

Annual Program Report 2022-2023

The report(s) should be inclusive of all levels, degrees (i.e. certificates, bachelor’s and master’s), modalities and locations.

Department: Behavioral Sciences

Department Chair: Dr. Richard Wiebe

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 and Planning by June 1, 2023.

Section I: Program Assessment (please complete this section for each program in your department)

Program: Sociology

A. 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	Annual department report	Annual	N/A

	use of writing and/or oral skills			
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”?
3	In-class paper	Final paper in class, which is taken in the fall of junior or senior year	All students in Social Theory	3; on a scale of 1 to 3 (1 = Beginning; 2 =	Results discussed in program meetings

				Developing; 3 = Proficient)	
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You may use this comment box to provide any additional information, if applicable:

In the data provided by Dr. Nwankwo, there were 8 students enrolled in the course but just six completed the final paper assignment that was used for assessment (one student withdrew from the course and another had taken an incomplete and had not yet finished the paper at the time of the assessment).

In his assessment, Dr. Nwankwo found that 0 students (0%) were at the “Beginning” stage, 2 students (33%) were at the “Developing” stage, and 4 students (66%) were at the “Proficient” stage.

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
<p>Other than GPA, what data/evidence is used to determine that graduates have achieved the stated outcomes for the degree? (e.g., capstone course,</p>	<p>No other evidence is used beyond the assessment described above.</p>

<p>portfolio review, licensure examination)</p>	
<p>Who interprets the evidence? What is the process? (e.g. annually by the curriculum committee)</p>	<p>The evidence is assessed by Dr. Nwankwo, the professor of the course from which the written artifacts are drawn. He assesses them using a three-stage rubric, utilizing TK20 to keep track of the results.</p>
<p>What changes have been made as a result of using the data/evidence? (close the loop)</p>	<p>Discussions are underway at the program level to consider possibly reordering the upper-level SOC courses.</p>

B. Assessment Plan for Program/Department

- I. Insert the program or department Assessment Plan (This is an independent plan from what is reported in this document).

Please see attached document

- 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 - no changes have been made

III. If you do not have a plan, would you like help in developing one? ___Yes

N/A

C. Program Review Action Plan or External 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: Completed October 2020

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	There is consensus among faculty, administration, and the external reviewer that the program needs a clearer identity. Crafting a new mission statement	Sociology faculty	Fall 2022	Faculty time	Review whether a new mission statement was written in the proposed time frame	Mission statement was written, edited, and finalized.

<p>“sociological imagination” and social justice.</p>	<p>will simultaneously help achieve this goal and reflect the changes made by the program in other areas in crafting its new identity.</p>					
<p>The Sociology program proposes to develop and run a capstone-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.</p>	<p>Faculty, administration, and the external reviewer are in agreement that having a capstone course (or an analogous class) would benefit the program and its students.</p>	<p>Sociology faculty; Dean</p>	<p>Developing and offering course (Spring 2022) Evaluating course success and deciding how to move forward (Fall 2022)</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Meeting after the first offering of the class to discuss the merits of making the special topics course into a required capstone</p>	<p>No change since last year: Dr. Arend developed a capstone-analogous course and it was scheduled to run in SP 22, but the course was canceled due to low enrollment</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>Faculty and external reviewer concur that greater standardization of rubrics will help students transition to upper-level classes</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Spring 2022</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Review whether this meeting took place, and review whether faculty make changes to their rubrics as a result</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>The Sociology program proposes to re-evaluate the sequencing and prerequisites for high-level courses such as Social Theory and the two research methods courses</p>	<p>Faculty and external reviewer concur that limiting 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>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Prior to Fall 2022</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Review whether AUC proposals have been submitted and approved within the set time frame to achieve goals identified by the program</p>	<p>N/A</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 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.</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>No change since last year: These proposals were made and passed successfully through AUC</p>
<p>The Sociology program proposes to draw up boilerplate language about key campus resources –</p>	<p>Faculty and external reviewer concur that including campus resource information on syllabi could potentially enhance students' awareness</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Spring 2022</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Review whether this information was compiled, and made available to faculty, within the</p>	<p>N/A</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>of, and ability to access, these resources.</p>				<p>given time frame</p>	
<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</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>Fall 2023 - Spring 2024</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>Implementation of this has been moved by the department until the next academic year, with the goal of allowing students' GPAs to rebound to normal following</p>

<p>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>the COVID semesters</p>
<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</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</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>No change since last year, since the university was not accepting new faculty line requests except for replacements.</p>

<p>programs / departments to propose mutually beneficial faculty appointments.</p>	<p>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 the university's financial status hopefully improves.</p>					
<p>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</p>	<p>Faculty and reviewer concur that the Sociology program will need to promote awareness of the changes to the program.</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Fall 2024</p>	<p>Faculty time</p>	<p>Review all aspects of the website, and any ancillary materials, to ensure that the desired content is clear and easily accessible</p>	<p>N/A - the proposed date for this goal has not yet arrived.</p>

<p>and faculty handbooks online; and identifying, digitizing, and/or creating any necessary student resources that are not currently online.</p>						
<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</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</p>	<p>N/A - the proposed date for this goal has not yet arrived.</p>

<p>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>students meeting the criteria have been offered the chance to join the society.</p>	
<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</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>We successfully met with the chair in Fall 2022 but were unable to do so in Spring 2023 due to a number of meetings being canceled due to weather.</p>

<p>chairperson's assistance with any pressing issues.</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 they conduct within their program, followed by the development of our own</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 conclusions drawn from these exit interviews</p>	<p>SOC obtained the exit interview questions from HMSV and modified this resource for use in our program. We deployed this survey at the end of Spring 2023 but did not receive any responses from any of the four SOC graduates.</p>

processes for this task.						
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	No change since last year: 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.
The Sociology program proposes to increase sociology	The Dean has signaled to the program that one of the major factors in being able to gain	Sociology faculty; Admissions	Initial meetings with Admissions: Spring 2022	Faculty and staff time; some financial resources	Compare numbers of majors and minors, as well as	In our program meeting we met with Tony

<p>student recruitment and retention by developing and implementing a plan in coordination with Admissions.</p>	<p>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 attracting higher numbers of majors and minors</p>		<p>Final implementation and assessment: Spring 2024</p>	<p>may be required depending on the nature of the plan developed</p>	<p>retention and graduation rates, pre- and post-implementation of the plan</p>	<p>Trodello and discussed a number of strategies to more effectively reach out to undecided majors, as well as having better communications with prospective SOC majors.</p>
<p>The Sociology program proposes to expand our use of assessment through continuing to</p>	<p>Proper assessment is key to making well-informed programmatic decisions, as well as to making incremental improvements</p>	<p>Sociology faculty; the Director of Assessment</p>	<p>Include assessment data in annual reports (yearly); All faculty members learn to</p>	<p>Faculty and staff time</p>	<p>Ensure that each annual report, and other related documents, has accurate assessment data included</p>	<p>Jason Nwankwo successfully assessed the Social Theory course for Critical</p>

<p>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</p>	<p>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.</p>		<p>use TK20 (Spring 2022)</p>		<p>Evaluate whether, per the timeline, all faculty have received adequate instruction in the use of TK20</p>	<p>Thinking (see results above)</p>
<p>The Sociology program proposes to obtain and use better data on</p>	<p>There is scant data available about recent SOC graduates and alumni. If we want</p>	<p>Faculty; staff from Alumni Services; staff from offices administering the graduate survey</p>	<p>Spring 2023</p>	<p>Faculty and staff time</p>	<p>Compare the numbers of students who take the alumni and</p>	<p>This goal was linked with the creation and implementat</p>

<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>				<p>graduate student surveys pre- and post-implementation of the plan.</p>	<p>ion of the exit survey (above). Beyond the survey we have not made any changes since last year.</p>
<p>The Sociology program proposes to engage in community building among its majors and minors. We will do this by: 1) sending more regular</p>	<p>Students tend to have better overall outcomes when they feel welcome in their chosen field of study, and especially when they feel like they are part of a like-minded group. Therefore, we will try to emphasize</p>	<p>Sociology faculty</p>	<p>Annual welcome letter (Fall 2021); Yearly get-togethers (Fall 2022); Increased connection with alumni (Fall 2023)</p>	<p>Faculty time; financial resources to sponsor small events for majors and minors</p>	<p>Determine whether the goals were achieved within the stated timeline</p>	<p>The coordinator, Dr. Patricia Arend, sent a welcome email to all sociology majors and has begun tracking interactions between</p>

<p>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>the cohesive nature of the Sociology program through the steps outlined here.</p>					<p>alumni and sociology faculty.</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? _____ Yes

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.

lii. 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.

Section II - Departmental Outcomes

A. Departmental Strategic Initiatives

Accomplished Initiatives AY22-23 <small>Add more rows as needed</small>	Corresponding Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy <small>Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 1.3</small>	Indicate (X) 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
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Planned Initiatives for AY 23-24 <small>Add more rows as needed</small>	Associated Strategic Plan Goal & Strategy <small>Goal # followed by Strategy # ex: 1.3</small>	Indicate (X) if a Diversity, Equity and Inclusiveness (DEI) Goal
Police Program Evaluation Project	1.2	Yes
“Inside Outside” education initiative for incarcerated learners	3.4	Yes

B. Departmental Accomplishments and Reflection:

Take this section to reflect on--

1. *22-23 Accomplishments not captured above*
2. *Initiatives that you may be considering for 23-24 academic year that you did not already capture above*
3. *Any other thoughts or information that you would like to share*

We remain frustrated by our inability to offer a capstone class and believe it impedes the attraction of more majors to our program.