A. ACTIONS TAKEN TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

What actions did you take in 2012-2013, based on previous assessment findings, to improve student learning in your program?  (Refer back to plans indicated in “Response to Assessment Findings “ in 2011-2012 Assessment Report.)

Findings from the previous report indicated that the department is working on offering multiple sections of courses on different days and in different time slots.  To assess this, an analysis of the Fall 2012 and Spring 2013 class schedule for Sociology was conducted.  It shows that more SOC 2000 are offered on MWF (5) than on TR (4), with a fairly good spread over the time blocks.  SOC 2000 could be scheduled earlier in the day in the TR time block as in both semesters the earliest class was held at 11:00.  There were three SOC 2000 classes offered in the late afternoon/early evening during the fall semester, but only one in the spring.  Looking at classes required for the major, it was possible for students to schedule all three classes during a single semester if desired.  All required classes were offered in the morning, during both terms, with the sole exception of a SOC 3410 section offered at 3:30.  Rotating the offerings of required courses so that they are also sometimes offered in afternoons and evenings is recommended.

Tenured faculty taught all methods and statistics courses in 2012-2013.

No assessment of advising was conducted.  How we might assess advising will be an agenda item at the next faculty meeting.

We discussed low response rates for senior exit surveys in a faculty meeting and instituted a new procedure where senior surveys are attached to degree check forms.  Faculty have been encouraged to ask students to complete the exit survey while they prepare the degree check.  It is hoped this will increase the response rate.

B. STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSED AND EXAMINED

Which Program Level Student Learning Outcomes did you assess and examine during 2012-2013?  List the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes using the format of “Graduates will be able to _______________________.

(Please note that due to specialized accreditation requirements, accredited programs may be required to assess and report on all program level student learning outcomes every year; accredited programs should report in a manner that will align with their accreditation.  Programs not carrying specialized accreditation may assess all of their learning outcomes every year but may choose to report on 2-3 per year, looking at several years of data.)

A senior exit focus group was conducted late in the spring semester 2013.  Four seniors participated.  Dr. Bergdahl facilitated the discussion and took notes on a laptop computer.  A copy of that report is attached in Appendix A.  It is recommended that the assessment plan and focus group questions be modified to ensure that data collected is more directly linked to the learning outcomes of the program.  There is currently little correspondence between the questions asked in the focus group and learning outcomes of the program.  This was discussed at the January 2014 faculty meeting and the Assessment Committee will work to address this issue.

In addition, a senior exit survey was provided to all graduating seniors in both a paper and electronic form.  Only three were returned, a 19% response rate.  New procedures discussed in section A above, should improve this response rate.

Responses from the senior exit survey were used to assess 3.1 (a), (b), (d), and (e), 3.2 (a) and (c).
3.1(a) Students will demonstrate knowledge of the major social institutions.  
100% strongly agreed they learned to describe and explain social institutions.

3.1(b) Students will demonstrate knowledge of the socialization process.  
100% strongly agreed they learned important differences in life experiences of people as they vary by race, class, 
gender, and other ascribed statuses.

3.1(d) Students will demonstrate knowledge of the theoretical formulations that serve as the foundation of the major. 
100% agreed or strongly agreed they learned basic theoretical perspectives or paradigms in Sociology.

3.1(e) Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic fundamentals of social statistics and methodology. Seven questions on 
the senior exit survey examined this domain:  
As part of my Sociology major, I learned to:  
1. Create a hypothesis with independent and dependent variables. 
   100% agreed.  
2. Evaluate the strengths/weaknesses of different research methods for answering specific research questions. 
   66.7% agreed.  
3. Gather information to make an argument based on evidence. 
   100% agreed or strongly agreed.  
4. Use the statistical software, SPSS, to analyze data. 
   66.7% agreed.  
5. Interpret the SPSS output. 
   66.7% agreed.  
6. Identify ethical issues in sociological research. 
   66.7% agreed or strongly agreed.  
7. Write a report from sociological information. 
   66.7% agreed or strongly agreed.

3.2(a) Students will demonstrate competence in Human Relations Skills, including working with others in groups, making 
decisions for organizations and supervising others.  
As part of my Sociology major, I obtained the ability to understand people from different races or cultures. 
100% agreed or strongly agreed.

3.2(c) Students will demonstrate competence in communication skills, including writing formal reports and speaking in front 
of groups.  
As part of my sociology major, I obtained the ability to organize and express ideas clearly in writing. 
66.7% agreed or strongly agreed.  
As part of my sociology major, I obtained the ability to organize and express ideas clearly in oral communication. 
33.3% agreed.

Final papers from SOC3410 were evaluated using a rubric (See Appendix B) that evaluated the Sociology Department Learning 
Outcomes 3.1(e) and 3.2 (c).

3.1(e) Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic fundamentals of social statistics and methodology.  
Two elements on the rubric evaluated this outcome:  
Paper involves a clear and explicit research question or hypothesis related to the fields of criminal justice, 
social problems or sociology. 
   The majority (90%) at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. Only 10% failed to meet it.  

Paper is grounded in the empirical literature. Student has located the relevant literature and described it 
adequately.  
   All students at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. Twenty percent met it fully.

3.2(c) Students will demonstrate competence in written communication skills.
Three elements on the rubric evaluated this outcome:
Citations, notes, and references presented in style generally acceptable in the social sciences.
The majority (80%) of students at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. Thirty percent met it fully and 20% failed to meet it.

Paper is relatively error free in terms of grammar and punctuation.
All students at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. The majority (80%) met it fully.

Writing has good flow. The document is well written, well organized and is readily understandable.
The majority of students (90%) fully met this outcome. Only 10% failed to meet it.

C. METHODS FOR COLLECTING DATA
Which students were included in the assessment? (For example, all seniors completing Course X in Spring 2013, all graduating seniors, etc.)

All eight graduating seniors in Spring 2013 were invited to participate in the focus group.

All graduating seniors in both fall 2012 and spring 2013 were offered the senior exit survey in both paper and electronic form.

Five randomly selected students enrolled in SOC3410 Research Methods in both fall 2012 and spring 2013 provided final papers for assessment.

D. ASSESSMENT MEASURES
• What key assessments/assignments/student work did you examine to directly assess the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes listed above?

Final papers from SOC3410 Research Methods were used to assess outcomes 3.1 (e) and 3.2 (c). Five papers from each SOC3410 class offered in 2012-2013 were analyzed with the attached rubric (Appendix B).

• What, if any, indirect assessments (e.g. exit survey, alumni survey, focus groups, etc.) did you use to indirectly assess the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes listed above?

Senior exit survey and senior focus group were used.

E. SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS
What did you find from your assessments? What did your data reveal about how well students are achieving the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes that you listed above?

Required course offerings need to be rotated more systematically to ensure all students can take them in a timely fashion.

Advising should be considered for future assessments. Exit surveys and focus groups have indicated we could do a better job in advising.

Response rates for senior exit surveys need to be improved. A new procedure has been implemented to increase that response rate.

The senior exit focus group questions need to be revised to more effectively assess learning outcomes of the program.

Indirect Measures: The learning outcomes 3.1 (a), (b), (d) and (e) were met by the majority of students assessed. For the learning outcome 3.2 (a) the majority met the outcome. The exception was 3.2 (c), only 33.3% met that outcome, which means the department should work on meeting the learning outcome about ability to organize and express ideas clearly in oral communication, or consider revising the outcomes based on current curricular offerings.

Direct Measures: The learning outcomes 3.1 (e) and 3.2 (c) were met by the majority of students assessed.
The Assessment Plan for the Sociology department requires revision to improve the fit between curricular offerings, learning outcomes measured and data collection procedures. The Assessment Committee will work on these changes and then present them to faculty.

F. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS
How were results shared? With whom were they discussed?

Faculty were apprised of preliminary findings in the January 2014 faculty meeting. The final assessment report will be distributed to faculty, discussed at the February 2014 faculty meeting and revisions to the Assessment Plan will be discussed.

G. ACTIONS PLANNED TO IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING
Based on what you learned from your assessment of the Program Level Student Learning Outcomes, what actions do the faculty in your program plan to take to improve student learning in your program/area? Describe the steps faculty have taken/will take to use information from the assessments for improvement of student performance and the program. List additional faculty meetings or discussions and planned or actual changes to curriculum, teaching methods, approaches, or services that are in response to the assessment findings.

We faculty will discuss the rotation of required courses in various time slots so that students will have greater access to these offerings. We will also discuss how advising might be both improved and assessed. A new system for collecting senior exit surveys has been implemented and already has increased returned surveys from previous collection efforts. The questions for the senior focus group will be examined to improve their alignment with departmental learning outcomes. Also, outcomes in the assessment program will be scrutinized to ensure they are congruent with current curricular offerings. Some outcomes in the assessment plan are measured more often and some activities outlined in that plan have not occurred at all during the five year cycle. The assessment plan needs revision to solve these issues. The Assessment Committee will work on revisions to the assessment plan and present them to faculty in Spring 2014. This should allow us to make better use of findings to improve student performance and the program.

H. SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS (recommended)
Please attach minutes of program faculty meeting where discussion of results and action planning occurred and any other relevant documents.
Appendix A

Focus Group Report—Sociology Spring Graduates
Tuesday, April 23, 2013 11:30 4 focus group participants
Facilitator: Jackie Bergdahl

Students were informed about the purpose of the session. All were reminded that their names and names of staff and faculty would not be used in the report. The following is a summary of the questions and responses from the session:

1. **What are your career goals or what do you intend to do after graduation: we asked both long and short-term goals?**

Regarding short-term goals, three of the four are going on to graduate school. Two are seeking a master’s degree and one directly to a PhD program. The fourth student is seeking employment currently. To my knowledge, she has been on at least one interview for a cashier position. The most ambitious long-term goal was for an academic job at an R1 institution. Two other students indicated they would probably go on to graduate school for a PhD and the fourth student didn’t have any long-term goals to report.

2. **Do you feel that Sociology has helped prepare you for these goals?**

All subjects felt that the department had helped them achieve their goals. One student felt that research opportunities for undergraduates were lacking. This student was surprised to hear about departmental honors projects and independent studies opportunities. Two students were aware of research opportunities but did not pursue them. One student reported that having taken SOC 406 Application of Research Methods and research done for an honor’s project made him stand out when applying to graduate school.

3. **Strengths of Program/ Weaknesses of Program?**

   **Strengths**
   Sociology of Race and Ethnicity class should be mandatory for freshmen and sophomores. Most agreed the department offers a good variety of courses, although some felt that the semester conversion had reduced the number of special topic courses. The size of the department made it easy to get to know all faculty.

   **Weaknesses**
   One student commented that not everyone should have to take research methods – not everyone is interested. One student was of the opinion that there was an over-emphasis on theory and not enough emphasis on quantitative methods. His complaint was that crosstabs and contingency tables were over-used when he would like to have learned structural equation modeling. Internships are needed to see how sociology works in the real world. Sometimes certain classes are not taught similarly – research methods for example.

4. **Most valuable course topics?**

   Family violence was mentioned as an interesting and important course.

   Juvenile Delinquency - because the next generation is going to need our focus was mentioned by two participants.
Race & Ethnicity mentioned earlier as an important course that should be required more broadly of freshmen and sophomores.

Theory and Self and Society were both “right up my alley.” Theory made you “open your mind and expand more.”

Sexuality and gender courses were both mentioned for getting a good grasp of critical analysis.

The drug intervention program was really good, hearing the participant’s stories especially. And the counseling portion was really interesting.

“Crime” classes were mentioned by all as important – women and criminal justice in particular as women are not covered in other criminal justice courses.

One student mentioned the research methods sequence (300, 306, 406) as especially important.

5. Any topics, courses, or subjects that you would have liked to have had?

Students recommended more quantitative methods, more about children or juveniles and the forensic part of criminal justice. One student suggested an education course – to understand that aspect of social life. Another wants to work with nonprofits, youth centers, rehab, teens, and girls and wanted courses related to these things. On student suggested incorporating rehabilitation classes or information about disability into sociology. They thought it would go with sociology – especially sociology of family. There were lots of interesting classes, but not always in rotation. You didn’t always know when a course would be offered again or if it would be offered again.

6. Any advice to the department?

Students had several recommendations:

a. They would like to know when courses are going to be offered. They don’t always know if a course is a regular offering (and on what schedule) or a special one.

b. One student recommended advice about what courses to take – she would have taken sociology of family if she had known about it.

c. More classes than just medical sociology – student felt that a course that covered topics like Munchausen syndrome, child abuse, and battered women was needed (family violence?).

d. As graduation approaches, take the seniors under your wing – be more involved in their plans and goals, send out messages – how are things going? Did you get that job? More mentoring is recommended since graduating classes are so small.

Similarly, another student suggested faculty could be more proactive with mentoring sociology majors - at least for the juniors. Students need more help in job-seeking - not hand-holding, but discussions of strategies for job-seeking.

e. A class about disabilities is needed. This could help students with disabilities. Perhaps this course could be a general education class like social problems. It could be a class about social identity (including disability) that might help recruit minors.
f. In all the other schools I applied to, Sociology was part of the sciences – perhaps we should change colleges. Look into offering a BS instead of just the BA.
Appendix B

Evaluation of SOC3410 Final Papers 2012-2013

Five randomly selected papers from each SOC3410 section offered during the 2012-2013 academic year were analyzed to evaluate Sociology Department Learning Outcomes.

Learning Outcomes Assessed:

3.1 (e) Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic fundamentals of methodology.

- Paper involves a clear and explicit research question or hypothesis related to the fields of criminal justice, social problems or sociology.
  
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  The majority (90%) at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. Only 10% failed to meet it.

- Paper is grounded in the empirical literature. Student has located the relevant literature and described it adequately.
  
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  All students at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. Twenty percent met it fully.

3.2 (c) Students will demonstrate competence in written communication skills.

- Citations, notes, and references presented in style generally acceptable in the social sciences.
  
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  The majority (80%) of students at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. Thirty percent met it fully and 20% failed to meet it.

- Paper is relatively error free in terms of grammar and punctuation.
  
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

  All students at least partially met the criteria of this outcome. The majority (80%) met it fully.
Writing has good flow. The document is well written, well organized and is readily understandable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>40%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of students (90%) fully met this outcome. Only 10% failed to meet it.

Overall, the average score for all five items on the rubric was 66% for all papers (range = 50-80%).