

**ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN**  
**AND**  
**2017/2018 UNDERGRADUATE SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM REPORT**

**Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice**

**Contributors** (in alphabetical order):

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Lori Holyfield (Undergraduate Director)

Anna Zajicek, Department Chair

**July 1, 2018**

## **Statement of Mission: Undergraduate Program in Sociology**

The mission of the undergraduate program in sociology is to provide the learning environment to meet the program goals and develop the skills listed below. Faculty members have been encouraged to tie the syllabi for every course into the program goals.

### **Program Goals (3-4)**

*(Program goals are broad general statements of what the program intends to accomplish and describes what a student will be able to do after completing the program. The program goals are linked to the mission of the university and college.)*

The discipline of sociology is characterized by its breadth and the diversity of its subfields and specializations. Hence, of particular importance to the sociology undergraduate program are the following general goals included in our mission statement:

1. to provide knowledge and understanding of the historical, social, intellectual bases of human culture and environment;
2. to provide habits of thought and investigation useful in later life;
3. to encourage exploration and development of ethical values; and
4. to offer the necessary foundation for professional competence or further training in professional or graduate schools.

### **Student Learning Outcomes (6-8)**

*(Student Learning Outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will know and be able to do as a result of completing a program. These student learning outcomes are directly linked to the accomplishment of the program goals.)*

By graduation, students with the B.A. Degree in Sociology should be able to:

1. effectively use communication skills in writing, editing, speaking and listening
2. effectively use analytical and computer skills to include the tools to analyze qualitative and quantitative data
3. effectively conceptualize and solve problems, and engage in critical thinking, effective reasoning, and decision-making
4. effectively use social skills to include cooperative learning and group problem-solving
5. be able to translate the sociological perspective into everyday life and problems.

In addition, students in sociology should have acquired the more specific set of skills:

1. an understanding of the theoretical foundations of the discipline of sociology.
2. an understanding of the methodological foundations of the discipline of sociology
3. an understanding of the sociological perspective (society's structures and processes) emphasizing the relationship between the individual and society.

### **Process for Assessing Each Learning Outcome**

*(A process must be defined and documented to regularly assess student learning and achievement of student learning outcomes. The results of the assessment must be utilized as input for the improvement of the program.)*

In the Department of Sociology and CMJS, the undergraduate SOCI committee has the responsibility for reviewing and evaluating our assessment procedures, and for offering suggestions to the faculty. The undergraduate committee is also responsible for developing, administering, and reviewing the alumni survey, and for informing the faculty of the results of that survey.

**1. Timeline for assessment and analysis**

*(Must include specific timeline for collection and analysis of assessment data.)*

- Data collection takes place on an annual basis during spring and fall semesters.
- In 2017/2018, data collection takes place between March 15 and May 30 and November 15 and December 15.
- The analysis of assessment data will take place between May 30 and June 30.

**2. Means of assessment and desired level of student achievement**

*(Must include at least one direct and one indirect method of assessment for each learning outcome.)*

We use two methods of assessment: 1) a required senior research paper, and 2) exit surveys and exit interviews with graduating seniors. In addition, we do follow-up assessment through an alumni survey.

- The research paper is the same as the one required by the College of Arts and Sciences and follows the guidelines currently in practice for the department. This paper requires that the student demonstrate skills in the areas described above.
- The exit survey gives us an objective measure and the exit interview a subjective measure of the department's effectiveness at meeting the students' goals.
- Finally, the follow-up alumni survey helps us determine if our program has been successful in preparing students for careers and/or further professional study.

**3. Reporting of results**

*(Must at least report annually to the Dean of college/school.)*

- Result will be reported annually by July 14

## **2017/2018 Academic Assessment Report**

### **DEGREE PROGRAM: SOCI, BA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (July 1, 2018)**

The Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice employed several measures to assess the academic achievement of its criminal justice and sociology majors:

- A. A research paper
- B. A capstone course
- C. An exit survey

The results of these various methods indicated that the department was performing well and accomplishing its goals.

#### **The Research Paper**

All students who graduated during AY 2017-2018 submitted adequate analytic/research papers in accordance with our and the College of Arts and Science's writing requirement.

#### **The Capstone Course and Exit Interviews**

SOCI 4043, Senior Seminar, is the capstone course for the undergraduate degrees in sociology and criminal justice. There were 20 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043: Senior Seminar during Fall 2017. Among them, 18 students (95%) passed; one student withdrew. There were 35 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043 during Spring 2017. Of these, 89% (N=31) passed and four students withdrew. The capstone course is used to conduct exit interviews for sociology majors and sociology and criminal justice double majors.

A 30-minute exit interview for the majors is an integral part of the course, and the instructors interview all graduating seniors through this course. The instructors conducted exit interviews in two sections of the course, Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semester. The interviews were informal but used the same series of open-ended questions.

During the fall 2017 semester, the instructor, Bill Schwab, conducted exit interviews in one section of the course (n = 12), in the Spring 2018, another instructor, Justin Barnum, sent an email with exit interview questions to all students enrolled in his class. The face-to-face interviews were informal but used the same series of open-ended questions; the email exit interviews consisted of five open-ended questions.

General findings related to CMJS major are presented and followed up with individual student answers.

#### **SOCI 4043 (Bill Schwab's sections) Fall and Spring**

##### **The Interview Protocol**

The instructor explained the purpose of the course to each student, described the types of information to be collected, and how this information would be used to improve the quality of our undergraduate programs. The instructor also informed each student that the interviews were confidential, the information would be reported in a way that he/she could not be identified, and that she/he could opt out of the interview or stop the interview at any time. All students participated.

### **Questions**

1. Why did you choose the major?
2. If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the same major?
3. Would you describe your favorite courses?
4. Would you describe the courses you liked least?
5. Is there a professor that you would like to talk about?
6. Did you have trouble getting core courses in a timely manner?
7. Can you suggest changes in the curriculum?
8. What are your plans after graduation?
9. How well did we do in preparing you for the job market or graduate/law school?

### **Findings**

- The vast majority of Criminal Justice majors chose the major as first-year-students.
- All the students said they would choose the major over again. Interviewees were enthusiastic about the degree program.
- Students tended to focus on favorite professors rather than specific courses—they mentioned Chris Shields, Summer Jackson, and Justin Barnum most often.
- The majority of the CMJS majors mentioned Chris Shields as a caring and helpful professor whose mentorship, in some cases, changed the direction of their careers and lives. Students mentioned other members of the faculty, but not with the same frequency.
- This is the third year where students did not mention the problem of a backlog in core courses. However, the students note they had problems enrolling in upper-level classes because of the junior status requirement.
- Students appear to be satisfied with the number and content of our electives. Using earlier exit feedback from our students, the department increased the efforts to address this issue in 2016. It appears this effort has been successful.

- Approximately a third of students are planning to attend graduate or law school, or law enforcement after graduation. Walmart, Sam's, and law enforcement agencies in the state are a major employer of our CMJS graduates.
- Chris Shield's work on expanding the internship program and sponsoring departmental job fairs has been successful in providing students with meaningful internship opportunities leading to possible employment.

### **SOCI 4043 (Justin Barnum section) Spring 2018**

#### **Questions asked included**

##### What you liked best about the program?

The majority of the students who responded to the email focused on our instructors, saying that they are the main asset in our department. They also emphasized the variety of electives offered, especially the special topics classes; the focus on the real-world applications of the things they learned; and the encouragement they were given for the future careers in the areas they were studying.

##### What three things could we improve on?

Students mentioned the need for interactions after classes. This is similar to what students noted last year when they indicated they wanted *more functions or guest speakers*. It appears they were not knowledgeable about our student organizations, including two organizations for CMJS students. Students also spoke of the desire for *more undergraduate research and writing for non-honors students*.

##### Do u feel prepared for your career/grad school?

Students indicated they feel fairly prepared for both career and graduate school. They also indicated that were aware of multiple social issues and how they will affect their prospective careers.

### **Online Survey, Spring 2018**

An online, electronically administered twenty-seven-item questionnaire collected evaluations from students who have applied for Spring 2018 graduation regarding the adequacy of their education and the skills they obtained.

Of the 19 total subjects that replied to the survey request, 42 % (N=8) of respondents were male, 89% of respondents (N=16) were white, 6% (N=1) were Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native; 6% of respondents (N=1) reported being multi-racial.; 5% indicated they were of Hispanic/Latino origin; 1 respondent declined to answer. A third of participants (33%) indicated they were combined SOCI-CMJS majors; 6% of the participants were dual majors with the second major other than criminal justice. All participants were seniors. With the exceptions of a few questions that some respondents skipped, the majority of findings presented are based on a total of 19 completed surveys.

Analyses show that students generally were satisfied with the content of course work in the major, the relevancy and difficulty of the curriculum, the depth and breadth of course offerings, and the adequacy of

instruction and advising. A significant number of them planned to further their education, many would select their major again, and nearly everyone would recommend their major to others. We discuss specific findings in detail below.

Findings:

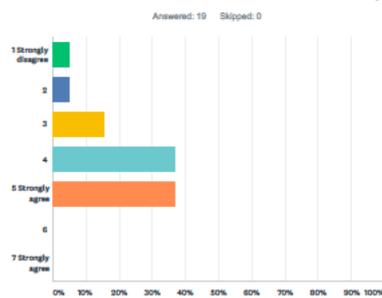
1. Quality of the curriculum. Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the content, difficulty, and variety of the curriculum. On a scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, students rate their agreement with the statements “I am satisfied with the variety of courses offered by my degree program” (Q-6, Figure 1) and “I am satisfied with the content of the courses in this program” (Q-7, Figure 2). Overall agreement with the first statement was average, with 79% of students rating their agreement as 4 and higher (compared with 64% in 2017); agreement with the second statement was also higher with 74% of respondents reporting their agreement as 4 and higher (73% in 2017). Only a handful of students (6% and 11%, respectively) reported a rating of 2 and lower, indicating that just a few students expressed disagreement with these statements. These findings confirm the information received in the exit interviews regarding the growing overall satisfaction of our students with our curriculum.

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Q6 I am satisfied with the variety of courses offered by this program.

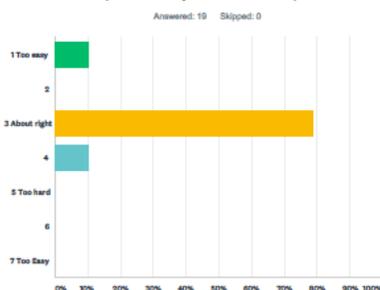
Q7 I am satisfied with the content of the courses in this program.



2. Difficulty of the curriculum. Students rated their agreement with a statement of satisfaction regarding the difficulty of the curriculum. Figure 3 (Q-8) shows students indicating that the level of difficulty is “about right” (89%); only a handful of students (11% - 2 students) indicated the courses are too easy.

Fig. 3

Q8 Rate the level of difficulty of the courses you've taken in this program (1=too easy to 5=too hard).



3. Program Goals 3 and 4. We measured our program goals 3 and 4 by asking students questions related to understanding of the historical, social, intellectual bases of human culture and environment, among others. Figure 4 (Q-14) indicates that students (89%) reported high level of

insight in the relationship between individual and society. The majority of students (89%) agreed that their major helped them gain the ability to recognize diversity and inequality (Fig. 5 Q-13).

Fig. 4

Q14 My major helped me gain insight into the relationship between individuals and society in human behavior.

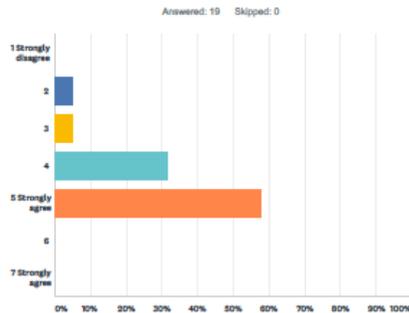
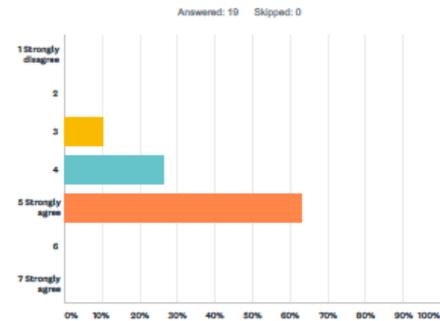


Fig. 5

Q13 My major helped me gain the ability to recognize diversity and inequality in society.



As Figure 6 (Q-12) demonstrates, 74% of the respondents agree/strongly agree they have learned how to conduct research in their major area. Figure 7 (Q-9) indicates that 95% of our students agree/strongly agree that they have learned several theories in their area. These responses indicate a substantive improvement over the last year, 64% and 73%, respectively.

Fig. 6

Q12 I learned how to conduct research in my area of study (sociology, criminology, or criminal justice).

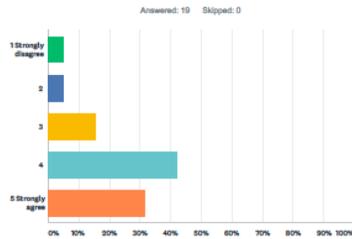
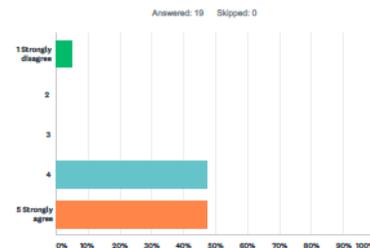


Fig. 7

Q9 I learned several theories in my area of study (sociology, criminology, or criminal justice).



4. Student Learning Outcomes (6-8). Finally, we asked a set of questions asking students to reflect on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they have acquired and be able to do as a result of our program. Overall, students feel very positively about our performance. Responses suggest that the department is meeting the programmatic goals consistent with our mission. Specifically, Figures 8 through 12 indicate that the majority of students (68%) agreed that the major improved their ability to understand data (Q-17), more students (74%) however agreed their ability to interpret data has improved (Q-18) or they (74%) developed the ability to make data-informed decisions (Q-19) With the exception of Q-17, these responses suggest a substantive improvement over last year. With regard to critical thinking (Q-20) and writing abilities (Q-21), 89% and 84% of the respondents strongly agreed with statements, respectively. This is another substantive improvement over last year. This is the second time that we have asked questions related to data literacy. At the same time, the department began to place more emphasis on data literacy in our courses. Our findings suggest that data literacy, writing skills, and critical thinking skills represent the three areas in which we observe some substantive improvements. We will continue to monitor these areas.

Fig. 8

Q17 Courses in my major developed my ability to understand data.

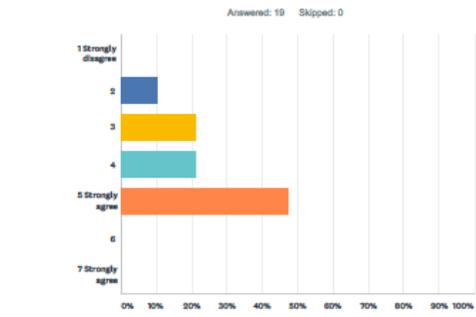


Fig. 9

Q18 Courses in my major developed my ability to interpret data.

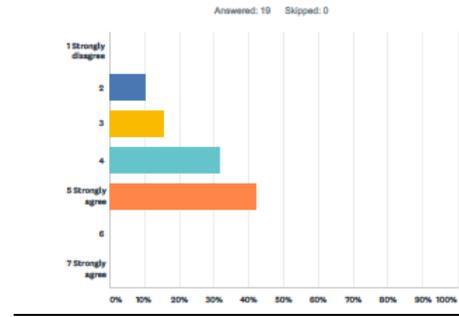


Fig. 10

Q19 Courses in my major developed my ability to make data-inform decisions.

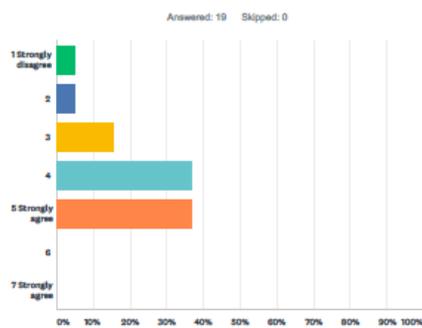


Fig. 11

Q20 Courses in my major developed my critical thinking skills.

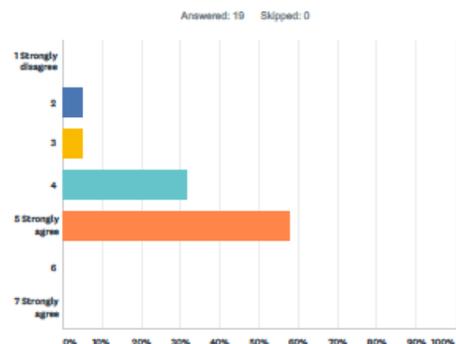
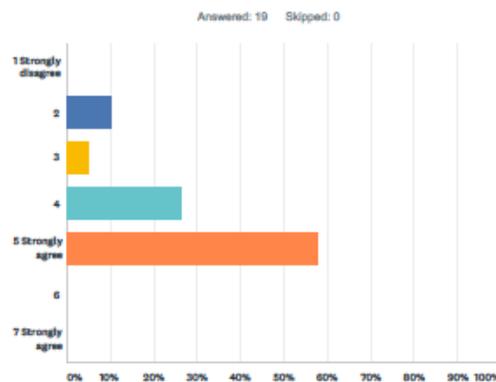


Fig. 12

Q21 Courses in my major improved my writing skills.



Additional findings indicated that the majority (80%) of the respondents feel the degree is valuable (Q-22, Fig. 13) and 86% of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they were glad they chose their major (Q-23, Fig. 14). Seventy three percent of the respondents reported that they would recommend their major to others.

Fig. 13

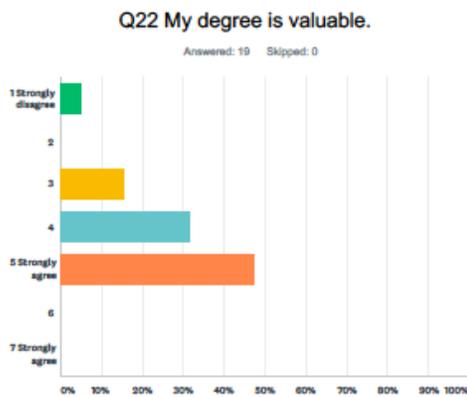
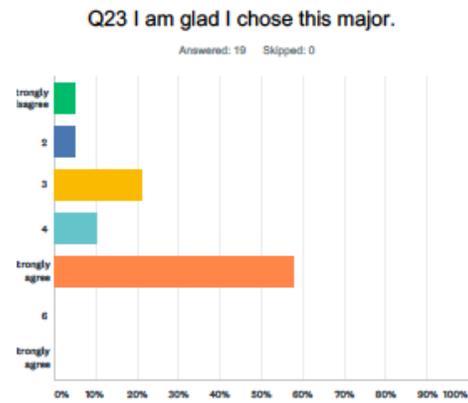


Fig. 14



## Summary

In general, our survey findings confirm the information collected during informal interviews and via email. The mixed-method results indicate that our department is performing well. Our students are satisfied with their experiences in the department, have positive experiences with the professors, and benefit from their courses. While we are meeting or exceeding all of our student learning objectives, we have improved several areas of our instruction, including the development of *research skills, data literacy, and critical thinking and writing skills*. The results regarding student perceptions of the value of their degree have also shown substantive improvement. In fall 2017, the department proposed a social data analytics certificate within the SOCI major. This effort was stopped by stakeholders from other colleges. This fall, we will continue the effort by proposing a development of a social data analytics concentration. Moreover, in line with our strategic priorities, during the summer of 2017, the department provided several faculty with additional funds to hire and work on several different research projects with our undergraduate majors. These funds will continue as long as the department has resources available to support undergraduate research.

Furthermore, we have continued to implement career-oriented content in our courses and our internship program is one of the best in Fulbright College. Given the importance of the internship experiences, we will add internship-related questions to our next year survey.

**Recruitment Efforts:** During Fall 2017, the department added 8 new majors (7 CMJS and 1 SOCI). During the spring we received numerous new majors and anticipate more through the summer during orientation. Prior to orientation our new majors grew to 81 (58 new and 23 transfer).

**Retention Efforts.** Importantly, under Lori Holyfield’s leadership, we have continued our robust retention efforts. In addition to our monthly “Pizza with a Prof,” the undergraduate director contacted the at-risk students via email and met with approximately 30 students to discuss strategies for success. Regular emails to all majors included a variety of informational subjects, such as tutoring services, deadlines, and invitations for face to face meetings. Currently, we have only 7 at-risk established majors. This is the lowest cohort of at-risk since record keeping.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- Development of *research skills, data literacy, and critical thinking and writing skills* is critical to the overall success of our students, especially to their post-graduation careers. The department will continue to support faculty efforts to engage our students in their research projects.
- Resource-wise, the Department is one of the largest majors in the Fulbright College, with over 410 majors in Sociology and Criminal Justice, and 105 double majors, but the Undergraduate Director position is budgeted at nine months only. Having the Undergraduate Director devoted to the issues of student success and retention as well as having the Director available through the summer to meet with our majors and counsel them regarding the skills they need and choices they have is a critical component of this effort.
- Student success and retention efforts are key components of our mission. We will use available resources and work on acquiring new resources to support this effort.