and psychological specializations. But the feminist approach of women emphasized women in relational and social contexts, initially through the vocabulary of sex roles.

Because the field was committed to predicating the analysis of human worlds on women, it became defined by that object, with major journals titled *Women's Studies Quarterly* (now called *WSQ*) or *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. The national organization of the field remains named The National Women's Studies Association. However, from the start, the field was characterized by its analytical approach of feminist interpretation, and feminist studies was an operational synonym for Women's Studies, providing the title for many events, courses, and journals (for example, *Feminist Studies*). From its start, the field of Women's Studies offered a social, contextual understanding that analyzed women in relation to men, sexuality, and what soon came to be called gender, as distinct from sex. As *gender* came to replace *women* as the organizing principle in the field over the 1970s, the view of gender also expanded from a singular focus on male/female difference to one integrating a range of axes of social demarcation, a by-now influential approach

known as intersectionality. Women's Studies also provided an intellectual space for studies of sexuality that were frank about their political implications. Women's Studies launched many of the earliest courses on lesbian, gay, and transgender issues. The actual scope of Women's Studies, therefore, has never been reducible to the object of women. Indeed, the field has become a major site for scholarship that investigates the relation of gender – including masculinity and transgender – to race, sexuality, and other axes of differentiation.

Under a range of names, the field of Women's Studies is by now an established interdisciplinary field, represented in most colleges and universities in the United States, including community colleges, and in curricula in major universities internationally. This representation takes different institutional forms, ranging from full departments with 12 or more FTEs to programs supported by one-half of a faculty line and voluntary contributions by faculty. Many accredited colleges offer a major; nearly all offer a minor or certificate. There are at least 18 PhD programs in the Women's/Gender Studies field in the US and a far greater number of MA programs. In addition, there are allied specialty accreditations in such fields as Gender and Development. The priority of the National Women's Studies Association is to increase diversity in the field, and accordingly offers targeted fellowships and special events for faculty from underrepresented groups in the academy.

The institutional forms of sexuality studies, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBTQ) studies, or Queer Studies show even more variation. Curricular offerings in these fields are increasing markedly, although rarely if ever forming an autonomous major. (From 2006 to 2012, Duke University was one of the few U.S. universities to offer a free standing undergraduate program in sexuality studies.) The City University of New York (CUNY) houses a Center for Lesbian, Gay, and Transgender Studies, which programs events and offers fellowships in the field. The University of Arizona (Tuscon) is developing a focus on Transgender Studies, with four new tenure-track lines in this field that supplement existing faculty strengths. While it may seem counterintuitive to link transgender studies with sexuality studies (rather than place it under an umbrella of gender studies), this connection reflects its particular history as a field of intellectual analysis that developed within LGBT intellectual advocacy that differentiates itself from psychological and medical research on transgender issues. Leading interdisciplinary journals in these fields include *Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* and *Transgender Studies Quarterly* (both Duke University Press), *Sexualities* (UK), and the *Journal of the History of Sexuality*. In the sciences, these fields are represented in *The Annual Review of Sex Research*, among other periodicals.

The domains of sexuality, gender, and feminist studies are supported by a large number of journals, topical workshops, and research institutes, such as those at Brown, Michigan, Columbia, and NYU universities. There are post-doctoral fellowships in Women's/Gender studies offered at various universities and increasingly in sexuality studies, for example a fellowship in LGBT studies at Yale

University and four current fellows in sexuality studies at the Humanities Center at University of Pennsylvania.

### **Women's Studies at Duke University**

Women's Studies at Duke began in 1983 at the instigation of the late Dr. Ernestine Friedl, then Dean of Trinity College. Under the leadership of Dr. Jean O'Barr, the first Director, the Program was comprised of faculty from around campus and worked both to develop a curriculum that was unique to this interdisciplinary field and to supplement and ultimately help to transform the curriculum of the home departments of the affiliated faculty. Graduate courses began in 1987 and the undergraduate major was established in 1994. In the late 1990s, an external review committee recommended that the Duke administration authorize four tenure and tenure-track lines in the Program in Women's Studies. The administration responded by authorizing those lines, as well as a search for a Director. Dr. Robyn Wiegman was hired in 2000 as the Margaret Taylor Smith Director of Women's Studies.

Duke's program in the study of sexualities, an undergraduate certificate, was an autonomous program housed in Women's Studies until 2012, when the Certificate was suspended and the overall program (courses, events) was integrated into the Women's Studies Program. The graduate certificate in Feminist Studies has 50 to 60 students and many of its graduates now teach in the field. While the field of Women's Studies does not rank programs, anecdotally we know that the Duke program is held in high regard. The reputation of the academic unit is enhanced by the outstanding archives at the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture as well as by Duke University Press, the premier publisher of cutting-edge interdisciplinary feminist and queer scholarship -- especially that centered on race - - and of the top journals in lesbian, gay, queer and transgender studies.

Under Dr. Wiegman, the program underwent a major transformation in curriculum, structure, and profile, yet retained its Women's Studies name as a reflective acknowledgement of its history. Interest in changing the name built among faculty and recent and current directors (Ranjana Khanna, Priscilla Wald), bringing the program to advance this proposal to become the Program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies.

### **Rationale for name change**

The reasons for changing the name of the Women's Studies program to **Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies** are intellectual, institutional, pedagogical, and pragmatic.

#### **1. The name of the field is changing.**

Nationally, most Women's Studies programs have altered their profile, signaled through name changes. Virtually always the new name includes Gender Studies. Often these incorporate sexuality studies. Changing our name to **Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies** is therefore in line with established currents in the US and internationally. Examples of names of programs and/or majors at peer institutions include:

- Stanford University: Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies;
- Northwestern University: Gender and Sexuality Program;
- UC Berkeley: Department of Gender & Women's Studies;
- Yale University: Women, Gender, Sexuality.

In many cases, there is a focus in feminist studies within programs, for example, as a graduate focus or undergraduate concentration in feminist studies. The use of feminist in a title or program is typically a signal that the unit is characterized by a scholarly and theoretical orientation. It is commonly applied to graduate-level training in the field. Programs and centers using the term *feminist* include:

- Colorado College: Feminist and Gender Studies
- Columbia University: Certificate in Feminist Scholarship from the Institute for Research on Women and Gender
- Cornell University: Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- Hampshire College: Feminist Studies Program
- Pitzer College: Gender and Feminist Studies
- Southwestern University: Feminist Studies Program
- UC Santa Barbara: Department of Feminist Studies (Graduate)
- University of Minnesota: Center for Advanced Feminist Studies
- Wesleyan University: Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies
- McGill University: Institute for Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies

2. A name change to Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies **more accurately describes the scope of our program's research, pedagogy, and service.**

- Core faculty in the Program in Women's Studies conduct research on gay identities, animals, men, the social construction of bodies, infrastructure, aesthetics, and other subjects that are not easily conveyed by the title. Secondary faculty further expand this topical breadth.
- Our undergraduate curriculum covers a range of subjects organized by the use of diverse feminist frameworks. For example, the introduction to the major is called Feminist Thought. A gateway course is Gender in Everyday Life and many course titles include gender and sexuality. (In fact, most of our courses using the term *women* are cross-listed and/or taught by non-core faculty.)
- Our active schedule of events is better defined by the proposed new name than the legacy name of Women's Studies. The program's flagship event is called the Feminist Theory Workshop. Another major annual offering is a

lecture in Queer Theory in honor of the innovations of the late former Duke professor, Eve Sedgwick.

- The program has absorbed the undergraduate program in sexuality studies and has submitted a separate proposal to transform the certificate program into a minor (See Appendix). We would like the overall program's name to reflect this integration.
- The new name better reflects our existing graduate program, the certificate in Feminist Studies.

3. There is **support for changing the program's name among stakeholders at Duke.**

- Undergraduates have expressed support for changing the name Women's Studies
- Anecdotally, there is an expectation that a name change may attract more undergraduate students to courses or the major or minors.
- Supporters of sexuality studies and LGBT programming would prefer to see these domains represented at the level of the program name.
- Graduate Students have demonstrated a preference for a program in Feminist Studies over one in Women's Studies.

#### **Relationship to Existing Programs**

- The program's new title, Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies, will not duplicate that of any existing program at Duke.
- Sexuality studies has already been integrated into the Program in Women's Studies, which provides its funding, staff support, and faculty oversight.
- The change will not affect the status or name of our Graduate Certificate program, which would remain the Certificate in Feminist Studies.
- Our undergraduate Major would be renamed Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies to match the new program title.
- This program would have two Minors: a Sexuality Studies Minor and a Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies Minor.

#### **Resources and Operations**

Duke's program in Women's Studies is already functioning as a realized program in Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies without that title. It has course offerings across a range of domains reflective of the field of feminist and sexuality-studies inquiry. The program is known for its well-run system of events, publicity, and student awards. Our core, secondary, affiliated, and graduate faculty flesh out the program's expertise in feminist and queer analysis and in research on gender and sexuality. The new title of GSFS would capture the existing scope of our existing activities.



