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12 July 2019

Office of Academic Programs and Assessment
Waldo Hall 314
Oregon State University

Enclosed, please find the Sociology Program Action Plan submitted in response to the 10-year Program review conducted in April, 2019.

Sincerely,

Lori A. Cramer

Lori A. Cramer, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
and Sociology Program Coordinator

APPENDIX 5: Signature Sheet for Action Plan

In signing this document, I (as Program Coordinator, Head, Director, or Chair) indicate that all faculty members in the academic program under review have had an opportunity to participate in the development of this Action Plan and review the final document. Additionally, the signature of the Dean indicates that the Dean has reviewed the final Action Plan document and discussed it with the Program Coordinator, Head, Director, or Chair for this program.

Lou A. Cramer

Name/ Program Coordinator Head, Director, or Chair

6/10/19

Date

[Signature]

Name/Dean

7/9/19

Date

Sociology Program Action Plan (2019 – 2022)

In April 2019 a review team, along with the Sociology faculty, completed an academic program review. The report from the external team provided 9 recommendations for the program to consider. This document indicates the steps the faculty intend to take to address these recommendations.

Background

The Sociology Program began the review process in Spring 2018, with Professor Mark Edwards leading a series of faculty discussion about the program's strengths and weaknesses in teaching, research, outreach and engagement, and progress in diversity and inclusion of students and faculty. The self-study included assessment of these different areas, as well as institutional data, plus data from recent surveys of students (on-campus and e-campus) and alumni. Drafts of the self-study were reviewed by all faculty and the final version was completed in January 2019. The study was forwarded to Academic Programs and onward to the external review committee in a timely fashion. The external team was on campus at OSU April 8 and 9. They returned to OSU a final report to which we here respond.

Recommendations from the Review Team

1. Be forward thinking about the budget: How will budget cuts affect faculty morale? How will student credit hours be affected? What are the most efficient and least disruptive ways to respond to budget cuts?
2. Think about decoupling the research methods series to teach relevant skills separately. Consider using an earlier course for WIC, consider a separate statistics course independent of methods (note that this might also allow for a broader range of methods coverage in the methods sequence--more time for qualitative and other research methods)
3. Advisors need timely access to data about student progress in order to support student retention.
4. Students appreciate research opportunities but are often unaware of how to access them and could benefit from a more coordinated effort to inform students about opportunities for undergraduate research.
5. Create an option focused on social justice and inequality to reclaim sociology topics that have been siphoned off to/by other programs and schools--maybe "social justice and social institutions" to address student demands for an option that covers topics related to education, social service, and inequality (among others).
6. Curriculum committee may consider taking a larger role in curriculum oversight. They can particularly help address the program weaknesses outlined above in regards to reconsidering the proliferation of elective options, the number of prerequisites, and the high number of graduate/undergraduate slash courses.
7. The Assessment committee can address issues of curricular drift in which the assessment recommendations (i.e., all courses should reinforce interpreting tables/figures) are evaluated and reinforced over time.

8. The program faculty should continue to find ways to support the students who are not easily transitioning into a bachelor's program. This support can be in the form of providing tutoring, restructuring the research methods sequence, and evaluating student outcomes to strengthen strategies for developing students skills. For example, students mentioned that they would like to learn how to develop skills for reading the sociology literature.
9. Both students and faculty stated the positive impact of internships on student and career development. The faculty may want to expand the number of internships by finding partnerships beyond the Corvallis area, i.e. Portland and outside Oregon.

Action Plan Responses

General comments

The OSU Sociology faculty generally agree with the assessment and recommendations offered by the external team. Several of these recommendations address topics that the program has already been discussing.

Specific Plans

Recommendation #1. "Be forward thinking about the budget: How will budget cuts affect faculty morale? How will student credit hour be affected? What are the most efficient and least disruptive ways to respond to budget cuts?"

Plan: The faculty is already working closely with School level and College level leadership to achieve these goals of addressing budget cuts and their effect on students and faculty. We have already initiated the elimination of the 200-level prerequisite to increase enrollments in upper division electives. This is an efficient and non-disruptive way to try to expand classroom enrollments, maintain faculty morale, and hopefully increase overall student credit hours. We will need to monitor this closely via the assessment committee to make sure that the learning outcomes of upper division courses can be met without having students take an introductory course first. We are also working together with a newly formed School Budget Committee to plan for future likely budget cuts.

Recommendation #2. "Think about decoupling the research methods series to teach relevant skills separately. Consider using an earlier course for WIC, consider a separate statistics course independent of methods (note that this might also allow for a broader range of methods coverage in the methods sequence--more time for qualitative and other research methods)."

Plan: The recommendations suggested here are not new to us. In fact, many of us remember that an earlier program review found that having our students take a separate statistics course at the university did not prepare our students very well. Such courses are taught to all students and are not focused on social science concerns. Therefore, we have opted to include statistics in our methods sequence, increasing the total number of credits from 6 to 8 to accomplish this. Therefore, we do not intend to outsource this learning. Other parts of this set of recommendations suggest what is likely the most time and work intensive, and disruptive, task of all the recommendations. We are agreeable to tackling this challenge. We have doubts about the benefits of relocating the WIC

requirements to other classes, but we will take this idea seriously. The Ad Hoc Methods committee will work first on reimagining the research methods sequence of courses. The faculty will devote significant portions of its faculty meetings in Fall 2019 to evaluating the known likely improvements and harm these changes could make. We will then make Category II proposals in Spring 2020 or Fall 2020 that will reflect possible changes in the role of WIC, in content that would expose students to a variety of sociological methods, and/or de-coupling Sociology 315 and 316.

Recommendation #3. "Advisors need timely access to data about student progress in order to support student retention."

Plan: This recommendation is more a university issue than something we can control. However, we will identify and work with the relevant administrators (perhaps the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and staff in the new division of Undergraduate Studies) to tackle this for all programs in our School. This will be much more efficient than just focusing on our program or college.

Recommendation #4: "Students appreciate research opportunities but are often unaware of how to access them and could benefit from a more coordinated effort to inform students about opportunities for undergraduate research."

Plan: We see research opportunities as one type of experiential learning that should be available for student participation. We appreciate that as a part of the university's strategic plan, many areas of campus will be working to make these opportunities more available. A variety of programs are available, and others are being created, in the divisions of Undergraduate Studies and Student Affairs. The offering of the new B.S./B.A. degree in public policy, and some of the resources of the School (Oregon Policy Analysis Lab, student organizations for Sociology, Political Science, and Economics), may expand such opportunities in our School. Before deciding what new initiatives to develop internally, we will gather data on what is currently available across campus, and market these opportunities to our students via the Advising Office, as well as email list serves to majors and minors.

Recommendation #5: "Create an option focused on social justice and inequality to reclaim sociology topics that have been siphoned off to/by other programs and schools--maybe "social justice and social institutions" to address student demands for an option that covers topics related to education, social service, and inequality (among others)."

Plan: We will discuss the merits of this specific curricular change. So far there has been general agreement that a version of this suggestion has merit, and we will likely initiate a Category II proposal in the 2019/2020 school year to create this option for both our on-campus and e-campus students. Needed courses are already in place and we have done some work already considering how available courses might be packaged as an option for our students. We will also work with the Assistant Director of Career Development in the College of Liberal Arts (see Recommendation #9 and our response) to make sure that we are developing areas that fit with the market.

Recommendation #6: "Curriculum committee may consider taking a larger role in curriculum

oversight. They can particularly help address the program weaknesses outlined above in regards to reconsidering the proliferation of elective options, the number of prerequisites, and the high number of graduate/undergraduate slash courses.”

Plan: At the beginning of Fall term, 2019, the faculty will agree to a new “mission” for the curriculum committee, deciding the degree to which this committee should take the lead on addressing some of the items mentioned in this list of recommendations (e.g., social justice option? collaboration with methods committee on redesign of that curriculum? evaluation of array of electives we offer?). Discussion of the role of the Curriculum Committee will take place along with the response related to recommendation #7.

Recommendation #7: “The Assessment committee can address issues of curricular drift in which the assessment recommendations (i.e., all courses should reinforce interpreting tables/figures) are evaluated and reinforced over time.”

Plan: At the beginning of Fall term, 2019, the faculty will agree to a new “mission” for the assessment committee, deciding the degree to which this committee should take the lead on addressing some of the items mentioned in this list of recommendations, especially with regard to the concern about “curricular drift”, such as making sure all courses are contributing to the Program’s student learning objectives. One important immediate concern will be whether we can meet the learning outcomes for upper division courses once the prerequisites are removed. This discussion will take place along with the response related to recommendation #6.

Recommendation #8: “The program faculty should continue to find ways to support the students who are not easily transitioning into a bachelor’s program. This support can be in the form of providing tutoring, restructuring the research methods sequence, and evaluating student outcomes to strengthen strategies for developing students’ skills. For example, students mentioned that they would like to learn how to develop skills for reading the sociology literature.”

Plan: In 2019-2020 the above-mentioned committees and the full-faculty will assess the degree to which current curricular and extra-curricular supports in the Program are functioning at supporting this group of students. We will make sure that our students are aware of the existing programs across the university (e.g., Undergraduate Writing Lab) by making these more visible in our Advising office and on our syllabi. We also hope that some of the above-mentioned planned changes will help meet this goal. For example, in the redesign of the methods sequence we will likely revamp the assignments related to reading/writing sociology so that students are guided more intentionally through sociological literature. We are cautious about adding additional required or elective courses to the major, as the review time has suggested, but will consider if these students interests can be accommodated by various means.

Recommendation #9: “Both students and faculty stated the positive impact of internships on student and career development. The faculty may want to expand the number of internships by finding partnerships beyond the Corvallis area, i.e. Portland and outside Oregon.”

Plan: As with recommendation #4, we see internships as part of the suite of experiential learning opportunities valued for all students at Oregon State University. We plan to survey the campus to bring attention to opportunities for our faculty and students. We have already begun to address potential impediments to students' doing internships by initiating the elimination of the long paper requirement for students enrolled in internship credits. We will have our internship coordinator meet with the Assistant Director of Career Development in the College of Liberal Arts to expand the array of possible internships throughout the Willamette Valley and the Portland area. We will also ask them to meet with the Director of our Public Policy graduate program as internships are a regular part of the graduate experience and there should be some sharing of these sites as possible venues for our undergraduates.

Action (recommendation #)	Metric	Anticipated Outcome	Who	When Actions To Be Initiated
Remove prerequisites from upper division sociology courses. (#1)	Successful Category II acceptance of proposed change.	Increased enrollment, especially in courses that reside in the baccalaureate core.	Interim Director, School of Public Policy	Fall 2019
Revise research methods sequence to make WIC requirement more manageable and to expose students to greater variety in sociological methods. (#2)	Agreed upon Category II proposed changes in AY 2019-2020; student survey in 2020-2021 to assess student experience in revised courses	Students receive a broader exposure to sociological methods.	Ad Hoc Methods committee and the Curriculum Committee. All instructors of these courses.	AY 2019-2020.
Work with the division of Undergraduate Studies to secure more up to date data. (#3)	A log of conversations with, requests to, and meetings with relevant parties on campus.	Advisors have access to timely data.	Academic Advisors.	AY 2019-2020

Create a robust list of opportunities for students for experiential learning. (#4 and #9)	Updates on progress at end of each quarter.	Experiential learning opportunities are summarized and available in our Advising Office.	Two faculty (internship coordinator and one other program faculty).	AY 2019-2020
Create a third option within the sociology degree (possibly in social justice and social institutions).] (#5)	Evidence in faculty meeting notes of on-going progress, and Category II proposal submitted at proper time	A third option will be available to students.	Curriculum Committee	AY 2019-2020
Redefine the work of the Curriculum Committee. (#6)	Evidence in faculty meeting notes of on-going progress. Report from committee at end of AY 2019-2020 on activities for year; again in 2020-2021	Curriculum Committee taking the lead on curriculum oversight and innovation.	All program faculty will define the work of the committee.	Fall 2019
Redefine the work of the Assessment Committee. (#7)	Evidence in faculty meeting notes of on-going progress. Report from committee at end of AY 2019-2020 on activities for year; again in 2020-2021	Assessment committee addressing broader concerns for the program.	All program faculty will define the expected work of this committee.	Fall 2019
Gather information on resources across campus available for various tutoring or advising needs. (#8)	Evidence in faculty meeting notes of reporting back on available help for students. Faculty reporting on degree to which	Expanded list of opportunities available to students, staff, and faculty.	Program advisors and two faculty TBA.	AY 2019-2020 AY 2020-2021

	these helps are advertised to our students			
Expand internships opportunities, and marketing of such to our students (#9)	Evidence in faculty meeting notes of reporting back on progress in expanding internships and marketing of them.	Expanded list of opportunities available to students, staff, and faculty.	Internship advisor; faculty at large (recommending internships to students, and connecting advisor with opportunities)	AY 2019-2020 AY 2020-2021