



CHAPTER 3

Social Justice Programs and Just Administrative Practices

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When I joined Webster University as a full-time faculty member in the year 2000, I quickly became involved in a number of interdisciplinary and social justice-oriented committees. Eager to work with folks who shared similar passions for crossing disciplinary boundaries and for collaborative work aimed at improving the lives of underrepresented, marginalized, and oppressed groups, I assumed the directorship of the university's Center for Practical and Interdisciplinary Ethics (the forerunner to our current Center for Ethics) and jumped into committee work with the Women's Studies Program (now the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program). Two years later, I helped institute a Safe Zone program on campus to advocate for LGBTQ rights and I joined the Environmental Studies Committee (now Sustainability Studies). I participated in, and eventually chaired, the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, and I aided in the establishment of the Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies. Uniting all of these various commitments was a passion for upending inequities, reducing marginalization,

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41

and eliminating oppression through work that crosses and integrates disciplinary boundaries.

It is in the spirit of these commitments, and with the hindsight of more than 18 years of experience, that I offer here tips, strategies, and arguments for the alignment of interdisciplinary social justice-focused programs with governance that aims to be equitable and inclusive, and that attempts to avoid discrimination within its own structures. I do so from the admittedly limited perspective of someone who teaches at a private PWI¹ and as a White, tenured faculty member. I explore the fact that, although faculty members such as myself undergo years of training in how to develop courses and curricula for our students in accordance with social justice goals, few of us undergo much training or receive guidance in how to develop institutional structures that themselves are equitable, just, and empowering for their governing members. In the course of my involvement with all of these committees, I have witnessed, suffered under, and also unwittingly perpetuated structures that were unjust and furthered other members' exclusion. Thus I offer up, with considerable humility and tentativeness, strategies that I hope will counter such structures. Mindful of the growth of interdisciplinary social justice programs² and also of their marginalization and fragility under nationwide budget cuts in higher education, I suggest that the importance of sharing strategies for adequately structuring and supporting such programs is now more critical than ever.

Dividing my chapter into sections that address mission, leadership, and committee composition, I consider various approaches to formulating the direction and scope of such programs, for tapping into the leadership strengths of faculty members who are differently situated in terms of interdisciplinary background and training, and for supporting committee members that might potentially be vulnerable for a variety of structural reasons. I argue, in part, for the importance of cultivating diverse committee and administrative membership, but I also caution that diversity itself cannot be the end goal of programs with social justice missions. Embedded in a commitment to diversity must be attentiveness to the risks of exploiting vulnerable populations within the program. These groups might include contingent faculty members, junior faculty members, and faculty members from underrepresented groups in terms of gender, race, sexuality, nationality, ability, and so forth. Additionally, directors and chairs—who are typically (but not always) secure in

their academic positions—are vulnerable to burnout and health risks, particularly when labor and financial resources at an institution are low. Given that these groups may be made even more vulnerable when the work of managing the curriculum, the budget, and cocurricular events for interdisciplinary, social justice programs is viewed as voluntary or optional, I offer tips from mistakes I have made, lessons learned, and shared successes in my own administrative work.

MISSION: CLARIFYING SCOPE AND INCREASING PROGRAM SECURITY

In the last two decades, as assessment practices and requirements have become more central to the labor of college/university educators—not merely for those in education and professional programs (nursing, legal studies, counseling), but also for those of us in the liberal and creative arts—mission statements for programs, departments, and committees have garnered increased attention. As assessment justifications have moved into common academic parlance for all realms of the university, and as their usefulness for internal (and not merely external) evaluation has become clearer to me, I have warmed to the importance of articulating, clarifying, and then sticking to one’s mission.³ There are, after all, real benefits to doing so, especially when it comes to programs that are both interdisciplinary and focused on social justice. Programs with these foci and scope suffer from marginalization at many institutions. This is due, in part, to the fact that most of the institutions have become wedded to the importance of disciplinary boundaries, rendering interdisciplinary work *mere* “problem-solving” as opposed to more “pure,” speculative approaches to gaining knowledge. Social justice programs are often viewed similarly, sometimes as contingently necessary but not as enduring work for the mission of a university. As Sandra, an African-American woman and social scientist notes: “I think even the well-meaning people see [diversity classes] as...this kind of fad thing that hopefully we’ll get past in the next couple of years and we’ll get back to the real business of education” (quoted in Joseph and Hirshfield 2011, 133). Interdisciplinary and social justice programs thus both suffer from the perception that they may eventually fade in usefulness, once the problems they set out to address are solved.

A thoughtful, accessible mission can help clarify—for faculty members, upper administrators, and even external board members and community members—why this work needs to be sustained, how it is integral to academia, and how it fits within the organizing structures of a university. When applicable, it can be worthwhile for faculty members to devote some time to clarification of the terms “interdisciplinary” and “social justice,” as there are unique obstacles and problematic assumptions to be found at the intersections of both organizing foci. The term “interdisciplinary” might be used to indicate “an assumption of interdependence, in that the theories, perspectives, tools and findings of one discipline cannot solve or illuminate the problem it is trying to solve so there is a sharing of purpose and methods, and development of understanding of the core principles of the contributing disciplines” (Townsend et al. 2015, 66). Faculty members who have thought through “the point” of coming together from several different disciplines are not only in a good position to point out a weakness in higher education—the isolating and narrowing effect of research done in academic silos—but are also better equipped to counter objections that their work is not central to the university.

Similarly, in a contentious and polarized political climate under which social justice programs might be viewed with suspicion⁴ by board members or alumni with conservative political commitments (and with considerable influence on budgets and resources), it is worth spending some time discussing, debating, and articulating what falls under the scope of a program that considers itself motivated by social justice considerations and what does not. As an increasing number of White supremacist groups, for instance, lay claim to the terms “oppression” and “marginalization,” a mission statement that broadly supports a commitment to social justice without articulating what that means may increase its vulnerability.

Neither the crossing of disciplinary boundaries nor the descriptor “social justice” indicates that anything and everything is or ought to be included, nor that expertise on the topic is a pipedream. As Julie Thompson Klein (2013) notes in her discussion of the role of interdisciplinary programs in higher education, the landscape has shifted. Academics used to worry that interdisciplinary work would fail to properly respect disciplines; now the tendency is to claim that we all can, and already are, doing interdisciplinary work. This mind-set can lead to a range of problems, from “superficial interdisciplinarity” (Klein 2013, 72)

that is disrespectful of disciplinary expertise, to irresponsible scholarship that ignores established research, to (of particular relevance for this essay) the formation of “kitchen sink” approaches (and thereby committees). In the development of my university’s Center for Ethics, for instance, it soon became clear that having “ethics” in our title opened us up to all kinds of assumptions about our scope and purpose; some assumed the Center served a campus regulatory role, others assumed it was an office for appeals or policing, and still others assumed motivations of righteousness and indoctrination. Thus it became critical to have a clear statement indicating that our mission is “to stimulate dialogue, encourage awareness, and promote critical thinking about ethical issues.” Making the mission clear and visible helped stave off not only misunderstandings of what we were doing, but also helped us out of sticky bureaucratic situations. For instance, when one of our dean’s advisory board members took a particular interest in the Center as a mechanism for launching her conservative Christian-based character education program, we referred back to the critical thinking aspect of the mission and ultimately declined her offer of financial assistance on the basis of the closing statement of our mission: “The Center does not endorse any particular viewpoint; it aims to promote sophisticated discussions through which various ethical positions can be discussed.”

Similarly, the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program has referred to its mission in order to weed out requests to serve as a platform for women’s advocacy that was unwittingly heterosexist, racist, classist, cissexist, able-ist, and nationalist. And our Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies has had to be careful and intentional about its scope in order to avoid becoming the site through which all programs, questions, and projects related to social justice are funneled. As the director has often had to insist, the Institute is certainly a place for considering questions of social justice, but this should not be taken to mean that all issues of social justice are human rights issues. To include everything related to social justice under the umbrella of the Institute risks watering down the goals and misunderstanding the scope of human rights scholarship and advocacy work. In the case of the Institute, difficult and important conversations have emerged about whether the scope of its cocurricular dimension should be widened to accommodate the interests of donors and advocates wherein the distinctions between social justice work more generally and human rights work more specifically are underappreciated. Devoting time to the articulation and revision

of mission helps foster these discussions and gives members a chance to sort through what should and should not be included in the group's activities.

Thus, long-term sustainability may be enhanced, and the potential for disconnect and political criticism minimized, when a program's curricular mission and practical operations are well-integrated and aligned through by-laws, practices, and procedures that put their values front and center. This point notwithstanding, I would also grant that mission statements, once formulated, should not be considered immutable or protected with an iron grip. They must also be open to criticism, updated, and consistently reflected upon. The importance of such reflection has been critical to the health and academic vitality of our Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program, for instance. Few fields have changed more rapidly in the past several decades than programs focused on women, gender, and sexuality (just look at the plethora of names associated with their study and the rapidity with which they have changed in the last several decades), and mission statements have changed accordingly. At my institution, our mission statement and our program name have gone through three substantial iterations in just 15 years. Our mostly White, cisgender, and heterosexual faculty used to explicitly require that courses in the program demonstrate that 80% of the content be focused on women. But as we were increasingly made aware by activists and scholars who have been marginalized and yet persisted in the field, a focus of 80% says nothing about which women, whose experiences, who counts as a "woman," and to what extent womanhood is even a useful category. While the "80 percent" mission statement had been helpful for weeding out those proposals we occasionally received (typically from hetero, cis-men, but not always) to teach a course that included some analysis of women, but was not informed by a feminist perspective (a course on the importance of chivalry, for instance), it also betrayed our lack of intersectional analysis and thereby feminist inclusivity. The more important component, we realized, was critical analysis of gender from an intersectional feminist perspective. Courses in masculinities and queer theory, for instance, seem ill-fit for the program under this more "traditional" (read white-, cis-, and hetero-privileged) 80%-women approach, and yet we all recognized that these were important to the program. Thus, we came to see the importance of revising our mission not only to include such courses, but more importantly to actively encourage the development of them.⁵

LEADERSHIP: IDENTIFYING INTERDISCIPLINARY EXPERTISE AND PREVENTING BURNOUT

In current academic climates, when many institutions are experiencing downturns in enrollment, consequent budget cuts, and increased reliance on contingent faculty members to staff classes, administrative committee work falls on the shoulders of fewer people who have less time than they previously did to engage in it. Exacerbating these challenges is the fact that, in the triumvirate expectations of research, teaching, and service, service is almost always valued least and last. In research-heavy institutions, full-time faculty are discouraged from spending too much time on committee work, and in teaching-heavy institutions, the same pressures emerge. Thus, it can be hard to find people who are willing and able to set aside the time to contribute to committees, even when they care about the issues deeply, and even when their research and teaching are related to the committee's work. Add to that the fact that chairing or directing these committees more than doubles the time (in planning, strategizing, troubleshooting, hand-holding, cajoling, and negotiating) that one would spend simply as a member, and it is no surprise that few people are able or willing to lead these groups. At my institution it has been no small feat to identify those who possess the qualifications, the time, and the willingness to lead committees that are interdisciplinary and focused on social justice. In every one of the committees I have been involved in, it has been enormously challenging either to find a person to chair or to adequately support the person who steps up to do so. As one colleague of mine and I joke, it ends up being the same committed few—the “usual suspects,” as we call ourselves—that find the time to contribute expertise and energy.

Part of this difficulty is tied to the fact that expertise can be, on the surface, somewhat difficult to identify when it comes to interdisciplinary social justice work. Identifiable standards emerge within disciplines, including knowledge of key figures, texts, jargon, common language, and an ability to ask questions that evidence relevant background information. And although these standards certainly emerge in interdisciplinary fields, it arguably takes longer to arrive at them and sometimes requires more discussion to break through the ways in which disciplinary norms and assumptions prevent easy communication. Before we changed our name from “Environmental Studies” to “Sustainability Studies,” for instance, it was necessary to discuss the meaning(s) of “sustainability”

from the perspective of many disciplines. The discussions were highly useful for promoting faculty professional development, for fostering discussion about ways in which our courses overlap and diverge from one another, and for brainstorming future interdisciplinary events. And yet, there is no getting around the fact that this did and typically does take longer than it would in a single-disciplined setting. Intellectually, it is fascinating, productive, and important work. But it proves difficult for a chair who has an agenda and did not anticipate that a single term might be subject to so many disciplinary interpretations, and the subsequent need for more or longer meetings.

Of course, the same thing happens within single-discipline departments. As someone trained first and primarily in philosophy, I cannot begin to count the number of meetings that have doubled in length due to intellectual arguments over a single term (it is the kind of thing philosophers love). But these discussions, at least at my institution, are not burdened by the feeling that we are engaged in work that is “extra” in relation to our primary jobs. With rare exceptions, faculty members are hired into the disciplines that they received years of training in. Yet those who chair interdisciplinary committees must often adopt a significant level of humility and an attitude of deep inclusiveness in order to encourage members from many disciplines to stay and to contribute. Without this, the risk of alienating people is too great; interdisciplinary social justice work is rarely required of anyone at a university. While most of us cannot “quit” our departments, more of us have the option to quit interdisciplinary social justice work practically any time we want. And when we become overworked (as so many of us are), these are often the first commitments to give. If service is minimally required, interdisciplinary social justice service is optional and/or considered supererogatory.

Chairs and directors, then, need to cultivate managerial skills that are slightly different from those of a department-bound chair. A department chair needs to be a good manager to the extent that they cultivate good will and inclusive practices in order to motivate people to go above and beyond minimal departmental expectations. But the chair of an interdisciplinary social justice committee needs to do so to keep people engaged at all. They need to worry about the threat of exit (which often takes the subtler form of “no shows” or people confessing that they are simply “too busy”), and thereby the risk of more work more falling on the chair’s shoulders.

Chairs who have a certain level of interdisciplinary expertise—either from teaching, research, or graduate training—also have to negotiate carefully how much to declare it as such. While some people are quite comfortable citing their degrees, research, and grants as evidence of their fittingness for leadership (and this is not taken as unduly boastful), in interdisciplinary settings this sometimes risks the appearance of grandiosity and can ultimately be alienating to some members. While it is often an advantage that interdisciplinary work is a great “equalizer”—no single discipline gets to be the authority on any particular question, topic, or endeavor—the disadvantage is that it is relatively easy, perhaps too easy, for more people to claim that they are an authority (particularly because they may be the only representative at the table of their discipline’s contribution to the interdisciplinary work). Negotiating claims to authority can be especially tricky for chairs who end up serving before they are tenured, as pre-tenured faculty members may be expected to behave with more humility toward and deference to their tenured members (especially when those pre-tenured persons are members of marginalized or oppressed groups). Claiming one’s expertise and one’s fittingness for leadership is no small feat, then, in such contexts, and those who are savvy enough to recognize the pitfalls, or those who have enough autonomy or support not to take on such roles, may decide it is better to decline a leadership position until one’s position is (or feels) more secure.

This is not particularly healthy or sustainable for interdisciplinary social justice committees, of course, as such double binds exacerbate the problem of the “usual suspects” taking charge. Diversity of insights, research, and experience is not aided by all of these obstacles and risks. Yet the advantage, in some contexts, to taking the risk of such a position is that one can also develop a cohort of colleagues who will write letters of support (for tenure, promotion, or new positions, for instance) when a department is unaware of the person’s level of interdisciplinary expertise. At an institution like mine, where the tenure review process encourages colleagues outside of one’s department or discipline to write letters to the college-wide review committee, this can be particularly useful for demonstrating the amount of work one has done, and for testifying to expertise that is more interdisciplinary than disciplinary in nature. Of course, for those who are not in tenure-track/stream positions, this is irrelevant.

Finally, given the “usual suspects” problem of identifying those with time, willingness, and expertise to contribute to leadership, chairs and directors of social justice-focused, interdisciplinary programs are likely to be at increased risk of burnout. There simply are not enough people to do the work, and so those who are good at it must be cajoled into continuing. Such people typically do the work because they care deeply about the subject and recognize that if they do not continue, the programs are quite likely to founder. In some committees with which I have been engaged, the exit of a chair has resulted in the near-demise or long hiatus of the committee, either because other members do not feel qualified, do not feel as responsible for it, or both. In other cases, however, unlikely but excellent new chairs emerge, and these can be important moments of growth, both for the members and the program. In the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program, for instance, each of us who has chaired has thought herself unworthy of the position, has publicly berated herself (in typically feminine-gendered fashion) over her shortcomings, and yet has done fantastic work despite her own expectations.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP: HIERARCHIES, VULNERABILITY, EXPECTATIONS, AND PARTICIPATION

Finally, one major challenge, as well as opportunity, for social justice-focused, interdisciplinary groups is the formation of the committee itself. Sometimes it can be relatively easy to find interested members; a good number of people are interested in knowing how their discipline-based interests are addressed in other disciplines, and a large number of academics are committed to social justice generally. Take the committees I have been involved with, for instance: the Center for Ethics has been able to identify many folks interested in ethics related to their field; the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies program can easily connect with people on issues like the gender pay gap and LGBTQIA⁶ discrimination; the Institute for Human Rights and Humanitarian Studies can draw large crowds at its conferences, as the importance of human rights protections galvanize interest and are not, on the surface, too controversial. Thus, support for programs that work on these issues is not hard to find, because everyone knows a little bit about them. The challenge, of course, is also just that: Everyone knows *a little bit*.

No doubt, there are cases in which knowing “a little bit” is sufficient; given that such service is often viewed as supererogatory, getting more people in the room and getting more folks willing to pitch in can be extremely beneficial. When tasks must be divided up and delegated to put on an event—a conference, an open house, an open forum—expertise in the field sometimes matters less than whether someone is willing to show up, help organize, put together publicity, send emails, and so on. So, it can seem unduly elitist, and can ultimately be counterproductive, to exclude those who are genuinely interested in full participation. (“Genuinely” is important here, as there have been some cases in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies where participation seems motivated more by a desire to prove that one is not sexist, racist, heterosexist, or cissexist than by a desire to actually learn and help.) In addition, I can think of many cases over the years in which people who know “a little bit” turn into those who develop significant academic expertise simply by listening intently, asking good questions (sometimes the most “naïve” questions are the best for forcing those who are entrenched in academia to really investigate and clarify their assumptions), doing their own research, and developing competencies through development of their teaching. Finally, the life experiences of a person who knows only “a little bit” about the academic field can sometimes upend the assumptions of those who have studied but not lived the oppressions they fight against. In our Safe Zone committee, those who do not have academic backgrounds in queer theory or LGBTQ+ Studies but who have life experiences as LGBTQIA people have provided critical instruction in the impacts of the committee’s work. And, of course, traditional “women’s studies” programs (now typically renamed to include gender and sexuality, or simply known as Feminist Studies or Gender Justice programs) have been rightly criticized and importantly revolutionized by the work of those at the academic margins (Black scholars, lesbian scholars, trans* scholars) whose work has been overlooked by white, heterosexual, and cisgender scholars.

Such examples of those who have “a little bit” of knowledge and a lot of commitment to learning, critiquing, and transforming these social justice-focused interdisciplinary endeavors can improve the committee’s work immensely. The trouble in such academic committees comes when the work of those who have spent years amassing academic expertise

on these subjects is discounted. In many cases, that academic expertise really does matter, even for more mundane organizing—when publicity is left to someone who does not realize that their language choices were unintentionally heterosexist, or when someone tasked with communicating with potential speakers unwittingly betrays a naiveté so fundamental that it leads the invitee to decline the invitation. In such cases, chairs will often decide and it is just easier to do this work themselves, in place of delicately educating committee members, or having to do damage control after the fact. But then, of course, the chair/director’s workload has gone back up, and, to tie back into the issues raised in the section above on leadership, the committee returns to the vicious cycle of having to contend with burnout and alleviating the disproportionate burden placed on the director or chair.

There are times when these risks may feel worthwhile to committee members. Given that such committees are often populated by members of groups that are themselves oppressed, underrepresented, or disenfranchised, the opportunity for such faculty members to work together, coupled with awareness of their marginalized or oppressed status, can provide much-needed relief from the burdens imposed by patriarchal, elitist, racist, able-ist, heterosexist, cissexist power structures. In the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies committee, for instance, many of us have remarked upon the fact that, despite the extreme stress we are under due to our workloads, these are the few committee meetings we actually look forward to and are willing to lead despite the burdens. In these spaces we can “breathe” a little, laugh, talk more freely (even about our kids!), without feeling as if our academic fittingness is under constant surveillance. The atmosphere we have created on this committee has arguably made most of us much more “productive” on its behalf, as we want to put the committee’s needs first and foremost. Cecil Canton (2002) remarks in *The Politics of Survival in Academia*: “I could allow my peers and the academy’s racist structure to shut me up, swallow me up, grind me up, and spit me out. Or I could find other ways to maintain my values and prove my value as a bona fide member of the university” (31). Choosing to ignore the advice to shun committee work beyond that of his departmental expectations, Canton (2002) claims that the work beyond the department’s “kept me from focusing on the hostile environment created by my colleagues and drowning in their negativity. While they thought that I was accepting ‘busy’ work on school and university-wide committees and work groups, I was carefully and

deliberatively developing positive working relationships with other faculty, staff, and administrators” (31–32). Because departments can be small and insular, the connections faculty members from marginalized groups forge can be personal and political lifesavers.

Yet they can also be exploitative and oppressive. Amado Padilla (1994) identified the phenomenon of “cultural taxation” to explain the undue and disproportionate burden suffered by faculty members from minority groups. These faculty members are asked to serve as diversity experts, to educate others about discrimination, to serve as liaisons with the community beyond the university, and a host of other expectations not regularly placed on faculty members from dominant groups.⁷ Padilla (1994) claims that faculty of color often work under:

the obligation to show good citizenship toward the institution by serving its needs for ethnic representation on committees, or to demonstrate knowledge and commitment to a cultural group, which may even bring accolades to the institution but which is not usually rewarded by the institution on whose behalf the service was performed. (26)

Among the responsibilities for faculty of color that go beyond those of White faculty members are the burdens of serving on a high number of committees and being asked to serve as experts for their racial and ethnic groups. This notion has since been extended to the concept of “identity taxation,” widening the scope of those who might be inequitably “taxed” on the basis of other oppressed and marginalized group statuses such as “gender, race and gender, and sexual orientation” (Hirshfield and Joseph 2012, 213). Laura E. Hirshfield and Tiffany D. Joseph (2012), for instance, focus on identity taxation as it affects women faculty members (and in particular, women faculty of color), who are “disproportionately asked to sit on diversity-related committees, which involves more ‘invisible’ work than other committee memberships” (215).⁸ In a study of women in political science, Sara McLaughlin Mitchell and Vicki L. Hesli (2013) find that women “provide more service and that they agree to serve more frequently than men” (355) and that the type of service is “token” service—less prestigious service that does not include leadership positions or administrative positions which grant more respect and money. And of course, contingent or adjunct faculty members can also be easily exploited, or at least made more vulnerable, by participating in committees when these are not in one’s

“job description.” Often hopeful that their participation will garner them a reputation as a “team player” and that their expertise and labor will lead to a more secure or higher paying position, contingent faculty are routinely disappointed to discover that no such positions are available or extended to them, and that the committee’s accomplishments are effectively performed on their uncompensated backs.

Much work needs to be done to attract, hire, support, and retain faculty of color and faculty from other marginalized groups (based on gender, ability, immigrant status, and so forth), as well as to address the extent to which contingent labor is fueling colleges and universities. Within our institutions, we need to work harder to uncover implicit bias and stereotype threat, and to make visible structures of gender, race, and other forms of power and privilege, particularly to those that hold it. We need to work to correct the exploitation of contingent faculty, striving to offer better long-term contracts and benefits and minimizing the pay gap. All of these tasks confront major obstacles (psychological, structural, and economic), which are immensely difficult to tackle and that do not lend themselves to easy fixes. Many concerned and well-meaning faculty and administrators even see aspects of these problems and want to correct them, yet are struck by the enormity of the problems in addressing them.

While solutions to all of these issues are beyond the scope of this paper, I want to close with one fairly easy, concrete action that institutions can perform, both at the faculty and the administrative levels. I suggest that most colleges/universities need to institute a clear mechanism for encouraging and rewarding “service work,” including, and perhaps especially, service of interdisciplinary social justice programs. As Tony Townsend et al. (2015) note: “[A]cademics tend to live in worlds where individual accomplishment is more recognized than service to colleagues, institutions and students” (662), but there is plenty that can be done to change these atmospheres and to correct such oversight. One remedy is to mandate the ranking of service contributions more highly in tenure and promotion reviews. While advice routinely circulates to faculty of color and women of all races and ethnicities to be protective of “their” time and to focus primarily on research and teaching,⁹ this advice implies that work shared with other colleagues does not count. This may ring hollow to those whose interdisciplinary and social justice commitments are less individualistic. For those of us who care deeply about the work and refuse to see it as “merely service,” institutional change that demonstrates value in such work is far more helpful than advice toward individual withdrawal from it.

Another important institutional change is to more widely publicize processes for granting course releases to do such work (as suggested by Mitchell and Hesli 2013, 363). When such releases are negotiated on a case-by-case individual basis, faculty of color and women of any race or ethnicity may be less likely to ask or negotiate for them. Transparent, highly publicized processes may increase the perception that all faculty members may apply, and might simultaneously enforce the message that committee work is institutionally valuable. Finally, institutions may increase funds toward, or at least enhance the prestige of, prizes and awards for exceptional service. At my institution there are highly sought-after awards bestowed annually for excellence in teaching and for exceptional research projects. Faculty members feel significant pride upon receipt of such awards and are publicly celebrated for their accomplishments at end-of-the-year gatherings and commencement. There is no comparable award for service, however, through which one can earn the cash and/or the line on one's CV to indicate recognition by one's institution for the importance of such work. Instituting such an award could go a long way to communicating the value of, and correcting against the bias toward, social justice and interdisciplinary work on college campuses.

Fostering, sustaining, and promoting the work of interdisciplinary, social justice-focused programs in higher education is no small feat. It is aided by the genuine commitments and enthusiastic participation of faculty members who care deeply about their work and the missions of their programs. It is also made more daunting by institutional assumptions and structural barriers to just, equitable, and sustainable faculty participation. My hope is that some of these musings and suggestions will help further the conversations and institutional commitments needed to keep these programs safe, to help them thrive, and to promote their sustainability.

NOTES

1. I teach at Webster University's U.S. home campus in Saint Louis, Missouri. The characterization of my institution as a PWI (Predominantly White Institution) can be disputed, given the following: "For 25 years Webster has consistently achieved top rankings since *DIHE* [*Diversity in Higher Education*] began publishing the survey in 1991, and ranks first among U.S. nonprofit, private institutions in graduating master's-level African-American and Total Minority Students for All Disciplines

Combined” (see Webster University, n.d.). However, at the global institution’s “home” campus in St. Louis where I teach undergraduates, the population is comprised mostly of White students. Thus my own experience is of teaching at a PWI, even if this is not quite representative of the institution’s network of campuses or of its graduate programs.

2. Klein (2013) notes, for instance, that from 1975 to 2000, programs in “[i]nternational relations/global, race and ethnic, and women’s studies more than tripled” (70).
3. I confess, however, that in the early 2000s I was highly resistant to assessment efforts that felt like hoop-jumping and that seemed politically motivated. Much “assessment-speak” initially seemed merely instrumental to satisfying upper administrators and accreditors for the sake of punitive measures and budget-cutting.
4. This might be particularly true of programs with terms such as “women,” “gender,” “race,” “ethnic,” “diversity,” “humanitarian,” or “climate” in their titles.
5. It is perhaps worth mentioning that discussion of program names and mission statements for such programs continue to be in flux and to evolve. During the Pre-Conference on Program Administration and Development of the NWSA (National Women’s Studies Association) meetings in Montreal, Canada, in 2016, lively discussions turned on the now decades-running question about whether “women” should still appear in the titles of our programs and courses, or whether “gender” is more appropriate and inclusive. Legitimate concerns about whether a change to “gender” and away from “women” risks “disappearing” women as a category and group for analysis and activism, alongside concern that making “women” central can be exclusionary to those who identify as non-binary and trans*.
6. LGBTQIA stands for “lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual.”
7. Special thanks to Webster University Research Librarian Donna Church for her recommendation of this article and several others referenced in this piece.
8. In their 2011 article, Joseph and Hirshfield note: “White faculty committed to race and diversity issues also experience cultural taxation, due to the small number of white faculty who are actively invested in such issues. However, this cultural taxation is different because white faculty who study race or participate in diversity-building programmes have, in a sense, chosen their identification as diversity advocates and generally do not contend with legitimacy issues as do faculty of colour” (136).
9. In an article for *Inside Higher Ed*, Joy Misra (2017) notes that women’s “service and leadership rarely carries the respect and reputational benefits

of disciplinary service, while it actively limits women’s research time” (quoted in Flaherty 2017, para 22). Misra advises that “women simply need to become more protective of their research time” and yet also notes the “grave consequences if they are not perceived as team players” (quoted in Flaherty 2017, para 23).

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