

February 7, 2022

Dear College of Arts and Sciences Curriculum Committee,

The UW System Women's and Gender Studies Consortium supports the current proposals offered by the WGSS program at UWEC to change status and name. As the proposal document indicates, the field of WGSS has changed greatly over the past twenty-years. Nationally and across UW System, relationships with Racial and Ethnic Studies programs have prompted new configurations which more accurately reflect the work taking place on each campus. These mergers increase opportunities for student engagement and faculty retention and flag an institution's alignment with cutting-edge approaches to intersectionally-grounded, feminist scholarship. These changes also visibly emphasize the support these programs provide to EDI initiatives on each campus and the equally important institutional support to develop these efforts in multiple areas. Accordingly, program mergers and name changes reflect both the changing parameters of higher education and the demand by students (and employers) for programs deeply rooted in intersectional approaches to race, gender, and other analytics. Critically, departmental status reflects institutional investments in supporting this crucial work, and a commitment to providing the resources and support needed to effectively serve an increasingly diverse student population and contribute to a culturally responsive workforce.

In addition to foregrounding an intersectional and anti-racist social justice analytic, the WGSS program at UWEC stands out across UW System in its efforts to actively advance an EDI agenda rooted in a commitment to women of color feminisms, transnational frameworks, and QTPOC scholarship. This work is evidenced in the breadth and depth of course offerings, affiliate networks, programming, and the expertise of tenure-line faculty. While this historical relationship to critical race studies, Ethnic Studies, and, more recently, queer and trans studies, has always been critical to the formation of the field, teaching at PWI's (predominantly white institutions) often hinders the full development of this historical relationship. Importantly, the faculty and students at UWEC have actively worked against this trend by developing courses, certificate offerings, and pedagogical approaches which keep these historical roots intact. The name change to the Department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies (REGSS) accurately reflects this ethic and speaks to the scholarship and social justice engagement already happening in the program.

In changing the name to the Department of Race, Ethnicity, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, the current WGSS program will support broader efforts across UWEC to make visible the deeply layered approaches to race and gender occurring across campus. Rather than existing in conflict with other units, the proposed name change reflects how intersectional approaches to race and gender occur in many spaces and places—effectively existing as crucial elements to scholarship throughout an institution, not just isolated pockets. The WGSS steering committee at UWEC has actively built a broad affiliate network, expanding the disciplinary approaches to race and gender available to students. This core work supports other intersectional approaches across UWEC and provides an important hub for advancing cutting-edge scholarship and pedagogy in this area. The WGSS program supports this approach by building networks that resist siloed and disconnected efforts but instead builds upon and enhances the best practices occurring elsewhere. Importantly, WGSS exemplifies this approach by knitting multiple disciplines and scholarly approaches together under one umbrella---exemplifying how intersectionality works to support student outcomes, institutional initiatives, and retention of institutionally-marginalized students, faculty, and staff.

The UW System Women's and Gender Studies Consortium offers a crucial hub for advancing and protecting WGSS across UW System. Our systemwide advisory board meets regularly to support the growth and relevance of each WGSS program or department pursuant to [Regent's Policy 14-3](#). The transition to departmental status under the name REGSS is an important

Women's & Gender Studies Consortium

University of Wisconsin-Madison

3301 Sterling Hall 475 North Charter Street Madison, Wisconsin 53706 USA

Phone: (608) 262-3056 Website: consortium.gws.wisc.edu

Universities: Madison, Milwaukee, Eau Claire, Green Bay, La Crosse, Oshkosh, Parkside, Platteville, River Falls, Stevens Point, Stout, Superior, Whitewater

growth opportunity for UWEC and aligns with the breadth of program offerings, student enrollment numbers, and the carefully developed curriculum, cross-listing standards, and student learning outcomes created by the program. From a planning and efficiency perspective, it makes the most sense for both changes to occur simultaneously.

The proposed name and status change reflect the future of WGSS systemwide and the remarkable leadership and thoughtful planning taking place from the program at UWEC.

The WGSS program on your campus stands out as a systemwide leader for intersectional approaches to race and gender, and we are eager to support the next stage of development. The WGSC will offer its full resources to support these transitions, and the work occurring in REGSS at UWEC will serve as important model for other UW System campuses.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Rytilahti, PhD

Director, UW System Women's and Gender Studies Consortium

UW-Madison, GWS Department

srrytilahti@wisc.edu

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Stephanie Ryttilahti
Director
Women's and Gender Studies Consortium
srryttilahti@wisc.edu

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