Sociology Program Learning Outcomes Assessment Project 2006-2007

Sociology is the systematic study of the organization, dynamics and consequences of social life. The scope of the discipline is as broad and diverse as social life itself. The major in Sociology at CSUCI is designed to give students the ability to analyze the world around them, its people and institutions, from local and particular issues of the region to national and international questions. Graduates of the program will be well-trained in the empirical methodology of the discipline, and familiar with current theoretical and substantive issues. The major is designed to broadly prepare students for a variety of professional paths or for future study. The new emphases in the major (institutions, inequalities, and social processes) illustrate how our program embraces the larger mission of the university:

CSUCI graduates will possess an education of sufficient breadth and depth to appreciate and interpret the natural, social and aesthetic worlds and to address the highly complex issues facing societies. Graduates will be able to:

- *Identify and describe the modern world and issues facing societies from multiple perspectives including those within and across disciplines, cultures and nations (when appropriate).*
- *Analyze issues, and develop and convey to others solutions to problems using the methodologies, tools and techniques of an academic discipline.*

Sociology Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

The Sociology program follows many of the Learning Objectives and Outcomes outlined in *Creating an Effective Assessment Plan for the Sociology Major* by the ASA Task Force on Assessing the Undergraduate Sociology Major (January, 2005). The current brochure for the sociology major identifies five learning outcomes, four of which are directly measurable. These include:

- Students will demonstrate understanding of the role of evidence in the social sciences and how to conduct both quantitative and qualitative sociological research;

- Students will demonstrate substantive knowledge of core areas and controversies in sociology and the ability to think critically about them;

- Students will demonstrate an understanding of the history and evolution of the discipline of sociology;

- Students will be able to communicate effectively about the field of sociology; and finally,

- Students will be prepared to continue their education in professional or graduate study beyond the B.A. degree.

For the 2006-2007 AY, the program has selected a lynchpin learning goal to assess:

- Demonstration of understanding the role of evidence in the social sciences and how to conduct quantitative and/or qualitative sociological research

This enables us to look at specific measurable outcomes via the Capstone project in Sociology. The Capstone is designed to be a culminating experience in the major. Students enroll in Sociology 499 having completed all major substantive and methodological coursework in the major. That is, they will have completed the statistics and quantitative research methods sequence (SOC 303 and 310); Sociological Theory (SOC 420); important substantive courses in major areas of the field, such as stratification (SOC 350), race and ethnicity (SOC 360), and political sociology (SOC 330). The Capstone is designed to demonstrate that the student is capable of completing original research on her own, with appropriate guidance.

Data and Analysis

This fall a small group of five (5) graduating seniors are completing their capstone. Based on their work, we will be able to develop a specific scoring rubric for the spring, 2007 students.

The Capstone experience specifically asks that the student be able to complete the following tasks:

- Locate relevant scholarly literature to plan for original research;

- Formulate a testable research hypothesis;

- Raise research questions in an appropriate theoretical context;

- Apply ASA ethical guidelines in the design, data collection, analysis, interpretation, and reporting of

sociological research;

- Demonstrate understanding of ASA guidelines for the ethical treatment of human subjects;

- Prepare an application for IRB approval at CSU, Channel Islands;

- Demonstrate understanding of quantitative and/or qualitative data techniques;

- Demonstrate understanding of appropriate application of techniques to the research question; and

- Communicating research results via a poster session or a student research conference.

The faculty in the sociology program will develop a Likert scale rubric, similar to the rubric used by our colleagues in Psychology to evaluate the following dimensions of the Capstone:

- The introduction contains enough information for me to understand the purpose of the study.

- The introduction/method section clearly identifies the hypothesis or research question

addressed in the study.

- The methods section clearly identifies the subjects/participants in the study.

- The methods section clearly identifies the variables/measures used in the study.

- The methods section clearly identifies the data collection methods used in the study.

- The results/analysis section clearly reports the necessary quantitative information about the

variables/measures used in the study.

- The results/analysis section clearly reports the necessary statistical results for testing the

hypothesis or answering the research question.

- If qualitative, the results/analysis section clearly reports and analyzes the richness of qualitative data.

- Presentation of the research is done in a straightforward and coherent manner.

- The student uses the appropriate citation style (ASA).

Conclusions and Implications for Program Modification

This year's work will be an important assessment tool for the first group of students completing the research methods sequence. Based on how well students perform across the dimensions here, we may determine to lengthen the research methods course from one to two semesters, bringing the total number of skills-based semesters to three. Since the Sociology program opened to students in fall, 2005, we are clearly in building mode. Assessing what we have gives us an opportunity to avoid pitfalls in the early years of the program.

References

Code of Ethics and Policies and Procedures, American Sociological Association Committee on Professional Ethics. 1999. Washington, D.C.

Creating an Effective Assessment Plan for the Sociology Major, American Sociological Association Task Force on Assessing the Undergraduate Sociology Major. January, 2005. Washington, D.C.