

The Feminist & Gender Studies Program Antiracism Report, AY 2021-2022

When Dr. Heidi R. Lewis transitioned to Assistant Professor during AY 2012-2013, the Feminist & Gender Studies Program “Statement on Scholarship” had not been reviewed and revised since the program’s only previous faculty member was reviewed for tenure. Primarily since Dr. Lewis was the only tenure-track faculty member in the program at that time, she was tasked with drafting a new statement, which was approved by the program’s directors and core faculty and implemented during AY 2013-2014. That statement was then used to evaluate Dr. Lewis at third-year and tenure review, as well as Drs. Nadia Guessous and Rushaan Kumar at third-year review.

Quite frankly, we all (including Dr. Lewis) were alarmed but not surprised by the ways the previous statement was written from a place of fear, anxiety, and defensiveness, the latter which resurfaced when we first discussed revising the statement just prior to Dr. Kumar’s third-year review. However, we recognize this to be characteristic of a hierarchical academic culture that results in early career faculty confronting both real and imagined threats concerning their ability to secure tenure. This is uniquely exacerbated for faculty with marginalized identities, especially those working at predominantly white and economically affluent institutions, such as Colorado College. Upon serious reflection, Dr. Lewis spearheaded efforts to revise the statement this fall in collaboration with Dean Peony Fhagen to attend to the program’s unprecedented growth and development.

Our most recent revisions support the college’s developing antiracism commitment, especially the fourth goal, “Support and Engage All Faculty and Staff in Antiracism Work.” Since the antiracism commitment notes faculty of color “have consistently done the heavy lifting, making CC a stronger community” and because “that work must be honored and recognized,” we revised our statement with particular attention to assisting the college’s efforts to “develop evaluation criteria and reward systems to ensure that antiracism work is considered in annual reviews for faculty.” We took this approach, because we agree that if “the work of antiracism to be successful, all faculty and staff must see it as part of their *responsibilities* to the college, and as something for which everyone must be held *accountable*” (our emphases). Along these lines, “Our Plan to Become an Antiracist Institution” defines antiracism as “the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing systems, organizational structures, policies, practices, and attitudes so that power is redistributed and shared equitably.”

During our review of the program’s previous statement, we were encouraged by Dr. Lewis’ attempts to address the ways our discipline has attended to the ways academic systems, structures, policies, practices, and attitudes have relegated intellectuals with subjugated identities and their myriad ways of knowing to the margins. For example, she references the program’s mission statement at that time, a statement she also wrote, which notes the ways our field attends to “sexuality, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, religion, physical embodiment, and other social markers” in relation to its “interrogations of power, inequality, and privilege.” However, our revised statement converses with “Women’s Studies Scholarship: A Statement by the National Women’s Studies Association Field Leadership Working Group” to more carefully address the ways “our field draws from, builds on, questions, and transforms conventional disciplinary approaches” and aims to “examine how knowers and systems of knowledge are

situated [...] requiring us to develop new modes of inquiry and engagement, pose questions, and create new knowledge that centers subjugated ontologies and epistemologies.”

Similarly, in the previous statement, Dr. Lewis acknowledged the significance of “activist collaboration both within and outside of academe” and the ways “our commitments cannot be confined within our own campus,” including the likelihood that faculty in our discipline will publish in “alterative media as frequently as they publish in traditional academic spaces.” However, during our review, we acknowledged the ways this takes a problematic “add and stir” approach, merely creating opportunities for this kind of work to be honored *in addition to* traditional academic work rather than reconsidering the evaluation of the work itself. Additionally, the scholarly expectations at third-year, tenure, and Full Professor review in the 2014 statement were not considerate of invisibilized labor or teaching expectations at Colorado College, which impact faculty of color disproportionately. Our revised statement addresses this problem by noting our work “includes but is not limited to traditional scholarship and also participatory action research, myriad forms of activism, artistic and creative expression, public performance, archival research, lab-based teamwork, and collaborative editorial work.” Further, it notes “our work may also be recognized as significant by intellectuals outside the academy.”

Dean Fhagen suggested we more clearly define “non-academic” to aid our peers in understanding the way our field is distinct, but not always entirely different, from others for which this particularity is not of paramount concern. We did so briefly in the requirements sections for third-year, tenure, and Full Professor review by writing that faculty in our program should have “presented their work or contributed their expertise to an audience outside higher education” for a specified number of times, noting this may include “a non-profit organization or high school” in the third-year review section. Further, including the “such as” caveat allows the candidate and/or program director or file chair to identify other relevant audiences and projects that fulfill this requirement.

Dean Fhagen suggested we be more thoughtful about professional scaffolding, which resulted in significant revisions regarding publications and grants or fellowships. More specifically, we now require third-year review candidates to “*submit* at least two peer-reviewed works for review” and to have “*applied* for at least one (internal or external) grant or fellowship” (our emphases). Subsequently, we require tenure candidates to “have at least *one* peer-reviewed work accepted for publication since third-year review” and to “have received at least one (internal or external) grant or fellowship since third-year review.” Now, the statement appropriately honors *process*, which is critical for early career faculty adjusting to their post-graduate school careers and liberal arts teaching and learning, especially that which is particular to Colorado College, such as the Block Plan. Additionally, Dean Fhagen also identified the lack of book manuscripts in our Full Professor requirements, which is particularly important since Dr. Lewis recently published her first book, which would not have counted per the previous statement, which required candidates to “have at least three peer-reviewed articles or book chapters related to the discipline in print.”