

17.3



PROPOSAL FOR  
A  
WOMEN'S RESEARCH CENTRE  
JOINTLY SPONSORED BY  
THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA  
AND  
ATHABASCA UNIVERSITY

The Vice-President's (Academic) Advisory Committee on Women's Studies

The University of Alberta

Edmonton, Alberta

March 22, 1988

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## 1. Background

This document will present a proposal for the establishment of a Women's Research Centre sponsored jointly by Athabasca University and the University of Alberta. This research centre will function as a focal point for feminist research in both universities and in the larger community.

Feminist research is defined as research for women, rather than research on women or by women. This implies a clear recognition of a value orientation, an orientation to improving the situation of women in our society and in the world community. However, it does not necessarily imply applied research. Much of feminist research challenges existing models of knowledge in the university and proposes alternatives to those models; such research is clearly research "for women" in spite of the fact it occurs within disciplines such as philosophy or literature or anthropology or other fields of primary knowledge.

In that feminist research is "for" women rather than "on" women, its domain extends to many areas of study. It may include analyses of political institutions, economic structures, ecological relations, or dozens of other phenomena which impact upon women. It differs from other research in these same areas by the constant question, how does this phenomenon or current knowledge about it affect women? Or how is this phenomenon experienced by women?

Margrit Eichler provides a succinct description of such research:

At the most fundamental level, feminist scholarship is committed to understanding and improving the situation of women. It starts from the premise that all scholarship is necessarily value-oriented and that more often than not a lack of feminist consciousness results in sexist theories and descriptions. Identifying and criticizing sexist elements in the existing literature is therefore an important part of feminist work. Once a critique has been achieved, and basic data have been collected, new concepts and models are created, either to express female experiences, or to encompass the experiences of both sexes. The latter can only be achieved after the former has been partially done. In either case, feminist work eventually gropes towards a new epistemology which allows for the adequate understanding of female and male life (1985:624).

By implication, feminist research and analysis not only critiques knowledge within disciplines but often transcends the boundaries of disciplines.

Feminist scholarship is well represented at the University of Alberta and Athabasca University, through the teaching, publishing and research of individual academics in various departments and Faculties. Nonetheless there is a need for a support system which could be provided through a formalized institute or research centre. Such a centre would encourage cross-fertilization and collaboration and would provide a mechanism for obtaining research grants. It would also establish a visibility for feminist scholarship which would attract students and international

visiting scholars.

To begin to address these needs, a number of steps have already been taken by the vice-president's coordinating committee on women's studies. For example, throughout the 1987-88 academic year potential funding sources have been explored and a number of seminars have been sponsored. In these seminars, feminist researchers in the universities and the community have gathered to present and analyze on-going research. It is time for this foundation to be developed into a formal research structure. We propose then that the two Universities establish a Women's Research Centre to enrich and facilitate the work of scholars doing feminist studies on these campuses and to facilitate collaboration between academics and community-based representatives in the development of knowledge.

## 2. Research Objectives of the Centre

The centre would have the following objectives:

- a) to provide a centre for critical disciplinary and interdisciplinary feminist research open to university and community researchers.
- b) to contribute to the building of a knowledge base in women's studies, especially on topics particularly pertinent to women of Alberta, Western Canada and the North.
- c) to continually develop and reassess feminist research methodologies, especially interdisciplinary methodologies.
- d) to make research results accessible, especially to those involved in university teaching, to community women's groups and to government agencies and departments with social policy mandates.

In addition the research centre would:

- a) provide an infrastructure to facilitate the research of academics, students, and women's groups and provide a mutually supportive environment for feminist research.
- b) provide a structure for developing funding proposals, bringing together researchers and potential research funds, and receiving and administering funds for women's research.
- c) provide a home for visitors engaged in feminist research (for example, academics on sabbatical or study leaves, independent researchers on research grants, researchers involved in large-scale projects for community groups)



### 3. Rationale for a Women's Research Centre

It is apparent that women's research centres within universities contribute both to the ability of those universities to acquire funds for related research and to the development of a critical mass of feminist researchers in academic communities. The best known and most obvious example in Canada today is the work currently done at OISE by scholars such as Margrit Eichler, Dorothy Smith, Mary O'Brien and Jeri Wine. Although these academics have quite different theoretical orientations, they complement and challenge each others work precisely because of their focus within feminism and because they work from the same institutional setting. This setting is a graduate school only, and resembles more closely a research structure than a standard university programme. In fact there has been no equivalent development of research at the University of Toronto in spite of the fact there are interested scholars there. OISE scholars currently hold well over one million dollars in SSHRC research grants for feminist research. We believe that a research centre at these two Alberta Universities could not only do as well, but could draw on a much wider potential for interdisciplinary research than OISE is able to do.

Other research centres and institutes in Canada further suggest the importance of such institutions for facilitating women's research. Mount Saint Vincent's Institute for the Study of Women has developed projects in women and development and received significant funds from CIDA, Universite Laval has formed the GREMF (Groupe de recherche multidisciplinaire feministe) and L'Universite du Quebec a Montreal has created GIERF (Groupe interdisciplinaire pour l'enseignement et la recherche feministes) to both support and identify funds for research. In the case of GIERF a major contractual arrangement has been made with Relais Femmes, an independent association of women's groups in Montreal, to ensure collaborative research can be done between academic women and women working in the community.

There are no equivalent structures in Western Canada (there is a national Women's Research Centre in Vancouver, but it does not have a base in any University). There are rumours and beginnings of other centres, but Athabasca University and the University of Alberta could now take the lead in developing a centre which would both benefit by the kind of work being done in eastern Canada and identify new directions for women's research. In particular, a joint centre of the nature proposed here would have a number of benefits for both institutions and for women in the surrounding communities.

A joint research centre would build upon the experience the two universities had in working together to develop the proposal for the Western Canadian Chair in Women's Studies. Each university would bring to the centre different and special strengths. The University of Alberta has relatively large numbers of active feminist scholars, dispersed throughout many faculties. It has a reputation as a world class university, and would bring to this partnership academics working within that tradition and reputation. Athabasca University is an internationally recognized university specializing in distance education. Because of its distance education mandate it has developed expertise in delivering education to groups which do not normally have access to post-secondary institutions, such as northerners and people in rural and isolated communities. Many of the methods used for distance education can be adapted and used in collaborative research with women's groups, or in disseminating research findings.



#### 4. Research Agenda

Although the exact program by which research centre objectives might be achieved will vary, depending on the funding and the researchers who become involved in the institute, we would like to describe here some possible directions which the research might follow. A specific research agenda (in the sense of topics for research) would not be set out in advance for the institute; rather associates of the institute would bring their individual and existing women's research interests into the institute. An appendix is attached listing the research currently being done by members of the committee and a few other academic members of the two universities; this provides the clearest example of the kind of work which would be carried out but at a higher level as a result of interaction within the centre.

The fall and winter presentations of research have included such diverse topics as women's depression, becoming a mother, research which is preparation for doing documentary films, research on education and employment of Indian and Metis women, women's biographies (both being written as academic work per se and being written as part of developing an understanding of the history of family members), and explorations of women's consciousness.

But what are other possible projects which we could see in the future? A project might begin with any researcher, so it could be in medicine, nursing, law, science, literature, psychology, or in applied concerns related to rape crisis centres, battered women's shelters, women and pensions and so on, but the following are possibilities.

1. Among the women who have been active in Alberta history probably the "famous five" are the best known. But these five women represent but a tiny fraction of women who have tried to create social change through political action of various forms, from organized protest groups to lobbying governments and participating in political parties. One major direction for interdisciplinary research would be to analyze this activity, both as a historical and contemporary phenomenon, to determine the causes and consequences of such activity and to propose alternative models for political action. At least some of this research could be in the form of "action research" as that term is used by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, as women actively engaged in trying to create some political change could participate at the same time with academics in a reflective research process.

2. As women's groups and governments identify major issues of concern, and funds are made available for related research, some particular issues could form the basis for long-term research in the institute. In these cases, it might be preferable to hire research staff specifically for such work. For example, there is currently a concern with child-care arrangements in Canada and proposals to fund large-scale research in this area. Violence against women has received similar public attention, as have economic factors influencing women's lives (employment discrimination, the structure of pension arrangements and so on). Although this research, by its nature, must be applied in its focus, it would be greatly enhanced by occurring in an environment in which theoretical issues are raised.



3. In the literary and fine arts areas there is much research today on the language used in relation to women, women's language in poetry and prose, and the images of women in film and art. There are obvious relationships between this work and concerns of women active in the community about pornography, violence against women, and the sexual objectification of women. An interdisciplinary women's research institute would enable the various researchers working in all of these areas to both do their within discipline work and to discuss their work with each other and with women attempting to impact on the situation in the community.

4. Michelle Harrison discusses PMS as a complex of symptoms related to women's menstrual cycle, but in her discussion she makes it quite clear that we do not know the relationship of PMS to social structure, for cross-cultural studies on menstrual cycles are extremely rare. That recognition which pervades her work, the recognition that physiological phenomena may well be deeply embedded in the gender structure of societies characterizes her research as feminist. It does not characterize it as interdisciplinary, for she herself focuses only on the medical aspects of the syndrome. In an interdisciplinary women's research institute in which a researcher was interested in this topic, we could work to bring her insight together with the research of sociologists and anthropologists into gender structuring and its impact on physiological phenomena. Such work does not necessarily require international research, for it can be done by research with women from religious enclaves such as Hutterites, women from various classes, and with women from minority cultural groups, to suggest but a few examples.

5. Women's groups in the community have a continuing need for what might be called small-scale research, or information gathering. The research centre would bring together these groups and graduate students who could do some of this work as part of their paper-writing and thesis work, possibly for a small fee paid to the student or as part of a research assistantship funded by the centre. Some of this work might well be done by undergraduate students in women's studies courses, enhancing their academic studies at the universities.

6. In the women's movement women are beginning to address issues of race, racism, and cultural differences. It is not the case that all women experience their situation as women in the same way, and for many women that means addressing problems of knowledge which are specific to their racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. The research centre would make it possible for this diversity of women's experience to be addressed by academic research, and addressed in a way which would be useful to the women involved.

7. Finally, research methodologies themselves would be an integral component of the centre's research agenda. Dr. Ursula Franklin, a metallurgist from the University of Toronto, argued while she was in Edmonton in 1987 that the most essential aspect of feminist research is that it continually takes context into account. That is, it is unlike analytical research, or the standard model of science, in which phenomena can be understood in terms of models which consist of ideal or logical relations. This set of ideas is not unique to feminist work but they are central to such work; the implication is that methodologies must continually make it possible to address context.

Dr. Franklin also remarked that, given the well-developed nature of quantitative methodologies in the sciences, and their basis within rigid disciplinary



boundaries, alternative methodologies based in multi-disciplinary work will initially seem inadequate to many people. She suggested some of our most important work may well be in clarifying and developing those methodologies as we do our work. When we begin a project the methodology might not always be clear, but it would then be essential to bring that methodology into focus before the work was completed and to make it a major topic for discussion. This kind of work may well be some of the most important research which is conducted at the centre, research which will enable us to address the epistemological and methodological questions raised by Eichler (above) and by others such as Allison Jaggar and Sandra Harding.

## 5. Structure of the Centre

### 5.1. Administrative and Working Organization

We would recommend that the membership of the centre be made up of those academics and community representatives who are engaged in or interested in feminist research and that the administrative structure consist of a co-ordinating committee and a paid staff. The co-ordinating committee would be composed of seven members, two appointed from the membership by the appropriate vice-presidents of each of the sponsoring universities and three selected by centre members. Their terms would be for from two to four years, with terms staggered to ensure there was continuity on the committee, and they would elect the chairperson from among themselves. The selection process for this committee would ensure that there was reasonable representation from the various women's groups involved, including a diversity of faculties in the universities, women in the community, and students of the two universities.

The co-ordinating committee would report annually to the appropriate vice-president of each university, and would meet at least twice a year with the members of the centre to discuss the on-going research work and administration of the centre. Its terms of reference would include the acceptance of applications for membership in the institute and the development of research projects. The committee would also arrange for dissemination of research results, and further other objectives of the institute not clearly covered by these three tasks. Other terms of reference would be to ensure that the institute as a physical plant was kept operating, that an adequate budget was developed and followed, that additional funds (both from within and outside the university) were sought to ensure the work of the institute, and generally to oversee the research institute as a functioning administrative unit.

The volume of work which we anticipate at the centre would necessitate the hiring of at least two employees, a director and a secretary. The first should be an academic position; under the direction of the Research Coordinating Committee the director would have responsibility for fund-raising, mediating between the universities and the community, establishing a high-profile centre which would be inviting to international scholars, and would be an information resource to both researchers and to individuals and groups who want specific research done. The director would also manage the day to day operations of the centre, develop annual budgets, and ensure that feminist researchers and community workers were knowledgeable about the centre. The director would, of course, be expected to



maintain her own research agenda within the framework of the centre's general orientation.

The secretary would ensure that necessary accounting, paper work, and filing was done. The secretary would also take responsibility for maintaining the centre in the absence of the director, and would carry out other duties which would assist researchers in their work. Other employees would be added as researchers and research assistants when funds were available, either through contracts, endowment funds, or university base budgetting.

## 5.2. Space and facilities

The space needs for the centre would be office space for researchers, and office for the director and the secretary. In addition, a seminar room would be needed for meetings of the centre, and there should be facilities for the preparation of coffee and snacks (especially for evening research meetings which will be necessary for community researchers to attend). There should be three to five research offices to get the centre started. We anticipate that these needs will expand, but it is difficult to say to what extent at the moment. Given the need to develop a particular milieu, a centre in which communication and cooperation are enhanced, one of the houses on the University of Alberta campus would be the preferred location.

As a first stage office equipment needs will include desks, filing cabinets, and book-cases for each person who has an office in the centre, and a seminar table with comfortable chairs. It will also be necessary to have telephones and a copying machine, and microcomputers with a connection to hyperbus for library search and use of the mainframes. The director and secretary would also work with microcomputers rather than typewriters, so that all information to be shared could be shared electronically, and so that researchers could request the secretary to edit and prepare for final printing files which had been prepared on disk. Ideally, there should be one laser printer on a computer network within the centre, and dot-matrix printers shared by every two computers. This kind of computer structure is now essential, we believe, for developing a research centre and for enabling such centres to communicate with others across the country (and the world). As research based in visual images rather than print media develops, there should be a slide projector, screen, television, videocamera and videocassette recorder.

We would keep copies of all research done within the centre, perhaps on disk and in hard-copy format, and make these copies available to interested people, but we would rely on the library systems of the two Universities and the Women's Resource Centre for maintaining books and documents. That is, when researchers have funds to buy books or documents which will not be personally owned, those books and documents will be purchased for the library systems or the resource room, or turned over to them after research is completed.

## 6. Finances

Financial arrangements for the centre will include initial start-up costs and annual operating costs. In the initial year (88-89), the research centre must be furnished and equipped; while these requirements are costed in the budget we expect that they can be met from existing university pools and will not represent a substantial new cost to either institution.

With respect to operating costs, we propose that the two universities reach a cost-sharing arrangement to provide the research centre with an annual operating budget that would maintain a satisfactory minimal level of activity and provide the support needed to seek external funding. We are presenting here two budget scenarios, one which requests specific funding from the two universities, and one which indicates the larger plans for the centre based on a search for external funding.

Budget Scenario I, then, is a "bare-bones" budget which will permit us to proceed in a small way until we are able to access other sources of funding. It is a budget that takes into account the current fiscal realities facing the two universities.

#### Budget Scenario I

##### Year one (1988-89)

##### Capital equipment

Five desks, filing cabinets, and bookcases@1,200	6,000.00
Seminar table@1,500	1,500.00
Chairs, 30@150	4,500.00
Copying machine@5,000	5,000.00
Computers, 4@4,000	16,000.00
Laser printer	4,000.00
	<u>*Subtotal=\$37,000.00</u>

##### Operating Costs

Purchase of one course off for a Centre Director	4,500.00
Clerical assistance, 20 hours/week	11,000.00
Computer and telecommunications costs	600.00
Mailing and Materials	1,200.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.**	4,288.00
	<u>Subtotal=\$21,588.00</u>

\* It is assumed that many of these items will come from in-kind donations from university pools. New resource outlays are unlikely.

\*\* The space figure is based on using a Garneau area house on the University of Alberta campus, costed at \$2.68 per square foot for 1600 square feet.

#### Budget Scenario II



Budget scenario II is the cost of establishing and maintaining an excellent women's research centre, and is the target budget for the centre. However, in the current fiscal environment, it will only be possible if funds can be raised from sources outside of the universities. We will approach various government departments, both provincial and federal, and we have been given some encouragement in regards to funding from these sources. In addition, as with other research institutes, major research grants will be sought to cover some of the costs, such as the funds proposed for research assistants and graduate research assistants. Finally, the private sector will be approached for donations, both to an endowment fund and to operating costs which may be matched by the province.

#### Year one (1988-89)

##### Capital equipment

Five desks, filing cabinets, and bookcases@1,200	6,000.00
Seminar table@1,500	1,500.00
Chairs, 30@150	4,500.00
Copying machine@5,000	5,000.00
Computers, 4@4,000	16,000.00
Laser printer	4,000.00
	<u>4,000.00</u>
	Subtotal=\$37,000.00

##### Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	45,000.00
Executive/Secretary (incl benefits)	24,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications costs	1,200.00
Telephone and Mailing	1,200.00
Materials (paper, photocopying, etc.)	2,400.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	4,288.00
	<u>4,288.00</u>
	Subtotal=\$78,088.00

#### Year Two

##### Capital Costs

Computers, 2@4,000	8,000.00
Networking costs (Phonenet or equivalent)	2,000.00
	<u>2,000.00</u>
	Subtotal=\$10,000.00

##### Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	47,000.00
Executive/Secretary (incl benefits)	26,000.00
Research assistant, 1@30,000	30,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 3@11,000	33,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	3,000.00
Telephone and Mailing	1,500.00
Materials	4,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	4,288.00
	<u>4,288.00</u>
	Subtotal=\$148,788.00

Year Three

## Capital Costs

Computers, 2@4,000

8,000.00  
Subtotal=\$8,000.00

## Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	49,000.00
Executive Secretary (incl benefits)	28,000.00
Research assistant, 2@30,000	60,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 6@11,000	66,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	4,800.00
Telephone and Mailing	2,000.00
Materials	8,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	<u>4,288.00</u>

Subtotal=\$222,088.00

Year Four

## Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	51,000.00
Executive Secretary (incl benefits)	30,000.00
Research assistant, 2@30,000	60,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 10@11,000	110,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	6,000.00
Telephone and Mailing	2,500.00
Materials	9,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	<u>4,288.00</u>

Subtotal=\$272,788.00

Year Five

## Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	53,000.00
Executive/Secretary (incl benefits)	32,000.00
Research assistant, 2@30,000	60,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 10@11,000	110,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	7,000.00
Telephone and Mailing	3,500.00
Materials	10,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	<u>4,288.00</u>

Subtotal=\$279,788.00



## 7. Concluding Comments

Women's research is an exploding area of scholarly work, as any perusal of bookstore shelves and periodicals would suggest. The University of Alberta and Athabasca University have an excellent opportunity to develop a women's research centre which is unique in Canada, and which would make a major contribution to this relatively new area of knowledge. This could be a research centre which is both "world-class" in the best sense of that term and also firmly rooted in the social and historical milieu, and indeed the women, of this province. It would serve the needs of scholars to meet and share their work, the needs of graduate students to become familiar with and participate in research projects, and the needs of community groups for issue-focused applied research.

**Appendix: Selected List of On-Going Women's Research Topics and Researchers**

- Assheton-Smith, Marilyn. (University of Alberta) Native Women, Education and Employment.
- Austin, Lisa. (Graduate Student) Images of Women in Eighteenth Century Literature.
- Bergum, Vangie. (University of Alberta) On Becoming a Mother.
- Bray, Cathy and Marilyn Assheton-Smith. (University of Alberta) Computerizing Information Flow in Women's Organizations (Action Research).
- Cavanaugh, Cathy. (Athabasca University, Community) Irene Parlby's Story.
- Chown, Diana. (Community) The Life of Alice Chown.
- Coulter, Rebecca. (Athabasca University) Women's Bibliography; Work on Adolescent Women and Employment.
- Elliott, Bridget. (University of Alberta) Images of Women in Art.
- Holmgren, Marj. (University of Alberta) Women's Experience of Depression.
- Manneschmidt, Sybil. (Graduate Student) Menstrual Experience and Social Status of Women.
- Mott, Robyn. (Graduate Student) Premenstrual Changes as Experienced by Women.
- Penrod, Lynn. (University of Alberta) French Feminist Theory; Maternity, Madness and Mortality in French and French-Canadian Women's Writing.
- Potrebenko, Mary. (Community) Women and Health.
- Spronk, Barbara. (Athabasca University) Native Women and Education.
- Stewart, Leslie. (Graduate Student) The Denigration of Women in Sport.
- Williamson, Janice. (University of Alberta) Writing: Feminist Theory and Literary Criticism.



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*representatives*

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It is apparent that women's research centres within universities contribute both to the ability of those universities to acquire funds for related research and to the development of a critical mass of feminist researchers in academic communities. The best known and most obvious example in Canada today is the work currently done at OISE by scholars such as Margrit Eichler, Dorothy Smith, Mary O'Brien and Jeri Wine. Although these academics have quite different theoretical orientations, they complement and challenge each others work precisely because of their focus within feminism and because they work from the same institutional setting. This setting is a graduate school only, and resembles more closely a research structure than a standard university programme. In fact there has been no equivalent development of research at the University of Toronto in spite of the fact there are interested scholars there. OISE scholars currently hold well over one million dollars in SSHRC research grants for feminist research. We believe that a research centre at these two Alberta Universities could not only do as well, but could draw on a much wider potential for interdisciplinary research than OISE is able to do.

Other research centres and institutes in Canada further suggest the importance of such institutions for facilitating women's research. Mount Saint Vincent's Institute for the Study of Women has developed projects in women and development and received significant funds from CIDA. Universite Laval has formed the GREMF (Groupe de recherche multidisciplinaire feministe) and L'Universite du Quebec a Montreal has created GIERF (Groupe interdisciplinaire pour l'enseignement et la recherche feministes) to both support and identify funds for research. In the case of GIERF a major contractual arrangement has been made with Relais Femmes, an independent association of women's groups in Montreal, to ensure collaborative research can be done between academic women and women working in the community.

There are no equivalent structures in Western Canada (there is a national Women's Research Centre in Vancouver, but it does not have a base in any University). There are rumours and beginnings of other centres, but Athabasca University and the University of Alberta could now take the lead in developing a centre which would both benefit by the kind of work being done in eastern Canada and identify new directions for women's research. In particular, a joint centre of the nature proposed here would have a number of benefits for both institutions and for women in the surrounding communities.

A joint research centre would build upon the experience the two universities had in working together to develop the proposal for the Western Canadian Chair in Women's Studies. Each university would bring to the centre different and special strengths. The University of Alberta has relatively large numbers of active feminist scholars, dispersed throughout many faculties. It has a reputation as a world class university, and would bring to this partnership academics working within that tradition and reputation. Athabasca University is an internationally recognized university specializing in distance education. Because of its distance education mandate it has developed expertise in delivering education to groups which do not normally have access to post-secondary institutions, such as northerners and women in rural and isolated communities. Many of the methods used for distance education can be adapted and used in collaborative research with women's groups, or in disseminating research findings.

*I'd leave this as is.*

*I would change this to 'people' because you are talking about the general focus of Athabasca's distance mandate.*



#### 4. Research Agenda

Although the exact program by which research centre objectives might be achieved will vary, depending on the funding and the researchers who become involved in the institute, we would like to describe here some possible directions which the research might follow. A specific research agenda (in the sense of topics for research) would not be set out in advance for the institute; rather associates of the institute would bring their individual and existing women's research interests into the institute. An appendix is attached listing the research currently being done by members of the committee and a few other academic members of the two universities; this provides the clearest example of the kind of work which would be carried out but at a higher level as a result of interaction within the centre.

The fall and winter presentations of research have included such diverse topics as women's depression, becoming a mother, research which is preparation for doing documentary films, research on education and employment of Indian and Metis women, women's biographies (both being written as academic work per se and being written as part of developing an understanding of the history of family members), and explorations of women's consciousness.

But what are other possible projects which we could see in the future? A project might begin with any researcher, so it could be in medicine, nursing, law, science, literature, psychology, or in applied concerns related to rape crisis centres, battered women's shelters, women and pensions and so on, but the following are possibilities.

1. Among the women who have been active in Alberta history probably the "famous five" are the best known. But these five women represent but a tiny fraction of women who have tried to create social change through political action of various forms, from organized protest groups to lobbying governments and participating in political parties. One major direction for interdisciplinary research would be to analyze this activity, both as a historical and contemporary phenomenon, to determine the causes and consequences of such activity and to propose alternative models for political action. At least some of this research could be in the form of "action research" as that term is used by the Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women, as women actively engaged in trying to create some political change could participate at the same time with academics in a reflective research process.

2. As women's groups and governments identify major issues of concern, and funds are made available for related research, some particular issues could form the basis for long-term research in the institute. In these cases, it might be preferable to hire research staff specifically for such work. For example, there is currently a concern with child-care arrangements in Canada and proposals to fund large-scale research in this area. Violence against women has received similar public attention, as have economic factors influencing women's lives (employment discrimination, the structure of pension arrangements and so on). Although this research, by its nature, must be applied in its focus, it would be greatly enhanced by occurring in an environment in which theoretical issues are raised.



3. In the literary and fine arts areas there is much research today on the language used in relation to women, women's language in poetry and prose, and the images of women in film and art. There are obvious relationships between this work and concerns of women active in the community about pornography, violence against women, and the sexual objectification of women. An interdisciplinary women's research institute would enable the various researchers working in all of these areas to both do their within discipline work and to discuss their work with each other and with women attempting to impact on the situation in the community.

4. Michelle Harrison discusses PMS as a complex of symptoms related to women's menstrual cycle, but in her discussion she makes it quite clear that we do not know the relationship of PMS to social structure, for cross-cultural studies on menstrual cycles are extremely rare. That recognition which pervades her work, the recognition that physiological phenomena may well be deeply embedded in the gender structure of societies characterizes her research as feminist. It does not characterize it as interdisciplinary, for she herself focuses only on the medical aspects of the syndrome. In an interdisciplinary women's research institute in which a researcher was interested in this topic, we could work to bring her insight together with the research of sociologists and anthropologists into gender structuring and its impact on physiological phenomena. Such work does not necessarily require international research, for it can be done by research with women from religious enclaves such as Hutterites, women from various classes, and with women from minority cultural groups, to suggest but a few examples.

5. Women's groups in the community have a continuing need for what might be called small-scale research, or information gathering. The research centre would bring together these groups and graduate students who could do some of this work as part of their paper-writing and thesis work, possibly for a small fee paid to the student or as part of a research assistantship funded by the centre. Some of this work might well be done by undergraduate students in women's studies courses, enhancing their academic studies at the universities.

6. In the women's movement women are beginning to address issues of race, racism, and cultural differences. It is not the case that all women experience their situation as women in the same way, and for many women that means addressing problems of knowledge which are specific to their racial, ethnic, or cultural groups. The research centre would make it possible for this diversity of women's experience to be addressed by academic research, and addressed in a way which would be useful to the women involved.

7. Finally, research methodologies themselves would be an integral component of the centre's research agenda. Dr. Ursula Franklin, a metallurgist from the University of Toronto, argued while she was in Edmonton in 1987 that the most essential aspect of feminist research is that it continually takes context into account. That is, it is unlike analytical research, or the standard model of science, in which phenomena can be understood in terms of models which consist of ideal or logical relations. This set of ideas is not unique to feminist work but they are central to such work; the implication is that methodologies must continually make it possible to address context.

Dr. Franklin also remarked that, given the well-developed nature of quantitative methodologies in the sciences, and their basis within rigid disciplinary

boundaries, alternative methodologies based in multi-disciplinary work will initially seem inadequate to many people. She suggested some of our most important work may well be in clarifying and developing those methodologies as we do our work. When we begin a project the methodology might not always be clear, but it would then be essential to bring that methodology into focus before the work was completed and to make it a major topic for discussion. This kind of work may well be some of the most important research which is conducted at the centre, research which will enable us to address the epistemological and methodological questions raised by Eichler (above) and by others such as Allison Jaggard and Sandra Harding.

## 5. Structure of the Centre

### 5.1. Administrative and Working Organization

We would recommend that the membership of the centre be made up of those academics and community ~~women~~ <sup>representatives</sup> who are engaged in or interested in feminist research and that the administrative structure consist of a co-ordinating committee and a paid staff. The co-ordinating committee would be composed of seven members, two appointed from the membership by the appropriate vice-presidents of each of the sponsoring universities and three selected by centre members. Their terms would be for from two to four years, with terms staggered to ensure there was continuity on the committee, and they would elect the chairperson from among themselves. The selection process for this committee would ensure that there was reasonable representation from the various women's groups involved, including a diversity of faculties in the universities, women in the community, and students of the two universities.

The co-ordinating committee would report annually to the appropriate vice-president of each university, and would meet at least twice a year with the members of the centre to discuss the on-going research work and administration of the centre. Its terms of reference would include the acceptance of applications for membership in the institute and the development of research projects. The committee would also arrange for dissemination of research results, and further other objectives of the institute not clearly covered by these three tasks. Other terms of reference would be to ensure that the institute as a physical plant was kept operating, that an adequate budget was developed and followed, that additional funds (both from within and outside the university) were sought to ensure the work of the institute, and generally to oversee the research institute as a functioning administrative unit.

The volume of work which we anticipate at the centre would necessitate the hiring of at least two employees, a director and a secretary. The first should be an academic position; under the direction of the Research Coordinating Committee she would have responsibility for fund-raising, mediating between the universities and the community, establishing a high-profile centre which would be inviting to international scholars, and she would be an information resource to both researchers and to individuals and groups who want specific research done. She would also manage the day to day operations of the centre, develop annual budgets, and ensure that feminist researchers and community workers were knowledgeable about the centre. She would, of course, be expected to maintain

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her own research agenda within the framework of the centre's general orientation.

The secretary would ensure that necessary accounting, paper work, and filing was done. She would also take responsibility for maintaining the centre in the absence of the director, and would carry out other duties which would assist researchers in their work. Other employees would be added as researchers and research assistants when funds were available, either through contracts, endowment funds, or university base budgetting.

*The secretary*

## 5.2. Space and facilities

*1/ extensions*

The space needs for the centre would be office space for researchers, and office for the director and the secretary. In addition, a seminar room would be needed for meetings of the centre, and there should be facilities for the preparation of coffee and snacks, (especially for evening research meetings which will be necessary for community *representatives* women to attend). There should be three to five research offices to get the centre started. We anticipate that these needs will expand, but it is difficult to say to what extent at the moment. Given the need to develop a particular milieu, a centre in which communication and cooperation are enhanced, one of the houses on the University of Alberta campus would be the preferred location.

As a first stage office equipment needs will include desks, filing cabinets, and book-cases for each person who has an office in the centre, and a seminar table with comfortable chairs. It will also be necessary to have telephones and a copying machine, and microcomputers with a connection to hyperbus for library search and use of the mainframes. The director and secretary would also work with microcomputers rather than typewriters, so that all information to be shared could be shared electronically, and so that researchers could request the secretary to edit and prepare for final printing files which had been prepared on disk. Ideally, there should be one laser printer on a computer network within the centre, and dot-matrix printers shared by every two computers. This kind of computer structure is now essential, we believe, for developing a research centre and for enabling such centres to communicate with others across the country (and the world). As research based in visual images rather than print media develops, there should be a slide projector, screen, television, videocamera and videocassette recorder.

We would keep copies of all research done within the centre, perhaps on disk and in hard-copy format, and make these copies available to interested people, but we would rely on the library systems of the two Universities and the Women's Resource Centre for maintaining books and documents. That is, when researchers have funds to buy books or documents which will not be personally owned, those books and documents will be purchased for the library systems or the resource room, or turned over to them after research is completed.

## 6. Finances

Financial arrangements for the centre will include initial start-up costs and annual operating costs. In the initial year (88-89), the research centre must be

furnished and equipped; while these requirements are costed in the budget we expect that they can be met from existing university pools and will not represent a substantial new cost to either institution.

With respect to operating costs, we propose that the two universities reach a cost-sharing arrangement to provide the research centre with an annual operating budget that would maintain a satisfactory minimal level of activity and provide the support needed to seek external funding. We are presenting here two budget scenarios, one which requests specific funding from the two universities, and one which indicates the larger plans for the centre based on a search for external funding.

Budget Scenario I, then, is a "bare-bones" budget which will permit us to proceed in a small way until we are able to access other sources of funding. It is a budget that takes into account the current fiscal realities facing the two universities.

#### Budget Scenario I

##### Year one (1988-89)

##### Capital equipment

Five desks, filing cabinets, and bookcases@1,200	6,000.00
Seminar table@1,500	1,500.00
Chairs, 30@150	4,500.00
Copying machine@5,000	5,000.00
Computers, 4@4,000	16,000.00
Laser printer	4,000.00
	<u>*Subtotal=\$37,000.00</u>

##### Operating Costs

Purchase of one course off for a Centre Director	4,500.00
Clerical assistance, 20 hours/week	11,000.00
Computer and telecommunications costs	600.00
Mailing and Materials	1,200.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.**	4,288.00
	<u>Subtotal=\$21,588.00</u>

\* It is assumed that many of these items will come from in-kind donations from university pools. New resource outlays are unlikely.

\*\* The space figure is based on using a Garneau area house on the University of Alberta campus, costed at \$2.68 per square foot for 1600 square feet.

#### Budget Scenario II

Budget scenario II is the cost of establishing and maintaining an excellent women's research centre, and is the target budget for the centre. However, in the



current fiscal environment, it will only be possible if funds can be raised from sources outside of the universities. We will approach various government departments, both provincial and federal, and we have been given some encouragement in regards to funding from these sources. In addition, as with other research institutes, major research grants will be sought to cover some of the costs, such as the funds proposed for research assistants and graduate research assistants. Finally, the private sector will be approached for donations, both to an endowment fund and to operating costs which may be matched by the province.

#### Year one (1988-89)

##### Capital equipment

Five desks, filing cabinets, and bookcases@1,200	6,000.00
Seminar table@1,500	1,500.00
Chairs, 30@150	4,500.00
Copying machine@5,000	5,000.00
Computers, 4@4,000	16,000.00
Laser printer	4,000.00
	<u>Subtotal=\$37,000.00</u>

##### Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	45,000.00
Executive/Secretary (incl benefits)	24,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications costs	1,200.00
Telephone and Mailing	1,200.00
Materials (paper, photocopying, etc.)	2,400.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	4,288.00
	<u>Subtotal=\$78,088.00</u>

#### Year Two

##### Capital Costs

Computers, 2@4,000	8,000.00
Networking costs (Phonenet or equivalent)	2,000.00
	<u>Subtotal=\$10,000.00</u>

##### Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	47,000.00
Executive/Secretary (incl benefits)	26,000.00
Research assistant, 1@30,000	30,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 3@11,000	33,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	3,000.00
Telephone and Mailing	1,500.00
Materials	4,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	4,288.00
	<u>Subtotal=\$148,788.00</u>



Year Three

## Capital Costs

Computers, 2@4,000

8,000.00  
Subtotal=\$8,000.00

## Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	49,000.00
Executive Secretary (incl benefits)	28,000.00
Research assistant, 2@30,000	60,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 6@11,000	66,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	4,800.00
Telephone and Mailing	2,000.00
Materials	8,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	<u>4,288.00</u>

Subtotal=\$222,088.00

Year Four

## Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	51,000.00
Executive Secretary (incl benefits)	30,000.00
Research assistant, 2@30,000	60,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 10@11,000	110,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	6,000.00
Telephone and Mailing	2,500.00
Materials	9,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	<u>4,288.00</u>

Subtotal=\$272,788.00

Year Five

## Operating Costs

Director (incl benefits)	53,000.00
Executive/Secretary (incl benefits)	32,000.00
Research assistant, 2@30,000	60,000.00
Research assistants (grad students), 10@11,000	110,000.00
Mainframe computer and telecommunications	7,000.00
Telephone and Mailing	3,500.00
Materials	10,000.00
Space, including telephone, maintenance, etc.	<u>4,288.00</u>

Subtotal=\$279,788.00

## 7. Concluding Comments

Women's research is an exploding area of scholarly work, as any perusal of bookstore shelves and periodicals would suggest. The University of Alberta and Athabasca University have an excellent opportunity to develop a women's research centre which is unique in Canada, and which would make a major contribution to this relatively new area of knowledge. This could be a research centre which is both "world-class" in the best sense of that term and also firmly rooted in the social and historical milieu, and indeed the women, of this province. It would serve the needs of scholars to meet and share their work, the needs of graduate students to become familiar with and participate in research projects, and the needs of community groups for issue-focused applied research.

**Appendix: Selected List of On-Going Women's Research Topics and Researchers**

- Assheton-Smith, Marilyn. (University of Alberta) Native Women, Education and Employment.
- Austin, Lisa. (Graduate Student) Images of Women in Eighteenth Century Literature.
- Bergum, Vangie. (University of Alberta) On Becoming a Mother.
- Bray, Cathy and Marilyn Assheton-Smith. (University of Alberta) Computerizing Information Flow in Women's Organizations (Action Research).
- Cavanaugh, Cathy. (Athabasca University, Community) Irene Parlby's Story.
- Chown, Diana. (Community) The Life of Alice Chown.
- Coulter, Rebecca. (Athabasca University) Women's Bibliography; Work on Adolescent Women and Employment.
- Elliott, Bridget. (University of Alberta) Images of Women in Art.
- Holmgren, Marj. (University of Alberta) Women's Experience of Depression.
- Manneschmidt, Sybil. (Graduate Student) Menstrual Experience and Social Status of Women.
- Mott, Robyn. (Graduate Student) Premenstrual Changes as Experienced by Women.
- Penrod, Lynn. (University of Alberta) French Feminist Theory; Maternity, Madness and Mortality in French and French-Canadian Women's Writing.
- Potrebenko, Mary. (Community) Women and Health.
- Spronk, Barbara. (Athabasca University) Native Women and Education.
- Stewart, Leslie. (Graduate Student) The Denigration of Women in Sport.
- Williamson, Janice. (University of Alberta) Writing: Feminist Theory and Literary Criticism.