

2008 Assessment Report, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

- a. Department of Sociology and Anthropology (Sociology Major only)
 - b. Betsy Lucal, Chair of Soc/Anthro Assessment Committee
 - c. Lucal
 - d. Gail McGuire, Department Chair
1. **Our educational goals** for sociology majors are for them to develop:
- a. Ability to apply the sociological imagination to trace the links between individual experiences and social forces and between social forces and history to critically understand oneself.
 - b. Understanding of substantive issues, which include how culture and social structures operate, the reciprocal relationships between individual and society, the relationships between macro and micro levels of social reality, and the impact of social institutions and social inequality on society.
 - c. Understanding of sociological research methods, both quantitative and qualitative, including how to interpret findings of such research, awareness of the assumptions built into various research methods and how the choice of a particular method may affect research conclusions and the advantages and disadvantages of applying a particular research method to a research question.
 - d. Awareness of the role of sociological theory and ability to discuss, apply, and describe some basic theories or theoretical orientations in at least one area of social reality.
 - e. Development of an understanding of social structures and processes connected with race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, etc.
 - f. Development of a global and multicultural perspective on the social world, including an awareness of factors contributing to social and cultural diversity.

We have not changed these goals since the 2006 Assessment Report.

2. **Our assessment techniques were:**

Direct: Review of student portfolios of work from all sociology courses taken by majors (especially the required theory, methods and 400-level seminar courses) by assessment committee. *We need to make sure all faculty members are contributing materials for the portfolios. Instead of having copies of student transcripts as part of the portfolios, for 2008, the committee chair looked at the transcripts of all the graduates and made sure the list of courses taken and grades earned was complete for each. (This year's committee was: David Blouin, Betsy Lucal and Jay Vanderveen.)*

Indirect: Survey of graduating seniors that asks how well they achieved departmental learning goals, what aspects of their education helped them with their learning and why, and what the department might do to help them learn more effectively and why those changes would help them. *We continue to work to improve the response rate for this survey (for 2008, 6 of 20 graduates returned surveys). It might help if the department secretary forwarded the list of each*

semester's graduates to the committee chair so letters could be distributed to students in a timely manner.

We also use a rubric for assessing the student portfolios. It can be viewed at:

http://landmark-project.com/classweb/tools/printable.php?rbrc_id=166817

3. The Assessment Committee met on 09 July 2009 to discuss the **results** of portfolio assessment and informal analysis of the survey of graduates. We agreed that students seemed to be meeting or exceeding our expectations for Objectives 2, 3, 4, and 5. We concluded that Objective 1 is difficult to measure based on the materials included in the portfolios and discussed ways to gather better evidence for this objective. Because we are confident that most of our students are meeting this goal, we need to be able to document that fact. Objective 6 remains the goal least likely to be met by our students. We decided to talk to faculty to find out whether they include global/multicultural perspectives in their courses. An informal survey of faculty (and perhaps an analysis of syllabi) will help us decide whether the portfolios simply fail to provide adequate documentation of this objective or students are not getting appropriate instruction to meet this goal.
4. In the surveys, students rated themselves as mostly meeting or exceeding the learning goals for the program. Comments from students indicated that their experience in the program was a positive one. They were most positive about their relationships with faculty in the department. As we continue to improve data collection with respect to this indirect assessment technique, we expect to learn more about students' perceptions of the program.

It continues to be our goal to complete annual assessment activities early enough to discuss them at a spring faculty meeting. Once again, life and departmental needs intervened to prevent us from doing so (we conducted two searches for new tenure-track faculty in the spring). Getting surveys to students closer to their actual graduation date will also help us achieve this goal (in addition to getting a higher response rate). We will present these findings and our suggestions for action at a fall department meeting.

5. **Two issues** to be addressed are: (1) surveying faculty to determine whether their courses provide students with exposure to materials relevant to meeting Objective 6 and (2) collecting better data to analyze. For the second issue, this means achieving a higher response rate for the survey of graduates and determining whether an additional assessment technique (such as a survey of faculty and/or the analysis of syllabi) would provide additional meaningful assessment data.