

Sociology Program
A Draft Assessment Plan

The program in sociology, both as a major and a minor has been inexistence at UAF for nearly 40 years. In the early 1970s, the faculty in the department worked together on a major revision of the sociology program to bring it in line with the standards set by the American Sociological Association (ASA). Periodically, the program has been reviewed to maintain compliance with the national standards although the ASA is not an accrediting body that requires formal compliance.

The program has also been revised several times to meet the varying internal reorganizations that put sociology in different locations on the organizational map of UAF. For example, a rural and cross-cultural emphasis was added when the department became part of the Rural College at one time. But the integrity of the discipline has been maintained through the vagaries of changing fads, fancies of the everchanging campus administration.

The program in sociology offers a Major, a Minor, and a large number of "service" courses. We have been able to accumulate more than our fair share of student credit hours inspite of the fact that for the last fifteen years we had 2.5 faculty positions assigned to the program in sociology. The biggest excitement occurred only this last semester with the addition of a whole new faculty member to the program and we now have 3.5 faculty in the department of sociology. We are very optimistic that we will be able to make greater contributions to the campus with this 40% increase in faculty power.

The department does not offer a graduate program except for the occasional interdisciplinary graduate degrees.

What follows, on the next page, is the philosophy and the methodology of the departmental assessment plan that will be implemented during AY 1999-2000. This will be a committed and combined effort of the entire faculty in the department of sociology.

The material covered in the next few pages owes a heavy debt of gratitude to the work of many members of the American Sociological Association nationwide.

Assessment in sociology has come a long way. Many departments have asked and answered the following questions in a variety of ways in a myriad settings. Assessment, learning, evaluation, and outcome have been buzz words that have been making rounds for both academic and political reasons. The combined efforts of many members of ASA have produced the following basic questions that will form both the philosophical and empirical basis of assessment, outcome, and evaluation in the department of sociology at UAF.

1. What do we know about students who enter our program/institution?

Age, sex, ethnicity, residents/out of state, preparation for college, transfer students, change of major, etc.

2. How are course -taking patterns related to outcomes?

Major/Minor
BA/BS option
Choice of electives

3. How do students experience the program/institution?

Positive/Negative/neutral/indifferent
See questionnaire attached

4. What is the student's contribution to learning?

Student participation, commitment, work patterns, etc.
Outcome is not just grades earned.

5. What do students learn over time in a program of study?

Documentation of student learning in a system of portfolio rather than a random list of discrete grades.

6. How do out of class experience contribute to learning?

Work experience, practicum, seminar presentations, etc.

7. What are students able to do with what they know?

Application of knowledge, "doing sociology."

8. What patterns characterize students' movement through the institution?

Full-time, part-time, withdrawals, drops, semester-long absences, early graduation, double majors, double degrees, etc.

9. What judgements can students make about their learning?

Research shows that students who are self-conscious about themselves as learners learn more. Identify such students and involve them in the assessment process. The oral intensive courses are a good place to "discover" such students.

Assessment Plan Implementation

1. Each faculty member will try and answer these questions about their students in their respective courses during the Fall 1999 semester. Each faculty member will be required to create a portfolio for each of their students. These records will be maintained only for sociology majors and not for hundreds of students who enroll in introductory sociology classes. There will be other ways to evaluate learning outcomes for students who take the "service" courses.
 2. The department will randomly pick 10 students from the Introductory courses to take the ETS (Educational Testing Service) standardized test to compare their performance in the departmental course.
 3. Require (not for grading purposes) graduating seniors to take the ETS sociology area test. The department shall pay the required fee.
 4. Administer to all students in the first semester of their senior year the ASA Sociology Program Goals/Indicators and Rating Form. This form is a measure of evidence of the success of a sociology student (program) as manifested in a number of logically interrelated (non-additive) indicators. It is a measure of indicators of:
 - Appreciation of diversity
 - Familiarity with social structure and processes
 - Theoretical sophistication
 - and Methodological competence.
 (Copy of the ASA questionnaire/rating form attached)
 5. The department head will administer the "Exit Interview" as an assessment of sociology majors.
(Copy of the ASA Questionnaire attached)
 6. A report of these findings will be presented to the Dean and the Provost in Fall 2000.
 7. The assessment process will then be an ongoing process year after year.
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