**2009 Assessment Report Feedback – Women and Gender Studies**

**Assessment Committee Contact**: Vicki Baker, Economics & Management

*\*Note*: The assessment report/feedback was reviewed/provided by Vicki Baker, Mark Bollman, and Scott Hendrix

First, thank you so much pulling this assessment report together.  Reading it helped me better understand the curriculum structure and progression. Overall, you have a great foundation for future assessment efforts, and hopefully the feedback provided is useful to you as you move forward.  Feel free to contact me with questions or if you need assistance as you move forward.

*Step 1:  Mission*

Based on the additional information provided in the report, the mission appears to be aligned well with the program components and is a good representation of the program overall. Our only suggestion is that the mission statement probably should include students in the mix, since they are the focus of departmental teaching efforts, and since student learning is the focus of the assessment plan and assessment efforts generally.

*Step 2:  Outcomes*

My only concern with the outcomes is the sheer number.  This is a lot to assess/to ensure that your program structure/curricular progression is achieving. There might be a way to collapse some of these into broader categories.  By no means is this suggestion a requirement, but again, I am just concerned about your ability to effectively assess whether these outcomes are being achieved.

One possible way to reorganize your outcomes is as follows: Department might organize all of the outcomes into 2-3 categories (e.g., areas of knowledge; specific abilities?), and focus initial assessment efforts on one of the categories. Categories might also be developed as Intro, Mid-career, and Advanced (plus lots of other options!). Or, perhaps select 2-3 key outcomes from the longer list and start with these few outcomes (those outcomes that are foundational, or cut across most courses, etc.—again, lots of options for defining and focusing outcomes).

\*\*\*In fact, you may already have these categories listed in Step 3: Institutions or Knowledge Systems, etc. *OR, the A, B, C, D list of four major ”pieces”?*

*Step 3: Program components*

I appreciate you listing the program requirements as they relate to the various outcomes you listed in Step 2. However, you need to provide specific examples that clearly articulate (1) how the actual outcomes are being achieved, and (2) how you are assessing IF they are being achieved.

To address Point #1 – Provide specific examples of courses that support and achieve each outcome /fall under each of the 5 emphases with corresponding examples of readings, activities, assignments, etc. that are specifically aimed at getting students to think about these issues/achieve the outcomes.

Related to the comment above - Under each emphasis, I know courses are offered in a range of disciplines and they can count towards meeting this requirement (correct me if I am wrong).  If this is the case, you need to assess that what students learn in one course in this category is comparable to what students learn in a different course (but within the same emphasis). In other words, there needs to be some commonality and assessment method that ensures that the available options within an emphasis are achieving the same goals.

To address Pont #2 – What assessment methods are you using?  Do you conduct exit interviews with graduating seniors?  Do you conduct alumni surveys?  Do you hold focus groups with current students to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum?  Do you have common grading rubrics or do the faculty that teach courses for WGS have regular meetings to assess program effectiveness, curricular issues, etc?  While you do not need to address ALL of the questions, I am posing, you need to address some.  You also need an ongoing plan of assessment which needs to include both direct and indirect measures of assessment.  Examples of direct measures may include tests/examinations, assignments/papers/projects, portfolios and field experience evaluations (to name a few). Examples of indirect measures include retention, graduation, placement rates, surveys (alumni, student), and grades (e.g., do you see students performance improving or decreasing over time?).

*Step 4: Methods/Data*

The proposed major exit interview/capstones sounds like a feasible method and helpful instrument for assessment student learning, especially as you are able to connect student questions and responses back to WGS learning outcomes (and assuming that your scoring or recording rubric is appropriate).

It’s unclear, however, what you see as the relationships between the exit interview and the course components/requirements listed in Step 3. *In fact, the expectation for this section of your assessment plan is that you would describe/discuss the methods and instruments currently being used (or planned) for gathering information about whether (and how) the learning outcomes (Step 2) are being achieved in the various program components presented in Step 3*.

You also need to use both direct and indirect methods of assessment. In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).

I realize this may seem like a huge undertaking, but we’ll get you through this with baby steps and I am happy to work with you on how to approach this in the most effective manner possible.