

Undergraduate Academic Program Review

Name of Program: B.A. in Sociology

Name and contact information for person completing the review:

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Indicate whether the program is

on campus
 online
 both

NCA Criterion 1 — – Mission and Integrity

NCA Criterion 2 — – Preparing for the Future

NCA Criterion 3 — – Student Learning and Effective Teaching

NCA Criterion 4 — – Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

NCA Criterion 5 — – Engagement and Service

I. Program Mission (NCA Criterion 1 and Criterion 5)

The Mission of the Department of Sociology is to provide a high quality baccalaureate program in Sociology that exposes our students to the theoretical background of the discipline, trains them in its methodology, acquaints them with the variety of its substantive content, and prepares them to advance upon graduation to either graduate schools or positions in government or business/industry. Quality teaching is reinforced by the participation of faculty in the advancement of sociological knowledge and service to the University and the profession.

II. Program Description (NCA Criterion 2)

Brief history of Sociology at Wright State University

The major in Sociology was originally housed within the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work at its origin in the late 1960s. Since the late 1970s, Social Work was split off as a separate department and Sociology is now housed within the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.

The Sociology faculty currently numbers ten tenured or tenure-track professors plus one visiting assistant professor. There are also four instructors, one of whom has his appointment split between Sociology and Art and Art History. There have been four hires since 2000, one of them a net addition. The intention is to upgrade the visiting assistant professor slot to an additional tenure-track line in 2007-8.

Sociologists have chaired the department during much of its history, except between 1982-88 and since 1998, when an anthropologist served/serves as chair.

The introductory course in sociology was originally a two-course sequence until the 1980s, when the college base was changed to four credits per course. Since then, Sociology 200 has served as the introductory course, and has been a part of the University's General Education program. In the 1980s-90s, that course was a requirement for all students; since the restructuring of General Education in the 1990s, it is now one of several optional courses within GE Area 3. This course has been Writing Intensive since that program was launched. Unsurprisingly, the total number of students the department services went down with the change in GE, when SOC 200 was no longer required of all.

A major change in the teaching of the sociology major came about after 2000, when three instructors were authorized to be hired, solely to teach the introductory course. This was part of the push within the College to move from the use of very large classes that numbered 200-450 students each, back to classes of 90 or fewer. This has freed up the tenure-track faculty to concentrate on the sociology core.

A second major change also occurred after 2000. The introduction of the Criminal Justice major meant that the number of sociology majors was reduced, by over one-third, as some students moved to the CJ major or selected it instead of sociology (or political science, or urban affairs, the other contributors to the major). Sociology's upper division courses in criminology and its related subjects are usually still fully-enrolled every quarter despite the loss of majors, since those courses are also being taken by CJ students.

Sociology majors are required to take a three-course methods sequence, two theory courses, a career course, a social problems course, and a course in race and ethnicity. They must select two courses from a suite that forces them to sample coursework in several content areas, and then to take an additional six elective sociology courses; the latter allows them to concentrate their studies in a content area of special interest, or to widely sample the field. An optional internship program allows students to be placed in career-related positions in social service agencies, courts, etc.; this program is also utilized by Criminal Justice majors.

There has been a minor in the program since the 1980s, and the option for exceptional students to pursue Departmental Honors at graduation through completion of an Honors research project since about 1990. A number of graduates of the department have completed graduate degrees, including MAs and PhDs in Sociology and other fields (Applied Behavioral Science M.A. at Wright State, Social Work, Public Administration, Social Welfare, Criminal

Justice, Political Science, etc.). Many graduates work in the region, and many of them serve a variety of social service agencies.

In addition to teaching sociology courses that are used by sociology and criminal justice majors, many of the sociology faculty also teach courses for the Applied Behavioral Sciences M.A. program, which is housed within the department.

Numbers of students served, majors, and minors:

Fig. 1. Number of students served

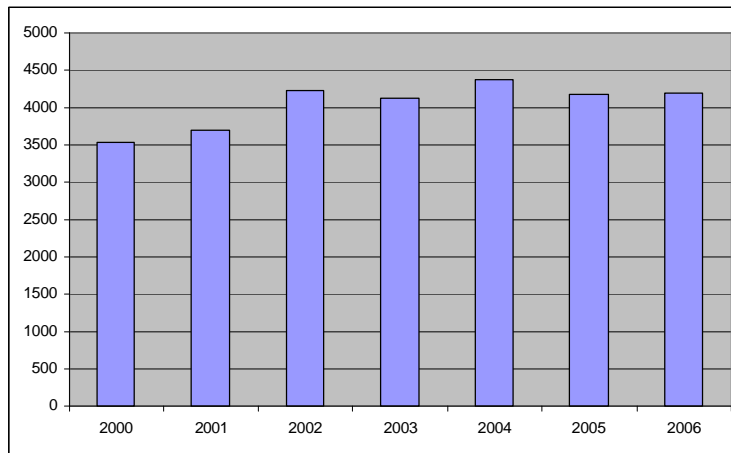


Fig. 2. Number of sociology majors

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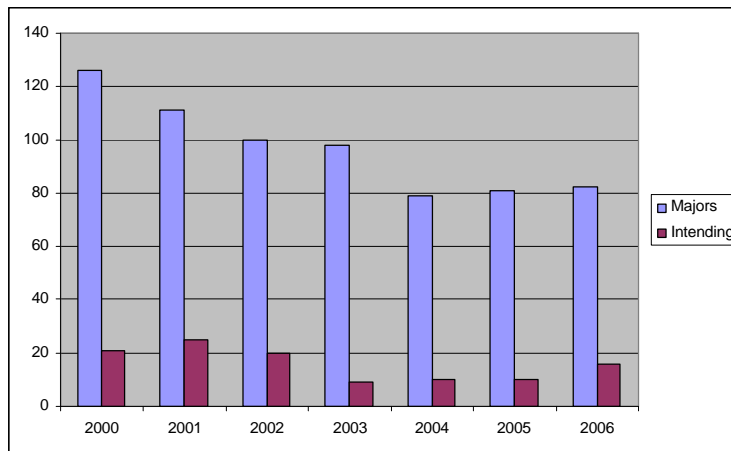


Fig. 3. Number of sociology minors

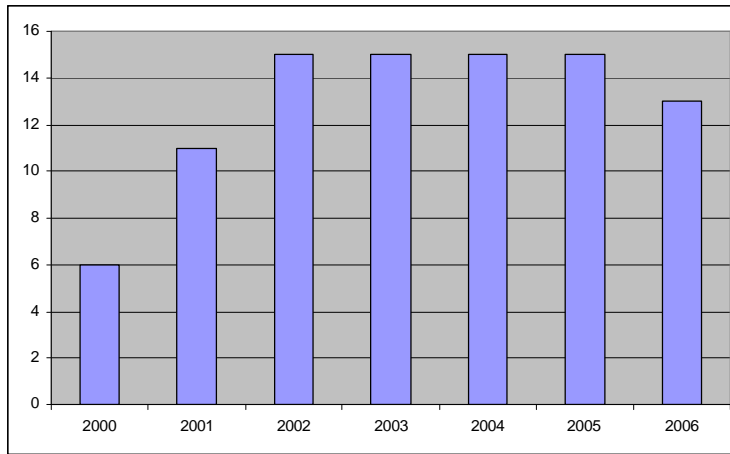
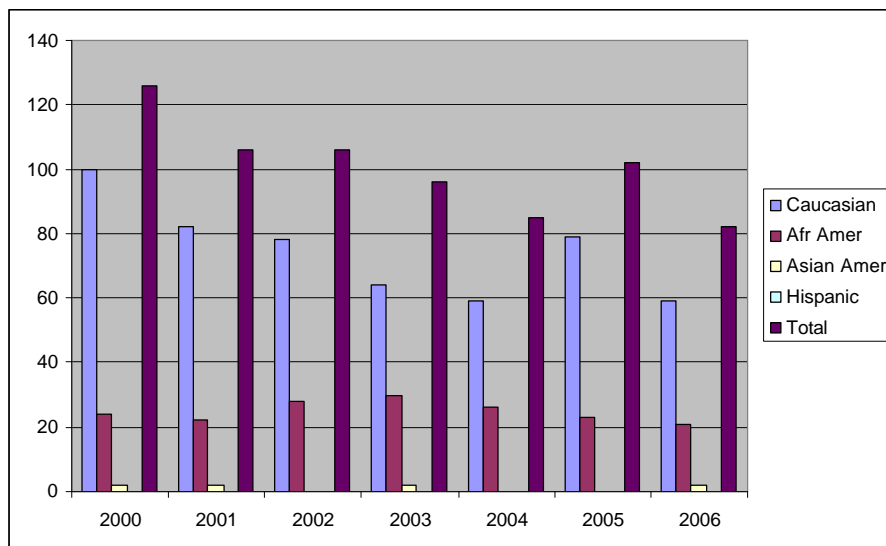


Fig. 4. Sociology majors by ethnicity 2000-2006



Number and diversity of Faculty:

There are ten sociology tenure-track faculty and one visiting assistant professor. One of them serves as the Director of the Applied Behavioral Sciences M.A. program. Another serves as the Director of the Criminal Justice major program. There are also four instructors, three of whom teach the introductory sociology course. One instructor, who is housed in this department but has has appointment split with Art and Art History, teaches the Regional Studies course in Africa.

The faculty is quite diversified, as fig. 5 indicates. A look at the history of the department's most recent hires in sociology (since 2000) reinforces the impression of the department's commitment to diversity. Including all types of lines, we have hired twelve individuals since 2000. These have included 2 European American females, 4 European American males, 2 African American females, 1 African American male, 2 Asian females, and 1 Asian male. During this period, two of these hires, one of them an African American female and the other an Asian female, voluntarily departed from the University and were replaced.

Number and diversity of Staff:

In 2000-2002, the department employed two staff members. From mid-2002 to 2004 the department employed 1.5 staff members (one on a half-time basis). From 2004 to the present, the department has employed only 1 staff member. This person also services the ABS MA program that is housed in the department.

Student assistants are employed on a part-time basis, approximately 2-3 per quarter.

The three staff members over these years have been European American females.

Fig. 5. Number/ethnicity of full-time faculty

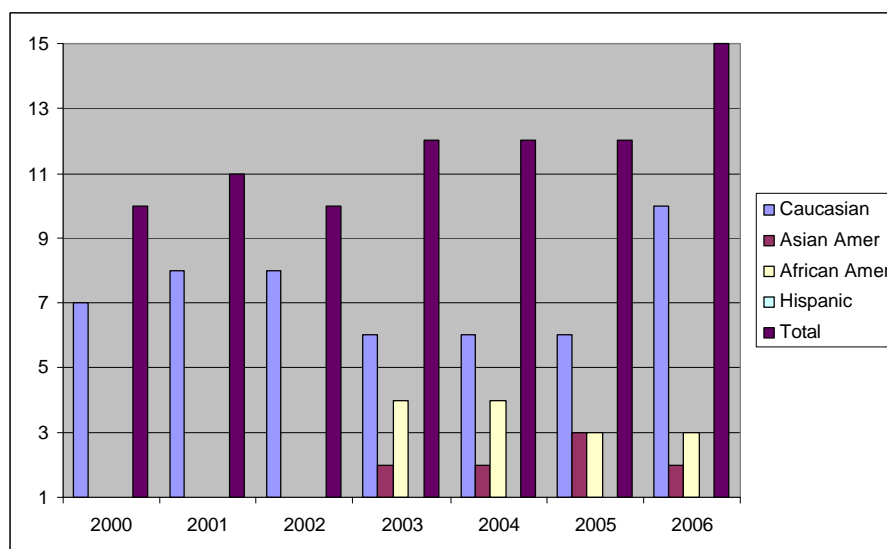


Fig. 6. Rank of full-time faculty

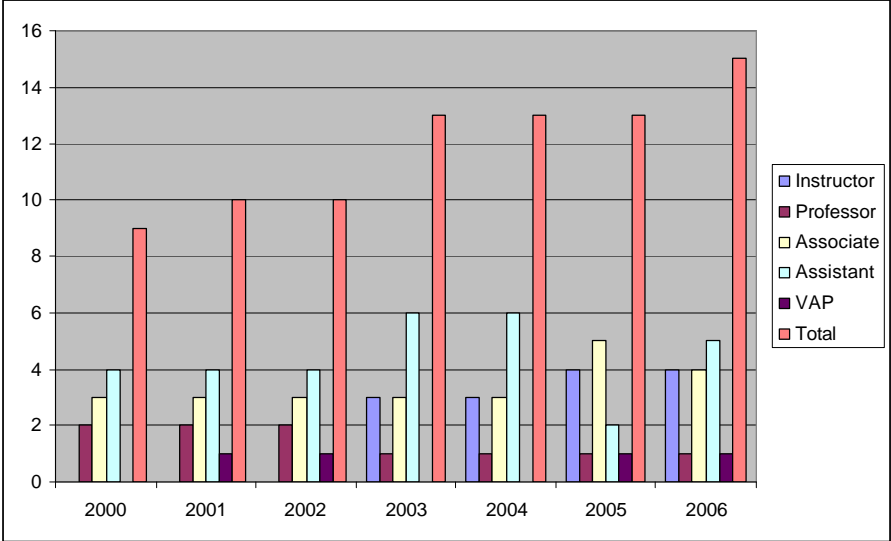


Fig. 7. Faculty

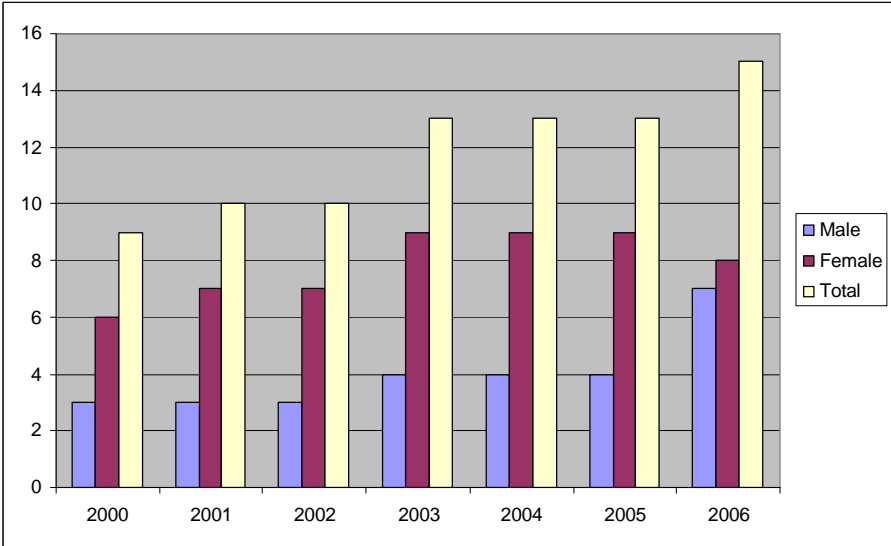
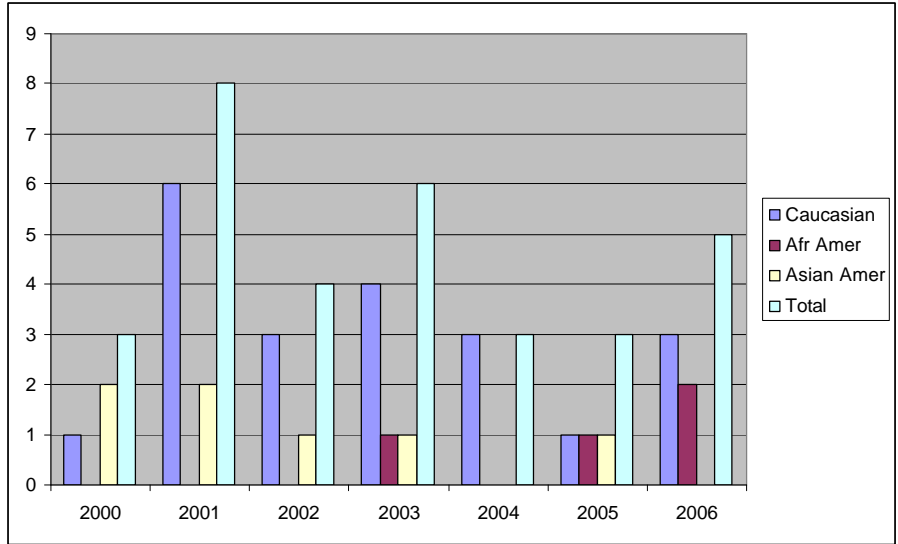


Fig. 8. Sociology adjuncts



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Budget

The department's operating budget has been quite flat during the past 15+ years, with the chart reflecting salary and benefit increases. The Anthropology and Sociology majors are housed within the same administrative unit (Department of Sociology & Anthropology), so the budget figures are for the unit and not specifically for the sociology major.

Fig. 9. Budget

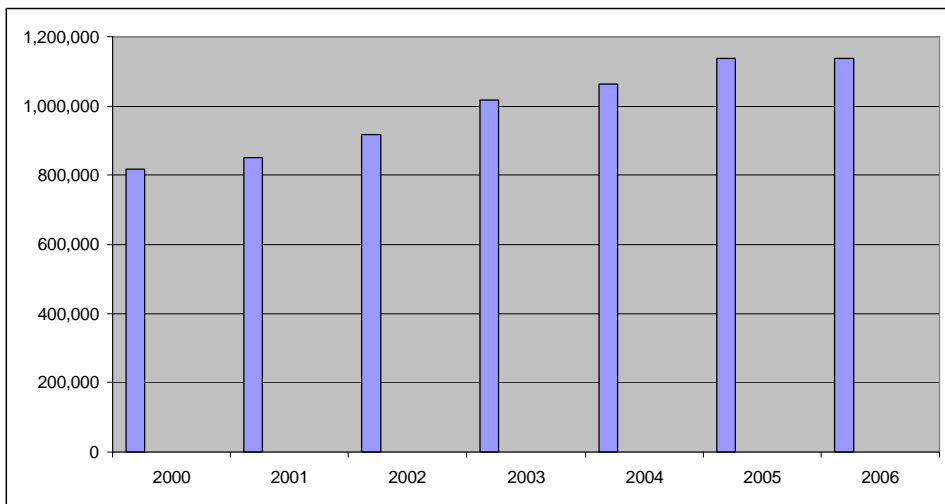
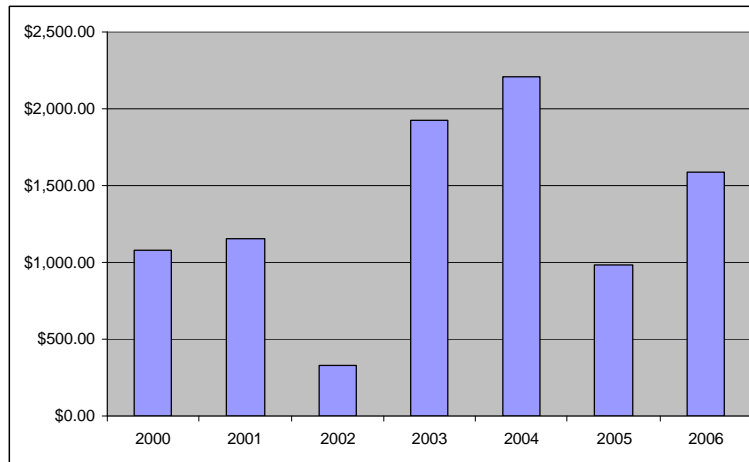


Fig. 10. Donations to the unrestricted department foundation fund are as follows:



Facilities and equipment

Sociology Computing Resources

Each full-time Sociology department faculty has an office equipped with a phone, a PC or Macintosh computer and direct access to the campus network through a 10/100 Ethernet switch. Additional hardware including Zip drives, scanners, DVD drives, and wireless remotes, have been purchased and installed to fulfill the specific needs of individual faculty members. The Sociology department office has additional equipment including a fax machine, a networked black & white laser printer, a scanner with OCR software that are also available for faculty to use, and a digital duplicating machine for large copying projects.

All faculty computers have the following software installed on them: Windows XP operating system with latest security patches and updates installed, Microsoft Office XP Professional software (Access, Excel, Front Page, PowerPoint, Word), Novell network client software, Hummingbird FTP and Telnet utility, CD/RW & DVD software, Adobe Acrobat Reader, and a local e-mail client. Additional statistical and research software such as SPSS 12, SAS 8.2, Mathematica 4, Visio, and Project are available for licensing and installation on faculty office computers.

Each Sociology department faculty member is given a WSU Campus Computer Account. This account gives faculty unlimited internet access, 20MB Novell network file storage space, 30MB Unix file storage space consisting of a personal web directory and email storage space, access to Novell network file storage for use by instructors, and a Wright State email address. Faculty can use their account to access the internet and their Novell storage space from any computer connected to the campus network with the latest Novell client software installed. Additionally, faculty can access their personal Novell file storage space and WSU's web-based email system from any computer with a browser and internet access.

III. Program Effectiveness (NCA Criterion 3 and Criterion 4)

Achievement of student learning outcomes (Please summarize program assessment findings for past five years and subsequent improvements to program) (3A)

The assessment process in Sociology and Anthropology has moved over the past five years from one that used indirect measures to one that is guided by a formal plan and uses more direct measures. The following is a summary of the activity and results since 2002.

In 2002-2003, outcomes assessed in sociology included:

1. determination of additional specialties needed within the curriculum
2. a review of the relevance of coursework and degrees to graduates in their post-graduation positions

Assessment employed a curricular review by the sociology curriculum committee, graduating student interviews, and alumni contacts. The courses that were believed to be important additions were identified, and utilized in writing position descriptions for faculty searches since conducted. Additions of content to methods courses were a particular area that was stressed by graduates and alumni. The overall satisfaction of alumni with their positions was revealed in this review.

In 2003-2004, the following learning outcomes were assessed:

1. Students will master an undergraduate level of knowledge of major social institutions
2. Students will master an undergraduate level of knowledge of social statistics and methods

Assessment was done utilizing a review of course grades and term papers. Findings for outcome 1, with a review based on five courses emphasizing social institutions, looked at 167 students. 93.4% of them achieved a grade of C or better. Term papers were assigned in two of those upper division courses, with 90% of those enrolled producing acceptable work.

For outcome 2, 180 students enrolled in two courses that emphasize social statistics and methods were included. Findings were that 91.7% of students passed the courses with a grade of C or better, and that 92.8% produced at least acceptable papers.

In 2004-2005 there was a disconnect between the new assessment plan that was developed and the newly-elected curriculum committee members who had to begin its implementation. A focus group was held in the Sociology Career Seminar (SOC 204). It found:

- a. Students felt there should be more internship opportunities offered in areas other than criminal justice.
- b. Some felt that an internship should be required of all sociology majors.
- c. It was suggested that advising and advisors could use improvement.
- d. Students wanted more variety in courses offered.

Reviewing these student recommendations, the faculty committee determined that:

- a. Faculty agree that internship opportunities should be broadened to offer areas other than criminal justice. This will be brought to the attention of the person or persons who will administer these internships.
- b. Faculty disagree with the focus group suggestion that an internship should be required of all sociology majors. A lack of faculty willing to manage internships, the problem of requiring students who are employed to take unpaid internship positions and a cap of 15 students allowed to enroll in internships every quarter all make a required internship for all majors infeasible.
- c. To address the issue of advising improvement a packet for new majors with information about the importance and availability of advising and suggestions about course sequencing was put together.

In 2005-2006, the committee hewed to the assessment plan more closely. Graduating seniors (Fall 2006) were asked to answer two index questions regarding their perceptions on the Substantive Content and Skill Set Development (twelve questions taken from the *2006 American Sociological Association Survey on Undergraduate Education*). Two additional questions, one comparatively rating the quality of sociology courses with other departments, and one comparatively rating the quality of sociology faculty with faculty in departments across the campus.

Learning Outcomes being assessed:

? Knowledge of the major social institutions (family, education, moral order, political and economic orders)

52.9% of students strongly agree they learned about social institutions such as the economy, family education, courts or health care and their impact on individuals, while 35.3 % agree and 11.8% disagree they had learned about social institutions such as the economy, family, education, courts, or health care and their impact on individuals

? The socialization process (social psychology)

70.6% of students strongly agree they learned the important differences in the life experiences as they vary by race, class, gender and other ascribed statuses, while 23.5% agree, and 5.9% disagree they learned the important differences in the life experience as they vary by race, class, gender, and other ascribed statuses.

? Theoretical formulations that serve as the foundation of the major (classical and contemporary theory)

58.8% of students strongly agree they learned basic theoretical perspectives or paradigms, and 41.2% agree (e.g., structural functionalism, conflict theory, symbolic interactionism).

70.6% of students strongly agree they learned basic concepts in sociology, while 29.4% agree (e.g., culture, socialization, social institutions, social stratification, and social change).

64.7% of students strongly agree they learned current sociological explanations about a variety of social issues, such as sexism, racism, crime, poverty, or inequality, 29.4% agree and 5.9% disagree they learned current sociological explanations for social issues such as sexism, racism, crime, poverty, or social inequality.

? Basic fundamentals of social statistics and methodology

52.9% of students agree they learned to develop a hypothesis which contained independent and dependent variables, and 47.1% strongly agree they learned to develop a hypothesis which contained independent and dependent variables.

64.7% of students agree they learned to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods for specific types of research questions, 17.6% strongly agree, and 17.6% disagree they had acquired this skill.

64.7% of students strongly agree they learned to gather information to make an argument based on evidence, and 35.3% agree they acquired this skill.

76.5% of students agree they learned to use statistical software (SPSS) to analyze data, while 17.6% strongly agree and 5.9% disagree they acquired this skill.

58.8% of students agree they learned to interpret SPSS Output, 23.5% strongly agree, and 17.6% disagree they learned to interpret SPSS Output.

70.6% of students strongly agree they learned to identify sociological research ethical issues, 29.4% agree they learned to identify ethical issues in sociological research.

58.8% of students strongly agree they learned to write a report from sociological information, 35.3% agree, and 5.9% disagree they learned to write a report from sociological information

Assessment of Department Course and Faculty Quality:

? Student rating of the quality of sociology courses comparatively with courses offered in other departments at Wright State University. Students evaluated the quality of the courses they took with sociology faculty in the following way: 17.6% fair, 41.2% good and 41.2% excellent.

? Student rating of the quality of Sociology faculty comparatively with faculty in other departments at Wright State University.

Students evaluated the quality of the sociology faculty compared to faculty in other departments in the following manner: 17.6% fair, 35.3% good and 47.1% excellent.

Analysis of Learning Outcomes

Eighteen percent of graduating seniors who answered the learning outcome basic fundamentals of social statistics and methodology questions, disagreed they learned to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of various research methods and to interpret SPSS Output. These questions bear watching throughout subsequent assessment periods.

Analysis of Department Courses and Faculty Quality

Almost fifty percent (forty-one and forty-seven respectively) evaluated course and faculty quality as excellent. Students appeared to be pleased with curriculum and instruction.

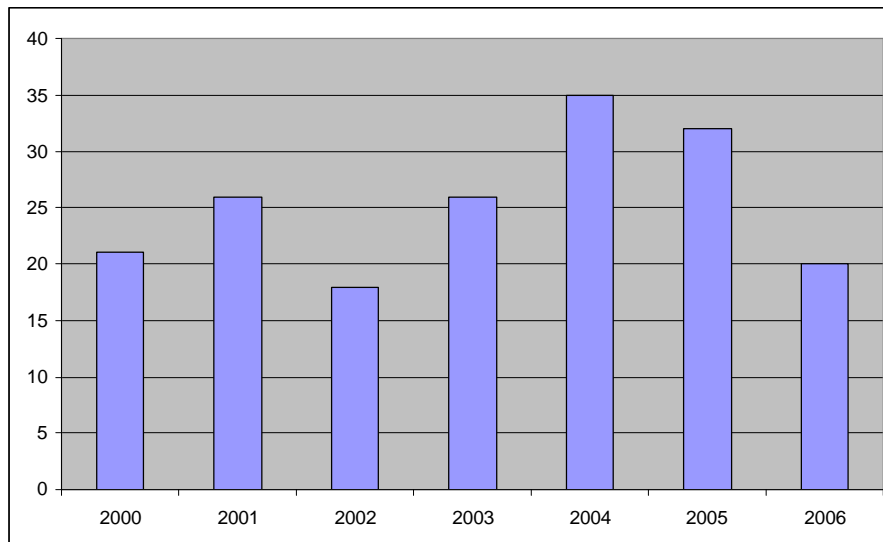
Program implications:

- ? The department received authorization from the Dean of COLA for additional sections of the Sociology Internship (SOC 433) should the student number rise above 16. We continue to agree with faculty evaluation that not all students be required to complete an internship.
- ? The Sociology department has developed a student handbook detailing this information and will be distributed during this academic year. New majors will now have information about the salience and accessibility of advising along with suggestions about course sequencing.
- ? Analysis of the Sociology Department offerings displayed a need for changes in terms of the quantity of methods and statistics courses offered. It was suggested that:
 1. only one section of Sociological Analysis (Soc 300), Introduction to Research (Soc 306), Advanced Research Methods (Soc 406) per quarter be taught across the academic year.
 2. Core courses be offered in all quarters to assist students in graduating on time, without having to wait or use independent studies for required courses like Sociological Theory and Contemporary Sociological Theory. This scheduling change will assist the department in preparing students to understand the theoretical foundations that serve as the foundation of the major.

Student retention rate (3A)

The department has not tracked the retention rate of its majors.

Fig. 11. Annual number of sociology graduates (3A) (undergraduates)



Placement of graduates (e.g., employment, graduate study) (3A)

The department has not tracked the placement of its majors in the past 5 years, but has begun the process of tracking this data with the 2006-2007 academic year. Some examples of positions into which recent graduates from sociology have moved include: probation officer, graduate student in Applied Behavioral Sciences and Humanities at WSU, graduate student in sociology M.A. or Ph.D. programs, staffer at a non-profit organization, police officer, child care worker.

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Teaching effectiveness (3B, 3D)

The university values teaching highly and requires student evaluation of faculty teaching. The department provides mentoring support for new faculty members and peer review of teaching of untenured professors by established (tenured) professors. Through the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL), the university offers many opportunities for improving teaching through seminars and workshops, and these are highly encouraged and supported in the department. Examples of CTL workshops attended by department faculty are those on Web Publishing: Dreamweaver, Turnitin.com (plagiarism software), the Electronic Classroom, Web Design, WebCT and Course Studio, and an Honors workshop. Faculty also attend university-sponsored conferences and workshops such as an annual conference on diversity and a Research and Sponsored Programs Workshop.

Faculty productivity (e.g., publications, grants) (4A)

Publications

Faculty productivity in the form of research and publications of that research are critical. The bylaws of the department emphasize the importance of this productivity in its promotion and tenure requirements and its annual evaluation criteria (see Appendix A).

Interrelations of program's teaching, research, service activities (3A-D, 4A-C, 5A-C)

The sociology discipline lends itself to a blending of the teaching, research, and service components. A good deal of the faculty's service activities involve interaction with professionals through serving on various local, statewide, and national committees. This interaction serves to help faculty stay current which assists the product delivered in the classroom. Similarly, most of the faculty write articles and conduct research in professionally oriented areas.

Integration of technology into curriculum and instruction (3C)

WSU faculty have been very fortunate that the university and college have supported technology well. The university was an early participant in supporting technology in the classroom, beginning with Astound almost 15 years ago. The University has had for some years an outstanding Center for Teaching and Learning and a department of Computer and Telecommunications Services, both of which work together to support faculty in the classroom. All classrooms have had computer equipment for several years. All faculty have access to learning and using web-assisted or online teaching programs (WebCT), including software for tests and plagiarism prevention, etc. All faculty have up-to-date computers. Students have easy access to computer laboratories and can connect from home to the university library.

Description of how program ensures that it is always current (4C)

The Department's bylaws reward scholarly productivity in the annual merit review process. This ensures that the faculty members strive to obtain funding and write scholarly articles in areas related to their competency. Participation in regional, national and international conferences creates contacts with other professionals and acquaints the faculty with new research being done by colleagues elsewhere.

"Comparative advantage" (e.g., distinctiveness in terms of students served, differentiation from programs offered at other regional institutions, strengths attributable to collaborative/interdisciplinary nature of program, etc.)

From a comparative standpoint, the sociology program at Wright State distinguishes itself by its professional orientation. Numerous faculty members belong to associations relevant to the area of sociology. These members chair committees, present papers, and contribute to the field with their experience and expertise. One faculty member served recently as president of a national professional organization, and others have been officers or section chairs. The professional contacts that these positions have opened have been and potentially will in the future be useful in securing student placements.

IV. Program Needs/Areas in Need of Improvement

Summarize the program needs (e.g., personnel, facilities, equipment) identified in this program review and the areas in need of improvement.

If there is the growth of the Criminal Justice major that is currently projected, and with which Sociology is closely linked both in course offerings utilized and participating faculty members (as teachers), then one or more additional faculty lines may be needed. The upgrading of the current visiting assistant professor position to a tenure track line will be aimed at satisfying some of that need in CJ. Returning the internship program to the responsibility of a full-time staff or faculty member, possibly at an instructor-level, is something we desire to implement (since a faculty retirement in 2005 it has been handled by an adjunct instructor). The department did receive authorization from the Dean for additional sections of the sociology internship should the student enrollment rise above 16.

The Sociology department has developed a student handbook detailing relevant information that will be distributed during the 2006-2007 academic year. New majors will now have information about the salience and accessibility of advising along with suggestions about course sequencing.

Analysis of the Sociology department offerings displayed a need for changes in terms of the quantity of methods and statistics courses offered. Core courses should be offered in all quarters to assist students in graduating on time, without having to wait or use independent studies for required courses. This scheduling change will assist the department in preparing students to understand the theoretical foundations that serve as the foundation of the major.

V. Proposed Improvement Action Plan

Summarize the actions that will be taken in response to the findings of this program assessment. Provide a timeline that indicates how these changes will be implemented and assessed over the next seven years.

Sociology has been very successful at graduating students who have gone on to function well in major-related job placements and in graduate schools. Much of our knowledge of this success has been anecdotal, and we are just about to circulate alumni surveys that we hope will make this knowledge more systematic and concrete.

The departmental honors option within sociology has been under-utilized in comparison with anthropology students. The advantages of pursuing an honors project needs to be better communicated to our students.

An additional staff position, or even a half position, would help in the administration and smooth running of the department as a whole (not just the sociology major). The present half-position staff person who serves the criminal justice program has been helpful in this regard, but that position will move if the directorship of criminal justice should move away from sociology in the future.

Assessing the effectiveness of any changes to our major will require us to collect data beyond that which we are already in the habit of obtaining. The analysis of results from the formalized exit and alumni surveys that are just being implemented will require that more faculty time be devoted to this.