

## **Sociology Department Five Year Assessment Plan**

### **Overview**

For the past five years, the sociology department has conducted an annual assessment retreat at the conclusion of the spring semester. During each retreat, department members review assessment data in the form of composite rubric scores on final methods papers and results from annual surveys of graduating seniors. The senior survey measures students' perceptions of the extent to which they have mastered learning outcomes in the discipline of sociology. We added a criminology major in the 2010-2011 academic year, and will begin administration of a senior survey for criminology majors in spring 2013. The mission statement, learning objectives, and learning outcomes for both majors are included as appendices to this report.

In this five-year assessment plan, we will describe in detail the next five years of our plans for assessing the effectiveness of our program and student learning outcomes. In this plan we will provide information about the data that we will examine, how we will assess those data, review the results of our assessment, formulate plans to address weaknesses in our outcomes, and measure the effectiveness of our plans.

### **Year One: 2012-2013**

The assessment process for this year began with the assessment retreat in May 2012. At this retreat, department members reviewed data from the senior survey and Methods II final paper rubrics. In addition faculty members discussed their overall impressions of the year with an emphasis on student performance in our capstone Internship course. We also discussed the uneven distribution of grades in our methods courses.

The learning objective that we decided to address in the upcoming year, identified for both sociology and criminology, is Learning Objective #4, *learn to conduct and critique quantitative and qualitative empirical criminological research.*

We decided to address the issue of the uneven grade distribution in our methods courses by requiring students to earn grades of C or better to enter each course in the methods sequence. Because students work in groups in our methods courses, it is particularly problematic when students who have not demonstrated mastery of the course content receive passing grades.

We also agreed at this meeting to review and edit our learning outcomes to conform to current best practices. Each learning outcome should be a simple statement that is measurable. We recognize that many of our learning outcome statements include more than one outcome, and as such are difficult to measure. We plan to have our revised learning outcomes ready by the end of Year One.

We will continue to monitor our program effectiveness with our senior survey, FSU's alumni survey, and our students' internship experiences.

## **Year Two: 2012-2013**

We established the following goals for this year:

1. Review and revise learning outcomes to reflect our new major mission statements and learning objectives (learning outcomes).
2. Improve student preparation for methods sequence courses. Prepare course change logs to specify new prerequisites for entry into Methods sequence courses (learning outcomes).
3. Redouble efforts in terms of career and graduate school preparation (program effectiveness).
4. Publicize student research and internships. Have an internship “show and tell” session at the conclusion of each semester (program effectiveness).
5. Continue to build community in our department by capitalizing on our successes. Encourage student-faculty field trips (program effectiveness).
6. Develop global studies program (program effectiveness).
7. Develop Inside-Out program. Two of our criminologists will become certified Inside-Out trainers over the next year. This program will enable FSU students to take classes at MCI Framingham with MCI inmates (student learning outcomes).
8. Document all department activities. We will create and disseminate a report showing all of the activities in which department members participate (program effectiveness).

Our department assessment retreat is scheduled for May 2013. The sociology major is undergoing an external review this year, so we will have additional assessment data at the conclusion of the year, to include the findings and recommendations of two external reviewers. We will also include a senior survey for criminology majors. We will review all assessment data and select a few goals for the 2013-2014 academic year. We will incorporate our revised learning outcomes in the planning process. During our assessment retreat, we will also review our progress on meeting the goals set at the previous year’s assessment retreat and map our core curriculum with our revised learning outcomes to assess gaps in the curriculum.

We are also working on a pilot program to develop a writing-intensive requirement in our major with Dr. Patricia Lynne of the English department. She is working with us to develop goals for writing in our disciplines, engage in curriculum mapping of writing skills, and develop a plan to address writing in our discipline. She will make recommendations to us at the conclusion of the 2012-2013 academic year, and we will begin to implement her recommendations in the 2013-2014 academic year. Part of our plan will involve assessment of student learning outcomes for writing in our disciplines.

We will prepare an annual assessment report and submit that to the Office of Academic Affairs.

## **Year Three: 2013-2014**

We will implement goals set at the May 2013 assessment retreat. At our May 2014 assessment retreat, we will review our progress meeting our targeted goals. We will use rubrics from our Methods II student papers as evidence of summative assessment in our program. We will use new rubrics based on our revised learning outcomes. Each learning outcome will have several components, and these components will be assessed as either “does not meet standard,” “meets standard,” or “exceeds standard.” We will use assessment data to develop new goals for the 2014-2015 academic year. Once we have a sense of how students are mastering our learning outcomes in the capstone experiences, we will develop formative assessments in the lower level courses.

We will prepare an annual assessment report and submit that to the Office of Academic Affairs.

#### **Year Four: 2014-2015**

We will implement goals set at the May 2014 assessment retreat. At our May 2015 assessment retreat, we will review our progress meeting our targeted goals using formative and summative measures of student achievement of our learning outcomes. We will use assessment data to develop new goals for the 2015-2016 academic year.

We will prepare an annual assessment report and submit that to the Office of Academic Affairs.

#### **Year Five: 2015-2016**

We will implement goals set at the May 2015 assessment retreat. The criminology major is scheduled to undergo an external review during this academic year, and we will consider the findings and recommendations of the external reviewers as we shape our goals for the 2016-2017 academic year. At our May 2016 assessment retreat, we will review our progress meeting our targeted goals. We will use assessment data to develop new goals for the 2016-2017 academic year.

We will prepare an annual assessment report and submit that to the Office of Academic Affairs.

## **Appendix I**

### **Mission Statement and Learning Objectives**

#### **Criminology and Sociology**

#### **Criminology Mission Statement**

The Criminology Program provides a challenging interdisciplinary education in a liberal arts setting. The structure of the program affords students the opportunity to understand crime, criminal behavior, and social control from a comparative perspective. The program broadly seeks to challenge, motivate, and inspire students to think critically, contribute professionally, and be engaged civically.

#### **Criminology Learning Objectives:**

1. Critically analyze and apply criminological schools of thought to the social world
2. Develop an understanding of criminal behavior, criminal justice systems, definitions of crime and deviance, and mechanisms of social control
3. Recognize the causes and consequences of inequality as they relate to crime and justice systems
4. Learn to conduct and critique quantitative and qualitative empirical criminological research

#### **Sociology Mission Statement**

The Sociology major at Framingham State University strives to introduce students to the social scientific tradition of sociology as one strongly rooted in the liberal arts. The program emphasizes the study of the diverse social and cultural forces that unite and divide human societies. It prepares students to articulate complex understandings of social issues and social change.

#### **Sociology Learning Objectives**

1. Develop an understanding of sociological principles, theories and concepts to interpret social life
2. Critically assess social problems and inequalities with respect to their extent, consequences, causes, and potential solutions
3. Recognize the impact of social patterns, human diversity, cultural difference, and globalization on social life
4. Learn to conduct and critique quantitative and qualitative empirical sociological research

**Appendix II**  
**Learning Outcomes**  
**Criminology and Sociology**

**Sociology Major**  
**Learning Outcomes**

- 1. Demonstration of knowledge of:**
  - a. Basic sociological concepts
  - b. Assumptions and applications of theory
  - c. Statistics and methodology
- 2. Use analytic and critical thinking skills to:**
  - a. Ask sociological questions
  - b. Understand information
  - c. Conduct investigations to answer sociological questions
- 3. Use problem solving skills to:**
  - a. Design an original sociological research study
  - b. Implement an original sociological research study
- 4. Demonstrate understanding of one (or more) specialized areas within Sociology by:**
  - a. Summarizing basic questions in the area
  - b. Comparing and contrasting basic theoretical orientations
  - c. Summarizing current research in the area
  - d. Identifying the social and policy implications of current research and theory in the area

**Criminology Major**  
**Learning Outcomes**

1. Articulate political, economic, and social contexts of crime and criminal behavior.
2. Apply information management, writing, and communication skills appropriate to the field of criminology.
3. Discuss the role and importance of law in achieving social order.
4. Explain theories of crime causation and their basis in sociological, psychological, and biosocial theories.
5. Apply the scientific method.

6. Utilize the principles and protocols of research in the social and behavioral sciences.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of how public policy is developed.
8. Articulate ethical and moral reasoning principles as they relate to crime and justice.
9. Integrate information across disciplines and use information from core courses to complete capstone.