

Update submitted December 7, 2007

Sociology/Anthropology Department

Sociology/Criminology
Undergraduate Program Review

2005 - 2006 Academic Year

Reviewer: Dr. Ernie Thomson

Department Chair: Dr. Sharon K. Davis

Executive Summary

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology offers undergraduate majors in Sociology and Criminology which are covered in this report, plus majors in Anthropology and Behavioral Sciences and an online Criminology major which are not covered here. The Sociology and Criminology majors require students to complete 48-50 units from classes offered by the department, including an internship and a 14 unit research sequence culminating in an original empirical research project. About two thirds of classes are taught by full time faculty, all of whom have Ph.D.'s from major research universities, with the remaining third taught by part time faculty who are highly qualified and have been teaching for the department for several years.

Criminology and Sociology are among the seven largest programs in the College of Arts and Sciences and both have grown substantially in the last five years. About three fourths of majors are female and about three fourths are minority students. About half are traditional age and about half older students, and just over half (57%) are the first in their families to graduate from college. More than three fourths plan to continue their education in graduate/professional schools. Full time faculty and a recently-added professional Advising Coordinator share advising duties. Average class sizes are small, ranging from about 8 students in Senior Projects classes to 15-30 in other classes.

Learning outcomes for majors include knowledge and skills in: basic perspectives, concepts, and theories; humanistic and social justice perspectives; the research process; and critical thinking and writing. Other outcomes include: understanding the relation between individual and society; comfort with diversity in different contexts; how to function as an ethical professional.

Assessment techniques included: a senior exit survey; an alumni survey; analysis of a sample of course syllabi; informal interviews with faculty; an interview with the Internship Coordinator, and evaluation of internship course evaluations and other related materials.

Findings included the following points:

- Majors get a good foundation in basic perspectives, concepts, and theories of sociology, and are very satisfied with their preparation in this area.
- Majors get a critical and diverse introduction to humanistic and social justice perspectives, and are also very satisfied with their preparation in this area.
- Majors get an extensive introduction to the relation between individuals and social/historical contexts, which operates across the department curriculum.
- Majors acquire substantial knowledge about the consumer side of the research process in the research sequence, and experience in producing original research in doing their Senior Project, and are satisfied with their preparation in this area.
- Majors acquire significant experience in critical thinking and scholarly writing across the whole department curriculum, and are very satisfied with their preparation in this area.

- Majors get substantial exposure to diversity issues in the department, and feel comfortable, competent, and satisfied with their preparation in this area.
- Majors learn to function as ethical professionals through instruction across the department curriculum and modeling by faculty, and are very satisfied with their preparation in this area.

Recommendations for action include:

1. Update the mission statement and the program goals and learning outcomes.

Department of Sociology and Anthropology faculty have discussed these issues and essentially decided that they are low-priority given the large number of other changes that we are currently working on, including the termination of the criminology online program.

2. Increase the involvement of full time main campus faculty in oversight of the off campus programs administered by Regional Campuses Administration to ensure appropriate quality control of these programs.

Dept faculty have discussed this issue and are working on ways to increase oversight of RCA programs in our majors. So far, ULV administration has not been receptive to the idea that more oversight is needed to ensure the quality of these programs which are taught entirely by part-time faculty.

3. Convert the Advising Coordinator position into a permanent staff position in order to make the improved quality and accessibility of advising services permanent.

With the premature termination of the criminology online program and the associated revenue-sharing agreement, the dept will lose the Advising Coordinator position and the higher-quality advising that it brought.

4. Create a tracking system for gathering and organizing data on basic aspects of the program, including characteristics of students, class enrollments, etc.

Dept faculty discussed this issue and thought it to be a good idea. But with only one-half of a full time Administrative Assistant assigned to the dept, we have no resources to do this.

5. Develop performance indicators to supplement self-report indicators in the ongoing assessment of program goals and outcomes.

Dept faculty also discussed this issue and thought it to be a good idea. But with only one-half of a full time Administrative Assistant assigned to the dept, we have no resources to do this.

6. Consider changing the Senior Thesis requirement to an Honors-only course, for those students planning to attend graduate or professional schools.

Dept faculty discussed this at length and thought it to be a good idea if carefully implemented. But lack of new faculty staff resources in a dept with many majors led faculty to delay consideration of any changes at this time.

7. Consider creating a new course on professionalism to help seniors learn how to "launch" the next stage of their lives (graduate/professional schools, jobs, etc.).

This recommendation is related to Recommendation 6 above, and lack of resources also makes this Recommendation unworkable at this time.

8. Provide more advising services to students related to graduate and professional schools (preparation for exams, information on the graduate education process, etc.).

Lack of faculty and staff resources also makes this recommendation unworkable at this time.