



UNIVERSITY
of HAWAII®
HILO

February 2, 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: Randolph G. Moore
Chair, Board of Regents

VIA: David Lassner
President
University of Hawai'i System

VIA: Don Straney *Donald D. Straney*
Chancellor
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

FROM: Matthew Platz *Matthew Platz*
Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
University of Hawai'i at Hilo

SUBJECT: REQUEST TO APPROVE AS "PROVISIONAL" THE BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREE IN GENDER AND WOMEN'S STUDIES, COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII AT HILO

SPECIFIC ACTION REQUESTED:

It is requested that the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents approve as "PROVISIONAL" the Bachelor of Arts degree in Gender and Women's Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Hawai'i at Hilo (UH Hilo).

RECOMMENDED EFFECTIVE DATE:

The recommended effective date is the Fall of 2015.

ADDITIONAL COST:

This interdisciplinary major leverages existing resources to offer a rigorous, relevant, and integrated liberal arts program. As such, it can be offered by the University at no additional instructional cost. Existing courses serve multiple majors and thereby increase enrollments in these courses, as well as increase institutional efficiency. Indeed, the presence of student majors will contribute to the SSH (Student Semester Hours) produced by academic departments in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Business, adding value to existing programs.

PURPOSE:

Gender and Women's Studies will be an interdisciplinary degree program in the College of Arts and Sciences. It focuses on the significance of gender in all aspects of the human-lived experience, especially in the formation of human identities, cultural practices, economic relations, and social institutions. The Program is meant to provide students with an interdisciplinary liberal arts education. Moreover, graduates will be educated people prepared with marketable skills in leadership, effective communication, collaboration, research and analysis, as well as an understanding of social justice in a global environment. This degree prepares students to work in the fields of domestic violence, law, education, health care, and social work.

BACKGROUND:

According to Board of Regents Policy III.A.1.a., related to New Programs, the "board shall approve the establishment of all new instructional programs granting academic credit leading to a degree or credential upon recommendation of the president."¹

This Gender and Women's Studies (GWS) program adds to UH Hilo's small but growing number of interdisciplinary degrees. The Program has evolved from the long-standing Women's Studies Certificate program at the University of Hawai'i Hilo. The program change from the Certificate to the B.A. recognizes that gender is a social and cultural category that encompasses a wide spectrum of identity and behavior. Gender and Women's Studies addresses heterosexual, as well as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (GLBTQI) issues. Its major concern is understanding the roles of gender and human sexuality across diverse contexts. This field also provides the analytical tools to examine relationships of power and privilege in culture and structure.

The outcomes of the Gender and Women's Studies Program support the goals of the UH Hilo campus in key areas, particularly Goals 1, 2, 4, and 5 of the Strategic Plan. Consistent with Goal 1 of the UH Hilo Strategic Plan, students in Gender and Women's Studies will demonstrate critical thinking skills that are relevant to issues of diversity, advocacy, knowledge creation, and global change (especially Pan-Pacific). Allied faculty will provide an environment that fosters mentoring. (This is particularly important for female and other students from groups experiencing marginality.) Students will learn through internships and service learning experiences that connect them to research, policy-making, practice, advocacy, cultural, and justice activities.

In support of Goal 2 of the UH Hilo Strategic Plan, Gender and Women's Studies is well-positioned to become a center of teaching and research excellence on our campus.

¹ This policy may be viewed at the following URL:

<http://www.hawaii.edu/policy/?action=viewPolicy&policySection=rp&policyChapter=5&policyNumber=201&menuView=closed>.

The Certificate Program already draws upon the contributions of excellent faculty. Two allied faculty were the 2011 recipients of Excellence in Teaching Awards; the Instructor for the Women's Studies Certificate received the award in 2010. Allied faculty have a strong record of engaging students in research projects, providing all-important undergraduate research experiences. The organization of this Program will support faculty-to-faculty mentoring, with a strong interdisciplinary approach to fostering professional excellence.

Interdisciplinary programs today promote cutting-edge teaching and knowledge creation. The new program will bring a strong interdisciplinary focus to UH Hilo, in keeping with emergent trends in higher education.²

The principles of Gender and Women's Studies are inextricably linked to issues of diversity (in support of Goal 4 of the UH Hilo Strategic Plan), reflecting the multicultural heritage of Hawai'i (and the Pan-Pacific), and acknowledging the diversity of human sexual identities. An understanding of the intersections of gender and indigenous identity represents a vibrant direction for our campus to highlight in teaching, research, and advocacy. Further, through an understanding of the ways in which social processes and institutions are themselves gendered, the Program will provide a valuable perspective on social and cultural change in the State of Hawai'i.

In support of Goal 5 of the UH Hilo Strategic Plan, the Gender and Women's Studies Program builds the capacity of the community's workforce and leadership needs by promoting an understanding of gender as a fundamental aspect of organizations and institutions. The Program learning outcomes promote critical thinking and communication skill sets that are essential in contemporary workplaces. Graduates will be ready to take on leadership roles, particularly as part of organizations that deal with critical social issues affecting Hawai'i's families and institutions. Internships in the Program will connect students with the workplace, especially in government agencies and the non-profit sector.

Finally, Gender and Women's Studies affirms and supports the University of Hawai'i System Strategic Outcomes and Performance Measures (2008-2015) and the underlying values of "academic rigor and excellence, integrity and service, aloha and respect." The degree will contribute to the expansion of Hawaii's educational capital by serving diverse groups of students, including non-traditional age women and men, many of whom are low-income and Native Hawaiian students from underserved regions (especially of Hawai'i Island) who are looking for a relevant course of study. Our excellent faculty will offer mentoring and extra-curricular research opportunities that will attract, retain, and graduate students who are first-generation college and low-income

² Klein, Julie T. (1999) *Mapping Interdisciplinary Studies: The Academy in Transition*. American Association of Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C.

students, thus increasing the educational capital of the State. This degree will also prepare students for effective engagement and leadership in a global environment by providing a curriculum that promotes respect for diversity, gender equity, and multiculturalism, particularly in the trans-Pacific context. Students will be well-prepared to compete in the global context, particularly in view of the interdisciplinary and global nature of the curriculum in Business, Humanities, and the Social Sciences.

ACTION RECOMMENDED:

It is requested that the University of Hawai'i Board of Regents approve as "PROVISIONAL" the Bachelor of Arts degree in Gender and Women's Studies, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Hawai'i at Hilo.

Attachment:

Program Proposal for Bachelor of Arts in Gender and Women's Studies

CC: Cynthia Quinn, Executive Administrator and Secretary of the Board of Regents