

**SOCIOLOGY UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM
ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES & OUTCOMES
2016-2017**

I. LEARNING OBJECTIVES OF THE UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAM

- Learning Objective #1: *Think critically and analytically, and reason logically about social issues and/or social problems.*
- Learning Objective #2: *Use sociological principles, concepts and theories to examine social behavior and issues.*
- Learning Objective #3: *Apply sociological methods to understand social behavior and issues.*

II. ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES 2014-2015

1. Focus group interviews with graduating senior majors (Spring 2015)
2. Evaluation of course assignments and student work product in required introductory and upper division sociology courses (Fall 2014-Spring 2015)
3. Survey of faculty regarding student activities and accomplishments in the areas of applied sociology, research and/or professional engagement (Fall 2015)

III. ASSESSMENT OUTCOMES

- Learning Objective #1: *Thinking critically and analytically*
- Assessment: **STRONG ACHIEVEMENT**

Interviews revealed a high level of confidence among graduating seniors in their mastery of skills related to thinking critically and analytically. Course quality was rated very high.

Introductory and upper division courses include assignments aimed at building critical thinking and analytic skills. Introductory courses include required book and film reviews that require critical engagement with sociological issues and problems. Upper division courses also provide opportunities for critical thinking and analytical skill building including assignments that require class-based analysis of family practices, the evaluation of social trends and the social consequences of social policies.

Faculty contribute to students' critical thinking and analytic skill building outside of the classroom in several ways, including the incorporation of students into the project design and data analysis and through Honors course contracts which require students to apply course material to a social problem or issue related to the course.

- Learning Objective #2: *Use principles, concepts and theories*
- Assessment: **STRONG ACHIEVEMENT**

Focus group interviews revealed a high level of confidence among graduating seniors in

their mastery of skills related to using sociological concepts to examine social behavior. Students particularly praised the community-based capstone experience as providing them with valuable opportunities to apply course material to social issues.

Introductory and upper division courses also provide opportunities to use and apply sociological concepts and principles. Introductory course assignments include service learning opportunities and requirements to analyze service projects using sociological concepts. Upper division courses require skill development through writing assignments and presentations that require the application of sociological concepts and theories, including analyzing social trends using sociological theory and applying sociological concepts and theories to observed social patterns.

The faculty survey revealed a strong commitment among faculty to provide opportunities outside of the classroom to use sociological concepts and theories, including in the Undergraduate Teaching Fellows Program, through intensive one-on-one advising and mentoring and through exposure to sociological research.

- Learning Objective #3: Application of methods
- Assessment: MODEST ACHIEVEMENT

Focus group interviews revealed that research opportunities where students can gain skills applying research methods are invaluable but not widely available.

Though many courses include assignments aimed at application of research methods, there is less consistency across the curriculum on this learning objective, particularly in courses that are not research methods-focused (e.g., *Social Stats*, *Research Methods*).

Students involved in research outside of the classroom achieve superior training in the application of research methods. Such opportunities are only available on a limited basis however. During the assessment period, fourteen SSWA majors participated in paid or unpaid research activities outside the classroom, seven presented their research at conferences or symposiums, two co-authored a publication with a faculty member and one secured competitive research funding (URCO) for their research activities.

IV. ASSESSMENT-BASED ACTIONS TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN 2016-2017

- Sustain quality and rigor of undergraduate courses while encouraging faculty to consider additional ways to incorporate Learning Objective #3 into their course assignments.
- Expand opportunities for student involvement in research. In Spring 2017, we will hold our first annual departmental Undergraduate Research Symposium, providing an opportunity for undergraduate researchers to present their work to faculty and students.
- Expand opportunities for students to develop a stronger community within the major. During 2016-2017, we have organized multiple student service projects, student social activities, and brownbag meetings on applying for graduate school and applying for jobs.
- Expand and formalize departmental funding support for undergraduate research and conference presentation opportunities. In 2015-2016 the department has

reserved \$10,000 for undergraduate support in this area.

- In Spring 2017, we will implement pre/post tests in the five required Sociology courses (SOC 1010: *Introduction to Sociology*, SOC 3010: *Social Inequality*, SOC 3110: *Methods of Social Research*, SOC 3120: *Social Statistics*, and SOC 4010: *Contemporary Sociological Theory*). Five instruments (1 for each course) have been developed.
- In Spring 2017, all graduating seniors will be asked to complete a Qualtrics survey that will measure student self-assessment of each of the three core learning outcomes.