

It's been brought to our attention by the good folk over at the University of Guelph that the admin there is in the process of eliminating the Women's Studies program-- just as Women's and Gender Studies makes its move into high schools, UGuelph is looking to take two major recession-blaming steps back. Since cutting WS would only cover like 0.17% of their expected budget shortfall, the excuse feels as credible as Milli Vanilli blaming it on the rain...

Why not pull out your shiny "because" lines (<http://www.themissgproject.org/about/>) and send them over to let the admin know why Women's Studies is just so darn important...

What you can do:

1. Sign the Petition: "Save Women's Studies at the University of Guelph"

<http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/savewmst?e>

2. Join the Facebook group with example letters, email addresses and info if you would like to write an email to the admin at U of G or just get a better idea of what's going on.

3. Read and pass on this important CALL TO ACTION:

Please Forward Widely

Responses should go to: Dan Irving, irving.dan@gmail.com

Please note that the BUGS meeting has been switched to March 24th, so we are asking for sign-ons asap.

We are requesting that you (1) consider signing on to this letter which we will send to the President and VP's at Guelph. To do so please indicate to me that you would like your name added and I will do so (2) circulate the letter within your networks.

Please feel free to use this letter as a template for your own, or borrow portions. Below are some facts concerning the decision to eliminate WS at Guelph:

Dear Colleagues,

As you may or may not know, the administration is in the process of eliminating the Women's Studies program at the University of Guelph. One of the University's responses to the current budget crisis has been to drop programs with fewer than forty majors. No data have been provided to substantiate the argument that eliminating majors will resolve our budget problems and, at this point, Women's Studies is the *only* major in the University that's on the chopping block. (Our source: a memo received by Undergraduate Coordinators from Shari Dorr of the Undergraduate Academic Information Centre, quoting AVPA Serge Desmarais.)

The BA Programs Committee recently voted to eliminate Women's Studies (having been told by the administration that there was no alternative). The decision still has to go through the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS) and Senate before it's finalized.

We're writing to ask you for your support in our efforts to save Women's Studies. In particular, please write the Chair of BUGS, Neil MacLusk (nmaclusk@uoguelph.ca), and ask BUGS to overturn the BA Program Committee's decision. Here are some facts you may want to use in your letter:

* Women's Studies has been chronically underfunded. The program began in 1979 but did not receive stable funding for more than twenty years. Cutting the Women's Studies program will save

less than 0.17% of the University's predicted \$46 million shortfall. And yet Women's Studies is the only program in the university that's slated to be cut.

* In 2007, Women's Studies received a favourable report from an external review committee, co-authored by Janet MacInnes of OVC and Alison Keith of Classics and Women's Studies at the University of Toronto. That report indicated that the program was under-resourced, and that the administration refused to provide additional resources.

* Because of the current budget crisis, in January Women's Studies Coordinator Norman Smith offered to cut the budget

by more than half. This would have involved dropping all WMST core courses except WMST 1000, Introduction to Women's Studies; the revised program would have focused on existing courses on women, gender and/or sexuality currently offered in the COA and CSAHS. This proposal was turned down. Instead the university is dropping the program.

* Other Colleges are trying furiously to save important programs with fewer than forty majors, sometimes by combining them with other programs. (For example, the College of Physical and Engineering Science is trying to protect the interdisciplinary Biophysics program, which has an enrolment comparable to Women's Studies.) Women's Studies is not receiving such support.

* Despite its chronic underfunding, Women's Studies is one of the most efficient programs on campus. Figures for the number of Women's Studies major vary, from 21 to more than 30, depending on how they're counted. Suppose, however, that there are as few as 20 majors. 20 majors and 0.4 full-time faculty gives a ratio of 50 majors per full-time faculty member.

Psychology has roughly 750 majors and 34.5 full-time faculty, which works out to approximately 22 majors per full-time faculty member.

History has 558 majors and 28 full-time faculty, which works out to approximately 20 majors per full-time faculty member.

Admittedly, Psychology and History have MA and PhD programs. So let's suppose that graduate students take 50% of a full-time faculty member's teaching time. That makes 44 majors per full-time faculty member for Psychology and 40 majors per full-time faculty member for History - still less than Women's Studies, even using the low-ball estimate of the number of majors. (If Women's Studies has 30 majors, that works out to *75* majors per full-time faculty member.)

* If the University of Guelph drops the Women's Studies program, it will become one of only a very few English-speaking universities in Canada, and certainly the only one that professes to be a research university, not to have a Women's or Gender Studies program. This is shameful.

* To add insult to injury, the University wants to keep offering WMST 1000 Introduction to Women's Studies. But it will be impossible for students to major or minor in Women's Studies.

Please write to the Chair of BUGS, Neil MacLusky (nmaclusk@uoguelph.ca), and ask the Board of Undergrad Studies to save the Women's Studies program. Please cc your letter to President Alastair Summerlee (president@uoguelph.ca), Provost and VP Academic Maureen Mancuso (m.mancuso@exec.uoguelph.ca), Dean Don

Bruce (don.bruce@uoguelph.ca) and, to show them your support, Women's Studies Coordinator Norman Smith (nsmith06@uoguelph.ca) and Administrative Assistant Linda Georges (lgeorges@uoguelph.ca).

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