

**SYNOPSIS OF A PROPOSAL FOR THE INITIATION OF A NEW INSTRUCTIONAL  
LEADING TO THE MINOR**

**IN QUEER STUDIES**

**WOMEN'S AND GENDER STUDIES**

**COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES**

**CIP 050208 GAY/LESBIAN STUDIES**

1. Description of Proposed Program

a. The Queer Studies (QS) minor is a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary program whose goal is the study of sexuality as a complex historical and cultural formation. Rather than understand sexuality as merely a feature of private intimacy or as result of unchanging biological forces, the QS minor approaches the study of sexuality in relation to the social construction of gender, race, ability, class, and citizenship. Currently there is no course of study at the University of Oregon that allows students to pursue the study of sexuality in an intellectually coherent way. Both students and faculty at the University of Oregon have noted this absence and have requested for over a decade that this gap be filled.

As a program committed to critical thinking and social analysis, the QS minor introduces students not only to the complex histories, cultures, political activities, and expressions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people, but it also raises questions about larger social and institutional formations. For instance, QS is particularly interested in the assumptions, language, and power of science, medicine, law, and religion to explain and regulate sexuality and the social relations based on it. In this way, QS places emphasis on the knowledge and activism generated by sexual minorities, as it explores the social construction of sexual identities and their connections to practices and discourses accepted as normal. Queer Studies focuses on the social and political forces shaping norms (particularly those pertaining to sexuality, gender expression, and family formation) and conversely how these norms come to be challenged either through their own internal contradictions or through pointed interventions of activists seeking social justice.

b. This proposal for a minor in Queer Studies expressly responds to student demand. Courses on topics connected to this field, such as transgender history, sexualities, gay legal issues, and many others, consistently fill, typically well before registration deadlines. Moreover, students have for the last several years expressed desire for such a program, bringing their requests to the University Standing Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Issues, to Chicora Martin's office for LGBT Education and Support Services, and to Women's and Gender Studies. For example, a petition calling for the establishment of an Undergraduate minor in this subject area, initiated and circulated by undergraduate students in the winter of 2004 and presented to the Provost in the spring, clearly demonstrates such student enthusiasm. Based on the number of WGS minors, we anticipate that approximately 20 students per year will minor in Queer Studies. In light of students' demands from the Multicultural Center and the Office of Student Life, we expect that students will come from a wide range of backgrounds and identities.

c. We envision a minor in Queer Studies to be an enhancement to a Bachelor's Degree, something that will give our graduates a competitive edge in seeking employment. In Oregon, a growing number of municipalities and cities (Portland, Multnomah County, Eugene, and Ashland, for example) have enacted domestic partnership legal status for same-sex couples and

families, leading to a need for individuals with expertise in the fields of human resources, legal counseling, and political activism. In addition, a growing number of professions, such as journalism, education, social services, counseling, and the health professions, seek graduates with expertise in LGBTQ issues.

## 2. Relationship to Strategic Direction

a. The main objective of the minor in QS is to provide students with a general and concentrated knowledge of sexuality as a complex historical, cultural, and intersectional formation. This program would raise the visibility of the University of Oregon as we facilitate the exchange of knowledge on sexuality with other universities in the country and abroad. Many universities have instituted Queer Studies programs including Duke University, University of California, Berkeley, UCLA, Cornell University, University of Massachusetts, Brown University, Brandeis University, Yale University, and Stanford University.

Establishing the Queer Studies minor will enable the University of Oregon to fulfill an important facet of its longstanding mission statement, currently reaffirmed by the Diversity Plan, which declares the institution's "dedication to the principles of equality of opportunity and freedom from unfair discrimination for all members of the university community and an acceptance of true diversity as an affirmation of individual identity within a welcoming community." (See complete proposal for a fuller discussion of the relationship between the proposed minor and the UO Diversity Plan).

b. A program of Queer Studies provides a vehicle and an institutional framework for relevant cross-disciplinary work which is currently done by scholars across the campus. These faculty who work in an array of disciplines on related topics and issues need scholarly and pedagogical forums for sharing resources, perspectives, goals, and collaborative investigations. Significant numbers of faculty, especially many more recently hired, have urged this linking of research and teaching interests into a coordinated and directed program.

## 3. Resources

a. The budgetary unit responsible for this program will be the Women's and Gender Studies Program. The bulk of the budget is course buy-outs (for one introductory course and one upper-division course) and one faculty buy-out per year to coordinate the minor across three quarters. These responsibilities include course planning, faculty recruitment to the teaching staff, advising students, auditing transcripts, advertising, planning speakers and events, writing reports, and maintaining statistics. The Office Specialist I (25% /9 months) will help with these duties.

b. The Queer Studies minor adds an important missing dimension to ongoing research and teaching units as CRESS, CSWS, CODAC, Women's and Gender Studies, Ethnic Studies, and various Research Interest Groups. The opportunity to teach on the basis of ongoing research, and to organize forums for collaborative investigation and symposia, make the U.O. setting increasingly attractive for faculty who might otherwise find better opportunities elsewhere.

## 4. Student Outcomes

a. For-profit and non-profit agencies in Eugene will benefit from employees graduating from the University of Oregon with an expertise in LGBTQ concerns. In addition, organizations such as COLAGE (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere), GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network), Looking Glass New Roads, PFLAG (Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays), HIV Alliance, and local queer-straight alliance youth groups often require regular student interns with knowledge in this area.