



# CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

College of Humanities and Social Sciences

Department of Sociology

TO: Dr. Sheryl Fontaine, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Dr. Jessica Stern, Associate Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences

FROM: Dr. Berna Torr, Chair Department of Sociology

DATE: March 25, 2022

RE: Response to External Reviewer's Report, Sociology PPR 2013-2022

On behalf of the entire Sociology Department, I express our gratitude for the time and effort spent by the external reviewers on our department's program review. We appreciate that Drs. Bandelj, Pinto, and Wood listened to all department stakeholders, and shared their expertise and excellent recommendations. We are pleased that they recognized and highlighted our department's strengths but also greatly value their recommendations.

We agree with the reviewer's assessment of our hiring needs. The dean's office and Provost have approved for a search for next year (one line). In addition, Dr. Ed Collom will exercise his retreat rights after stepping down from FAR and join the department as a full professor next fall.

We also agree with the reviewers' recommendation for additional support for course releases and summer support for faculty for research. At the department level, we have implemented department summer support grants for assistant and associate professors for summer 2022 using ODCP money. In the future, we would like to expand this to support research for full professors and graduate students. These efforts are small steps towards addressing the disparate impacts of the pandemic, which has, in some cases, radically altered faculty research endeavors. We appreciate the Provost's previous support of junior faculty and agree that additional course releases as they approach promotion milestones would help ensure that we retain and promote our diverse faculty.

The reviewers noted the strength of our advising model. However, this is an area where additional funding support from the college would be impactful, if not transformational. Currently we fund advising course releases at the department level utilizing our instructional budget and careful enrollment management. Our advisors, who have expanded advising substantially over the review period, must work at maximum capacity to achieve our current successes, and we nevertheless struggle to reach all our majors and provide year-round advising. As UPS 300.002 notes – "The responsibility for ensuring the availability of academic advising rests with each college dean". Additional monies to allow the department to help the Dean meet these responsibilities would ideally consist of

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dedicated budget that departments could use to offer the advising model that works best for their students.

If we were given budget for the recommended staff advisor position, we would happily accept it. However, we recognize the difficulties in creating this type of position currently. In the meantime, we plan to adopt the alternative recommendation and pilot hiring two Graduate Assistants (GAs) @ 10 hours per week next year to help with advising support, outreach to students, and program support (TSLC, FSLC). This pilot will be funded with department-generated coursematch funds as with all GAs currently. But this is not a sustainable long-term funding mechanism and other viable alternatives necessitate additional resources from the college. With any of the recommended possibilities for advising support, we would still need faculty advisors and any budget for departmental academic advising should include course releases for faculty advisors.

In line with the reviewers' recommendation to add a staff line, a new ASC I was hired, started, and is already helping to reduce burden on front office staff. We have implemented efforts to cross-train the staff though we hope the dean's office can also provide more centralized training. We emphatically echo the recommendation that HR and Academic Affairs take seriously the need to make staff salaries more competitive, provide more flexible work and telecommuting arrangements, and create career ladders to keep good staff at CSUF. As a department that has a demonstrated ability to train, supervise, and promote highly qualified staff, we would happily pilot a program allowing for greater direct supervisory authority. The current situation is untenable and trending in the wrong direction for reasons entirely outside the control of the department, who must nevertheless deal with the consequences. At the expense of considerable effort and resources, sociology currently has excellent staff colleagues, but we anticipate substantial upheaval and continued turnover given the current work climate for staff in the college and university.

The reviewers note that classroom space and computer lab space continue to be an issue, as in the last PPR. We agree that an additional classroom and plans for our own computer lab are top priorities for the department. Leadership from the college to coordinate classroom access with other colleges and departments, such as the College of Communications classrooms in College Park, could ease both some of the classroom space concern. We also agree with the recommendation to lower class sizes, but budget and room constraints make this difficult. Additional classroom space and college/university support for advising and GAs would help us reduce class sizes. This semester we lowered caps on 400-level classes and plan to continue this. Pre-pandemic we successfully offered a few classes on Fridays, however student interest is minimal and one Friday class this semester was cancelled due to low enrollment.

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We are hopeful that once the new AVP of EIP (Leahy) is on campus, we can begin discussion and renegotiate the MOU for our online program as recommended. We would appreciate assistance from the Provost's office to better understand the spending models currently used on campus as well as the spending flexibility that may be *possible*. Similarly, assistance and advocacy to formalize a more productive and equitable MOU for the department on the part of the Dean's office is vitally important and would be much appreciated. This past year we have been creative with ways to put the ODCP revenues to use to support summer research grants for junior faculty. We proposed an expansion of this to support graduate student research but encountered obstacles raised by the Budget Manager that we hope the Dean's office can offer support in resolving. In addition, we have instituted revenue sharing with AFAM/ASAM/CHIC which will allow them to support their faculty as they support our program. We hope to explore ways to use these funds for additional staff salary and professional development.

The recommendation to develop a CANVAS page for the graduate program is a great one! The new ASC I drew up a plan that was reviewed and approved by the chair and grad advisor. The next step is building and implementing it this summer. We agree that the graduate program could use additional support—advising and GA support would help support the graduate program.

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