

# **Women's Studies as Civic Engagement: Research and Recommendations**

**A Teagle Foundation White Paper**

**Prepared on behalf of:  
The Teagle Working Group on  
Women's Studies and Civic Engagement and  
the National Women's Studies Association**

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## Table of Contents

Members of the NWSA Teagle Working Group	3
Executive Summary	4
Introduction	6
Making the Case for a Rededication to Civic Education: What Is Required?	8
Why Women’s Studies?: A Resource for Countering the Civic Crisis through Curricular-Based Civic Engagement	9
• Activist Scholarship	10
• Modes of Inquiry	11
• Engaged Pedagogies: Survey Results and Discussion	14
Connections and Disconnections: Myths and Realities about Women’s Studies and Civic Engagement	19
Recommendations	23
Conclusion	25
References	26
About the Author	29
Appendix A: Student Survey Instrument	30
Appendix B: Student Survey Results	31
Appendix C: Faculty Survey Instrument	35

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Women's Studies as Civic Engagement: Research and Recommendations**

This report is a result of the National Women's Studies Association's (NWSA) successful grant application to the Teagle Foundation's request for proposals (RFP) titled "Big Questions in the Disciplines." That RFP sought to explore whether the increasing specialization of disciplines "pushed aside" the meaning and value of liberal arts learning.

In response, NWSA argued that Women's Studies is a discipline launched with big questions about justice, inclusion, and belonging. Although often assumed to be only a gender equity project, the discipline of Women's Studies has drawn on its activist roots in the women's, civil rights, and student movements of 1960s and 1970s to develop unique intellectual frameworks that teach students how power, privilege, and difference shape our individual identities and society as a whole. These pedagogies converge well with the civic mission of higher education, arguably one of the most important outcomes of liberal arts learning.

As such, this report argues that Women's Studies has key lessons to offer about fostering civic engagement at the course level that will deepen student learning in the college setting, contribute respectfully to communities in which they become involved, and produce lifelong civic leaders. However, as the NWSA proposal noted and further research documented in this report indicates, the expertise borne of the discipline's scholarly output is rarely called upon as institutions seek to promote civic engagement on their campuses. And too often, those overlooking such contributions include a significant number of Women's Studies faculty.

This white paper argues that as higher education re-dedicates itself to its long-standing commitment to promote civic purposefulness at the core of the undergraduate experience, Women's Studies is a valuable resource. Although rarely using the language of civic engagement, Women's Studies has developed a vast body of scholarship and a collection of pedagogical approaches that bridge theory and practice for students at institutions seeking to bolster their roles as a citizen educators.

The conclusions of this white paper are derived from a two-year initiative that included two extended meetings of the Teagle Working Group, a one-day workshop on civic engagement in Women's Studies that took place at the 2010 NWSA conference, and national survey data collected from both students and faculty.

Its findings indicate three areas still need to be addressed to take full advantage of the resources that Women's Studies brings to any institutional rededication to its civic mission:

1. Support of faculty is absolutely necessary to the integration of civic engagement into the core experiences—i.e., the curriculum—of undergraduate students. This includes not just the usual resources of time and money, but a reconsideration of what counts for tenure and promotion that is better aligned with institutional mission statements.
2. National organizations like NWSA must lead the way in explicating Women's Studies' expertise on civic engagement. As one of the most diversely constituted disciplines in the U.S. academy, Women's Studies would benefit from better articulations of how the variety of the civic engagement practices that go on in its curriculum connect to the core principles of the discipline.
3. The work of coming to terms—literally developing a common language to speak about the importance of civic engagement across disciplines, campus units, and surrounding communities—is urgently required, not just to make Women's Studies' contributions intelligible beyond its disciplinary borders but to allow for more meaningful exchanges about the practice of civic engagement at every level of higher education.

To thrive in times of austerity, institutions of higher education must deploy existing resources more efficiently to meet their civic missions. Innovation in such difficult contexts may require that leaders move beyond what they think they know and take a “fresh look” at what is at hand: Who is already committed to the work that aligns with the institution's goals? How is the institution rewarding those who best reflect what it claims to value? Where is the untapped expertise that could help the institution move forward?

In sum, we assert that the discipline of Women's Studies—its intellectual preoccupations combined with its enduring mandate for social justice—constitutes a valuable resource for a meaningful rededication to higher education's civic mission.

## Women's Studies as Civic Engagement: Research and Recommendations

Talk of a civic crisis abounds. Partisan politics, “birthers,” election fraud, and immigration laws dominate our national conversations and transform the practices of citizenship into a combative moral terrain. National laments about the loss of community and authentic connections—from “bowling alone” to excessive technologizing of our social networks—add to collective anxieties about increasing isolation and lack of democratic participation. Combine these perceptions of loss with the very real widening wealth gap which inevitably exacerbates existing divisions of race, class, region, and shared experience, and the civic crisis talk makes sense.

Whereas more education has previously been associated with higher rates of civic participation, that trend has reversed with this generation. Political scientist, Robert Putnam, summarizes fifty years of research: “[b]y almost every measure, Americans’ direct engagement in politics and government has fallen steadily and sharply over the last generation, despite the fact that average levels of education—*the best individual-level predictor of political participation*—have risen sharply throughout this period” (qtd. in Finley 2011, 3-4; emphasis added).

In spite of what most university mission statements claim to accomplish,<sup>1</sup> higher education no longer is a guarantee for producing “better” citizens. We suffer from a “civic recession,” claims a 2011 report to the nation by Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Global Perspective Institute (GPI), and this has brought higher education to a “crucible moment”: “Higher education is one means of transforming our nation to meet the demands of a new century. Yet, to take on the magnitude of the challenges, colleges and universities must also transform themselves in the process” (“Reversing the Civic Recession” 2011, 15).

But how? With shrinking resources, expanding class sizes, and increased public scrutiny ushering in unprecedented shifts in priorities for higher education, self-transformation for an endeavor that feels as idealistic (and, for many administrators and faculty, amorphous) as civic purposefulness can easily be dismissed as an unaffordable luxury.

Perhaps the most strategic response in such circumstances is to repurpose what is already at hand. At many campuses, tapping into existing resources and making use

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<sup>1</sup> Mecham and Gaff (2006) found that “contributing to the community” to be among the most common goals mentioned in college and university mission statements. And yet, they point out, “few curricula have been implemented to facilitate the attainment by students of the propensity for contributing to the community.”

of the most recent findings about best practices in civic engagement may have the greatest impact. Some of these recent findings indicate that civic engagement that is embedded in the curriculum is most effectual. As this report indicates, then, a fresh look at Women's Studies, a discipline with a long tradition of civically engaged curriculum, may be warranted to reinvigorate higher education's civic purpose at both the institutional and national levels.

For over 40 years, Women's Studies has been broadening its curriculum in ways that are well-suited to respond to the civic crisis. Yet the discipline often has been overlooked for its potential to contribute to larger institutional goals. Much more than a gender equity project, the discipline of Women's Studies investigates issues of power, privilege, and difference at the course level and helps students connect those investigations to various means of social transformation. Although rarely using the language of civic engagement, Women's Studies has developed a vast body of scholarship, a tradition of theoretically-informed practice, and a collection of pedagogical approaches that "bridge the explanation-action gap"<sup>2</sup> for students at institutions seeking to bolster their roles as a citizen educators.

The findings of a two-year Teagle Foundation funded project administered by a diverse group of senior Women's Studies scholars, called the Teagle Working Group, and under the auspices of the National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) demonstrate the promise of Women's Studies' pedagogies as models for placing civic engagement at the core of the undergraduate student experience. As such, we argue that key resources for effective responses to the civic crisis already exist on campuses with strong Women's Studies programs, thereby making the potential of institutional change more viable.

The findings also indicate three areas still need to be addressed to take full advantage of the resources that Women's Studies brings to any institutional rededication to its civic mission:

1. Support of faculty is absolutely necessary to the integration of civic engagement into the core experiences—i.e., the curriculum—of undergraduate students. This includes not just the usual resources of time and money, but a reconsideration of what counts for tenure and promotion that is better aligned with institutional mission statements.
2. National organizations like NWSA must lead the way in explicating Women's Studies' expertise on civic engagement for various audiences. As one of the most diversely constituted disciplines in the U.S. academy, Women's Studies would benefit from better articulations of how the variety of the civic engagement practices that go on in its curriculum connect to the core principles of the discipline.
3. The work of coming to terms—literally developing a common language to speak about the importance of civic engagement across disciplines, campus

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<sup>2</sup> Miller and Mansilla (2004) use this term to talk about the effectiveness of the work of interdisciplines like Women's Studies.

units, and surrounding communities—is urgently required, not just to make Women’s Studies’ contributions intelligible beyond its disciplinary borders but to allow for more meaningful exchanges about the practice of civic engagement at every level of higher education.

Obviously, no single constituency can address all three of these areas of need. Rather, the findings of this report call on administrators, faculty, tenure and promotion committees, funders and other civic engagement stakeholders (which represent a broad set of constituencies both inside and outside of academia), and the national organizations that represent Women’s Studies practitioners, including the National Women’s Studies Association, to play a role in making innovative uses of the discipline’s rich body of resources to further the civic purpose of higher education.

### **Making the Case for a Rededication to Civic Education: What Is Required?**

In the post-World War II era, higher education grew into its current status as a foundational institution in U.S. society. Its expansion fueled the economic prosperity, the scientific and technological advances, and the political influence that characterized the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as “the American Century.” The articulated value at the heart of this expansion rested on higher education’s civic purpose. As the 1948 document produced for the first Presidential Commission on Higher Education put it,

The first and most essential charge upon higher education is that at all levels and in all its fields of specialization, it shall be the carrier of democratic values, ideals, and process. (1948, vol. 1, 102)

Even now, as a consumerist mentality takes hold among students and demands for “job-readiness” occupy more and more of the discourse around higher education, its civic purpose remains central in the national mindset.

A recent study conducted by Eric Dey, professor at the Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education at the University of Michigan, demonstrated that over one half of students arrive at college with a strong sense that contributing to the larger community should be a focus of their chosen institution (Dey 2009, 3). As it turns out, there are good reasons for students to want this kind of college experience; research indicates that civically engaged students can boast increased personal efficacy, retention and completion rates, positive impacts on career development, satisfaction with college, critical thinking skills, and moral development (Finley 2011, 9-12).

The problem, however, is that our colleges and universities are too often failing to deliver on this expectation. “As students move through their educational programs,” Dey points out, “their belief that their institutions should focus on contributing to a larger community is stable and strong, but their assessment of whether their



institutions actually are focusing on that goal becomes increasingly pessimistic” (2009, 6).

Therefore, it is not a lack of enthusiasm on the part of students or even—according to Dey’s survey of over 30,000 respondents—a lack of interest on the part of faculty, staff, and administrators. Neither is it a lack of planning or financial support on the part of institutions. In fact, efforts to address the “civic recession” seem to be on the rise as colleges institute service-learning programs and universities tout their support for local and regional communities through educational outreach and community-based research.

Rather, the difficulty seems to be at the level of curriculum: too many civic engagement efforts suffer acutely from a lack of integration into and coordination with the *curricular*—and thereby the *core*—experiences of students. Carol Schneider, President of AAC&U, argues that

[f]or too long, our campuses have made civic engagement and social responsibility an extracurricular activity, the realm of student affairs and off-campus life... [when] successful integration of learning is surely the key to success. The more students transfer knowledge and skill from the classroom to the community and then back again, the better prepared they will be to take responsibility for their lifelong roles as citizens and human beings. (2003, 5)

Even among institutions that have community service as a graduation requirement, such experiences can remain “disconnected from in-depth consideration of social issues, collective action and discipline-based curriculum in the classroom” (Finlay, et al. 2010, 297-98). Students’ civic experiences often, in the words of a recent study, “are too diffuse, peripheral, and limited to foster in all students the kinds of skills, knowledge, and dispositions that American democracy currently needs” (“Strengthening Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement” 2011, 7).

It makes sense, then, to support institutional locations already embedded in the curriculum that boast expertise in effective civic engagement. Women’s Studies is such a location.

### **Why Women’s Studies?: A Resource for Countering the Civic Crisis through Curricular-Based Civic Engagement**

So what is it about Women’s Studies that can contribute to an institution’s civic engagement goals? Although popular perceptions tend to limit it simply to a gender equity project, the discipline is much more multifaceted. Women’s Studies boasts a legacy of activist scholarship and has developed basic modes of inquiry that make the discipline unique. Out of this amalgamation comes a tradition of highly engaged pedagogies that work well among diverse cross-sections of current undergraduate populations. As such, this report argues that Women’s Studies has key lessons to

offer about fostering civic engagement at the course level that will deepen student learning in the college setting, contribute respectfully to communities in which they become involved, and produce lifelong civic leaders.

In a nutshell, Women's Studies regards civic learning as most effective when students understand how social problems emerge from interconnected systems of inequality *and* simultaneously learn how to challenge those systems. Therefore, the discipline highlights social justice frameworks that distinguish engagement from "service" or "volunteering" where too often issues of power and privilege go unquestioned. Emerging research indicates that "an awareness of social justice may be key to fostering civic engagement and...[boosting] its persistence" (Finlay et al. 2010, 297-98) and that social justice frameworks actually produce better learning outcomes.<sup>3</sup>

In assessing the discipline's pedagogical approaches, the Teagle Working Group, which brought together scholars from a range of institutional types, articulated twelve essential elements of civic engagement in Women's Studies curricula. This white paper explicates these characteristics, grouping them into the categories of "Activist Scholarship," "Modes of Inquiry," and "Engaged Pedagogies: Survey Results and Discussion" and highlights their role in Women's Studies' unique approach to civic engagement in the undergraduate classroom.

### Activist Scholarship

#### *Civic engagement in Women's Studies:*

- *Draws on histories of radical politics to make both connections and distinctions between service and struggle*
- *Provides perspectives on deep democracy and informed reciprocity*
- *Counteracts both consumer and missionary models of community-based learning*
- *Examines the possibilities of dissident citizenship*

Teagle Work Group  
June 2010

Women's Studies is a discipline with roots in the civil rights, student, and women's movements of the 1960s and 70s. As a result of this legacy, the discipline's practitioners have developed scholarship that contributes to a social justice mandate, implicitly working for synergies between knowledge production and its applications beyond the academy. In addition, Women's Studies' activist roots have emerged from social groups whose experiences are shaped by race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, religion and other systems of dominance and subordination. As a

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<sup>3</sup> See Welch (2009) for a summary of recent research that investigates the cognitive growth levels associated with service learning versus social-justice oriented courses. Students in social justice courses consistently scored higher on the Measure of Epistemological Reflection compared to their counterparts who took courses with only service learning components.

result, its methods of engagement reflect deeply on the paradoxes of terms like “citizenship” and “democracy,” especially as they are mobilized in the name of liberal learning. In short, Women’s Studies has dedicated itself not just to critical thinking *about* practice but to critical thinking *in* practice.

For example, in drawing connections between identities and actions, former Program Director of Projects at Rutgers’ Center for American Women and Politics, Tobi Walker, notes that an “exploration of the historical and theoretical roots of community service theory reveals an intellectual tradition that is heavily masculinized and fails to consider the relationship between women, service and politics” (2000, 26). Other Women’s Studies scholars have taken on questions more fundamental to liberal learning: Bonnie Zimmerman, a former National Women’s Studies Association President, has voiced concerns about the role of civic engagement as part of the Women’s Studies project, noting that “the emphasis within Women’s Studies on volunteer activities. . . may actually reinforce current power structures and relations by taking on some of the work that used to be considered the responsibility of the state” (2002, 188). Likewise, feminist Native Studies scholar, Andrea Smith, has developed a body of research that raises questions about the historical emergence of civic ideals in the United States. She challenges us consider alternative or even dissident forms of citizenship as possible and even desirable in some circumstances (think: Montgomery Bus Boycott during the Civil Rights Movement or the Stonewall uprising in New York City that typically marks the beginning of the Gay Rights Movement). In questioning common-sense assumptions about who is a citizen of the United States, she argues that we can access alternative visions of nation and sovereignty “based on care and responsibility for land that all can share” (2008, 311-12).

Thus, it is never just about “giving time” or “doing good.” This kind of rigorous interrogation—even of its own assumptions—is typical of how Women’s Studies scholarship encourages critical thinking in practice.

### Modes of Inquiry

*Civic engagement in Women’s Studies:*

- *Brings intersectional approaches to power, privilege, and inequality*
- *Examines local/global connections*
- *Acknowledges sexism and its relationship to other forms of oppression*
- *Produces life-long learners and critical inquiry toward social transformation*

Teagle Working Group

June 2010

The National Women’s Studies Association states: “Women’s studies is interdisciplinary, intersectional, comparative, and global” (NWSA 2011). These four modes of inquiry, when combined, provide a unique framework for shaping students’ understandings of their civic engagement experiences.

*Women's Studies is Interdisciplinary:* In a recent editorial in *Signs*, one of field's premier journals, Mary Hawkesworth, former Chair of Women's Studies at Rutgers University, speaks to the field's

unique way of attending to and theorizing structures of power that operate by demarcating certain domains as natural, accidental, or pre-political, and as such, beyond the reach of social intervention. By theorizing power relations that encompass embodiment, sexuality, and oppressive structures that permeate everyday life, whether they gain their purchase from culture, from tradition, or from changing local, national, transnational, and global practices, feminist scholarship renders the politics of difference and the politics of knowledge intelligible and actionable. (2011, 511)

Obviously, such a knowledge/action project could not simply pivot on a single demographic characteristic (gender) or demand a single avenue to its goals (equality). To be both "intelligible and actionable" as well as deeply reflexive about its own practices, Women's Studies has had to be open to multiple knowledges from multiple disciplinary locations. And while this long-standing commitment to interdisciplinarity carries with it a "deep tension"—that it can be pursued in institutions whose rigid disciplinary structures often function as obstacles to that commitment (Lichtenstein 2012, 35)—it nevertheless demonstrates a flexibility to attend to context specific knowledges and embrace opportunities to cross borders.

*Women's Studies is Intersectional:* While Simone de Beauvoir might have offered us an early critical insight about identity formation—that one is not born a woman but rather becomes one—Women's Studies' interrogation of the relationships between institutions and identities have gone far beyond the category of women. Drawing heavily on women of color feminist analyses that go back much farther in history than *The Second Sex*,<sup>4</sup> Women's Studies has made the conceptual claims and theoretical practices of intersectionality a foundation of the discipline. As Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambara, professors at University of Maryland's Women's Studies Department put it in their recent anthology, intersectional analysis "begins with the experiences of groups that occupy multiple social locations and find approaches and ideas that focus on the complexity rather than the singularity of human experience...by examining relationships and interactions between multiple axes of identity and multiple dimensions of social organizations—at the same time" (2009, 3-4). As such, intersectionality illuminates the multivalences of power and inequality in individual identities specifically and in social life more broadly.

*Women's Studies is Comparative:* Whereas intersectionality seeks to capture the complexity of identity formation, comparative approaches within Women's Studies emphasize the work of seeing mutually constitutive relationships between—and building communities of mutual interests across—differences. Chandra Talpade

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<sup>4</sup> For example, see Beverly Guy-Sheftall's 1995 anthology, *Words of Fire*, for speeches, documents, and writings that trace African American feminist thought back to the 1830s.

Mohanty, Professor and Chair of Women's and Gender Studies at Syracuse University, argues that in comparative frameworks "[w]hat is emphasized are relations of mutuality, co-responsibility, and common interests.... Differences and commonalities thus exist in relation and tension with each other in all contexts" (2003, 242). Through comparative methods, then, the interconnectedness—local and global, colonizer and colonized, privilege and deprivation—are brought into relation with one another in specific contexts. This illustrates what she calls the "common differences" approach to analysis and solidarity work in which we can "tell alternate stories of difference, culture, power, and agency [through] a more cross-cultural lens" (2003, 244). Women's Studies strives to tell alternate stories through a simultaneity of foci (e.g., individual experience, institutional power, historical contingencies), a multiplicity of critical lenses, and a constant attention to the specific contexts in which they interact. The point is to emphasize difference without simply capitulating to divisions or hierarchies.

*Women's Studies is Global:* Because of its emphases of interdisciplinary, intersectional, and comparative modes of inquiry, Women's Studies has constituted an extremely fertile location for fostering global perspectives. Simultaneously taking up and critiquing earlier notions of "global sisterhood," Women's Studies has sought to develop transnational approaches to thinking about gender that both draw on and extend theories of power, privilege and differences across national boundaries and through global processes. In their introductory text, Inderpal Grewal (Professor and Chair of Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Yale University) and Caren Kaplan (Professor of Women and Gender Studies and Chair of Cultural Studies at University of California, Davis) attempt to bring "Women's Studies into an era of globalization by connecting women's issues in the United States to women's issues elsewhere...[and showing] how colonialism and imperialism, as they spread across the world, shaped ideas about gender as much as other modern phenomena" (2005, np). Thinking through global perspectives shifts understanding of local issues. Yet, in an ongoing effort to reflect on the ways in which location affects knowledge production in the academy, Chandra Mohanty, along with M. Jacqui Alexander, Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at University of Toronto, demand that Women's Studies always inquire: "When is the transnational a normativizing gesture – and when does it perform a radical, decolonizing function?" (2010, 24). It is through the constant assessment of methods, goals, and effects of its own knowledge production that Women's Studies has come to possess a finely tuned approach to engaging the world beyond its borders.

### Engaged Pedagogies: Survey Results and Discussion

#### *Civic engagement in Women's Studies:*

- *Encourages students think about structures of inequality*
- *Teaches students how to challenge norms of inequality*
- *Shows students how private troubles can become public issues (and vice versa)*
- *Helps students to enter communities with humility as well as an openness to learning and personal transformation*

Activist scholarship and the four modes of inquiry are not only confined to research and publication among the Women's Studies faculty. They are as well the foundation of Women's Studies undergraduate teaching. Through them, students are offered a complex, deeply reflective, justice-oriented frame of analysis of history, culture, and society that challenges their assumptions about who they are in relation to others. It starts at the introductory level (where the vast majority of students will take only this single Women's Studies course) all the way through to senior level internship or capstone courses (for students majoring in Women's Studies).

Since undergraduate teaching is at the heart of this two-year project, NWSA, with the guidance of the Teagle Working Group, sought to gather a snapshot of data about Women's Studies pedagogies in the undergraduate classroom.<sup>5</sup> Members of the Working Group and participants in the "Power and Privilege at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Nation Workshop" held at the NWSA conference in November 2010, distributed student surveys and completed faculty surveys about their Women's Studies courses that include civic engagement components as a significant part of the workload. Students were asked to take a pre-test during the first week of instruction and a post-test during the final week.<sup>6</sup> Responses were open ended, and a "short answer" format was encouraged. NWSA received survey responses from 365 students. Pre- and post-test surveys were compiled and accompanied by the course syllabus and, in most cases, a faculty survey.

*Results of Student Surveys:* Student surveys reflect a broad national cross section of the field, and included courses ranging from the introductory to the capstone level. Students reported information on their year in college, gender, race, major, and number of previous Women's Studies courses taken.<sup>7</sup>

Students were fairly evenly distributed by year in college, and their racial self-reports correspond with the United States 2000 census population data by race.<sup>8</sup> Student majors reflect a wide range, with most students reporting majors in social sciences (27%), humanities (19%), and Women's Studies (19%).

Collecting data on a national scale posed administrative barriers. For example, one faculty participant was not able to secure their local Institutional Review Board approval quickly enough to distribute pre-test surveys, which meant her students could not participate in the data collection efforts. At another institution, a tornado prevented students from attending the final class, rendering post-test survey distribution impossible.

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<sup>5</sup> Thanks to Allison Kimmich for her work in compiling, analyzing, and writing up the results of the student survey data.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix A for a copy of the instrument used for both pre- and post-testing.

<sup>7</sup> See Appendix B for a breakdown of student response data.

<sup>8</sup> See Grieco and Cassidy (2001).

Interpreting the survey results also presented unanticipated challenges. For example, Working Group members, who drafted pre- and post-test survey questions, thought that by asking students to provide responses to the question, “What does ‘community service’ mean to you,” they might observe a shift from a “missionary” model of community service to one that was more attuned to issues of power at the end of the course. Overall, however, the question was not a good measure of changes in student thinking, with many students using identical wording on pre- and post-test surveys. Sixty-five percent of all students reflected no change in their responses.

Yet students’ responses yielded some promising—if modest—shifts on the questions, “In what ways are you privileged or disadvantaged compared with others,” “What are the greatest challenges facing women,” and “What does it mean to be an engaged participant in a democratic society” (See Appendix B). For example, with regard to the question about privilege, student responses on pre-tests typically reflected gratitude for family support. One student wrote, “I have a family that at least tries to understand me and I’m thankful for that.” The same student’s post-test survey includes greater specificity, incorporates an intersectional analysis of identity, and places the student in a broader social context: “I’m white and upper middle class.”

On the issue of challenges facing women, a male respondent wrote on his pre-test survey, “mood swings,” and on his post-test response, “men,” reflecting a shift from stereotypical views about women to one that sees women in terms of their socio-cultural relationship to male power. Students in some cases questioned the survey in their post-test responses, writing, “Which women?” and using comparative analysis indicating their understanding that women face different challenges based upon, in this case, their national identities.

Finally, students’ responses to the question, “What does it mean to be an engaged participant in a democratic society,” mark shifts in more traditional forms of engagement—such as voting—to more active ones that indicate students’ commitments to taking action and speaking out.

*Results of Faculty Surveys:* Fifteen of participating faculty completed their surveys at the end of the course and were asked to describe their civic engagement assignments, their pedagogical approaches (e.g., readings/discussions/assignment guidelines), their definitions of “success,” and how this work could be made less challenging vis-à-vis various stakeholders (community partners, their institutions, national Women’s Studies organizations).<sup>9</sup>

In the surveys (as well as during the workshop), participants discussed how they draw on the field’s foundations to shape their civic engagement assignments. For example, Brenda Risch, Assistant Professor of Women’s Studies at University of Texas El Paso (UTEP), developed a two-part introductory-level course titled “Images

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix C for a copy of the faculty survey.

and Representations of the Borderland” and “Social Issues of the Borderland” in which students visited community non-profit organizations, explored cultural and artistic sites (museums, public murals, historical sites), and met with key stakeholders involved in current debates about local community development issues. Students utilized daily journal assignments to analyze the historical and cultural contexts of the people and material worlds they were encountering through their experiential-based learning in the community. This work inside and outside of the class eventually prepared students for a final assignment that asked them to develop proposals for social policy initiatives that account for and honor the border cultures and identities that form the community in which UTEP is located.

According to her faculty survey, learning outcomes for students were quite positive; for example, Risch indicated that students were “better able to engage difficult material because they saw real-life examples” and that this curricular approach “reached ‘concrete’ learners (professional/science focused) and enabled them to engage in theoretical discussion about ethical and social justice issues.”

More significant for this report, however, is the fact that Risch’s responses illustrated well how the Women’s Studies curriculum at UTEP has great potential to support civic engagement goals at the institutional level.<sup>10</sup> For example, in responding to the question, “What were challenges and successes of the current civic engagement project?” Risch included the following under “successes”:

- Highly impactful visits to community sites -- none of the students had been to 95% of the sites we visited
- Actions of community activists “became visible” to students as significant and difficult work to transform the community
- Increased university visibility with community partners
- Created future internship possibilities with community partners

In post-test surveys of Risch’s courses, 75% of students showed significant shifts in attitudes when asked about the meaning of engaged participation in a democratic society. For example, one student initially spoke of engagement as simply “voic[ing] concerns” and ended up speaking about engagement as “understanding the key issues affecting society and realizing you have the power to do something about it.”

Along the same lines, Associate Professor of Gender and Women’s Studies, LeeRay Costa, who taught “Food, Culture and Social Justice” at Hollins University reported that “successes” in her course “brought more community folks to campus and improved relationships between community and university; all of the partners are willing to continue next year.” In addition, she noted that one of her students was actually invited to become a board member at the organization where she conducted her community partnership project. According to Costa, this student, at

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<sup>10</sup> The University of Texas at El Paso’s mission statement includes “a special focus on applying innovative interdisciplinary approaches to explore and address major issues that confront the multicultural, U.S.-Mexico border region.”



the same time, “critiqued what she saw as highly problematic gender/race/class hierarchies embedded in the board’s structure” in her final reflection paper.

While it would be difficult to measure the outcomes for this student and the organization she will now help to lead, most students in this course demonstrated significant changes in attitudes about the meaning of community service, perceptions of their own privilege, and participation in a democratic society.

In fact, Costa’s course was among three courses in particular in which student surveys reflected a dramatic shift in their pre- and post-test results, pointing to some preliminary suggestions about pedagogical “best practices” for the field (See Appendix B for data). Faculty at private liberal arts institutions offered two of the courses and a faculty member at a public state university offered the third one. One course enrolled a majority of seniors (Beloit College, “Readings in White Privilege,” taught by Catherine Orr), Costa’s course enrolled mostly juniors (Hollins University, “Food Culture, and Social Justice”), and the third enrolled mostly first-year students (Grand Valley State University, “Introduction to Gender Studies,” taught by Danielle DeMuth).

The variety of what civic engagement in Women’s Studies constitutes was on display here as well. While Costa’s course required students to complete at least 20 hours of a “community partnership project with a local food service organization,” DeMuth’s introductory course offered students the option to complete a 6-hour co-curricular activity, which could include attending relevant events or being placed in an agency. Orr’s course, on the other hand, asked that students to take a theory or concept from the course and engage the larger campus community in dialogue or action that raises awareness about the implications of that concept.

Despite the diversity of approaches to civic engagement, faculty teaching all three courses demonstrated a high level of expertise in and/or dedication to exploring civic engagement issues. For example, the “Introduction to Gender Studies” instructor, Danielle DeMuth, has co-authored an edited collection on activism, *Unsexed Gender, Engendering Activism*, and required the co-curricular activity in her course since 2006. As chair of the Teagle Working Group, I (Catherine Orr) have published several articles and chapters focusing on the function of activism in Women’s Studies’ theory and curriculum. Frequently, I challenge students to think deeply about their own desires to “do good” for “others” as a way of promoting the importance of both reflection and accountability in civic engagement work. LeeRay Costa, who taught the food culture course at Hollins University, sought and received a small budget from her Vice President for Academic Affairs as well as the commitment to offer the course again next spring.

The results of these surveys, although preliminary, indicate that some students did transform their understanding of themselves and their communities with just one semester of Women’s Studies civic engagement. This is just a snapshot of the data gathered with a less-than-perfect instrument and therefore cannot be considered definitive. However, the results are consistent with previous research on Women’s

Studies pedagogies that point to high levels of engagement and cognitive growth associated with work in the discipline.<sup>11</sup>

In sum, it is clear from the entire cache of data that the Women's Studies curricula students experienced in these courses were steeped in activist scholarship and drew heavily on the modes of inquiry explicated above. Even a cursory look at the syllabi indicates that each course demanded that students think critically about what they were learning in class and how that new knowledge had applications in the world beyond it. In addition, all the courses were overtly interdisciplinary and consciously intersectional throughout. All employed comparative perspectives at least once; many courses did much more in the way of comparative analysis. And almost all made use of global perspectives on topics under consideration at some point, while a number were actually organized through the analysis of global flows and the potentials of transnational feminism.

What is less clear from the data gathered is *how* the tradition of activist scholarship or the modes of inquiry employed in these courses connected (or not) to the twelve essential elements of civic engagement in Women's Studies that the Teagle Working Group compiled. In other words, it is unclear whether students experienced and benefitted from curricula that "counteracted both consumer and missionary models of community-based learning" or "helped [them] to enter communities with humility as well as an openness to learning and personal transformation" or "produced life-long learners and critical inquiry toward social transformation." In a sense, this entire two-year Teagle project has confirmed that the articulation, let alone the assessment, of the concrete outcomes of Women's Studies civic engagement has barely begun.

Two final pieces of fairly consistent data in the faculty surveys should be mentioned here: lack of adequate resources at both the institutional and national levels. Even as they touted successes and their students showed shifts in attitudes about civic engagement, faculty made near universal mention of the need for more support that recognizes the crucial role that courses like these play in forwarding the mission of their respective institutions. Voiced loudest were the gaps between what is recognized by the institution for tenure and promotion, what furthers the institution's mission, what effective Women's Studies pedagogy demands, and, to a lesser extent, what community partners expect from their participation in civic engagement projects.

For example, one faculty pointed to the structural accommodations (e.g., class scheduling, lack of transportation provisions to get students to community-based

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<sup>11</sup> See, Berger and Radeloff (2011) for the most recent and extensive survey data on how the undergraduate curriculum in Women's Studies impacts student perceptions through engagement with communities beyond the classroom. Previous research also includes *The Courage to Question*, which indicated that Women's Studies "contributes to a gradual progression in students as they move over time from voice to self-empowerment to social engagement" (Musil 1992, 5).

locations) as well as resources (e.g., lack of funding for a teaching assistant). Another remarked on the lack of “institutional infrastructure to assist in planning and logistics” as well as a lack of “material resources” that could sustain a broader commitment to civic engagement. This topic was the subject of intense conversation among the untenured faculty who participated in the grant activities.

As such, Workshop participants, in particular, called upon NWSA to take the lead on developing criteria for tenure and promotion that both recognized and rewarded the labor (intellectual and logistical) that civic engagement in Women’s Studies courses requires. The topic came up again in the faculty surveys. For example, one participant said that “more opportunities for training/discussion [from NWSA] would be wonderful” as well as some guidance on best practices: “Our campus culture at the moment is engrossed in assessment. I feel good about how I graded the activist projects, but I feel that it might be helpful for NWSA (or some other body of feminist academics) to offer guidelines about how ‘responsible civic engagement’ is graded.” Yet another participant asked for “more published scholarship from our field about this work that discusses the advantages, conflicts, research methodologies, pitfalls and academic issues related to tenure and promotion.”

### **Connections and Disconnections: Myths and Realities about Women’s Studies and Civic Engagement**

Many in higher education foundations as well as administrators at individual campuses recognize that the synergies between Women’s Studies curricula and civic engagement initiatives benefit the institutions of which they are a part. In such cases, Women’s Studies is “at the table.” For example, in the American Association for Higher Education series on service learning in the disciplines, Women’s Studies was 17<sup>th</sup> in a series of monographs on service-learning and the academic disciplines.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the recent set of national dialogues organized by the Association of American Colleges and Universities and the Global Perspectives Institute to prepare for a U.S. Department of Education project included the Executive Director of NWSA. She was asked to attend the meeting because the field of Women’s Studies produces, in the words of the invitation letter, some of the “most innovative thinking and programmatic activity on civic and democratic engagement” in higher education. As well, Caryn McTighe Musil, AAC&U Senior Vice President, attended a meeting of our 2011 Teagle Working Group to report on the results of the larger national conversation that her organization helped promote.

Of course, the synergies between Women’s Studies and civic engagement are even more visible when Women’s Studies faculty are tapped to enter administration and thereby bring with them their first hand knowledge of assets that the discipline can provide larger institutional initiatives. For example, NWSA President Bonnie Thornton Dill, long-time chair of Women’s Studies at the University of Maryland,

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<sup>12</sup> See Balliet and Heffeman (2000).

was recently appointed Dean of the College of Arts and Humanities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that such promotions have been occurring at an increased pace, and this can only help in the effort to make Women's Studies' potential contributions at the curricular level more intelligible to broader constituencies.

It is probably just as accurate to say, however, that the vast majority of people in higher education—from foundations to individual campus administrators to faculty in other departments to students—have no idea about the synergies between Women's Studies curricula and civic engagement.

The ironies of this particular disconnect are profound. Articles, books, white papers, and informal reports from educational foundations, higher education researchers, and community-based leaders speak in stark terms about the dismal state of civic engagement in higher education, especially as it relates to curricular initiatives. These sources are replete with frustration about disciplinary hierarchies, specialization, technocratic expertise, presumptions of neutrality, and fears of bias—in other words, the dominant epistemology of academe—that run counter to goals of higher education's civic purpose. In the words of one report, such disciplinary excesses have “robbed the academy of its ability to effectively challenge society and to seek change” (Saltmarsh et al. 2009, 5). Likewise, in one recent civic engagement text, the authors lament that beyond “the general organizational and historical features of academia,” faculty are too often concerned with avoiding the “risks” of broaching topics that are “sensitive” or “engender[ing] strong reactions or disagreements” or invoking accusations of “political indoctrination” or “bias” (Colby et al. 2007, 5).

More often than not, these same sources then turn their attention almost entirely to rehabilitating these traditional disciplines. Typically, soaring rhetoric about the values of democracy embedded in our national identity are followed by a presentation of the research that shows positive learning outcomes associated with civic engagement for undergraduate students and a concluding plea for bucking the dominant culture of the academy.

In other words, the proponents of civic engagement too often lament the state of disciplines that have capitulated to the dominant culture of academe instead of seeking out those intellectual projects, like Women's Studies, that have been skeptical of it all along. Rather than drawing expertise from disciplines that have embraced the risks of breaking with the discourse of the unbiased expert, they instead seek to develop engaged pedagogies among those who are steeped in it. As a result, the disciplines that have traditionally demanded that students become engaged in the world beyond the classroom, like Women's Studies, are rarely heard from in these expert accounts of best practices in civic engagement.

At best, this disconnect is a matter of unfamiliarity with the discipline. (As Women's Studies has almost no K-12 presence, it is usually something with which the college-going population is not familiar.) At worst, it is matter of rather negative associations about the discipline that have persisted since its inception.

To put a fine point on it, Women's Studies has an image problem.<sup>13</sup> And while every established discipline is likely to have its attending stereotypes, Women's Studies seems to be an object of derision more than most. Of course, any number of issues are at work here, and each institution with a Women's Studies program, no doubt, has its own idiosyncrasies that could render any given program an inappropriate location to draw leadership on broader institutional mandates like civic engagement. Suffice it to say, though, that in associating oneself with Women's Studies, as a faculty or as a student, one often risks being taken less seriously than when associating with other, more traditional, disciplines.<sup>14</sup>

The implications for civic engagement projects on campuses are obvious: if some of the most effective curricular-based civic engagement work is being done in disciplinary locations that are thought of as incapable of contributing to the larger conversation, then optimization of institutional resources suffer greatly.

But this is only half of the problem. The other side of the disconnect between institutionally sponsored civic engagement projects and Women's Studies curricula is found within the discipline itself. In other words, Women's Studies practitioners tend to be rather suspicious of institutionally sanctioned versions of projects they think of as unique to the discipline.

The proceedings of the Teagle Working Group provide a good illustration of this suspicion. Specifically, our conversations kept circling back to a recurrent theme about the inadequacy of the referent "civic engagement" to both capture and communicate the pedagogical practices that are central to Women's Studies. The major concern was about "watering down" the social justice mandate that is foundational to Women's Studies. One Working Group member wondered aloud about the "lines between activism and civic engagement" and whether Women's Studies would "benefit from the blurring." Other members questioned assumptions they saw at work in how civic engagement is mobilized in other contexts:

- How does the term "civic engagement" set aside questions about access to citizenship rights that are necessary prerequisites for many forms of engagement?

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<sup>13</sup> Women's Studies practitioners can report—almost universally—disapproving reactions by others to the discipline. Manuel (2011) validates the anecdotal data through a series of in-depth interviews by experts both in and outside of Women's Studies. Her report variously states that Women's Studies is perceived to be: overly politicized, more polemics than content, full of shrill people taking about oppression, all about hating men, by, for, and about white women only, an anachronism, and irrelevant.

<sup>14</sup> Chapter three of Berger and Radeloff (2011) document a number of negative reactions from students' peers and families about declaring Women's Studies majors.

- How does the term bypass the work of both historicizing and learning to recognize the structural inequalities that actually produce the needs in the communities that our students then are asked to engage?
- How does the term reify town-gown divides that posit that the structures that produce inequalities are “out there” in the community and thereby make invisible how institutions of higher education themselves both produce and benefit from such structural inequalities?
- How does the term foment a missionary model of “helping” less privileged “others” and thereby reify stereotypes about class, race, regional, religious, sexual, and gendered differences that may already exist between students and the larger communities in which they live?
- Conversely, how does the term reify a kind of secular privilege that may not fit with some religious based institutions’ sense of mission?

In short, the language of civic engagement was something that the Teagle Working Group seemed to regard as imposed from the outside.<sup>15</sup> More comfortable was the language of social justice and activism to represent Women’s Studies’ foundational assumptions.

This language-as-sticking-point is consistent with the findings of the FrameWorks Institute’s report conducted on behalf of NWSA, which compiled and analyzed a number of interviews of Women’s Studies faculty and experts in civic engagement. FrameWorks’ researchers found that Women’s Studies faculty “implicitly gravitated toward and explicitly endorsed terms such as ‘social change,’ ‘social transformation’ and ‘social justice’ to describe the goals of their work” and that “the term ‘civic engagement’ was largely absent from the way that women’s studies scholars talked about and presented their field” (Manuel 2011, 5-6).

It should also be mentioned though, that students in the courses surveyed for this project exhibited this same language-based disconnect. The term “civic engagement” seemed to conceal both the broad range of their own experiences with/understandings of their work in communities beyond the classroom. For example, the most consistent example for engaged participation in democratic society that students gave was voting. And despite the overwhelming number of affirmative responses to the idea that what is learned in the classroom is relevant outside the classroom, very few students—whether first years or seniors—responded in a way that made the connection between their civic engagement projects and the engaged participation mentioned in the very next survey question.

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<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that the difficulty of coming to terms with the language of civic engagement is not unique to Women’s Studies. Both Finley (2011) and the national dialogues convened by AAC&U and GPI documented how difficult the term “civic engagement” was to pin down. Related terms (e.g., service learning, civic education, community-based learning, etc.) and multiple definitions of each mean that an almost constant demand for clarification still marks the discourse around the term “civic engagement.”

Nevertheless Working Group members did acknowledge that the term civic engagement is broad enough to encompass their social justice teaching, research, and service in their Women's Studies programs. Thus, they could embrace the language of civic engagement if the issue at hand was about making the discipline of Women's Studies more intelligible to outsiders.

This acceptance of the language of civic engagement on the part of the Working Group was likely helped along by two outsiders present at the first Working Group meeting in 2010. Whitney Smith, CEO of Girls for a Change, a nonprofit organization dedicated to girl empowerment, shared perspectives about the benefits of assessing outcomes of community based projects and communicating those benefits to stakeholders. Also in attendance was Tiffany Manuel, Director of Impact and Evaluation for FrameWorks Institute, an organization dedicated to advancing the communications capacity of nonprofit organizations by effectively framing scholarly research about social problems. Both Smith and Manuel gave presentations that offered fresh perspectives to the Working Group about the importance of systematizing Women's Studies approaches to and communication about its civic engagement work in undergraduate classrooms.

## **Recommendations**

The need for higher education institutions to develop more effective civic engagement pedagogies at the core of the undergraduate experience has never been greater. At the same time, Women's Studies' expertise has for too long been peripheral to the broader movement in higher education that now advocates for meaningful civic engagement at the curricular level. Through its grant to NWSA, the Teagle Foundation has provided the resources for the discipline of Women's Studies to begin an in-depth process of articulating—both for itself as well as for outside audiences—and assessing the value of its civic engagement expertise as it has been cultivated in undergraduate classrooms for the past 40 years.

The task of articulation and assessment of Women's Studies *as* civic engagement requires that three general areas be addressed: increased support of faculty, stronger leadership at the national level, and embracing a common language.

### *Recommendation One: Faculty Support*

Support of faculty is absolutely necessary to the integration of civic engagement into the core experiences—i.e., the curriculum—of undergraduate students. This includes not just the usual call for more time and money, but a reconsideration of what counts for tenure and promotion that is better aligned with institutional mission statements that commit to producing more engaged citizens.

Jacoby and Hollander (2009) echo a common call among civic engagement experts: "To tie civic engagement to the academic core of higher education, it must be recognized and rewarded in faculty promotion and tenure processes" (229).

Faculty require training to prepare students for engagement beyond the classroom. The time and skill required to develop effective university-community partnerships as well as the on-going assessment of their efficacy in local communities must be recognized as the real work of the institution. This means, especially at research institutions, a fundamental reconsideration of how the teaching and service categories of the faculty evaluation process is warranted. Too often the lesser value placed on these categories of faculty work is in direct conflict with the civic mission the institution claims as central.<sup>16</sup>

*Recommendation Two: National Leadership*

National organizations like NWSA must lead the way in explicating Women's Studies' long-standing expertise on civic engagement. As the findings reflected in this white paper suggest, the field has much to contribute to national conversations, and could significantly benefit from additional grant funding to deepen and expand its work. As one of the most diversely constituted disciplines in the U.S. academy, Women's Studies would benefit greatly from a more centralized source of research, resources, and messaging about its value in higher education contexts, especially as those contexts concern civic engagement.

Countering the ongoing misperceptions and stereotypes about Women's Studies with information that accurately captures the value of the discipline's work in higher education is key to getting the discipline's practitioners "at the table" when issues of optimizing institutional resources are under discussion on campuses across the U.S. Specifically, assessing and explicating the ways in which the discipline of Women's Studies advances the civic mission of institutions of which it is a part has to be a broadly coordinated and resourced effort at the national level.<sup>17</sup>

*Recommendation Three: Coming to Terms*

The work of coming to terms—literally developing a common language to speak about the importance of civic engagement across disciplines, campus units, and surrounding communities—is urgently required, not just to make Women's Studies' contributions intelligible beyond its disciplinary borders, but to allow for more meaningful exchanges about the practice of civic engagement at every level of higher education.

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<sup>16</sup> Certainly, this is not a new call for change in the academy, and a number of proposals about how to rework tenure and promotion to better align with the mission statements of most institutions are subjects of intense discussion. For example, Ernst Boyer's (1997) *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* is a good source of generative thinking about assessment of faculty.

<sup>17</sup> For a recent overview of assessment issues in Women's Studies, see Levin (2007) report to NWSA, "Questions for a New Century: Women's Studies and Integrative Learning."



## **Conclusion**

To thrive in times of austerity, institutions of higher education must deploy existing resources more efficiently to meet their civic missions. Innovation in such difficult contexts may require that leaders move beyond what they think they know and take a fresh look at what is at hand: Who is already committed to the work that aligns with the institutions goals? How is the institution rewarding those who best reflect what it claims to value? Where is the untapped expertise that could help the institution move forward?

This report argues that Women's Studies programs would fare very well under the kind of scrutiny that emphasizes efficiency at institutions that claim a civic mission. The field's decades-old discussion about the relationship between its theories of social transformation and their practical applications offer expertise upon which campus and community stakeholders can draw. In sum, we assert that the discipline of Women's Studies—its intellectual preoccupations combined with its enduring mandate for social justice—constitutes a valuable resource for a meaningful rededication to higher education's civic mission.

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## About the Author

Catherine M. Orr is Professor and Chair of Women's and Gender Studies at Beloit College. She teaches and writes about feminist theory, activism, race, and disciplinarity. Her work has been published in *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Hypatia*, *NWSA Journal*, and *Feminist Collections*. She served as National Conference Chair for the National Women's Studies Association (2006-08). Her forthcoming book (co-edited with Ann Braithwaite and Diane Lichtenstein) is titled *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies* (Routledge 2012) and re-examines the field's foundational assumptions by identifying and critically analyzing eighteen of its key terms. She lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

## **APPENDIX A: Pre and Post-Course Questionnaire**

### **National Women's Studies Association Survey**

You are being asked to complete this questionnaire as part of a National Women's Studies Association project (funded by The Teagle Foundation) to improve student learning in women's studies classrooms.

Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

University ID number: \_\_\_\_\_

Year in College: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you taken any other women's studies courses? Which ones?

What does "community service" mean to you?

In what ways are you privileged or disadvantaged compared to others?

What are the greatest challenges facing women?

What I learn in the classroom is relevant outside the classroom. Why or why not?

What does it mean to be an engaged participant in a democratic society?

If you have questions or concerns about this project and/or your participation, please contact Allison Kimmich, Executive Director of the National Women's Studies Association ([www.nwsa.org](http://www.nwsa.org)).



## APPENDIX B: Student Survey Responses

<b>Survey Responses by Demographic Categories</b>		
<b>Year in College</b>		
Freshman	75	21%
Sophomore	97	27%
Junior	81	22%
Senior	112	31%
TOTAL	365	
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	46	13%
Female	322	88%
TOTAL	368	
<b>Race</b>		
White	236	67%
Black	25	7%
Asian American	13	4%
Hispanic/Latino	38	11%
American Indian	1	0%
Other	39	11%
TOTAL	352	
<b>Major</b>		
Women's Studies	65	19%
Humanities	75	19%
Social Science	104	27%
Behavioral Science	27	7%
Science/Engineering	28	7%
Medical	23	6%



Education	12	3%
Business	19	5%
Undecided	39	10%
TOTAL	392	
<b>Number of Women's Studies Courses Taken</b>		
0	197	57%
1 to 2	60	17%
>2	86	25%
TOTAL	343	
<b>Note:</b> Totals vary by subcategory because in some cases did not respond, or in the case of majors, students listed double majors.		

<b>Student Responses to Survey Questions</b>		
What does “community service” mean to you?		Total Percent Change
Change	118	35%
No Change	218	65%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	336	
In what ways are you privileged or disadvantaged compared to others?		
Change	177	51%
No Change	169	49%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	346	
What are the greatest challenges facing women?		
Change	202	59%
No Change	142	41%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	344	
What I learn in the classroom is relevant outside the classroom. Why or why not?		
Change	139	41%
No Change	203	59%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	342	
What does it mean to be an engaged participant in a democratic society?		
Change	179	52%
No Change	163	48%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	342	

<b>Three Courses Representing Most Change</b>							
		Grand Valley State University	Grand Valley Percent Change	Beloit College	Beloit College Percent Change	Hollins University	Hollins University Percent Change
What does "community service" mean to you?							
Change		24	80%	8	80%	7	78%
Has Not		6	20%	2	20%	2	22%
		30		10		9	
In what ways are you privileged or disadvantaged compared to others?							
Change		17	61%	9	90%	7	78%
Has Not		11	39%	1	10%	2	22%
		28		10		9	
What are the greatest challenges facing women?							
Change		20	65%	9	90%	6	67%
Has Not		11	35%	1	10%	3	33%
		31		10		9	
What I learn in the classroom is relevant outside the classroom. Why or why not?							
Change		12	43%	6	60%	8	89%
Has Not		16	57%	4	40%	1	11%
		28		10		9	
What does it mean to be an engaged participant in a democratic society?							
Change		19	70%	6	60%	7	78%
Has Not		8	30%	4	40%	2	22%
		27		10		9	

## **APPENDIX C: Faculty Survey**

### **Civic Engagement in the Women's and Gender Studies Classroom: Power and Privilege at the Intersections of Race, Class, and Nation**

**Fellow Survey February 2011**

NAME:

INSTITUTION:

COURSE:

Thank you for participating in the National Women's Studies Association project to improve student learning in civic engagement courses funded with generous support from the Teagle Foundation. Your reflections on and responses to the following questions will shed light on your teaching goals and help NWSA how it can better support your work in the future.

1. Describe the civic engagement project/projects you developed for your participation in this grant project. Please attach your syllabus and/or relevant assignment descriptions.
2. How did you foster responsible civic engagement in your class? Your response may take into account readings, discussions, and assignment guidelines.
3. What is your definition of success for this project?
4. What would make this civic engagement work more doable and successful in the future
  - In terms of your community partnerships:
  - In terms of the classroom:
  - At the institutional level:
  - At the national/field of women's studies level:
5. What were challenges and successes of the current civic engagement project?
  - In terms of your community partnerships:
  - In terms of the classroom:
  - At the institutional level:
  - At the national/field of women's studies level:

6. Is there anything else you would like to share?