June 14, 2010

W. Randy Smith
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
200 Bricker Hall
CAMPUS

Elliot Slotnick
Associate Dean for Graduate Programs
200 University Hall
CAMPUS

Dear Randy and Elliot,

The Arts and Humanities Curriculum Committee met, reviewed, and unanimously supports the Department of Women’s Studies proposal for a name change from its current name, Department of Women’s Studies, to the proposed name, Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. As Chair Jill Bystydzienski’s letter addresses, the current name is not an appropriate reflection of the scholarship that has evolved over time within the department, nor is it an accurate description of the offerings within the undergraduate and graduate degree programs. The Department of Women’s Studies focuses not only on the feminist methodology foundational to the discipline, but also the broader application of this lens applied to different genders and sexuality in order to understand the social relationships within our society today.

The proposed department and program title name changes will more accurately represent the excellent scholarship and instruction that the faculty currently produce. The change in name for the undergraduate major and minor to Bachelor of Arts in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Undergraduate Minor in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies will create a more cohesive description of the areas with which students engage while undergraduate majors within the unit.

We also support the name change in the graduate programs to Master of Arts in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies and Doctor of Philosophy in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and that the course offerings listing be changed to “Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies.”
The proposed name changes and Book 3 listing will be appropriate moves as they relate to the following:

- interdisciplinary nature of the scholarship within the field,
- transparency for students and advisors who search for women’s, gender and sexuality studies courses in Book 3 listings,
- representation for the multiple offerings in the unit.

The proposal has the full support of Arts and Humanities. If you have questions, please contact me.

Thank you for considering this request,

Valarie Williams
Professor and Associate Dean

cc: Mark Shanda, Interim Dean, Arts and Humanities
    Joseph Steinmetz, Executive Dean and Vice Provost, Arts and Sciences
June 15, 2010

W. Randy Smith  
Vice Provost for Academic Affairs  
203 Bricker Hall  
190 North Oval Mall  
CAMPUS

Elliot Slotnick  
Associate Dean for Graduate Programs  
250 University Hall  
230 North Oval Mall  
CAMPUS

Dear Randy and Elliot:

The name change for the Department of Women’s Studies to the Department of Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies has my full support. The name change is an appropriate reflection of the scholarship and course offerings within the department.

Currently, we have an interdisciplinary Minor in Sexuality Studies which is part of DISCO, a consortium of faculty who administer interdisciplinary minors within Arts and Sciences. The minor is drawn from units within colleges around the university with a different focus than the work within Women’s Studies. As both programs will report to me, I foresee no concurrence issues within Arts and Sciences.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Joseph E. Steinmetz, Ph.D.  
Executive Dean and Vice Provost  
Arts and Sciences  
Professor of Psychology
May 17, 2010

Proposal for Academic Unit Name Change
Submitted by Jill Bystydzienski, Professor and Chair, Department of Women’s Studies

Current Name:  Department of Women’s Studies
Proposed Name:  Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies

Rationale for Name Change:

The faculty in the Department of Women’s Studies voted unanimously on May 7, 2010, to change our name to the Department of Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies. Accordingly, we also propose to change current degree titles to “Bachelor of Arts in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies;” “Undergraduate Minor in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies;” “Master of Arts in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies;” “Doctorate in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies;” and “Graduate Minor in Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies.” We also propose that the course offerings bulletin Book 3 listing be changed to “Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies” and referred to therein in with the letters WGS.

When Women’s Studies was founded as an inter-discipline, programs—and later departments—emphasized “women” as a way of naming the subjects and intellectual perspectives that had been neglected by traditional disciplines. However, in recent years many programs and departments that began as Women’s Studies have changed their names in recognition of the expanded intellectual breadth of scholarship and teaching that Women’s Studies programs and departments perform now. While Gender Studies is a common variant, or Women’s and Gender Studies, our department has opted for Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies to more accurately reflect the scope of knowledge our faculty produce and teach. Currently, there are 45 departments nationally, including those of Harvard and Yale, that have included Sexuality in their titles, and many more are in the process of considering such change.

Women’s Studies as a field has increasingly recognized that the study of gender and sexuality are central to research on women and girls. Feminist scholars also insist that studies of gender and sexuality should not be conducted solely on “women” but have important lessons to offer for understanding social relations of difference very broadly. In fact, many of our faculty examine the sexual politics of gender in society, considering religious movements, political theory and philosophy, transnational politics, and histories of the family, to name a few. Therefore, the name change reflects the fact that as a department, we no longer just study “women.” Our hope is that the name change will illustrate effectively our contemporary approaches to theory and research. We can no longer claim to just be a Department of Women’s Studies, nor do we wish to retain this restricted imagination.

The decision of the women’s studies faculty to change our name has been long in the making. During the last two years, we have held discussions about this possibility. The current process of
conversion to semesters has entailed a careful review of our curriculum which clearly confirmed what we have known for quite some time now: gender and sexuality are integral to all that we do. Including “sexuality” in the department’s title also points toward the national norm of housing sexuality studies in women’s and gender studies programs and departments. This is due to the fact that feminist critical approaches to gender, women, and social difference treat sexuality as a core feminist concern and a core feminist methodology. Indeed, since Women’s Studies became a department at Ohio State several faculty lines have been designated as sexuality positions. The addition of these faculty members has firmly reinforced our national leadership in the sub-field of feminist sexuality studies. Sexuality is not peripheral to our research or teaching at OSU and currently exists as a foundation to our undergraduate and graduate curricula.

We are aware that the re-naming of the department creates complications vis-a-vis the Sexuality Studies Program which recently proposed an undergraduate major and is supposed to be housed in an administrative unit along with three other interdisciplinary programs. However, given that Sexuality Studies has explicitly stated that it does not provide a feminist framework for its major, we think it is crucial to distinguish our curricular offerings in sexuality from those provided through the Sexuality Studies major. A feminist framework has been very important for training professionals in fields such as Rape Crisis centers, Women’s Centers, and organizations devoted to GLBT issues. Naming our feminist work in sexuality explicitly in our departmental name will help students and their future employers recognize the expertise involved in their education. Moreover, at the graduate level, this re-naming will situate us explicitly as a leader in the field of feminist sexuality studies, thereby increasing our already robust recruitment in this area and further heightening our profile for faculty research.

[Signature]