I would like to express my appreciation to St. Norbert College for its generous hospitality and for the many opportunities in which I was able to speak candidly with administrators, faculty, staff, and students in their role as stakeholders in the future of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program (WMGS). I especially thank Karlyn Crowley, Director of WMGS, for organizing my visit, and Bob Rutter, Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness, and David Duquette, Associate Dean for Humanities and Fine Arts, for providing additional funding for the external review process.

Introduction

I was impressed by the overall vitality of and support for St. Norbert’s Women’s and Gender Studies program and, in turn, feel optimistic about its future. Most importantly, WMGS succeeds by drawing faculty interest, as well as core and supporting courses, from across the College. As a result, the program has provided a space for a unique intellectual community to develop. In addition, WMGS core courses provide students with intellectual breadth, cutting edge perspectives, and in-depth analysis into several primary constructs and foundational concerns in the discipline of Women’s and Gender Studies. As a result, WMGS students speak to the importance of the program as both a rigorous and intellectually rich centerpiece to their St. Norbert education.

Appreciation for the work WMGS abounds from a number of campus constituencies. In the words of those with whom I spoke, the program is a “gem”, a “jewel,” a “beacon of intellectualism,” an “important area of study,” “quite remarkable” and “very robust.” In addition, a number of people indicated that WMGS at St. Norbert was “long overdue” and are very glad to see it has thrived in such a short period of time. In brief, WMGS informs and enriches the work of students, faculty, and staff as they seek to fulfill St. Norbert’s mission of educating “the whole person.”

Because of this optimism, I sensed among WMGS devotees an eagerness to build on its successes in ways that are consistent with both St. Norbert’s unique mission and the College’s future aspirations. I support this. At the same time, I was made aware of a number of mutually reifying misperceptions that in turn fueled various forms of mistrust among stakeholders; this dynamic must be addressed if the program is going to succeed in moving forward.
The misperceptions by those outside the program tend to be grounded in a lack of basic information about the discipline itself—its goals, its methods, and its orientation to the production of knowledge in the contemporary academy. These misperceptions, I believe, could be greatly alleviated by way of a few key changes that emphasize transparency and some programming aimed at sharing general knowledge about the field of Women’s and Gender Studies. Other areas of impasse are more deeply imbedded in the campus climate and culture, and thus need to be negotiated among constituencies beyond the program itself. Put simply, **WMGS will move forward if it both articulates and mobilizes the basic tenets of the field of Women’s and Gender Studies for the campus community that, in turn, acknowledges and supports the field as a key contributor to the College’s stated mission.**

**Overview** - In what follows, I offer nine recommendations for the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at St. Norbert College. After a quick summary of the review process, I then provide some history and background information about the discipline of Women’s and Gender Studies and connect that history to larger contextual issues currently facing St. Norbert College as a whole. I move on to my observations and concerns, which then serve as context and rationales for the recommendations. I take these up in sections that detail the program’s resources, its curriculum and programming, and its leadership, all of which require a renewed commitment to the program by the WMGS leadership and various levels of increased support from other campus units.

**Process of External Review and Site Visit**

As the sole external reviewer, I was contacted well in advance and asked to carry out an external review of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at St. Norbert College. The WMGS director made all the arrangements in an efficient and timely manner thereby making my work during the site visit much easier. About a month before my visit, I received the Women’s and Gender Studies Program Review allowing me to familiarize myself with the program’s history, general information about courses and students, assessment data, and data on peer and aspirant WMGS programs and departments. Other documents such as the Curriculum and Educational Policy (CEPC) response to the Program Review, WMGS faculty syllabi, and the schedule of meetings for the external review were provided about a week in advance of my visit. I gleaned other information about the College itself—its mission, history, recent campus events, etc.—from the St. Norbert website.

I would like to recognize the extraordinary professionalism and care with which the Program Review was prepared; its attention to detail and the variety of issues covered all contributed greatly to my understanding of both the accomplishments of and the challenges facing the program. I would also like to acknowledge the importance of the feedback given by CEPC in its 11/5/2009 memo; my
recommendations will support many, but not all, of their observations, concerns, and recommendations.

What would have been even more helpful were some guidelines for the external review process itself, preferably from Academic Affairs or the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. While I understand that St. Norbert rarely conducts external reviews and while the general approach to external reviews can be rather pro forma, documents that offer insight into institutional-wide strategic planning initiatives, policy guidelines that reflect institutional values, and/or some set of guiding questions could have helped narrow the focus of my review more quickly and easily.

My schedule consisted of a very full day of visits with most of the WMGS faculty, a number of key administrators, and WMGS students on December 4, 2009 (see Appendix A). A phone meeting with the Director of the Office of Faculty Development took place about a week later.

Details of the visit were well organized – including accommodations, escorts between meetings, food, etc. – and the WMGS director ensured that the schedule was adhered to, even when my discussions went over time. In these discussions, I heard about the interests and concerns of a number of campus stakeholders in much detail, and as a result, am able to talk in some depth about both program’s achievements thus far and the challenges it currently faces.

**Background and Context**

*History of the Discipline of Women’s and Gender Studies* – In a number of ways, the program’s scholarly and pedagogical engagements at St. Norbert reflect the national context. As a primary focal point of interdisciplinary teaching and scholarship in the US academy over the past 40 years, the field of Women’s and Gender Studies links to a multiplicity of other areas and disciplines. This role is typically exemplified institutionally at most colleges and universities by a range of core and cross-listed courses, stand alone and jointly administered major and minor programs, and various combinations of core, joint, and affiliated faculty. The constant in all of these diverse arrangements is a focus on the multiplicity of gendered identities and justice. In this way, the field of Women’s and Gender Studies, as it is variously constituted across of number of institutions, has made important contributions to the intellectual life of US higher education, especially in the wake of the shifting demographics of students based on gender, race, and income levels in recent decades.

Since the 1970s, however, Women’s and Gender Studies has also developed as *a discipline in its own right*, evolving as all other disciplines do by cultivating a sense of cohesion, a shared set of texts and references, a distinct body of theory and methodology, a set of shared values and priorities, and a distinctive pedagogy—all of
which are fluid and constantly debated among the field’s practitioners. In short, the discipline coheres around:

1. The study of gender and its intersections with race, class, sexual orientation, ethnicity, dis/ability, nationality, and other categories of identity and experience
2. A social justice mandate that seeks to address prejudice, oppression, and structural inequalities through both scholarship and intellectually grounded social action
3. A reflective methodology that constantly generates critical questions about the effects of its own knowledge production

The National Women’s Studies Association, the field’s primary, US-based, scholarly organization, has defined Women’s and Gender Studies as “dedicated to social and educational transformation” and concerned with the multiplicity of gendered identities in the broadest sense from perspectives that are “comparative, global, intersectional, and interdisciplinary.” Therefore, the discipline is much more than the sum of cross-listed courses about women and/or gender extracted from other disciplines. Drawing from this complex of historical, institutional, and scholarly features, this version of Women’s and Gender Studies—the “state of the art” in the field—contributes most to those colleges and universities that orient their mission around social justice and educating students to contribute to a diverse society.

**Contextualizing the History WMGS at St. Norbert** – The Women’s and Gender Studies Program (WMGS) at St. Norbert College was officially launched in 2005 after a working group of interested faculty proposed a minor, which was subsequently approved by both the faculty and St. Norbert College’s Board of Trustees. Although the program’s inception was “late” when compared to most of its cohort and aspirant institutions, WMGS at St. Norbert has made impressive progress in less than five years with 47 declared minors, 10 graduating minors, and 2 graduating self-designed majors—all with no core, adjunct, or even jointly appointed faculty and only three core (one of which is cross-listed) courses offered a total of 11 times. In addition, the WMGS affiliated faculty and students have provided the larger St. Norbert community with curriculum and programming that reflects both the College’s unique mission and the growing diversity of its student, faculty, and staff.

St. Norbert’s WMGS program is at a critical stage in terms of its growth and ability to contribute to the College’s aspirations, especially in the areas of curricular innovation and support of an increasingly diverse community of students, faculty, and staff. With no faculty lines, no divisional home that reflects its interdisciplinary identity, a small budget, little control over its curricular offerings, and various levels of understanding about the field itself among its stakeholders, the current configuration of the program risks a debilitating stasis that is likely to mitigate the program’s initial success, not just in terms of courses, student interest, and declared minors but also in terms of the intellectual and scholarly development of faculty associated with the program. At the very least, the faculty who are most knowledgeable about and invested in the field of Women’s and Gender Studies, who (not surprisingly) have done the most to ensure
the program’s successes thus far, will “burn out.” Although this general set of circumstances is similar to the state of many, but certainly not all, interdisciplinary minors at St. Norbert, the potentials of a better-supported and more integrated Women’s and Gender Studies Program might be best considered within the college-wide context.

In fact, the critical juncture for the WMGS mirrors the college-wide context in which a newly hired and popular President along with a soon-to-be-hired Dean of the College will no doubt provide the St. Norbert community as a whole with exciting opportunities for reflection on and rededication to the College’s unique mission. Part of that community-wide reflection must inevitably consider issues of campus climate and long-standing imbalances in the institution’s leadership, especially as they affect women and people of color. This climate is a key feature of the larger context that “contains” WMGS at St. Norbert: it both fosters the program’s weaknesses and presents the program with its greatest opportunities for significant and lasting contributions to the College as a whole.

**Cultivating the Intellectual Program in Context** – Although I heard much about the recent campus climate survey (which was variously received and seemed to provoke a range of responses among those who participated in the WMGS external review process, especially as to the survey’s accuracy), the general findings parallel other in-direct indicators of climate, most notably the numbers of women and people of color in the higher ranks of the faculty and the administration (Fact Book 2008, 35; West and Curtis 2006, 70).

Questions about structural inequalities and the campus cultures that perpetuate them are certainly not St. Norbert’s alone, as most previously white and male dominated institutions of higher education are compelled to come to terms with the gaps between stated missions and institutional realities at some point and over the long haul. Though potentially vexing, ire-inducing, and, for most of us who belong to one or more of these dominant groups, evocative of extreme personal vulnerability, addressing these realities genuinely and systematically is incumbent upon any institution that embraces, as St. Norbert does, an ethos of both communio and Docere Verbo et Exemplo (Fact Book 2008).

Fortunate are the institutions that have rich internal resources on which to draw, and St. Norbert is fortunate. A well-supported WMGS program can provide important intellectual and programmatic contributions to a systematic effort on the part of the College’s leadership to align “word and example.”

Overall, my recommendations reflect a common course of action taken by many institutions over the past several decades to optimize the disciplinary interests and intellectual strengths of the field of Women’s and Gender Studies, not just as an area of scholarly inquiry popular among an expanding demographic of students, but also to help find innovative and intellectually grounded ways to move forward on diversity
initiatives across the institution as a whole. In other words, my overarching appeal is to both cultivate and make use of WMGS expertise—both from the College’s WMGS program as well as the broader community of WMGS affiliated scholars nationwide—as part of current and future campus-wide diversity initiatives and institutional renewal.

In laying out a more comprehensive vision of the “place” of WMGS at St. Norbert than is typically articulated in documents like this, I realize that I am pushing the scope of a program review to its outer limits. Yet, what I saw and heard at St. Norbert throw into relief the interrelatedness of certain institutional dynamics within which WGMS, as a campus unit and as an intellectual project, is caught up. With that in mind, some of the recommendations below can and should be accomplished by WMGS alone; others require considerable commitment on the part of the administration. Also, I should point out that this small unit is already working at full capacity. Even comparatively small changes, such as re-organizing the structure of WMGS Advisory Council, take considerable discussion and work from the faculty members. Thus I stress to the administration that providing support at this point will pay much greater dividends in terms of the future robustness and vitality of the Women’s and Gender Studies Program and the program’s ability to contribute to a broader range of St. Norbert’s future successes.

Observations and Recommendations

Data included in the Program Review and the various accompanying documents are extensive, so I will not rehearse much of that here. However, the documentation provided along with my many candid conversations during the visit has enabled me to make a set of recommendations that are interrelated and build on one another. To parse out issues and provide specific rationales, I have divided my observations and recommendations into three main sections:

- Program Resources
- Curriculum and Programming
- Leadership and Campus Support

Program Resources

Teaching – The quality of teaching affiliated with St. Norbert’s Women’s and Gender Studies Program is very high. As one outside observer noted, WMGS has “some of the best professors we’ve got [at the College]; everyone knows how good they are.” The combined teaching evaluations of affiliated faculty along with a number of student feedback indicators demonstrate a commitment to excellence in regards to student learning and marks WMGS as a “standout” program at St. Norbert. This recognition of WMGS’s contribution to student learning at the College provides a strategic opportunity for optimizing current faculty resources.
Ten faculty members have taught in the WMGS program in the past five years, and are drawn exclusively from other departments. No adjuncts have been used nor have joint appointments been made since the program was launched. As such, the WMGS teaching schedule, even in terms of the program’s core courses, is largely determined by the needs and decisions of faculty and chairs in other disciplinary units. The generosity of these disciplines in sharing their faculty resources with the program is to be commended. But this generosity is in perpetual tension with scarce institutional resources.

Considering the constant demands to teach high-enrolling, lower level general education courses and courses that serve the disciplinary major(s) at the upper level—along with the unexpected occasional needs to cover for sabbaticals, faculty leaves, administrative duties, and the like—the ability of any interdisciplinary program to maintain consistency in its teaching schedule is perennially compromised. It also requires faculty to negotiate the demands of two academic “homes,” only one of which is truly recognized in the administrative structure of the College. Obviously, this is as tenuous a foundation as can exist for any program, let alone one that has demonstrated excellence in aligning itself with the College’s teaching and social justice mission.

It should be said that it is not unusual for interdisciplinary programs to have various levels of faculty engagement with the current research/methods/conversations associated with the field given that most instructors are trained and housed in more traditional disciplines and divisions. And although uneven and sometimes inconsistent understandings of the basics of any field among students can be a result of this institutional precariousness, the good news at St. Norbert, again, is that the quality of the instruction of WMGS is quite high and worth optimizing for broader institutional gains. A few key changes will build on this existing foundation.

**Recommendation 1:** Establish two “term joint appointments” over the next two years for the existing 1/3-time faculty members who teach in WMGS, one of which should be the director of the program. These initial two appointments, among other things, will be charged with leadership within a slightly restructured (see R7) WMGS Advisory Council and with facilitating the professional development of WMGS affiliated faculty. Both initial and subsequent appointments should be made for staggered three-year terms with options for renewal and expansion as new hires are made and WMGS-oriented professional development opportunities for current faculty expand the pool of potential term joint appointments. Academic Affairs should follow guidelines for the establishment and evaluation of these term joint appointments as outlined in Appendix C of Michael T. Marsden’s 1995 article “Politically Mainstreaming Interdisciplinary Programs: A Structure for Success.”
Service and Outreach – Community service and outreach, at both the college/university and the broader local, national, and international levels, has long been a hallmark of the discipline of Women’s and Gender Studies. As a field keenly focused on issues of social justice, this level of involvement in communities outside of its immediate purview of faculty and students is hardly surprising. Typically, community outreach provides significant “outputs” by building strong and collegial campus environments, developing collaborative research projects with local/national/international groups, providing intellectual frameworks, data, and skills to various groups of people interested in issues that intersect identity and power, and helping groups in the strategic presentation of their grievances to larger audiences. This work on the part of the discipline’s practitioners, in turn, often improves the visibility and respect accorded to the college/university overall. Women’s and Gender Studies at St. Norbert has been no exception to this general approach to service and outreach.

The WMGS Program Review and the CVs of WMGS faculty provide rich information about the service undertaken by the program’s members. They demonstrate, among other things, how many of its members have an intellectual grounding in and experience with various approaches to institutional and social change. I applaud the extent to which the Curriculum and Educational Policy Committee (“WMGS Report Review” 2009, 1) and the College’s administration recognize the level of service from the Women’s Studies department.

The work of the WMGS Director in the discipline’s national association is especially worthy of note (i.e., serving on the Governing Council of field’s national organization, co-chairing the organization’s Student Interest Group) and unusual in most national academic organizations that feature the “big” names from the “big” programs at the level of national governance. She has single-handedly put St. Norbert on the map as far as Women’s and Gender Studies is concerned. Other WMGS faculty’s service contributions, both inside and outside of WMGS, are many, varied, and just as commendable.

At the same time, and to compliment the above recommendation about WMGS term joint appointments, I recommend that affiliated faculty generally and the WMGS Advisory Council specifically undertake a more strategic and coordinated approach to service, outreach, and organizational change experience associated with the program over the short term. This approach should focus on gathering, analyzing (particularly in relation to St. Norbert’s unique mission), and disseminating basic information about the discipline of Women’s and Gender Studies, both among themselves (to get on the “same page”) and for the benefit of larger campus community.
In particular, work is needed to address some basic misunderstandings—all of which I heard first hand—about the field among various campus constituencies outside of the program; these misunderstandings include that the discipline is a simple extension of “radical” feminism, that is just about “gender equality,” that is “just for women,” that is just about “studying women,” that Women's and Gender Studies is not really a discipline, or that the “gender” in WMGS functions only as code for “men.”

At present, there is little formally in place at St. Norbert to address this range of misunderstandings about the field. Affirmative and forward-looking conversations grounded in state-of-the-art Women’s and Gender Studies scholarship—touching on its history, its goals, its ongoing debates, its key texts and thinkers, and, ultimately, what it does or should represent at St. Norbert—are needed.

**Recommendation 2:** WMGS Advisory Council should develop and implement a two-year project titled (something like) “Focus on the Field: State-of-the-Art Women’s and Gender Studies” promoting the basic understanding about the field of Women’s and Gender Studies by providing multiple points of entry (i.e., speakers, workshops, book groups, panels, brown bags, etc.) for multiple levels of interest among the campus community. The project should:

1) **Promote state-of-the-art Women’s and Gender Studies as outlined by NWSA**
2) **Create open and welcoming events that emphasize intellectual exploration among both supporters and skeptics of the field’s goals**
3) **Collaborate with other campus units (e.g., other disciplinary units, Women’s Center, Student Affairs, Division of Mission and Heritage)**
4) **Explore the value and potential applications of Women’s and Gender Studies consistent with the unique mission of St. Norbert College**

The changes called for above and subsequently require leadership, coordination, and a tremendous amount of administrative energy and enthusiasm, especially in implementing and sustaining a two-year project designed to raise the profile and perceived intellectual integrity of WMGS among numerous campus constituencies.

**Recommendation 3:** The WMGS Director should have at least one-third of her time reassigned to WMGS administration. This reassigned time should come with expectations for leadership of the planning and implementation of the two-year project (see R2) as well as the other recommendations contained in this report. To insure the disciplinary integrity of WMGS, the rotation of directorship should circulate only among those faculty who hold term joint appointments.
Research/Scholarship - At residential liberal arts institutions like St. Norbert, the primary focus is the intellectual, spiritual and personal development of students. Teaching is core the activity, and the faculty is the key resource to be developed.

With heavy teaching loads, however, the tendency among faculty at liberal arts colleges is to weave their research interests into their teaching when and wherever they can. And while faculty at St. Norbert vary as to the intensity of their scholarly activity, the scholarship associated with the field of Women’s and Gender Studies can provide important openings for individual faculty development (and even professional renewal) along with strengthening the program’s curricular offerings.

I heard repeated references to two general areas of interest among campus community members outside of the program: critical masculinities and feminist science studies. The former was seen as a way to address climate issues that are manifested at the peer level among St. Norbert students; the latter was seen both as a way to balance the program’s offerings by drawing on the division currently not represented in WMGS cross-listed course offerings and as a potential source interdisciplinary innovation at the College. Therefore, cultivating intellectual community among faculty across disciplines through the engagement with specific areas of Women’s and Gender Studies scholarship can both strengthen the program’s curricular offerings as well as advance larger institutional goals.

**Recommendation 4**: WMGS Advisory Council, in consultation with current and potential WMGS associated faculty, WMGS students, and other campus stakeholders, should assess the program’s future curricular needs and begin the work of strategically aligning those needs with individual faculty’s current and long-term scholarly interests/research agendas (as well as any current all-college strategic agenda as it relates to curriculum). In turn, WMGS Advisory Council will provide recognition and support for associated faculty to develop courses that align both with their own scholarly interests, WMGS programmatic and curricular aspirations, and state of the art in Women’s and Gender Studies. Critical masculinities and feminist science studies should be among the first areas considered for possible curricular development.

Budget – My understanding is that St. Norbert does not typically provide significant budgets for disciplinary units, let alone interdisciplinary units outside of the administrative structure. That said, the work called for in the recommendations of this report (particularly R1 and R2 above) along with future aspirations of WMGS will likely require more discretionary funding.
**Recommendation 5:** “Ramp up” discretionary funding and/or administrative support in conjunction with goals and timelines for R1 (term joint appointments), R2 ("Focus on the Field" project), R3 (reassigned time for director), and R4 (course development).

**Curriculum and Programming**

**Core courses** – The three required courses that every WMGS student must take—“Introduction to Women’s and Gender Studies”; “Women, Gender, and Imperialism”; and “Feminist Theory”—form a solid curricular foundation, represent the field’s state of the art (meaning here that they approach topics of women and gender in ways that are comparative, interdisciplinary, intersectional, and global), and even engage the most current of cutting-edge questions in the field.

The introductory course, for example, uses texts and assignments that promote the basic tenets of Women’s and Gender Studies, especially its interdisciplinary and comparative dimensions. In addition, this course employs the field’s unique approach to pedagogy in that it uses students’ personal lives as a launching point for scholarly inquiry (e.g., demands for intellectually-informed reflection, personal experience examined in theoretically-grounded assignments, historicizing key constructs), and, given Student Opinion on Teaching (SOOT) scores, is well received by students.

“Women, Gender, and Imperialism” offers a progressive approach to the field’s current preoccupations with global and post-colonial perspectives on gender by engaging questions about western feminism’s imperialist histories. Post-colonial critiques of knowledge production about the gendered identities and practices of formerly colonized subjects are both innovative and central to the course content.

The capstone “Feminist Theory” course demonstrates a number of inventive approaches to teaching the “classic” debates in the field, especially through the use of popular culture texts (always well-liked by students). Both intersectional and comparative approaches are represented well here.

The limited and rather preliminary data assessing student-learning outcomes covered in the Program Review indicate that intersectional analysis on the part of students is most likely the weakest aspect of the core curriculum. This is not unusual for undergraduate programs in Women’s and Gender Studies for a number of reasons that range from the conceptual complexity and thus pedagogical challenges of conveying the basic principles of intersectionality to the stages of intellectual development of average 18-22 year olds who are still forming their higher order, critical thinking skills. Therefore, taking up the
concept of intersectionality in one course late in developmental structure of the WMGS curriculum might not offer enough opportunity for students to encounter this key aspect of the field.

**Cross-Listed Courses** – The number and stated frequency of cross-listed courses is more than sufficient for a WMGS minor consisting of six courses. Although these courses are “housed” in disciplinary units outside of WMGS (entirely in the humanities and social sciences, which is not unusual, especially for a program this size), they are nevertheless integral to the program’s intellectual and curricular integrity.

Some cross-listed courses in the program appear to be inconsistently grounded in current assumptions operating in the field of Women’s and Gender Studies. This kind of unevenness is not unusual in the formative years of programs made up of busy faculty who are fully engaged in their “home” disciplines. But conversations that provide practical support and opportunities for affiliated faculty to engage in the discipline’s state-of-the-art scholarship will lend itself to more consistent outcomes in student learning.

**Recommendation 6:** WMGS Advisory Council should encourage a reassessment/rededication to state-of-the-art Women’s and Gender Studies within core and cross-listed courses. Concentrate course development (see R3) on fostering opportunities to expand both the number and frequency of core and cross-listed courses that will offer multiple exposures to key WMGS learning goals. All core courses should continue to reflect the discipline’s basic tenets in that their approaches to women and gender are comparative, interdisciplinary, intersectional, and/or global. In addition, core and cross-listed courses should be strategically aligned with student-learning outcomes and regularly assessed through course evaluations, graduation questionnaires, and exit interviews with WMGS students. Course evaluations should include some measure of student perceptions about consistency and/or coordination across all WMGS courses.

**Leadership and Campus Support**

**Program Governance** – The WMGS Advisory Council (AC), currently made up of the Director and six faculty members, has done an admirable job of both setting up and administering a program with impressive early successes. The numbers of minors, student feedback, and overall popularity of the program across campus attest to the hard work, passion, and dedication of this group of faculty.
Faculty members who currently sit on the AC are, in large part, synonymous with the “working group” that championed the establishment of the WMGS minor. Fairly consistent membership on these sorts of leadership bodies is not unusual for Women’s and Gender Studies programs that require cross-listed courses to administer degree programs. Maintaining faculty commitment to an interdisciplinary program is a challenge; offering an alternative space for service and collegiality is one way to help small programs maintain interest among those who frequently cross-list or seek to cross-list courses.

Not surprisingly then at St. Norbert, the AC is a place of connection and community for faculty members—sometimes even staff and students too—around “transdisciplinary” feminist intellectual inquiry and organizing. It is a location to both exchange ideas and foster leadership that counts for faculty as service to the institution. In this way, WMGS is like any other disciplinary unit in its administrative charge. And yet the voluntary and transdisciplinary interests of this campus unit means that it exists outside of the typical rules and expectations that govern other disciplinary units.

I offer this background because, among other things, the hybrid quality of WMGS leadership has helped foster in a small number of outside observers perceptions of the AC as ideologically “exclusive” and therefore politically suspect. Most often I heard this sort of talk in conversations that raised concerns about the lack of criteria regarding cross-listing courses. While it is no coincidence that the suspicions tended to come from (although not exclusively so) the same members of the campus community who lack basic familiarity with the discipline of Women’s and Gender Studies, it is the AC and other WMGS faculty who must take the responsibility to foster more openness and provide more opportunities for members of the campus community to engage with and understand the basic tenets of the discipline (see R2).

**Recommendation 7:** The AC should seek to develop more openness and transparency in cross listing WMGS courses by, first, forming a WMGS Curriculum Committee (consisting of two members of the AC and chaired by one of the WMGS term joint appointments), which would then establish criteria and protocols for core and cross-listed courses. Criteria should be clear, succinct, widely publicized each semester, encourage broad faculty participation, and include invitations to attend upcoming workshops, reading groups, brown bags, and panels. Resources for faculty who wish to develop WMGS courses or create WMGS-oriented units in existing courses should be included too. Course criteria should be based on state-of-the-art Women’s and Gender Studies, but should not demand full knowledge and engagement with the field (for example, cross-listed courses could focus on two of four of NWSA’s field characteristics—interdisciplinary, intersectional, comparative, global—whereas core courses could focus on three or even four field characteristics).
Although I call on the AC to take the lead in fostering more openness, the responsibility for addressing misperceptions is not the AC’s exclusively. After all, it is completely understandable that members of underrepresented groups in environments that struggle with diversity and inclusion, especially in higher ranks and administration, seek each other out and build their own community. In part, this community building helps to temper the impacts of their own perceptions of exclusivity in the larger institution’s leadership structure based on ideology or identity.

In other words, political suspicions go both ways in this case, and WMGS cannot address deeply entrenched issues in the campus culture alone or in isolation. The College’s leadership should offer public and demonstrable support of the program within a larger context of systematic initiatives designed to address campus climate issues.

One internal resource that should be employed as WMGS embarks on both its two-year project, "Focus on the Field: State-of-the-Art Women's and Gender Studies" (R2) and its curricular development initiatives (see R4, R6, and R7) is St. Norbert’s Office of Faculty Development (OFD). Regarded by many as “one of the best [faculty development offices] in the country” for a small college, the actual work of mutually advancing both WMGS and larger campus goals and initiatives (improving campus climate, recruitment and retention of racially diverse faculty/students/staff, curricular development and assessment, professional renewal) is perfectly suited to be supported by and coordinated with OFD. On multiple occasions, I heard about how valuable OFD projects and programming are to faculty at all levels. In particular, the summer workshop on the liberal arts held two or three years ago provides a prototype for the more intensive “Focus on the Field” activities.

**Recommendation 8:** St. Norbert’s Office of Faculty Development should be called upon by the administration to help coordinate and fund the programmatic, curricular, and professional development initiatives described in R2, R4, R6, and R7. Specifically, this support should include working with the WMGS Director to bring in outside scholars to run workshops on topics that advance WMGS as well as to foster larger conversations about climate and diversity issues on campus. Topics should include state-of-the-art Women’s and Gender Studies, cultivating diversity through curricular initiatives, intersectional approaches to critical masculinity studies, and feminist science studies.

I believe that the above recommendations—although ambitious and far-reaching—are certainly attainable and within the capabilities and ethos of the College as a whole. In fact, some demonstrable successes in the areas of AC transparency, information dissemination and outreach, as well as course
development, will provide the foundation for WMGS to develop a major and make a currently solid program into an excellent one in the very near future.

**Recommendation 9:** The WMGS Director and Advisory Council should set up a strategic plan—complete with a timeline inclusive of the above recommendations, specific event planning for the “Focus on the Field” project, implementation of cross-listing guidelines, targets for course development—to work toward the proposal of a major within the 3-5 years.

**Conclusion**

Overall, the Women’s and Gender Studies Program at St. Norbert College is strong and has enjoyed incredible success in a short period of time. In so many ways and for so many in the campus community, it is said to represent the best of the institution’s future. Therefore, the range and depth of my recommendations should not be taken as being critical, but rather, as a set of concrete ideas to further support a program that has the potential to improve the overall quality of the liberal arts experience for all students at St. Norbert. I hope that the administration will share my view that WMGS is a valuable part of the intellectual life of the institution and has demonstrated its ability to achieve even more. As St. Norbert seeks even greater national recognition for its liberal-arts excellence, Women’s and Gender Studies will have a vital role to play.
Sources Consulted


Women’s and Gender Studies Advisory Council. “St. Norbert College Women’s and Gender Studies Program Review 2009.”

External Reviewer’s Background

Catherine M. Orr is Associate Professor and Chair of Women’s and Gender Studies at Beloit College. She is the former co-chair of the standing committee on Program Administration and Development (2003-2006), which seeks to support the work of and advocate for department and program chairs, directors, and coordinators in the National Women’s Studies Association (NWSA). She was elected NWSA National Conference Chair in 2006 and served through 2008. Her research interests take up critical perspectives on the field of Women’s and Gender Studies in the US, third wave feminisms, and feminist theory. She has published articles in *Women’s Studies Quarterly, NWSA Journal, Hypatia, Irish Feminist Studies,* and *Feminist Collections* and chapters in anthologies/collected works such as The Women’s Movement Today, Teaching Feminist Activism, and The Encyclopedia of Gender and Society. She is currently co-editing a book of critical genealogies about the field of Women’s and Gender Studies.
## Appendix A: Meetings During On-Site Visit

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friday, Dec. 4th, 2009</th>
<th>Meetings - Individuals/Groups</th>
<th>Topics of discussion</th>
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<tr>
<td>9-10:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Michael Marsden, Dean of the College and Academic Vice President</td>
<td>Governance/divisional structures; faculty development; strengths/challenges of WMGS program; college curriculum; faculty workload; tenure/promotion policies; interdisciplinary programs; resources</td>
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<td>10-11:00</td>
<td>Orientation and Campus Tour; Bola Delano Orian, Asst. Professor of Education Vicky Tashjian, Assoc. Professor of History Michelle Tichy, Asst. Professor of Education</td>
<td>WMGS programming, curriculum, leadership; strengths and challenges of the WMGS program; campus climate</td>
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<td>11-11:30</td>
<td>Jay Fostner, Vice President of Mission and Heritage</td>
<td>Catholic intellectual tradition; Norbertine heritage; College mission; strengths and challenges of WMGS program; campus climate</td>
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<td>11:30-12</td>
<td>Mary Oling-Sisay, Vice President for Student Affairs &amp; Dean of Students Cindi Barnett, Advisor of Women's Center</td>
<td>Collaborative programming with WMGS; Norbertine heritage; WMGS curriculum; strengths and challenges of WMGS program; campus climate</td>
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<td>12:15 p.m.</td>
<td>Lunch w/WMGS Faculty/Affiliates Bonnie Berken, Assistant Professor of Natural Sciences Bola Delano Oriaran, Assistant Professor of Education Brad Ellis, Assistant Professor of Spanish Marti Lamar, Assistant Professor of History Laurie MacDiarmid, Associate Professor of English and Writer in Residence Tynisha Meidl, Assistant Professor of Education Beth A. Tarasawa, Assistant</td>
<td>Strengths and challenges of WMGS program; WMGS Advisory Committee; Norbertine heritage and Catholic tradition; campus climate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time</td>
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<td>2-3:00</td>
<td>Meeting with Students: Margaret Deneen, ‘10 Lara Eucalano, ‘11 Kellie Herson, ‘11 Drew Johnson, ‘09 Billy Korinko, ‘09, Men’s Initiative Coordinator Gretchen Panzer, ‘12 Ryan Reed, ‘11</td>
<td>Strengths and challenges of WMGS program; WMGS curriculum; campus resources for students; campus climate</td>
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<td>3-4:00</td>
<td>Meeting with Deans: Linda Beane-Katner, Director of Faculty Development and Associate Professor of French James Benton, Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Associate Professor of Sociology Anindo Choudhury, Associate Academic Dean and Associate Professor of Biology David Duquette, Associate Dean of Humanities and Fine Arts and Professor of Philosophy Kevin Quinn, Incoming Associate Dean of Social Sciences and Professor of Economics Bob Rutter, Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness Larry Scheich, Associate Dean of Natural Sciences and Professor of Chemistry</td>
<td>Strengths and challenges of WMGS program; interdisciplinary programs at SNC; WMGS curriculum; WMGS Advisory Council; campus climate</td>
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<td>4:15-5:15</td>
<td>Thomas Kunkel, President</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary programs at SNC; strengths and challenges of WMGS program; resources; campus climate</td>
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<td>5:30-7:00</td>
<td>Dinner with WMGS faculty: Betsy Bauman, Assistant Professor of Religious Studies Cheryl L. Carpenter-Siegel, Assistant Professor of Sociology Vicky Tashjian, Associate Professor of History</td>
<td>Resources, WMGS Advisory Council; WMGS curriculum; campus climate</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<td>7-8:00</td>
<td>Debriefing with Karlyn Crowley</td>
<td>Strengths and challenges of WMGS program; WMGS Advisory Council; concerns and likely recommendations</td>
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<td>Mon., Dec. 15th, 2009</td>
<td>Phone conversation: Linda Beane-Katner, Director of Faculty Development and Associate Professor of French</td>
<td>Strengths and challenges of WMGS program; faculty development</td>
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