

ANNUAL PROGRAM REPORT: DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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| College | CLASS |
| Department | Sociology |
| Program | |
| Reporting for Academic Year | 2021-2022 |
| Last 5-Year Review | 2020-2021 |
| Next 5-Year Review | 2025-2026 |
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| Author of Review | Linda Dobb |
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1. FIVE YEAR REVIEW PLANNING GOALS: SOCIOLOGY

1. Examine best practices around providing a capstone course in the major. Consider developing capstone options.

The department has worked over the past 2 years to have a research-based capstone course for students in Sociology. The results have been variable and may be a factor in students moving away from the Sociology major or failing to complete the major in a timely fashion.

The 5-year review detailed Initial concerns that students had a lack of preparation moving into the Methods and Capstone. These concerns have proven true, and the department decided in Fall 2022 that the students would be better served by a writing and analysis course. This was developed and submitted in Fall 2022. It is in line with the new requirement for intensive writing as a prerequisite to graduation (replacing the old WST)

In future the required upper division courses in Sociology will be: Theory; Writing and Analysis for the Social Sciences; and Research Methods. This change will be effective with the 2024 Academic Year.

Students may elect to do a capstone, which will either be applied fieldwork or a substantial research paper.

2. Investigate the possibility of creating a broad sociology or social sciences MA

Given the pandemic and the need to shift modalities and meet student needs, the Department has not yet started to consider or reconsider an MA or joint MA. Additional tenure-track faculty might be required before this can be considered again.

3. Assess online courses

We are in the process of accessing the efficacy of our online courses. A spreadsheet was created (attachment A) which shows courses in Sociology, the method by which they have been taught, and DWF rates. No very direct correlation has yet been found between modality and success, but faculty are now being heavily encouraged to take Canvas and Quality Matters training. The Department will complete its transition to Canvas by Fall 2023.

Many students want us to offer more online courses. According to Outreach Coordinator Jamee Robbins, the number one ask at her sessions with community college and high school students is for a complete online Sociology degree. Currently only Chico state offers this. The Department has authorization to offer several courses as hybrid but a detailed reconsideration of creating a wholly online track will occur this Fall.

4. Need for Additional Tenure Track faculty

While the number of Sociology Majors has fallen substantially during the pandemic and post-pandemic enrollment slump, the department still does need at least one additional tenure track faculty member. One tenure track faculty member, an expert in online instruction and a Latina, left the department in Summer 2022. Filling that position would help the department in creating its online track for students, assist with training other faculty in best practices, serving our majority population, and that individual be a likely advisor to the fully online cohorts.

5. Analysis of graduation rates and achievement gaps

This is an ongoing process for the department and we looked together at www.calstate.edu/dashboard. The good news for Sociology is that we have no courses in the top ten in CLASS for DWF rates nor first generation or URM achievement gaps, and that we have a growing number of very successful Latinx students in the program. The department has a 15% 4-year graduation rate (university rate is 12%), a 53% 6-year graduation rate (university rate is 48%), and an overall 3.09 average GPA (slightly below the university rate)

6. Use High impact practices

Faculty in the department are interested in involving more students in research, helping students publish, taking them on field trips, showcasing speakers, and providing more intensive advising. Our efforts in these areas are evolving after the pandemic and we will be encouraging more students to visit in person, through a fall meet the faculty mixer, speakers and a spring awards ceremony.

7. Enrollment:

Much of the emphasis in the 5-year review was on the fact that the department had too many majors given the number of tenure-line faculty. Now that the department's major total almost at its 2010 level (315 students) our emphasis must be on recruitment, retention, and informing students of the job opportunities

for Sociology majors. We will be working on the latter during the Spring of 2023.

8. Technology plan:

The department will have all courses moved to canvas by Fall 2023; we have been investigating, with IT the acquisition of Dedoose for quantitative analysis. Hopefully the campus will purchase this software this year.

OVERALL:

a.-strengths: Sociology is blessed with very good faculty, who are high producing in terms of scholarship and engagement with students. The major continues to be very attractive for students, particularly Latinx students and women.

b.-weaknesses: Still need to connect more with Alumni and use their stories to inspire potential majors. Need to develop suggested course maps for students which point them to careers and/or graduate study. Need to continue to diversify the faculty

c. COVID has eroded some of the traditional fabric that holds a department together. We are rebuilding and reconsidering many avenues which, we hope, will make us responsive to post-COVID student needs.

II. PROGRAM CHANGES AND NEEDS: SOCIOLOGY

.Overview:

Given that the Sociology major requires very few lower division courses, it remains extremely attractive to community college students (SB1440). The most significant changes impacting the Sociology Department at this time are : a) community college enrollments have fallen dramatically during the pandemic, and the department will need to explore other possible audiences for its major; b) many more students have grown accustomed to studying online and the demand for flexible scheduling is growing—online classes fill, on-ground classes may not; c) students are increasingly turning to more vocationally-based majors—sociology can prepare students for great careers, but we will need to keep helping students understand how to link the curriculum to their futures.

Curriculum:

The experiment of offering only a research-based capstone seems to have hit a dead-end. The faculty have determined that students need more instruction in writing and analysis in order to be effective report writers, graduate students, and thinkers. Therefore, the capstone will move to “elective status” in 2024 and the department will be exploring two elective capstone tracks: one that is research-based and one that is practicum-based.

Students:

Many students are doing very well in the major and respond very well to the faculty. Students comment that most of the faculty are caring and interactive in their approach. The majority of our major are now Latinx females; it would be great to hire with this in mind.

Faculty:

There is an ongoing need to continue to diversify both the tenure-track and lecturer faculty. This is difficult in a time of constricting resources. We hope to do more by bringing in diverse speakers, sponsoring programs on themes that emphasize diversity, inclusion and social justice, and looking at the curriculum to incorporate themes and issues of importance to our students.

High teaching and advising loads sometimes make research difficult. The various contractual and campus-based programs giving release time to new faculty have been very helpful in alleviating some of the stress endured by probationary faculty.

Staff:

The department is fortunate to have an Administrative Assistant who is very willing to take on new projects like: tracking course modalities, DWF rates, creating a new bulletin board, updating the website, and participating in outreach events. Hopefully, Lisa Gonzalez will stay with the department for some time into the future.

Resources:

At this moment the facilities, space and equipment seem adequate. The time is possibly growing nigh to replace faculty laptops. Also, if the department wants to experiment with high-flex, which may help with enrollment, it needs assurance that the classroom equipment really is up-to-par in facilitating concurrent in-person/on-zoom instruction.

The one area where we could use more resources is in student help. Many of our faculty want to use students in their research but feel the students should be paid for their efforts. Given the many demands placed on our students by finances, family, and time, it is hard to argue with this sentiment. Even a \$2000 work-study allocation would go a long way toward helping the faculty realize their goal of involving students in meaningful research efforts.

Assessment:

As the University moves toward re-accreditation, the department will need to reinvigorate its assessment efforts. Most recently, the department assessed its capstone course through a survey of students and their satisfaction with instruction and outcomes. This assessment (attachment B, pts. 1 & 2), is partly responsible for the change that will occur in the major starting in 2024. In addition, the department will be asking Julie Stein, of APS, to visit in the Spring semester and provide us with a refresher on course and program assessment.

Other:

As addressed, the Sociology major will be undergoing three significant changes in the next two years: a) adding an upper-division Writing and Analysis course as a degree requirement, and making the Capstone an elective rather than a requirement; b) determining whether or not it will also offer a completely online degree, and then outlining this pathway for students; and, c) putting more emphasis on the job and/or advanced degree prospects for Sociology majors and providing students with suggested pathways based on their needs and interests.

The pandemic has changed many things about higher education. The Sociology Department is experiencing many of these changes at ground-level. The important things will be—of course—not just acknowledging the change but responding quickly and effectively to it.

III. SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT

List of Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

PLO1: Students will demonstrate an ability to evaluate “knowledge” claims of sociological analyses by critically assessing their analytical framework, data collection techniques, sampling techniques, and data analyses used in empirical research projects. (ILO 1 Thinking and Reasoning)

PLO2: Students will demonstrate oral and written abilities to effectively communicate and engage in educated, open-minded discussions of diverse sociocultural beliefs, perspectives, and norms. (ILO 2 Communication)

PLO3: Students will possess knowledge of cultural differences and an understanding of how power, privilege, and culture produce social inequalities and stigmatization, and how structures of domination are effectively challenged. (ILO 3 Diversity)

PLO4: Students will work collaboratively in diverse groups, learn to value civic engagement, and, when appropriate to their educational path, successfully engage in community service. (ILO 4 Collaboration)

PLO5: Students will demonstrate knowledge of local, national, and global policies and practices that contribute to environmental degradation; the unequal distribution of the consequences of environmental degradation; and strategies for developing sustainable alternatives. (ILO 5 Sustainability)

PLO6: Students will demonstrate an ability to critically read, interpret and synthesize abstract sociological arguments and theories, and use sociological theories and models to develop research questions. (ILO 6 Specialized education)

Assessment Process & Assessment Results

Some of our program assessments are old and the process will have to be restarted in 2022-2023. PLO3 & PLO5 were assessed in 2015-2016, PLO 4 was assessed in 2016-17 and in 2017-2018

Embedded course assignments (student essays) were used to assess PLO 3 & PLO 5. Rubrics were designed to score essays. PLO 4 was assessed by reviewing student journals and surveys.

No assessments were submitted in 2019 as the Department was working on its Five-year review

In 2020-2021, a different type of assessment was performed in Sociology:

While not originally planned, several faculty created and implemented—very much in line with the discipline of Sociology—two student surveys in response to moving online during the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to the Black Lives Matter protests that occurred in Summer 2020. Those surveys, titled “Department Survey of Student Experiences Moving Online” and “Black Student Lives Matter: Setting Goals for Change in the CSUEB Sociology Department” were widely disseminated through zoom town halls and in other forums (Attachment C). Key take-aways from these surveys were: the importance of faculty connections as essential to student success and the need to more deeply connect the program’s curricular offerings with our students’ lived experiences. We want to empower and engage students to think critically about the world around them, while supporting them in times of crisis. We hope to continue to use the information obtained from the 2020-2021 studies to improve student learning and the student experience.

As indicated in an earlier section of this report, a survey assessment of the Capstone course was conducted in spring 2022. The results represented quite a range of opinions but overall caused a reexamination of the Capstone requirement.

Curricular changes that respond to the ILOs have included, the following courses

SOC 330 - Environmental Sociology: An introduction to environmental justice theory and practice. Environmental racism and other forms of ecological injustice are examined. Claims made by diverse groups are probed, and policy and civil society responses to perceived environmental injustice are explored. Units: 4 ; G.E./G.R. Area: D4 (PLO and ILO 5)

SOC 345 - American Society: Sociological perspective on important institutions and developments shaping life in American society today. Units: 3 ; G.E./G.R. Area: D4 (PLO and ILO 3)

SOC 418 - Sociology of Music: Music’s connection to social/political issues. Sociological theory is used to understand musical culture, learn how music is connected to other social factors (race, class, and gender), and develop a deeper understanding of our personal musical preferences. (PLO and ILO 3)

We will first conduct an assessment of these courses in 2022-2023, in order to restart our assessment processes.

Another response to our assessments has been the development of a new course:

SOC 302 - Writing and Analysis for the Social Sciences: which will help students to critically evaluate articles and research, and write logical and cogent arguments that support their points of view.

A broader definition of assessment is now necessary as we consider the overall success and impact of Sociology in educating and graduating our student population. As indicated in earlier sections of this report we now must consider eliminating achievement gaps, reducing high DWF rates, and hastening time to graduation as important indicators of program efficacy. The Department has begun its examination of these factors and has determined that it will look very critically at any course with a DWF rate in excess of 12% (currently 8 of 28–28%), or any class where the achievement gap is beyond .5. We will ramp up our PLO/ILO assessments, especially in courses that were created to meet the upper division overlay objectives for sustainability, diversity and social justice. And we will be doing additional exit interviews, similar to the survey performed for the Capstone and attached to an earlier section of this report.

III. DISCUSSION OF PROGRAM DATA & RESOURCE REQUESTS

As discussed in earlier sections of this report, the Department is now examining the dashboards to set new goals that represent forward movement in eliminating achievement gaps, lowering the number of courses with high DWF rates, and facilitating graduation rates. There is a true need to examine modalities and work toward providing students with road maps that support their preferred modality and their career aspirations.

The department has hard-working faculty but needs to replace the faculty member who departed in August 2022 and (thinking ahead) replace our FERP faculty member who will depart in the next two years. Teaching, advising, researching, service and performing outreach are expectations of all faculty and they demand that we have more tenure-track individuals to provide consistent and ongoing support to students. We request 1 tenure-track hire at the Assistant level in 2023-2024 to help us implement new changes in the program, meet our diversity goals and strengthen the quality of our offerings.

Discussion of Trends & Reflections Notable Trends

The most notable trend at this time is connected to the decline in enrollment at the University level which is impacting most majors and even service courses. It is our hope to turn around that trend in Sociology by making sure students can easily associate the program with excellence, interesting subject matter, and a clear path to a career.

Attachments:

A: Chart of Sociology courses, modalities, DWF rates

B. Capstone Survey instrument & Capstone survey results

C. Survey conducted by the Sociology Dept. faculty (Stempel, et. al) on the impact of COVID-19 on students