

Sarah Willie-LeBreton, Ph.D.

ASA Departmental Resources Group

Statement of Consulting Approach

My consulting work is informed by three things: first, a kind of libertarianism in that I believe that smart and thoughtful sociologists are often the best suited to design a good fit program for their school; second, my belief in what I refer to as “the therapeutic approach,” and by that I mean that it’s often terrifically useful to have people with an outside perspective offer a group thoughtful and candid observations, and a bit of gentle guidance, about why some things are going well and others things may not be going so well; and third, I believe in diverse approaches. When I got to graduate school, I met fellow students who had gone through a range of different undergraduate programs and they all brought important aspects of that education to the graduate table. It taught me that a good undergraduate sociology program could be community-based learning centered, or theory centered, thesis-experience centered, or popular studies centered and each will turn out terrific students who bring sociological insights and observations to graduate school, the work place, or to their own voluntary organizations.

I have taught at the university and small liberal arts college levels and over the course of my career engaged elementary, high school, college, honors program, and graduate students. I have taught in joint as well as singular departments, and am currently a full professor serving as the chair of a joint department of sociology and anthropology at a highly selective small liberal arts college.

The anxieties of parents whose children are liberal arts majors and those of students who enter today’s job market together with the particular critical observations that sociology offers are always on my mind. I have discovered that they can be answered and

deployed, respectively, in a variety of ways, and I look forward to working with departments that are trying to become the best that they can be--for their contexts, with their resources, appropriate for their students.

For a truly effective review, I believe every effort should be made for each faculty member to have confidential one-on-one contact with the reviewers. I also think it is important for student voices and if possible and when appropriate staff voices to be heard during the review process. The particular strengths that I bring to consulting work are my ability to work with diverse groups of people, from administrators, to faculty, to students and staff, to listen carefully and to suggest resolutions to conflicts—among department members or between a department and the administration of a college.

My consulting work is enhanced by my work with programs in Black Studies and Gender and Sexuality Studies, knowledge gained during two terms on my college's educational policy committee and three years as an Associate Provost (or Associate Dean of Faculty), and continuing service as a board member for a small liberal arts college. I also am active in the Association of Black Sociologists, Sociologists for Women and Society, the Race and Culture Sections of the ASA, and I have offered workshops on chairing departments and preparing for departmental reviews at regional and national meetings.

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