



**FROM** Laura Dugan, Chair, University Senate

**SUBJECT** Senate Consideration of the Proposal to Rename the Department of Women's Studies (Senate Document #19-20-52)

In Spring 2020, the Senate Programs, Curricula, & Courses (PCC) Committee and the Senate Executive Committee (SEC) considered a proposal to rename the Department of Women's Studies to the Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. As the proposal involved renaming the department to honor a specific individual, the proposed renaming was governed by the University System of Maryland (USM) Policy on the Naming of Facilities and Programs (VI-4.00), which requires confidentiality during the consideration of an honorific naming proposal. As such, the PCC Committee and the SEC considered the proposal confidentially in executive session, and the SEC acted on behalf of the Senate to consider the proposal.

The PCC Committee met on Friday, April 3, 2020 and went into executive session to consider the proposal confidentially. The committee reviewed the proposal against the criteria in the USM policy. On April 14, 2020, the PCC Committee forwarded a memo that explained its consideration of the proposal and recommendation to the SEC.

The SEC met on April 20, 2020 to consider the proposal confidentially in executive session. The committee reviewed the proposal and the memo from the PCC Committee, and met with the chair of the PCC Committee, Janna Bianchini, to discuss the proposal. The SEC also reviewed the proposal against the criteria in the USM policy.

On April 23, 2020, the SEC submitted its assessment of the proposal, as well as the assessment of the PCC Committee, to President Loh for his consideration.

University of Maryland PCC  
Program/Curriculum/Unit Proposal

PCC Log No: 18056

Program: N/A

Department/Unit: Department of Women's Studies

College/School: Arts and Humanities (ARHU)

Proposal Contact Person (with email): Ruth Zambrana - rzambran@umd.edu

Type of Action (check one):

- Curriculum change (includes modifying minors, concentrations/specializations and creating informal specializations)
- Curriculum change is for an LEP Program
- Rename a program or formal Area of Concentration
- Establish/Discontinue a formal Area of Concentration
- Other: Renaming an Academic Department
- Establish a new academic degree/certificate program
- Create an online version of an existing program
- Establish a new minor
- Suspend/Discontinue a degree/certificate program
- Establish a new Master or Certificate of Professional Studies program
- New Professional Studies program will be administered by Office of Extended Studies

*Italics indicate that the proposal must be presented to the full University Senate for consideration.*

Approval Signatures - Please print name, sign, and date. For proposals requiring multiple unit approvals, please use additional cover sheet(s).

1. Department Committee Chair Ruth Enid Zambrana *Ruth Enid Zambrana* Ruth Enid Zambrana 11/15/18
2. Department Chair Ruth Enid Zambrana *Ruth Enid Zambrana* Ruth Enid Zambrana 11/15/18
3. College/School PCC Chair \_\_\_\_\_
4. Dean Bonnie Thornton Dill *Bonnie Thornton Dill* 11/19/18
5. Dean of the Graduate School (if required) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Chair, Senate PCC Janna Bianchini *Janna Bianchini* 2-1-19
7. University Senate Chair (if required) \_\_\_\_\_
8. Senior Vice President and Provost Elizabeth J. Peise *Elizabeth J. Peise* 9-9-20

Instructions:

When approved by the dean of the college or school, please send the proposal and signed form to the Office of the Associate Provost for Academic Planning and Programs, 1119 Main Administration Building, Campus-5031, **and** email the proposal document as an MSWord attachment to [pcc-submissions@umd.edu](mailto:pcc-submissions@umd.edu).

Summary of Proposed Action (use additional sheet if necessary):

We are proposing that our department name be changed from "Department of Women's Studies" to "The Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies"

Unit Code(s) (to be entered by the Office of Academic Planning and Programs):



UNIVERSITY OF  
MARYLAND

COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES  
*Office of the Dean*

1102 Francis Scott Key Hall  
College Park, Maryland 20742-7311  
301.405.2088 TEL 301.314.9148 FAX  
www.arhu.umd.edu

DATE: November 16, 2018

TO: Janna Bianchini, Chair, Senate PCC

FROM: Bonnie Thornton Dill, Dean, College of Arts and Humanities

RE: Approval of Name Change Proposal by Department of Women's Studies

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'BTD', located to the right of the 'FROM:' line.

Attached is a proposal drafted by the interim chair of the Department of Women's Studies requesting a name change for the department. The new name not only captures the current scholarly and curricular strengths of the department, but also points to future trends in research and teaching that define gender, women's and LGBT studies. Furthermore, the department faculty, the chair, and the college wish to honor the legacy of Harriet Tubman. The proposed name attests to the department's ongoing efforts to increase its national leadership in incorporating faculty and students of color in all aspects of department pedagogy, research, and programming.

I support this request and approve the proposed department name change to The Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies. Please let me know if you have any questions.



2101 Woods Hall  
College Park, MD 20742  
301.405.6877 TEL 301.314.9190 FAX

November 15, 2018

Dear Dean Thornton Dill,

I am writing on behalf of the faculty of the Department of Women's Studies to request approval to change our name from the Department of Women's Studies to "The Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies." Having recently marked over forty years as a program, and as we approach our twenty-fifth year as a department, the Department of Women's Studies is in a phase of transition. This transition began in 2013 as we became the new home for the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Program, formerly under the Dean of Undergraduate Studies. It continues as we come to the end of an overhaul of our undergraduate major, which when finally completed will change from a BA in Women's Studies to a BA in Gender, Race and Sexuality Studies; a new program that will offer our undergraduate population a wider range of thematic clusters and greater flexibility in pursuing the major. We are poised to begin a similar reframing of our graduate Certificate in Women's Studies, as well as our Minor in Black Women's Studies. The renaming represents yet another pillar in our disciplinary and institutional reframing.

Our reasons for the proposed name change are several. First, our department has established a foundational presence in the field of women's studies because of the key contributions made to black feminist thought and transnational theorizing of the analytical category of "intersectionality." Second, our teaching and scholarship have centered issues of race and racialization as one of the defining features of our pedagogy—we are the only program nationally that offers a minor in Black Women's Studies. We know that the diversity of ideas and identities matters to the shape and direction that disciplines are able to pursue. Third, we have long maintained strong commitments to the mentoring and training of students of color. At present, our faculty comprises 70 percent people of color, and our doctoral program consists of 13 students out of 22 who identify as students of color. Additionally, of the doctoral degrees granted, 44 percent (including Asian students) were to graduates who identify as scholars of color.

We as a faculty wish to ensure that the department name captures and telegraphs our scholarly and disciplinary commitments. It is important to us that we do so without simultaneously making the misstep of sidelining the many scholars, programs, and departments on our campus whose work centers on issues of race and racialization. For example, simply appending the category "race," to the name, as in "Critical Race, Women, and Gender Studies," would not have gotten us beyond this dilemma. Drawing on Harriet Tubman's legacy as part of our nomenclature now facilitates more than we could have anticipated. By drawing on Harriet Tubman's name, we are able to signal a commitment to issues of race and racialization, while pointing to a long legacy of struggle for justice and freedom. With this key historical figure as part of our institutional identity, our very name will invite our students to reflect on and critique contemporary manifestations of inequity while sharpening their ability to analyze historical antecedents. Honoring Harriet Tubman in this way also seems appropriate given Tubman's ties to the State of Maryland, having been born in Dorchester County.

As part of the name change, we see ourselves as having an ethical and intellectual responsibility to mount a series of educational programming that will accompany it. Our plans include: a departmental (faculty, staff, students) Harriet Tubman Byway Tour, which was conducted on October 26, 2018; reading groups

guided by a series of articles about Tubman (*Meridians* Vol. 12, No. 2, 2014); and an open house to talk with students about the politics and context for the name change.

The contours of women's studies now abut and intertwine with a range of other disciplinary locations, in particular, sexuality studies, transgender studies, and queer studies – each potentially signifying slightly different theoretical commitments. These shifting contours manifest in the many departments that have renamed themselves, drawing on formulations such as—Women and Gender Studies (e.g., Rutgers), Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies (e.g., Ohio State), Gender and Sexuality Studies (e.g., Northwestern) and though less frequent, but nonetheless present, Feminist Studies (e.g., UC Santa Cruz). Our recasting also engages these disciplinary shifts through the use of “Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.” This component of the name change reflects our expanded engagement with trans- and sexuality studies, and does so without erasing the field's genealogy by maintaining the category of “women's studies.” Taken together, “The Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies” accomplishes a number of tasks – it centralizes our commitment to race and racialization, it allows us to keep up with changes in the field, it marks our presence as distinctly connected to the state of Maryland, and it reminds our institutional and disciplinary interlocutors that our scholarly modality is one of sustained critique and re-imagining. With this rationale in mind, the Department of Women's Studies is requesting that we be allowed to change our name to “The Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies.”

We have consulted with the United States Patent and Trademark Office as well as the Maryland Department of State, which handles trademarks, and they have confirmed that we do not need legal approval from the family to use the name of Harriet Tubman. Additionally, the University's Office of General Counsel stated that there are no additional legal procedures outside working with the Senate PCC to process the name change. However, we do not wish to change our name without contacting the family, and so we have sent a letter to Miss Ernestine “Tina” Martin Wyatt whose name was provided to us through the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Visitor Center in Cambridge, MD. At this juncture, we have not heard from Miss Wyatt, however we wish to begin this process and so submit this letter.

Please inform us of next steps. If you require any additional information please let us know. I appreciate your assistance and support in facilitating this matter through the college and university.

With utmost respect,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ruth Enid Zambrana". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Ruth Enid Zambrana, Ph.D.  
Interim Chair and Professor  
Department of Women's Studies

**To: Dr. Pamela Lanford, Chair of the University Senate**

**CC: Dean Bonnie T. Dill**

**Reka Montfort**

**From: Ruth Enid Zambrana, Ph.D., Chair and Professor, Department of Women's Studies**

**Date: March 27, 2020**

**RE: Request for Renaming of the Department of Women's Studies**

**1. Describe how Harriet Tubman fits the System criteria of: "scholars and other distinguished individuals who are preeminent in their field of endeavor and/or have contributed meaningfully to the USM or any individual institution."**

Harriet Tubman is one of Maryland's most accomplished and distinguished figures, a role model to the world, and preeminent for her work of guiding enslaved people to freedom and fighting for the rights of America's disenfranchised. While the USM did not exist during her lifetime, Harriet Tubman contributed to Maryland's, and the nation's, history. Harriet Tubman continues to be an enduring figure in American history for her devotion to abolishing slavery, fighting for freedom in the Civil War, and continuing to work for equality after Reconstruction. Harriet Tubman's history is explicitly tied to Maryland, as her route on the Underground Railroad ran through the Eastern Shore in what is now known as the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway. With her early history and many of her distinguishing acts taking place in Maryland, she has certainly impacted our state and its people.

Our Department seeks to carry her pioneering and fearless social activist and freedom fighter legacy forward. Members of the Department met with Tubman's descendants who were enthusiastic about this naming opportunity. We discussed with them how to carefully commit our program to Ms. Tubman's legacy and agreed that this name signals a commitment to a vision and actions that promote justice, equality, and freedom. It also signals a commitment to issues of race and racialization, which are central to the Department's mission and a national/international marker of this unit's distinction.

Having the name of this key historical figure as part of our departmental institutional identity, highlights our unique and field-defining focus on Black feminist Thought. Our naming and field-defining focus will draw students from around the globe who are eager to engage in the study of contemporary manifestations of inequity while sharpening their ability to analyze historical antecedents. Honoring Harriet Tubman at the Flagship institution of the State system of higher education is fitting given her roots in the State of Maryland, which have recently been recognized in the Maryland State House (see articles below). It would also support and amplify the work of her family to remember their great aunt through Harriet Tubman Day and other Maryland-based initiatives.

**2. Provide a biographical profile and describe the honoree's accomplishments.**

Harriet Tubman was born Araminta Harriet Ross to enslaved people in Dorchester County, Maryland. While her father earned his freedom, her mother and many of her siblings remained enslaved for much of their early life. One of the most vivid moments from her adolescence that helped inform many of her future accomplishments happened at a dry-goods store. Tubman refused to help capture a runaway slave, and in response was struck in the head with a two-pound weight that caused her to endure seizures, severe headaches, and narcoleptic episodes for the rest of her life.

Her accomplishments are demonstrated bravery, fearlessness, and undaunting determination. Between 1850 and 1860, Tubman made 19 trips from the South to the North following the network known as the Underground Railroad. She guided over 300 people, including her parents and several siblings, from enslaved Maryland to freedom in the North. This earned her the moniker “Moses” for her leadership. It also led to her involvement in the Civil War, where she worked for the Union Army as a cook and a nurse, and later an armed scout and spy. She was the first woman to lead an armed expedition in the war, the Combahee River Raid, which liberated more than 700 slaves in South Carolina. After the war, Tubman returned to her new home in Auburn, New York, where she cared for her aging parents and fought for suffrage and rights for women, minorities, the disabled, and the aged. She continued fighting for others until the day she died, cementing her legacy in the annals of American history as a freedom fighter, a soldier, an activist, and a caretaker. Harriet Tubman’s accomplishments resound loudly to this day, and our Department hopes to honor her legacy through our pedagogy, research and through learning experiences that teach about struggles for freedom and social justice.

#### **Articles on Harriet Tubman’s Honoring by the State of Maryland**

- ‘A Room with a Different View’: Maryland Unveils Statues of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass in State House
  - <https://www.baltimoresun.com/politics/bs-md-pol-maryland-tubman-douglass-statues-20200210-fxgcotbdlvb4pfs2nr4jn3f5dy-story.html>
- Statues of Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman Unveiled in Maryland State House
  - [https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/statues-of-frederick-douglass-harriet-tubman-installed-in-maryland-state-house/2020/02/10/5baf4dd2-4c1f-11ea-b721-9f4cdc90bc1c\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/md-politics/statues-of-frederick-douglass-harriet-tubman-installed-in-maryland-state-house/2020/02/10/5baf4dd2-4c1f-11ea-b721-9f4cdc90bc1c_story.html)