

Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program Strategic Plan

Mission

The Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program (GWS) at Gustavus Adolphus College seeks to create more just and democratic communities by cultivating in our students a commitment to active and engaged citizenry through an academically rigorous program with an experiential component. We believe that an interdisciplinary program of study such as GWS equips students to do the work of building democracy particularly well. The GWS Program works to ground this education for democracy in the immediate community. Students in our courses presently work in a number of community organizations, in placements developed by the Community Service Center. Current work sites include state, local, and regional governmental and nonprofit agencies. The GWS program is proud of our graduates, some of whom go on to pursue advanced degrees in law, social work, and psychology. Many others immediately work for programs such as teach for America and the Lutheran Volunteer Corps. Our graduates especially embody the College's commitment to social justice and service.

Program

Gustavus Adolphus College offers a major and a minor in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies. This interdisciplinary program examines gender and sexuality as cultural and social categories that organize and shape human experience. Students interrogate the social meanings of femininity, masculinity, sexual behavior, and desire as integral to the ways that groups and individuals construct their identities within and across a variety of historical, social, and cultural contexts. To this end, students will also examine the ways that gender and sexuality intersect with other categories of social difference such as race, class, ethnicity, nationality, religion, ability, and age.

At present, we have ten majors and more than twenty minors. Courses in the GWS Program come from a variety of disciplines including Art, Communication Studies, English, French, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Religion, Sociology, and Theatre/Dance. There are many faculty in departments who do not presently offer courses that carry GWS credit but who have a strong involvement in the program. This is a benefit to both faculty and students because these faculty members are available for advice and consultation.

A multidisciplinary approach provides students with a foundation for thinking more broadly about categories of social difference and the various cultural and legal institutions that produce and sustain them. Students who successfully complete the program will be exposed to a wide array of methodologies regarding the history, theory, and practice of gender studies and will gain extensive experience with writing and research with a strong emphasis on information literacy.

Need and Vision

As stated above, the GWS program places a high value on working within the immediate community and its needs. In the St. Peter area, this means attending to our rural location and our changing demographics. While many fine programs in metro areas address the need for and lack of participation by the socially marginalized in economic, social, and political life, there is a dearth of such programs in rural areas. Furthermore, relatively few programs address needs that are particular to rural people. There is an acute need to promote financial literacy and career planning of immigrant women and men who are transitioning to the American economy, and those who are re-entering the job market or who need to make important financial decisions and wish to understand more about their personal finances and the economy. This need holds in both economic boom times as well times of economic crisis.

Goal 1: Continued Excellence in our academic program

Strategies:

1. **Partner with academic departments in faculty searches to strengthen our program's course offerings.** The field of Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies is constantly evolving with new areas of specialization that come from and cross over into traditional academic departments. These faculty-hiring partnerships benefit other departments, the GWS program, and the College as a whole.
2. **Increase funding for the Moe Lectureship in Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies.** Open to the entire Gustavus as well as St Peter community, this lectureship program is our highest profile event. This biennial lectureship program has brought leading scholars from disciplines including biology, nursing, philosophy, theatre, and English, to campus for very short visits. With increased funding, we would bring scholars who would be in residence for an extended time, much like the Rydell Lecture in the sciences. This would provide faculty and students the opportunities for sustained dialogues with leading experts in a variety of fields. This would help to attract faculty and students to our program.
3. **Create endowed scholarships for off-campus study programs.** Scholarships allow students to avail themselves of off-campus (international and domestic) programs. Many programs focus on community building and social justice. These programs enable students to participate in experiential opportunities that develop transferable skills and ways of understanding community development and apply their newly acquired skills to other communities.

Goal 2: Become a community resource that works collaboratively with providers and agencies to address explicitly the concerns of rural marginalized populations

Strategies:

- 1. Fund a half-time position in the Community Service Office to create and oversee collaborative community development projects/activities/programs.** This person coordinates student and faculty work with off-campus agencies and providers to undertake a Community Needs Assessment with social services organizations, nonprofits, and other community stakeholders to chart the existing services, existing needs, and the gaps between the two. This Needs Assessment is an on-going project. This person is also responsible for identifying, creating, and maintaining community partnerships.
- 2. Generate strategies to address the identified needs.** Informed by the Needs Assessment, work with faculty and community stakeholders to increase awareness of and access to affordable and sustained healthcare, focusing on women with children, disabled people, the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, and other marginalized people.
- 3. Provide outreach, public service and educational programs that afford numerous access points of information about social services, healthcare, and public policy.** This may be done in the context of individual courses and as free-standing events sponsored by the GWS program.

The members of the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program ask that this strategic plan be read in conjunction with the strategic plan of the Community Service Center.

Strategic Plan discussed and approved by the Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program on February 9, 2009

Respectfully submitted,

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Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies Program