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Weaving Women's Studies into the Institutional Web: A Case Study

Frances Kraljic and Inez Martinez¹

Kingsborough Community College [KCC], one of six in the City University of New York [CUNY], a University containing eleven senior colleges, a medical and a law school, and a Graduate Center, is the first and only community college in CUNY to have a Women's Studies [WS] Program. It took a long, long time to obtain this Program, and it has taken multi-faceted efforts to weave it into Kingsborough's life in such a way as to (thus far) keep it. Because we believe that WS are particularly important at the community college level, we are sharing the story of the development of KCC's WS Program in hopes that aspects of it may prove useful to colleagues at community colleges throughout the country.

A Brief Defense of Women's Studies

Before offering this pragmatic account, however, we (as advised by our reviewers) respond to the challenge posed by current discourse to the value of WS. Given, among other things, our experience of the difference WS courses have made in the lives of our students, we were willing to assume that value. We wish to point out that the following defense has not been occasioned by either our own pedagogical experience or our intellectual focus, but by the state of WS discourse--itself, we believe, partially a reflection of the resistance that the successful institutionalization of WS has spurred.

Challenges to the Viability of WS

Ironically, about the time that Kingsborough finally converted the courses in WS offered by various departments into a Program, the discourse in WS had turned to whether WS was any longer an intellectually defensible academic endeavor. This challenge was given most cogent voice by Wendy Brown in her 1997 article "The Impossibility of Women's Studies." Brown argues that "Women's Studies as a contemporary institution . . . may be politically and theoretically incoherent, as well as tacitly conservative—incoherent because by definition it circumscribes uncircumscribable "women" as an object of study, and conservative because it must resist all objections to such circumscription if it is to sustain that object of study as its *raison d'être*" (3). Brown bases her claim that the subject, "women," is uncircumscribable on the wealth of scholarship that has begun to articulate the empirical and subjective differences between women's experiences. In other words, she claims that the intellectual requirement of making ever more precise differentiations is equivalent to a field's being uncircumscribable and therefore intellectually fraudulent. Imagine astronomers giving up astronomy because new data and

¹ We wish to acknowledge and thank our colleagues from KCC Susan Farrell and Cecelia Salber and from Teacher's College at Columbia, Vivian May, for their suggestions and help in our writing this article.

puzzles keep arising, or biologists, those scholars of life systems, throwing over biology as uncircumscribable when faced with the question of whether certain apparent organisms qualify as living. The need to refine the differences within and to expand the terrain of subject matter as more knowledge becomes available is simply part of intellectual endeavor. Further, *what determines a field of inquiry is the questions it asks of its subject matter*. As a field little more than a quarter-century old, WS continues to develop its defining questions. We suggest that asking gender questions of any subject qualifies as WS, and since gendered subjects occur always as specific persons at specific times, that all the aspects of their specificity would be relevant: their bodies, the ways their societies construct race, economic position, prestige, metaphysical and religious meaning, and cultural values, and the way they, themselves, feel, think, imagine, and behave both as individuals and as members of groups.

Brown's second argument, her accusation about political conservatism, ignores that WS is the site for debates that would otherwise not occur. As Zimmerman points out in her unpublished paper, "Beyond Dualisms," given at the conference on The Future of Women's Studies held at the university of Arizona in October, 2000 (6), Shirley Yee, whose article appears in the same issue of *Differences* as Brown's, argues that WS keeps "woman" on the table as a contested, visible and complex category of analysis that validates the existence of women as a group in society and addresses sexism and racism directly in the production of feminist scholarship[W]omen's studies should be retained both for its intellectual and for its political value, precisely because it enables explicit engagement with "women" as an admittedly unstable, fragmented term" (61-62). Even if Brown's claim that the debates about the category "women" lead in certain instances to turf protection is true (and she offers no data), the fact is that the debates themselves are politically and intellectually progressive in that they manifest ever more articulated understandings of the range of women's experiences, a subject notoriously neglected prior to Women's Studies.

"Women's Studies Are . . ." According to Whom?

Perhaps the most salient part of Brown's article for community colleges such as Kingsborough is the way she defines Women's Studies. The first problem with her definition, pinpointed by Zimmerman, is that she writes as if subject formation and the functions of discourse were the only terrain of intellectual inquiry explored by WS: "the kind of work that Brown argues for is directed almost entirely toward the analysis of discourse and subject-formation, an important but not exclusive concern of women's studies. She does not address institutionalized oppression and resistance nor the material structures of society which constrain women's individual and collective actions" (5). We would argue that the impact of Brown's analysis on WS discourse has itself become regulatory in that we find ourselves addressing its challenge in order to share our experiences about working WS into our community college institution, having, in Foucauldian terms, to produce a reverse discourse. Foucault argues that discourses are "tactical elements or blocks operating in the field of force relations," (101) force relations being "relations of power which take specific forms in particular societies, organized, for example, through relations of class, race, gender, religion and age" (110 Weedon).

Basic to our response is the belief that Brown offers what amounts to a middle-class and white definition of WS. That is why she thinks the articulation of differences among women undoes the category. This construction of WS ignores the reams of scholarship pointing out that American women of color have been active in defining feminism since at least the 1830's (Guy-Sheftall 1995, 1) and have participated in creating the scholarship for WS since its beginnings (Guy-Sheftall 1995, 14-16 and Hooks 1994, 121). The recent president of NWSA, Berenice A. Carroll, in her Presidential address at the NWSA conference at Simmons College in 2000, begins by pointing out that WS was born of scholarship begun in the women's movement and that women of color were from its origins writers affecting the discourse (139-40). A recent publication, *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from 30 Founding Mothers* offers one personal account after another demonstrating that however partially conceived, however imperfectly understood, social justice for all was the driving force behind women's focus on gender justice. It was the absence of concern for gender justice in the practices of civil rights and anti-war organizations that led to the focus on women during the second wave, the feminist movement leading to WS programs. Brown claims that "Faculty, curriculum, and students in women's studies programs are in a relentless, compensatory cycle of guilt and blame about race, a cycle structured by women's studies original, nominalist, and conceptual subordination of race (and all other forms of social stratification) to gender" (9). Introducing the category of gender to the conceptualization of social justice historically was marred in the writings and teachings of the majority of second wave WS academics who were white and middle-class by their projection of specific aspects of their experiences upon all women, but the introduction of gender into intellectual inquiry was and continues to be necessary to seek not only social justice for all, but informed intellectual discourse about over half of the human race.

Brown's Choice of Theories

Brown's reliance on Lacan's, Foucault's, and Derrida's theories as if they were true rather than theories is evidence of her intellectual class position. Bell Hooks in *Talking Back* has made the obvious but taboo point that in "university settings . . . increasingly, only one type of theory is seen as valuable—that which is Euro-centric, linguistically convoluted, and rooted in Western white male sexist and racially biased philosophical frameworks" (36). This being the case, she argues, "We will need to continually assert the need for multiple theories emerging from diverse perspectives in a variety of styles" (37). She reiterates the point made by numerous black feminists that epistemological distancing of experience as a source of data for reflection and theory-building is inimical to the intellectual and political work of marginalized groups (37-38).

Relevance of Definitions of WS to KCC

hooks's critique is particularly salient for our community college experience with WS. In response to our Provost's concern as to whether KCC's WS Program appeals to the broad range of students at our urban institution, we did a demographic survey of the students taking WS courses during the spring of 1999. The results were that almost three-fifths of

students taking WS courses at KCC were people of color, almost one-fifth were males, and almost three-fifths were age 22 or under. This data helped quell the stereotype that the Program drew only white, middle-class, older women. It also indicates why our faculty works to stay abreast of the WS scholarship and theory produced by women of various backgrounds and experiences, particularly women of color.

WS Helps Students Reconceive Their Lives through Reconceiving Knowledge

That our students find their women's studies courses neither intellectually incoherent nor fraudulent is evidenced in their evaluations of them and in their personal testimonies. KCC's WS Advisory Board, consisting each semester of the faculty teaching WS courses and of student representatives (a system that provides for both stability and change as some faculty and student representatives change and others remain), initiated an evaluation form, one created by student representatives, which faculty teaching WS courses ask students to fill out at the end of each semester. We have promised confidentiality concerning these forms, but we can offer the generalization that well over ninety-five percent of the students who take these courses make almost exclusively positive comments about them, about twenty-five percent claiming personal transformation. A study performed by one of our faculty from the Department of Behavioral Sciences, Helaine Harris, provides both generalizations and specific comments from students who took her "Women and Psychology" course. Professor Harris, recognizing the highly diverse composition of Kingsborough's student body, sought to create a psychology course that was multicultural from its inception, one that did not simply add some materials on women of color, a procedure that she criticizes as keeping women of color marginal. The students' evaluations not only supported results determined by previous national research into the effects of WS courses on students—feelings of empowerment, of broadened perspectives, of increased self esteem; they also included an appreciation of other people's experiences and cultures, a greater awareness of options for ways of living one's life, and a sense of being part of a community larger than the single individual. These effects together led the majority of the students to claim that the course had enabled them to grow in some fundamental way. As one student put it, "The class affected my whole life."²

We posit that Foucault's account of subject formation renders "subjects" too exclusively in terms of power relations and is impoverished to the degree that it excludes or subordinates to the issues of power functions all else that humans experience as psychologically significant. This article is not the place to detail this argument, but its heart is that any single frame for psychological significance is reductive and thus excludes realms of meaningful human experience. For purposes of this discussion, limiting our focus to the frame of power, we affirm that while we attempt, at our best, to practice what Hooks calls "liberatory pedagogy" (1994, 145-47) and are grateful and gratified when students claim to have been or show that they have been empowered, we do not equate "empowerment" with dominant-subordinate power relations. Empowerment also can refer to "power to" realize the range of individual and social life-serving potentialities in any given situation; in other words, empowerment can refer to

² For further information about this study, contact hharris@kbcc.cuny.edu.

agency and teleology. WS has from its beginnings been concerned with the quality of lived life, and KCC students acknowledge again and again that the quality of their lives as they are living them is richer because of the questions they have pursued in their various WS courses, the intellectual frameworks they have been introduced to, the connections they have been able to make between data and their lives, the contesting positions they have encountered in texts, the conversations and arguments they have had with one another and with their instructors, the relations they have been able to establish with one another as a learning community, the models of lived lives they have encountered, the narratives of historical human efforts for improved lives and societies they have discovered, all leading to an expanded sense of their own potentialities for valuable lives, loves, communities, and work beyond their previous imaginings. WS courses, in other words, have provided an intellectual and life-enhancing alternative to traditional courses, an alternative particularly vital to students of color, who, as beautifully described by Elizabeth Higginbotham (237), so often suffer dominant discourses in survival mode.

Why WS Education is Crucial at the Community College Level

These fruits of WS education are too precious to let go, particularly on the questionable grounds of a narrow, and it seems to us, arbitrary discipline-based conception of knowledge and education in general and of WS in particular. A little-noted but statistically arresting fact is that most community college students, nationwide, do not graduate and therefore, do not continue on to four-year colleges. Kingsborough, actually, has a relatively high percentage of students who do graduate, about thirty percent after five years. Of these, about three-quarters continue their studies at four-year colleges. The point is, a point not usually grasped by those who see community colleges as only a link in an educational chain, that for the vast majority of community college students--in the case of Kingsborough, over seventy percent--their only exposure to the possibilities of higher education will cease when they finish their community college study.

Consequently, having women's studies available at this level of higher education is crucial. Otherwise, except for the few who transfer to four-year colleges having WS courses and/or Programs, American community college students will never have access within the academy to the scholarship that during the last thirty years has transformed what interdisciplinary scholars, and even the most current scholars in disciplines, consider core knowledge.

On this basis, we offer the following analysis of the elements that contributed to the institutionalization of WS at KCC as a Program in hopes that it may be of use to sister community colleges seeking to establish WS Programs for their students.

Resolute Faculty

Curriculum at community colleges tends to follow developments in senior college and graduate level education, and thus institutional recognition of fundamental curricular changes, such as the inclusion of questions based upon the experiences of women,

requires exceptional persistence by faculty. In order to become a Program, women's studies at Kingsborough needed a committed cohort of faculty who devised and taught discipline-based courses in women's studies for twenty-five years. The WS Program took root in the early 1970's when individual courses such as Women in American History, Women and Literature, and the Psychology of Women were introduced in their respective departments by faculty members determined to interrogate their subject matter from women's perspectives.

Engaged Students

In addition to continuous faculty commitment, the Program required a steady stream of student interest. Although this stream arose spontaneously, it has needed continuously to be fed, and many KCC faculty have, over the years, generously and energetically organized events and taken roles in college structures, such as clubs and The Women's Center, to do so. In 1974 KCC hosted a three-day Women's Conference in which over a thousand students participated, putting the issue of gender equality on the campus' intellectual map. A student club dedicated to equality between the sexes was an early form of student organization, one that metamorphosed over the years through various versions into the current student Women's Studies Club that participates in the Program's policy decisions by having representatives on the WS advisory Board. By the 1980's a Women's Center was established on campus, one that has, over the last four years, upon student initiative, hosted the Clothesline Project, the creation and display of hundreds of t-shirts expressing the feelings of women, including many from KCC, who have suffered violence. Yearly Women's History Month presentations have engaged thousands of students in activities ranging from lectures to film and live music and/or theater presentations. For the last three years, during Women's History Month, the WS Program has sponsored a panel consisting of WS Program students who share with an auditorium of students their experiences in the Program. This list does not exhaust ways that student interest has been sparked: there have, for example, been outreach programs to local high schools, articles in the school newspaper, special presentations about women's studies by the Women's Center, etc. The point is that ongoing efforts to engage students have been fundamental to the coming to be and to the survival of the Program.

Supportive Administration

The third ingredient has been administrative support. The administration left the development of courses to department decision. As long as students registered to take the courses approved by the departments, the administration had no objection to WS courses. The development of a Program involved a critical leap, and various factors contributed to the emergence of administrative support. In terms of curriculum, the arrival of new faculty on campus in the 1990's who created additional WS courses representing a range of the disciplines in the liberal arts and sciences, such as sociology (The Sociology of Gender), anthropology (The Cross-Cultural Study of Sexuality), art (The History of Women in Art), and biology, (The Biology of Women) provided the academic basis for the college administration to invite interested faculty members to spend the academic year, 1993, writing a proposal to establish a WS program. The political basis included a

Chancellor sympathetic to women's studies and a University-wide initiative encouraging collaboration between City University of New York's six community and eleven senior colleges. Women's studies, an area with few turf assets on any campus to defend, provided a good opportunity to seek inter-campus collaboration. The administration provided released time to three faculty members (one course each) to develop and guide the proposal through college channels. Eventually a search committee submitted a list of names for the program directorship to the college president, Leon Goldstein. In 1994, he appointed us, Professors Frances Kraljic and Inez Martinez, co-directors. We report to the Provost and Dean of Academic Programs.

Cost-effectiveness

The WS Program is not a department, and the directors have none of the institutional powers of a department chair. As Ann Taylor Allen, citing Guy-Sheftall, has noted, this kind of organization has both strengths and weaknesses: "Whereas the location of key courses in traditional departments increases the institutional stability of programs, it impairs their autonomy by reducing their control over course offerings, faculty recruitment, and curriculum development" (164).³ We would add that it also means that, apart from letters of commendation and invitations to participate in WS coursework and presentations, we have no formal influence on the progress of the careers of our colleagues. Indeed, the ancient art of persuasion is our primary resource. The administration has given us six released hours annually apiece, office space (a prize we garnered through the generosity of the English Department), and a college assistant for twenty hours a week. Otherwise, apart from office supplies, the Program has no budget. The disadvantages of such a situation are analyzed in depth in Judith Allen's "Strengthening Women's Studies in Hard Times: Feminism and Challenges of Institutional Adaptation" (372-380). While we obviously acknowledge the superior possibilities that extensive resources afford for running a WS Program, we believe that from the administrative point of view, one of KCC's WS Program's main virtues is that it is cost-effective. It has not required new faculty or an independent budget. A not inconsequential further advantage of these budgetary arrangements is that any enterprise undertaken, such as the production of a brochure, requires cooperation from many people and departments in the college, thus assuring the administration that any initiative the Program succeeds in achieving will have college community support.

Developing the WS Concentration

The administration has also been willing to support the establishment of a concentration in Women's Studies, partially, we believe, because its establishment required few administrative changes, and partially because its establishment offered an avenue of coherence to KCC's AA degree distribution requirements, sometimes known as the "Chinese Menu." KCC requires liberal arts degree candidates to choose among courses offered in five categories, each of which includes a number of disciplines. One category, for example, includes courses in history, political science, and economics. Students must take nine credits from at least two disciplines in each category, except for that of science,

³ A.T. Allen cites Beverly Guy-Sheftall and Susan Heath, 4.

mathematics, and computers, where the requirement is 11 credits. (Students are now, given a change in University policy reducing the number of credits required for graduation, permitted to reduce any one of the categories by three credits.) The WS Program, through its Advisory Board, proposed to grant a certificate to liberal arts graduates who choose to take twelve credits in women's studies courses while fulfilling their distribution requirements. Since the Program had at least one, sometimes as many as four WS courses in each category, no curricular or distribution requirement changes were asked of the administration, making its cooperation more easily obtained. Further, the fact that KCC's distribution requirements had upon occasion received criticism on the grounds that student selections among the offerings might not result in coherence, made the WS proposal for a concentration attractive to administrators wanting to counter that criticism. The WS concentration now provides liberal arts students with a thematic focus if they wish to take advantage of it.

Conceiving Grants for Curricular and Faculty Development

Another way that administrative support was obtained was through a successful grant application. All the branches throughout CUNY were applying for a New Visions in Higher Education grant being sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs and funded by the Aaron Diamond Foundation. Interdisciplinary proposals were particularly welcome. One of the first actions taken by the Advisory Board in 1994 was to bring together faculty from the behavioral sciences, English, history, philosophy, political science, and speech and theatre departments to conceptualize a grant proposal for Women's Studies at KCC. The grant, written by Dr. Bonne August, provided KCC's WS Program funding for the creation of a new course, American Women in the Performing Arts, for developing special WS sections of a number of basic courses, and for a seminar for faculty development. Faculty development seminars have been, of course, one of the main ways that WS scholars have attempted to understand and incorporate into their teaching the burgeoning materials on women, particularly as regards the range of differences among women (Schmitz, *passim*). The seminar continues to date as a study group that discusses readings in areas members have chosen. Faculty members re-envision their courses, basically by introducing questions and data concerning gender, ethnicity, race, class, and sexual orientation not traditionally addressed in standard courses, and by introducing student-centered pedagogical approaches. This effort has been greatly aided and enhanced by the participation of many KCC faculty in the CUNY-wide Faculty Development Seminar chaired by Dorothy O. Helly, "Balancing the Curriculum for Race, Class, Gender, and Ethnicity." Kingsborough's obtaining the New Visions grant enhanced the college's position within the university, and this prestige helped obtain administrative support for one of the Program's most effective innovations: partial mainstreaming.

Partial Mainstreaming

As a result of the New Vision Grant proposal to develop special women's studies sections of basic courses, many established basic courses at KCC now have one section that is specially designated for students who are particularly interested in a women's studies

focus. The two required English courses, and introductory courses in sociology, mass media, and music carry such a section. This approach to mainstreaming has had several advantages. Students may choose to be taught by faculty who have kept current with the developments in their disciplines concerning the inclusion of questions relating to gender, race, ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation. Students may fulfill basic distribution requirements without sacrificing these new lenses in studying different disciplines. Since the courses also contain the material required by a system that assumes as fundamental the experiences and questions of society's dominant groups, articulation between our community college and senior colleges is not affected and does not have to be renegotiated. Neither does there have to be a proliferation of women's studies courses in order to make WS questions and new scholarship available to more students. Finally, this system of designated sections of a course avoids one of the main pitfalls of mainstreaming, that is, having the material taught by faculty who are not prepared to teach it and who, under the name of the new WS scholarship, offer versions of "facts," ideas, and attitudes that remain totally untouched by the transforming WS scholarship. The Program has thus been able to establish *effective—because it is partial—mainstreaming*.⁴ Since in signing off on the New Visions Grant proposal, the administration agreed to this curricular innovation, the WS Program has received only administrative support for these special sections.

Introducing Interdisciplinarity

Administrative support has also been obtained for the development of an interdisciplinary course. The political context in which the KCC WS Program arose, that is, the initiative from the University Chancellery advocating collaboration between campuses, meant that reaching an articulation agreement with the senior college to which most KCC graduates transfer, Brooklyn College, was a high priority. Thus another early collaborative effort by interested faculty was to create a new introductory course for the WS program modeled on one of the *interdisciplinary* introductory courses, Women in the Social Sciences, required by Brooklyn College for its WS bachelor's degree. Since this course was conceived as a way to begin to integrate the two WS Programs, administrative support was given even though the course did not fit into the disciplinary department structure of Kingsborough. Designed by faculty across departments, this interdisciplinary course, because it is the only one required for the WS concentration, was not difficult to house, since any department taking it under its wing was assured that any students taking the concentration would necessarily be taking at least one of her or his WS courses from that department's offerings. The Department of History, Philosophy, and Political Science became the home of this interdisciplinary course, the first one to be cross-listed as a women's studies course. Ironically, Kingsborough has not to date been able to obtain an

⁴ Brown criticizes the awarding of WS credit to particular sections of a course: "Chaucer taught by one faculty member may count for women's studies, but not when it is taught by another" (4). This perspective seems linked to her belief that it is subject matter rather than questions about subject matter that defines disciplines. I (IM) explain this distinction to my students with the example of an outstretched hand. Physicists ask what energy forces are involved; biologists, what physiological elements; cultural anthropologists, what cultural meaning; WS scholars, what difference a gendered person of a particular race, class, sexual orientation, historical moment, and culture makes in the meaning and consequences of the gesture.

articulation agreement with Brooklyn College, this in spite of efforts from some Brooklyn faculty to help. Instead, after a long, arduous struggle to obtain recognition and acceptance among our own CUNY senior colleges, the KCC WS Program has articulation agreements with Hunter, York, and Queens Colleges. Agreements are still pending with Brooklyn and the College of Staten Island. Private colleges have been more receptive and eager to accept our students and their course work. For any community college program, articulation with four-year colleges is crucial for demonstrating not only intellectual currency, but also bureaucratic life, an influential argument for preserving the program.

As must be apparent from this selective history, administrative support has often been gained through taking advantage of opportunities provided by political circumstances, and then it has been kept through a series of initiatives resulting in successful institutionalization. Besides those already described, the Program has become more fully institutionalized in a number of ways. Getting a concentration passed by the College Council and by the Board of Trustees was just a beginning to becoming institutionalized. The Program's existence and offerings had to be woven into the fabric of the institution to appear in registration materials, the college catalogue, in college-produced brochures, and each of these small developments had to be initiated by the co-directors. Information had to be accessible to students through the counselors, which means that we have on a continuing basis to meet with and discuss the Program with counselors. It had to be accessible through the college web page, which means that we have had to seek help in putting together and maintaining a WS web page link.

Leading Campus Intellectual Life

Perhaps even more important than such visibility issues, however, has been the effort to make women's studies part of the core of the college's intellectual life. The Program has from its beginnings sponsored a scholarly presentation series for faculty. Each semester faculty doing gender-related research present their work to faculty and students. Some of the topics presented have included Women and Religion, Female entrepreneurship, Women Composers, Women and Eco-Tourism, and Women who influenced Mazzini. Staying at the center of the college's intellectual life requires, besides activities such as this series and the study group, alertness to innovative possibilities. Thus, for example, last year the WS Advisory Board recommended responding to the invitation sent out nationally by the University of Minnesota. The WS Program, then, with cooperation and funding from the Office of the Provost and the Coordinators of Women's History Month, brought to Kingsborough its first national teleconference, "Women's Voices, Women's Solutions: Shaping a National Agenda for Women in Higher Education." Faculty, administrators and staff who participated in the electronic interactive multilogue attended.

Knowledge and Politics

Ruth Perry points to the criticism of WS that "it is political/rhetorical/ideological rather than scholarly" (6). One favor Foucault has done current scholarship has been his

demonstration that knowledge is inherently political, a claim made by feminists from the beginnings of WS but without the discursive clout of Foucault. WS has been a pioneer of the position that knowledge should serve the goal of social justice for all, and that educators should help students learn how to identify political implications of data and of ideas so that they may make informed choices. Evaluating whether and how this ability is being developed depends upon the limited measures of personal testimony and perceived activism. Students do sometimes report not only changes in their private lives, but also the development of political consciousness and a sense of responsibility to the broader society. We have seen a number of students become feminist leaders. Two of these students have taken public roles that permit us to cite them. One of the winners of the award for academic excellence in Women's Studies, Denise Darcelin, an African American, not only told her story during her participation in the student panel during Women's History Month, but also publicly expressed it during an interview for a television program sponsored by Kingsborough. Denise, a working mother, who, during her tenure at KCC served as the President of the WS Club, explains that after taking women's studies courses, she changed the legal specialization she intends to practice. She now wants to represent the interests of women in the pursuit of equality and social justice. Another student, Blessing Ijeoma, whose home is in Nigeria, has, after taking the WS concentration, participated in the Feminist Leadership Institute sponsored by the Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, a project of the Feminist Majority Foundation. Afterwards, she returned to Kingsborough to speak with students about various programs in which they might participate, such as the international effort to support women in Afghanistan seeking education. Denise and Blessing are two of many KCC students, who have been inspired in various ways, to seek social justice. Knowing them and the myriad students who report having integrated their learning not only into their personal lives but also into their lives as citizens sustains our women's studies faculty (who now number about thirty in a faculty numbering about two hundred), as we do the work detailed in this history.

Fitting the Transformative into the Conventional

This chronicle of the growth and development of the KCC WS program illustrates the essential role of committed faculty and students in getting administrative support. Institutional support follows student and faculty support—particularly as triggered by political contexts affecting prestige and budget. We have learned that interdepartmental efforts, participatory group decisions, co-directorship, interdisciplinary courses in a discipline-based academic structure, specific WS sections of basic courses, can work. They can work not only in the sense of becoming part of an academic institutional structure that does not normally accommodate such efforts, but also in the sense that they can help provide educational offerings to students that help them take control of their lives, that provide them with intellectual frameworks, knowledge, and options that they otherwise would not have had.

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