

Report on Center for the Study of Women and Society

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Women's Studies Program

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After spending a day visiting the actual sites where the work is done and talking to faculty and staff directly associated with the Center for the Study of Women and Society (SCWS) and those who have run and are running programs affiliated with it, I concluded, stated here up front and elaborated in this report, the SCWS is poised to give the Graduate Center a more noticeable name, locally, nationally, and internationally as an outstanding place for the study of women and gender. That is its greatest potential and a goal in the future to keep in mind. It is also initiating global outreach. Meanwhile, its programs serve the local academic faculty, students, and interested residents with an interest and commitment to the study of women in society. I begin with its potential that would not require new programs or initiatives but rather build on what is already in place. I believe everything is in place for further development.

My second conclusion focuses more on CSWS's influence on CUNY, first on the Graduate Center itself and then on its impact on the larger CUNY colleges and community colleges, all the people, that is, who work on women, gender, and society. In this area, the work of SCWS far outstrips the relatively modest resources expended on it.

Structure of SCWS:

Currently the structure that serves as the umbrella organization for all SCWS activities is constituted by

1. a Director who is a faculty member receiving a two-course release to direct the activities both of CSWS and the Women's Studies Certificate Program.
2. an Assistant to the Director (APO) who is also responsible for both the Center and the certificate program.

3. an Advisory Board composed of ~~six~~ ^{eight or} faculty members, ^{and 4} by-laws requiring that these members be drawn equally from the humanities and the social sciences. The Advisory Board meets regularly, deciding on issues pertaining both to the curricular program and to the CSWS. ^{collected out}

The structure rationally echoes the current arrangement. However, this arrangement diminishes both sides of the vibrant enterprise. As the self-study points out, the two separate entities, now under one structure, had originally been separate in some ways although working to the same general ends: the study of women, the education of women's studies students, and the commitment to public policies (as a point of origin of the discipline in a social movement).

Recommendations about Structure

One question about the structure is whether it would be best for both entities to have a separate director. This question was answered in 1993 in favor of having one Director/Coordinator of both entities. **I do not recommend at this time that this decision be revised.** For political as well as intellectual reasons, to have both entities supervised by one person with a vision of both related but separate missions promotes a smooth-running enterprise. However, in order to work optimally and to fulfill even its relatively modest and local (though CUNY-wide) mission, the structure must be supplied with adequate resources.

Resources required:

1. **At the very least, an additional APO**, or administrative person of some level who will work exclusively for one unit. Since this report focuses on CSWS, the person would work for the Center, coordinating its activities and making possible the pursuit of grants and other kinds of monies and publicity.
2. Additional support for the Director/Coordinator. The teaching load for the Director is quite heavy, heavier than it would be in other institutions for far less work and less varied work. To teach one course per semester would seem maximum, particularly since the work is more complex than an Executive Officer

of an academic department. In addition, the courses should be centered at the Graduate Center. According to the interviews I had with faculty, filling the position is particularly difficult, not because the program is weak or diminishing or unexciting but because the position is onerous, even for those with administrative skills and propensities. That both parts of the job have been successful is a testimony to sacrifices made that should not be demanded and are a particular sore point in regards to Women's Studies where there is an implicit expectation that women will give extra effort to the program because of ideological commitment and gendered expectations. **In other words, the Director should be a full-time appointment.**

3. An additional college assistant, whose duties would be exclusively at CSWS. This position offers not only help to the Center but training to the student awarded it. I envision that the college assistant would be in charge of publicity and of acting as a liaison between the research activities of the Center and students and faculty not necessarily associated with the Women's Studies Certificate Program.
4. I considered the question of a Deputy Director from the 1993 resolution, a recommendation that was not implemented. If the right circumstances and will to do so come together, a Deputy Director would produce more coordinated programs and could augment the research aspect of CSWS and surely would bring more visibility to the Center. Such a person could serve as an interface between the Graduate Center and New York residents, which is part of its mission of public programs. In addition such a person could more actively pursue international fellows who would add intellectual breadth to the Center. The person, either called a Deputy or Assistant Director would work with the APO to work seriously for grant-writing, the success of which is measured in years of preparation and multiple submissions; it requires great amounts of time. Currently, even with augmented staff as above, there would be no one with the expertise or specific job description to write grants, and would benefit from the guidance of Brian Schwartz and his office. I believe this would be a long-term and recommended goal.

The first three are urgent recommendations, the fourth would take CSWS to a better, fully professional level of functioning.

Selected initiatives and activities under the umbrella of CSWS

Women's Studies Discipline Council This activity, somewhat buried in the report, adds to the extraordinary vitality of the Center's activities by bringing together from the far-flung campuses faculty who have common interests. The campuses ultimately supply faculty to the Graduate Center, but that is only one important aspect of its function. The importance of the Discipline Council cannot be overemphasized because it adds to the intellectual tone of the Center, stimulates research, brings talented and new faculty together to produce an engine of creativity, and all this within the larger institution. This Council can infuse the enterprise of Women's Studies with a sense of its place within CUNY. As the self-study indicates, some of that sense of purpose is expended in services to students. The mentoring program provides only one example of how the CSWS extends its reach to all the CUNY campuses for the improvement of the student quality of life. Were there the interest and resources, there could be a study of the mentoring undertaken as a graduate research project. Significantly such a project as mentoring (which women returning to school or younger women who are first generation college students particularly require, according to current research) brings in the community colleges and the colleges to play a key role in the central mission of the study of women and society.

interesting idea

Another notable accomplishment of the Discipline Council is their annual luncheon celebrating the accomplishments of women scholars across the CUNY system. Again, this activity brings together scholars not only to celebrate but to support and stimulate scholarship.

CSWS

Again, another way of bringing together the discipline in such a far-flung entity is the website, and, although it may not be an explicit aspect of the Discipline Council, it provides a similar function of integrating the discipline.

The Feminist Studies Group: CSWS functions here as a gathering place for graduate student research and programming. Were this group only to meet to provide a forum for

presenting their own work, it would be serving an important interdisciplinary function. But it does much more in organizing and sponsoring speakers, organizing a conference, and an additional regular major conference on feminist pedagogy every two years. I comment on this as a specific response to Brian Schwartz's question about whether CSWS serves a student component. This group serves the graduate students not by providing them with lectures (though CSWS does that as well) but by allowing the students to plan and initiate their lectures according to their own interests. They, thus, receive invaluable administrative experience while they are adding to their disciplinary knowledge.

Women Writing Women's Lives: CSWS sponsors this group of writers working on women's biographies. It is another example of outreach because the group serves not only the faculty whose research involves biography but those writers in the community with a feminist perspective. This group gathers those community people into a forum where they are supported and stimulated while at the same time the community people lend their considerable expertise (and reputation) to the group. In addition to the regular meetings organized around themes, WWWL provides a network, again whose potential for stimulating and improving each other's work is invaluable. That being said, the productivity of the group is impressive and first-rate. There have been conferences featuring the members' work, and future activities of this nature are planned. WWWL is another group that serves an interface function between the public and the Graduate Center.

College and Community Fellowship (CCF) and Community Leadership and Education after Reentry (CLEAR) : I place these two entries together because I understand it works under the same leadership and has the same personnel associated with it. I was asked specifically if this CSWS program may have run its course. Rather than dwindling, I found that the project is attracting more and larger grants, the most recent, though not in the self-study, I believe is a large grant from the Robin Hood Foundation. The project expects even more grants in the future. Currently, it has two doctoral students conducting research. It is an admirable project, fulfilling the visions of

the founders of Women's Studies to make a difference in the outside world. While not activist in the ordinary sense, the project has a one-hundred percent success rate. Not one woman in the project has returned to prison. At present the project serves seventy-five women, and it expects to expand to one hundred. Not only is the program of benefit to the women it serves but it provides research opportunities.

CCF has an active and essential mentoring program staffed by volunteers. It is the hope of the project to add more mentors. This mentorship program also reaches across campuses to involve people as mentors. Mentoring programs provide valuable experience for the mentors, while, it is not too strong to claim, they help ensure the success of the mentees.

This is a vital and I believe unique component of the Center and should be treasured by the Graduate Center for its importance and its success in attracting high-quality donors.

Lecture series and similar programs:

I will not list or comment on individual series because the offerings seem to speak for themselves in scope and quality. I will only respond to a query about whether CSWS spreads itself too thin and cannot bring in an adequate audience for its numerous lectures and programs. Director Anne Humpherys has indicated that many of the programs are co-sponsored and are often initiated by other units. There is discrimination on her part in not sponsoring everything, and, of course, it is sometimes hard to gauge the attendance at events, since there are so many at the Graduate Center, not to mention in the city at any given time. However, the co-sponsoring function seems to me one vital aspect of CSWS in serving as a congenial while discriminating venue for the wider interests of the Graduate Center. I cannot judge whether the many are too many, but it is certainly a rich and complex offering.

Publications: This area makes CSWS unique, and I will offer one major and free-of-cost suggestion to further integrate the publication activity with that of CSWS.

Women's Studies Quarterly is already a part of the mission of CSWS. It provides faculty with a publication, and the extraordinary quality of the Women's Studies faculty ensures the high quality of the editors. Such an enterprise adds luster to the Graduate Center and certainly argues for the intellectual quality produced and sponsored by CSWS. An example of the tangible benefits of the sponsorship is that some of the research from CLEAR may be published in the *Quarterly*. In a sense, this is a different kind of mentorship but by those lights no less valuable.

The Feminist Press CSWS has co-sponsored events with the Feminist Press, and this association seems a natural. The Feminist Press is a unique and invaluable asset to the Graduate Center, and their activities have a national and international reach. Their publications with their international scope and their mission to publish works that fall under the rubric of CSWS would seem to make some sort of formal relationship and partnership an evolutionary step in the relationship. The Feminist Press would gain a firm institutional presence and CSWS would make official what right now is a sensible, vital but too casual affiliation.

Recommendation: The Feminist Press become a unit under the umbrella of CSWS, with the same sort of autonomy to raise funds to have an advisory board and so forth as CCF/CLEAR.

Prizes and Awards: Not an inconsiderable asset, prizes and awards encourage students and boost morale. They are a potential area for more fund-raising, should a Deputy or Associate Director be appointed.

Future plans: I met the new director of the Center for Biography Studies and with a member of WWWL and with the Director of MALS and heard of their plans for a conference and further collaborations.

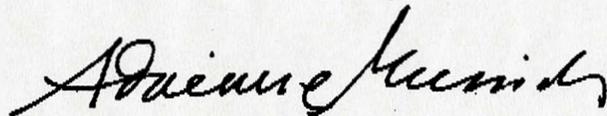
The Activist Women's Voices Oral History Archive and Urban Fieldwork

Internships: Recommendation: I mention this archive and project in the section with future plans because this seems a model for more archival work and closer affiliation with the Mina Rees Library. I have nothing to add but to praise this project and to

suggest that some future (near future) collaboration in the library to set up an area for the CSWS collection of books and archives, to be supplemented by the donation of the remarkable collection of books by Jane Marcus. The Marcus collection needs to be kept together, and a dedicated space not only for it but perhaps with other books and archives can be created. This is another fund-raising possibility.

In conclusion, CSWS in its present reduced state is a beehive of productive activity of an amazing range, serving students, faculty, the public, and identified groups within the community. Its outreach is admirable in creating an intellectual community. I believe it might reduce lectures but not at the cost of alienating other units in the Graduate Center and only if the effort does not seem worth the pay-off. The Center serves a very wide community with the highest quality programs.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Adrienne Kucinski". The signature is written in dark ink and is centered on the page.

 Attachments can contain viruses that may harm your computer. Attachments may not display correctly.

Humpherys, Anne

From: Adrienne Munich [adrienne.munich@gmail.com] **Sent:** Tue 5/20/2008 10:26 PM
To: Schwartz, Brian
Cc: Humpherys, Anne
Subject: My report on CSWS
Attachments:  [Report on Center for the Study of Women and Society.doc\(68KB\)](#)

Dear Brian,

How interesting a day I spent, and what a pleasure to meet you. I was feeling discouraged about higher education, particularly in NYC, and you restored my positive outlook. I've written up this report, and hope it is adequate for your needs. If there are any questions or areas I have neglected, please do let me know. I didn't have a whole lot to say about some of the CSWS activities; they all seemed not to need any tampering with. I hope I have addressed the specific questions that you and Julia Wrigley raised during my meeting with you. CSCW is a treasure and a bargain!

Warm regards, Adrienne

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