

UA Transformation Proposal:

**Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW)
and
Center of Excellence in Women's Health (WCOE)**

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Units Included in the Reorganization:

Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW)
Center for Excellence in Women's Health (WCOE)

UA Transformation Proposal:

Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW) and Center of Excellence in Women's Health (WCOE)

We propose to either formally merge or enhance the partnership of two UA units – the Southwest Institute for Research on Women (SIROW) and the Center of Excellence in Women's Health (WCOE) – creating a “team science approach” to social behavior and medical research on women and girls. While this proposal is small in the scheme of the challenges facing the University, it has potential to cultivate research networks, increase externally funded research, strengthen fundraising opportunities, and allow for administrative efficiencies - subsequently doing more while also raising the University's reputation and ranking.

This proposal includes two units located in two colleges – SIROW resides in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS) and the WCOE resides in the College of Medicine (COM). Given that the college structure is currently under review, ambiguity exists with regard to how a formal merger might work, although both units are in favor of a being coalesced with the Department of Women's Studies which is housed in SBS. Regardless, whether formally merged or designed to strengthen the SIROW/WCOE partnership, this proposal advances the mission of the two units while increasing productivity, visibility, and University reputation and ranking.

1. Advantages:

There are several advantages to the proposed merger or enhanced partnership of SIROW and the WCOE. For students there will be increased opportunity to participate in any one of the externally funded SIROW and WCOE projects (see attached portfolio and organization of projects) with a streamlined application process coordinated by one staff person. Student opportunities would be furthered through the writing for and funding of student support grants. Employees would benefit from the merger or enhanced partnership as support staff could focus more closely on one area of work (e.g. fundraising; pre-award budget vs post award tracking; student-related services). Currently, the one full-time and two part-time state supported staff employed by the two units are required to complete multiple tasks in different areas. Additionally, the research staff in both units who are soft funded would have increased job security and flexibility with increased opportunities to transition to another funded project when a particular funded project is completed. Advantages for the University include greater visibility by having one larger unit (vs two smaller units) that could potentially serve as a coordinating and dissemination center for research, outreach and services on and about women and girls for all of the UA campus. Additionally, trained and committed research staff would be retained at with higher rate due to increased opportunities to transition from project to project, saving valuable resources of time and money. Moreover, increased grant revenue would forward the UA mission to be a top research university in the US, and the size and scope of the merged/partnered units would contribute and solidify fundraising efforts.

2. Changes or eliminations:

We do not propose any changes in existing undergraduate or graduate programs.

3. Strengthening of the teaching, service, and research/creative activities:

This proposal builds on the strength of the two units – SIROW's long standing productive history of external research funding on and about women and gender, and the WCOE's

significant contributions to teaching, research and clinical practice in the area of women's health. Aligned with the UA's land grant mission and strategic plan to be a leader in *Southwest, Native American, Borderland, and Latin American studies*, both units, already leaders, having extensive outreach and research programs in the southwest United States specifically within the borderlands and with vulnerable, health disparate, underserved, and understudied populations. Strengthening the partnership of the two units brings together their respective expertise (SIROW's social and behavioral research and the WCOE's medical and clinical research) as they focus on UA's mission and strategic plan. Additionally, the partnership of the WCOE with the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences provides additional connections with units such as Nutritional Sciences, Center for Physical Health and Nutrition, Arizona Cooperative Extension, and Evaluation Research and Development. SIROW and WCOE have already collaborated on highly successful research projects. Merging, or strengthening the partnership of the two units will result in a formalized interdisciplinary approach that is forward thinking, embraced by prominent institutions of higher education (our aspirational peers), and endorsed by NIH and other funding agencies. This interdisciplinary research approach has evidenced striking new findings that reconfigures conceptualizations, transfigures approaches across disciplines, and changes practice at the individual, societal and policy levels – all while generating innovative research ideas. The SIROW and WCOE merger or enhanced partnership will foster such synergy.

Teaching and Service: While neither unit is a teaching unit per se, both have contributed to the UA teaching mission. SIROW has had faculty development grants, organized professional conferences (with continuing education credits), developed courses, provided foreign exchange program for students (with Canada and Mexico), offered preceptorships, independent studies, internships, databases for secondary data analysis for master theses and dissertations and so on. The WCOE has supported a graduate student program, developed continuing medical education programs, and partnered on women-specific medical curriculum in the four health sciences colleges. To strengthen the UA teaching mission, the newly merged or partnering units will request that teaching be specified as part of the mission and subsequently expand our contribution to teaching by reconfiguring personnel to teach at least one General Education Tier I course per year in women's health, multidisciplinary research methods, sex-based biology, women in science and engineering, and/or other topics of relevance. We also plan to develop on-line women's health related courses (in English and Spanish) for the UA or for other institutions of higher education in the Americas. Together, we will formalize our student-sponsored activities (internships, preceptorships, etc) developing an application process under the direction of one person (instead of several) streamlining and saving on personnel workload. The proposed merged or partnered units will be in a better position to submit for F awards, BIRCWH and WHRR proposals, and other instructional related external funding opportunities given its enhanced interdisciplinary and added teaching mission – advancing the UA teaching mission.

The proposed merged or partnering units will build upon the service work currently being offered by SIROW and the WCOE. Most of the current service work is performed within the directors' tenured homes (Department of Women's Studies; Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology). With this merger or enhanced partnership comes a commitment to look for appropriate and advantageous ways in which personnel can better serve each of the respective academic departments as well as the wider University.

Research and creative activities: The proposed merger or enhanced partnership will strengthen our research and creative activities by giving organizational structure to research on and about women and girls. Yet, it is the interdisciplinary nature that gives the merger/partnership its strength, and thus, it is important that the tenured academic homes remain separate. Bridging the social and behavioral science with medical research will strengthen our ability to write award winning research applications; and importantly, the research will fill current gaps in our

understanding of the intersections between the social behavioral and medical fields. Each of the two units comes to the table with significant areas of strength – not only with respect to the academic training of the researchers and the specific areas of research foci, but with regard to personnel, research sites, and collaborations. To name a few, SIROW brings expertise in quantitative and qualitative methods and analysis, three off-campus community-based research sites including one in Phoenix, AZ, numerous UA campus- and community- based health intervention projects, and the Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) program. The WCOE brings an administrator versed in organizing and uploading research grants, faculty and academic professionals who are expert in community-based participatory research and action, and several community-based projects relevant to women’s health. Both units have numerous formal and informal links to borderlands communities and people, including working alliances with school districts, Indian tribes, governmental agencies (e.g. juvenile corrections; immigration detention facilities; county health departments), and community-based organizations. The merger or enhanced partnership will situate us in a better position to take advantage of our respective resources. We envision quarterly research meetings where data is discussed and new research proposals are conceptualized. An overall strategic plan will be developed through a participatory process. We foresee increased synergies, intellectual value, and enthusiasm.

While the majority of the work is research based, creative work will also be accomplished. Together we will pursue the development of evidenced based interventions, intervention manuals, the translation of effective programs to Spanish, and on-line courses in English or Spanish to train practitioners in women’s and girl’s health. We will ensconce art projects, creative writing workshops, memorials, readings, and other creative work that focus on women and gender issues from a historic and current perspective. These creative projects will intertwine social conditions (poverty, domestic violence, empowerment), behaviors (HIV risks, eating disorders, parenting) and medical realities (breast cancer, childbirth, life span issues) documenting women’s lives, bringing awareness to issues, contributing to the well-being of women and girls, and informing the research agenda.

4. Raising the unit’s and University ranking or reputation:

This proposed merger/enhanced partnership will raise the unit and university reputation and ranking by increasing externally funded research projects. We will promote a “team science” approach to increase research funding opportunities particularly with NIH, NSF, industry, and private foundations. While we realize that remarkable research on and about women is located in other units across the UA campus, we are anticipating that this newly formed research unit or enhanced partnership would serve as a resource for UA professors, clinicians and investigators across the University including those located within the Medical School in Phoenix. The noteworthy, historical reputation that SIROW and WCOE have for bridging academia, research, and outreach will be bolstered - yet consolidated - raising reputation and rank. The merged or partnering units would also create a more cohesive collective for training students, writing for Ph.D. and post-doc support proposals (F awards, BIRCWH and WHRR proposals), and allowing access for multipurpose data sharing. With a larger more cohesive collective conducting research on women and girls and the expansion of research projects and funding that will follow, the UA, and particularly our academic home departments, will be better able to recruit and retain graduate students, faculty, visiting scholars who are interested in research on and about women and girls.

The structure of the merged or partnered units would remain, for the most part, the same. A Steering Committee comprised of the current directors and lead research staff would meet on a regular basis to discuss strategic plans, research, administration, teaching and fundraising issues. We would organize each unit’s respective projects into areas of research and activities that include currently funded projects including: 1) K-12 Education and Outreach (7 projects), 2) Clinical Research (10 projects), 3) Legal and Policy (5 projects), 4) Adult Outreach (5 projects),

5) Academic and Professional Development, (2 projects), and 6) Oral History and Literacy (4 projects) (see attached diagram).

5. Processes of consultation:

This proposal has been discussed with SIROW researchers and staff, and in particular with members of the SIROW Steering Committee. The proposal was vetted with the Head of the Department of Women's Studies, as well as faculty, researchers and staff at the WCOE as it was being developed. It was also reviewed in person with the Dean of the College of Medicine and emailed to the Dean of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). Six of the lead researchers who reviewed this proposal voted in favor of the merger or enhanced partnership.

* Note: The proposal assumes that agreements already in place for SIROW through the College of SBS and the Office of the Vice-President for Research remain in place as do the agreements made for the WCOE through the COM and Office of the Vice-President for Research.

* Note: This proposal does not conflict with merging of SIROW and Department of Women's Studies as proposed in the Collage of SBS White Paper nor does it conflict with the White Paper proposing a consortium "Critical Analysis and Social Change".

Budget Considerations

Given that the combined permanent state funding for both units (SIROW and WCOE) is about \$200,000 annually and represents less than 6% of the total grant funding generated by the two units, a reduction in budget is not being proposed. It would be expected that the state funding and the negotiated IDC return rate for the respective units would remain the same. None-the-less, cost benefit will be generated through:

- Offering one Gen Ed class per year would contribute to University's teaching mission – and reduce teaching costs elsewhere within the University,
- Increased internships, preceptorships and independent studies would contribute to the University's teaching mission and reduce burden on other professors and costs at the departmental level,
- Increased grant funding supporting faculty, researchers and students,
- Increased IDC returns for the University,
- Improved ability to conduct fundraising activities given a larger unit/partnership and increased research portfolio.

We do not expect to eliminate the very few positions that are currently funded on state dollars. However, we do expect that certain job and/or job duties would be redefined to create efficiencies. Specifically, we envision that administrative and support staff would provide leadership in defined areas. For example, we would not need two websites with a portion of two staff (one SIROW; one WCOE) assigned to website updates. Instead, one person would be assigned to take the lead. We would also join fundraising efforts under the leadership of one person. Teaching and student-related services would also be under the leadership of one person instead of two -- although this would entail a realignment of workload duties (adding teaching to an already funded position). Financial workload could be divided to create efficiencies by having one person assigned to pre-award activities and the second to post-award activities. Given staffing limitations, further divisions may not be possible.