



**The University  
Of Alabama  
In Huntsville**

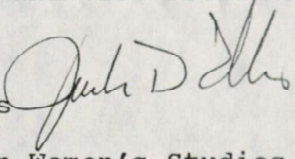
Huntsville, Alabama 35899  
Phone: (205) 895-6200  
Fax: (205) 895-6949

College of Liberal Arts  
Office of the Dean

6 June 1995

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: S. P. McManus, Provost and Vice-President for  
Academic Affairs

FROM: Jack D. Ellis, Dean   
College of Liberal Arts

RE: Proposal for a Minor in Women's Studies

I have received your memorandum of 12 May 1995 indicating your intent to take no action towards implementing the proposal for a minor in Women's Studies, despite its approval in February by the University Curriculum Committee.

Your decision is a keen disappointment to me and to the members of the university-wide Task Force, who for two years have labored to produce a plan that would have brought UAH's curriculum into line with that of Alabama's other research universities and with the offerings of 425 colleges and universities across the country.

While all of us understand the importance of the reasons that you cite, including the current budget crisis and the planned reduction of existing programs, the Women's Studies proposal was a modest endeavor that would have made few demands on UAH's limited resources. It called for no new positions, no new space, no new equipment. It represented a simple strategy for effecting a coherent program of study for UAH students, based on existing faculty and courses. At the same time, it held out the potential for generating additional enrollments and external support. Had you considered meeting with the committee before rendering a judgment, I think that you would even have found a willingness to consider interim arrangements, at least insofar as the projected annual cost of \$7,250 is concerned, in return for an expression of support. I regret that this did not happen. Because area studies programs are designed for more rational use of existing faculty and resources, they provide an institution such as ours the opportunity for growth and intellectual renewal, even during hard times.



I am less clear on the linkage that you assume to exist between the proposal in question and the curricular issues articulated in the Title VI remand. I testified at these hearings in Birmingham last February, heard part of the testimony of other witnesses, and reviewed the court records, and I do not recall a single instance in which the proposed minor in Women's Studies at UAH was ever mentioned. As you recall, however, a detailed examination of course syllabi in our college during the spring showed that Liberal Arts faculty devote a substantial portion of their lectures and readings to issues of black history and culture, which was the chief curricular concern of the plaintiffs. In any case, a minor in Women's Studies in no way prevents or interferes with the creation of a Black Studies program at UAH, should the time come when we have sufficient faculty with expertise in the field capable of supporting it.

In fact, because Women's Studies seeks to remedy public and scholarly neglect of the perspectives and contributions of a marginalized group, including black women, it could have helped lay the groundwork for other area studies. Here in our own state, as the authors of *Alabama, the History of a Deep South State* have reminded us, women were historically denied civil and political rights, excluded from juries and the ballot box, prohibited under English common law from disposing of their own property, and suffering many of the same indignities and deprivations endured by slaves and free blacks. Women gained the right to vote only in 1920, despite the hostility of the Alabama legislature. Since then, access to economic equality and the professions has necessitated constant struggle.

These are important issues with which future generations of UAH graduates must be familiar, men as well as the women who make up almost half of our student body. As you work to resolve our financial difficulties, I hope that you will not permit Women's Studies at UAH to go the way of the core curriculum. I hope that you will do everything in your power to support enterprising faculty like those of the Women's Studies Interest Group, who have built a record of excellence and creative vision since 1990 and who, I now fear, will be less willing to invest time in other curricular innovations, such as a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies. I suggest that you meet with members of the Task Force to discuss possible strategies for achieving their goals.

CC: Dr. Carolyn White  
Dr. Thomas Brindley  
Dr. Rose Norman✓