



Dear Department Leader:

The past year has been marked by increasing political polarization, proliferating hate crimes, and rising economic inequality. Science as a whole, and even fact-based decision-making, are under attack. The role of higher education is being questioned and institutions are being asked to demonstrate their value in entirely new ways. The very basis for substantive discussion of controversial topics has been challenged on campuses across the country.

Sociology departments have a critical role to play in responding to these events. As a discipline, we have the tools to understand and explain the causes of polarization and the approaches for responding to it. Our theories reveal how social structures reproduce inequality and what would be necessary to reduce it. Our classes teach students to think critically and communicate effectively across differences.

As a department leader, you know that delivering on the promise of sociology in these difficult times requires strong sociology programs and a strong national association backing them up. For that reason, I'm writing to ask you to make sure that your department is a part of the ASA's [Department Affiliates Program](#).

The ASA Department Affiliates Program delivers a wide range of [benefits](#) to help your department navigate the difficult context of higher education today. Through webinars, faculty and students gain access to valuable professional development opportunities without ever leaving campus. *Chairlink*, the ASA newsletter for department leaders, helps you anticipate and be responsive to the latest challenges. *The Independent Variable*—our newsletter for undergraduates—helps students gain interest in the field and increase their success in the major. Department Affiliates are listed on the ASA website with active links to their department's own websites, helping them gain valuable national visibility.

When departments of sociology are connected to the ASA through the Department Affiliates program, students benefit, faculty benefit, departments benefit and the discipline benefits.

Please [login](#) to the ASA website with your department ID and password (if you don't know what these are, contact customer service at customer@asanet.org or call 202.527.7884) and add your department to the list of ASA Department Affiliates today. Together, we are stronger and more effective. The times demand it.

Sincerely,

Michele Lamont

ASA President

Robert I. Goldman Professor of European Studies, Professor of Sociology and African American Studies,
Harvard University