

Annual Departmental Report 2021-2022

Program Information

Program/Department: [Sociology / Behavioral Sciences](#)

Department Chair: [Dr. Christine Shane](#)

Department Assessment Committee Contact: [Dr. Patricia Arend](#)

This document is to be kept in the department and an electronic file is due to the AVP of Institutional Research & Planning by June 1, 2022.

A. Departmental Special Section for AY 21-22

Department Lessons Learned and Accomplishments

- **Successful completion of a search for a new faculty member**
- **Revision of our curriculum as per program review to include a new required course and create program clusters**
 - **Comprehensive revision of course offerings in the catalog and copy edit**
 - **Added civic learning and diverse perspectives LAS designations to most sociology courses**
- **Initiated departmental conversation about student mental health and related social problems (poverty, transportation, etc.)**

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B. Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs) (Educational Objectives)

I. List of PLOs and the timeline for assessment.

PLO #	PLO – Stated in assessable terms	Where are the learning outcomes for this level/program published? (please specify) Include URLs where appropriate	Timing of assessment (annual, semester, bi-annual, etc.)	When was the last assessment of the PLO completed?
1.	Students will be able to understand key sociological concepts	Annual department report	Annual	N/A
2.	Students will be able to communicate sociological concepts effectively through the use of writing and/or oral skills	Annual department report	Annual	N/A
3.	Students will be able to think critically about social issues and social theories	Annual department report	Annual	AY 19-20
4.	Students will be able to apply sociology to social life	Annual department report	Annual	N/A
5.	Students will develop appropriate skills for conducting sociological research	Annual department report	Annual	N/A

II. **PLO Assessment** (Please report on the PLOs assessed and/or reviewed this year. Programs should be assessing at least one each year.)

Using the table below, list and briefly describe the **direct method(s)** used to collect information assessing whether students are learning the core sets of knowledge (K), skills (S) and attitudes (A) identified as essential.

PLO # (from above)	Assessment description (exam, observation, national standardized exam, oral presentation with rubric, etc.)	When assessment was administered in student program (internship, 4 th year, 1 st year, etc.)	To which students were assessments administered (all, only a sample, etc.)	What is the target set for the PLO? (criteria for success)	Reflection on the results: How was the "loop closed"?
1	Students will be able to understand key sociological concepts	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	Students will be able to communicate sociological concepts effectively through the use of writing and/or oral skills	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
3	Students will be able to think critically about social issues and social theories	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Students will be able to apply sociology to social life	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
5	Students will develop appropriate skills for	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

	conducting sociological research				

You may use this comment box to provide any additional information, if applicable:

Assessment of PLO #3 in Social Theory (SOC 3160) was interrupted in FA 21 due to Dr. Jason Nwankwo’s last-minute departure for medical leave. The course was taught instead by Dr. Patricia Arend who used different assignments than Dr. Nwankwo had used in the AY 19-20 assessment. Assessing these assignments would have created a disparity in the data, and so assessment was temporarily put on hold. Additionally, disruptions due to COVID-19 made the process of assessment too difficult to achieve given existing program resources.

Summary of Findings: Briefly summarize the results of the PLO assessments reported in Section II above combined with other relevant evidence gathered and show how these are being reviewed/discussed. How are you “closing the loop”?

Reflection Prompt	Narrative Response
Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine that graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? (e.g., capstone course, portfolio review, licensure examination)	N/A
Who interprets the evidence?	N/A

<p>What is the process? (e.g. annually by the curriculum committee)</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence? (close the loop)</p>	<p>N/A</p>

C. Assessment Plan for Program/Department

- I. Insert the program or department Assessment Plan [See above](#)
- II. Explain any changes in the assessment plan including new or revised PLOs, new assessments that the program/department plans to implement and new targets or goals set for student success. [N/A](#)
- III. If you do not have a plan, would you like help in developing one? [N/A](#)

D. Program Review Action Plan or External Accreditation Action Letter/Report

Annual Reflection/Follow-up on Action Plan from last Program Review or external accreditation (only complete the table that is appropriate for your program)

I. Programs that fall under Program Review:

- i. Date of most recent Review:
- ii. Insert the Action Plan table from your last Program Review and give any progress towards completing the tasks or achieving targets set forth in the plan.

Specific area where improvement is needed	Evidence to support the recommended change	Person(s) responsible for implementing the change	Timeline for implementation	Resources needed	Assessment Plan	Progress Made this Year
The Sociology program proposes to revise its mission statement to include the concepts of the “sociological imagination” and social justice.	There is consensus among faculty, administration, and the external reviewer that the program needs a clearer identity. Crafting a new mission statement will simultaneously help achieve this goal and reflect the changes made by the program in other areas in crafting its new identity.	Sociology faculty	Fall 2022	Faculty time	Review whether a new mission statement was written in the proposed time frame	None, focus was on faculty search
The Sociology program proposes to develop and run a capstone-	Faculty, administration, and the external reviewer are in agreement that	Sociology faculty; Dean	Developing and offering course (Spring 2022)	Faculty time	Meeting after the first offering of the class to discuss the	Dr. Arend developed a capstone-analogous course and

analogous course as a special topics course, and – upon its completion – evaluate the success of this course to determine whether a capstone course will become a permanent part of our curriculum.	having a capstone course (or an analogous class) would benefit the program and its students.		Evaluating course success and deciding how to move forward (Fall 2022)		merits of making the special topics course into a required capstone	it was scheduled to run in SP 22, but the course was canceled due to low enrollment
The Sociology program proposes to collect the rubrics used for upper-level classes and have a discussion about achieving greater standardization across upper-level class rubrics.	Faculty and external reviewer concur that greater standardization of rubrics will help students transition to upper-level classes	Sociology faculty	Spring 2022	Faculty time	Review whether this meeting took place, and review whether faculty make changes to their rubrics as a result	N/A
The Sociology program proposes to re-evaluate the	Faculty and external reviewer concur that limiting	Sociology faculty	Prior to Fall 2022	Faculty time	Review whether AUC proposals have been	N/A

<p>sequencing and prerequisites for high-level courses such as Social Theory and the two research methods courses</p>	<p>Social Theory to more advanced students will produce better outcomes, and that there should be debate about potentially changing the current progression of courses.</p>				<p>submitted and approved within the set time frame to achieve goals identified by the program</p>	
<p>The Sociology program proposes to develop required clusters of classes, from which students would choose to take one class in each. These areas will be broadly reflective of the main focuses of Sociology (race, class, and gender).</p>	<p>Faculty, Dean, and external reviewer concur that structuring the wide range of courses currently offered by the program faculty into clusters will create benefits for students, and broaden their understanding of sociology, without requiring us to</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Prior to Fall 2022</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Review whether necessary AUC proposals have been submitted and approved to create the clusters and make the necessary changes to our curriculum</p>	<p>These proposals were made and passed successfully through AUC</p>

	offer any new classes. Creating these clusters will also help our program develop an identity around the key topics we address in our required clusters.					
The Sociology program proposes to draw up boilerplate language about key campus resources – such as those mentioned above, as well as others – so that faculty can easily include this language in their syllabi, thus increasing uniformity across courses in the program.	Faculty and external reviewer concur that including campus resource information on syllabi could potentially enhance students' awareness of, and ability to access, these resources.	Sociology faculty	Spring 2022	Faculty time	Review whether this information was compiled, and made available to faculty, within the given time frame	N/A

<p>The Sociology program proposes to gather data about the feasibility of changing our minimum required major GPA from 2.0 to 2.5, and subsequently to make a decision about whether to implement this change. We intend to delay this change for a short time, however, both to facilitate the gathering of data, and to get past the immediate effects of COVID-19, which might temporarily affect students' ability to maintain a high GPA</p>	<p>Faculty and reviewer agree that increasing the GPA requirement would help distinguish our program, though at the cost of some number of majors who are unable to maintain the 2.5 requirement.</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Spring 2023</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Review whether this discussion took place and resulted in a definitive decision to change, or not change, the GPA requirement.</p>	<p>N/A - change is not scheduled until SP 23</p>
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<p>The Sociology program proposes to follow the recommendations made in our self-study to continue applying for a new faculty line yearly, and to collaborate with other programs / departments to propose mutually beneficial faculty appointments.</p>	<p>Faculty and external reviewer concur that an additional faculty line is necessary for the program to reach its full potential. However, based on discussions with the Dean, we understand that a new faculty line will not be possible in the immediate future due to financial limitations stemming from the impacts of COVID-19. Therefore, we will pursue a faculty line yearly throughout the review cycle, as</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Yearly applications, throughout the next review cycle</p>	<p>Faculty time; university resources to hire a new faculty member</p>	<p>Review to confirm that faculty requests are submitted yearly</p>	<p>Sociology successfully completed a new faculty search in FA 21. The university was not accepting new faculty line requests for AY 22-23 except for replacements.</p>
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	the university's financial status hopefully improves.					
The Sociology program proposes to do a systematic review and revision of materials available on the program's website, including: transitioning useful portions of the student and faculty handbooks online; and identifying, digitizing, and/or creating any necessary student resources that are not currently online.	Faculty and reviewer concur that the Sociology program will need to promote awareness of the changes to the program.	Sociology faculty	Fall 2024	Faculty time	Review all aspects of the website, and any ancillary materials, to ensure that the desired content is clear and easily accessible	N/A

<p>The Sociology program proposes to explore incorporating Alpha Kappa Delta into the Sociology program. This would add an element of prestige for high-performing Sociology students. Faculty will review the requirements to form an AKD chapter at Fitchburg State University, and – if a sufficient number of students would qualify to be a part of it each year – seek funding to pay annual dues.</p>	<p>Faculty and reviewer concur that having AKD as an option for Sociology students would offer students a chance to be recognized for their high academic performance, and also help enhance the reputation of our program.</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Fall 2023</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Determine whether AKD requirements were reviewed. If faculty agree to move forward after reviewing requirements, review whether AKD status has been applied for and granted, and whether students meeting the criteria have been offered the chance to join the society.</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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<p>The Sociology program coordinator will invite the departmental chairperson to at least one program meeting each semester so that faculty can better share their concerns, and get the chairperson's assistance with any pressing issues.</p>	<p>Faculty and reviewer agree that more regular meetings with the chairperson will assist with better communication and achieving program goals</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Fall 2021, and ongoing throughout the review cycle</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Ensure that the chairperson has been invited to attend at least one program meeting during each semester</p>	<p>This goal was implemented in SP 22, and is planned to continue in future semesters</p>
<p>The Sociology program proposes to begin a trial phase of conducting exit interviews with graduating seniors. The first step of this project is to meet with the Human Services faculty to determine the logistics and content of the exit interviews</p>	<p>Faculty and reviewer concur that having exit interviews will provide valuable data for assessing and understanding our program from the students' perspective</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Spring 2022 (pilot); Spring 2023 (full)</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Verify that each graduating student was contacted and offered the chance to participate in an exit interview; oversee the creation of a summary document listing general</p>	<p>SOC obtained the exit interview questions from HMSV and aim to modify this resource for use in our program in future</p>

they conduct within their program, followed by the development of our own processes for this task.					conclusions drawn from these exit interviews	
The Sociology program proposes to create a survey that will be sent out to SOC majors and minors seeking their input on the major academic changes proposed in this document. The data gathered via this survey will then be included in discussions related to the proposed changes.	Faculty and reviewer concur that having student input is important when making changes of this type	Sociology faculty	Prior to Spring 2022	Faculty time	Ensure that a survey is created and that it is sent out to all eligible Sociology majors and minors, and that the data is summarized in a document that is made available to the faculty	This change was debated in a program meeting and it was decided that this information was not necessary to make the changes to clusters. A future survey is proposed regarding the potential GPA change.

<p>The Sociology program proposes to increase sociology student recruitment and retention by developing and implementing a plan in coordination with Admissions.</p>	<p>The Dean has signaled to the program that one of the major factors in being able to gain additional faculty lines is servicing a larger number of majors and minors. Furthermore, recent events – the Black Lives Matter protests, COVID, the 2020 presidential election, etc. – can all be more thoroughly understood through a sociological lens and if we wish for this understanding to become more widespread in the campus community then we need to start</p>	<p>Sociology faculty; Admissions</p>	<p>Initial meetings with Admissions: Spring 2022 Final implementation and assessment: Spring 2024</p>	<p>Faculty and staff time; some financial resources may be required depending on the nature of the plan developed</p>	<p>Compare numbers of majors and minors, as well as retention and graduation rates, pre- and post-implementation of the plan</p>	<p>N/A</p>
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	attracting higher numbers of majors and minors					
The Sociology program proposes to expand our use of assessment through continuing to implement the assessment of sociology courses using the plan developed with the director of assessment. This plan calls for faculty to learn to use TK20, identify and carry out assessment of appropriate assignments in upper-level courses, and publish results of these assessments in annual reports and other documents	Proper assessment is key to making well-informed programmatic decisions, as well as to making incremental improvements within classes. Therefore, it is important that the program continues to build, and expand, its assessment program to build on gains made in these areas.	Sociology faculty; the Director of Assessment	Include assessment data in annual reports (yearly); All faculty members learn to use TK20 (Spring 2022)	Faculty and staff time	Ensure that each annual report, and other related documents, has accurate assessment data included Evaluate whether, per the timeline, all faculty have received adequate instruction in the use of TK20	N/A

The Sociology program proposes to obtain and use better data on graduates and alumni. This goal will be achieved through meeting with Alumni Services, and staff from other offices, to develop a plan about increasing the effectiveness of the alumni survey and the graduating student survey.	There is scant data available about recent SOC graduates and alumni. If we want to know how best to tailor our program to meet our students' future needs, we need to have a reliable means of understanding their short- and medium-term post-graduate trajectories.	Faculty; staff from Alumni Services; staff from offices administering the graduate survey	Spring 2023	Faculty and staff time	Compare the numbers of students who take the alumni and graduate student surveys pre- and post-implementation of the plan.	SOC faculty started a Google Doc with contact info of recent graduates to help keep in touch with them better. Future meetings are planned with Alumni Services to achieve the remainder of this goal.
The Sociology program proposes to engage in community building among its majors and	Students tend to have better overall outcomes when they feel welcome in their chosen	Sociology faculty	Annual welcome letter (Fall 2021); Yearly get-togethers (Fall 2022);	Faculty time; financial resources to sponsor small events for majors and minors	Determine whether the goals were achieved within the stated timeline	N/A Not yet due to Covid-19

<p>minors. We will do this by: 1) sending more regular communications to all SOC majors and minors, including a yearly welcome email from the program coordinator; 2) plan yearly in-person get-togethers for majors and minors; and, 3) attempt to maintain connections with alumni, especially as it relates to mentoring or speaking opportunities</p>	<p>field of study, and especially when they feel like they are part of a like-minded group. Therefore, we will try to emphasize the cohesive nature of the Sociology program through the steps outlined here.</p>		<p>Increased connection with alumni (Fall 2023)</p>			<p>Started tracking connections SP22</p>
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iii. If you do not have an action plan, would you like help in developing one based on your last program review and needs of the program?

N/A

II. Programs with external Accreditation: N/A

- i. Professional, specialized, State, or programmatic accreditations currently held by the program/department.
- ii. Date of most recent accreditation action by each listed agency.
- iii. Date and nature of next review and type of review.

List key issues for continuing accreditation identified in accreditation action letter or report.	Key performance indicators as required by agency or selected by program (licensure, board or bar pass rates; employment rates, etc.)(If required.)	Update on fulfilling the action letter/report or on meeting the key performance indicators.

E. Departmental Strategic Initiatives

Accomplished Initiatives AY 21-22 <small>Add more rows as needed</small>	Corresponding Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy <small>Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 1.3</small>	Indicate if a Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness (DEI) Goal
“Not just not-racist, but antiracist: Improving antiracism action in the Behavioral Sciences Department at Fitchburg State University; Phase Two”	2.1	Yes
Police Program Evaluation Project	1.2	Yes

Planned Initiatives for AY 22-23 <small>Add more rows as needed</small>	Associated Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy <small>Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 1.3</small>	Indicate if a Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness (DEI) Goal
“Not just not-racist, but antiracist: Improving antiracism action in the Behavioral Sciences Department at Fitchburg State University; Phase Three”	2.1	Yes
Police Program Evaluation Project	1.2	Yes
“Inside Outside” education initiative for incarcerated learners	3.4	Yes

F. Departmental Reflection:

Take this section to reflect on--

- 1) *Initiatives that you may be considering for 22-23 academic year that you did not already capture above.*

N/A

- 2) *Any other thoughts or information that you would like to share.*

The past academic year posed great challenges for our students, which changed the nature of work for faculty. We spent significant time, for one example, doing outreach to students who had disappeared from our classes. Many of us commented in department meetings that we could use a social worker to help our students navigate illness, loss, poverty, transportation issues, family care, mental illness, and much more. We stress the need for continual reflection on best practices for higher education in the face of pandemic instability and a rapidly changing society.