

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

Statement of Purpose and Scope.

This document reports on the assessment progress for the Department of Sociology during AY 2011-2012. 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 two 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 every 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. In the Fall 2012, two of the four students pursuing the senior thesis option voluntarily switched to the senior comprehensives after consulting with their readers.

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 2011-12, twelve of our majors participated in one or more internships during their junior and senior years. These internships were located primarily in the federal government and non-governmental organizations from around the Washington DC metropolitan region. A junior enrolled in the Hispanic Caucus in the Summer 2012. One senior enrolled in an internship with a non-profit in Boston.

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

Of the seniors who graduated in May 2012, none applied to graduate school. 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 own undergraduates who completed our program about three years ago enrolled in our graduate program last January and is now completing her second year of courses required towards the completion of the MA degree in our department.

Among our graduate students, of the two who graduated in May 2012, both are working, one with an educational research firm supporting the Department of Education and the other with a legal aid community organization.

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 New York City last year. Two of the seniors who graduated in May 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, in the academic year 2011-2012, a total of twenty seniors took our comprehensive. Two failed and requested a retake in April of 2012. Of those two, one passed and one failed the retake exam.

Curricular Improvements

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

1. We completed the review of our undergraduate curriculum and decided to change our senior seminar course from two semesters to one. In addition, seniors

pursuing the thesis option will now be required to enroll in thesis preparation supervised by their reader. Students not completing the senior thesis will have an additional elective and we will be encouraged, through advising, to enroll in an internship course.

2. The department decided to dedicate the calendar year 2013 to a reassessment of our graduate program.

3. We continue to reorganize faculty teaching and advisee assignments to better match faculty strengths with desired course outcomes.

4. We continue to appraise all our courses through several additional assessment questions in the course evaluations.

5. As part of their preparation for comps, students are actively encouraged to consult with individual faculty members.

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 2012	Passing rate for comps in April 2012	Passing rate for comps Fall 2012
Graduates	NA	100% (2)	NA	NA	NA	NA
Undergraduates	NA	NA	100% (4)	80% (10)	50% (2)	100% (6)