

October 29, 1979

MEMO

TO: Vice President John Quinn, Chairman
Committee on Structure
FROM: Women's Studies Program Steering Committee
RE: Women's Studies and College Restructuring

The Women's Studies Program, as an interdisciplinary program, has looked forward to the end of the present school structure of Brooklyn College, which created arbitrary divisions between disciplines and multiplied the amount of bureaucracy with which we had to negotiate to develop curriculum and staff our courses.

We are concerned, however, as to how an interdisciplinary program might best be placed in a new structure which will have departments as operative modules. Up to this point, we have had the opportunity to experience clearly the disadvantages and the advantages of our non-departmental status. We have not had votes in decision-making processes which directly affected the program, such as curricular and personnel decisions; we have been able to staff our courses only at the suffrance of the chairpersons of departments from which our staff was borrowed. We have had to fight and struggle for the most minimal office support, both in personnel and OTPS. The most serious problem, in fact, has been that survival itself of the Program has been dependent on formal or informal support from various figures in the administration, and has been a continous cliff-hanging struggle.

The advantages of Program status have been of a very different sort, but also considerable. The collective nature of our governance, including equal participation of students, has been a model-in-operation of the feminist, non-hierarchical perspective of the program. The faculty, drawn from many departments of the school, have shared information and insights with each other, and brought new insights back to their home departments and disciplines. Electives with a feminist perspective have become part of the regular curriculum of many departments.

We are proud of what we have done, and have much more to do; our goals include the development of the first Master of Arts program in Women's Studies in New York City and the development of a cohesive program core of inter-

disciplinary electives on the undergraduate level. We realize that the best insurance of stability, staffing control, and validated participation in curriculum and personnel decisions would be found through achieving departmental status. We feel firmly dedicated, however, to collective governance, validated student input, and interdisciplinary sharing of faculty.

We would like to speak for the development of a new structure which would be flexible enough to permit the existence of new models in administration as well as curriculum; we would like to participate in developing a model for a program with departmental delegatives, or a collectively administered department. This might, for example, include a sharing of lines between departments and/or staffing the new structure with faculty on rotating leaves from their "home" departments, or other arrangements which would allow for creative flexibility.