

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW
ACTION PLAN
SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT
May 2007

The Sociology Department underwent its external site review in fall 2006. The site reviewer's report recommended that the department address seven distinct policy areas, six of which the department faculty accepted. In essence, the review team's major recommendations for academic development were based on the areas of concern that the department had already raised in its APR self-study. The department summarized the major issues in the Unit's Future Direction section of the self-study that called for building on the department's faculty and curriculum strengths, and stressed the need to address areas of concern such as sociology majors, course offerings, and graduate student diversity. The review report addressed these points, and others raised in the body of the self-study. In short, reviewers sanctioned the department's goals and vision for future direction. The general objectives of this action plan derive in response to the findings and recommendations in six areas: Faculty Cluster Hiring, Facilitating Accelerated Change, Curriculum, Graduate Student Teaching Load, the Need to Increase Minority Graduate Students, and the Extraordinarily Low Compensation of Adjunct Faculty.

Objective I: Faculty Cluster Hiring

With reference to the department's Future Strategic and Development Direction, the Report recommended that we embark on a specific plan for hiring new faculty on the argument that departmental renewal, reconfiguration, and rise in regional/national stature would be enhanced by conducting target hires in several "clusters:" (1) a senior criminologist to attract more graduate students, generate more externally-funded research, provide more highly qualified graduate-student instructors for the undergraduate criminology courses, contribute to supporting the criminology major, and perhaps increase the applied options for M. A. students; (2) a Latino Studies hire, optimally, and consistent with a national trend someone who can combine U.S. Latino and Latin American Studies; (3) a general social inequality line (race, class, gender, sexuality); (4) two in medical sociology, one an expeditious senior hire, the other a junior appointment within a ten-year period. The Report recommended that the central administration approve a "forward funding" process and that the department commit internal resources in order to facilitate these hires.

GOAL: To meet at least two of the recommended cluster area hires within the next five years, and all five within the next ten years.

Individuals Responsible: Chair, Dean & RWJFC Director

Action 1: When department faculty vacancies occur over the next three to five consecutive years, the department will formally discuss each replacement with the APR cluster hiring recommendations to clarify the feasibility and priorities of such hiring.

Action Taken: Faculty discussion of priorities for future hires occurred in both April and May 2007 faculty meetings.

Action 2: The annual faculty hiring process will involve submitting an inquiry to the dean of the College of Arts & Sciences on the availability of resources for advancing the cluster hire recommendation.

Action 3: With funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy (RWJFC), we will expedite the hiring of at least one, and possibly two, medical sociologists in the next 1-3 years.

Action Taken: In May 2007, the department submitted a request to the College of Arts & Sciences and the RWJFC for approval to hire a medical sociologist, rank open, next academic year.

Other Resources Needed: “Forward funding” for cluster hires as provided by the College of Arts & Sciences when possible, and/or the Office of Vice President for Diversity as propounded incoming President David Schmidly.

Start and Completion Dates: Start: Spring 2007. Completion: Spring 2012 & Spring 2017.

Objective II: Facilitating Accelerated Change

To grow in stature at an accelerated rate, the Review Team recommended allowing increasingly important roles for its younger faculty, and more specifically, having the senior associate professors and less senior full professors assist by engaging in some combination of (1) administrative service, (2) reinvigorated research programs that include external grant-and-fellowship-seeking, and (3) increased teaching or community service.

GOAL A: In the next five years the younger faculty will assume greater roles in departmental governance.

Individuals Responsible: Chair

Action: The chair will appoint younger faculty members to more of the department’s key governance positions, including chair of the Graduate Committee, associate chair, chair of faculty standing committees, and chair of faculty hiring committees.

Action Taken: Assistant Professor Nancy Lopez has been assigned to chair the Graduate Committee for 2007-08.

GOAL B: The research productivity of senior faculty will increase in the next five years.

Action: The opportunity for senior faculty to compact the yearly 4-course teaching requirement into one semester, or to arrange a 3-1 load, will be made available, permitting time in the remaining semester for research, publication and community service.

Other Resources Needed: Funding for additional part-time instructors and/or graduate student teachers in order to insure constant availability of courses required for sociology and criminology majors.

Start and Completion Dates: Start: Fall 2008. Completion: Spring 2012.

Objective III: Curriculum

A. As introduction to sociology is key for recruiting sociology majors, the report advised that faculty teach large sections of 101 (400-700 enrollments), and institute a system of

graduate discussion sections perhaps coordinated with the Freshman Learning Program, and/or to serve evening and weekend clientele.

GOAL: The regular faculty and lecturers will regularly teach large 101 sections by the next five years.

Individuals Responsible: Chair, department faculty and Graduate Committee members

Action 1: The department Executive Committee will consider implementing new incentives to be made available to encourage faculty to teach 101 that could include: course reductions contingent on a minimum rate of peer review publications per year; special compensation for overload teaching to be covered by the department's F&A return fund.

Action 2: The department Curriculum Committee will study and draft a report on the advisability and feasibility of returning the department to 1-hr. credit discussion sections for very large 101 lecture courses.

Action 3: The department will institute a preceptorship program which will require all first year Ph.D. graduate students to complete special tutoring and/or training in teaching 101 by particular faculty.

Action Taken: *This item has been placed on the agenda of the faculty fall retreat scheduled for September 2007.*

B. The site review team cited the lack of “variety and innovation” in the sociology curriculum compared to other programs in the country, and recommended curriculum reinvigoration by designing new courses in areas of interest to the current generation of students.

GOAL: Three to five infrequently taught courses of contemporary interest to students, such as Soc. 230 Society and Personality, Soc. 250 Latin America through Film, Soc 335 Sociology of Mass Communication, and Soc. 338 City Life, will be regularly offered, and several new courses will be designed and regularly offered in the next five years.

Action 1: With consideration for meeting requirements for Sociology and Criminology majors as well as Social Welfare minors, the department Undergraduate Committee will establish a process and timetable for designing three to five new courses over the next five years.

Action 2: Each semester the call will go out to faculty, graduate students, and part-time instructors to teach the infrequently taught courses that are of special interest to undergraduates.

Action Taken: *Soc 305, Environmental Sociology, a historically infrequently taught course, has been added to the Fall 2007 course schedule.*

Other Resources Needed: Funds to support additional part-time instructors may be necessary; funds to support the hiring of one or more tenure track faculty may be required depending on student response to new courses.

Start and Completion Dates: Start: Fall 2007. Completion: Spring 2012.

Objective IV: Graduate Student Teaching Load

Reviewers judged the teaching load for graduate students generally too large, noting it not unusual for a student to teach two courses per semester while taking courses for credit

and/or studying for comprehensive exams and dissertations, causing delays in degree completion.

GOAL: The amount of teaching by graduate students will decrease by a volume of one quarter over the next five years.

Individuals Responsible: Chair & department Graduate Committee

Action: To supplement the funds for teaching provided by the administration, the department Graduate Committee will seek an infusion of fellowship funds via internal sources such as the Center for Regional Studies and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Center for Health Policy, and externally from foundation and federal sponsors.

Objective V: Increasing Minority Graduate Students

In view of New Mexico's ethnic demography, the significant ratio of minority undergraduate majors, and the prominence given to diversity by UNM faculty and administration, reviewers noted the paucity of under-represented groups in the graduate program.

Comment: In order to achieve success in this objective, the department recognizes that a plan for increasing the number of minority graduate students is a systemic initiative that should include integrating strategies for attracting and retaining students, which means establishing an environment in which students thrive and complete their degrees at an appropriate rate. The department benefits from a number of faculty members who have extensive experience in diversity issues that include recruiting, retaining and successfully mentoring minority students.

GOAL: The department will increase minority graduate student representation, especially Latino(a)s and Native Americans, to reflect the demographic diversity of the State of New Mexico, by the next five years.

Individuals Responsible: Chair, department Graduate Committee and other faculty as needed.

Action 1: The department chair will appointment a colleague with the expertise and experience of working with and mentoring minority students, as chair of the faculty Graduate Committee.

Action Taken: The Graduate Committee Chair for 2007-08 has been selected (see Objective II).

Action 2: The Graduate Committee will be charged with expanding upon current and/or developing new and more pro-active minority recruitment strategies aimed at attracting targeted students to include: cultivating and attracting UNM students, cultivating undergraduate researchers, actively recruiting students from other majors, offering workshops about graduate school or participating in similar workshops offered by other programs; attracting funds for recruitment trips to non-disciplinary conferences to attract top quality students; pro-active recruiting by adjusting traditional reading of applications; developing a public relations campaign to portray the department as a good place for minority grad students; submitting UNM priority proposals to the state legislature for minority student recruitment; accessing resources of the RWJF Center for

Health Policy to recruit underrepresented graduate students interested in minority health policy studies; search for possible private and public sources of funding for fellowships.

Action 3: The department will revise recruiting materials and website to attract minority graduate students.

Action 4: The Graduate Committee will survey current graduate students to determine the optimum academic culture and climate for attracting minority students and having them thrive.

Other Resources Needed: funds for fellowships and minority graduate student recruiting activities.

Start and Completion Dates: Start: Spring 2007. Completion: Spring 2012.

Objective VI: Extraordinarily Low Compensation of Adjunct Faculty

Noting the department's substantial reliance on adjunct faculty, reviewers felt they were paid at an extremely low rate, less than graduate students, with no health benefits. It called on the administration to raise their salary levels.

GOAL: To see an appreciable increase in the salary or benefits that part-time instructors receive to teach sociology courses in the next five years.

Individuals Responsible: Chair, Dean and Provost

Action: While the department is unable to affect the structural condition lying at the root of this problem, (i.e., the contingent pool of money the College is forced to use in order to pay adjunct instructors), the department chair will annually apply to the College to raise the basic salary used to pay part-time instructors, and encourage top administrators to pursue legislative initiatives that increase the funding sources as well as provide benefits for adjunct faculty.

Other Resources Needed: The availability of funds for this purpose from the College of Arts & Sciences.

Start and Completion Dates: Start: Fall 2007. Completion: Spring 2012.