

Executive summary

Introduction

The Sociology Program is located in the Department of Sociology & Anthropology within the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. It provides undergraduate education in sociology for students wishing to complete degrees that include the Sociology Major, Sociology Teaching Major, Sociology Minor, Sociology Teaching Minor, or BIS emphases. The program also serves students seeking general education, diversity credits, or who wish to take sociology courses for interest. It studies social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. It investigates the structure of groups, organizations, and societies, and how people interact within these contexts. Its subject matter ranges from the intimate family to the hostile mob; from organized crime to religious cults; from the divisions of race, gender and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture; and from the sociology of work to the sociology of health care and medicine.

Mission

The sociology program revised its mission statement in the Fall 2013, immediately after, and according to the recommendations in, the last 5-year program report. Revisiting and refining the vision represented the first step in the efforts to better align the program mission with its goals and student learning outcomes. The vision statement reflects the American Sociological Association's view on the role of Sociology undergraduate programs. The Sociology program mission resonates with the new [College of Social and Behavioral Sciences mission statement](#) and echoes Weber State University's [core mission of access, community, and learning](#).

In revising the mission, our faculty members agreed that the most important goal, the one that separates sociology from other social science disciplines, entails building a skill of sociological thinking where students make can explain how social structures and cultures shape and interact with individual biographies and life chances. Additional skills include collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data, critically evaluating social phenomena, and synthesizing complex concepts into cogent and compelling oral and written reports. All five goals are integrated in the course content and pedagogy through the specific program outcomes, albeit in various degrees, and faculty are encouraged to explain to students which skills they are developing in sociology. As an undergraduate-only program, we are focused on training students in skills that can be marketable in a variety of occupations and careers. That training takes place both inside and outside the traditional classroom as students engage in online education, serve the community through community engaged learning (CEL) courses, conduct primary research, intern in area companies and organizations, and participate in Study Abroad programs. It's our goal that students who graduate with a Sociology major or minor degree have acquired discipline-specific content knowledge (concepts, theories, methods, research findings) and had an opportunity to apply sociological analysis and ways of thinking—e.g., the so-called “sociological imagination”—in practice. Regardless of students' future career paths, these skills are both relevant and valuable in the labor market. The program also serves the university's Liberal Arts tradition by contributing to the General Education curriculum and thus preparing students as engaged and responsible citizens who can navigate the unique social, political, and economic challenges of the 21st Century.

Assessment

After the previous five-year self-study report, the program made a plan to have all its courses assessed by the 2016-17 report (see, http://www.weber.edu/portfolio/socio_ap.html). We managed to complete all the scheduled assessments except for two courses that were not taught during the five-year period: SOC 3840: Cities and Urban Life (taught as an interdisciplinary honors course with two co-instructors) and SOC 4550: Sociology of Work (canceled for low enrollment). Both are taught in fall 2016 and will be included in the next five-year report, 2020-21. Each course was assessed by the professor (or professors) who taught the course. This report entails these assessment summaries as well as the assessment data with qualitative and quantitative results. Based on the last five years' assessments, there were no significant changes that were required for any of the courses; however, student performance on individual outcomes occasionally prompted the instructor to review a course assignment or reflect on ways that students' motivation to turn in all assignments could be improved. After this five-year report, the program faculty may need to revisit the threshold and discuss whether it should be set at a higher level for the next five-year period.

Skills

All Sociology major and minor graduates are asked to take a survey about their experience in the Sociology program. The survey results from two years with significant response rates (AY 2013-14 and AY 2014-15) show that students' skills have increased after taking sociology classes. Among the 2013-14 graduates, the largest increase was on two skills, "Use sociological theory to discuss a current event or issue" and "Explain basic sociological concepts (e.g., self, institution, and structure) to another person." The smallest increase was for "write an application letter for a job or graduate school" with an increase of 1.4 points. The findings also show that most students graduate with some experience in high impact practices.

Advising

Advisement in career decisions and graduate school plans is addressed by faculty advisors in discussion with students; faculty teaching SOC 4900: Senior Capstone Course; occasionally by faculty in special presentations on careers and graduate school hosted by the Anthropology and/or Sociology Club; and by the campus Careers Services Office and their annual campus career fairs. The program has also experimented with a specific course that combines the students from two program in teaching career skills.

In addition to the above segments, this report contains information from our alumni, including their evaluation of the utility of their degree and future career plans.