



The Graduate School and University Center
of The City University of New York

Center for the Study of Women and Society / Box 135-192
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Dear Colleague,

Several people who have heard about our project, which is designed to facilitate the inclusion of Women's Studies in the Community College curriculum, have asked us for more specific information about it. It has proven to be a worthwhile and valuable undertaking, both for the actual work we are engaged in as well as for the knowledge gained about more subtle processes and strategies for introducing change in academic environments.

Enclosed you will find a summary of the project to date. Please feel free to contact me for further information. If you would like we can send you a copy of the completed report when it is available.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Sue Rosenberg Zalk, Ph.D.
Director

SRZ:jr

COMMUNITY COLLEGE GENDER-BALANCING CURRICULUM PROJECT
Center for the Study of Women and Society
Graduate School and University Center, CUNY

The Center for the Study of Women and Society, located at the Graduate School and University Center of the City University of New York, received a grant from the Ford Foundation for the purpose of encouraging faculty at the Community Colleges to include Women's Studies material in their courses and to provide resources and assistance to those faculty interested in this relatively new scholarship and in ways of incorporating it into standard courses. Funding patterns suggest that historically Community Colleges have been somewhat ignored by outside funding agencies in the area of Women's Studies. The Ford Foundation has been at the forefront in attempting to rectify this imbalance.

The Advisory Board for the project consists of one representative from each of the Community Colleges. Consultants from the Community Colleges as well as the other branches of CUNY contribute their expertise to the project. These consultants have been enlisted as the need arises for their specialty areas in Women's Studies. The number of faculty and staff contributing to this project will continue to increase during the Fall semester, 1985, as the project nears completion.

Although the project is concerned with the issue of gender and incorporating the new scholarship on and by women into the curriculum, a concern was expressed by the participants that within gender, balance for cultural diversity be achieved. As such, consideration and inclusion of race, ethnicity and class with gender as the axis has become an essential component of the grant. The Advisory Board agreed that the final product of the project will be a Guide for incorporating Women's Studies into basic courses. It will be directed toward Community Colleges and distributed to all teaching staff.

The first phase of the project involved assessing the status of Women's Studies at the various Community Colleges. This task, as simple as it sounds, turned out to be quite difficult. It is clear that, on the whole, few Women's Studies courses are offered at the Community Colleges. This, however, varies from college to college. The structure and mission of the Community Colleges makes the inclusion of Women's Studies courses problematic. Where such courses do exist, they do so at the initiative of individual faculty members and in those colleges which place a greater emphasis on the Liberal Arts, as opposed to the technical programs, and as such have the flexibility to offer more electives. There are no Women's Studies programs at the Community Colleges. Analyses of course content to assess the breadth of inclusion of Women's Studies material was undertaken. Course outlines proved to be of little help because most present a brief sketch of the content. Few of the course readings appeared to reflect feminist scholarship. Informal discussions with faculty suggested that the amount of Women's Studies content included in courses was a function of the interests of the instructor. Most of

the teaching staff approached was receptive to the idea of including Women's Studies material in their courses and to the assistance this project promised to offer. Where resistance was encountered it stemmed from several sources. Some felt concern at being asked to further increase their work responsibilities. Community College faculty have a very heavy teaching load (it is not uncommon for them to teach five courses a semester) and undertaking the mastery of new material and major course revisions is an overwhelming task. The assurance that specific material would be made available reduced the concern. Others felt their teaching was being scrutinized and judged and were somewhat hesitant to even share their course outlines. Assurances to the contrary met with varying degrees of success. The degree of administrative support varied although there was general enthusiasm for the service this grant intended to supply. Many administrators voluntarily offered their assistance in facilitating the project. Exceptions to this seemed to stem from issues of "turf." While engaged in this project the Advisory Board has become increasingly sensitive to the numerous issues and complexities involved in dealing with institutional change. As a result a separate section of the final report will deal specifically with approaches to introducing change in academic settings.

The demands and needs of the Community College students in the particular system also provide a challenge for this project. Our students at the seven Community Colleges represent an extremely diverse population regarding not only race, class and ethnicity, but also in the interests indicated by enrollment in many diversified two year programs. Specifically, many of the students are enrolled in technical and other applied areas and are not required to take many liberal arts courses. This posed a challenge to the project in that the best attempt must be made to add balanced information to the knowledge base of as many students as possible through a broad range of courses.

From its inception this project never intended to introduce Women's Studies courses per se but to integrate relevant information into existing courses. Thus, one of the earliest tasks was to decide the optimal way to expose the most students to this information. Registration data on courses was collected and analyzed and it was decided that those Liberal Arts courses which had the greatest number of Liberal Arts and non-Liberal Arts students in attendance would be the target for this project. Since this varied somewhat between the Colleges, it was decided that rather than concentrate on the integration of this material in specific courses, themes would be used that could be appropriate to several disciplines. Of the many themes suggested, the final theme chosen was women, work and family with consideration and inclusion of race, class and ethnicity. It was felt that this theme addressed the necessary elements and would represent women of diverse backgrounds and the many spheres in which they would function.

With this format in mind, the participants are each proceeding with this project by viewing women, work and family from the perspectives of various disciplines: anthropological, psychological, sociological, historical, economic and literary. Each of these sections will include suggested key readings for faculty as well as suggested readings for students with a summary of the key ideas these readings address, and discussion and essay questions generated by these readings. An introduction to each section will include a general discussion of issues regarding the discipline and content and methodology. An extensive bibliography will be included at the end of the report.

Since English Composition is a required course for all students at all seven Community Colleges, a separate section on the inclusion of Women's Studies within this course will be included. Other sections of the final report will deal with language and communication, classroom dynamics and pedagogy.

The format of the final report will be a guide for faculty that will include the following sections:

1. Women's Studies
 - a. Definition
 - b. Importance of inclusion in the Community College curriculum
2. The special mission of the Community Colleges and its relationship to Women's Studies
3. Instituting change in academic settings
4. Models of Women's Studies programs in academic settings
5. Language, communication and classroom dynamics
6. Selected curriculum: Inclusions on Women, Family and Work
 - a. Overview on biases in content and methodology in the disciplines
 - b. Suggested topics
 - c. Suggested annotated readings for faculty
 - d. Suggested annotated readings for students with related discussion and essay questions
7. Extensive bibliography

Although the completion of the guide will be the final product of the grant, the participants in the project view this as the beginning of a larger project on Women's Studies at the Community Colleges. More specifically, interest in gender-balancing the technical programs has been expressed. The present vision of such a project would involve generating suggestions regarding advisement, course content, classroom dynamics and the match between pedagogy and cognitive styles, in which they have traditionally been underrepresented. Funding for this project will be pursued in the future.