

Key Assessment and Curricular Improvements  
Department of Sociology  
B. A. and M. A. Program

**Statement of Purpose and Scope.**

This document reports on the assessment progress for the Department of Sociology during AY 2010-2011. The document shall combine graduate and undergraduate reporting.

For our MA Program, students are assessed on two sets of rubrics, the graduate comprehensives and the graduate thesis or seminar paper projects. The undergraduate capstone experience also consists of two components, the senior seminar and the senior thesis or the comprehensive examination. Whether a senior opts for the thesis option or the senior comprehensive depends in large part on individual grade point averages. Since the last assessment report, the department has increased the in-major GPA required to pursue a senior thesis from 3.0 to 3.2 on a scale from 0 to 4 points. In addition, in the last faculty meeting of the Fall semester, the department reviews the progress reported by each students on their thesis. With this information on hand, individual progresses are assessed to determine whether or not to allow each student to continue with the thesis option or to revert to the comps.

**Progress Using Indicators from Past Assessments.**

Past reporting assessment also have examined such indicators as internships, entrance into graduate programs, and the employment of alumni.

Internships:

In 2010-11, a large portion of seniors participated in one or more internships during their junior and senior years. These internships were located in governmental organizations, such as the Parole Board of the Department of Justice, the U.S. Marshall Services, and the State Department, or research institutes, such as the Center for American Progress and the Equal Rights Center, from around the Washington DC metropolitan region.

The reported assessment of our student interns were outstanding and several managed to secure employment after graduation in the same places where they interned or the internship experience served them to springboard to other professional job opportunities.

## Entrance to Graduate Programs

During the 2010-11 academic year, two of our seniors applied to graduate school, one was accepted to the University of British Columbia with financial assistance, the other to the University of Maryland to pursue a graduate degree in cyber crime. It has been our experience that many of our graduates work for a year or two before going back to graduate school. This pattern is in part dictated by the cost of undergraduate education and reflects the general trend nationwide. For instance, one of our undergraduates who completed our program about three years ago enrolled in our graduate program last January and is now taking courses towards the completion of the MA degree in our department.

Among our graduate students, of the three who graduated between May 2010 and 2011, two applied and were accepted in doctorate sociology programs, one at George Mason University and the other at the State University of New York at Albany.

## Thesis/Seminar Requirement

All the graduate students who pursued our seminar papers successfully passed. We define a seminar paper as the written outcome of an inquiry that follows research and publication standards in our profession. Two of the graduate students presented their work at the Eastern Sociological Society meeting in Philadelphia last year.

Eight of the undergraduates who graduated last May opted to complete the Senior Thesis requirement, all successfully passed, and two passed with distinction. Of this group, two also presented their research at a poster session in the Eastern Sociological Society last Spring.

## Comprehensive Exams

Our comprehensive exams test theories and concepts discussed in our core requirements and in at least two concentrations in our major. All graduate students who took the comps passed the exam.

Of the undergraduates, four out of fourteen students who took our comps in the Spring 2011 failed; two of the four later requested to take the exam again in September 2011 and passed it. In the Fall 2011, five students took the comps and two failed. The two students who failed in the Fall also failed in the Spring. In our department a failure of any one part of the exam requires a complete retake.

## Curricular Improvements

The department has taken the following curricular initiatives in part as a result of the assessment outcomes mentioned above:

1. We have begun a comprehensive review of our curriculum, beginning with the capstone process and our core requirements, to see where we may better achieve programmatic learning outcomes.
2. We are reorganizing faculty teaching and advisee assignments to better match faculty strengths with desired course outcomes.
4. Several new assessment questions were inserted into course evaluations to appraise courses across our curriculum.
5. Students are now more actively encourage to consult with individual faculty members about their preparations for comps.

### Summary Table

	Acceptance rate to graduate programs	Passing rate for graduate comps and seminar papers	Passing rate for senior thesis	Passing rate for comps Spring 2011	Passing rate for comps September 2011	Passing rate for comps Fall 2011
Graduates	100% (2)	100% (3)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Undergraduates	100% (2)	NA	100% (8)	71% (10)	100% (2)	60% (3)