

Women's and Gender Studies/Disability Studies (WGS/DS) response, Integrated Academic and Research Plan

Entering UWinnipeg

1) STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

Historically, students have come to university directly from high school. Demographic projections suggest that the number of students entering UWinnipeg directly from high school will decline over the medium-term. This suggests that we must explore alternate pathways into UWinnipeg. PACE, ELP and the Collegiate are important entry points for students at a variety of life stages into UWinnipeg. Our Community Learning programs also represent a pathway by exposing school-age children from families that have been historically underrepresented in post-secondary institutions to University.

WGS/DS students historically have not all come via the direct-from-high-school route. Many of our majors, in particular those stand-out students who become our research assistants and teaching assistants, have been (and continue to be) older (and younger) students who have come to Uni after a time working and/or travelling, and are committed to higher education on a level that differs from the direct-from-high-school folks. Often mature students' quality of commitment comes from their life experience, and their view of Uni and getting a BA as something they *choose*, not something to which they come *by default*. Further, many more traditional students find WGS/DS after their first year because it is not something in their high school curriculum and/or their understood conventions of University. While latecomers might initially seem to be a limitation, it again means that those students who find us have a greater commitment and motivation. They are supported by our excellent, diverse regular and contract faculty.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

What are some ways that these existing pathways can be strengthened? What opportunities exist for creating links between our community learning programs and our core mission? Are there new pathways we can create that enhance access and provide a continuum of supports for traditionally under-represented learners? What would this entail?

The many women's and gender related centres and organisations around Winnipeg have had different kinds of connections to WGS/DS, often developed through personal links with individual faculty members; these individual connections need to be encouraged and fostered. Implicitly, when faculty do presentations or activities at centres and locations outside the Uni (Mentoring Artists for Women's Art, Plug In, or Rainbow Resource Centre, for example), we represent UW. We also do so when our students do Practica in the community outside UW. Something as simple as information sheets that don't presume high school, that emphasise the fact that UW has alternative, interdisciplinary programs and departments, and that we welcome mature students, non-traditional students, etc. would be useful when we do that work. We're not suggesting that more merching of UW be added to already overworked faculty agendas. However, some support when we do outreach on our own, anyway, would be great.

Disability Studies is a joint program with Red River College, and students majoring or minoring in DS have two required placements, one at each institution. In this way they make valuable

connections to disability organizations outside the academy (e.g., Canadian Centre on Disability Studies and Council of Canadians on Disability). We would do well to foster those connections also.

DS has been run primarily on the energy of a single faculty member, who is not accorded the same compensation as Department Chairs. She has no budget and gets only a .5 FCE course release annually for her efforts. With at least 15 majors, including one Honours student, it is becoming difficult to sustain let alone grow the program. A UW commitment to DS, including (for a start) hiring a faculty member in the area would enhance UW's accessibility and sense of being welcoming to differently abled students—and differently abled faculty outside DS/WGS.

We need:

A Tenure Track hire in Feminist Critical Disability Studies

2) STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

UWinnipeg believes that there is no substitute for face-to-face instruction in a classroom setting, and this will remain our predominant method of delivering a high quality educational experience. However, we must also adapt to our changing environment and develop a response by incorporating technology and experiential learning in ways that expand student learning opportunities.

WGS/DS has long been participating in both experiential learning (our Practicum courses in particular, but indeed all of our courses) and distance education. While often the students who take online or VOD courses are in Winnipeg and potentially could come to classes, these formats also make UW accessible to mobility impaired folks, stay-at-home parents, those with demanding jobs and/or shift work, folks outside Winnipeg, etc. This form of education should be recognised for its significance to point 1 above—making the Uni accessible to non-traditional students.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

How could we effectively incorporate online and experiential learning into the pedagogical practice of faculty? What kinds of new or enhanced pedagogical supports would faculty require to increase their willingness to use online and experiential modes of learning? What resources would be required?

The previous system, where the budget for Distance courses—including fully online courses and VOD—was outside the Deans' budgets, and there were specific kinds of premiums for developing and first teaching (do these continue? we don't know! They should!) actually encouraged faculty to develop and teach online courses. Further, we don't see that "experiential learning" has been extended to the pedagogy that happens when faculty work with with research assistants and teaching assistants. The experiences those fortunate few get assists them in learning (experientially) how to be better communicators, to give better responses to issues and concerns, to do research, and so on, that not only prepares them for academics (which is part of the world, and an experience), but crucially also other kinds of work after and during Uni. Support from the Experiential Learning folks for teaching and research assistance would be an excellent idea—for preparing conference presentations and journal articles, for example, and

even for conference travel. The \$750 grants from Research are welcome and helpful, but don't cover actual costs.

Further, we note that our commitment to experiential learning supports our feminist commitment to collaborative learning. The Uni should understand Experiential Learning in a broader sense. How about a fund for Practica? Especially in Arts? How about Experiential Learning in Digital Humanities, linking up with the Technology Solutions Centre (see below)? Innovations in feminist pedagogy and experiential learning require financial support.

3) STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

UWinnipeg has made a strong commitment to sustainability and indigenization and aims to create an environment that embodies these values. Sustainability is a lens applied to all practices and processes to guide University activities (academic and operational) increasingly towards supporting the revitalization and resilience of ecosystems and communities. Indigenization, in part, refers to our recognition that we must do more to include indigenous peoples, perspectives, and knowledge in every aspect of the academy. One of our strategic priorities as we move forward is to ensure that there is a shared understanding of what indigenization means at UWinnipeg. Both sustainability and indigenization cut across all academic departments and student support units.

Controversies over the last year have demonstrated the desperate need for women, transgender, and Two Spirit perspectives on Indigeneity. Feminist First Nations and Métis folks' points of view have been distinctly absent from too much of the discussion.

A commitment of financial resources by the University of Winnipeg for new hires and the creation of research chairs (e.g. CRCs) in these areas are needed to show that the UW has indeed made a strategic commitment to these areas. Clearly this will contribute to UW sustainability since it will actually be able to stand behind and follow through on public commitments.

It is also important to note that Indigenous people, especially women, have much higher rates of disability and chronic illness than non-Indigenous people. All of these intersections must be taken into account when thinking about inclusion.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

What approaches would be most effective in promoting indigenization in our teaching and research? What approaches would be most effective in promoting sustainability in our teaching and research? What role could individual faculty members, departments, and other units play in addressing our commitment to sustainability and indigenization? How can these values be embodied in the physical space on campus?

It is important to ensure that Indigenous scholars are hired in all departments and that Indigenous folks are hired as staff. Active recruitment in these areas is needed, along with strategic focus on retention. Employment equity officers should be brought back to work with departments on recruitment, hiring, and retention. All departments should be encouraged to work to integrate Indigenous epistemological frameworks. Non-Indigenous scholars must take these frameworks seriously. Scholars should be encouraged to investigate Indigenous models of research,

teaching, and learning. For example, those teaching at UW might be encouraged to acknowledge in their courses that that UW is on Treaty One Territory, heart of Métis homeland. (Hey, put it on course outlines!) Faculty should be supported to work in collaboration with Indigenous scholars, students, and community members.

The physical space on campus should have more feminist Indigenous faculty.

A Tenure Track hire in Feminism, Anti-Racism and Diaspora

A Tenure Track hire in Indigenous Feminisms

4) STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

UWinnipeg acknowledges that particular attention must be paid to supporting faculty early in their careers. Additionally, UWinnipeg has committed to developing new supports and identifying, sharing, and reinforcing best practices that enable faculty to achieve success in teaching and research. Throughout this process, we must be mindful that teaching excellence and research are not dichotomous. Research, scholarly, and creative activities strengthen our capacity to provide high quality teaching to our students.

Individual faculty in WGS/DS have participated extensively in informal/individual mentoring of other faculty across campus (not only in WGS/DS), and in including more junior and/or other faculty in their work (e.g. Greenhill's research programs including UW faculty from Criminal Justice and English; Owen's DS network which includes faculty from UW, UM, St. Boniface and RRC; Failler's cultural studies group with folks from English, Politics, History—that work explicitly intervenes in community understandings of the CMHR). These activities are part of our feminist commitment to make a difference by making the Uni a more inclusive place, and ensuring that feminist perspectives make their way into other locations, rather than being (potentially) focused only in WGS/DS.

Owen, along with Lisa Sinclair from Psychology, has resurrected UWFA's Status of Women Committee, renaming it the Women and Equity Committee. Faculty members, especially junior faculty who are women, disabled, racialized, trans, queer, etc., talk about the chilly climate at UW. They often don't feel welcome or included, and all too many are harassed by students and colleagues. We lose valuable faculty this way. Another problem is that faculty from non-dominant groups may not feel comfortable seeking promotion.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

What kinds of support do new faculty members at UWinnipeg require early in their teaching careers? What kinds of support do new faculty members at UWinnipeg require early in their research careers? What is required to implement these supports? Who should implement them?

It would be productive for the UW to be known for a diverse range of scholarly research and creative practices. Right now, the face of research of the university is communicated through various media and on the research office website. Every faculty member should have a professional-looking research profile page on the research office webpage, rather than selecting a few scholars to highlight. We do need to do a better job of merching innovative feminist and critical humanities and social sciences research. The University needs to understand its own diversity of research projects, and to show off that diversity. Our excellent faculty should follow

their own lights with respect to research; we *should not* be trying to drive research in particular directions especially with respect to subject areas (though encouraging while not enjoining collaboration is a good thing, because collaboration, under the right circumstances, is a good thing).

A way to ensure that new faculty members hit the ground running, as opposed to being exhausted by high teaching levels and lack of job security (this applies to term positions and contract faculty) is to hire tenure track from the get-go. This seems to be particularly a problem in Arts.

Junior faculty, especially from traditionally marginalized groups, need to be mentored. This occurs informally but a more formal network organized and recognized as service by the administration would be helpful. UW also needs an Equity and Diversity office with at least one dedicated person. HR is currently spread too thinly and unable to address faculty need in this area.

Experiencing UWinnipeg

5) *STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:*

UWinnipeg recognizes the value of growing our research capacity and continuing to improve our degree of teaching excellence.

WGS/DS is generally recognised as a place where we “punch above our weight” to quote Dean Moulaison. **All WGS/DS faculty have received Uni research, teaching, and/or community service awards.**

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

How can the institution better support faculty in pursuing research funding, including tri-council grants? How can the institution better support faculty in pursuing teaching excellence throughout their careers? What is the role of graduate students and graduate programs in growing our research capacity? What specific supports do faculty need to assist them in successfully completing research activities while continuing to grow as educators? Who should deliver these supports?

All WGS/DS faculty actively engage in timely, socially relevant, innovative research and/or research-creation. We are recognized as exceptional feminist scholars and artists in interdisciplinary areas including but not limited to: artist-practitioner knowledges, feminist art and activism, critical disability studies, diaspora and anti-racism, folklore and culture, performance studies, public memory, and settler colonial studies. Our faculty produce creative works and are recognized by their peers as professional artists. Creative work includes fiction, poetry, video, photography, installation, performance, etc. Collectively, we address local, national, and transnational issues, and reach diverse audiences across various sites through multiple and creative modes of communication and dissemination. We (and others in the Uni) would be supported by:

Tenure track hires in WGS/DS (specifically, see above)

New funded opportunities for research mentorship and training to junior faculty, contract faculty, graduate and undergraduate student research assistants.

While the Uni tends to focus on Tri-council research funding (for good reasons), success in attracting other Partnerships and other funding needs to be recognised more—for example, government funding (Status of Women Canada, Disability Issues Office Canada) and organizational funding (Alliance of Five Research Centres on Violence against Women and Children)—for new and continuing projects.

The Institute for Women’s and Gender Studies (IWGS) supports WGS/DS faculty research and provides a context for student research training, community collaboration, outreach and exchange. It could be a model—the Uni should consult with us about it.

Foster partnerships with external organizations. The IWGS offices’ move to the Buhler Centre has put us in closer proximity to the Plug In Institute for Contemporary Art. We will further develop collaborative programming with Plug In, and envision opportunities for research partnership and experiential learning.

New programs should go forward **if and only if** the University can support them with full-time tenured or tenure track new faculty appointments. Moreover, we should avoid overlap, or, to put it more positively, departments should be open to other departments’ faculty and programs for support, input, and participation—our impression is that hitherto this has happened only as a default against a presumed ideal in which a graduate program based in a single department is the apparent desideratum. Given the excellence of our faculty, joint grad programs within the University are a good idea. We should partner with other postsecondary institutions **if and only if** they bring faculty and students who significantly enhance our programs and could not be covered by current UW faculty and students.

Throughout the Uni, and in particular in Arts, hire more tenured and tenure track faculty who can better thus can include and work directly with students than can CAS hired on a per course basis. Immediately triple the number of Work-Study and other grants available to faculty. Reduce teaching load, offer more flexible workload, and offer greater significant administrative support (no, not another Vice President, more Research Coordinators!) so more attention can be paid to developing research-teaching pedagogical models.

6) *STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:*

UWinnipeg takes pride in its diverse campus environment where people from all walks of life (e.g., international students, mature students, indigenous students, new Canadians, students with disabilities, etc.) feel welcome on campus and are supported to achieve their full potential.

We hope “walks of life” does not exclude those people who do not walk—language is political. We would add queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsex, Two Spirit, questioning. Taking pride in students with disabilities while under-resourcing Disability Studies seems ironic.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

How can UWinnipeg promote and enhance an institutional culture of respect and belonging? How can we create spaces for learning, socializing, studying and reflecting that contribute to such a culture? What gaps currently exist in the services offered to students? What work needs

to be done to address these gaps?

The best support for a diverse campus environment would be a more diverse faculty. (See above).

7) STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

UWinnipeg has a strong history of intersectoral research based on partnerships between departments, other post-secondary institutions, and external organizations. We are committed to maintaining and cultivating these partnerships.

The demand is there. Faculty are crafting and receiving Partnership Development Grants from SSHRC and/or are proceeding to the Partnership Grant stage, and we are finding international support for our efforts. Our colleagues in Canada and around the world want to partner with us, and so do their Institutions, who are making written commitments. We already have funding programs that support collaboration. Perhaps we would benefit by extending current partnerships (formal and informal)—e.g. having a wider range of curators teach in the Curatorial Practice MA.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

How can we build internal opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between UWinnipeg faculty members? How can we build opportunities for dialogue and collaboration between UWinnipeg faculty members and external organizations? How could individual faculty members, academic departments, and other university units play a role in cultivating these partnerships?

Most such partnerships have come via the initiative of individual faculty members. A Uni culture that explicitly supports such initiatives and supports a strong research culture in Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, including interest-driven work, will put UW in a strong position. Recognising the politics of research, we see a need for developing and supporting partnerships that offer alternatives to the conventional and status quo.

8) STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

The work of the library is integral in supporting faculty research and teaching, enhancing student experience and success, and mobilizing knowledge and research.

We appreciate library support, for example on copyright and open access. The library is our cornerstone.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

In what ways can the capacity of the library be strengthened so that it better supports research, collaboration, teaching, and learning? What is the role of the library in the mobilization of research?

We're currently coming out of a bad period where a head of library took it upon herself to presume a lot about what happens here, and to make unilateral decisions (or at least decisions in which she failed to consult faculty about our work and use of the library). Yeah for the new

Library Dean and her colleagues, who are more open to working with faculty, consulting with faculty, and offering direct support to faculty. Our UWFA and AESES library colleagues always helped us, but it's great that they now have support for their extensive and excellent efforts.

Success at UWinnipeg

9) *STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:*

Teaching and research are interconnected and both contribute to the core success of UWinnipeg. We are committed to developing ways to understand, define, and measure success in both of these areas.

The concept of “measuring success” implies a simplistic quantifiable system. We do not agree that this is a direction UW should take.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

How should we define and measure research success at the University of Winnipeg? How should we define and measure teaching success at the University of Winnipeg?

A single measure of research success limits our potential and flexibility. Defining research success will depend on the type of research and its aims, and the purposes for which we are measuring. Feminist, disability studies, and other critical research cannot be measured in simplistic quantifiable terms. Sometimes making a difference in the lives of only a few people is incredibly significant, especially when those people go on to make a difference in the lives of those with whom they are in contact. A commitment to Indigenization is also a commitment to decolonizing research and scholarly practices, and this involves a serious look at language in an attempt to proliferate meaningful and relevant methods, rather than standardize practices as a way to measure success. Vibrant ecologies are diversified and varied. It is essential for the university to explore alternative models for understanding what helps to make research and teaching meaningful, ethical, and vibrant practices.

There's a need for more research resources and staff in the research office. Some Universities have grant writers. Some Universities give course or other release to people who give feedback to other grant writers. How about release for folks writing major grant proposals? They are at least as much work as writing an article for a refereed journal (minimum!)—but they benefit the Uni in different ways. How about funding for projects that align teaching and research (which might help students, staff, and faculty avoid making assumptions that UW faculty are not leading-edges by definition because they're at UW)? How about Experiential Learning funding for hiring research assistants, and support for the process of working with RAs (which is work!—RAs are very helpful, but they also need to be taught and developed)! How about courses in which students serve as research assistants on a faculty research project, and including that within the notion of a Practicum? A course in which students prepare a refereed journal issue? UW should further expand its notion of research to include creative endeavours.

10) *STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:*

UWinnipeg faculty produce knowledge that influences policy, advances research, supports communities, and strengthens the workforce. We are committed to the idea of knowledge mobilization and must explore opportunities and resources that will move our research even

further into the public domain.

We greatly appreciate the strong support in getting the feminist word out from Communications—writing press releases, etc.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

What are some ways that UWinnipeg can ensure that research is responsive to and applied within the public domain? What kind of opportunities might UWinnipeg develop that would facilitate partnerships between the institution and the broader community to influence policy and reach a wider audience? What role could individual faculty members, academic departments, and other university units play in advancing knowledge mobilization?

Let's try to work on destabilising the current obsession with refereed articles in journals as the be all and end all, the only marker of faculty excellence. For many faculty, including those in WGS/DS, the most appropriate way to get the word out, in particular to communities, is not through refereed articles. For example, collaboration between WGS and TSC has produced the IFTF, which should be a flagship not only for academics but also for the technical work involved. iftf.uwinnipeg.ca Greenhill is currently writing an article for Digital Humanities on the process of developing that, in collaboration with a TSC staff member and the main student data entry person. We are talking about further work, including an Experiential Learning project in Digital Humanities doing computer visualisations of fairy tales.

All of the University needs to recognise the Research Office and the (Assoc) VP Research as the location for and clearing house for all research activity. Making the administrator responsible for research an *Associate* V-P sends a message that research is less than other areas. The main administrator in research should be a full Vice President.

What about another layer of research mobilization or research communications staff at the UW, distributed across the Library, the Research Office, Communications, and a new position in Community Research Engagement? This team would work with each other but also work from their respective offices with faculty members to actually help us develop our research projects in ways that make them more accessible.

11) STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

UWinnipeg remains committed to providing high quality undergraduate and graduate education with a focus on the liberal arts. In pursuit of this aim, UWinnipeg needs a vocabulary and a means to name and evaluate student outcomes, impact, and success.

How about counting the number of students and faculty who are actually in the (liberal) Arts faculty and supporting them proportionally to their numbers? In addition to the recognition of the actual numbers in the liberal arts, it is essential that richness and depth of student engagement is articulated. These kinds of endeavours could be developed if faculty had proper administrative support. For example, several innovative and meaningful projects have been put on hold in WGS/DS because we do not have the proper administrative support to develop these projects. WGS/DS needs a full-time staff person rather than an administrative assistant who is shared. A model for this kind of support can be seen in the Urban and Inner City Program. This program

has an Office Assistant and a Program Director.

HOW DO WE ACHIEVE THIS?

What are some specific ways to measure “successful graduates” that reflect our belief in the value of a liberal arts education and the specific mission of our institution?

WGS/DS is currently developing a section on our web page for testimonials from students.