

SOCIOLOGY LEARNING ASSURANCE REPORT AY 2011-2012

Report Date: September 27, 2012

School/College: Arts and Sciences

Department/Program: Sociology

Person completing the Report: Cecilia Santos

1. **Overview Statement:** Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken last academic year
 - a. The Department of Sociology did not assess learning outcomes through the courses that were taught in AY 2011-2012. In fact, last academic year was a period dedicated to revising the learning assurance plan implemented in the previous assessment cycle (2008-2011). Building on the results of that assessment cycle, the Department discussed curriculum changes and designed its new Student Learning Assurance Plan for the 2012-2014 academic cycle. Therefore, this report focuses on the changes made to the curriculum and the new Plan, demonstrating active review of the curriculum and of the measures that the Department is taking to achieve the program learning goals.
 - b. **Joshua Gamson, Stephanie Sears and Cecilia Santos** served as the members of the Sociology Learning Assurance Subcommittee for AY 2011-2012. The committee designed the new Plan for the 2012-2014 academic cycle. The whole Department discussed the results of our previous assessment cycle, and all faculty contributed to curriculum revisions and helped the committee to design our new Learning Assurance Plan.
2. **What we did to assess the program learning goals and outcomes in AY 2011-2012**

In Fall 2011, the Department discussed the data collected from assessing the program learning goals and outcomes in AY 2010-2011. In

particular, we diagnosed the problem of student learning at the upper levels, and discussed ways in which students could enter the Capstone and Honors Thesis courses with stronger research knowledge and skills, and how those courses could further build and solidify research-related knowledge and skills.

Due to difficulties in attracting enough students to the Honors Thesis Workshop course in 2009-2011 academic years, we changed our course offering for AY 2011-2012: While Honors Thesis remained an option for students, we decided to offer the course as a Directed Study rather than as a Workshop course; we hoped that self-motivated and well-prepared students would pursue this option, with the rest entering the Capstone course. We also made an extra effort to inform students of the Honors Thesis Workshop option at an earlier stage of their undergraduate career. As a result, student interest in the Honors Thesis Workshop has improved and we are offering the Honors Thesis Workshop course again in Fall 2012.

In addition to changing the frequency of some of our core courses, such as Capstone, we dedicated extra effort to advise students to take Sociological Theory at an earlier stage in their career. All faculty advisors were instructed to guide the students to take core courses in a sequence that we believe would improve student-learning outcomes at the upper levels.

To address the issue of redundancy across the curriculum, the Department revised its areas of emphases and submitted the revisions to the Curriculum Committee in Fall 2012.

Since Fall 2011, the Department has been discussing needed revisions on our core courses, particularly the two courses on U.S. versus global inequalities, respectively. We gathered information on the trends in the discipline and other Sociology programs throughout the country; we discussed our relationship with other programs at USF that also address global inequalities, and we discussed whether it would be better for our student learning to combine the U.S. and global inequalities into one single course on stratification and inequalities with both an American and international perspective. We did not want to change this aspect of the curriculum without achieving consensus and making sure this was the best path to take regarding our curriculum revisions. Since our program is scheduled to go through an external review in Spring 2012, we

decided to wait and take the opportunity to receive feedback from the external reviewers on how to proceed on this aspect of our curriculum revisions.

Finally, the Department revised and submitted its Student Learning Assurance Plan for the 2012-2014 academic cycle.

3. What will be done differently as a result of what was learned this year?

As stated above, last year we changed the frequency of our offering of the Honors Thesis Workshop course. However, student interest in this course has increased and we are now offering the Honors Thesis Workshop course at least once a year.

To address redundancy in our curriculum and to keep our curriculum current and cutting-edge, we revised our areas of emphasis and submitted the revisions to the Curriculum Committee. The Committee has not made its final decision on the proposal yet. One of the proposed changes relates to the creation of a new area of emphasis in Education and Culture. We also combined the previous areas of emphasis in Gender and Race/Ethnicity within a new area focusing on Human Rights and Social Justice.

Regarding our student learning assurance plan for 2012-2014 academic cycle, we revised our previous plan and incorporated the recommendations received from the Office of Student Learning Assurance and the Associate Dean Shirley Mcguire. The new curriculum map was expanded to include elective courses. We added a new learning outcome (1.d) to measure student learning of “levels” of inequality beyond national borders (within-national, international, and global levels of inequalities). We also added our Mission Statement to the new plan.

4. Attach a copy of the components of the department/program student assurance plan that have been modified since its initial submission:

- a. Program Mission: The Mission has not changed since the first assessment cycle (2008-2011). In fact, our Mission was approved by the Department in 2002 and revised in 2005. However, in contrast with the previous assessment plan, we did include the Department’s Mission Statement in our new plan for the 2012-2014 academic cycle.
- b. Program Learning Goals: The four learning goals have not changed.



- c. Program Learning Outcomes: We added one learning outcome (1.d), as indicated in our Learning Assurance Plan for the 2012-2014 academic cycle (see attached).
- d. Program Learning Rubrics aligned with outcomes: No changes since submission of our previous assessment plan, except the addition of the rubric corresponding to the new learning outcome 1.d (see attached).
- e. Curriculum map that shows the courses that pertain to the outcome: We have added electives to our Curriculum Map (see both core and elective curriculum maps attached).

