Academic Program Review Report

Department of Sociology

California State University, Sacramento

Review Team

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Fall 2013

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM REVIEW PROCESS

The Department of Sociology underwent their scheduled program review as one among seven academic units in the 2011-2012 review cycle. This was the fourth cycle at our University to incorporate the Program Review Pilot Study. The Pilot Study offers programs three options for the design of the Self-Study; the Department of Sociology chose Option C, titled "Focused Inquiry." As explained in the *Pilot Study Manual of Procedures,* Option C calls for three main components:

- General information about the program, e.g., data on students, faculty, staff, facilities, etc. (most of which is supplied by Office of Institutional Research);
- A statement of intended student learning outcomes at the program level; methods for assessing them, including the use of direct measures; assessment results to date; and documentation of the use of assessment results in efforts to achieve program improvement (assistance with the preparation of which is available from the University Assessment Coordinator); and

The results of a focused inquiry addressing issues of particular interest/concern to the program itself, in the context of what is currently important to the college and university.

For its focused inquiry, the Department of Sociology undertook a set of projects relating to enhancing student learning and the assessment thereof (outlined in pp. 34-43 of the Self-study):

1. Evaluate and rewrite undergraduate department learning goals and outcomes.
2. Evaluate graduate program, considering connection with undergraduate learning goals and program.
3. Link department learning goals and objectives with university learning goals and objectives.
4. Evaluate entirety of program to determine potential achievement of learning goals and objectives.
5. Evaluate past assessment findings and possible implementation into the larger program. This will be done in consideration of the newly determined learning goals and program plan for delivering the goals to students.
6. Evaluate assessment program; develop department assessment plan for the next 5 years.
7. Design specific assessment for this year.
8. Collect data for this year to measure specific learning goal(s); measure both specific goals and overall assessment plan.
9. Solidify plan for five-year assessment plan based on the evaluation of the assessment that occurs during the Self-study (Spring 2012).
10. Create SacCT 9.1 undergraduate and graduate Sociology "courses," to be implemented Fall 2013, to help inform students and disseminate information (regarding departmental changes, availability of resources, advising program, etc.).
11. Develop an ongoing group advising program to keep students informed and to connect with students; planning for Fall 2013 implementation.

This report is structured based primarily on the three sections prescribed by Option C. Therefore, once preliminary materials have been set forth, it begins with general information pertinent to the

Department, then examines issues involving learning outcomes and assessment, and then proceeds to the review of the focused inquiry.

During the course of the review process, the Review Team consulted the following individuals, documents, and other resources.

Individuals Consulted

Dr. Judson Landis, Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology

Dr. Bohsiu Wu, Professor and incoming Chair (in August, 2013), Department of Sociology

Dr. Todd Migliaccio, Professor, overseeing Program Review process, Department of Sociology

Dr. Amy Liu, Professor and Graduate Coordinator, Department of Sociology*

Dr. Edward Lascher, Interim Dean, College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies

Dr. Amy Liu, Director, Office of Academic Program Assessment*

Dr. Wendy Ng (External Consultant), Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology, San José State University

*The Review Team met on two occasions with Dr. Liu, one time to consult about matters pertaining to the graduate program, the other time to consult about assessment.

Classes and Meetings Attended

Meetings with faculty (May 15, 16, 21, 22, and 23, 2013)

Meetings with undergraduate students:
• SOC 101, Introduction to Statistics for Sociologists (April 18, 2013)
• SOC 192, Sociological Theory (May 13, 2013)

Meeting with graduate students (prior to SOC 294, May 13, 2013)

Documents Consulted

Department of Sociology Documents
• Self-Study proposal (November 30, 2011)
  ▪ http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ProgReview/Proposals/Proposals%2011-12/Sociology.pdf
• *Department of Sociology Self-Study 2011-2012*

• Department of Sociology 2011-2012 Annual Assessment Reports and related documents
  ▪ BA: http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/Assessment%20Reports/11-12/SOC/soc%20major.pdf

- MA: http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/Assessment%20Reports/11-12/SOC/soc%20grad.pdf
- *Sociology Department Exit Exam*: http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/Assessment%20Reports/11-12/SOC/exit_exam.pdf
- *Undergraduate Sociology Student Exit Survey*: http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/Assessment%20Reports/11-12/SOC/exit_survey.pdf
- *Sociology Paper Assessment Rubric*: http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/Assessment%20Reports/11-12/SOC/Sociology%20Paper%20Assessment%20Rubric.pdf
- Sociology minor "template" (IPP reporting document) (February 3, 2012): http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/Assessment%20Reports/11-12/SOC/soc%20minor.pdf
- The Department of Sociology website
  - http://www.csus.edu/Soc/
- *Sacramento State University Catalog*, Sociology
- http://catalog.csus.edu/current/programs/soc.html
- Syllabi from Department of Sociology courses

Office of Institutional Research *Sociology Fact Book Fall* (2013)
- http://www.csus.edu/oir/Data%20Center/Department%20Fact%20Book/Departmental%20Fact%20Book.html

External Consultant Report for the Department of Sociology, Dr. Wendy Ng (May 17, 2013)

Previous Program Review report for the Department of Sociology (May 13, 2006)

Program Review Pilot Study, 2007-2011 and *Manual of Procedures for 2011-2012 Cycle*

Program Review at Sacramento State
- http://www.csus.edu/acaf/progReview/

Office of Academic Program Assessment at Sacramento State
- http://www.csus.edu/programassessment/index.html

Academic Transformations: A Decade of Change in Department Structures and Teaching Loads (American Sociological Association's *AY 2011-2012 Department Survey Series* No. 3, November 2013)

The Review Team wishes to thank all the above who contributed to the program review process.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

<u>Commendations to the Department:</u>

Commendation 1: The Department consistently offers excellent courses, providing a sound foundation for student learning.

Commendation 2: The Department contributes extensively to the University's General Education program, and also serves other departmental degree programs.

Commendation 3: The graduate program is strong, with a well-structured curriculum, a healthy number of applicants, and capable and energetic leadership on the part of Graduate Coordinator Dr. Amy Liu and the Graduate Committee.

Commendation 4: The faculty, full-time and part-time alike, are devoted to providing through their courses excellent opportunities for student learning.

Commendation 5: The departmental website provides clear information that is easily accessible.

Commendation 6: The Department provides good opportunities for students to socialize and participate in shared academic activities through the Sociology Club and the Alpha Kappa Delta honor society.

Commendation 7: The Department has made good strides in the area of student advising, with its new group advising plan and its mentoring plan for at-risk students overseen by Dr. Mridula Udayagiri.

Commendation 8: The Department has succeeded in developing and implementing an assessment system that contributes effectively to enhancing student learning and serves as an exemplary model for our campus.

Commendation 9: The Undergraduate Assessment Committee led by Dr. Todd Migliaccio and Dr. Jacqueline Carrigan has been very effective, and several faculty have participated in Faculty Learning Communities sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning during the past two years.

<u>Recommendations to the Department:</u>

Recommendation 2: Discuss the impact of the rapid increase of students majoring Sociology, taking into consideration the accompanying increase in the major-to-faculty ratio and possible effects on career prospects for graduates.

Recommendation 3: Consider means of discerning reasons for the rapid increase in number of students choosing to major in Sociology.

Recommendation 4: Make every effort to maximize effective and sufficient scheduling of core requirement courses; if these efforts prove inadequate, make a case for hiring new faculty based in part on clear illustration that these efforts are not adequate and that the status quo is impeding time-to-graduate and graduation rates.

Recommendation 6: Consider carefully the variety of forms that a capstone course or experience might take, and the variety of benefits for student learning.

Recommendation 7: Make release time for the Graduate Coordinator position more meaningful, perhaps by devising a cumulative scheme such that 1-unit per semester amounts to an occasional actual release from teaching commitments.

Recommendation 8: Consider development of a teaching assistantship program.

Recommendation 9: Explore options for the M.A. culminating experience, including variations on the themes of Thesis (e.g., consider more stringent requirements in order for a student to be granted this option), Project, and Exam.

Recommendation 11: Develop a departmental manual of policies and procedures for purposes of clarity and easy accessibility and of providing a platform for further deliberation.

Recommendation 12: Develop position descriptions and hiring requests based on evidence derived from assessment efforts and on well-reasoned arguments regarding the most pressing needs.

Recommendation 14: Resolve internally how best to prioritize programmatic needs based on curricular requirements.

Recommendation 15: As the Department continues its annual assessment efforts, consider carefully the seven suggestions set forth in this report for purposes of further enhancing the assessment system, making it more comprehensive, and capitalizing more fully on its potential for improving student learning.

Recommendation 16: Ensure that course syllabi clearly state course learning outcomes and, when appropriate, connections to program learning goals/outcomes.

Recommendation 17: Take full advantage of the excellent assessment efforts, applying results in service of supporting faculty hire requests and of further enhancing opportunities for student learning.

Recommendations to the Dean, College of SSIS:

Recommendation (to the Dean) 10: Explore allegations of inappropriate conduct among faculty and take appropriate steps to help the Department restore trust and collegiality.

Recommendations to the Dean, College of SSIS, and to the University Provost:

Recommendation (to the Dean and the Provost) 1: Take note of the effects of impaction on other departments.

Recommendation (to the Dean and the Provost) 5: Support expanding the faculty pool in collaboration with the Department's diligent attempts to adopt more effective curricular design and scheduling practices.

Recommendation (to the Dean and the Provost) 13: In light of the clear needs for expanding the pool of faculty who are capable of teaching core requirement courses, provide resources to enable the Department of Sociology to hire based on arguments supported by assessment and by this program review. (Cf. Recommendation 5.)

Recommendation to the Faculty Senate:

Based on this program review and the Self-study report prepared by the Department of Sociology, the Review Team recommends that all of the Department's degree programs be approved for six years or until the next scheduled program review.

INTRODUCTION

Current Circumstances

This Program Review report was prepared during a period of transition for the Department of Sociology, as new Chair Bohsiu Wu replaced Judson Landis, who had served as chair for forty years. The Review Team regards this as a time of opportunity for the Department, as it carries forth the many fine accomplishments of the past and looks forward to some improvements now and in the future. The Review Team finds that in most aspects the Department is sound and provides for students a vibrant and nurturing atmosphere for pursuit of sociological knowledge. External Consultant Wendy Ng, herself a chair in a CSU Department of Sociology (at San José State University) and therefore with a privileged perspective on the challenges and opportunities of these current circumstances, concludes her report with a summary statement that aligns well with the perspective of the Review Team:

> The Department of Sociology at CSUS provides an excellent education for its undergraduate and graduate students. As a program it provides best practices in assessment in the major, and aligns these practices with the Sacramento State Baccalaureate Learning Goals. The department is undergoing a transition in leadership and this is an opportunity to develop, plan, and implement changes. (p. 18)

The Review Team's recommendations set forth in this report attempt to assist with this process of developing, planning, and implementing changes. We focus especially on steps that can be considered to improve clarity and effectiveness of departmental policies as means of promoting a more effective work environment for purposes of enhancing opportunities for student learning.

Overview of the Department

The Department of Sociology is housed in the College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies along with Anthropology, Asian Studies, Economics, Environmental Studies, Ethnic Studies, Family & Consumer Sciences, Gerontology, Government, Liberal Studies, Psychology, Public Policy & Administration, Social Science, and Women's Studies.

The Department serves four main constituencies of students:
- Undergraduates who major or minor in Sociology
- Undergraduates in degree programs that incorporate Sociology courses as electives, including students completing majors in Social Science (with 7 Sociology course electives)
- Students fulfilling General Education requirements in Areas A3, C1, C4, D1A, D1B, D2, and E; two of the D2 courses also fulfill the Race & Ethnicity graduation requirement
- Graduate students in the M.A. program in Sociology

Undergraduate Programs

The B.A. requires 43 units. Core requirements cover social theory and methods of inquiry, and such social institutions as the family, education, politics, work, and religion. The B.A. allows

students to choose elective courses from among thematic areas: crime and deviance; diversity and inequality; socialization and interaction; and globalization and social change.

Service to General Education

During the past five years, the Department has offered 14 GE Area courses:
- A3: SOC 8
- C1: SOC 162
- C4: SOC 135
- D1A: SOC 1
- D2: SOC 3, 10, 118 (also R&E), 120 (also R&E), SOC 155, SOC 164
- E: SOC 126, 127, 158, 168

During the past five years, the Department has enrolled 15,746 students (3,153 per AY) in these GE courses, thus contributing robustly to the University's General Education program.

Graduate Program

The M.A. in Sociology requires completion of 30 units, all of which must be 200- or 500-level. Core requirements consist of 6 courses (15 units: the 1-unit 200A, the 2-unit 200B, and 4 3-unit courses). Elective options (3 courses, 9 units) incorporate a broad range of sociological topics (e.g. gender, crime and deviance, race and ethnic relations). The Culminating Experience requirement (6 units) consists of either a thesis or a project.

Faculty and Staff

The departmental website lists 15 full-time and 13 part-time faculty members (one of them emeritus faculty). Office of Institutional Research *Sociology Fact Book Fall* (Fall 2013) lists 12 of the 15 full-time faculty as tenured and 3 on tenure-track.

The departmental office is staffed by an ASC II and a part-time ASA I.

Facilities and Technology

The departmental office is located in Amador Hall 450; the faculty offices are also in Amador Hall.

Student Affairs and Advising

According to the OIR *Fact Book,* the number of undergraduates in the Department has ranged from 412 (2008) to 545 (2012). In Fall 2013 the number is about 800. Graduate student enrollment over this same period has ranged from 39 to 51. The Department has implemented mandatory academic advising is mandatory for all of its student students. The Department maintains a Sociology Club and the Alpha Kappa Delta honor society.

GENERAL INFORMATION (Option C, Part 1)

<u>**Academic Programs**</u>

Undergraduate Programs

As noted above, the number of undergraduates in the Department has ranged from 412 (2008) to 545 (2012). In Fall 2013 this number has risen to 800, which marks an extraordinarily rapid increase. Likely this is due largely to impaction in the Division of Criminal Justice and the Department of Psychology. In any event, it would help the Department to know more precisely the reasons behind the increase. According to a November, 2013 report published by the American Sociological Association (*Ay 2011-2012 Department Survey Series* No. 3), the average (baccalaureate) major-to-full-time-faculty ratio for sociology departments in AY 2011-2012 was 14.2. At 800 majors, the current major-to-faculty ratio for this Department is 53.3. Considerations with regard to the undergraduate major must be made in light of this rapidly changing situation. In the big picture, this increase also raises concerns about career prospects for an expanding pool of graduates with a degree in Sociology.

Recommendation (to the Dean and the Provost) 1: Take note of the effects of impaction on other departments.

Recommendation 2: Discuss the impact of the rapid increase of students majoring Sociology, taking into consideration the accompanying increase in the major-to-faculty ratio and possible effects on career prospects for graduates.

Recommendation 3: Consider means of discerning reasons for the rapid increase in number of students choosing to major in Sociology.

All indicators suggest that the B.A. and minor in Sociology feature excellent courses. Students and faculty alike speak approvingly of the learning opportunities the programs offer, and of the relevance of sociological study for career preparation and other important aspects of life. As noted in the Self-study (p. 12), graduation rates, at least for transfer students, tend to be well above University averages.

Commendation 1: The Department consistently offers excellent courses, providing a sound foundation for student learning.

This review has revealed four central issues with regard to the B.A. program that have been debated by the Department over the past several years:
1. The ideal number and of core methodology requirements (recently reduced from three to two courses, SOC 101 and SOC 102)
2. How to offer a sufficient number of sections of core requirements
3. The efficacy of requiring a capstone course experience
4. The possibility of articulation of community college Statistics course(s)

There are obviously no clear "right or wrong" solutions to these issues, and it is both natural and healthy that the Department should be debating them.

1. Core methodology courses.

It seems to the Review Team that the Department might have good reason to re-introduce a third core methodology course, but we hasten to point out the obvious, that doing so would increase the challenge of offering sufficient sections of core requirements. The decision to reduce from three to two apparently was based in part on the advice of the former Provost, and so does not necessarily represent the majority preference of the faculty. The Review Team reviewed data suggesting a low efficiency rate in mathematical abilities among Sociology students upon entry, suggesting in turn a need for more emphasis on statistics in the curriculum. We also reviewed information pointing out the practicality of strong training in statistics for purposes of getting a good job. The WASC core competencies include Quantitative Reasoning, a skill set enhanced by these methodology courses and one that Sociology ought to be able to feature.

The Department could explore alternate ways of integrating quantitative reasoning in upper-division electives. The Department could also consider articulation of community college Statistics course(s) and development of a capstone course experience that integrates statistics as part of the research methodology.

In light of the increased enrollment and the possible bottlenecks this might create, the Review Team also suggests that the Department consider restructuring its core requirements. External Consultant Dr. Wendy Ng is clearly doubtful that Social Psychology necessarily belongs among the required courses of an undergraduate program (or for that matter a graduate program) in Sociology (see especially her recommendation on p. 11). The Review Team learned that the scheduled sections of Social Psychology are usually over-enrolled and that students still are left on the Wait List. It might be worth considering restricting the core to include method and theory courses of 11 required units, and pushing the other 9 units of the current 20-unit set to combine with the existing 17 units of electives.

2. Sufficient number of sections.

This issue goes hand in hand with optimal scheduling of classes and with the assigning of sections to faculty. The Self-study (p. 30) makes note of scheduling problems several years ago, such as overlapping times at which required courses were offered. It refers to steps taken to remedy the problem of haphazard scheduling. Likely the situation has improved, but at times during this review complaints from students have surfaced suggesting that scheduling problems persist. Avoidance of scheduling core requirements at the same time is of course basic to sound scheduling, as is providing whenever possible alternative scheduling choices. Some students spoke favorably of experiences in other departments with Saturday courses, or Friday afternoon courses. Almost all of the students we spoke with prefer that courses be scheduled in the morning or early afternoon rather than later afternoon or evening. Regarding the assigning of sections to faculty, it would be unfortunate if a faculty person capable of teaching a needed core course were to be assigned a large section of an elective that uses up all of that person's allocated WTUs. Concern on this front also surfaced during this review. Among other ideas for

improvement, it would be logical to staff required core courses before staffing elective courses. Dr. Ng addresses both scheduling of classes (p. 7) and assignment of faculty (p. 10).

The surest solution, assuming resources are available, to providing a sufficient number of core courses would be to hire more faculty who are capable of teaching them. For various reasons, it is optimal that full- rather than part-time faculty teach core requirements. If indeed it is not possible to resolve this issue through better strategies of scheduling or assigning sections, then it is necessary to expand the faculty pool. Time-to-graduate and graduation rates are at stake, along with reasonable accommodation of students' schedules and curricular integrity. As Dr. Ng observed, "Faculty were concerned that students were taking the required core of statistics and research methods during their senior year rather than earlier in their career." (p. 8)

Recommendation 4: Make every effort to maximize effective and sufficient scheduling of core requirement courses; if these efforts prove inadequate, make a case for hiring new faculty based in part on clear illustration that these efforts are not adequate and that the status quo is impeding time-to-graduate and graduation rates.

The Review Team notes that the Department of Sociology includes faculty members who maintain a high profile of service to the University (e.g. the Office of Academic Program Assessment and the California Faculty Association), such that this Department collectively is contributing in an exceptional manner to University service. The fact that these faculty members are willing and able to serve in these important capacities should not jeopardize the Department with regard to faculty resources.

Recommendation (to the Dean and the Provost) 5: Support expanding the faculty pool in collaboration with the Department's diligent attempts to adopt more effective curricular design and scheduling practices.

3. Capstone course possibility.

It is clear that the Department has considered carefully the question of whether or not to implement a capstone requirement for the major. The Self-study (p. 21) comments on the idea and asserts: "A capstone course was deemed unworkable given the number of majors we have combined with staffing problems." The suggestions provided here might not offer anything new, aside from some perspectives born of interaction with students and of experience in other departmental settings. Dr. Ng remarks that students voiced interest in "something more" than what the current curriculum offers by way of a senior experience, something that would "bring everything together so that they would know what they could do with the major." (p. 6) Is it possible that a capstone course could accomplish this while also potentiating further improvements to the (already outstanding) assessment system? Might it also be possible to devise a capstone course that would help fortify students' engagement with applied statistics? (This relates to the issue regarding articulation with community colleges, discussed in the next section.)

Dr. Ng sets forth some of the American Sociological Association's reasons behind it's recommendation for "a culminating experience or a capstone course" as a best practice in

sociology curricula. In this same section, she offers a number of alternative versions for such a course. (pp. 9-10)

Recommendation 6: Consider carefully the variety of forms that a capstone course or experience might take, and the variety of benefits for student learning.

4. Articulation with community college Statistics course(s).

This issue is related to the capstone issue in that a capstone could incorporate more experience with applied statistics than is currently afforded to students by the current curricular plan. During Dr. Ng's visit to the SOC 101 class, 2/3 of the students indicated that they had taken a community college Statistics course. Some of these students commented that it was more math-based and not so applied to sociological research as is SOC 101 (for more on this see External Consultant Report, pp. 5-6). Later in her report, Dr. Ng recommends that the Department "consider the articulation of statistics courses from community college for transfer students" (p. 11), although she admits to having mixed feelings.

Short of articulation, another means of formally acknowledging prior learning of statistics would be to offer a diagnostic exam and granting credit or course waiver to students who achieve a sufficient score. The Self-study (p. 31) makes note of this possibility, and the Review Team learned that work is being undertaken to develop such an exam. This seems a good step toward potential resolution of this issue.

Service to General Education and to Service Department Programs

The introductory overview of the Department noted its robust contribution to the University's General Education program, having enrolled on average 1,576 students per semester in GE Area courses, 14 of which have been offered during the past five years. This number exceeds the number of undergraduate students enrolled in the Sociology B.A. and minor programs by about 3 to 1. Some of the students taking these GE courses also are fulfilling elective (and in the case of SOC 1, core) requirements for the major or minor, but nevertheless this extent of contribution to GE is very significant. Also as noted above, the Department offers courses that are taken as electives by students in pursuit of other undergraduate degrees, most notably Social Science.

Commendation 2: The Department contributes extensively to the University's General Education program, and also serves other departmental degree programs.

Graduate Program

The Sociology M.A. program is highly regarded by students and faculty alike. Students cited a number of things to praise, including excellent seminars, effective scheduling, good interaction with peers and faculty, good preparation in the Sociology B.A. program (especially thanks to SOC 192), and always finding room in seminars. Dr. Ng, while advising against maintaining Social Psychology as a core requirement, compliments the Department for its strong curricular

structure. Graduate Coordinator Dr. Amy Liu informed the Review Team of various features that we deem commendable, for example that the program attracts between 35 and 60 applicants each year, of which up to 20 are admitted. The merely symbolic (1 unit per semester) release time, which seems insufficient for a program of this size.

Recommendation 7: Make release time for the Graduate Coordinator position more meaningful, perhaps by devising a cumulative scheme such that 1-unit per semester amounts to an occasional actual release from teaching commitments.

Commendation 3: The graduate program is strong, with a well-structured curriculum, a healthy number of applicants, and capable and energetic leadership on the part of Graduate Coordinator Dr. Amy Liu and the Graduate Committee.

The main issues that surfaced during this review with regard to the graduate program involve the culminating experience. Currently this is a 6-unit requirement consisting of either a Thesis or a Project. In the case of the Thesis especially, the workload for faculty, who are not compensated for this, seems to be (not unexpectedly) an issue.

Dr. Ng (pp. 12-13) emphasizes the efficacy of the Project for those students who do not necessarily plan to pursue admission to a Ph.D. program, and provides a list of relevant ASA resources. She concludes this section of her report by focusing on practical, career-oriented benefits:

> Graduate programs can prepare students with sociological skills that graduates bring to the workforce. The "project" option of an MA program can significantly address the issue of a career-oriented sociological study that benefits students with real skills and can also benefit communities, organizations, or the university in a practical manner. Call it applied or public sociology, it is something to consider in the MA program. (p. 13)

Along with acknowledging these various benefits of the Project option, the Review Team also encourages consideration of offering an Exam option. Two graduate students with whom we spoke expressed strong interest in an exam. Opinions vary on this, but it can be argued that the Exam is the best option for students preparing to teach at community college level because it allows for exploration of a relatively broad spectrum of issues. If designed appropriately, an exam can incorporate some of the research work of a thesis. For example, a list of potential questions can be developed in advance (from which a few are randomly chosen at the time of the exam); this demands of the student a research-oriented approach to preparation, such that appropriate sources are sought and studied. The Exam normally places less by way of demands on faculty time.

On the subject of preparing graduate students to teach, the Review Team also perceives a possibility for the graduate program to develop a teaching assistantship program that could benefit its students, undergraduate students, faculty, and the general situation with regard to resources and ability to cover sections. Such a program would likely involve a course or other means of helping graduate students develop pedagogical skills. (For a good example, see HIST 400, The Teaching of History in College.) This program would also yield the general benefit of helping to integrate the graduate and undergraduate programs.

Recommendation 8: Consider development of a teaching assistantship program.

With regard to the Thesis option, the Department might want to consider more stringent requirements than are currently in place in order for a student to be granted the Thesis option. For example, a minimum standard could be set for written communication skills as evinced in seminar work leading up to advancement to candidacy, perhaps via scoring based on a common rubric. More stringent requirements would help ensure that any given student is adequately prepared to undertake the Thesis option. Among other benefits, this tends to have a net effect of reducing faculty workload by reducing instances of "problem theses" the critique of which can be so very time-consuming.

Recommendation 9: Explore options for the M.A. culminating experience, including variations on the themes of Thesis (e.g., consider more stringent requirements in order for a student to be granted this option), Project, and Exam.

Faculty and Staff

The Review Team offers a decidedly mixed review of issues revolving around departmental faculty. Students heap lavish praise on their faculty, without exception, for the quality and commitment with which they go about helping their students learn. The faculty themselves have impressed us with their expertise and obvious commitment to excellence. In the areas of departmental climate and governance, however, there are challenges that need to be overcome. It is the hope of the Review Team that attention to tangible matters can, over time, help to resolve less tangible issues, like lack of trust and feelings of discord.

With regard to the quality and commitment of the faculty, the Review Team concurs wholeheartedly with Dr. Ng's summary statement:

> There is no doubt that the faculty in this program are dedicated to the students and to their profession as sociologists. They have a strong sense of the discipline and the department provides a valuable service to the university in the form of General Education…

Students routinely commented on how much they like the faculty. The extent of professional achievements beyond the classroom among faculty is impressive. Along with substantial research and publication records (Self-Study Appendix B: Department of Sociology Publications), the faculty tend to engage in a broad array of activities that benefit the University, the community, and state and national organizations and projects involving sociological studies (Self-study, 9).

Commendation 4: The faculty, full-time and part-time alike, are devoted to providing through their courses excellent opportunities for student learning.

During the course of this review, much has been made of what Dr. Ng refers to as "departmental climate." She provides helpful broader context while summarizing the specific situation:

> It is not unusual for sociology departments to have a range of viewpoints and beliefs—

these are not only disciplinary based, but can also extend to the interpersonal and departmental climate. Such issues may be below the surface and not evident at first glance. A concern expressed by a few of the interviews had to do with departmental climate with regards to communication, values of the department, practices and policies. (p. 8)

The Review Team concurs with Dr. Ng's summary, having made similar observations and more. We heard talk of divisiveness, of "them" and "us," and of "cliques"; of controlling course content and allocation of teaching assignments; of "bullies"; of "sexism" and "a perception of racism." Faculty voiced concerns about the negative atmosphere at faculty meetings. Faculty mentioned that they could not express themselves freely over concern about retaliation by colleagues. On the other hand, we also heard about collegial relations among faculty when not needing to deal with challenging departmental issues. Dr. Ng's comment about "below the surface and not evident at first glance" would seem to describe this situation accurately. This might help explain why issues with regard to departmental climate are not mentioned directly in the Self-study. The Review Team contends that the need to address this issue of departmental climate should be a top priority.

Recommendation (to the Dean) 10: Explore allegations of inappropriate conduct among faculty and take appropriate steps to help the Department restore trust and collegiality.

Additionally, the Review Team encourages the Department to consider some more tangible issues, attention to which might help improve departmental climate. We have identified four main issues:
1. Diversity among faculty
2. Clarity regarding departmental policies and procedures
3. Hiring needs and how to go about meeting them
4. Course assignments

1. Diversity among faculty

The Review Team has heard from several faculty and students about the need for more ethnic diversity among faculty. The Self-study *does* address this issue, although it does not assertively call for changes. It cites the "Statement on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity in Sociology: Core Principles" (adapted from the program statement on Diversity and Inclusive Excellence of the American Association of Colleges and Universities). (p. 3) It cites the five undergraduate Learning Goals, #4 of which asserts that students will be able to:
- Experience and engage with a diverse population
- Be aware of the difficulties of challenging inequality and the opportunities to do so
- Overcome their ethnocentric viewpoints (p. 4)

The Self-study notes favorably that the Department has managed to increase percentages (per OIR *Fact Book* data) of female faculty (from 36.4% in 2006 to 50% in 2010) and minority faculty (from 22.5% to 30.8% in 2010). (pp. 7-8) (The Self-study Proposal refers to "another potential area we are considering" for inclusion in the Self-study, i.e. "Personal and Social Awareness and Values" [p. 2], but this seems not to have been taken up in the Self-study.)

When faculty spoke to the Review Team about concerns over diversity, they frequently noted the recent loss of minority faculty, and wondered what might be the causes for this. The issue of diversity thus naturally intertwines with the issue of hiring needs (to be considered below). Students who spoke about diversity inevitably argued that the faculty needed to reflect demographically the student population, such that, for example, the proper faculty person teaching a Sociology course about any given ethnic minority ought to be of that minority. Students expressed a similar perspective with regard to appropriate faculty advisors and mentors. Not every faculty member agrees with this, but all seem to recognize that the Department faces real concerns over the issue of diversity. The Review Team is left with the impression that there is no easy solution to this issue, but rather that sound and well-intentioned arguments can be made for various positions. The Review Team acknowledges that this impression does not at all resolve the issue per se, but we hope that it can help facilitate collegial, transparent, and constructive consideration leading to an increased level of trust—something all faculty members seem to desire.

2. Clarity regarding departmental policies and procedures

Faculty perspectives on this issue seem to vary quite widely. Some clearly agree with the perspective of Dr. Ng, who recommends enhancing shared governance through "providing a structure and common understanding for policies and procedures of the department." (p. 16) The Self-study makes some references to issues involving shared governance, such as the comments on committee policy and the establishment of a Budget Committee (pp. 31-32), but for the most part this subject is not addressed. Dr. Ng refers to a recently developed handbook, but apparently this was based on mistaken information. In any event, the Review Team strongly advocates for the development of a departmental manual of policies and procedures. Even those faculty who do not consider this to be a problematic issue should benefit from having a clearly stated and easily accessible catalog of policies and procedures.

Recommendation 11: Develop a departmental manual of policies and procedures for purposes of clarity and easy accessibility and of providing a platform for further deliberation.

3. Hiring needs and how to go about meeting them

The Self-study makes a plea for hiring more faculty, pointing out specific needs relating to "a key component of our department learning goals: *The sociology major at CSU Sacramento will be expected to develop intercultural knowledge and competence about cultures locally, the United States, and globally.*" (p. 17) Notably, this does not directly address need to increase staffing of core methodology courses, but rather (as the Self-study goes on to say) elective areas like Black Sociology and Queer Studies. The Review Team observed more concern about adequate coverage of the core. This might well be the result of a recent sharp spike in the number of Sociology majors. As noted above, the number in Fall 2012 was 545, the highest number for five years (the lowest, 412, was in 2008). But now, in Fall 2013, there are about 800 majors. The major-to-faculty ratio is 53.3, more than four times the current average per the ASA's November, 2013 report. Considerations with regard to the undergraduate major must be made in light of this rapidly changing situation. In the big picture, this increase also raises concerns about career prospects for an expanding pool of graduates with a degree in Sociology.

Whatever bottleneck problems with core courses that were encountered at the time of composing the Self-study have naturally become much more severe. It also should be noted that the Department's student-faculty ratio is about twice the national average for sociology departments.

When we factor the issue of faculty diversity into the mix, we see (to state the obvious) that this issue of hiring needs and how to go about them is very complicated, and of course is inevitably affected by amount of resources available for new hires.

Recommendation 12: Develop position descriptions and hiring requests based on evidence derived from assessment efforts and on well-reasoned arguments regarding the most pressing needs.

Some faculty in the Department have been very blunt about the key to resolving some of the issues explored in this report: More faculty hires. Obviously this would help alleviate the bottleneck problems that have become more acute recently. Hiring minority faculty would help alleviate the concerns of some students and faculty over the need better to reflect the demographics of the student population. The Review Team generally agrees that the Department needs and deserves to expand the faculty pool, but we contend that justification for new positions needs to be based, in the words of the following Recommendation, on arguments supported by assessment and by this program review. As Dr. Ng states in her recommendation along these lines:

> The department should prioritize hiring in areas that work with curriculum development spelled out by the Program Review. One or two positions per year over the course of several years would fulfill critical needs in the areas the department has the most curricular demand. (p. 17)

The Review Team encourages the rethinking both the structure and the method of delivery of curriculum in order to ensure strategic sound and effective hiring.

Recommendation (to the Dean and the Provost) 13: In light of the clear needs for expanding the pool of faculty who are capable of teaching core requirement courses, provide resources to enable the Department of Sociology to hire based on arguments supported by assessment and by this program review. (Cf. Recommendation 5.)

4. Course assignments

Through analysis of the OIR *Fact Book* and through discussions with faculty, the Review Team has determined cause for some concern with regard to the assignment of sections to faculty. This general issue might be taken up in a departmental manual. Efforts should be made to avoid unfair overloads to part-time faculty, or for that matter, to full-time faculty. A specific FTES range could be set as a target for each faculty person. In the case of serious variance above the targeted range, faculty (again, both part-time and full-time) could perhaps be given professional development funds as means of compensation. Course assignments should not be based merely on faculty preferences to teach this or that elective. Priority must be put on staffing required core courses.

Recommendation 14: Resolve internally how best to prioritize programmatic needs based on curricular requirements.

Facilities and Technology

The Department is housed in Amador Hall, an unremarkable but functional venue. Library resources are said to be adequate, especially with the rapid increase in online accessibility. In general, the Review Team finds facilities and technology to be sufficient to support student learning per the Departments mission and goals. As mentioned above, the departmental website includes the mission statement and undergraduate Program Learning Goals. It provides much by way of useful information and helpful links. One highlight is the "FAQ" document that is easily accessible from the "Advising and Retention" page.

Commendation 5: The departmental website provides clear information that is easily accessible.

Student Affairs and Advising

Student Organizations

The Sociology Club was combined at the end of Spring 2013 with the Alpha Kappa Delta honor society (they had been separated in 2008). AKD on its own has been very successful, even earning a Letter of Gratitude in June, 2012 from the Executive Director (Self-study, Appendix D). The Self-study (p. 30) also refers to several recent accomplishments on part of the Club, including various activities designed to help students with career orientation.

Commendation 6: The Department provides good opportunities for students to socialize and participate in shared academic activities through the Sociology Club and the Alpha Kappa Delta honor society.

Advising

The Self-study (pp. 28-29) explains that in 2009 the Department implemented mandatory group advising for all students in response to relatively negative impressions from students as expressed in an exit survey.

Dr. Ng recommends that the Department "Review undergraduate advising structure," (p. 14) noting recent improvements but also urging further consideration with regard to meeting student demand for advising. The Review Team is optimistic that the Department is heading in the right direction and commends the efforts made so far.

Commendation 7: The Department has made good strides in the area of student advising, with its new group advising plan and its mentoring plan for at-risk students overseen by Dr. Mridula Udayagiri.

ASSESSMENT (Option C, Part 2)

The Department of Sociology has distinguished itself as a campus leader in development and implementation of a sound assessment system. The 2006 Program Review Report made strong pleas for improvements, and the Department clearly has delivered. That the focused inquiry of this program review cycle has been devoted primarily to improving assessment is indicative of the serious and concentrated efforts. Dr. Ng's high praise in this regard suggests that the Department's achievements are notable at the level of the CSU as well. She writes:

> The department has one of the comprehensive assessment plans I have seen among program reviews. The department responded to the previous review in examining assessment with the major and as a result, all pieces of assessment are in place. The department appears to have a strong assessment culture. Their assessment plan is clear, and has assessable program learning goals with a sustainable plan to focus on one learning goal each year. They should continue on the current path and work to bring in faculty at all levels of the assessment process. (p. 13)

Many of the Department's accomplishment with regard to assessment are documented in the Self-study and its appendices. Analysis of the previous programmatic learning goals and objectives led to condensing from eleven PLGs to five while at the same time enhancing correlation with the Universities Baccalaureate Learning Goals (Self-study, pp. 34-36). Evaluation of the graduate program and consideration of connections between graduate and undergraduate learning goals produced the Graduate Program Assessment Plan (Appendix K). In order to help determine the potential for achieving PLGs, the Department developed a matrix using three categories (Introduced, Practiced, Demonstrated) (Self-study, pp. 36-37; Appendix L is the Core Course Matrix). The current Assessment Plan specifies learning goals to be assessed for five consecutive years (Self-study, p. 37). The Department has made strides toward implementing direct means of assessment to accompany indirect means previously employed (Self-study, pp. 38-39); direct means include application of the Sociology Writing Assessment Rubric (Appendix G). The Self-study (pp. 39-42) also sets forth specifics for assessment during the academic year for which the Self-study was produced.

Commendation 8: The Department has succeeded in developing and implementing an assessment system that contributes effectively to enhancing student learning and serves as an exemplary model for our campus.

Commendation 9: The Assessment Committee led by Dr. Todd Migliaccio and Dr. Jacqueline Carrigan has been very effective, and several faculty have participated in Faculty Learning Communities sponsored by the Center for Teaching and Learning during the past two years.

The Department is commended for totally redesigning its assessment plan and collecting preliminary data to assess its programs. As the Department continues its annual assessment efforts, we encourage it to:
1. Critically evaluate whether program learning outcomes (PLOs) along with other components of the assessment system (e.g. assignments, etc.) demonstrate the meaning, quality, and uniqueness of the degree programs.

2. Use curriculum maps, rubrics (e.g. the VALUE rubrics), and "backward design" to explicitly indicate where learning, assessment, and improvement take place for each PLO.
3. Think about who is going to use the assessment data (the instructor, department, college, or the university?) in order to determine the kind of data needed so as to facilitate effective collection and reporting.
4. Collect demographic data that will shed light on students' background and its correlation with their academic performance.
5. Explicitly connect the direct assessment with other assessment tools in the Department, such as the exit survey.
6. Conduct follow-up assessments so as to discern if any given program changes have contributed significantly to improved student learning. The Review Team concurs with Dr. Ng's recommendation that the Department consider using the ASA's "BA and Beyond" exit survey.
7. Strive to integrate GE and program assessment. Every one of the 14 GE courses offered by the Department during the past five years is also a course that counts toward the major, and one of them (SOC 1) is a core course required for the major. Assessment of these courses can and should contribute to systematic evaluation of both the program and the Department's GE offerings. Focus on WASC's core competencies seems an especially viable means toward achieving this integration.

Recommendation 15: As the Department continues its annual assessment efforts, consider carefully the seven suggestions set forth in this report for purposes of further enhancing the assessment system, making it more comprehensive, and capitalizing more fully on its potential for improving student learning.

As inferred in the foregoing, one of the foundational aspects of a sound assessment system is a clear statement of appropriate program learning outcomes (PLOs) or goals. Dr. Ng rightly praises the Department for having developed such PLOs (now reduced from eleven to five). They are stated on the departmental website along with the mission statement. But Dr. Ng (pp. 8-9) also calls for clearly stating *course* learning outcomes and, where appropriate, clarifying connections to PLOs, in all syllabi. Notably, in Dr. Ng's Appendix B, "Program Learning Outcomes," her rubric-based evaluation assigns the lowest score ("Emerging") to the category "The Student Experience"; she writes: "Students have some knowledge of program outcomes. Communication is occasional and informal, left to individual faculty or advisors." (p. 22)

Recommendation 16: Ensure that course syllabi clearly state course learning outcomes and, when appropriate, connections to program learning goals/outcomes.

FOCUSED INQUIRY (Option C, Part 3)

As noted in the opening of this report, for its focused inquiry the Department of Sociology undertook a set of projects relating to enhancing student learning and the assessment thereof (outlined in pp. 34-43 of the Self-study):

1. Evaluate and rewrite undergraduate department learning goals and outcomes.
2. Evaluate graduate program, considering connection with undergraduate learning goals and program.
3. Link department learning goals and objectives with university learning goals and objectives.
4. Evaluate entirety of program to determine potential achievement of learning goals and objectives.
5. Evaluate past assessment findings and possible implementation into the larger program. This will be done in consideration of the newly determined learning goals and program plan for delivering the goals to students.
6. Evaluate assessment program; develop department assessment plan for the next 5 years.
7. Design specific assessment for this year.
8. Collect data for this year to measure specific learning goal(s); measure both specific goals and overall assessment plan.
9. Solidify plan for five-year assessment plan based on the evaluation of the assessment that occurs during the Self-study (Spring 2012).
10. Create SacCT 9.1 undergraduate and graduate Sociology "courses," to be implemented Fall 2013, to help inform students and disseminate information (regarding departmental changes, availability of resources, advising program, etc.).
11. Develop an ongoing group advising program to keep students informed and to connect with students; planning for Fall 2013 implementation.

The fruits of these efforts are to some extent noted in the foregoing section on Assessment. In its review of the focused inquiry and related assessment materials, the Review Team was for the most part very impressed, but also pondered whether the results of these efforts were being put to optimal use.

Recommendation 17: Take full advantage of the excellent assessment efforts, applying results in service of supporting faculty hire requests and of further enhancing opportunities for student learning.

Recommendation to the Faculty Senate:

Based on this program review and the Self-study report prepared by the Department of Sociology, the Review Team recommends that all of the Department's degree programs be approved for six years or until the next scheduled program review.