EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Academic Program Review
College of Arts and Sciences

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM

Department of Sociology

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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CAMPUS VISIT

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The review team read the self-study written by faculty in the Sociology Department, reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, and other university materials.

1. **How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.**

The external review committee gave the Sociology department a rating of VERY GOOD. They mentioned that this department "deserves to be lauded for its strong commitment to social justice, undergraduate pedagogy, passionate and dedicated faculty, and vibrant student body." The committee decided this program compares with "other top Jesuit schools such as Santa Clara and Seattle University," but noted, "if there were aspirations [to be on par with] institutions such as Georgetown or Boston College research time and resources would need to be doubled." The committee mentioned a number of areas where the department demonstrated excellency, such as "exemplifying the mission of the institution, collegiality, high quality teaching, contribution to campus-wide programs, and providing leadership not just in the department but across campus." They added, "if the Department addresses some of the areas

which could benefit from strengthening, and is provided the resources with which to do so, it can move to overall excellence."

2. **What are the most important general issues/challenges that emerged from the external review process?**

- **Faculty workload:** The external reviewers recommend recognizing the "intensive involvement [of Sociology faculty members] in many external programs in and across the university" and how this involvement makes it difficult to complete other aspects of the faculty role, especially research. The committee asserted "multiple commitments mean that faculty in the department are spread too thin."

- **Additional Faculty lines:** The committee felt "there is a significant need for faculty lines in the department" in the short and long term. The external reviewers recommend securing short term replacements for faculty leaving for sabbatical and other opportunities in the near future, and also establishing two additional faculty lines for the long term.

- **Honors and capstone program structure:** The honors and capstone projects currently rely heavily on faculty advising students, at times with no credit. The committee referenced "strong support for changing the honors program organization" to allow faculty more time to focus on research and/or expand capstone project offerings.

- **Quantitative literacy:** Referenced in both the Self Study and in on-campus interviews, the committee recommends establishing a required statistics course for majors. This is especially necessary for students in the honors thesis course.

- **Support staff:** The current Sociology Program Assistant is highly regarded by students, faculty, and staff and "holds a great deal of institutional knowledge" while providing "many informal and unofficially recognized services for the students and the department." The committee recommends "the department and college should carefully consider strategies to anticipate [the Program Assistant's] departure for more challenging and more adequately remunerated roles." Later on in the report, they state: "Consideration of an additional half-time staff support person may be needed."

- **Research culture:** The committee noted teaching and service commitments currently make the expectation of spending 20% of faculty time on research "seem infeasible." They recommend establishing a more robust culture of research in the department and take steps to give "clear guidance regarding what constitutes 'enough' time on service especially."

- **Student resource needs and morale:** "A significant increase in student resource needs alongside cuts in faculty support" have increased concern over faculty morale in the department, according to the external review committee. More and more students need "special accommodations" which, coupled with cuts to supportive programs, have impacted faculty greatly.

3. **What specific recommendations for improving the program's quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?**

- **Student research and alumni networking:** The committee wrote, "Collaborative research between faculty and students is a high impact practice that holds great potential." They recommend, "The department should consider ways of involving sociology students in research aimed at collecting data about alumni and post it on the departmental web page. With permission from those alumni, they could include contact information so that current students can network with graduates who majored in Sociology." This will increase "the number of students who do a significant research project within the context of a class" and give current students a platform to network with alumni.

- **Data sharing:** They recommend sharing alumni data with "Admissions, the Office of Career Services, as well as all relevant administrators." The committee noted alumni employment data posted on the Program website can be used "as an example to prospective students and their families illustrating how a degree from the institution helped prepare them for jobs and careers."

- **Using alumni data:** Following their first recommendation, the committee feels this alumni data "should be built into courses throughout the curriculum," starting on the first day of class through the capstone courses.

- **Intellectual convergence and MCAT scores:** The external reviewers referenced changes to the MCAT exam in 2015, which "has a new section focusing upon social science material, 30% of which is basic sociology." With this in mind, they recommend "as part of the Student Learning Outcomes for SOC 150 [Intro to Sociology], the Department should verify that it covers the material needed for the MCAT as well as material from the [Sociological Literacy Framework] in the course." This may assist in increasing class enrollment by drawing in additional pre-med students.

- **Minors:** The committee found one "programmatic issue that does not appear to strongly align with the needs and interests of the department or faculty – the continued use of emphases within the major." They recommend "emphases should be dropped from the major offerings. Specializations seen as Core offerings should be rearticulated as minors," with the exception of criminal justice, "which seems popular and relevant.".

- **Additional faculty lines:** The external reviewers recommend the University hire one to two additional faculty in the Sociology department.

- **Curriculum map:** The committee recommends the Department "consider doing a curriculum map, where the concepts and competencies of the Sociological Literacy Framework are mapped to all of the courses in the Sociology curriculum." They noted, "the department is very familiar with curriculum mapping and has done an excellent job of using it to map their student learning outcomes to the courses in the curriculum as part of their assessment plan," but using the Sociological Literacy Framework would allow the department to identify any gaps in the curriculum.

- **Quantitative literacy requirement:** To stay "consistent with national guidelines for the undergraduate major in Sociology," the committee recommends "the department should require a statistics course for the major." Considering the University already requires 4 units of math or quantitative science, they

advised the department "can stipulate that students take a statistics course to fulfil this part of their Core Curriculum requirements." The external reviewers also recommend working with the Mathematics, Economics, and Politics departments to develop "a course in statistics for the Social Sciences."

- **Honors program:** The committee advises additional review and reformatting of the honors course to better align with faculty goals.

- **Internship course:** The external reviewers recommend the creation and regular implementation of an internship course. "Like SOC 393 Career Exploration & Planning," the committee wrote, "perhaps this could be a two-unit course that is taught the same semester when students are doing their internships." They recognized the work the faculty are already doing to provide students with internship opportunities, but recommend formalizing the system within the curriculum and cite student interest in a more formal process.

- **Faculty support:** The review committee referenced faculty support initiatives through the [National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development](). In order to assist faculty in achieving their research goals and help strengthen teaching skills, they advise, "The College or University should consider institutional membership in the National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development, and putting untenured or new associate faculty through their Faculty Success Program (FSP)."

- **Student involvement:** The committee cited numerous examples of faculty going above and beyond to facilitate and support student clubs, organizations, and other co-curricular experiences. They recommend the department "consider the possibility of strengthening undergraduate sociological identities through moving AKD initiation to the third year and re-establishing the Sociology Club."

- **Online and hybrid course offerings:** The reviewers recommended creating more online or hybrid courses "in consultation with college leadership" in an effort to "ease pressures on classroom space, student resources, and faculty time." They referenced a possible miscommunication between faculty and administrators, noting faculty "with concerns over intellectual property, resources to develop classes, and compensation for time spent creating course content."

- **Cultural Anthropology minor:** While the committee did not meet with anthropologists in the department or with International Studies, they did offer a recommendation on the issue of moving the Cultural Anthropology minor under International Studies: "If the department wants to move the Cultural Anthropology minor to International Studies, then open and explicit conversations need to be had with International Studies and all of the faculty and administrators involved in this decision."

4. **In the opinion of the external review committee, is the program following the University's strategic initiatives?**

The reviewers noted that there are limitations in resources, but the Department of Sociology is a "strong and coherent program" that can "become even stronger in the future, with a renewed sense of identity and purpose as they help students… develop their sociological imaginations." They observed "structural limitations through university policies

and union negotiations that can create tensions, but these are beyond the ability of reviewers or the department faculty to adequately address." They recommended the department focus on "protecting research time… through team-teaching approaches to free up more blocks of time given the time-intensive teaching schedule," "explore opportunities for collaboration with other local universities," expand online offerings, and address faculty morale.

5. **In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?**

As the external review committee stated in their report, "the Department of Sociology stands as a model for the University in terms of living the mission of the institution. Several of the syllabi we examined emphasize learning goals in alignment with the mission and the department conducted its self-study and teaching evaluations with these goals in mind. On all counts the department exceeds expectation. The faculty, the courses, and the leadership activities in the department reflect a commitment to diversity, social justice, and the betterment of the region and humanity. The students we met expressed a strong sense of this mission in their experiences. All four had done research, written longer research papers, been engaged in class discussion, volunteered, and participated in service-learning." They also commended the Program and the University on its ability to recruit diverse faculty and student populations, which in turn lead to a more robust multicultural education and community.

6. **What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?**

The external review committee recommends all parties read this report, then faculty in the department should "meet to celebrate their strengths, and then talk about how well each recommendation may help strengthen the program, as well as the feasibility of implementation of the recommendations." After that, the next step is for the Dean and Associate Deans to meet with the faculty (full-time) of the Department of Sociology and discuss the action plan based on the self-study and reviewers' report. Based on the reviewers' suggestions, the Office of the Provost could assist the program by thinking creatively about faculty support, specifically to look into programs to invest in newer faculty members, replacing faculty absent in both short and long terms, and granting faculty additional units of compensation to account for advising and co-curricular support for students outside of the classroom.

7. **What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?**

No additional information is necessary to understand the report.