

Ideas for Generating Student Involvement in Sociology Departments

(a revision of the Sociology Student Club Tool Kit)

Introduction

Actively involved students make a good department even better. A sociology department that acts as a professional community is more likely to have satisfied students, ones who see sociology as more than just the classes they take and who feel connected to their department and faculty. While there are many ways to generate student involvement in the actual classroom, there are also helpful ways to provide sociology students with a sense of belonging in the department outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, whether the department is big or small, students are often reluctant to interact with faculty on a casual level or learn more about their department besides just the courses they take. Departments can involve their students in a way that will be positive to their development and growth and make students feel welcomed and included.

Sociology, as the study of group and social life, offers the perspectives needed to create an engaged student body. Sociologists understand, perhaps more than anyone, how the social dynamics and interaction of a group affects its outcome. Sociology departments can affect the climate of their departments by actively engaging their students, both inside and outside the classroom. They can create a community in which students can articulate themselves in a meaningful way.

This booklet serves as a revision of *The Sociology Student Club Tool Kit: Generating Student Involvement in Departments of Sociology* of 1999 by Steve Hoffman which was also a revision of the Stephen F. Steele and Joan Albert's *Sociology Club Tool Kit* of 1992. Both of these previous publications focused on department sociology clubs, orientation meetings, and student handbooks. They discussed the mechanics of starting a sociology club, its governance structure, and with what various activities sociology clubs are involved. For this edition, the Academic and Professional Affairs Program (APAP) sought to expand the focus by presenting general ideas for generating student involvement in sociology departments. These tips range from having a sociology book related discussion group to encouraging participation in honor societies. Information from previous editions is also included. We intend this booklet to be a suggestion guide for departments seeking to revive themselves or for faculty seeking a closer, informal connection to their students.

ASA's Academic and Professional Affairs Program seeks to advance the place of sociology in colleges and universities, strengthen departments and their programs, and encourage the best practices in education and teaching. To this end, APAP produces many teaching resource materials such as this one. Special thanks to those who helped with this booklet, including William Roy of UCLA, Jim Sherohman of St. Cloud State University, Dennis McSeveney of University of New Orleans, and Steve Hoffman of Northwestern University. We are always looking for more resources and ideas and welcome your comments to this booklet.

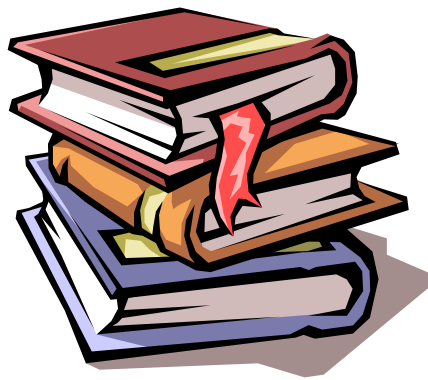
1. Student Handbook

A student handbook is a great first step to orient students to the sociology department. A handbook provided to new majors and minors would serve as a guide to the department on a variety of matters. Handbooks will differ widely based on the size and structure of the department. The student handbook allows students to be kept abreast of department policies and procedures. Having all this department information in one place is handy to the overwhelmed undergraduate. It need not be seen as a huge effort and does not necessarily need to be longer than 20-30 pages. Some things to include in the student handbooks are:

- What is sociology? Why study sociology?
- Department mission and goals. Brief history of the department.
- Requirements and descriptions of the major and minor. Include checklist for students to track their individual progress. Include a model curriculum of what classes ideally should be taken each year. If applicable, include information about other concentrations, specializations, and certificates within the department.
- List of courses offered and their prerequisites
- Information on capstone course or senior thesis
- Explanation of student evaluation and competencies expected in students. This can be helpful for students to know how they will be evaluated (it also helps if there is some department consistency in this matter).
- Department structure – Chair, Assistant Chair, Director of Undergraduate Study, Director of Graduate Study
- Advising
- Faculty Profiles – list of faculty and their concentrations
- Links to other majors and minors and to the school as a whole. Discussion of double majors and minors or concentrations in other departments. Links to other programs outside of the department can be helpful to students. For example, Northwestern University has the Institute for Policy Research and students often have the opportunity to work on research projects.
- Department Activities – colloquiums, brown-bag lunches, social gatherings, etc.
- Post-graduation information. What can sociology students do with a major in sociology? Information on possible careers and graduate study. Providing this sort of information is vital to students who are often clueless coming into a major about their futures. For example, St. Cloud State University helps their students by providing each major with career related brochures and a copy of the *Careers in Sociology* (published by ASA).
- Honors Program/ Honors Society, if applicable
- Links to professional organizations, such as American Sociological Association, Society for Applied Sociology, or the Eastern Sociological Society and other regional sociological organizations. Include information about how students can get involved.
- Reference tools – Brief listing of related journals, databases, and useful datasets; helpful websites such as jstor.org; library research information.

Also include information about writing sociology papers and the ASA citation style.

Departments can modify this information based on their needs. It is important that this information be updated regularly; once a year should be enough to be sure that the contact information is up-to-date. In general, the Student Handbook should be considered a key resource that helps students navigate their department world. The following is the Table of Contents from the Student Handbook for University of California-Los Angeles Department of Sociology and St. Cloud State University Department of Sociology and Anthropology, reprinted with permission.



INFORMATION KIT FOR SOCIOLOGY MAJORS

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
SH 262

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2002-2003 UNDERGRADUATE GUIDE
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
UCLA

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Hanover College
Sociology and Anthropology Student Handbook 2004-2005

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Handbook for Sociology Majors 2002-2004
SUNY – Genesco

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2. Departmental Website

In this information age, a department's website can serve a similar tool as the Student Handbook. It serves as a orientating guide to the department, with resources and links to other areas. Most departments already have some kind of web address, but it is important to develop it into something that can be helpful. A good website informs both majors and nonmajors, students who are undecided about their major and simply want more information. Departments should assess the use and purpose of their website and then make appropriate changes. Websites can differ based on the size and composition of the department and school. The audience for the website needs to be determined, whether it be current students in the department, graduate students, the general public interested in sociology programs, alumni, other sociologists, or any combination of these. Your departmental website should include:

- Description of sociology program and department including undergraduate and graduate study
- Faculty profiles, preferably including curriculum vitas and contact information
- Letter from the chair
- Contact and staff information
- Graduate student information, including list and e-mails of current graduate students, list of recent placements of PhD graduates
- Research opportunities
- Department news
- Funding information, research grants, etc.
- Links to other relevant resources on campus

This hardly needs to be a time-consuming task and the rewards are great. Having one person assigned to the task of updating the site, perhaps a department secretary, would be sufficient. If it lists upcoming events in the department, students are given more of a chance to be actively involved and informed. For example, students might be hesitant to approach professors directly to learn of their research interests. However, if this information was posted on the website, students would already have an "in" and a contact could more easily be made to work on a research project or have a related discussion. In this example, students become more actively engaged in sociology outside of their classes. If the department has a sociology club, information on how to join and events can be posted. University of Washington's sociology department website is a great example of including a plethora of information that is relevant to a variety of groups (www.soc.washington.edu). One part of generating student involvement in your sociology department is having your students informed about what is going on in the department; the website is an excellent tool for doing that.

3. Department Listserv

Related to the department website, a department listserv is also an effective mechanism for engaging sociology students. A listserv is electronic discussion mailing list, in which people subscribe to the list and e-mails sent from one subscriber are sent to everyone else on the list. As messages are sent to the list, they are forwarded directly to your e-mail address. Whenever you activate your e-mail program they are there for you to read. E-mails disseminated over the listserv can be information about classes, research opportunities, and upcoming events. Depending upon the size of the department, there can be listservs for all students, each cohort of majors, graduate students, or the entire department. Listservs are a great tool for uniting students around a common interest. If a student is interested in resources for social stratification, s/he can send a message to the listserv asking for that information. Chances are, if a listserv has enough people on it, someone will have information on it.

James Madison University has effectively generated student involvement and interest with their listservs. The department conducts an “E-mail Sociological Trivia Contest” for majors. The secretary maintains a listserv for all majors and every quarter the department announces a new trivia contest that asks a number of questions. One example is “This early sociologist was born in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, earned a doctorate at Harvard, studied in Germany, edited a journal called *Crisis*, developed the concept of double consciousness, and spent most of his career teaching at Atlanta University.” (The answer is W.E.B. DuBois). One question is sent to the list each week. The person who correctly answers first receives a nonmonetary prize or winners are drawn from a pool of students who correctly answer before a deadline. This was a real hit with students.

One person will need to be responsible for moderating the listserv, in terms of adding new subscribers and moderating posts so that messages are appropriate listserv content. One suggestion to eliminate unwanted messages (“spam”) is to only let subscribers post messages to the listserv. The person in charge should also keep a record of all messages sent for potential archiving purposes. Departments can also decide what the purpose of their listserv is so that only purposeful messages are sent. For more information about starting a listserv, contact your school’s Information Technology Office. A listserv is a great tool for creating a free flow of discussion and social interaction within the department. Opening up as many communication channels as humanely possible is very important, as most people differ on their preferred means of asking a question or giving input, but all have valuable and interesting things to say.

4. Department Field Trips

This idea may seem unrealistic due to financial constraints, however off-campus field trips can be an exciting way to unite and involve sociology students.

Departments can organize trips that range from a homeless shelter in a nearby city, a sociological site in the surrounding community, or a sociological association meeting. These events can be organized with or without an official club to sponsor them. Any faculty member who has a particular interest or expertise could organize a trip. Carpooling and public transportation can be used to minimize costs. Departments that organize outside events like field trips demonstrate to their students their own involvement and willingness to get students involved.

Jacksonville State University's sociology club has taken short trips to a nearby correctional facility and longer, all-day trips to the nearby cities of Atlanta and Birmingham, exposing students to things that they normally would not see in Jacksonville. Trips can also be purely social events such as a bowling or movie night. Ripon College sends students on museum trips as well as on hikes to local monuments along the Mississippi River. Hanover College has an interesting field trip that illustrates discrimination and racism to students first hand. In the "observational study of racism" a group of students go to a local mall and several minority students go in before the others. Several Caucasian students follow behind, watching for the security guards that inevitably seem to follow only the minority students. While Professor Keith Roberts does hold a session before these excursions on why and why not they are not scientifically sound studies, it is a great example of using field trips to illustrate many of the points students may have learned in class but may not have connected with their everyday lives (that is, if they are not already subject to systematic discrimination). Other departments, such as State University of New York at Cortland and the University of Louisiana-Monroe, send students to sociological association meetings.

5. Honor Societies

Sociology honor societies provide an opportunity for students to become involved on a more academic level. Chapters at each school offer their own activities. There are currently two sociology related honor societies – Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society, and Pi Gamma Mu, the National Honor Society for the Social Sciences. Start a chapter and encourage your students to join these honor societies as they become further connected and professionally involved with those of similar interests. It also looks great on a resume.

Alpha Kappa Delta, the international sociology honor society, was founded in 1920 at the University of Southern California. The purpose of this society is to promote an interest in the study of sociology, research of social problems, and other intellectual activities leading to the improvement in the human condition. To be members, students must have a GPA of 3.0, be declared sociology majors or minors (having taken four courses prior to initiation), and pay the membership fee. Requirements for admission are the same at all colleges, but the lifetime membership fee may vary. Benefits to membership include a subscription to

Sociological Inquiry, AKD's official journal, as well as the opportunity to make contacts with others in sociology. As an additional benefit, AKD will provide up to \$400 in assistance to eligible AKD chapters to help subsidize students who participate in regional meetings. More information on AKD can be found at www.alpha-kappa-delta.org.

Pi Gamma Mu, which was founded in 1924, seeks to foster excellence in the social sciences and to promote cooperation among them. Its primary objectives are to encourage the study of the social sciences among students and faculty members throughout the world and to recognize their outstanding achievement. In addition to sociology, members are also from such disciplines as anthropology, economics, international relations, criminal justice, social work, social psychology, social philosophy, and cultural geography. Membership qualifications are the same as those of AKD. Membership includes a subscription to *International Social Science Review*. Pi Gamma Mu also offers scholarships. More information on Pi Gamma Mu can be found at www.pigammamu.org.

Membership in these honor societies increases the Civil Service rating at which a person enters federal service. Membership in Alpha Kappa Delta, the International Sociology Honor Society, provides superior undergraduate students entering Federal Civil Service a pay level increase from GS-5 to GS-7. This amounts to a permanent pay increase of approximately \$5,000 per year for the rest of their Federal career. The United States Office of Personnel Management's Operating Manual, under "Qualification Standards for General Schedule Positions," states that to be eligible for a GS-5 position a person must have "4 academic years above high school leading to a bachelor's degree, or Bachelor's degree." A GS-7 position requires "Bachelor's degree with Superior Academic Achievement for two-grade interval positions, or one academic year of graduate education (or law school, as specified in qualification standards or individual occupational requirements)." One means of certifying "Superior Academic Achievement" is membership in a national scholastic honor society. Sociology students who are more engaged in the discipline through an honor society also become more aware of sociology in the professional world.

6. Book Discussion Group

Book discussion groups are popular across the country. Sociology departments can take advantage of this trend by sponsoring a discussion of a sociology related book. In reading groups, members or the faculty leader choose a book to read and then the group discusses it. This is a great opportunity for students to "do sociology" outside the formalities of the classroom. The group can be informal and meet monthly. Depending on interest, a group can be determined at both the undergraduate and graduate level. To get a group going, at least one faculty member needs to be responsible for it, including getting the word out. All faculty could invite their students to participate, whether or not they are majors or minors.

It is best to choose a book that addresses sociological issues but is not too “technical.” Students who are already engaged in heavy reading for their classes might be reluctant to pick up another book. However, a book that is not too long, is an “easy read,” and yet relevant to the field is much more attractive. Good choices are those not just geared to the sociological audience and can be easily obtained such as Barbara Ehrenreich’s *Nickel and Dimed* and Ellis Cose’s *The Rage of a Privileged Class*. The department can purchase a few books and loan them to students and encourage others to use the library. Jackson State University organizes a series of book discussions in which members of a pertinent course are brought in to lead the discussion. For example, Professor Consandra McNeal’s Black Female and Family class acted as the discussants for Maya Angelou’s *The Heart of a Woman*, incorporating some of the insights from their course into the discussion of the popular book. Students can also read the book of a local sociologist or professor. The department can then invite the sociologist to an “Author meets Student critics” day and a panel of students can respond to the book in a public forum. A book discussion group is a great opportunity to engage sociology students and create a collegial atmosphere in the department.

7. Department Newsletter

A department newsletter is another effective mechanism for getting the word out about the department and involving students. Through a newsletter, news can be relayed, feedback can be sought, announcements can be made, and articles written by and/or of interest to students can be included. Newsletters often include essays relating to campus and student life, career possibilities and resources, information about graduate school, on-campus research and teaching opportunities, and general announcements of department activities and student accomplishments. In addition, the ASA produces the *Student Sociologist* newsletter twice a year on our website. This newsletter contains useful information for sociology students and has a place at the end for departments to add their own information. Departments can use this as a starting point for their own newsletters!

Professor Jay Livingston, who edits the Montclair State University’s sociology department newsletter, commented, “I always tried to include as many items as possible about what students were doing. I was guessing that if we wanted to make students feel that the sociology department was an interesting and welcoming place to be, we were better off showing them that we were interested in students’ work than showing them what great research the faculty was doing.” Northwestern University’s newsletter includes updates on alumni, which exposes current students to the opportunities available with a background in sociology. In addition to highlighting student activities and accomplishments, newsletters can encourage the contributions of students in the production of the newsletter itself. The Greensboro College Sociology Club newsletter “Sociogram” often picks a substantive theme to explore in a single issue. A recent edition took

on the controversial issue of marijuana legalization, with articles both for and against. The final page of the newsletter includes a cut-away survey that asks for the respondents' demographic identity, religious affiliation, and a number of substantive questions. The results were published in the following issue. Such "thematic" newsletters have the advantage of involving readers in the substance of the newsletter and generating interest in the next issue. Along the way, the reader can be presented with a number of announcements that detail upcoming activities. Usually the work required to produce a newsletter is not too time-consuming. One faculty member, such as the department secretary, can undertake the project with student assistance. One newsletter a quarter, season, or semester should be sufficient.

8. Orientation Meetings

In addition to student handbooks, another way to familiarize students with the department is to have orientation meetings. Having orientations for sociology students can be a difficult task as many sociology students do not declare their major until late in their undergraduate career. This is different from students in other majors. Because of this, it is especially important for departments to involve students in the short time they have. Departments can require attendance at an orientation meeting for all new majors and minors within a certain time frame beyond declaration. If three orientation meetings are held each year, that should be enough to cover all incoming students.

Orientation meetings, which do have to last longer than two hours, can be a chance for students to meet faculty. Try to invite and ensure the attendance of as many faculty as possible at the orientation meeting. Allow for some informal mingling before the meeting starts. Students will get a feel for the department as a whole and feel more welcomed as a member of this new community. Some things to include in the orientation meeting are:

- a general introduction to the department
- faculty areas of interest
- research projects and potential opportunities for student assistants
- handing out the student handbook
- a review of requirements for the degree
- other activities in the department.

Another idea for orientating students to the department is through a proseminar course, which aims to prepare students for professional work in the field of sociology. For more information on these courses, see *Proseminars in Sociology: Graduate and Undergraduate Programs* (2004, published by ASA).

9. Student Club

Having a student sociology club offers students an established forum for involving themselves in the department. A student club can use any of the ideas in this booklet. A lively sociology club is both a benefit to the students in the department as well as to the department itself. It can help build cohesion among the various constituencies that make up a department. The club is more than a forum for undergraduates, it is also an organizational medium through which faculty, staff, department and school administrators, graduate students, researchers, campus organizational leaders, and undergraduates can interact on a meaningful level. A student sociology club also helps build student leaders on campus and can often form an important link to departmental governance structures. Sociology clubs provide students with an additional opportunity for meaningful involvement in their educational pursuits outside the classroom.

In establishing a club, one should recognize the difference between a club and an honor society. Sociology clubs should be open to everyone interested. The first step is to determine funding sources. Writing a proposal to the pertinent administrative office or student government body is a good time to think about the type of club the department envisions for itself. It is also a good idea to solicit student feedback on general support for the club, what type of structure and activities they would appreciate, and even getting student leaders involved in the drafting of the proposal for funds. A club should have a defined formal structure, including officers such as president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer. Generally speaking, the president facilitates activities, delegates responsibilities to the rest of the officers and club members, and presides over meetings. The vice president assists the president. The secretary is responsible for the logistical aspects of administering the club. The treasurer is responsible for keeping track of the budget. The election or appointment of new officers should be timed so that there is enough lead time to stagger training. The new officers should be able to become acquainted with their regular duties and work with the outgoing officers. Lastly, every club needs a faculty advisor, preferably someone who has shown a true commitment to student teaching. The sociology club should be student-run and not the vehicle for a particular faculty member's agenda.

A club constitution is a useful document where the formal duties of the officers and a clear mission statement are articulated. It details club procedures, including how officers are chosen and how funds are allocated. The mission statement is a summary of the club's purpose, goals, and core activities. Often a club that is well organized will have a better chance of obtaining funds. Clubs can also seek financial support through fundraising activities. Once formed, the club can hold a wide array of activities such as book discussion groups, career days, peer mentoring, and volunteering opportunities.

10. Fundraisers

Students often complain that there is not enough money to do the kinds of activities that they want. Getting students involved in fundraising for more department resources is a good way to generate interest. As students often want to be part of positive change in this way. Fundraisers can be towards activities of the sociology club or computers and other resources for use in the department. Money can also be raised and then donated to a community service organization.

The sociology club at Carroll College sponsors fundraisers to support local charities and institutions dealing with youth, the homeless, and the elderly. The active sociology club at the University of Texas at Brownsville has a weekly food booth that helps cover operating costs. They have also been successful in getting donations from community businesses. The club holds special events such as a Valentine's Day raffle, in which campus members buy raffle tickets in the hopes of winning free dinner certificates, roses, movie tickets, and gifts which have been donated by local businesses. Club members at Augusta State University raise money through bake sales, hot dog sales, yard sales, etc. for local charities and for funds for student participation in professional associations. The club has helped to sponsor the participation of about 40 students at six professional meetings where students presented papers and participated in roundtables, workshops, and poster sessions. The club also conducted two major book drives and then raised the money to ship the books to reservations. California State University-Bakersfield uses resources gained from fundraisers to sponsor prominent guest speakers, support student involvement in professional activities, honor graduating seniors, participate in campus-wide events, and engage in other community and educational endeavors. All that is needed to get a fundraiser off the ground is a faculty member and students willing to participate and the possibilities for fundraising are endless.

11. Career Events

Students are often thinking about what they are going to do with their lives, no matter what their major is. One way sociology departments can generate student involvement outside the classroom is to sponsor career events, including having a career day. Sociology, like many other liberal arts majors, does not prepare students for any one particular career, but rather emphasizes many skills that can be applied to a multitude of careers. Sociology majors obtain jobs in a variety of sectors, including government, nonprofit, business, social services and law. However, it may be difficult for students to know what their career options are. This is why career events specifically geared towards sociology majors are helpful.

Departments should recruit alumni to come back and discuss how they used their sociology background in their present careers in panels, workshops, or seminars. Ohio State University's career panel, in which former students talk about their careers, allows present students to network. These events can also

be cosponsored with your school's career placement office. University of Washington has a Sociology Alumni Association which provides career guidance to present students. It is also a good idea to invite members of the community who studied sociology to discuss how that background affects their job. It is also particularly effective to get a cross range of graduated sociology majors – individuals at various stages in their career trajectories and from various occupational settings.

“Career Days” also have an immediate appeal to students as they work to complete their degree. Such meetings are a great opportunity to provide students with career resources. ASA has many relevant career booklets such as *Careers in Sociology*, *Majoring in Sociology*, and *Embarking upon a Career with an Undergraduate Degree in Sociology* that can be displayed for student use (see www.asanet.org for more details). Such days can include alumni and members of the community. Organizing a career day should not be a large effort if the entire department pulls together its resources of people to invite. A well-organized Career Day will give current students real-life experiential lessons in how those who graduated before them have been able to use their degrees in diverse occupational settings. The earlier students learn of career options, the more prepared they will be once they enter the real world. Departments can get students more involved by helping them see their major or minor beyond the classroom.

12. Film Showing and Discussion

Similar to having a book discussion group, having a film showing and discussion is another way to incorporate a sociological perspective into a popular activity. Show a film and then invite a faculty member to facilitate a good sociological discussion of the film and its impact. Different faculty members can facilitate the discussion each month and one faculty member would need to be responsible for organizing the event. A sociological perspective can easily be applied to many films. For example, a showing of “Boyz N the Hood” could lead to a discussion of the inner city and poverty. Likewise, a showing of “Philadelphia” could lead to a discussion of the sociology of AIDS and HIV. If the department does not have a television and VCR or DVD player, the film could be shown at an auditorium on campus. For logistical purposes, the movie should not be longer than two hours and the following discussion not longer than 30 minutes. Having a once-a-month film series could also attract students of other disciplines. Showing documentaries is also a good idea. Check with your school's film and audiovisual department for assistance. And be sure to bring popcorn and beverages to ensure a good turnout!

13. Colloquiums, Talks, and Lectures

Many departments already sponsor brown-bag lectures, colloquiums, and other talks on a regular basis. However, many do not realize the potential for involving undergraduate students at this level. As a result, these lectures are addressed to graduate students and faculty and undergraduates often feel too intimidated to attend. Students should be made to feel welcome at these events and some talks should be specifically designed for them.

One idea is to plan a brown-bag lecture once a month and ask a department faculty member to present a report on his or her current research. Speakers from the surrounding community can be brought in to speak with students about how to apply what they learn in class to the real world. Clemson University, for example, regularly brings in employees of governmental agencies (such as state law enforcement or Department of Social Services representatives) as well as occasional speakers such as Gregory Garrison (who successfully prosecuted the Mike Tyson sexual battery and rape trial). Another good idea is to bring in representatives of the regional sociology associations who can speak to students about participating in regional meetings and upon the wider disciplinary work of professional associations. Faculty and graduate students could be invited to lead a discussion about a topic in which they have expertise.

Carroll College's sociology club, in conjunction with other groups, dedicates each February to Social Justice and has a series of guests speakers regarding social justice issues. Many departments also bring in faculty from other departments to discuss their current research or a topic relevant to current events, such as professor knowledgeable in immigration issues to discuss current immigration trends throughout the country. It is good idea to have these talks either during the lunch hour or in the early evening to maximize attendance. Whenever they are held, be sure to offer light refreshments and allow some time for mingling between faculty and students. Offering a question-and-answer session at the end of the talk makes students feel that they can contribute. There is no need to make these events too formal. At its best, a colloquia, lecture, or talk will allow students to get the most out of their sociology department and provide an opportunity for meaningful student involvement outside the classroom.

14. Research Fairs and Symposiums

Similar to colloquia, research fairs and symposiums are another opportunity to involve students outside the classroom. Student research or paper presentations are a great way to get students adjusted to presenting their work in a more informal setting. It is good practice to set up a range of formats. Try inviting only student peers one time, then invite all students and faculty another time. See what works best for your department and listen to the feedback of attendees. Departments can organize a "Student Research Day" where sociology students of all years can present their class papers. Students can either elect to

participate or have faculty nominate their papers for submission. Many departments also sponsor trips to regional sociological association meetings where students can have the opportunity to present their papers. Professors also can organize a session at one of these meetings and allow their students to present their research in this forum.

Holding a Student Research symposium at the end of the year in conjunction with a department honors program or senior thesis works well because students will have completed thoughtful projects and conducted original research. Also, such symposiums are a great idea if there are students who plan to attend a sociological association meeting to present a paper. Discussing a paper to a group of peers is great practice for doing the same in front of a host of strangers. The graduate program at New York University has developed a workshop series for its graduate students. These regular workshops provide constructive criticism to faculty and graduate students' current research projects. While NYU conducts this workshop for its graduate students, it is easy to envision this as an undergraduate activity as well. Peer feedback on current research is a great way to generate constructive dialogue on student or faculty projects and discussants have the invaluable opportunity to delve constructively into the research of faculty and researchers in their department. Having a research fair such as this can also lead to faculty and students collaborating on research projects in areas of interest. Students will also be inspired to develop research interests outside of the classroom and become more familiar with their department in the process.

15. Department Awards and Paper Competitions

Many departments already have awards for graduate students, but why not have them at the undergraduate level? They allow students to feel pride in their work and accomplishments. Many sociological associations and honor societies sponsor undergraduate paper competitions that students should be encouraged to enter. Departmental student awards can run the gamut from "Student Paper of the Year," "Collaborative Student Project of the Year," "Best Student Paper on X subject," "Outstanding Student(s) of the Year," or any other kind of departmental recognition award. St. Cloud State University offers a monetary award for best sociological paper as well as scholarships based on academic achievement and financial need. Award ceremonies are a great way to bring together a cross-range of attendees as well. Many people come out in droves, including faculty and department staff, students who rarely show up at other events, and friends of students. This is also a great opportunity to invite the parents and family of students to showcase the department.

16. Activities with other departments, clubs, and groups

Whether or not your department has a sociology club, it is a good idea to sponsor events with other departments and groups as a way to get more students involved. Often single departments have limited resources and pulling together resources with other groups can increase the quality of the event. Ohio State University's Sociology club sponsors events with the Criminology Club and the Organization of Minority Students in Sociology and Criminology. Many sociology students also have a double major or minor in other disciplines such as anthropology, criminology, or ethnic studies, so sponsoring joint events is a way to generate involvement in many departments. The sociology club at Augusta State University sponsored an annual holiday food drive with the Criminal Justice club. This can be valuable, as undoubtedly many other departments also want to generate more student involvement. Activities can also be geared to groups within the department, such as minorities or first-year students. Any of these ideas from this booklet can be sponsored with another group, club, or department in order to facilitate discussion and interaction among students of similar disciplines.

27. Volunteering and Community Service Events

An exciting way to involve students is to forge connections with the community through volunteering and community service. Faculty members can sponsor volunteering activities that expose sociology students to the world outside of their campus. Such activities can vary in the amount of time commitment involved from a one-day thing to an ongoing project. Clemson University's sociology club has worked on a local park beautification project; conducted food drives; provided books, clothing, and other items, as well as thrown parties for a battered women and children shelter; and organized a Rape Awareness week. Similarly, Michigan State University's student organization has established ties with a local Boys and Girls Club in which students mentor, tutor, and spend social time with underprivileged children. According to professor Emily LaBeff, "Faculty find that these kinds of activities bring greater involvement and learning than traditional lectures or presentations. Sociological theories concerning poverty, inequality, family, and education become much more real and applicable." Indiana University's sociology club does a great deal of community service work. Every year the club adopts a needy family at Christmas. They have also collected canned good for needy families and have been involved in Habitat for Humanity.

An original approach to increasing student involvement is to create a vital group of active students interested in community needs and projects. The Sociology Club at the University of Southwestern Louisiana has organized a "Strike Force" of volunteer members who put their name and contact information on a list. This list is then used as a resource for faculty to contact assistants at a moment's notice for a research need or service task. So far, "Strike Force"

participants have helped community agencies with research for a number of grant applications. Members are also instrumental in the production of reports written for local agencies and produced by the department as a whole, including a report on the homeless population in the local county. The program at University of Southwestern Louisiana is a great way to create an engaged group of students who are active within the department. It also gives the student volunteers a sense of professional distinction to be part of such a group, helping to socialize them into working as peers with faculty.

It is also a good opportunity to students to interact with faculty on an informal basis. Departments can poll students once a year to determine what kind of community service activities they would be most interested in. While time commitments vary depending upon the service activity, it is best to choose an activity that involves learning rather than just doing work. For example, serving food at a soup kitchen should be linked to the state of homelessness in the United States. Community service activities work well with undergraduates who are often eager to volunteer. A faculty member who has a particular expertise or connection to a community service agency could lead such an activity. Volunteering activities are a great way to involve students that links what is learned in the classroom to the community.

28. Faculty and Student Socials

Departments should sponsor many informal opportunities for exchange between faculty and students on a social basis. These sort of activities make students feel included and welcomed in the department. Having socials in the department allow students to become better informed of the happenings in their department.

University of California-Irvine holds regular “Lunch with a Faculty” days in which interested students have lunch with a willing faculty member to discuss the faculty member’s area of interest or background, the students’ aspirations and future plans, and anything else that may come up. Events like this are particularly effective at larger institutions where such interactions are not always easy to come by. Another idea is to have a department meet-n-greet at the beginning of the year. Serve food as a way to entice students to come. The department should encourage all faculty members to attend. Information on the department should be made available, including the student handbook and information on ways for students to be involved. This event can be like an open house, which allows people to enter and leave as they please. Departments can also have end-of-the quarter or semester socials, as a way to wind down before exams. At these events, faculty members should try to interact with students that they do not already know and get to know the names of as many students as possible. Socials can also coincide with other campus events or holidays, such as Valentine’s Day or Halloween. Northwestern University’s sociology department had a social on Halloween in which a professor gave a talk on the sociological significance of the holiday and students made masks.

Sociology clubs can also sponsor a dinner at a professor's house. This may be difficult for logistical reasons, but it could be used for students who win a departmental award or who graduate with honors. Different social events work for different departments depending upon the size and characteristics. Whatever sort of social event the department decides to host, it will make a big difference in generating student involvement and making them feel included in the department.

Conclusion

All of these ideas are designed to encourage students to see their sociology department as more than just where they take their classes. It is important to figure out what works best for your department. And where events are concerned, it is important to advertise these events and make sure students know what is going on in the department. Getting students involved in the department, outside of the classroom, is not an easy task, yet a necessary one.