

March 28, 2011

The Alexa McDonough Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice  
(renamed 2013)  
~~The Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice~~

## Background

Building upon its proud history as the first degree-granting institution for women in the Commonwealth, upon the *Destination 2012* document, and upon the Women's Leadership Task Force Initiative report written at the request of the President in 2008, the members of the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) have updated the guidelines for the Atlantic Institute for the Study of Women (known as the ISW). The original charter is 30 years old (Appendix A), and it is obvious that massive changes have happened in the world, in Canada, in the Atlantic region, and at the Mount since then. What remains unchanged throughout the past 30 years is the acknowledged commitment of the Mount to women, gender equity, social justice, and peace. The intention of the WLI is to put those external commitments of the Mount in a contemporary context, to determine where we should revisit historical commitments of the old ISW, and preserve and enhance its strengths to work towards meeting Goal 2 of *Destination 2012*, "To create and maintain programs and activities which demonstrate our enduring commitment to the advancement of women".

The new Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice is more than a department or a building. It is a hub that will cluster research, learning, communications, and related activity from all interested Research Chairs at the Mount, other Mount institutes and initiatives, students, staff, the community, and various departments and programs including but not limited to the Art Gallery, Business Administration, Cultural Studies, Education, English, History, Political Studies, and Women and Gender Studies.

Issues of equity and social justice, women's and gender studies, are of concern to many stakeholders in our academic community. Gender studies cross-cuts the curricula of many disciplines and departments and provides opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration that may move towards social action. Issues of equity and social justice are also interdisciplinary and collaborative for many.

The revitalized initiative seeks to raise the profile of the Mount's activities related to gender issues, equity, and social justice, and to engage students, faculty, and staff in global and local matters. The following revised mandate and vision for the new ISW were developed by the WLI after a consultation process.

## Vision

The Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice is a hub of feminist energy, action and research that seeks to achieve equity and improve lives in their complexity and multiplicity, locally and globally.

## Mission

The Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice of Mount Saint Vincent University lives its vision by undertaking through collaboration and communication the following activities:

- **Research and Inquiry** that coordinates, supports, and builds capacity among feminist researchers and creative artists at the Mount, other campuses, and in community groups and organizations. In addition, the historic partnerships represented by Nancy's Chair in Women's Studies and by *Atlantis: A Women's Studies Journal/Revue d'etudes sur les femmes* are fostered.
- **Action** to secure new partnerships, access funding, and opportunities in the areas including but not limited to community development, gender, race, sexuality, class, ability and social justice.
- **Support** through program offerings in a variety of time slots and formats. For example: films, volunteer childcare during events, assistance with advocacy, student training, and linking action in the broader community to research.
- **Education** by creating and offering programs, and courses in related areas, and providing gender perspectives in all disciplines. For example: gender and peace-building, feminist research methodologies, research skills for the community/NGO sector, feminist leadership skills, anti-oppression theory and practice.

## Membership and Governance

Membership in the Institute for Women, Gender, and Social Justice is open to all Mount students, faculty and staff, and also to interested community members who have an affiliation with the Mount. The Institute will be governed by a Steering Committee which will oversee the Institute's operations.

The membership of the Steering Committee shall be as follows: Associate Vice-President (Academic and Research) (ex officio); one Dean (ex officio); two full-time faculty members; one part-time faculty member; two staff members; two students (one graduate, one undergraduate); up to three community members invited by the Institute.

### General Membership:

The Chair of the Steering Committee will issue to the University Community an annual call for membership in the Institute. Those interested in membership will be asked to file an application form for record-keeping and communication purposes and will be eligible to attend the Annual General Meeting in person or by proxy.

### Steering Committee Membership:

The Chair of the Steering Committee shall, in advance of the Annual General Meeting, issue a call for nominations for any staff or faculty vacancy on the Steering Committee (note that undergraduate and graduate student members of the Steering Committee shall be appointed by their respective organizations; the Dean shall be appointed by the Vice-President Academic; and community members of the Steering Committee shall be invited by the Committee to

serve). The slate of nominees shall be presented for approval at the Annual General Meeting. Where there is more than one nomination for any elected Steering Committee position, an election will be conducted by ballot at the Annual General Meeting.

Except for student terms, which shall be one year, the terms of the Steering Committee members shall be for three years, staggered to provide continuity. The Chair of the Steering Committee shall be elected by the Committee for a three-year term. The Steering Committee will report directly to the President via the Steering Committee Chair. A report of the Institute's activities will be submitted to the President on a yearly basis.

Amendments to the Institute's objectives and organization will be made with the approval of Senate.

DRAFT #13, March 10, 2011

## ATLANTIC INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF WOMEN

### Introduction

The recent resurgence of interest in the position of women in Canadian society has been reflected in the courses and research conducted recently in our universities. It is very apparent, however, that in most areas very little research has been conducted, especially within the context of the Atlantic region. The history of women in this region, for example, is virtually unexplored as are the contributions women make to the economic well-being of their families and women's role in the arts, politics, or voluntary organizations, to name but a few examples. There is, in fact, an enormous field of research which is waiting attention. To the extent that this research has not been conducted, our ability to teach certain courses and educate women about their role in Canadian society is limited, as is our ability to make a significant contribution to society through the encouragement of sound and non-discriminatory social policies.

As the Mount is oriented towards the educational needs of women and has faculty concerned with research on women, it is appropriate that this University be a leader in the field of women's studies in the Atlantic provinces. In order to give greater prominence to research on women, and in order to be able to draw on resources outside our University, we propose that the Mount establish an Atlantic Institute for the Study of Women at this University.

### Purpose of the Atlantic Institute for the Study of Women

The purpose of the Institute is to improve the quality of life of women and to promote the equality of women with men through a fuller and more informed understanding of the role of the women in Canadian society in the past, in the present, and in the future.

The Institute would undertake to fulfill this mandate through the following means:

**Research:** The Institute would undertake and encourage research on women, particularly in the Atlantic region, through the acquisition of external funding to support specific projects; by providing facilities, services and assistance, where possible, to those people wishing to conduct such research.

**Dissemination of Research:** Through a publication and programme of working papers and reports, the Institute would make research findings available to other academics, policy makers and the community at large.

**Education:** The Institute would work in close co-operation with the academic departments teaching courses in women's studies in order not to duplicate the functions of the departments. The Institute would, however, seek to develop special programmes, e.g. summer programmes, for those teaching women's studies, workshops and conferences of relevance to those undertaking and using research on women.

**Social Policy:** The Institute would endeavour to promote and encourage the analysis of social policies as these pertain to women in the Atlantic region. At the present time, there is no research centre within the Atlantic provinces which has research on women as its focus. Indeed, it is probable that no such centre of the sort envisaged here exists in Canada at the moment. The Simone de Beauvoir Institute at Concordia University does perform some of the functions listed above, although it is primarily concerned with teaching.

The Atlantic Institute would reaffirm the Mount's concern with the quality of life of women in society and would give new visibility and importance to research on women. It would, therefore, enhance the reputation of the University and attract students and faculty to the Mount. Having an Institute such as this at the University would allow students to be aware of the importance of research in this particular field of study. It should also increase the opportunity for students and faculty to be involved at various levels in many of the projects developed through the Institute.

It should be noted that the Mount is already fulfilling some of the functions outline above. For instance, the library has obtained special collections and maintains a more comprehensive collection of journals and books dealing with research on women than probably any other library in the region. Conferences which have promoted the dissemination of research to varied audiences have been held at the Mount under the auspices of academic departments and the Centre for Continuing Education. Further, the Mount offers a wide range of academic courses on women than any of the Atlantic universities and consequently has a group of faculty from a diversity of disciplines who are interested in women's research. The establishment of an Atlantic Institute for the Study of Women would, therefore, be an outgrowth of many of the activities currently in place, but it would allow a clearer definition of their importance and relevance to the University and the wider community. It would also give us the opportunity to develop research projects on a larger scale and over a longer time frame, building into these projects salaries for full or part-time research staff.

It would appear to be very possible to bring grant money to the Institute given some time to develop proposals and make contacts with governments and other granting agencies.

### **Organization of the Institute**

The Institute will be administered by the Director and a Board of Directors, subject to the policies and regulations established from time to time by the University. The Director of the Institute will be appointed by the President on the advice of the Committee on Research and Publications and the University Review Committee (URC). The appointment may be for up to three years and is renewable.

A Board of Directors should be appointed to oversee the Institute's operations. The Board should have members from the University as well as people from other organizations and groups who are interested in the goals of the Institute. The following membership is suggested: Director of Research, four faculty members, Deans, four members from the community, e.g. lawyers, representatives of community groups, 'prominent people in businesses, education, faculty from other universities.

The Director will make recommendations to the President on the faculty and community members of the Board of Directors. Consultation will take place between the Director and the Committee on Research and Publications URC in making these recommendations. Members of the Board will be appointed for up to a three year term, renewable. The President is an ex-officio member of the Board of Directors.

All members of the Board of Directors are eligible to vote in decisions pertaining to the functioning and policies of the Institute at the meetings of the Board. In accordance with University policy, the meetings will be conducted following Robert's Rue of Order. The Director will be responsible for calling regular meetings of the Board.

The Board would approve the sponsorship of research and other activities by the Institute.

The Board of Directors is responsible for establishing the criteria and policies by which researchers may become research associates and for implementing these procedures.

An Advisory Committee for the Institute will also be established. Members of this committee will be drawn from organizations or will be individuals with whom the Institute wishes to maintain close liaison because of their connections with the community, government, or other organizations. Such representatives are important in enabling the Institute to initiate research which is responsive to community needs and creates links for the institute to important sectors of the community.

Invitations to appropriate persons to be members of the Advisory Committee will be issued by the Board of Directors. The Advisory Committee will normally meet a least once a year to review the Institute's operation and make recommendations about future directions for the Board of Directors to take into consideration.

Amendments to the Institute's objectives and organization can be made only by recommendation to the Senate.

The Institute would be required to give a yearly report to Senate so that there would be a review of the Institute's operation by the ongoing faculty at the University.

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