



## President Alfred Rollins's recollections about women's programs at ODU

from his oral history interview in 1999

Interviewer: The Women's Studies program was started not long after you came here, and the Women's Center was already in place. Was there opposition on the part of the faculty towards these facilities for women?

*The Women's Center was started just before I came here. But yes, there was opposition. And this happened all over the country. For example, people, when we were developing a counseling center for students, people would say, "Why do you need a Women's Center? Why can't the Counseling Center take care of this"-you know, take care of this thing of women needing counseling. And why should women have special help in learning how to study or whatever. Well, of course, the answer was that they weren't getting their shake at all under the male-dominated operation. The Women's Studies program, well, all over the country there was opposition to these programs which were not traditional academic disciplines. There was a lot of opposition to black studies programs and the women's studies programs, and the opposition tended to link them together and say, "We're just feeding dissension and differences this way." You know, these arguments are still going on. The movement for a women's studies program was led by a number of women, chiefly Carolyn Rhodes. When I came here, she had a group negotiating with Chuck Burgess on some of these hardcore issues of salary inequities and whatnot. We were having the same discussions in Vermont, and they were going on all over the country. Old Dominion was a little behind the game. A lot of other institutions were ahead in these areas. But attempts were being made to meet some real issues and real problems that were being raised all over the country and had not been faced before. This had been quite a quiet campus, at least by my standards, a quiet campus during the period of what I call "student interest," when students used to be excited enough about something to protest. Now, nobody seems to be excited about anything. To some extent, we were playing catch-up here on some of these social issues. I think maybe on the racial issue we were a little ahead of the game in the sense that we were trying--a lot of well-motivated people in both institutions were trying to find a creative, constructive solution to the problem without smashing everything up.*

Full February 15, 1999 interview (no audio available):

<http://dc.lib.odu.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/oralhistory/id/447>