

New Brunswick Strategic Planning Proposal

Proposal Title: Comparative Race, Gender, and Sexualities

Proposal Initiators: Allan P. Isaac, American Studies and English
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Primary Strategic Priority/Foundational Element/Integrating Theme Addressed

Improving the Health and Wellness of Individuals and Populations
Inclusive, Diverse, and Cohesive Culture
Educating Involved Citizens and Effective Leaders for a Dynamic World
Cultures, Diversity, and Inequality—Local and Global
Build Faculty Excellence
Strong Core of Sciences and Humanities

Current and Potential Collaborations: School of Social Work, Center for Social Justice Education, RBHS, SAS: American Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies, Anthropology

Proposal Abstract (brief summary of the proposal – 250-word limit):

The School of Social Work with its work with RBHS, Center for Social Justice Education, Comparative Literature, Women's and Gender Studies, Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies, and American Studies would like to build upon its existing strengths in the study of race, gender and sexuality to expand and consolidate research, work and teaching of comparative gender and sexualities to foster cultural competency in areas of shared academic interest and professional development within the undergraduate and graduate curriculum.

Comparative Race, Gender and Sexualities takes a transnational and transcultural view of gender and sexual social formations. Interrogating culturally and racially specific conceptions of gender fluidity, this interdisciplinary inquiry brings arts, humanities, social sciences, and the natural sciences to destabilize and complicate many of the debates about the social, biological and cultural constructions of gender and sexuality. What is (and has been) the relationship between gender and colonial imaginaries? And how can a critical engagement with gender in transnational, migratory, and postcolonial contexts complicate notions of gender expression and sexuality and further gendered agency in a global context? These and other critical issues related to the medicalization

and pathologization of gender-variant bodies to managing and policing these individuals cuts across schools and disciplines.

Full Proposal Description (5-page limit)

[Insert here the full proposal, which should describe in detail a) what is being proposed, b) how the initiative aligns with the University Strategic Plan, c) any additional themes, priorities, and elements addressed, d) who will be involved, e) desired outcomes, and f) anticipated resources to support this initiative.]

This proposal emerges from the productive collaboration between the School of Social Work with its work with RBHS, the Center for Social Justice Education, Comparative Literature, Women's and Gender Studies, Latino Hispanic Caribbean Studies, and American Studies Department on issues related to the study of migration, comparative racial studies, gender and sexuality as relevant experiences in the configuration of contemporary individual and collective identities. Each unit has developed an academic and/or curricular initiative that is relevant for the proposed collaboration:

Improving the Health and Wellness of Individuals and Populations

The School of Social Work currently has five faculty members working on issues related to the intersections of social work, ethnic and sexual identities: Edward Alessi, Kristin Scherer, Michael LaSala, Jerry Floersch, Jeffrey Longhofer. The School offers a course entitled "LGBT Issues" that includes a section on how to deal with patients who identify as Trans, as gender nonconforming, or as gender queer. SSW hosts SWAGGER (Social Workers Advocating for GLBT and Gender Non Conforming Equal Rights), an organization at the Rutgers University School of Social Work dedicated to advocating for the rights and wellbeing of the LGBTQIA community at the School of Social Work, Rutgers, and the community at large. Professors Longhoffer and Floersch, are also developing a doctoral program in Social Work that attracts a significant amount of African American and Latino students, and the issue of Cultural Competency is increasingly becoming a crucial component in the training of Social Workers.

Inclusive, Diverse, and Cohesive Culture

The Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities (SJE), formerly the Office of Diverse Community Affairs and LGBT Concerns, continues to provide educational, social, and leadership development programs and activities for LGBT students, allies, and staff/faculty Liaisons for LGBT Students. The Center hosts a broad network of faculty and staff liaisons that welcomes students to Rutgers in a LGBTQ Reception every Fall, and provides student support and mentorship throughout the academic year. They collaborate with several units in the university to make sure that we provide safe academic and physical spaces for our students. They also host and support the Trans@RU website, where our students, faculty and staff can find the latest information about resources available for members of our community. Our efforts have been nationally recognized with Rutgers University- New Brunswick being named on the 2013 Top 25 LGBT-Friendly universities in the country by the Campus Pride Climate Index and Huffington Post. With our growth in visibility, we were also selected to host the 19th Annual Northeast LGBT Conference in April 11-13, 2014.

Community Links:

Last year, IRW and the newly formed Tyler Clementi Center co-sponsored a lecture by Drs. Rankin and Beemyn, national experts on campus climate issues for LGBT students, also met with members of the university administration to discuss how to implement best practices for creating an inclusive campus at Rutgers. Moreover, IRW convened another colloquium that brought together academics and activists for two days of discussions on topics ranging from criminalization to healthcare, and from employment non-discrimination to transnational transgender politics. Substantial effort was made to ensure that the panels reflected both racial and ethnic diversity, including people involved in community activism as well as advocacy at the state, national or international level.

Educating Involved Citizens and Effective Leaders for a Dynamic World

The Department of Women's and Gender Studies offers a Minor in Critical Sexuality that has proven to be very popular among undergraduate students. During the 2012-20123 academic year they offered two sessions of the first course on "Introduction to Trans Studies" ever offered at Rutgers, with extremely healthy enrollments. The Department has also supported research and teaching about the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality, by crosslisting and even offering undergraduate and graduate courses, and admitting graduate students interested in this kind of work. WGS also supported the hiring of Aren Aizura, our Mellon Postdoc, who spent two years developing undergraduate courses and programming on Trans studies, and they have defined Trans Studies as one of their priority areas for future hiring.

American Studies houses the Minor in Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies, a growing minor addressing the needs of students wishing to study race in comparative, rather than a single category, context. The Minor is designed to introduce students to the complexity of racial formation by bringing together courses from multiple departments engaged in the analysis, history, and political economy of race and migration. American Studies also funds development of new courses that examine two or more regional or racial groups, as well as sponsors programming around intercultural exchange.

Cultures, Diversity, and Inequality—Local and Global

The Disorientations Working Group was formed in the Spring 2012 and funded by the IRW. The purpose of this group is to encourage faculty and graduate students from different departments, programs, schools and campuses to work together on collaborative projects. ***Disorientations***, is a working group led by Professors Allan Punzalan Isaac and Rick Lee, which addresses how gender and sexuality shape developments in comparative race histories, visual and performative cultures, and transnationalism in the study of Asians in the Americas and the Diaspora. The ***Disorientations*** working group is comprised of 13 members (7 faculty, 4 graduate students, and 2 staff members), representing disciplines ranging from AMESALL to Anthropology and from American Studies to Women's and Gender Studies.

The Institute for Research on Women (IRW) has been key in the identification and development of research agendas for the study of gender and sexuality among different

schools in New Brunswick, and across three of the four campuses of Rutgers. In 2011, The IRW added Sexuality as one of the key components of the center's mission. For the 2012-2013 academic year the Institute for Research on Women organized its annual core programming on *Trans Studies: Beyond Hetero/Homonormativities*. This year's annual programming also included three additional initiatives: the hire of a two-year Mellon Postdoc who is an expert in Trans Studies, the organization of a one day colloquium entitled "Trans Politics: Scholarship and Strategies for Social Change," that invited activists and scholars to collaborate in areas of common interest related to Trans issues and Trans studies, and the former director and the current Associate Director are editing an anthology of some of the presentations included in the Distinguished lecture series and the one day colloquium (plus some invited collaborations) to explore the impact of Trans Studies on Feminist and Gender studies.

Build Faculty Excellence

While our annual programming on Trans Studies opened several potential new areas of collaboration, it also posed challenges. This year's topic was the culmination of several years of joint efforts with the Women's and Gender Studies Department, the Center for Social Justice Education and LGBT Communities, and others, intended to raise the profile of Trans Studies at the university. In 2011-12, we hired a 2-year Mellon postdoctoral fellow who designed and offered the first Introduction to Trans Studies course at Rutgers. The IRW weekly seminar and the Distinguished Lecture series allowed us to identify a significant cohort of graduate students from different SAS departments and programs who are developing research projects incorporating Trans Studies as theoretical paradigm. The IRW's Undergraduate Learning Community and Spring Colloquium—not to mention the Introduction to Trans Studies course that was offered through the Women's and Gender Studies Department in both the Fall 2012 and the Spring 2013 semesters—confirmed that there is a strong interest among undergraduates in this field of study. Both the IRW and the Women's and Gender Studies Department recognize that Trans Studies is an important area of research that Rutgers cannot currently address at the faculty level; indeed, we end the academic year without a faculty member who can cater to the significant and growing interests of our undergraduate and graduate students in this field.

Strong Core of Sciences and Humanities

Roundtable organized by the Tyler Clementi Center entitled "The Future of LGBTQ Studies at CIC Institutions" held on March 26, 2014. This roundtable was a discussion featuring leading scholars from four membership schools in the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC). Presenters shared their views about the research, curricular, and programming opportunities and challenges of promoting and sustaining LGBT and queer studies at their home institutions, as well as begin the conversation to establish cross-institutional partnerships dedicated to the study of gender and sexuality among CIC schools. Participants included Marilee Lindemann is associate professor of English and the director of the LGBT Studies program at the University of Maryland; Martin F. Manalansan IV is associate professor of Anthropology and Asian American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and a leading scholar in LGBTQ studies; Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel is professor of comparative literature and

Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies at Rutgers University, and a former director of the Institute for Research on Women (2011-13) and Debra A. Modellmog is professor of English and the coordinator of the Sexuality Studies program at Ohio State University. The first of its kind, this roundtable allow us to identify some areas of shared interest, as well as to identify comparative studies of race, gender and sexuality as a fertile area of future development at Rutgers-New Brunswick.

II. Future Collaborations within NB's Strategic Plan

The success of IRW's theme "Hetero/Homonormativities" last year (2012-13) garnered interest in Comparative Literature and the School of Social Work as well as the departments of American Studies (Newark), Educational Theory, Policy and Administration, History, Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies, Media Studies, Political Science (Newark), Sociology, and Women's and Gender Studies. Taking advantage of existing undergraduate minors in Critical sexuality Studies (WGS), Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies (American Studies), research and teaching on the intersections of ethnicity, race and sexuality offered in Latino and Hispanic Caribbean Studies, History, Africana Studies and Comparative Literature, we would like to propose an initiative that will link applied and theoretical research about racial, ethnic and gender diversity with the professional education and research that focuses on cultural competency. Focusing in migration, race, gender and sexuality as crucial components in the articulation of citizens, clients, individuals and communities, this initiative will link existing curricular and academic offerings to foster collaborations among SAS departments and professional schools at Rutgers.

Professional Development

Inter-professional education has been defined mostly as the exchange of knowledge among and between the helping professions and applied professional fields. And while some have seen the humanities and social sciences as crucial, though adjunctive, to this exchange of knowledge, few have imagined how the humanities and social sciences are essential to the production of *new knowledge* across fields of professional practice.

For example, the School of Social Work is working closely with the School of Medicine to develop capacity for interprofessional education. This proposal will broaden this effort to include the more than 300 BSW students enriching their curriculum for the 21st century with broader and international cultural competency in gender and sexuality. This will also enable crucial linkages between SAS students and potential career paths in social work and other helping professions in a 4 + 1 degree and/or certification. It is our goal to create new knowledge and effective pedagogy on gender and sexuality crucial to effective professional practice.

This proposal seeks to create an Institute for Comparative Gender and Sexuality that will forge relationships among faculty across professional schools and SAS units to coordinate: 1) applied and theoretical research on race, gender and sexuality through cross-school seminars; 2) creation of new curricula and collaboration across applied fields (i.e., nursing, social work, medicine, and management) to develop new knowledge

related to sexuality with a transnational perspective; 2) to develop a Graduate Certificate on Critical Public Cultures for cultural competencies across the professional schools.

Faculty Resources

School of Social Work: Edward Alessi, Kristin Scherer, Michael LaSala, Jerry Floersch, Jeffrey Longhofer

School of Communication: Kathryn Greene, Deepa Kumar

SAS: Ben Sifuentes-Jauregui (American Studies/Comparative Literature), Carlos Decena (WGS/LHCS), Louisa Schein (Anthropology), Allan P. Isaac (American Studies/English), Yolanda Martinez-San Miguel (Comparative Literature/LHCS), Arlene Stein (Sociology), Michelle Stephens (English/LHCS), Anjali Nerlekar (AMESALL), Kayo Denda (Libraries)

Funding Source

We have already received funding from the IRW, LHCS, American Studies, the Tyler Clementi Center and SAS. We will work with colleagues in the humanities and applied fields to seek funding to sustain these new ventures (e.g., SAMSHA program on inter-professional education). We are also planning to apply for funding for the SAS Entrepreneurial Program.

Please save your proposal as a Word document and submit it as an email attachment to NBStratPlanProposals@rutgers.edu by April 15, 2014.