

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION

SUBJECT: Department of Women's Studies

ACTION REQUESTED: Rename as the Department of Women's and Gender Studies

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 1, 2020


The Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts requests approval to rename the Department of Women's Studies as the Department of Women's and Gender Studies, effective September 1, 2020.

The context for this undertaking goes back to the 1990s, when there was a growing tendency among departments and programs devoted to the interdisciplinary field of feminist scholarship to expand and/or revise the name "Women's Studies" in order to bring more precision to the subject(s) of their scholarly inquiry and classes, and to include more subject(s) in the unit's name. Thus, Departments of Gender Studies or Gender and Sexuality Studies—often retaining Women's, but sometimes not—are more common today. This trend has long been resisted at Michigan, for reasons ranging from investments in preserving/honoring local institutional history, principled positions on signifying practices and language politics more generally, and inertia. In the past several years, however, generational shifts and growing concerns about inadvertent "signaling" in the current name (i.e., the possibility that "Women's" alone risks appearing non-inclusive) have led to a critical mass of faculty keen to revisit the issue.

This request follows on an almost two year process of discussion, deliberation, and voting which ended last November when a final ballot revealed Women's and Gender Studies to be the preference of a plurality of the faculty.


We hereby recommend approval of the recommendation of the Executive Committee of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts that the Department of Women's Studies be renamed as the Department of Women's and Gender Studies, effective September 1, 2020.

Recommended by:



Anne Curzan, Dean
Geneva Smitherman Collegiate Professor of
English Language and Literature
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor
College of Literature, Science, and the Arts

Recommendation endorsed by:



Martin A. Philbert
Provost and Executive Vice President
for Academic Affairs

September 2019