

**Assessment Report for Student Learning
In the Sociology Major
2006-2007 Academic Year**

October 4, 2007

Executive Summary

This Assessment Report for the Sociology major assesses student learning during the 2006-2007 Academic Year. Assessment results indicate that students performed at an **excellent level for two of the three learning goals**, while at an **inadequate level for the third one**. Improvement Plans are discussed.

Student Learning Goals

The learning goals for the Sociology major are:

1. Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze personal and social experiences by applying the sociological imagination.
2. Students will demonstrate the ability to use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to design a sociological research project, and communicate its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

The sociology faculty are committed to the Millikin mission and have designed a curriculum which intentionally prepares majors for professional success, democratic citizenship in a global community, and a personal life of meaning and value by producing graduates who are capable of thinking critically from a sociological perspective. The Sociology learning goals fit with the Millikin University Mission in the following ways.

Sociology graduates achieve the goal of *professional success* by demonstrating their ability to:

- a. analyze personal and social experiences by applying the sociological imagination,
- b. use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender, and their interrelationships, and
- c. design a sociological research project, and communicate its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Sociology majors will develop a discipline-based understanding of *citizenship in a global environment* goal by:

- a. using sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender, and their interrelationships, and
- b. designing a sociological research project, and communicating its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline.

Sociology majors discover and develop a *personal life of meaning & value* as they:

- a. analyze personal and social experiences by applying the sociological imagination, and
- b. use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities of race, class, and gender, and their interrelationships.

Snapshot

Given the relatively small number of sociology majors and minors, most sociology classes are providing service to the Human Services major and other University curriculum requirements, including the CAS Social Sciences requirement, US Studies, Global Studies, and Gender Studies.

The following table shows the classes taught in Sociology during the 2006-2007 Academic Year. Not included in this list are the Human Services classes taught by the Social Workers or the Statistics or Social Psychology classes taught by a Psychologist.

| Fall 2006 | | | Spring 2007 | | |
|------------------|----------------|-----------------|------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Course # | Instructor | Level | Course # | Instructor | Level |
| SO10001 | Crisler | 35 | SO10001 | Crisler | 37 |
| SO10002 | Crisler | 34 | SO10002 | Crisler | 35 |
| SO12001* | Parker | 30 | SO12001* | Parker | 23 |
| SO23201 | Crisler | 21 | SO22101 | Crisler | 15 |
| SO31001 | Fennessey | 16 | SO22401* | Troy | 25 |
| SO35102 | Troy | 26 | SO22402* | Troy | 31 |
| SO37201 | Crisler | 9 | SO25001 | Troy | 6 |
| SO45001 | Troy | 7 | SO33001 | Fennessey | 16 |
| | | | SO36101 | Crisler | 25 |
| | | | | | |
| Total | | 178 | Total | | 213 |
| | | | | | |
| | Classes | Students | | Classes | Students |
| Full-Time | 5 | 132 | Full-Time | 7 | 174 |
| Adjunct | 2 | 46 | Adjunct | 2 | 39 |

* Cross-listed with an IN class

The Learning Story

The sociology major uses the scientific method to study social groups and processes. Majors are intentionally exposed to the key social factors influencing human behavior, as well as, the methods for critically analyzing social patterns and values by sequenced coursework.

As students proceed through their plan of study taking introductory, sociology fundamentals, and elective course work in specialty areas of the discipline, they are exposed to the theoretical explanations and empirical evidence regarding a variety of social arrangements and come to recognize that it is only possible to understand their own identities in the context of the social groups to which they belong. Majors learn that by examining the diversity of human experience we are ultimately able to locate and define ourselves. Sociology course work also helps majors develop strong analytical and quantitative reasoning skills from their required statistics and research methods courses. Students continue to learn the power of the scientific method of inquiry as they engage in research in the community and how to use computer-based statistics packages for analyzing and interpreting social data. These experiences culminate with the development of a research project, often commissioned by organizations within the larger Decatur community in the senior year.

Beyond exposure to the discipline, students learn skills necessary to assess and critically evaluate the diversity of human experiences, especially the impact of diversity as characterized by race, class, and gender of groups. The integration of

service learning and experiential education throughout the sociology curriculum creates a pervasive theme that pushes students to examine questions of ethics and values as they study issues of social inequality and interpret the social forces producing such inequality. Whether studying the family, race and ethnicity, criminology, urban sociology, or deviant behavior, students learn to synthesize existing theoretical knowledge using research findings to develop practical solutions. Their training enables and empowers sociology majors to critically analyze complex, real-world problems, evaluate the merits of various remedies, and appreciate the role diversity plays in the analysis of human behavior, and its ethical implications for their personal and professional lives. In sum, the sociology major integrates the general education and major curriculum with pre-professional experiences and mentor relationships, to mirror the University goals of professionalism, citizenship, and a life of personal meaning and value by advocating and demonstrating the impact of life-long learning and service.

Assessment Methods and Data

The Sociology faculty have decided to collect the following assessments of the sociology major:

- 1.** Learning Goal 1 will be assessed in Sociological Analysis SO450, the capstone course, through an analysis of the final exam, which asks students to write specifically to this learning goal. Given the presently small number of graduating majors, all sociology majors' assignments will be evaluated.
- 2.** Learning Goal 2 will be assessed in SO224, Poverty and Welfare, which substitutes for one of the Sociology Fundamentals courses (SO 320 Social Stratification) by evaluating the term paper submitted in this class. Because of the small number of majors, all papers from Sociology majors will be evaluated. Although this learning goal addresses inequalities of race and gender, as well as class, only papers concerning class inequality will be assessed because other classes are taught by adjuncts.
- 3.** Learning Goal 3 will be assessed by evaluating the proposal for a research project that students turn in while they are students in SO221, Methods of Sociological Research.
- 4.** Advising Survey – each semester when course schedule advising is performed, the department will administer the Behavioral Sciences Advising Survey. This anonymous questionnaire data will be collected, analyzed, and reported to faculty and students, and used as an indicator and source of guidance for how faculty are serving student needs.
- 5.** Exit Survey – we plan to resume administering an exit survey in Spring 2007 to all graduating Sociology majors. The Behavioral Sciences department scheduled major, group exit interviews to obtain student perspectives and insights about their educational experience for 3 years, but they were poorly attended (less than 1% of all departmental majors attended despite pizza enticements) and the department suspended them due to external validity issues. We hope the anonymous questionnaire emailed to each student as an attachment will be completed and returned. In addition, using a standard form across all disciplines in our department will allow for other comparisons.

Assessment Results

Learning Goal 1 – Both sociologists, using the appropriate rubric, reviewed the final exams for the six sociology majors who took SO450, Sociological Analysis. (See Rubrics in Appendices 1 and 2.) Eighty-three percent of the students scored above the standard of 3.00. The average scores for each student are as follows:

| Student Number | Average Score | Cum. Percentage |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 5 | 17% |
| 2 | 4.75 | 34% |
| 3 | 4 | 51% |
| 4 | 3.75 | 67% |
| 5 | 3.25 | 83% |
| 6 | 2.75 | 100% |

Learning Goal 2 – Both sociologists, using the appropriate rubric, reviewed the term papers for the four sociology majors in SO224, Poverty and Welfare. One hundred percent of the students scored above the standard of 3.00. The average scores for each student are as follows:

| Student Number | Average Score | Cum. Percentage |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 5 | 25% |
| 2 | 4.5 | 50% |
| 3 | 4 | 75% |
| 4 | 3.5 | 100% |

Learning Goal 3 – Both sociologists, using the appropriate rubric, reviewed the research proposals submitted by the five sociology majors in SO221. Twenty percent of the students scored above the standard of 3.00. The average scores for each are as follows:

| Student Number | Average Score | Cum. Percentage |
|----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 1 | 4.5 | 20% |
| 2 | 2.5 | 40% |
| 3 | 1.5 | 60% |
| 4 | 1 | 80% |
| 5 | 1 | 100% |

Summary of Assessment of Student Learning for the Learning Goals

| | |
|-----------------|------|
| Learning Goal 1 | 83% |
| Learning Goal 2 | 100% |
| Learning Goal 3 | 20% |

Advising Survey

The Advising Survey was administered on Scheduling Day in April, 2007. The results are as follows:

| Dept. \bar{X} | Advising Categories (5 point scale) |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| 4.84 sd= .365 | Convenience of scheduling your appointment with your advisor |
| 4.74 sd= .609 | Amount of time spent with advisor during the class scheduling appointment |
| 4.69 sd= .706 | Advisor's feedback about progress in meeting graduation requirements |
| 4.57 sd= .565 | Advisor's knowledge about course options or selections in the major |
| 4.67 sd= .574 | Advisor's knowledge about course options or selections in university studies |
| 4.78 sd= .879 | Availability throughout the academic year |
| 4.83 sd= .841 | Timeliness of response to my questions or concerns |
| 4.67 sd= .825 | Ability to answer academic or plan of study questions |
| 4.84 sd= .970 | Knowledge about campus support programs |
| 4.88 sd= 1.044 | Knowledge about co-curricular opportunities |
| 4.76 sd= .802 | Knowledge about whom to contact to answer academic questions |
| 4.76 sd= .942 | Helpfulness with career preparation and planning |
| 4.90 sd= 1.071 | Information about job opportunities on campus or in the community |
| 4.91 sd= .342 | Attitude toward me as an individual |
| N = 58 majors | |

Exit Survey

An Exit Survey of graduates has not been conducted. The department is still discussing this issue.

Improvement Plan

Learning Goal 3 is assessed by scoring the final draft of a Research Proposal assigned in the required Methods of Sociological Research course, SO221.

Currently students in this class devote much of the semester to completing a series of Research Proposal assignments (topic—10 points, preliminary bibliography—50 points, class presentation—40 points) and the final draft for an additional 100 points. Research Proposal assignments and the final draft account for only 200 of a possible

450 points; about 44% of the final grade. Students rarely take the opportunity to submit a working draft.

In order to increase the likelihood that each student will consider rewriting each of the preliminary assignments, we will increase the value of each assignment as below:

1. Statement of the problem and justification of its significance—50 points
2. Literature review—50 points
3. Subject selection—50 points
4. Measurement of variables—50 points
5. Data collection method—50 points
6. Proposed analysis—50 points
7. Final Draft—100 points

The effect will be to increase the value of the Research Proposal to about 400/600 points or 66.7%. For Spring of 2008 I shall encourage second drafts of the first 6 assignments for all students who do not achieve at least 45 of the 50 points available for each task. Future offerings of SO221 may include mandatory rewrites.

Appendix 1 – Sociology Assessment Rubric

| Learning Objectives | Nominal (1 point) | Adequate (3 points) | Excellent (5 points) |
|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Goal 1: Ability to analyze personal & social experiences by applying the sociological imagination. (Capstone Assignment)</p> | <p>Fails to understand or use the sociological imagination in problem solving or interpreting personal & social experiences. Fails to adhere to the ethical principles & standards of sociology, & shows minimal ability to match personal values to life goals.</p> | <p>General understanding & ability to evaluate personal & social experiences using the sociological imagination. Can, with minimal ethical errors or deviations from professional standards apply their knowledge & skills to serve professional & community needs.</p> | <p>Demonstrates thorough & insightful ability to evaluate personal & social experiences using the sociological imagination. Rigorous & conscientious appreciation of how the ethical principles & standards of sociology impact society as shown in their professional & community activities.</p> |
| <p>Goal 2: Ability to use sociological analysis to explain the structural inequalities race, class, & gender. (Term Paper for SO224)</p> | <p>Minimal understanding of the effects of race, class & gender on society, inability to develop hypotheses or solve problems using a sociological analysis.</p> | <p>General understanding & ability to evaluate the impact of race, class, & gender on society, some evidence of the ability to create hypotheses or solve problems using sociological analysis.</p> | <p>In-depth synthesis of perspectives of race, class, & gender & their societal impact, & can readily develop hypotheses & solve problems using sociological analysis.</p> |
| <p>Goal 3: ability to design a sociological research project, and communicate its findings in accordance with the professional standards of the discipline. (Research Proposal for SO221)</p> | <p>Proposal fails to demonstrate an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings.</p> | <p>Proposal adequately demonstrates an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings.</p> | <p>Proposal demonstrates an ability to design a research project and communicate its findings to an excellent degree...</p> |

Appendix 2 – Artifacts & Standards for Sociology

| Artifact | Green | Yellow | Red |
|---|--|--|--|
| Capstone Research Project (Learning Goal 1) | 70% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. | 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. | Less than 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. |
| Paper for SO224 (Learning Goal 2) | 70% of majors achieve a a score of 3 or above. | 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. | Less than 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. |
| Research Proposal for SO221 (Learning Goal 3) | 70% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. | 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. | Less than 60% of majors achieve a score of 3 or above. |