

Sociology Response to the Dean's Recommendations

The Sociology Department appreciates the external review and the Dean's review and recommendations resulting from the Program Performance Review (PPR). The Department especially appreciates the efforts and guidance of the Dean's office to help us devise a strategic plan to enhance our strengths, meet our challenges, and improve our academic unit to the benefit of our students. During the process of the self-study and reviews, the Department has initiated a number of activities that address the recommendations and has implemented changes to address the issues. Our activities and plans to address recommendations are outlined.

Tenured/Tenure track faculty

Dean's recommendations:

- Continue to hire faculty in targeted areas outlined by the external reviewers and the Department's self-study, especially those who engage in quantitative research projects, in order to enhance the strengths of the undergraduate major and graduate program;
- Utilize department resources (assigned time and professional development funds) to reward department service, and make every effort to recognize and articulate this service in the RTP process;
- Examine the causes of the substantial attrition rate of new faculty hired after 2006;

Sociology Department plans:

Since the receipt of external review and Dean's recommendations, the Department has lost two additional faculty members: an associate professor retired and another tenure track assistant professor separated to join an R1 university. The Department now has 2 assistant professors, 8 associate professors, 1 full professor, 2 faculty members in the FERP, and 1 full-time lecturer. This leaves Sociology with a faculty ratio of 12:14 or 46% tenure/tenure track faculty in AY 14/15. With only one full professor (at 40%), this low ratio continues to place most of the department administrative burden on remaining faculty who are engaged in the RTP process.

- The Department commenced its recruitment of two tenure-track faculty for AY 15/16 which essentially does not improve the tenure ratio given the very recent loss of the two FT faculty noted above, and does not alleviate the fact that junior faculty have heavy service commitments to maintain the Department as a functioning academic unit.
- The chair plans to continue efforts of the past two years to protect assistant professors from the most time consuming department service, while offering additional support to them to prevent repeated attrition experienced in the past. As one example, faculty voted AY 13/14 to allocate a greater share of travel funds

to the assistant professors to assure conference presentations and participation that will enhance professional development, networking, and peer-reviewed publications.

- Factors that contributed to the high attrition of junior faculty included the financial crisis of 2008-2010, the perceived lack of departmental support for junior faculty, and the mismatch of expectations. With the budget crunch of the great recession, faculty were all on a 4/4 teaching load with class sizes often twice the norm and all junior faculty were thrust into leadership roles on department committees. There were no funds for conference attendance or professional memberships. During the 2008-2010 era, this workload, combined with weak leadership and poor communication of administrative directives, left new junior faculty feeling unsupported. Many had been recruited with an emphasis on scholarship that left them unprepared for large class sizes and multiple preps. To address this, the Department has made a conscious effort in the past two years to be clearer in its recruitments about the importance of the teacher/scholar model, and the prospects and challenges of a state institution such as CSUF. With the budget relief, the implementation of more purposeful curriculum-driven class scheduling, and stream-lined prioritization of limited resources, new assistant professors have a lighter teaching load, travel funds, and some protection from the most time-consuming demands of department citizenship. To prevent faculty requests for support from being short-circuited at the staff level, the chair now filters all faculty requests attempting to find avenues that assist faculty needs.

Adjunct Faculty

Dean's recommendations:

- Hire part-time faculty in a timely manner, and utilize a variety of resources to evaluate them beyond their SOQ's;
- Encourage part-time faculty to take advantage of professional development opportunities offered by the department of Sociology, the College of H&SS, and the Faculty Development Center;

Sociology Department plans:

To address the concerns of the adjunct faculty, the Department has initiated several changes.

- First, the AY 14/15 schedule has tentatively been completed giving adjuncts a preview of their likely schedule for the entire academic year with the proviso that the course assignments are only recommendations, subject to the Dean's approval as well as changes in funding, enrollment and satisfactory evaluations.
- Second, the Department plans to offer four (attendance optional) adjunct workshops this academic year—two each semester—to improve the inclusion of the adjuncts in the Sociology community.
- Third, in the past, staff required adjunct faculty to vacate offices each term; this displacement contributed to the alienation of faculty who had no ability to personalize their office space and a disincentive to bring books and materials that

make their workspace optimal; office assignments for 3AY and 1AY contracted adjuncts will be semi-permanent.

- Fourth, and most importantly, the Department recognized the problem of too heavy a reliance on the SOQ instrument for evaluation. To that end, the Department is revising the SOQ instrument to be a more valid measure of teaching and learning. The DPC and faculty who conduct peer classroom visits are adopting practices to assure more thorough, integrative, and useful evaluations that focus on quality of instruction, use of best practices and currency in the discipline.

Curriculum

Dean's recommendations

- Continue to revise their undergraduate curriculum and integrate more high-impact practice experiences into their courses, and consider reinstating a capstone course or experience as a major requirement;
- Rethink the sequencing of their required MA courses;

Sociology Department plans:

As encouraged by the Dean's recommendation, the Department continues to revise its undergraduate curriculum incorporating the results of its assessment of student learning.

- The Department recently received approval from Academic Programs to revise substantially its concentrations, including required courses focused on data analysis and community engagement for each concentration. The new course proposal for Sociology 485, a capstone course, is pending review of the college curriculum committee.
- In Spring 2014, the Department tripled the number of students enrolled in Sociology 495, Internships and has plans to sustain the growth of this option. The department curriculum committee plans to consider ways to further expand high impact practices.
- The Graduate Committee plans to consider the sequencing of graduate courses and as well as to review the content of Sociology 585

Advisement

Dean's recommendations

- Ensure that undergraduate advisement occurs in the summers;
- Ensure the equitable distribution of mentoring and committee responsibilities for MA projects, theses, and exams;

Sociology Department plans:

- Summer advisement currently occurs in conjunction with New Student Orientation and Transfer Student Orientation events as well as twenty hours of on-site advising in July and August. During AY 14/15, faculty will discuss how to expand summer advising to align better with Titan I and Titan II registration.
- The Dean's suggestion to consider matching MA applicants' interests with faculty interests is an approach to better supervision of thesis and projects that the Graduate Committee will consider along with better incentives for faculty to assume more equitable distribution of graduate student supervision.

Graduation rates

Dean recommends:

- Improve on the graduation rates of their first-time freshmen through mandatory enhanced advisement and by integrating them into the social networks of the major;
- Work to decrease the time to degree rates for M.A. students;

Sociology Department plans:

As the Dean notes, Sociology's 6-year or less graduation rate for both first-time freshman "in major" and for upper-division transfer students exceeds that of the College and the University. The Department plans to continue and enhance these patterns.

- The Department will explore avenues to engage lower division students with department research and networks earlier in their CSUF careers. Faculty meetings will include a discussion about mandatory advisement as well as outreach to this population by AKD and Sociology week.
- Although the Department's recent record in 3 year and 4 year graduation rates for graduate students show substantial improvement, the Graduate Committee will explore ways to make further reductions in time to graduation for the MA program.

Learning Outcomes and Assessment

Dean's recommendations:

- Build on current assessment efforts by demonstrating how evidence is used to reshape their undergraduate and graduate curriculum, and create a program-based assessment experience that measures undergraduate mastery of student learning goals and outcomes;

Sociology Department plans:

The Dean recommends that the Department improve its utilization of assessment results to close the loop and improve student performance on learning outcomes.

- To assure that the assessment results inform and drive curricular improvements and proposed changes, the Department will merge two committees, assessment and curriculum, into one committee charged to review all courses on a rotating

basis, to conduct the annual assessments as outlined in Appendix III of the PPR, to make curricular changes that respond to apparent weakness discovered in the assessment process.

- Further, the Department plans to work closely with the Director of Assessment and Educational Improvements to assure that our plan adopts best practices and to make any changes in our plan that she recommends.

Budget/targets

Dean made no recommendations.

Facilities

Dean made no recommendations.

Staff

Dean recommends:

- Work with the Dean's office to create departmental leadership that is a stable, enduring, and informed;
- Work with the Dean's office to resolve the current tensions between faculty and staff.

Sociology Department plans:

The problems noted by department and external reviewers are attributed, as the Dean notes, in large part to the instability in leadership and unclear expectations of staff.

- The chair plans to work closely with the Dean's office to assure staff work within the duties appropriate to their job classifications, to monitor staff workloads more closely, to maintain a more equitable workload distribution among staff, and to reduce tensions between the ASC and faculty.
- To that end, the chair is implementing monthly progress reports, assuming direct responsibility for budget, and continued assuming of direct responsibility for scheduling, assigning adjuncts, and monitoring enrollments.
- The chair, in conjunction with staff, is reevaluating long-standing practices that have resulted in tensions between faculty and the ASC. With stable leadership, clear lines of authority, and cross-trained staff, the staff can begin to operate within the scope of their assigned duties which will improve the department atmosphere.