



Memorandum of Understanding

This MOU has been read and approved by:

Department Chair: *Lori B Baralt* Date: 4/14/2025
Lori B Baralt

Dean, College of Liberal Arts : *Deborah Thien* Date: 4/14/2025
Deborah Thien

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**Program Review Summary
 Memorandum of Understanding**

Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS)
 College of Liberal Arts
 March 2025

This document serves as a summary of the Program Review findings and a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) outlining the consensus reached by the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS), the College of Liberal Arts, and the Division of Academic Affairs, based on the recently conducted program review with a Self-study received in December 2024. Dr. Catherine Sameh (University of California, Irvine) and Dr. Sheena Malhotra (California State University, Northridge) completed the external review in January 2025. This report and MOU was issued in March 2024, and it describes the goals to be achieved and the actions to be undertaken by all parties to this MOU to achieve these goals, during the next program review cycle. Progress toward goals is to be addressed in an annual report.

The Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) offers a stand-alone major (45 units), a WGSS minor (18 units), and they oversee an interdisciplinary Queer Studies minor (15 units), which was developed in 2013. The BA degree is the focus of this program review. The Department has cross-listed courses with the following programs and departments: American Indian Studies, Anthropology, Asian and Asian American Studies, Chicano and Latino Studies, English, Cinematic Arts, History, International Studies, Linguistics, Philosophy, Political Science, Religious Studies, and Sociology. Additionally, WGSS 424 Gendering Environmental Justice counts as an elective for majors in Environmental Science and Policy.

The WGSS Department has made progress in assessment as recommended in the MOU from 2017. The MOU specified the following needs: 1) establish concrete, measurable learning outcomes for students and implement meaningful assessment; 2) provide a progress report on the Department's assessment efforts and a curriculum map of outcomes to the CLA dean, the Vice Provost for Academic Programs, and the Director of Program Review and Assessment; 3) review demand for core major requirements on a regular basis and adjust offerings as necessary to allow appropriate degree progression; 4) The department will work with the college to establish a hiring plan in areas of disciplinary need, and; 5) The program will provide a biennial update on progress made towards the actions agreed to in this MOU, to be submitted in conjunction with its biennial assessment report. They revised and updated their Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) and they also developed Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) that are active and measurable for all courses. Since the last review, they completed assessments in 2017/2018 and 2018/2019. In terms of course offerings, the core courses for



majors, WGSS 101, WGSS 102, and WGSS 300 are regularly offered every semester. WGSS 301 is offered every Fall semester, and WGSS 415, WGSS 495, and WGSS 496 are offered every spring semester.

Resources reviewed for the report:

1. Self-study 2024
2. External review 2025
3. Previous MOU 2017
4. Department website

Strengths were identified in the reports

1. **Mission Statements:** The Department has mission statements and program goals that are posted clearly on the website and are appropriate in context for the profession.
2. **Department Culture:** Faculty go above and beyond to support and empower their students.
 - a. Faculty take turns advising the WGSS Student Association (WGSSSA), which is also the campus chapter of Unite for Reproductive & Gender Equity (URGE), a youth-led reproductive justice organization. WGSSSA students work closely with the department to sponsor feminist events of interest to the larger campus community.
 - b. Although WGSS faculty no longer receive re-assigned time for advising (academic advising is done by department faculty in collaboration with ATLAS), they are highly involved in mentoring and advising students, many of whom are in under-represented groups. There is concern of cultural taxation for faculty. As stated in the external review report “WGSS faculty mentor students to create a sense of belonging in the department and carry out a lot of cultural taxation work for the university (faculty from underserved groups mentoring students from those groups).”
 - c. The department has done a commendable job of engaging students, staff, and faculty across campus, as well as the broader Long Beach community, through initiatives that bring high-quality speakers and events to CSULB. These efforts reflect the diverse interests and experiences of the university community. WGSS enriches university education by organizing, sponsoring, and co-sponsoring impactful events that foster dialogue, learning, and engagement.
3. **High Impact Practices:** The WGSS degree requires an internship as an important way for students both to apply their feminist education and gain experience in a field they would like to pursue. The capstone research project that graduating seniors complete is part of a two-course sequence on epistemology and methodology. In the first semester (WGSS 301), students learn foundational concepts, culminating in the production of



their own research project in the second semester (WGSS 495). This year-long program provides students with comprehensive training in research methods while allowing them to explore a topic of personal interest. It also offers valuable experience for those considering graduate studies, giving them the opportunity to conduct primary research that can support their future academic pursuits.

4. **Highly Accomplished Faculty:** The WGSS tenure-track faculty are highly accomplished in their field, as are 3AY lecturer faculty, all of whom hold a Ph.D. and actively contribute to research and publications within the discipline.
5. **Curriculum:** In addition to the high impact practices mentioned above, the department curriculum is dynamic and engaging. It reflects key scholarly discussions and debates in the field. The number and quality of courses the department offers reflects a deep and broad engagement with the key concepts and theories of the field. Students spoke to the high quality of faculty teaching, the variety and rigor of the courses, and the exceptional teaching methods of all the faculty. Students attested to the support and dedication they receive from the faculty.
6. **Student Engagement and Retention:** WGSS students demonstrated a firm grasp of the field of study and how it applies to their future life and career goals. They also expressed a strong sense of belonging and community, which is crucial for retention.

Concerns were noted in the reports

1. **FTES:** The department has maintained non-major enrollments, going from 195.5 FTES in Fall 2016 to 182.2 in Fall 2023. However, students within the major were at a high of 34.4 FTES in Fall 2016, and at a low of 13.8 in Fall 2023, which is a clear drop in majors. The department attributes the recent decline primarily to the shift to remote instruction (during the COVID-19 pandemic), which hindered recruitment efforts and limited the ability to attract new majors. In response, the department has recently ramped up its outreach to currently enrolled students. Moving forward, the College of Liberal Arts Dean and CLA staff need to support the department faculty in developing and implementing innovative strategies that can increase First-Time, First-Year (FTFY) students' exposure to WGSS and encourage their engagement with the program.
2. **General Education:** Many WGSS courses fulfill General Education (GE) requirements. However, the introduction of new GE requirements in Fall 2025 may affect non-major enrollments in WGSS courses. For example, WGSS 101: Gender, Race, Sex, and the Body has consistently been a popular course within Category E: Lifelong Learning and Self-Development, with 7 to 9 sections typically offered each semester. The upcoming CSU-wide GE changes could lead to a noticeable drop in the enrollment of non-majors and FTES unless quick actions are taken. The external reviewers recommend that the Dean's Office support the department in adapting its GE courses and facilitating the integration into new GE categories.



3. **Facilities:** WGSS teaches primarily in one classroom with a 35-student maximum cap. This space is cramped, not allowing for active teaching. The department has requested high quality and larger classrooms that are available during peak class times to sustain their enrollment and grow their major.
4. **Resources:** Although the department has received strong support from the WGSS librarian, the CSULB Library's feminist, gender, and sexuality-based holdings vary from year to year and overall remain inadequate for student and faculty research endeavors and teaching innovation.

Opportunities for Development were noted in the reports

1. **Faculty Size and Workload:** Although the department currently has three full professors and two associate professors, several of these tenured faculty have significant teaching releases due to their administrative roles. Additionally, one tenure-track hire separated from the University after taking a leave of absence. The external reviewer noted the significant demands placed on the more active tenured faculty members, highlighting the need for additional support to ensure long-term sustainability.
As the demand from students grows for trans studies scholarship, courses, and methods, WGSS needs a tenure-track hire in trans studies to fulfill student academic needs and the field's mission. New hires are key for addressing the department's mission as well as our campus needs and mission.
2. **Assessment:** The department participated in the core competency assessment initiative prior to the COVID-19 pandemic but has not yet resumed its assessment plan since the institution returned regular assessment reporting after the hiatus during COVID. There is now an opportunity to refine the curriculum through ongoing assessment and closing the loop.
3. **Graduation Rates and Time to Graduation:** Although there is concern that this is a low-enrolled major, the Department has averaged at least 16 graduates each year, placing it above the CSU system's threshold for low-conferring degrees ($n=10$). The department has very few FTFY majors, since most of their majors come from undeclared students or transfers. Since the Fall 2018 cohort, an average of 33% of transfer students have graduated within two years (ranging from 23.1% to 45.5%), while an average of 56% have graduated within four years (ranging from 38.5% to 83.3%). The average time to degree for transfer students ranges from 2.2 years to 3.3 years, which is in the range of the GI 2025 benchmarks. However, FTFY students typically take between 4.4 and 6.3 years to graduate. Due to the small number of FTFY students, this data should be interpreted with caution. The department has begun analysis of why students don't graduate, including degree shifting and needing to bring back students who dropped out over COVID. The department has started analyzing the factors contributing to student



non-completion, including degree changes and re-engaging students who dropped out during COVID-19.

Recommendations:

It is therefore agreed that the Department of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (WGSS) will collaborate with the College of Liberal Arts and Division of Academic Affairs to:

1. Continue to implement the program's comprehensive assessment plan to complete its annual assessments using direct and indirect methods and report on closing the loop activities to illustrate that continuous learning outcome data are used to inform decision making. Provide an annual update (due June 1) on progress made towards MOU actions to the CLA dean, the Coordinator of Program Review and Assessment, and the Vice Provost for Academic Programs. Your review cycle will therefore be from 2024-2031. A comprehensive self-study will be due June 2031 for a 2031-2032 Academic Year review process.
2. Develop an outreach, recruitment, and retention plan to increase major FTES with the support of the Dean's Office in terms of collaboration with the outreach and events coordinator and promotion of WGSS via CLA's outreach and social media platforms.
3. Determine the impact of GE changes on curriculum, student enrollments, and faculty hiring. Some suggestions offered by the external reviewers may be considered if feasible. For example, with the support of the Dean's Office, develop new courses or add GE designation in additional categories to help with enrollment and increased exposure to WGSS for students in their first two years.
4. Assess graduation rates (including FTFY 4-year and Transfer 2-year rates) and implement strategies to enhance student retention and increase graduation rates to meet or exceed university benchmarks.
5. Strategically assess faculty hiring and reassigned time needs based on both teaching and service demands. As resources allow, a tenure-track (TT) hire in Trans Studies should be considered, with the potential for an additional hire in the coming years.
6. Develop a plan to enhance facilities and library resources to meet departmental needs, as resources permit.
7. With the support of the CLA Dean's Office, establish a system to track alumni contact information, enabling the department to maintain direct communication with its alumni.
8. Given recent national discussion surrounding "gender ideology" and diversity, equity and inclusion, the College of Liberal Arts and the Division of Academic Affairs will support the WGSS department in addressing challenges related to the field of study.

This MOU has been read and approved by:

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

LONG BEACH

Office of Vice Provost for Academic Programs



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