



Docket Item:

University Program Approval: Portland State University, Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sexuality, Gender, and Queer Studies (B.A./B.S.).

Summary:

Portland State University proposes a new degree program leading to a B.A./B.S. in Sexuality, Gender, and Queer Studies. Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) staff completed a review of the proposed program. After analysis, HECC staff recommends approval of the program as proposed.

Staff Recommendation:

The HECC recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

RESOLVED, that the Higher Education Coordinating Commission approve the following program: Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Sexuality, Gender, and Queer Studies (B.A./B.S.) at Portland State University.



Portland State University seeks the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission’s approval to offer an instructional program leading to a B.A./B.S. degree in Sexuality, Gender and Queer Studies.

1. *Describe the purpose and relationship of the proposed program to the institution’s mission and strategic plan.*

The Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies situates its academic and scholarly work in alignment with both the vision and priorities of Portland State University and the principles of excellence advocated by the Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP) of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU). The newly adopted *PSU Strategic Plan* notes the university’s mission as one where we will use our collective knowledge as scholars and students to serve and sustain the city and state; to expand and sustain our dedication to community engaged learning; to educate a diverse community of learners; and for our research and teaching to have a global impact. The proposed Sexuality, Gender and Queer Studies (SGQS) major advances these goals in its attention to both historical and contemporary innovations in the field of Sexuality, Gender, and Queer Studies, the examination and expansion of linkages between theory and application in the community, the supporting the experiences of diverse learners, and community exchanges whereby we share research and student-activist projects with communities locally, regionally, and globally. To exemplify how this program supports PSU’s mission within a national framework we have coordinated several of the PSU goals with specific LEAP principles, and then matched these with key aspects of the SGQ Studies major.

<u>PSU goal</u>	<u>Elevate Student Success</u>
<u>LEAP #2</u>	<u>Give Students a Compass</u>

The SGQ Studies major will create a formal pathway for students to engage with cutting-edge issues related to sexuality and queer studies. It will provide opportunities for student participation in scholarly and creative endeavors through community-based learning and individual practicum experiences that draw upon and expand students’ understandings of SGQ issues. It will support transfer students who have begun their coursework in sexuality/queer studies at other institutions and provide critical core courses for all SGQS majors. The major is scaffolded so that the core courses move through examination, analysis, application, and synthesis of materials while the electives will allow for individualized engagement with connected issues in a variety of disciplines.

<u>PSU goal</u>	<u>Expand Commitment to Equity</u>
<u>LEAP #1</u>	<u>Aim High--and Make Excellence Inclusive</u>

The major will center theorizing, scholarship and activism by queer of color scholars and activists. Over the past ten years, academics of color whose work addresses gender and

sexuality have transformed the field often glossed as “Queer Studies.” These scholars are challenging the once-dominant analyses that centered the narratives, experiences, values and politics of middle and upper-class white, cisgender LGBTQ people; their work insists on a more complex—and thus more accurate—field of study which centers the scholarship and experiences of people of color in global and transnational contexts. This maturation of the field creates an opportunity to join the vanguard of a discipline in great demand from students nationally. This academic orientation will propel students to produce cutting-edge scholarship and community-based projects that address interconnected social justice issues related to sexuality, gender, and queer experiences, rather than placing sexuality and gender in discrete siloed categories. This focus will not only make the program more inclusive and attract a diverse array of students, but will assist in efforts to create a more welcoming campus climate for queer and transgender students of color where they will see multiple identities not just included, but centered in the curriculum. It will also bolster recruitment, retention, and graduation efforts for students of color and others. The major’s programmatic emphasis will also provide an arena for future strategic personnel investment to support diverse faculty.

<u>PSU goal</u>	<u>Extend Leadership in Community Engagement</u>
<u>LEAP #5</u>	<u>Connect Knowledge with Choices and Actions</u>
<u>LEAP #6</u>	<u>Foster Civic, Intercultural and Ethical Learning</u>

The SGQS major offers inquiry-based learning that will immerse students in problem-solving activities culminating in individually designed research projects. As the major becomes established, our student-scholars will showcase their work with community organizations in such venues as the annual WGSS Student Research Colloquium (now in its 11th year). Through scholarships and active mentoring, WGSS will support undergraduate students wishing to present their work at the National Women’s Studies Association conference.

The attention in the major to the power dynamics of gender, gender expression and sexuality as they are shaped by class, gender, race, disability, and cultures extends PSU’s focus on equity and social justice. The SGQS major will foster a cadre of students well-suited to mentorship roles in Gender and Sexualities SINQ courses, UNST Capstones, and electives related to the major.

The major’s courses and co-curricular projects connect students to methods for creatively, ethically, and efficiently addressing social justice issues related to sexuality and queer studies. The coursework for the major will prepare students to be leaders in a variety of fields as the explicit study of power and privilege (e.g., hetero- and homo-normative, racial, national and other vectors of privilege) will provide them with the tools to understand both interpersonal and institutional frameworks. Especially noteworthy is the importance placed on critical experiential learning. In addition to the research element, students will be involved in practicum opportunities. Such learning sites include on-campus placements with our partners at the Queer Resource Center and the Women’s Resource Center, and in the community at organizations such as Outside In, SMYRC, New Avenues for Youth, and The

Pride Foundation.

PSU's Sexual and Gender Equity taskforce (SAGE) and Queer Resource Center have helped to create a campus where all sexual and gender identities and expressions are acknowledged, supported, and equitably included in all aspects of campus life. By adding the SGQS major, PSU will demonstrate its leadership in the research, enquiry, and pedagogy that sustain and extend advances in understanding and supporting the social, historical, and political implications of gender and sexual diversity, inclusion and equity.

The curricular focus of this major will enhance the WGSS department's and PSU's commitment to diversity with regard to race, sexuality, and gender. Establishing this major can also support the commitment by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences to create and support research clusters around contemporary social issues through cluster hires. The social justice research cluster is a key opportunity for strategic investment in tenure-line faculty who will contribute to the intellectual and demographic diversity of CLAS, expand scholarship on social justice through the lens of sexuality/queer studies, and thus demonstrate and enhance the university's commitment to diversity.

2. *What evidence of need does the institution have for the program?*

Overall, it is clear that this new program is timely and relevant to PSU students. In relation to the strategic goal to "advance excellence in teaching and research" this program fills unmet student needs and builds capacity to deliver culturally relevant content and pedagogy. By reviewing the enrollment data for the SGQ Studies minor we can begin to see the emergence of a demand for the major. The SGQ Studies minor has seen significant growth since it was launched in AY2009. Since that time the number of graduates per year has risen from 2 in its first year to 25 this academic year; the program has graduated a total of 81 minors since AY10. The required courses for the minor indicate strong enrollment patterns: in most cases, the courses are either just shy of course capacity or exceeding capacities. This speaks to the demand for upper-division courses that students can use in their minor and the Gender & Sexualities cluster. Psychology and Sociology are by far the most popular primary majors for the SGQ Studies minors; we fully anticipate that in the future some students will double major with the newly proposal SGQ Studies major rather than merely minoring. Since a second major can double dip courses with the UNST cluster, there will be an incentive to add the SGQ Studies major.

In order to gauge demand by current students we convened a focus group and employed two surveys of potential majors. Each of these showed that there is solid interest in an SGQ studies major from current students. They spoke to the expanding field of SGQ studies as the "cutting edge" and "increasingly needed in the next 5-10-15 years." While many value the Women's Studies major, they also spoke to wanting a more in-depth focus on sexuality, LGBTQ people history, and politics, and queer theory and perspectives. They delineated the potential benefits of this major for their future careers in health care, social service work, and business. The students as a whole attested that this major would offer them the

background and knowledge (as well as provide evidence) that they are prepared to best serve LGBTQ populations and better improve the climate around gender and sexuality in a wide range of occupations. This major also meets demand for connection and community for LGBTQ students and those with wider interests in sexuality studies. As one student wrote in support of offering a major, “The classes that I've taken through the SGQ minor have been some of my favorites at Portland State. They foster a sense of community, and have helped me to feel more comfortable with myself and unapologetically proud of my identities.” Thus, this major will potentially fulfill demand for more community on campus for those already here and help to build PSU’s reputation for being LGBTQ friendly, which will potentially attract additional students to PSU from the Portland area and elsewhere in Oregon, out of state, and internationally.

According to the first short survey that was distributed among current WGSS students, Gender and Sexualities Junior Cluster courses, and several physical sites on campus approximately 50% of the 53 respondents indicated they would be likely to complete the proposed major if it were available to them. A survey of 19 current SGQ minors showed that over 60% of respondents would be likely to complete this program as their first or second major if it were available.

3. *Are there similar programs in the state? If so, how does the proposed program supplement, complement, or collaborate with those programs?*

The proposed major creates a pathway to PSU’s new graduate certificate in Gender, Race and Nations. Undergraduates with significant experience in analyzing sexuality and queer studies through an intersectional frame will contribute to the graduate certificate’s commitment to better illuminate the interconnected and complex issues of today's society and to engage in community-based research projects that incorporate Portland’s growing diversity. Given that Oregon State University (OSU) has a graduate minor in queer studies, graduates of our major will be encouraged to explore that as another regional option for continuing their studies.

Transfer students from the regional community colleges will be important to the vitality of this major. WGSS will strengthen the connections between the department and the community colleges by doing presentations about the new major. Given the steady growth in sexuality and queer studies across the state, a regional conference focusing on related issues could become a reality. The regional NWWGS association used to have an annual conference; the focus on SGQS issues, curricula, and pedagogies could rejuvenate this organization.

This interdisciplinary major will also provide impetus for personnel and curricular discussions across PSU. And as noted in an earlier section of this document, WGSS is already an active participant in the emerging CLAS research/hiring clusters. Additionally, WGSS is in preliminary conversation with the Department of Geography about possible cross-listed

courses and a joint faculty position. We fully anticipate pursuing conversations with the School of Public Health and the School of Social Work once the major is approved.

As a founding department in the School of Gender, Race, and Nations at PSU, WGSS is in the position to contribute to the GRN graduate certificate curriculum and its research initiatives by enhancing and expanding our SGQS faculty and course offerings. At least two of the other departments in the SGRN – Indigenous Nations Studies and Black Studies – are interested in offering courses that would align with the SGQS major. By establishing this major we will be providing new opportunities for students to enroll in those departments' courses, e.g., BST342 Black Masculinities (under review by CLAS CC) and Queer Indigenous Studies.

WGSS is exploring possibilities for collaborating with colleagues from OSU and University of Oregon (UO) on programming related to SGQ Studies. With the new major, we fully anticipate hosting a summer institute for PSU and other colleagues to deepen critical theorizing, pedagogies, and community activism on the range of issues emerging from current work on sexuality, gender, and queer studies.

All appropriate University committees and the Statewide Provosts Council have unanimously approved the proposed program. The PSU Board of Trustees approved the program on June 6, 2017.

Recommendation to the Commission

The Statewide Provosts Council recommends that the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission authorize Portland State University to establish an instructional program leading to a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science (B.A./B.S.) degree in Sexuality, Gender and Queer Studies, effective Fall 2017.

Institution: Portland State University
Program: B.A./B.S. in Sexuality, Gender and Queer Studies

Action: At the June 7, 2017 meeting, the Statewide Provosts Council approved a new program for Portland State University, B.A./B.S. in Sexuality, Gender and Queer Studies to move forward to the Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission for its review and approval. The PSU Board of Trustees approved it at their June 6, 2017 meeting.

Eastern Oregon University

Sarah Witte, provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Oregon Health & Science University

Elena Andresen, interim provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained

No vote – absent from meeting

Oregon State University

Ed Feser, provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Oregon Tech

LeAnn Maupin, acting provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Portland State University

Sona Andrews, provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Southern Oregon University

Susan Walsh, provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



University of Oregon

Scott Coltrane, provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained



Western Oregon University

Steve Scheck, provost

Approved
 Opposed
 Abstained

