

23 October 2013

**RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING THE WOMEN AND GENDER STUDIES DEPARTMENT IN
THE HUNTER COLLEGE SCHOOL OF ARTS & SCIENCES**

RESOLVED, that effective February 1, 2014, the Hunter College Department of Women and Gender Studies shall be established in the School of Arts & Sciences as part of the Division of Social Sciences with all of the rights and responsibilities of a department.

Explanation:

The Women and Gender Studies Program (WGS; formerly, Women's Studies) at Hunter College was one of the first such programs in the country. Officially established in 1975, the program emerged as part of larger intellectual, political, and pedagogical movements that sought to redress omissions of the study of gender, sexuality and racial-ethnic minorities in undergraduate university curricula. Because of its location in a predominantly urban, public-sector institution that historically was the first to serve young women of all ethnic and class backgrounds, Hunter's Women and Gender Studies Program was, from its very beginning, conscious of its special mission of diversity and inclusion.

Hunter's Women and Gender Studies Department will be the first of its kind within CUNY, and its creation will allow CUNY to join the ranks of other R1 institutions that recognize the importance of study of this area in a liberal education.

In the spring of 2011, a Presidentially appointed Task Force recommended the creation of a WGS department in its final report. Among its reasons for supporting the creation of a WGS department, the Task Force highlighted the facts that "WGS is a discipline with its own concepts and theoretical domain, as well as being an interdisciplinary field that intersects with other fields in the sciences and humanities"; "student success for this popular major depends on departmental status" to provide students with greater programmatic stability, course availability, and access to academic advising and support; and the change will "provide better articulation with CUNY community colleges and the CUNY Graduate Center."

WGS has grown rapidly in size, complexity, and function in recent years. According to analysis by the National Women's Studies Association, WGS at Hunter College is among the largest of such entities in the country based on student enrollment, which has surged in the past decade from 38 majors in 2001 to over 90 majors and 20 minors in 2012. Every year more than 1500 students take WGS 100 Introduction to Women's Studies and WGS 201 Classics in Feminist Thought in order to fulfill a portion of their Pluralism and Diversity requirements. Because WGS carries such a large burden in terms of helping students fulfill general education requirements, it must routinely turn students away from overenrolled WGS courses that students are taking both to fulfill major and minor requirements as well as other college requirements. Department status will allow for thoughtful programmatic development and long term planning so that WGS courses will be available to the students who need them.

The Women and Gender Studies Department will maintain and expand its commitments to its majors by providing students with greater administrative stability, ensured access to required courses, and opportunities for interdisciplinary study. The new department will also maintain its commitment to the general education of Hunter College students through its vast array of courses satisfying college-wide requirements. Departmental status will also allow WGS to expand its contributions to public health, social work, human rights, and developments in various sciences.

The WGS program has sustained itself because of the commitment and generosity of 49 faculty from 25 departments and programs across Hunter College, many of whom have dedicated time to the administration and governance of the program by serving on its policy committee. In addition to its regular academic curriculum, the program contributes to the life of the college through planning and sponsorship of campus-wide events. Since 2004, the program has organized and co-sponsored over 85 events. In these respects, the program already functions in many ways like a department, and it deserves the levels of autonomy and support afforded academic departments.

A separate resolution will be submitted to the Board of Trustees via the Chancellor's University Report pursuant to which, contingent upon the approval by the Board of Trustees, the Women and Gender Studies Department in the School of Arts & Sciences as part of the Division of Social Sciences will be established.