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Expanding the Concept of Affirmative Action to Include the Curriculum

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Of course, Professor Smith may be eager to explore a particular topic pertinent to women's studies in a particular semester, and the offering may be worthy and may attract enrollment. But Professor Smith was not hired to teach women's studies. There are service courses, bread and butter disciplinary offerings, core courses, graduate courses, other special interests competing for this professor's time and that of the student body. A women's studies course in such a setting is more than likely to be or to become an occasional, topical offering; and, if enrollment is slight or below otherwise obtainable levels, the experiment is unlikely to be repeated. All of which says nothing about the question of Smith's qualifications to teach women's studies. Professors are not self-selected in medicine, law, or dentistry. Yet there seems to be a notion that any competent historian or literary critic or anthropologist or sociologist who is interested, or thinks students might be, is qualified to teach women's studies, quite regardless, for example, of whether this person has done or is likely to do any research of publishable quality in this field.

And what about research? Professor Smith might want to do women's studies research and might be very capable of doing it. But is this the field Smith is likely to do research in most thoroughly, consistently, and rigorously if women's studies is not the primary agenda of those who will evaluate Smith's work and award tenure and promotion in accordance with their criteria? Or is it fair to Smith or to women's studies to expect that her research in women's studies should be ancillary to the main body of work on which her career development will depend? This is not a purely abstract question since all of us, I'm sure, can name individuals who have done distinguished work, yet been denied tenure at the institutions where that work was done on the grounds that women's studies research was not central to the disciplinary concerns of the particular individuals into whose hands these decisions were entrusted. Unjust? Of course. But can we refocus the concerns of long-established disciplines

without a base from which to do original research in those disciplines? That is too much of a bootstrap operation. It certainly cannot be done by the offering of an occasional topics course drawn from the sheer goodwill of already heavily overburdened faculty.

The time has come, I think, for women's studies programs and those who are committed to the advancement of women's studies as an interdisciplinary academic field to rid themselves of the tutelage of oversight committees and shed the ritual and fiscal constraints of annual negotiations for borrowed faculty and ad hoc credit-hours and place women's studies where it belongs, squarely at the heart of undergraduate education. A women's studies curriculum can be coherent only if it is planned as a women's studies curriculum. It will have continuity only if its courses are offered regularly and their sequence refined as the field advances.

In time, I think, but I fear a very long time, it will no longer be necessary for women's studies to constitute itself as a separate field and seek integration with other academic fields; the legitimate place and perspective of women's concerns will be recognized by all the disciplines. But until that happens there is a need and a very urgent mission for scientists, humanists, and social scientists in women's studies. As members of a department among departments, recognized for their academic contributions and bearing the full autonomy of a department in the give-and-take of academic planning, women's studies scholars together with their students and allies in many fields have a fair chance of contributing to the achievement of that integration of women's studies into the disciplines it addresses and of contributing at the same time and through that process of integration to the larger agenda of human understanding.

Madeleine J. Goodman is Coordinator of Women's Studies at the University of Hawaii.

Expanding the Concept of Affirmative Action to Include the Curriculum

By Nancy Topping Bazin

At Old Dominion University, a state university of 14,500 students in Norfolk, Virginia, the concept of affirmative action has been expanded to include the curriculum. From my perspective as a Women's Studies Director who also serves on the University Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunities Committee, I would like to share the story of (1) how this came about, (2) what it means, and (3) what questions and problems it raises in terms of my work as Director of Women's Studies.

The President of ODU strongly supports affirmative action in hiring. Because we have an energetic Coordinator of International Programs, the President likewise recognizes that

material concerning people of color inside and outside the United States should be integrated into the curriculum. In September 1979, however, when this story begins, he did not realize that the integration of women into the university and into society called for a transformation of the traditional curriculum. Because his talk at the first meeting of the President's Advisory Committee on Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity revealed this gap in his awareness, I suggested to the Affirmative Action Director, Maggi Curry (whose title is also Assistant to the President), that a special meeting with the President to clarify the goals and activities of both Women's Studies and the Women's Center would be helpful. She decided that a meeting

on this subject would benefit all those in the upper administration. Therefore, she added the Vice President for Academic Affairs, the Vice President of Educational Services and Planning, the Dean of Student Affairs, and the Dean of Arts and Letters to the list of those invited to participate.

In addition to describing the goals and activities of Women's Studies at this initial meeting, I chose to emphasize, through the following written statement, the relevance of Women's Studies to the mission of the university:

The mission statement of Old Dominion University emphasizes that a great university must have "men and women of wisdom and courage, with a vision of the future, who have mastered the path leading to the attainment of that vision." Women's Studies' vision of a future with equal opportunity for all responds to ODU's mission as a state, urban, and regional university. As a state institution, ODU must serve all the people, including the 51-percent majority who have, in the past, been only rarely the subject of serious academic study or research. As an urban institution, it must record the history of women in this area and respond to and provide leadership for the changing attitudes towards women as they are reflected in the medical, psychiatric, economic, social, educational, political, domestic, geriatric, and legal aspects of city life. As a regional institution serving an international, commercial, and military population, Old Dominion should (1) teach and do research concerning women's lives throughout the world (but especially in the frequently neglected nonwestern and Third World countries), (2) advocate and facilitate female participation in the commercial life of the Tidewater area and its ports, and (3) serve the educational needs of not only the female military personnel but particularly the many military wives who reside in this region. Although there are over 300 Women's Studies Programs in the United States, Old Dominion University is the first institution in Virginia to offer a Women's Studies Certificate and an emphasis in Women's Studies within interdisciplinary majors and master's degree programs. Since Women's Studies has developed so notably as one of ODU's areas of specialization, this interdisciplinary field should receive explicit recognition in our mission statement. Excellence in this area is a vital academic responsibility. Furthermore, by developing Women's Studies, ODU enhances its affirmative action mission—that of making its research projects and its curriculum more responsive to the needs of women in this urban area, region, and state.

Furthermore, I suggested that the mission statement be altered slightly to clarify the university's commitment to "the philosophical principle of equality." I explained how such a commitment might influence both teaching and research, and proposed that the concept of affirmative action be expanded to include the curriculum. The President, who obviously enjoyed the lively discussion that followed, suggested we meet at least two more times to discuss, first, how faculty attitudes and curriculum could be changed and, second, the issue of "advocacy."

Meanwhile, as a member of the University Affirmative Action Committee, I was asked to set up a subcommittee on curriculum. When the Committee asked the Affirmative Action Director if she would be willing to expand her definition of affirmative action to include the curriculum, the answer was "Yes." Since she functions as an advisor to the President, this was, in my opinion, an important step toward our long-range goal of creating a multicultural curriculum. Among the more important resolutions this committee presented to the President at the end of the year were the following:

1. *Resolved:* The AA/EEO Director and the President's Advisory Committee on AA/EEO henceforth should encourage faculty to

integrate into the curriculum materials and perspectives that reflect the points of view of women, minorities, and Third World as well as nonwestern peoples.* This task will expand the traditional definition of "affirmative action" to include the goal of changing faculty and student awareness and understanding of different experiences and points of view through a curriculum that reflects these multiple perspectives.

2. *Resolved:* Other schools in the University should adopt, if possible, the tentative 1980-81 Curriculum Committee plan in the School of Arts and Letters to discuss with appropriate faculty each of the courses that satisfy school or university requirements. As part of these evaluative discussions, questions about representation of women, minorities, and international perspectives in texts, lectures, and classroom discussions will be raised and solutions suggested in cases where such material is omitted.
3. *Resolved:* Discussions should be held with the Director of Freshman English to explore possibilities for including in the required composition courses readings and assignments that will stimulate awareness of multiple cultural experiences and perspectives.

Despite this group's success in having these resolutions approved, the functioning of this subcommittee was not entirely smooth; frequently, the consciousness of some of the committee's own members had to be raised, and occasionally, the committee suffered strange side effects from the raised consciousness. One man, for example, was not sure he could remain on the committee, because, being religious, he believed in the patriarchy; namely, when he and his wife could not agree, the Bible made it clear that he was to make the decision!

The meetings with the upper administrators were somewhat smoother, even while addressing such questions as: Is a commitment to equality "advocating" equality? Can one separate the philosophical from the political? Are there two sides to racism and sexism? Certainly, what finally emerged from the meetings was significant. The President and the two Vice Presidents acknowledged:

- (1) the need for a curriculum that would reflect the perspectives of and include materials about women and minorities as well as Third World and nonwestern peoples;
- (2) the need to hire faculty who have the training and experience to provide these perspectives;
- (3) the appropriateness of including within the university mission statement a commitment to the ideal of equality and, therefore, permission to draft a sentence such as the following to submit to the faculty and eventually to the Board of Visitors for approval:

The university is committed to the ideal of equality; therefore, it will provide a multicultural curriculum that adequately represents women, minorities, and Third World as well as nonwestern peoples; and it will include on its faculty those who do research on topics that enrich such a curriculum.

**Editorial note:* It is understood that there is overlap among these categories—that "women," for example, includes minority women, that some "Third World" people are also "nonwestern," and so forth. The framers of the document are aware of the problem inherent in the use of the phrase "women and minorities" but have not been able to find a satisfactory substitute. They welcome suggestions.

When someone on the committee asked the President the purpose of including such a sentence in the mission statement, he replied that it would serve as a "hunting license." Although I would not have chosen such a male image, he revealed that he had understood my point: the mission statement will provide the authority needed to justify the improvement of the curriculum.

A 1980-81 committee will design strategies for inducing those in charge of courses that satisfy university requirements to make multicultural materials and perspectives an integral part of their courses. This committee will function under the auspices of the Affirmative Action Office; thus, Maggi Curry has followed through on her commitment to assume responsibility for encouraging affirmative action within the curriculum. The President and the Vice President for Academic Affairs will be members of this affirmative action subcommittee.

A possible additional result of this administrative commitment would be that the Center for Instructional Development would be encouraged to sponsor faculty development conferences to help the various disciplines transform their curricula. I presently sponsor, each fall and spring, a one-day Women's Studies Faculty and Graduate Student Development Conference with some financial support from the Center, but the topics discussed are interdisciplinary and less specialized than those of conferences that, for example, focus only on women and psychology, women and technology, or

women and economics. Administrative support for such faculty development efforts could sow the seeds for significant change in the way courses are taught throughout the university.

These developments at Old Dominion University have already made enormous demands on my time and energy as Director of Women's Studies, and these demands are likely to increase. There is the sensitive issue of increasing faculty support for our goals, and my obligation as Women's Studies Director to suggest bibliography and speakers for faculty development in various fields. There is the continual process of providing information for and effectively raising the consciousness of even the members of the new curriculum committee. The job of a Director of Women's Studies is more varied than that of a traditional chairperson, since one works with people in a great many disciplines and offices throughout the university. Expanding the definition of affirmative action to include the curriculum will further enlarge the responsibilities of a Women's Studies Director in a fascinating but potentially overwhelming way. I look forward, however, to the challenge; and I hope this article will help to inspire similar developments elsewhere—not only in colleges and universities but also in elementary and secondary schools.

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Integrating Women into the Liberal Arts Curriculum: Some Results of "A Modest Survey"

By Ann Froines

In 1978, the Women's Studies Program at the University of Massachusetts/Boston initiated a survey to examine the impact on the liberal arts curriculum of the new scholarship on women. We were looking beyond the courses offered by Women's Studies, since one of the goals of our program, like others, had been to promote the transformation of the male-centered curriculum. During much of its first decade, Women's Studies had focused on developing its own courses and scholarship. By 1978, the Women's Studies Program offered annually ten courses taught by its own faculty, as well as cross-listing another twenty courses regularly offered by departments. We assumed that the faculty teaching the departmental courses would have felt the impact of new feminist scholarship. But what about those faculty who were uninterested in the program, or negative toward its goals? We saw the survey as the beginning of a new and systematic effort to bring feminist critiques and new knowledge about women to arts and sciences departments and disciplines.

The survey was carried out by a college-wide Committee on the Status of Women, authorized by the Dean. To introduce the survey constructively, the Women's Studies Program prepared and distributed to all heads of departments and curriculum committees a fifteen-page report called "Resource Guide for

Women's Studies at UMB," listing bibliographies, reference tools, and periodicals available in the Women's Studies Resource Center and the UMB library. We also offered the program's assistance to faculty interested in finding new scholarship on particular topics relating to women. Accompanying the "Resource Guide" was a note from the Dean, announcing that the survey was about to begin and asking for the departments' cooperation.

The faculty questionnaire sought (1) to discover the faculty's general attitude about materials on women in the curriculum; (2) to elicit specific information about materials on women in use; and (3) to record information about problems in finding such materials and incorporating them into course-offerings. We planned to compile a list of resources within each discipline that might be helpful for those wanting to revise courses. Because we were asking all faculty to participate, at least by filling out a survey form, we decided to issue results in broad, disciplinary areas, not by course or instructor.

Despite our sensitivity to the feelings of the faculty, only twenty percent returned the survey forms. The content of these responses also indicated that almost all of them were sympathetic to the goals of the survey. We were hearing from the already converted. Forty of the forty-nine respondents listed