Department Evaluation Visits Manual

2005

for ASA’s Department Resources Group
The DRG manual has been developed from a number of sources and has evolved over time. Much of its outline and contents emerged from a working group, which was part of a TRG workshop at a 1985 Wingspread Conference.¹

Edward L. Kain and Charles S. Green, III originally compiled this manual in 1994. It sought to codify the operating principles for DRG members who undertook program reviews. This [2005] edition aimed to include information pertinent to reviews of graduate departments. For this work, we thank Jeanne Ballantine, Tom VanValey, Maxine Atkinson, and Denzel Benson. Overall, the manual needed updating, new resources, and insights from veteran DRGers. The DRG Advisory Board did significant reviewing and revising and I thank them in particular: Kathleen McKinney, Ed Kain, Jay Howard, Jeanne Ballantine, and Gregory Weiss.

The manual is a “living document” that will continuously be updated as we learn more about the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) and how it shapes our skills as DRG visitors to sociology departments.

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¹ TRG is the acronym for Teaching Resources Group, the former name of the Department Resources Group.
INTRODUCTION

The Department Evaluation Visits Manual is designed to provide guidance for members of the Department Resources Group (DRG) who are doing departmental evaluation visits. Most visits are to undergraduate programs, but increasingly graduate programs are asking for reviews. Sections of this manual specific to graduate programs are in italics. This is not an exhaustive training manual, and there are points about which various evaluators may honestly disagree. We have tried to build discussion of some of these points into the manual.

This manual is only one of many resources for the DRG evaluator. Visitors to departments should be fully conversant with the literature on department evaluation. In particular, they should be familiar with Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated (2004 edition), the report from the ASA Task Force on Assessment (Creating an Effective Assessment Plan for the Sociology Major [2005]) and How Does Your Department Compare? (2003). These reports can be very useful in evaluating departments and shaping the recommendations that are made to the department.

Another useful document is the brief and informative Program Review and Educational Quality of the Major, published in 1992 by the Association of American Colleges (AAC)\(^2\). This document is discussed more fully later in this manual. Appendix I to this manual includes a longer list of resources, which can be useful to the visitor as an external reviewer for a sociology program.

Finally, reviewers must have substantial knowledge about teaching, learning, and curriculum in sociology and in higher education more generally. This includes work, for example, in Teaching Sociology as well as by several authors writing on these topics across disciplines. These resources may be read and used by DRG reviewers but also suggested as readings to members of the department under review.

This manual is divided into three sections. Part I reviews some basic assumptions and principles of program review, both as originally developed by the group at the Wingspread Conference (1985) and as outlined in the aforementioned program review document from the AAC. The guidelines serve as best practices, always tempered by the complexities and realities of any department. Part II goes through the process of program review from beginning to end, outlining issues and guidelines and clarifying the role of the department evaluator. Part III of the manual is a set of Appendices that provides further resources for the department visitor, including a list of general resources, outline of typical reports, sample reports, and other useful documents.

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\(^{2}\) The American Association of Colleges has renamed itself as the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU).
PART I. ASSUMPTIONS AND PRINCIPLES OF PROGRAM EVALUATION – a set of best practices

The AAC and Program Review

A key assumption of the AAC guide to program evaluation is that we must focus on key elements of strong programs. If we can identify the key elements of strong undergraduate programs, then through systematic program review we can help build strong programs in a variety of settings.

The Program Review and Educational Quality in the Major (1992) report identifies thirteen elements of strong programs, and suggests that evaluations be built around these elements. Strong undergraduate degree programs must have:

1. statements of clear and explicit goals, which can be understood by students in the program (AAC, 1992: 3).
2. methods for helping students focus upon inquiry and analysis (4).
3. a critical approach enabling students to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of different perspectives (4).
4. a connection with students’ needs (5).
5. links with scholarly inquiry, which reflect the current state of the field (6).
6. a major which reflects a coherent plan and not just a collection of unrelated courses (6).
7. linkages with other fields and disciplines and departments on campus (7).
8. connections with issues of liberal learning, including ethics, and social and political concerns (7).
9. a supportive community which encourages students to grow and develop (8).
10. a commitment to inclusiveness on a range of issues, including race, class, gender, and age (8).
11. a clear commitment of the faculty to careful advising of students (10).
12. systematic and careful evaluation and assessment of students (10).
13. rewards, recognition, and support from the administration for the whole range of faculty activities—advising, teaching, research, curriculum development, and evaluation and assessment (11).

The Program Review document goes on to outline an exhaustive series of questions to be asked in any program review based upon these assumptions. As noted above, it is a very useful document for DRG visitors serving as external evaluators of sociology programs.

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3 These points are drawn directly from the Program Review document, as noted in the page numbers cited.
ASA Guidelines for the Undergraduate Major

In 1990 and then revised in 2004, Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major took the general AAC report and applied it to the sociology major. The first report contained 13 recommendations and the second report has sixteen. These recommendations serve as a guide for DRGers when they visit departments. The sample reports at the end of this manual illustrate how the Liberal Learning Recommendations can structure a report. While there is no accrediting mechanism in sociology and these recommendations are advisory, they have been written by an ASA Task Force and vetted and approved by the ASA Council. They provide a useful place to start a conversation with a department. Even when a department intentionally rejects, or more likely, modifies, one of these goals, they are working as a collectivity to make intentional decisions about their program.

Recommendations from Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated (2004)

**Recommendation 1:** Departments should develop a mission statement, goals, and learning objectives for their sociology program and make them public, especially to students.

**Recommendation 2:** Departments should gauge the needs and interests of their students, and department goals and practices should, in part, reflect and respond to these needs and interests as well as to the mission of the institution.

**Recommendation 3:** Departments should require introductory sociology and a capstone course in sociology as well as coursework in sociological theory, research methods, and statistics for the sociology major.

**Recommendation 4:** Departments should infuse the empirical base of sociology throughout the curriculum, giving students exposure to research opportunities across several methodological traditions, providing repeated experiences in posing sociological questions, developing theoretical explanations, and bringing data to bear on them.

**Recommendation 5:** Departments should structure the curriculum of required major courses and substantive elective courses to have at least four levels with appropriate prerequisites. At each succeeding level, courses should increase in both depth and integration in the major while providing multiple opportunities for students to develop higher order thinking skills and to improve their written and oral communication skills.

**Recommendation 6:** Within this four-level model, departments should also structure the curriculum to include one (or more) content area or substantive sequences which cut across two or more levels of the curriculum. Departments should design sequences to develop students’ skills in empirical and theoretical analysis along with their knowledge about one or more specialty areas within sociology.
Recommendation 7: Departments should structure the curriculum to develop students’ sociological literacy by ensuring that they take substantive courses at the heart of the discipline as well as across the breadth of the field.

Recommendation 8: Departments should structure the curriculum to underscore the centrality of race, class, and gender in society and in sociological analysis.

Recommendation 9: Departments should structure the curriculum to increase students’ exposure to multicultural, cross-cultural, and cross-national content relevant to sociology.

Recommendation 10: Departments should structure the curriculum to recognize explicitly the intellectual connections between sociology and other fields by designing activities to help students integrate their educational experiences across disciplines.

Recommendation 11: Departments should encourage diverse pedagogies, including active learning experiences, to increase student engagement in the discipline.

Recommendation 12: Departments should offer community and classroom- based learning experiences that develop students’ critical thinking skills and prepare them for lives of civic engagement.

Recommendation 13: Departments should offer and encourage student involvement in out-of-class (co- and extra-curricular) learning opportunities.

Recommendation 14: Departments should develop effective advising and mentoring programs for majors.

Recommendation 15: Departments should promote faculty development and an institutional culture that rewards scholarly teaching and the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Recommendation 16: Departments should assess the sociology program on a regular basis using multiple sources of data, including data on student learning.
Elements of Strong Graduate Programs

Some of the elements on which graduate programs can be reviewed, often based on their own guidelines developed in response to reviewer questions and recommendations, are as follows:

1. **The curriculum** should be explicit and clearly laid out with expectations for each level of graduate work including course requirements and recommendations, research and teaching expectations, and criteria for an acceptable thesis or dissertation topic and end product.

2. **A graduate manual** should be accessible to students and prospective students, preferably online. This should cover the institution’s requirements as well as the department’s expectations for graduate education, plus other information necessary to entering graduate students.

3. **Research and teaching** should be part of the program and expectations laid out for students. A teaching program patterned after Preparing Future Faculty (PPF) or one developed by the institution should be a part of the curriculum of PhD students. Time commitments for departmental research and teaching assistants should be explicit and monitored.

4. **Time to degree** expected should be reasonable and laid out clearly, and candidates’ progress monitored.

5. **Goals for the percentage of students to be funded** should be laid out along with possible sources for funding.

6. **Truth in advertising** should guide what prospective students are told about funding, requirements, time to graduation, and job prospects. In addition, only specialty areas for which the department has adequate staff should be advertised.

7. **Regular advising** should be a required part of each student’s experience. Early and continual feedback on student progress from student advisor or the graduate advisor should be required. Strongly recommend that the department, as a whole, do an annual review of progress of all students and communicate that assessment in writing to each student and adviser. Departments should consider developing systematic mentoring programs, including clear guidance as students reach the job market.

8. **Expected skills to graduate** should be explicitly stated and might include data analysis skills and teaching skills.

9. **Job placement of graduates** should be monitored and data maintained for assessment; this information should be made available to incoming and prospective students.

10. **Percentage of students funded** and sources of funding should be on record.

11. **Diversity in the graduate student cohort** should be a goal of programs ...including who is accepted, funded, retained, graduated.
Some Assumptions and Principles of Evaluation

The working group at the Wingspread Conference (1985) outlined a number of basic assumptions and principles to guide department evaluation. These build upon what the AAC report talks about and can be helpful in guiding the department visitor.

Some Basic Assumptions of Evaluation

1. The task of any departmental visit is to advance the discipline, including student learning. As noted above, the basic questions are: Do departments have clear goals? Are departments meeting their goals? and Are they effective? If the answer to each of these questions is yes, then departments will inherently advance the discipline of sociology.

2. The department or program is the key unit in advancing the mission of both disciplines and colleges or universities. Consequently, evaluation of this unit is of enormous significance.

Some Principles of Evaluation

1. It is important to know who the client is—and we need to make clear for whom the report is primarily written. This is an issue about which members of the DRG honestly disagree. Some feel that in all cases the department is the client. Others say that this is not always the case. If a report is for the dean, it is good policy to ask that it be sent to the department as well. If the dean says no, the reviewer needs to evaluate if he/she wants to do the department evaluation. Some members of the DRG feel that all concerned parties must have full and open access to all written reports of the visitor. If/when the client is a dean, this may not be possible.

2. The role of visitors is to evaluate the sociology program and to contribute in every possible way to the improvement of the department. DRG visitors do not make promotion and tenure recommendations, nor do we evaluate individual faculty members. Nonetheless, particularly in small departments, writing the report can sometimes be difficult. If, for example, in a three-person department where Professor X always teaches theory, and students complain about theory and assessments show poor results in theory, it is hard not to speak about Professor X.

   We do routinely make recommendations about what specializations to look for in future hires. We also note overall faculty strengths. However, the foregoing is not meant to imply that the visitor must ignore troublesome personnel issues such as negligence or incompetence in the performance of duties. Rather the visitor’s obligation is to find constructive solutions for such problems.

3. While we are sociologists and are trying to assist the sociology program or department, DRGers are not solely advocates. Every department has strengths and weaknesses. Some have many weaknesses, but carefully worded, feasible recommendations can go a long way in helping a department. DRGers are independent evaluators, not the mouthpiece of the department. What a department feels it needs, especially in terms of resources, may or may not be what you recommend. That said, the DRG review is an important occasion for getting the department some attention, and hopefully favorable attention to its strengths and needs.
4. Departments are not isolated units. Departments operate in a turbulent and complicated context which includes the number of students, students’ needs and aspirations, alumni/ae, and goals and resources of other departments and of the entire institution, professional associations and unions, accrediting agencies, government, foundations, other college and universities, and citizen interest groups. The impact of this context on a department must be taken fully into account by the visitor.

5. Visitors must pay attention not only to the obvious features of departments and what people tell them but also to any hidden agendas that people might have and to covert phenomena as factions and coalitions, personal animosities and professional jealousies, empire building, and battles over academic “turf.” In addition, a department must be understood as the product of a history of events in which causes were won or lost, ambitions realized or frustrated, resentments harbored or alleviated. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that hidden agendas will not trip up the visitor if he/she knows what he/she is doing. This manual is designed to help plan and prepare for a thorough and professional review of a department and its program.

6. In addition to attending to past and present internal department politics, visitors must be sensitive to the consequences for the department of the evaluation visit and the evaluation report. It is important to know of any key events in the past (e.g., a joint department that split), major changes in administration, the priorities of the administration, or patterns of change in the department (such as the number of faculty or majors that has gone up or down markedly).

**Principles of Graduate Program Reviews**

Although many of the guidelines for undergraduate reviews are applicable to graduate reviews, some specific areas are of particular importance in graduate reviews. [And, areas like assessment are very pertinent to undergraduate program reviews].

1. **Assessment:** This should be an ongoing activity of graduate programs and should include some or all of the following:
   - Does the program have clearly laid out goals?
   - Does the department pay attention to the curriculum, to changes in the field?
   - Does it adjust its program to include new trends in the field, or new faculty lines?
   - Does the program do periodic but regular reviews of its program and procedures?
   - Does the program collect data for the purpose of assessment (re: student recruitment, performance of students, placement post graduation)?
   - Does the department use data collected to evaluate and revise the program? What is the process or procedure for doing this?

2. **Resource Allocation** refers to infrastructure—space, facilities, equipment, staff and budget. Are computer facilities up to date and updated regularly? Are library holdings in each graduate specialization updated regularly and is there adequate budget to do this? Is there adequate staff to offer courses and advise graduate students? Are graduate students supported both normatively and financially in professional development such as attending conferences?
3. **Faculty-student relationships** are crucial to graduate program success. Do faculty members spend time advising and mentoring graduate students? Are students regarded as professionals in training, apprentices, employees, or are they ignored to fend for themselves? Are students represented on appropriate departmental committees? Is the advising load distributed across appropriate faculty? Are faculty members providing the necessary training for all students in teaching and research skill development?

4. **Articulation with undergraduate programs** in the institution needs to be clearly laid out. Are courses dual listed as graduate and undergraduate? If so, are graduate students getting enough graduate level education? Is credit given for courses taken elsewhere at the undergraduate or graduate level? Is this policy clearly articulated?

5. **Recruitment of new graduate students:** are the procedures for accepting and rejecting students laid out clearly? How does the program promote itself? Does the program offer all that it promises so that students can complete the program as advertised?

6. **Accreditation or certification:** Are there guidelines for the graduate program and is the program following these?

7. **Teacher preparation:** Is this part of the curriculum and experience provided by the program? How is this done and what are the expectations for students? Is it developmental and significant and evaluated and documented?
PART II: THE PROCESS OF SERVING AS AN EXTERNAL DEPARTMENT REVIEWER

The guidelines provided in this section of the manual are organized in terms of a typical temporal sequence which reflects the various phases of evaluation activities: the pre-visit phase, the visit phase, and the post-visit phase. Within each phase, major issues are identified first, then specific guidelines for the visitor’s role are presented.

Pre-Visit Activities

Major Issues

1. Who is the client?
2. What is the purpose of the review? How will it be used?
3. What should be the scope of the evaluation activity?
4. What are and should be the conditions of the visit?
5. What materials or information is available or can be requested before the visit?

Guidelines

1. Identify the client. This may be obvious because of who contacts you and how you are contacted. If you are contacted via the ASA, make certain that you stay in contact with that office as the process of the review progresses. If you were not contacted through the ASA, it is good policy to inform the ASA of your visit. The ASA keeps a record of all DRG visits and can give you up-to-date information about materials which may be of use to you in your review.

2. Determine if the visit is for an evaluation, internal or external, for a workshop, or for some combination of the two. If for evaluation, why was the evaluation request made? Is it part of a routine, on-going process? Does it represent the first time the department has ever been reviewed? The client may need help in clarifying the goals of the visit.

3. Identify the major aspects of the program to be evaluated. For example, will you be expected to evaluate only the undergraduate major program or both graduate and undergraduate? Most DRG members focus on undergraduate programs. This is not a “rule” but rather reflects the majority of the requests and our strengths. Also identify the specific areas for evaluation that typically include some or all of the following:

   A. Curriculum and major(s) (undergraduate and/or graduate)

   B. Facilities and resources: faculty, offices, classrooms, computer labs and computer support, telephone and copying, library holdings, support staff, etc.

   C. Departmental governance and collegiality
D. Role and effectiveness of the department in relation to other departments and programs and to the institution’s mission

E. Adequacy of administrative support (i.e. budget) essential to departmental productivity and quality

F. Faculty effectiveness—teaching, research, service

G. The department assessment plan addressing student learning, development, career or other outcomes and achievements

4. Review the department’s mission statement, learning goals and objectives for students, and annual assessment process. The clarity of these materials, the department’s commitment to achieving them, and the adequacy of organizational skills and resources needed to realize them represent a major focus of each review.

5. Learn as much as possible about the department, the institution, and in the broader sense the context or environment in which the department operates. Much can be learned about the department and institution in advance of your visit by going to the institutional website. The department homepage and individual faculty homepages should also provide useful information. Request, in advance, and review for clues and concerns the following:

A. Essential documents for the review
   1. copies of any current or past self-study(ies)
   2. copy of department’s assessment plan including its mission statement and learning goals and objectives for students, and reports addressing the plan’s goals.
   3. a copy of the college catalog (Catalogs for all institutions are available online at CollegeSource, if your institution subscribes to this service.)
   4. copies of syllabi from the department [at least for core courses]
   5. copies of all faculty vitae
   6. course enrollments and number of majors (past 3 to 5 years)
   7. courses offered in the past 3 to 5 years
   8. department budgets
   9. library journal holding and evaluation of the book collection
   10. written statements of concerns from the department as a whole as well as from individual faculty

B. Other documents such as:
   1. handbooks about the program(s)
   2. minutes of department meetings of significance
   3. results of any studies (such as focus groups) on faculty, student, and alumni/ae satisfaction with the program
   4. institution and department mission statements
   5. newsletters
6. collective bargaining agreements
7. information on student clubs
8. department bylaws information on committee structure.

(The relevant documents from above list should be requested for graduate department reviews. Graduate catalogs are also available online via CollegeSource)

C. Other documents for graduate program reviews include: documents that contain goals for the program (statement of purpose); who is training for what; program requirements, number of students; funding patterns; teaching assignments of graduate students; placement/alumni data and other key contents. Note any self-study inclusion with graduate program foci or comments on support for graduate students.

D. Review all materials well before the visit so you have time to request any missing materials or seek clarification of issues not addressed by the materials received. In addition, read the materials carefully, noting such things as:
   1. inconsistencies or contradictions
   2. the proportion of attention given to various topics or subjects
   3. whether the language used in some sections is overly cautious or opaque
   4. how well documented are self-evaluations of the program and the level of resources and support given to it

E. Based on the sorts of materials provided and your reading of them, formulate some questions to ask and very tentative hypotheses about the program to be explored further during the visit.

6. Determine the conditions of the visit. These include:
   A. Your itinerary:
      1. Schedule an opening session with all parties involved in the review.
      2. Ask to interview:
         a. each department member individually (including the chair, part-time and adjunct faculty if possible)
         b. relevant members of the administration (division head, dean, provost if relevant, graduate dean)
         c. students (preferably with food but not with faculty present) Hold separate meetings with undergraduate and graduate students.
         d. chairs of departments with important relationships with sociology
         e. Graduate Advisor or Director of Graduate Studies
         f. someone from the computer center
         g. someone from the library
         h. department staff—secretaries, professional advisor, etc.
         i. exit interviews with department and with administration
3. Be sure to allow free time within the visit schedule to collect thoughts, for other team members (if any) to consult with one another, to tour the department facilities, to explore the campus unaccompanied, and to deal with unexpected contingencies. It is useful to have a room on campus where you can keep materials and go during breaks. Reviewers should be assertive in requesting some free time periodically throughout the campus visit in order to accomplish these activities.

B. Lodging and transportation:
   1. It is important to have lodging at a hotel or motel and not in a faculty member’s home. This allows privacy and time to work on reading additional materials, organizing your observations, and on thinking about a draft of your notes/report. Try to bring a laptop computer and get started with writing!

   2. It is useful to have your own transportation to allow flexibility and time away from people at the institution you are reviewing, but this is not always possible (or housing may be walking distance).

C. Compensation:
   1. ASA can provide guidelines for what is customary. (In 2005, $500 per day, plus travel was typical.)

   2. A written report is almost always required; if it is lengthy, then perhaps ask for an additional day of honorarium.
   
   Note: schools often have a fixed rate of compensation for these visits and reports. Usually the rate is well below what ASA suggests. Try to negotiate “up” and make the case that you are a trained professional and that you’ll be investing a lot of uncompensated time (in preparation, in writing, in travel). Whether you take less than $500/day or not is completely your decision.

8. In a formal letter following negotiations over such matters, establish the conditions of the visit. These conditions will include: goals of the visit (whether a summative or formative evaluation, etc.); travel itinerary; lodging; who is to be seen during the visit; consultation fees; contents and dissemination of the report(s) to be written. Be certain that this letter gives a confirmation list of what the department is paying for—curriculum evaluation, workshop, written report, etc.

9. Ask the chair of the department to distribute a memo to the department (faculty, staff, and students) with the agenda and a brief written statement covering the purpose and expectations of the visit. This may help minimize the number of people who do not understand the purpose of the visit or do not trust what is taking place. Send some biographical information about yourself, your professional interests and experiences, and your involvement in DRG. [If the department arranged the visit through ASA, then they will have received the DRG brochure and basic guidelines].
Visit Activities

Major Issues:

1. How should the visit activities be organized?
2. What types of data should be collected? What are reasonable information gathering goals?
3. What are some ways to maintain your perspective and objectivity during the visit?
4. How can the visitor handle unexpected requests, conflicts, etc.?
5. How can the visitor make sure the feedback to the department is consistent with the original evaluation contract with respect to such matters as the scope and objectives of evaluation and to whom the report is submitted?
6. How does the visitor handle a de-briefing and exit interview?

Guidelines for the Visit

1. It is ideal if you can have an opening/orienting session. One suggestion is to have a noon opening session over lunch. The client (chair or dean) could make a public statement about what the visitor is doing and why. The DRG visitor should do the same. This helps set the tone for the visit and orients the people who will be interviewed later during the process.

Some of the people you meet may have only the vaguest idea of why you are there and what your role is—and accordingly will be suspicious (if not actually frightened) of you. While it is ideal to have the opening/orienting session, sometimes such meetings cannot be arranged—and even when they are, not everyone may attend. Therefore, it is imperative to explain your purpose for being there and what your role is to everyone with whom you meet.

2. Gather a diverse array of data from multiple sources; for example:

A. Interview department faculty, administrators, faculty from outside the department (especially the chairs of other departments related to sociology through cross-listed courses, service courses, interdisciplinary majors, or minors), and students to determine the “insider” view of the department’s strengths and weaknesses and its role and status within the institution. Be sure to interview secretaries and other support staff—they are too often overlooked in evaluation visits, yet they are often the most knowledgeable about a department’s budget, its history, where some of its skeletons are buried, and how it really functions.

B. Be sure to find out how adjunct or part-time faculty and teaching assistants are used. Determine how many are current or former graduate students. Interview as many of them as possible.

Graduate departments should have clear responsibilities concerning who is training for what, requirements for graduate students regarding teaching assignments (both as an assistant to a faculty member or as the instructor of
record), comprehensive examinations, support for students, and other expectations.

C. Obtain spontaneous observations. To do this you might:

1. Wander around the department and campus to inquire about the department’s use of library and computer facilities and its reputation; note the physical location and the condition of the department (is it in the basement of the oldest building? In a prime location in the newest building?) Do department members have adequate computer facilities, software, and support? Does the library have recent sociology books and easy access to the most important journals? Does the library provide access to basic research engines such as JSTOR, Academic Search Premier, and others? Do department courses have adequate access to electronic classrooms with full computer projection and web capabilities? What are the physical conditions of classrooms? Are they crowded? Can chairs be arranged for work other than lecture? What about space for informal interactions among students or students and faculty such as lounges?

2. Notice such things as: What is on department and faculty bulletin boards? Are there student clubs or associations? What materials are available for prospective majors? Do faculty members talk about sociology? institutional politics? disciplinary issues such as teaching and research? Do they have brown bag or regular presentations/discussions on topics in research and/or teaching? Is there a formal speaker series? How many faculty and students attend?

3. Be skeptical as a validity check on any information you have been given (especially verbally): check information with several sources; notice what information you have asked for that has not been given or has been answered evasively.

4. Conduct qualitative interviews through open-ended questions. Probe for the good features, the strengths the department has, as well for its faults and weaknesses. LISTEN CAREFULLY. Don’t hesitate to make notes during the interviews. In your interviews with faculty, several questions which might prove useful are:

“What are your most important contributions to the department?”

“What are your personal goals for professional growth and development? How do they link to department goals?” “Do you receive support to pursue your goals?” “From where?” “How easy is it to get support?”

“What do you see as some strengths of your department?”

“What do you see as some places which could be strengthened in your department?”
“Where do you think the department should be heading in the next 3-5 years?”

5. If you are part of a team of visitors, compare notes, observations, hypotheses, and hunches with each other during this visit. Be sure that the schedule includes some BREAKS not only for the obvious reasons, but so you can check your impressions with one another.

6. Having a debriefing/exit interview is important for “closure” on the visit (since your report won’t be coming for a few weeks), to check some facts and get initial reactions, and to “seize the moment” where you have the attention of the department and administration. Try to take notes for the debriefing as you go along, such as a separate piece of paper where you record “big ideas” and “tentative conclusions” so you do not have to flip through your entire set of notes from every conversation to find some of the main points you plan to make in the report. It is hard to prepare for a debriefing when you have a very full schedule and little time to assemble a cogent “presentation.”

   A. Debrief before the close of the visit with the dean and the department chair, and if possible with the whole sociology faculty, each in separate sessions.

   B. Debriefing serves to check and refine your perceptions and conclusions. If there is something you can’t make sense of, or if the members of a visitation team disagree on interpretations, use the debriefing to obtain clarification. You can also provide a final opportunity here for any additional comments department members wish to tell you.

   C. The debriefing should include your sense of what the outline of the final report will be like and should provide a preview of major conclusions and recommendations. Some ideas follow:

      1. Departments typically need reassurance that they really are doing some things effectively—and that “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” Moreover, departments may need to be sensitized to strengths they may not have perceived and to the ways those strengths might be capitalized on to make their program even stronger. (These statements need to be included in the written report as well.)

      2. Administrators may need to be informed of the effectiveness of a program which has been taken for granted and possibly not adequately rewarded. (Again, this applies to the written report as well.)

      3. You may offer suggestions or alternative that have been used by other departments, but don’t dictate solutions. Ideally, you should restrict your role to that of a catalyst or facilitator rather than that of an expert. For example, try to get the faculty themselves to diagnose their problems and
come up with solutions best suited to the context in which they find
themselves. That way they will have ownership over these solutions and
thereby the commitment to follow through in implementing them. Yet,
you can help in this process via both facilitation and offering resources or
information from the national or international levels.

4. One important part you can play as an outsider, especially if the
departmental faculty have not been involved at the national level in the
discipline (i.e. they are “locals” rather than “cosmopolitans”), is to help
them search for a focus and identity. Often, you can accomplish this by
sensitizing them as to where they fit into national trends in the discipline.
You can also help build morale by noting how they look compared with
other departments in similar institutions. You may want to recommend
particular areas or foci within the department that can serve as a
foundation for growth in the near future. Similarly, you may need to point
out possible misallocations of resources (inconsistency between
department goals and the resources available to achieve them) that need to
be addressed. This latter point is more often the case in graduate
departments. Indeed, it may be a point of conflict over undergraduate
versus graduate programs.

**POST-VISIT ACTIVITIES**

 Major Issues:

1. How/when should reports be developed, written and submitted?
2. What precisely should be the advocacy role of evaluation visitors?
3. Does the evaluation cycle end when the report is submitted or should visitors try to
obtain feedback from the department—its reactions to the report, changes attempted, etc.?

 Guidelines:

1. As a general guideline, pull out the sociological stops: analyze the institutional
constraints; look at the political/social context; incorporate the positions and statuses of
individuals in your analyses; examine the taken-for-granteds; examine structural
impediments to change; assess the department as a group. Encourage department
members to assist you in doing this as well.

2. Try to reconstruct from the information you have been given and from what you have
observed what the power structure is like, where the lines of cleavage lie: Who is doing
the teaching—just junior faculty or TA’s or all faculty? Who serves on important
committees? Who has the department chairperson’s ear? Is the chair really powerful?
Who doesn’t speak with whom? Who lunches with whom? The information may help
you make recommendations that are more likely to work in that context.
3. **The report should be submitted in a timely fashion: between one and four weeks after your visit. A timely report is a key part of a DRGer’s responsibility!**

We repeat: The report should be submitted in a timely fashion (between one and four weeks after your visit), not only as a matter of courtesy and professional obligation but to assure that your recollections are still fresh. However:

A. Allow enough time to digest fully the information you have gathered, to “cool down” or “decompress” and to consult with other team members (if any), and to refer to relevant scholarly literature (if helpful).

B. Don’t be surprised if additional feedback from the department or others comes after you have left. Indeed, they may be precipitated by the debriefing at the end of the visit. These tidbits of information may provide invaluable insights.

4. Although the structure of the report may be relatively constant from one place to another, customize the content of the report to each individual institution. Avoid jargon and clichés!

5. Phrase recommendations to be supportive; avoid words and phrases such as “faults” and “weaknesses” in favor of such terms as “areas for improvement,” “opportunities,” “challenges,” and “concerns.”

   A. Recommendations should be geared to local goals.
   B. Recommendations should be supported by relevant data.
   C. Recommendations should be succinct yet detailed enough to be constructive.
   D. When possible, try to indicate helpful ideas and leads that give people a few concrete steps if they accept recommendations. For example, you might recommend a specific article in *Teaching Sociology* which talks about setting department goals, or a successful strategy that has been used in another department.
   E. Some new concerns or issues not anticipated in the original agreement may need to be addressed informally by telephone with the department and/or concerned parties rather than in the final written report.

6. The length of the report should be congruent with the length and scope of the visit. Several pages should be enough if the visit was a day or less in length, especially if the evaluation is summative rather than formative, and if you are not being compensated for a full-fledged report. For longer visits, for formative evaluations, and where you have contracted for a comprehensive and detailed report, ten to twenty-five pages (including appendices, charts, bibliography, etc.) is the norm. However, there is considerable variation in length among different reviewers. Clarify the department’s and institution’s (client’s) expectations about this early on.

7. Remember that the final report is also a vehicle for communication between the department and relevant administrators. The report must therefore be prepared with the
differing, perhaps even conflicting, goals of these parties in mind. As mentioned previously, the ideal is that all written reports are to be fully shared with all concerned parties.

A. Issues which the department may not wish to share with administrators may have to be addressed by the visitor in informal debriefing sessions during the visit or by e-mail, letter or telephone after the visit.

B. Visitors must be cautious about buying into a department’s paranoia about administrators. Such paranoia is often misplaced. Moreover, perceptions of a lack of administrative support can constitute a “comfortable illusion”—a belief which legitimates inaction.

8. If the members of a team of evaluators cannot agree on interpretations or recommendations, present the various alternatives in a draft report to the department acknowledging any uncertainties or disagreements.

9. Evaluators must always strive to be advocates of the discipline and of the department (within the limits of the problems/issues you observe). However, when there are personnel or other problems clearly evident to everyone, the evaluator can only lose credibility by glossing over these. Such problems must be addressed forthrightly and constructive recommendations provided for solving them.

A. It is perfectly appropriate to suggest—not dictate-- possible solutions (i.e. float trial balloons) in informal oral debriefing sessions during the visit and/or afterwards by telephone or e-mail.

B. It is important to remember that even sociologists can overlook the possibility that problems may have their origins in group processes rather than individual characteristics or predispositions. As an outsider you may be better situated than department faculty are to see the structural sources of problems. Of course it is your obligation as a DRG visitor to suggest such a possibility to them.

10. Send a draft of the report to the department and ask them to identify any errors or areas of concern. Revise the report as appropriate based on their comments. Then submit the final version to the administration and department as agreed. Frankly, if the report has a lot of (constructive) critical suggestions, it might be wise to address “accuracy” by a phone call to the chair. DRGers cannot get boxed in with faculty/chair comments about the substance of the report, so make it clear that sending an advance report is for matters of factual accuracy only.

11. Be sure to append a thank you letter to the final report. Remember that a lot of overload work went into preparing for your visit, hosting you and talking with you, and responding to your draft report!
12. Whether to submit a copy of the final report to ASA (with permission of the department which you reviewed) keeps coming up but has yet to be settled. It is an issue about which members of the DRG disagree. At this time, most DRG members do not send copies of their reports to ASA. ASA will begin (in fall 2005) sending a short questionnaire to the department that used a DRGer, asking how the consulting visit went.

13. Follow up:

   A. Generally, DRG evaluation visitors invite departments they have visited to continue to consult with them whenever issues arise.

   B. It is not only courteous but reasonable consulting practice to follow up on a visit. Some DRG visitors routinely contact a department a year later with an inquiry as to what progress the department has made and with a renewal of the offer to continue consulting.

   C. Send an e-mail to the ASA saying you completed the visit, the location, and dates. If there are any generic issues that you wish to discuss, please indicate those to Carla Howery.

*   *   *   *   *

Part III of the manual includes additional information which may be helpful to you as you prepare to visit departments, write your report, and continue contact with the department/institution. It includes a list of references, sample recommendations, and a sample report, among other documents.
PART III-APPENDICES
SELECTED RESOURCES FOR THE DEPARTMENT RESOURCES GROUP VISITOR

APPENDIX I: A SELECTIVE LIST OF RESOURCES FOR DRG MEMBERS\textsuperscript{4}

Workshops


DRG Visits


\textsuperscript{4} A special thanks to Maxine Atkinson who compiled the section on Resources for Graduate Program Reviewers, and Edward L. Kain who compiled the sections on teaching sociology.


**Resources for Graduate Program Reviewers**


Assessment


ASA Task Force on Assessing the Undergraduate Major. Web Site (forthcoming).


Keith, Bruce. (Guest Editor). 2002. Teaching Sociology With a Purpose: Issues in Curriculum Design and Assessment - Special Issue of Teaching Sociology 30:all.


Wagenaar, Theodore C. 2004. “Assessing Sociological Knowledge: A First Try.” Teaching Sociology. 32:232-238. (This is followed by two comments and a reply.)


Critical Thinking


Community Based/Experiential/Service Learning


Curriculum

The October 2002 issue of Teaching Sociology is dedicated to the topics of curriculum design and assessment. Among the many useful articles found in this issue is the lead article by Greg. Weiss: (Weiss, Gregory L. 2002. “The Current Status of Assessment in Sociology Departments.” Teaching Sociology. 30:391-402.)


Wagenaar, Theodore C. 2004. “Is There a Core in Sociology? Results from a Survey.” Teaching Sociology. 32:1-18. (This is followed by 4 more articles/comments about the core in sociology.)

General References on Teaching and Learning


Learning in Sociology Courses


Race/Class/Gender/Diversity


Scisney-Matlock, Margaret and John Matlock. 2001. “Promoting Understanding of Diversity through Mentoring Undergraduate Students.” *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*. 75-84.


Research Methods and Integrating Research Across the Curriculum


Scholarship of Teaching and Learning


Journals (selected list)

Teaching Sociology
Journal of Higher Education
Research in Higher Education
American Association of Higher Education Bulletin
Journal of Excellence in College Teaching
Chronicle of Higher Education
To Improve the Academy
Review of Research in Higher Education
Change
Black Issues in Higher Education

Organizations (selected list)

American Sociological Association, Teaching Resource Center
American Sociological Association, Department Resources Group
Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC & U)
The Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD)

Indexes

Teaching Sociology, 26-year Index, 1973-1999
ERIC, Clearinghouse on Higher Education, The George Washington University
The Chronicle of Higher Education, annual Index (August)

Newsletters (selected list)

The Teaching Professor, edited by Maryellen Weimer
http://www.teachingprofessor.com/

Spotlight on Teaching, University of Oklahoma
http://www.aarweb.org/publications/spotlight/default.asp

Teaching at Davis, University of California at Davis,

Teaching, Sonoma State University
http://www.sonoma.edu/ctpd/#Teaching

The Teaching Newsletter, California State University, Sacramento,
http://www.ctl.csus.edu/newsletter.htm

Forum, The National Teaching and Learning Forum, Washington DC
http://www.ntlf.com/
The Beacon, St. Norbert College
http://www.snc.edu/facdev/

The Teaching Network, Center for Teaching Effectiveness, University of Texas at Austin
http://www.utexas.edu/academic/cte/aboutcte.html

Teaching at UNL, University of Nebraska at Lincoln,
http://www.unl.edu/svcaa/teaching@unl/organizations.shtml

Teaching Excellence, POD Network in Higher Education,
http://www.podnetwork.org/publications&resources/teachingexcellence.htm

Teaching and Learning Matters, ASA Section on Teaching and Learning in Sociology newsletter,
http://www.asanet.org/sectionteach/join.html

Conferences

Lilly Conference on College Teaching and Lilly regional conferences
American Association of Colleges and Universities, annual meeting and specialty conferences
Professional Organizational Development, annual conference
Resources for Core Library Collections:


APPENDIX II: OUTLINE OF A TYPICAL REPORT

Models for Report Writing

There are many different ways to write a report and no “right” way. This section lists several options. Appendix III includes sample final reports.

One Example: Outline for a final report:

1. Optional: an executive summary preceding the body of the report.
2. Introduction
   a. Institutional setting in which program is located
      (1) Mission of the college or university
      (2) Essential program statistics (i.e. number majors and faculty)
      (3) Role of sociology—actual or potential—in the institution
   b. Purpose of the visit
3. Strengths and Areas of Concern—back up your conclusions point by point with narratives of your findings, observations and quotations, omitting names as appropriate to preserve confidentiality.
4. Institutional and Departmental Needs
   a. These should be defined in terms of the major problems identified during the visit and in terms of the context in which the department is located.
   b. The needs identified serve as the basis for recommendations in such areas as curriculum, program focus or foci, department administration, additional resources required, etc.
5. Recommendations—these should be succinct, but clearly related to the needs identified.
6. Follow-up support which visitor(s) may provide. NOTE: be sure to follow through with any promises made!
7. Appendices: Suggested items to include:
   a. Relevant statistical information (e.g. enrollments, majors, degrees granted) drawn upon in the report, unless these are readily available elsewhere—such as in a self-study.
   b. Course outlines and other resource materials, published or unpublished, which the visitor wishes to make directly available to the department.
   c. A bibliography of resource materials, such as ASA-TRC materials, the ASA/AAC report on the major, books, journal articles, and other relevant documents. The visitor recommends that the department consult these documents on its own.
   d. Materials which the visitor has prepared especially for the department’s use, e.g. statistical comparisons with sociology programs in other institutions similar in type to the one visited.
Another Example: Outline for a final report:

1. Describe who you met with and what materials you reviewed.
2. Overview of Evaluation of Program
3. Major and Minor Degrees
   a. Learning Goals
   b. Major Requirements
   c. Curriculum
   d. Sequencing and Course Levels
   e. Minor Requirements
4. Students
   a. Number
   b. Perceptions
5. Faculty
   a. Evaluation
   b. Development
6. Other
   a. Budget
   b. Computers
   c. Library
   d. Other

Example Three: Outline for a final report:

1. An executive summary that begins with a summary paragraph or two, followed by the recommendations that are included in the body of the report.
2. An introduction that describes:
   a. when the visit occurred, who was interviewed during the visit, and any other activities that were done during the visit (such as visiting the library)
   b. materials that were reviewed
   c. particular goals/purposes of the visit
3. Basic description of the department/program, including:
   a. size and makeup
   b. relationships with other departments/programs
   c. course offerings and enrollments
4. General discussion of strengths and weaknesses
5. A set of recommendations, based upon 2, 3, and 4 above, and generally structured around the recommendations found in Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated. List each of the national recommendations, and then reflect upon the department/program in relation to those guidelines. Specific recommendations for the department are built upon the national guidelines.
6. Appendices that include relevant data, resources, and reference materials.
Sample Outline of a Typical Report with Recommendations
(provided by Ted Wagenaar)

Introduction: Details of the visit
Strengths and Weaknesses
Structural Constraints
Curriculum Issues

Curriculum Review:

Recommendation 1: Re-examine the program goals articulated in the previous Self Study and discuss how they can be taught more consistently across the curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Clarify what study in depth is for sociology majors and how the program contributes to students’ exposure to study in depth.

Recommendation 3: Discuss all the required courses such that all faculty members are involved in determining what these courses address and how these courses contribute to a coherent exposure to the major.

Recommendation 4: Become more systematic and thorough regarding assessment of students’ knowledge and skills learning in the major.

Curriculum Requirements:

Recommendation 5: Consider dropping Social Problems as a requirement.

Recommendation 6: Consider reducing the number of hours required in allied fields.

Course Offerings:

Recommendation 7: Consider offering Stratification and Classical Theory more often, perhaps once a semester.

Recommendation 8: Review the curricular rationale for offerings in Sport, Social Movements, Elites, Arts, and Mass Communications and discuss the frequency with which such courses should be offered (if at all). Consider merging Race Relations and Minority Groups.

Recommendation 9: Consider offering Deviance more often.

Recommendation 10: Review the Gerontology offerings and either offer the courses more often or delete one or more of the courses.

Recommendation 11: Consider making the Internship course a regular course that meets regularly in a seminar format and carries more sociological analysis.
Recommendation 12: Either create one theory course that includes both classical and contemporary theory or require majors to complete both Classical Theory and Contemporary Theory.


Other Issues

Student Issues:

Recommendation 14: Consider providing more opportunities for faculty-student collaboration on research.

Recommendation 15: Consider providing more information on careers, particularly early in students’ exposure to the program.

Recommendation 16: Consider doing a survey of students to determine their reaction to various aspects of the program.

Recommendation 17: Discuss strategies for improving advising.

Recommendation 18: Develop a comprehensive program handbook.

Recommendation 19: Consider distributing a list of majors along with contact information to all majors.

Computer Usage:

Recommendation 20: Expand students’ exposure to computers in many of the sociology courses.

The Future:

Recommendation 21: Remain very involved in the discussions pertaining to revisions in the general education requirements, particularly those involving the diversity course requirements.

Recommendation 22: Begin planning an effective strategy for handling the cap on the number of majors.

Recommendation 23: If there is sufficient faculty and student interest, consider developing a joint major in sociology and anthropology.
Recommendation 24: Continue the efforts already underway to assess majors’ knowledge and skills; consider developing an exit exam.

Recommendation 25: Consider holding meetings for just the sociology faculty more often.

Recommendation 26: Meet yearly with the Dean and consider regular meetings with the Provost as well.

Conclusions.
APPENDIX III. SAMPLE DRG REPORTS

These reports are included with the permission of the departments involved. We have attempted to remove identifiers. These are samples only and are specific to the departments for which they were written.

EXTERNAL REVIEW OF THE SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM AT X COLLEGE

Edward L. Kain, (Date)

Introduction

This review is a report of recommendations and observations based upon my discussions with faculty and students at X College on (dates of visit). I interviewed Professors Y and Z (sociology), Professors A, B, and C (psychology), Dean D, Dean E, Mr. F (Director of Academic Computing) and Ms. G, (Head Librarian). I carefully reviewed course syllabi, faculty vitae, the X College Bulletin, course enrollment figures for the past ten years, department budget information, department alumni survey, and college recruiting materials. In addition, I had lunch with a student who is concentrating in sociology. We were joined later by the sociology faculty. I also familiarized myself with computing and library resources. The visit also included an entry and an exit interview with Vice President H.

This review is divided into three parts. The first section looks at the sociology program at X College and makes general observations about its size and resources. Second, the report addresses two issues facing sociology at X College in the next several years--the retirement of a faculty member, and the structuring of sociology in relation to psychology. The final section turns to issues of curriculum. Recommendations are presented which reflect national standards delineated in a report from the American Sociological Association and the Association of American Colleges.

Sociology at X College

Department size The most striking characteristic any observer would first note about X

5 Methodological note: the observations in this report have at least one strength and one weakness. A strength is that the information and input which I received from faculty and staff across the campus were highly consistent. A weakness is that I only met with one student. While the lunch session was advertised in a number of classes, the limited turnout suggests that the student perspective may not be adequately represented in this report.
College's program in sociology is the small department size. With only two faculty members, Sociology has made a valiant effort to cover a wide range of courses which serve both the general curriculum and needs of students concentrating in sociology. Along with (Department I) sociology has the smallest faculty on campus. This constrains the ability to cover the discipline and offer a strong program within the liberal arts context.

Course offerings and enrollments. Data which I reviewed on course offerings over the past eleven years indicate that very few courses can be taught on a regular basis. Only one section of Introductory sociology is offered each semester, with class sizes ranging from 20 to 63. Since 1985, over half of these sections have exceeded 35 students. Course size in the Marriage and Family course is also typically above 35 (9 out of the 10 times it has been offered in the last decade). Most courses beyond Introductory, Marriage and Family, Cultural Anthropology, Methods, and Theory are offered every other year at the most. As will be noted in the final section of this report, some courses central to the discipline of sociology (most notably, Social Stratification) are not in the curriculum at all.

Limitations in course offerings, both in terms of which courses are taught and how often they are taught are not a result of poor planning on the part of the two faculty members in sociology. On the contrary, department members have done an excellent job of trying to balance service to general education programs, needs of the major, and interests of students. Limitations in course offerings are a result of faculty size. My first recommendation follows directly from this.

RECOMMENDATION 1: IN BOTH SHORT- AND LONG-TERM PLANNING. A CONCERTED EFFORT SHOULD BE MADE TO STRENGTHEN FACULTY RESOURCES IN SOCIOLOGY. ADDITION OF A THIRD FULL TIME TENURE TRACK FACULTY MEMBER SHOULD BE A HIGH PRIORITY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

The second section of this report more carefully examines faculty resources. The third section focuses upon curricular issues. Further recommendation about both faculty and curriculum are made in those sections.

Library resources. In general, the collection in sociology is solid for a small liberal arts college. The report on the Sociology Collection in J Library (prepared in January by K)
indicates that most areas within the “recommended core collection” found in Books for College Libraries are represented at the 35% level or better. During my visit to campus, I sat at a terminal in the library and did a “spot check” for a selected list of books in sociology. Over 70% of the books I checked were in the collection. Most of the “classics” were there—missing research monographs tended to be those published within the last five years.

X College has a very good system for ordering new books for the library. Unlike some departments, sociology faculty regularly spend their full book budget each year. Because students do not have easy access to a larger research library, it is important that the collection be as complete as possible. Faculty in sociology should continue to work closely with the Librarian Liaison to the Social Sciences to determine areas which need strengthening within the collection. Thus, my second recommendation.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: CONTINUED FUNDING FOR THE SOCIOLOGY BOOK BUDGET IS ESSENTIAL. STRENGTHENING OF THE COLLECTION MAY INVOLVE CONSIDERATION OF AN INCREASE IN THE CURRENT BUDGET TO FILL GAPS IN THE COLLECTION.**

Similarly, the periodicals collection in sociology is solid for a small liberal arts college. The three major research journals (American Sociological Review, American Journal of Sociology, and Social Forces) are all in the collection. Likewise, central journals in a number of subfields (Criminology, Demography, Gerontologist, Sex Roles, Signs, Social Policy) as well as anthropology (American Anthropologist, American Ethnologist, Journal of American Folklore) are in the library. At the same time, some subfields are not represented. I did not find any major journals in urban sociology. (I relied heavily on the “Current Sociology Periodical Subscriptions” list, and therefore may have missed some periodicals which serve multiple disciplines). Several other research journals might be considered for addition as well—The Journal of Health and Social Behavior, the Journal of Family History, the Journal of Social History, the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, the Public Opinion Quarterly all come to mind as important publications in the discipline.

Particularly at a liberal arts college with teaching as a focus, another journal which is important for the collection is Teaching Sociology. This journal includes articles on pedagogical research, teaching techniques, and reviews of software, movies, videos, and books. Because
periodicals are an expensive enterprise, both in terms of money and space, I make the following recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 3: MEMBERS OF THE SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM, IN CONSULTATION WITH LIBRARIANS, SHOULD REVIEW THE PERIODICAL HOLDINGS. SEVERAL JOURNALS SHOULD BE ADDED—IN PARTICULAR, I SUGGEST CONSIDERATION OF TEACHING SOCIOLOGY, PUBLIC OPINION QUARTERLY, AND THE JOURNAL OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL BEHAVIOR.


Computer resources The sociology department has done a good job of integrating computers into the curriculum. Indeed a number of my interviews indicated that Dr. Y has been one of the most active faculty members on campus in terms of using computers in classes. Campus computer resources remain a major limitation. The research methods class must all use the computer in the hallway outside of Dr. Y’s office. Attention needs to be paid to expanding student access to computers. The computer laboratory housed in the library has potential. Physically, it is organized well for classroom instruction. Unfortunately the hardware is outdated and there are no projection capabilities in the room. The budgeting process needs to build in support for maintenance and upkeep of the computing equipment which is already available on campus.

RECOMMENDATION 5: COMPUTER RESOURCES NEED TO BE EXPANDED SO THAT STUDENTS HAVE EASY ACCESS TO COMPUTERS WHICH CAN BE USED FOR COURSE ASSIGNMENTS.

The building of network capabilities on campus over the next several years is important for both students and faculty. Linkage to an electronic mail system and modem access for data
transfer will strengthen not only sociology, but all programs on campus. Because the library is not a research library, for example, network capabilities can allow both students and faculty access to research libraries as well as data archives.

**RECOMMENDATION 6: COMPLETION OF NETWORK CAPABILITIES ON CAMPUS SHOULD BE USED TO PROVIDE ACCESS TO LIBRARY FACILITIES AND DATA ARCHIVES FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND FACULTY IN SOCIOLOGY.**

Course content as reflected in syllabi The course syllabi which I reviewed indicate great strength in the content of courses in sociology. This is in contrast to syllabi I have reviewed from many other institutions. Syllabi are clearly organized and have the following strengths: 1) objectives for the courses are clearly stated, 2) methods of student evaluation and assignment of grades are clear, 3) current texts and reading materials are used in the courses and 4) a clear and concise course calendar is provided. Further, the syllabi indicate that a variety of techniques are used in the classroom--lectures, discussions, videos and movies, projects and assignments, guest speakers and fieldtrips. Assignments include library research, data collection and field experiences. These strengths are to be applauded.

Initially, I was contacted to be an external reviewer through the Department Resources Group of the American Sociological Association. This review was initiated because of the upcoming retirement of Dr. Z. The next section of this report focuses upon several issues related to this transition in the department.

**The Structuring of the Sociology Program at X College**

The retirement of a faculty member in a two-person department raises a number of issues. Given that sociology at X College is housed within a joint department including psychology, at least three issues are important to consider at this juncture:

1) What department structure makes most sense for the discipline of sociology?
2) What type of person might be most appropriate in a search for the replacement of Dr. Z when s/he retires next year?

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8 It should be noted that some of Dr. Y’s course materials are considered of such quality that they have been published in collections published by the Teaching Resources Center of the American Sociological Association.
3) How can the curriculum best be structured to have a strong program in sociology at X College?

This section focuses upon the first two questions. The third is addressed in the concluding section of this report.

When evaluating the size and structuring of a department, it is useful to place it within a broader perspective. During the spring of 1992 the Research Methods course at Southwestern University collected data on sociology departments at 110 national and regional liberal arts colleges. The sample was chosen by using the 1991 U.S. News and World Report article "America's Best Colleges" (1991: 77-108). The national liberal arts colleges in the top two quartiles (70 schools) and the top ten regional liberal arts colleges in each of four regions (40 schools) were combined to form the full sample. A full list of the sample institutions is found in Appendix X.

Two types of data were collected. First, a content analysis of all 110 college catalogs was done. A variety of variables were coded, including types of department (sociology alone, anthropology alone, combined sociology and anthropology, etc.), course requirements for the major, etc. Second, telephone interviews were conducted with the chairs of all sociology departments in the sample. Because 21 of the colleges did not have a sociology department, interviews were completed with 89 department chairs.9

Data from these two studies are helpful in providing a context for evaluating the sociology program at X College. These data provide some guidance in answering all three questions posed above. Table I (Appendix Y) illustrates that national and regional liberal arts schools differ in the type of department structure which is most common. Overwhelmingly, national liberal arts colleges have either a combined department (sociology and anthropology) or both departments. Indeed, 54 of the 70 institutions in this sample fell into one of those two categories. At the regional liberal arts colleges the most common situation is that there is a sociology department and no anthropology department. Fully half of the regional schools in the sample fall in this category.

None of the 40 regional schools in the sample had an anthropology department without a sociology department.

9 The schools excluded were those that had only an anthropology department, no sociology or anthropology department, or only some type of combined department which was not sociology and anthropology. This decision was made since the focus of the research was upon the structuring of the sociology major.
One major reason for the difference between regional and national schools is department size. As noted in Table 2 (Appendix Z), regional liberal arts schools average about three faculty members in sociology (and anthropology), while national liberal arts schools average closer to six faculty members. This will be discussed in more detail below.

The structuring of the department at X College, which combines sociology and psychology, is clearly unusual in terms of national patterns. This alone might not be reason to change the structure of the department. In my interviews on campus, however, I directly asked respondents if they felt that sociology and psychology should remain together or should be separated. For a variety of reasons, the people I talked with felt that sociology should become a separate department.

Among the reasons most cited for separation are:

1) The relative size of the faculty in the two disciplines has meant that sociology has considerably less power in the current structure.

2) Since the 1960's, enrollments throughout the nation in psychology have increased while enrollments in sociology have tended to decline. This has tended to increase the relative status of psychology in relation to sociology. A difference in status has meant that sociology in a combined department may be seen as a "step-child" which does not receive the power or resources which it needs as a program. 3) The most effective departments are those which can develop a sense of identity for the students. This is difficult when a small discipline like sociology is embedded within a larger program.

The combination of uniform response in my interviews on campus with the national data indicating that sociology is seldom linked with psychology within a departmental structure lead me to my next recommendation:

**RECOMMENDATION 7: SOCIOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY SHOULD BE SEPARATED SO THAT EACH IS AN INDEPENDENT DEPARTMENT.**

Several other disciplines at X College are found in combined departments. Mathematics and Computer Science, Classical and Modern Languages, Religion and Philosophy, and Economics and Business Administration all fit this description. In contrast to Psychology and
Sociology these combinations are more likely the rule rather than the exception when other small liberal arts colleges are examined. At my home institution, for example, all of these same combined departments are found except Psychology and Sociology. Consultation with my colleagues (who have all done department reviews in the last five years) indicates that comparable liberal arts colleges typically combine Mathematics and Computer Science, Classical and Modern Languages, and Economics and Business Administration. This combination is also common for Religion and Philosophy, but less so than for the other three examples.

In my interviews on campus, two respondents indicated that a problem with separating the departments is that a two-person department is too small. This may be true, but having it combined with another department does not alleviate the impact which that has upon the curriculum. Indeed, the major problem with a two-person department (as noted in the first section of this document) is that the discipline cannot be adequately covered. Again, data from other schools can be helpful here. In this case, I will focus upon the interviews with department chairs at 89 regional and national liberal arts colleges. Table II provides information on sociology faculty.

Data in Table II indicate several things. First (as noted in the opening section of this report) sociology is significantly understaffed at X College when compared to other national liberal arts colleges. (X College has two sociologists. The average faculty size at national liberal arts colleges is between 5.5 and 6 FTE faculty in sociology and anthropology.) Second, schools with a smaller average faculty are much less likely to have anthropologists on the staff. (The regional liberal arts colleges, which have a lower average faculty size, have considerably smaller percentages of their faculty trained in anthropology.)

A two-person department has great difficulty covering all of the areas in one discipline, let alone two. Given these national data, and the constraints put upon the curriculum (which were noted in section one of this report), I make the following recommendation:

**RECOMMENDATION 8: WHEN DR Z RETIRES, THE NEW POSITION SHOULD BE FILLED WITH A FULL-TIME SOCIOLOGIST.**

My interviews indicated strong support for the teaching of anthropology at X College. I agree that a liberal arts curriculum needs anthropology. At the same time, many of the respondents whom I interviewed expressed strong concern that a two-person department cannot
cover two disciplines. Indeed to strengthen the curriculum in sociology, both people should focus upon sociology. Until it is feasible to add a third full-time position in the department, part-time faculty should be used to teach anthropology.

**RECOMMENDATION 9: IF THE STAFFING LEVEL REMAINS AT TWO PEOPLE IN THE DISCIPLINE, BOTH SHOULD TEACH SOCIOLOGY. THE USE OF PART-TIME STAFFING TO TEACH CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY SHOULD BE EXPLORED.**

Respondents in my interviews also voiced strong support for the addition of a third position in sociology. This third full-time faculty position could then be an anthropologist. There are advantages and disadvantages to having a joint department which has only three people. Certainly a three-person sociology department would have the capability of offering a strong major. At the same time, the importance of anthropology in a liberal arts curriculum and ways in which it would support other programs lends support to adding a full-time anthropologist at the point when a third person could be added to the department. While a careful review of curriculum issues and support of general education requirements should be done before such a hire, my interviews lead me to suggest that a cultural anthropologist who can also teach linguistics (a combination which is not unusual) would complement both the language programs at X College and strengthen interests in cognitive science within the psychology program.

**RECOMMENDATION 10: AT THE POINT WHEN A THIRD PERSON MIGHT BE ADDED TO THE SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM, A CAREFUL REVIEW SHOULD BE COMPLETED WEIGHING THE RELATIVE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF HIRING A SOCIOLOGY, AN ANTHROPOLOGIST, OR A PERSON TRAINED IN BOTH DISCIPLINES.**

Given that my recommendation is that the replacement position should be a full-time sociologist, what areas of expertise might make most sense? Any sociology curriculum needs to cover a variety of areas. These include:

1) Introductory sociology and/or social problems
2) Other courses required of the major--typically research methods (often with a statistics prerequisite) and theory
3) Other courses on general topics--socialization, deviance, criminology, groups and organizations, social psychology
4) Courses focusing upon social institutions--family, education, occupations and professions, health and medicine, religion, and political sociology
5) Courses which focus upon issues of structure and diversity--social stratification and inequality, race and ethnicity, gender, aging
6) Courses which focus upon issues of change and process--demography, urban sociology, collective behavior and social movements, and social change and development

A two-person department cannot cover all of these areas. Careful decisions need to be made so that the curriculum provides students with a range of courses which build a coherent program and prepares them for graduate school or jobs which apply sociological skills and knowledge.

Clearly the department needs to hire a generalist who can teach in a wide range of areas. It makes sense to complement the strengths of Dr. Y who is trained in and/or feels prepared to teach introductory, methods, aging, demography, urban, gender, family, and occupations and professions. One important area currently missing in the curriculum is a course in social stratification. Continued coverage of a number of the areas taught by Dr. Z (introductory, race and ethnicity, criminology, collective behavior and social movements) is also important.

Most departments nationwide (like X College) require research methods and theory. It is best if all required courses are not taught by the same person. Since Dr. Y has expertise in research methods, it makes sense that the second person would be able to teach sociological theory. Thus I make the following recommendations:

**RECOMMENDATION 11: THE NEW SEARCH SHOULD SEEK A GENERALIST, WHO CAN TEACH INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL THEORY, AS WELL AS SOME COMBINATION OF SOCIAL STRATIFICATION, RACE AND ETHNICITY, CRIMINOLOGY, AND COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS.**
RECOMMENDATION 12: BECAUSE IT WILL GENERATE A LARGER POOL OF APPLICANTS, A NATIONAL SEARCH (USING THE ASA EMPLOYMENT BULLETIN TO ADVERTISE THE POSITION) SHOULD BE CONDUCTED. IF INTERVIEWS ARE DONE AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS, THE ASA ANNUAL MEETINGS IN AUGUST WOULD BE AN IDEAL SETTING FOR MEETING THE BROADEST RANGE OF CANDIDATES.

Another consideration, in addition to content area, is the theoretical orientation and the methodological training of the job candidate. Because Dr. Y uses a variety of theoretical perspectives (which I consider a strength), then the particular theoretical approach of the applicant is not as important. (If, in contrast, Dr. Y focused upon the micro level using a symbolic interactionist approach, then the ideal candidate would take a more macro approach.) Methodological training should also be considered. Dr. Y is trained in quantitative methods. I do not, however, feel that it would be wise to search for a candidate who focuses upon qualitative research. There are at least three reasons why I take this position. First, the research published in the dominant journals in sociology, and the emphasis of the top graduate programs requires that students are conversant with current quantitative techniques. Second, if the department is able to add an anthropologist in the foreseeable future, this person will undoubtedly be on the qualitative end of the spectrum, giving students exposure to a range of methodological approaches. Third, the quantitative/qualitative distinction is a false dichotomy. Sociologists who are well trained in quantitative techniques know the problems and pitfalls of this type of analysis and are often able to teach qualitative research as well.

RECOMMENDATION 13: OTHER THINGS BEING EQUAL, THE IDEAL CANDIDATE FOR THE REPLACEMENT POSITION IN THE DEPARTMENT WILL BE CONVERSANT WITH CURRENT QUANTITATIVE METHODS IN SOCIOLOGY.

The listing (on page 39) of general areas within sociology leads to a more careful discussion of curriculum. The final section of this report turns to issues of curriculum content and structure.
Analysis and Review of the Sociology Curriculum

The hiring of a new faculty member provides an excellent opportunity for a department to carefully review its program and curriculum. While there is no standard curriculum in sociology, a clear set of national guidelines has been developed in recent years. In 1990 the American Sociological Association's Committee on Teaching and the ASA Council voted to encourage departments nationwide to review and implement the recommendations of a report entitled Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major. This report was published by the American Sociological Association and "completed in conjunction with the Association of American Colleges National Review of Arts and Sciences Majors." This section of my review focuses upon the sociology curriculum and uses the recommendations in the Executive Summary of this document as a guide for strengthening the program. 10

"Recommendation 1: Departments should articulate and publish goals and rationales for their program."

A number of the syllabi of courses at X College clearly articulate goals for the course. This is very good. In addition, it is important as a department to develop an overall set of goals for the full program. This can evolve over time as part of a full examination of the curriculum. Such a curriculum review should evaluate all course offerings in terms of how they work toward the general education requirements at X College, as well as how they develop the sociological expertise of students who are concentrating in sociology. One result of this evaluation should be the development of a department handbook for students. This handbook would include a description of the program, its goals and rationales, discussion of what students will gain from concentrating in sociology, and information about alumni from the program. Thus, I make the following two recommendations:

RECOMMENDATION 14: THE SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM SHOULD DO A FULL REVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM USING GUIDELINES FROM THE REPORT ENTITLED "LIBERAL LEARNING AND THE SOCIOLOGY MAJOR."

10 There are two systems of numbering for recommendations in this section. Those which are in lower-case, are in quotations, and begin with number 1 are drawn directly from the joint report from the AAC and the ASA: Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major. Recommendations which are printed in upper case letters and continue from the number 14 are my recommendations for the program at X College.
RECOMMENDATION 15: ONE RESULT OF THIS REVIEW SHOULD BE THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STUDENT HANDBOOK FOR THE DEPARTMENT.

"Recommendation 2: Departments should assess the needs and interests of their students; departmental goals and practices should reflect and respond to these needs and interests."

The survey of alumni which was completed by the Department of Psychology and Sociology is a solid step in this direction. The department also should develop ways to assess the needs and interests of current students, and then evaluate how the current curriculum responds to these needs and interests.

RECOMMENDATION 16: THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONTINUE TO COLLECT DATA FROM ALUMNI, AND SHOULD DEVELOP WAYS TO ASSESS NEEDS OF CURRENT STUDENTS IN SOCIOLOGY COURSES -- BOTH THOSE WHO ARE CONCENTRATING IN SOCIOLOGY AND THOSE WHO TAKE SOCIOLOGY COURSES AS PART OF THEIR GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

"Recommendation 3: Departments should structure the curriculum and pedagogical experiences to increase the intellectual development of students. Departments should promote active learning experiences."

The department description found in the X College Bulletin has an excellent statement in this regard. It says: "The program emphasizes learning the sociological perspective method, learning how to learn about society rather than quantities or soon to be outdated facts." (p.95) This approach is to be applauded and reinforced. Particularly because the department is small, it is not possible (nor would it necessarily be a good idea) to cover all content areas within sociology. It is important, however, to cumulatively build the "sociological imagination" and skills of students who concentrate in sociology.

This is an area in which the department needs to focus some effort over the next several years. The current curriculum has little structure and does not have a sense of building the skills of students as they progress. Perception among students and colleagues is that one can take any course at any time. The next several recommendations from the joint ASA/AAC report can be helpful as the department reviews its curriculum.
"Recommendation 4: Departments should have at least four levels in a sequence of courses in the major."

Level 1: The Liberal Learning report suggests that there be several courses which are at the introductory level. The sociology program currently offers three courses at the introductory level--introductory, cultural anthropology, and social problems. Unfortunately, as noted in the first section of this document, faculty size means that only one section of introductory is offered each semester. Social Problems has not been offered in recent years. The addition of a second sociologist who teaches only sociology may help alleviate this problem.

RECOMMENDATION 17: AT LEAST THREE SECTIONS OF INTRODUCTORY SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS SHOULD BE OFFERED EACH YEAR. ONE OF THESE COURSES SHOULD BE A PREREQUISITE TO ANY UPPER LEVEL COURSES IN THE DISCIPLINE.

The sociology program already emphasizes that courses do not focus upon facts, rather upon how to learn about society. If these introductory courses are a prerequisite to upper-level courses, they should provide students with a specific set of skills and abilities which can then be assumed in upper-level courses. Among these may be things like: a) the ability to read research articles, report their basic methods and findings, and accurately provide a full citation, b) a working knowledge of the major paradigms within the discipline and how they differ in their approach to analyzing society and social issues, c) the ability to read a simple table of data, and d) the ability to understand research concepts such as independent and dependent variables, control variables, and the importance of sampling.

Level 2: The Liberal Learning report next recommends that general service courses (such as family) and courses required for majors (methods, theory, statistics) be at the second level. This would suggest that current courses be renumbered to reflect which classes are the next step after introductory. Because of the small size of the department, this is somewhat difficult. If the curriculum is to be cumulative, then courses must be offered on a relatively regular basis to allow students the opportunity to take pre-requisites.
RECOMMENDATION 18: COURSES IN THE CURRICULUM SHOULD BE RENUMBERED TO REFLECT THE CUMULATIVE NATURE OF THE REVISED CURRICULUM.

RECOMMENDATION 19: METHODS, THEORY, STATISTICS, AND MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY (AS WELL AS OTHER COURSES WHICH SERVE GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS) SHOULD BE AT THE SECOND LEVEL IN THE SEQUENCE.

Level 3: The Liberal Learning report suggests that these courses are more advanced substantive courses which enroll "mostly majors, minors, and fellow travelers."

Level 4: This is a capstone course (or courses) "in which students are encouraged to integrate the diverse elements of the coursework into a coherent and mature conception of sociology as an approach to inquiry and to life."

RECOMMENDATION 20: THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD DEVELOP A CAPSTONE EXPERIENCE FOR SENIORS WHICH ASKS THEM TO INTEGRATE THEIR SOCIOLOGICAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE IN A CULMINATING PROJECT.

"Recommendation 5: Departments should structure the curriculum to recognize explicitly the intellectual connectedness between sociology and other disciplines."

This can be done in a variety of ways. The current course catalog lists several suggested courses for students concentrating in sociology in either of the two "tracks". This is a very good idea. In addition, the department should consider cross-listing courses from other departments which might enhance the offerings in the program. For example, very few courses focusing upon institutions are offered. Basically, family and occupations/professions are the only two types of courses offered. The department might consider courses in education (Education 25, Schools and Society) and political science (Political Science 45, Comparative Political Systems) as cross listed courses which would give students the opportunity to examine institutions which are not covered in the sociology curriculum.
RECOMMENDATION 21: THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD CAREFULLY REVIEW COURSES IN OTHER DEPARTMENTS WHICH MIGHT BE CROSS-LISTED IN A WAY WHICH WOULD ENHANCE THE SOCIOLOGY CURRICULUM. CROSS-LISTED COURSES SHOULD BE REGULARLY REVIEWED TO BE CERTAIN THAT THE CONTENT IS APPROPRIATE FOR STUDENTS CONCENTRATING IN SOCIOLOGY.

"Recommendation 6: Departments should design a curriculum that gives students repeated experiences in posing sociological questions and bringing data to bear on them, making full use of computer and communication technologies, as available."

Given the resources which are available, the department has made a strong effort to integrate computing into the curriculum and have students use data to examine sociological questions. As the computer resources at X College improve, this will become easier. A number of syllabi which I reviewed indicated experiences which had students posing sociological questions and bringing data to bear upon them. In Dr. Z's Family course, for example, students have both a term paper and reading and reaction/response reports. Her/his introductory course includes the choice of a methodological or praxis project. Both Cultural Anthropology and Indians of North America include ethnographies and Criminology includes three field experience reports. Collective Behavior requires a policy report. Similarly, Dr. Y's Job Market Sociology course involves group and individual projects where students learn how to read research articles and conduct interviews.

Her/his introductory course integrates computer projects and simulations into the course. The Research Methods course involves students in a number of data collection and analysis activities. Similarly, both the Sex and Gender course and the Adulthood and Aging course include projects involving data collection and analysis as well as a praxis option.

RECOMMENDATION 22: THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD CONTINUE INCLUDING A VARIETY OF DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS EXPERIENCES IN COURSES. EACH COURSE SHOULD BE REVIEWED FOR WAYS IN WHICH COMPUTING MIGHT BE INTEGRATED AND HOW THE SOCIOLOGICAL SKILLS OF STUDENTS ARE CUMULATIVELY DEVELOPED.
"Recommendation 7: Departments should structure activities to promote a productive learning community that includes students and faculty."

"Recommendation 8: Departments should structure activities to help students integrate their educational experiences within the department and across departments."

In addition to the in-class experiences noted above, one way in which the department fosters a learning community is through the international social science and history honor society, Pi Gamma Mu. The department should also consider a variety of other ways to develop a sense of academic identity among sociology students. I would recommend the following:

**RECOMMENDATION 23: DEVELOP A SET OF WAYS FOR FOSTERING A SENSE OF THE COLLECTIVE ACADEMIC ENTERPRISE IN SOCIOLOGY.** FOR EXAMPLE: 1) ENCOURAGE STUDENTS TO SUBMIT RESEARCH PAPERS TO PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS. 2) TAKE STUDENTS TO PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS, WHETHER OR NOT THEY ARE PRESENTING PAPERS. 3) CONSIDER A SOCIOLOGY COLLOQUIA SERIES. THIS MIGHT INCLUDE OUTSIDE SPEAKERS, STUDENTS PRESENTING PAPERS FROM RESEARCH THEY HAVE DONE FOR COURSES, FACULTY PRESENTING THEIR RESEARCH, AND BOTH FACULTY AND STUDENTS PRESENTING PAPERS THEY WILL BE GIVING AT PROFESSIONAL MEETINGS.

Some of these activities could be organized with other disciplines and departments. The Southwest Social Science Association, for example, includes papers in a variety of disciplines—history, political science, psychology, and sociology. Students from all of these disciplines could be encouraged to travel to the meetings together. They might organize a joint colloquium on campus including any faculty or student papers which had been accepted at the meetings.

"Recommendation 9: Departments should structure the curriculum to underscore the centrality of race, class, gender in society and in sociological analysis."

While issues of race, class, and gender are critical variables, we are all often guilty of not including enough material on these issues in all of our courses. All courses in the curriculum should be reviewed with an eye for including issues of race, class, and gender.
One weakness in the curriculum is the lack of a stratification course. The gender and race courses should be offered on a more regular basis. Addition of part-time faculty support in anthropology might allow more regular offerings of stratification, gender, and race courses. The experience at many small liberal arts schools is that gender can be offered every year and will draw a significant number of students. This can complement any university-wide program in Women's Studies.

**RECOMMENDATION 24:** ALL COURSES IN THE CURRICULUM SHOULD BE REVIEWED WITH AN EYE FOR INCLUDING ISSUES OF RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER.

**RECOMMENDATION 25:** COURSES ON GENDER, RACE, AND STRATIFICATION SHOULD BE OFFERED ON A REGULAR AND PREDICTABLE SCHEDULE.

"Recommendation 10: Departments should structure the curriculum to increase students' exposure to comparative and international materials where appropriate."

A number of courses in the curriculum already integrate international materials. This is an area where American sociology has often fallen short, however. The American Sociological Association's Department Resources Group has published a new edition of "Internationalizing the Curriculum". This might be a useful addition to the Department library, if it is not already there. Indeed, the department should consider buying any appropriate materials from the Teaching Resources Center which will be helpful in strengthening the curriculum. At a small school where all faculty members must serve as generalists, it is difficult to keep up with current literature in a wide number of teaching areas. The materials from the ASA provide faculty with recent syllabi and course materials used by faculty who are experts in their subfields within the discipline.

**RECOMMENDATION 26:** AS WITH THE ISSUES NOTED IN RECOMMENDATION 24, ALL COURSES IN THE CURRICULUM SHOULD BE REVIEWED WITH THE INTENT OF FINDING WAYS IN WHICH INTERNATIONAL ISSUES MIGHT BE INTEGRATED INTO THE COURSEWORK.
RECOMMENDATION 27: A ONE-TIME ITEM SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE
SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT BUDGET FOR PURCHASING RELEVANT
CURRICULAR MATERIALS FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION'S TEACHING RESOURCES CENTER ON
A REGULAR BASIS. THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD EXAMINE NEW
PUBLICATIONS FROM THE ASA TO BE ADDED TO THIS COLLECTION.

"Recommendation 11: Departments should structure the curriculum to develop the sociological literacy of students and the application of sociological knowledge to policy issues."

From the first course it is useful to get students reading the sociological literature. The use of readers, as is reflected in the syllabi for the introductory course is a good way to do this. Assignments which have students reading original research (as is the case in most courses at X College) are useful in this regard. Offering the Aging and Demography courses as contemporary policy studies courses explicitly addresses policy issues, as do the policy assignments which are integrated into several courses in the sociology curriculum.

"Recommendation 12: Departments should structure the curriculum to provide opportunities for students to develop higher order thinking skills, and skills in written and oral communication, at least in upper division courses."

Until the curriculum is structured so that there are multiple levels, it becomes difficult to focus upon more advanced analytic abilities among the students. As a curriculum review is done in sociology and courses are reorganized in a cumulative sequence, then content and structure of courses can build skills in a cumulative manner.

RECOMMENDATION 28: REVIEW OF THE CURRICULUM SHOULD INCLUDE ANALYSIS OF THE CUMULATIVE NATURE OF THE COURSEWORK–SKILLS DEVELOPED IN UPPER LEVEL COURSES SHOULD BUILD UPON AND MOVE BEYOND SKILLS DEVELOPED IN LOWER-LEVEL COURSES.

"Recommendation 13: Departments should assess the major (curriculum, courses, and instruction) on a regular basis using multiple sources of data."
Indeed the 28 recommendations made in this report involve a great deal of work in assessing the major. As noted in Recommendation 16, current data collection efforts should continue and be expanded. These tasks demand both time and effort. The cumulative nature of the changes will hopefully help the department build upon its strengths and move the program in a direction which will enhance sociology both as a major and as a part of the liberal arts curriculum at X College.

(This report included two appendices—a list of the 110 colleges used in the content analysis, and data from the results of that study. Because these data are now dated, they have not been included here.)
I. Introduction: Purpose of the Visit

The primary purpose of the visit to ____ was to review the sociology program’s curriculum and faculty needs, to evaluate departmental resources (not including budget), and strengths of the program, and to make recommendations for future directions. The visit was held on ____ on the campus. The reviewer met with the dean, faculty members, staff and students during the visit. (see schedule, Appendix A)

The Department sent the reviewer a number of documents before the visit including the sociology program self-study, resumes of faculty and visiting lecturers, syllabi for a number of courses, enrollment figures and course offerings, the catalog and student handbook, and other pertinent documents.

Based on the documents, visit and interviews, I am very impressed with the excellent treatment I received from faculty members and others, the beautiful campus, the administrative support for the department, and the fact that there is an openness to look at possibilities for change. I want to thank everyone for the cordial reception.

The following report is based on review of the documents and conversations with relevant members of the college community. Discussion and recommendations focus on an overview of findings and recommendations for consideration by the program, department and college.

The primary focus of the report is on the future foci of the sociology program, the possibilities for “identities” for the department, and resulting specialty areas for future hiring. Other factors relating to the department follow these main issues.

II. Sociology Program: Background

Stated Goals and Objectives

As stated in the departmental self-study (p. 2), the objectives of the sociology program are:

1. to provide a strong liberal arts curriculum…. critical thinking skills, and to prepare students for a wide range of professions… (These relate to the GER and sociology major)
2. to provide early childhood, elementary, and special education students with an academic program that can be used in a double major configuration with education. (This is still being developed.)
3. to provide courses in support of the college’s GER in the areas of Behavioral Sciences and Non-Western Civilization. (This objective is partially met with the introductory sociology and social problems courses and the non-western courses, but is in progress in terms of the role the department will play in the new “Core
Curriculum” requirements (“Core Curriculum” p. 14), especially the first and second year seminars.)

In addition to the objectives, the department lists several goals for the program (Self-study, p. 2). These include the following:

1. to develop the “sociological imagination” among students...(to)equip students with the analytical and research tools for understanding and solving social and personal problems.
2. …students should be able to evaluate their own values and beliefs from diverse vantage points, and be willing to recognize and adjust them as they encounter new situations and experiences.
3. providing a needed service in the region, or having a niche to fill.

The program also “embraces” the Association of American Colleges/American Sociological Association recommended goals (Self-study, p. 9). These include interdisciplinary study; using technologies; centrality of race, class, gender and culture in society; exposure to comparative and international materials; opportunities for higher-order thinking, written and oral communication skills; and promoting a productive learning community.

The implication is that courses and the curriculum should provide opportunities for students to meet these goals through presentation of theories and content on “keeping an open mind.” These goals and objectives should underlie any curriculum planning.

Description of The Sociology Program

The very valuable self-study as well as information obtained during the on-campus visit provided much of the factual information for this report. In addition, the very attractive and comprehensive Student Handbook outlined the many services available to students, and the course catalog laid out the requirements for majors, including required courses and number of course students must take. The document outlining the new “Core Curriculum” was vague on the role the sociology program might or will play, but an important consideration for the program is the additional hours majors will have to take courses. Nothing stood out as significant for the program in a perusal of the union contract.

At this time the sociology program has 137 majors; criminal justice has 544 majors, including many former sociology majors. The combined number of majors is an increase over the pre-criminal justice numbers that included 416 majors (1999). The combined department is growing and seems to be adjusting to the new configuration.

Nine full-time faculty make up the department: one criminal justice, one justice studies, four combination, and 3 sociology. One new sociologist and perhaps another faculty member will join the faculty next fall, 2004.

The primary roles of the sociology program appear to be two: 1. to provide GER courses; and 2. to produce majors who can obtain employment in the field or go on to graduate school.
Strengths and Weaknesses

As reported in the Self-study (p. 6), strengths of the sociology program include a solid theoretical perspective/foundation for students, liberal learning skills and perspectives, productive faculty (teaching and research), and a strong departmental structure with sociology and criminal justice under the same administrative unit. This assessment appears accurate. It would be useful to delineate more clearly in which courses students are getting the “solid theoretical perspective” and “liberal learning skills and perspectives” in order to assure that transmission of knowledge and skills is consistent across the curriculum. For example, students commented that the content of the methods classes varied greatly depending on who was teaching the course.

The combined faculty talents constitute a major strength of the department. They represent a broad range of interests and can “cover” most of the courses now listed in the course catalog. Interests range from third world issues to the future and cyberspace, to children and adolescence and to applied methods, and to many aspects of criminology.

The diversity in the department is impressive. Interest in the two key roles of faculty members--teaching and research--appear to be strong as indicated by the active research programs of many of the faculty members. Several faculty members employ technology in their classrooms and others use active learning techniques. Some faculty are teaching courses in their special interest areas or research areas, adding depth to the curriculum. Although the purpose of the review was not to evaluate teaching, it seems to be solid and students expressed satisfaction with their courses.

The main weaknesses acknowledged in the Self-study (p. 6-7) and of concern in this report are the lack of a coherent plan of courses; this fact will make up the majority of the discussion and suggestions in this report. In addition, the document points out the need to improve student community service and field work. There is also a desire to involve more students in faculty research.

The program relies on Visiting Lecturers (VL) to teach a high percentage of course, a situation that both the program and dean see as one that needs to be changed. I would note that I found limited coordination of VL teaching and course content with courses taught by full-time faculty and with the curriculum needs.

Support Service for the Sociology Program

Support services at the college appear to be strong. Several faculty recognized ___ as an especially helpful support for teaching, research, travel money, and other small grants. There is great pride, and rightly so, in the new technology center and it’s support services. Except for a few specific cases of faculty members using computer labs to teach methods, I was not clear how much technology is being used in teaching classes. Although the self-study mentioned limited library holdings, the support services through
“inter-library loan” and electronic accessibility appeared to be sophisticated and access to needed resources in a short period of time reasonable. If new concentrations are developed, library holdings should be updated to include key journals and reference books such as encyclopedias in the specific areas. A glance at the journal holdings shows that the library does not have some journals I would judge to be key, although if they can be retrieved quickly on the electronic system this may not be a problem: American Journal of Sociology, Sociology of Education, and Teaching Sociology.

III. The Curriculum, Hiring and Related Issues

A major purpose of this review is to explore directions for the sociology curriculum that could provide more coherence and foci to the program. Although there is an impressive list of course offerings in sociology and most major content areas are covered in the listing, there is no sequencing or guidelines for students and advisors on what courses sensibly precede others in a program of study. A major goal of this report is to suggest approaches to use and specific ideas to discuss in restructuring the curriculum.

To determine if the goals for the curriculum are met, such as transmitting the “sociological imagination” to students and offering a logical sequence of courses, the faculty members will need to be engaged in a dialogue to talk about the philosophy of the curriculum and plan a program based on the current goals or a reconsideration of goals.

Suggestion: Because time is scarce during semesters, plan a “retreat” just before or after a semester and spend a day away from campus distractions to discuss the curriculum. The retreat should certainly include all those who teach sociology courses, and perhaps all members of the department. Some preparation or homework prior to the retreat would help facilitate the progress at the retreat.

Purpose of the Sociology Program Curriculum

Department members pointed out several goals that could guide a discussion of the curriculum. In addition to the goals from the self-study (listed above), additional goals such as helping students prepare to be lifelong learners, to cope with change, to respect diversity, to develop research skills, to be critical thinkers with theoretical knowledge in sociology, to develop oral and written communication skills, and to provide service to the community are underlying themes that could guide a discussion of curriculum.

The three main stated purposes of the sociology program are to provide GER courses, to participate in interdisciplinary college programs, and to prepare majors for employment and/or graduate school. Although the impact of the new “Core Curriculum” on the sociology program is somewhat unclear, it appears unlikely to lessen the demand for Introduction to Sociology, Social Problems, and third world offerings. Sociology offers courses in the GER areas of “inquiry” and “data analysis” as well as diversity and inequality.

Suggestion: The contribution of sociology to first and second year seminar offerings is a topic for consideration, especially how many departmental faculty resources must be or should be devoted to these offerings.
A major opportunity raised for the sociology program by the new “Core Curriculum” is the flexibility students have with the freed-up hours. The sociology program could attract some dual majors because of the extra credits students have to devote to other courses. Therefore, consideration of concentrations is timely.

The second purpose, to prepare majors, involves several topics: 1. the goals for major requirements; 2. the structure of the major requirements; 3. coordination of topic coverage between courses; and 4. sequencing of courses.

A note on two comments of students interviewed is relevant here: first, students indicated that one reason they selected sociology was the flexibility in what majors must take and when; they liked picking course and having few requirements. However, when asked if “concentrations” would be useful, especially in career preparation, they all agreed they would. A second comment had to do with consistency within courses; for instance, they commented that they had each had different methods instructors and each had totally different courses. Their suggestion was that there be consistency and coordination across required courses on content and expectations.

1. **Goals for major requirements:** What courses are required and when they are required in the major’s program should be discussed. For example, at this time theory and methods are required of all majors; they have advanced numbers (SO 400, 402 and 403), implying that they should be taken at the end of the student’s program. Is this the intent? Many programs require these courses near the beginning of the major’s program so that substantive courses build on the base of theory and methods by adding the relevant specifics for that course material.

   **Suggestion:** Consider the goals of the theory and methods courses in relation to the rest of the curriculum and place them accordingly.

2. **Structure of major requirements:** The current structure of courses mentioned in the self-study is (check!) the “ferris wheel” model; this means that there is no sequencing to the curriculum and that students take courses in any order they wish after the introductory course. The most commonly accepted model for sequencing curricular offerings is that offered by the AAC/ASA report on Liberal Learning and Learning in Depth. These suggestions (Appendix B) need to be adapted to the specific situation; for instance, with a high percentage of students working, convenient times for required course offerings will need to be considered.

3. **Coordination of topic coverage between courses:** Coordination of curriculum content goals such as “sociological imagination” and communication skills will insure that they receive adequate coverage in courses to meet the goals.

   **Suggestion:** Discuss the courses in which specific goals are to be covered to be sure these goals are being met.
4. Sequencing of courses: An evaluation of which courses are core courses and which courses are specialized (i.e. in concentrations) will help in sequencing courses. Sequencing may need to be limited to a few courses so that students who commute and hold jobs can be accommodated.

**Suggestion:** Discuss the order of courses based on what content should come first.

**The Introductory Course**

Introductory sociology provides the basis for all other study in sociology; for some students it is their only exposure to sociology. If there is a core of information that the full-time faculty feel is important for students to learn in this course, that core should be made known to the many Visiting Lecturers (VLs) who teach the course. That could include a limited selection of approved texts from which to select (may already be in effect), specific concepts, ideas, or skills that all students should know by the end of the course, or content that all students should be exposed to. From my inquiries I could not detect that there are any guidelines for how this course is taught.

**Suggestions:** Have guidelines for the course including suggested texts, content to cover, and sample syllabi, especially for VLs and new instructors. With additional full-time faculty, it will be possible to have them teach more of the introductory courses.

Two specific problems were mentioned with regard to the number of sections of introductory courses that need to be taught: the drain on faculty resources, possibly affecting offering of courses for the majors, and the use of VL to teach courses. Short of limiting the number of sections, two solutions could ease the problem: 1. hiring more faculty; and 2. raising the course enrollment limits. In principle I am not in favor of teaching large sections, although I do it myself. However, as a temporary solution to a situation that is being rectified with the gradual hiring of new faculty members, it might be worth considering. For instance, if courses average 50 students and the program offered one large (200 student) section of introductory sociology each term, that would reduce the number of sections by 6 per year. It is desirable to have discussion sections, led by graduate students if possible, to supplement the large lectures. I understand there are few large classrooms for this purpose, but space for one section a term might be found. Names of two full-time faculty who would be good at doing these large sections were mentioned.

**Suggestion:** Consider ways to reduce reliance on VLs to teach the introductory courses.

**Course Offerings**

The course catalog lists a substantial variety of courses. Most of the core sociology courses (as indicated in curriculum guides) are included in this listing, and some additional courses that are not “essential” (special interests of faculty) are a part of the offerings, providing choice and richness. Faculty members mentioned some additional courses that they would like to see offered or offer themselves. Adding courses should depend on where they fit in the overall
course plan, sequence, and concentrations. Possible additions that were mentioned include immigrant, sports, qualitative methods, applied sociology, work, medical sociology (check), law/comparative legal systems, children’s literature, political sociology, and population.

A review of course offerings for the past three years and discussions with faculty members reveal that not all of the listed courses are offered on a regular basis, due in part to faculty turnover. Several courses are listed in the course offerings but have not been offered for several terms, or the faculty member who taught the course is no longer at ___. (Self-study p. 4).

Suggestions: In the process of curriculum review and revision, evaluate whether there are courses that need to be offered more often or should be dropped from the list. These decisions will help inform areas for faculty hiring.

New Faculty Hires

In order to reduce reliance on Visiting Lecturers and to enhance the expertise in new concentrations, new hires are needed. Based on a review of the courses that are listed in the catalog, those that have been offered or not offered in the last several terms, and needs for new courses, the following should be considered in deciding where to expand faculty resources. The main considerations should be to develop the concentrations, to add faculty with expertise in areas that are weak, and to assure that core courses for the majors are covered. It is desirable to have at least two faculty members who can teach the core courses required of all majors, and to have at least two faculty who have specialties in each of the concentrations.

Some needed specialty areas that were mentioned by faculty members include race, class and gender; urban sociology (studies), especially regional development in medium and small-sized cities; immigration; ethnography and qualitative methodology; and a sociologist of education with different foci from the new faculty member.

Suggestion: Decisions on areas of specialization on new faculty hires should be based on curricular decisions: what courses need to be taught, what new concentrations will be developed, and so forth.

Suggested Curricular Changes

Two changes in the curriculum could both strengthen the course offerings and give direction to the current course listings:

1. Sequence the course numbering to add coherence and depth to the curriculum. The AAC/ASA guidelines suggest a course sequencing that could provide the basis for discussion. (see Appendix C) Whether this can be adopted as suggested depends on the program’s decisions about the order of required courses, concentrations, and ability to offer courses at times that students can take them.

The importance of sequencing is that students can build knowledge in a logical order and level of difficulty. But it takes coordination and buy-in of faculty! This addresses the “autonomy vs. planning” issue. The challenge is to decide what courses should precede others and to coordinate levels of difficulty. I have attached a sample of
one such sequencing; each institution must develop its own plan, but guidelines are available. (see Appendix C for one sample and AAC/ASA model.)

2. Offer tracks or concentrations for majors and minors that help students focus and prepare for future jobs or graduate school. Concentrations would need to be “marketed” to students, especially potential dual majors, indicating the internships and jobs related to the concentration.

The reason for offering concentrations is to provide study in depth in specific areas of sociology, to prepare students for jobs in specific fields, and to organize the curriculum around groups of courses and faculty members. A number of suggestions for possible concentrations to consider appear below:

An important question to discuss is whether students will be required to select one or more concentrations, or whether they can take either concentration(s) or only the required courses and a required number of other electives.

Suggestions for Concentrations

The following list of possible concentrations was developed from existing strengths, discussions with faculty members, and directions in the field. They are listed as TALKING POINTS.

**Sociology of Education:** This existing concentration is designed for dual majors in education and provides depth of knowledge for those intending to work in the field of education. As an example, students would take the required sociology courses; sociology of education and other specialty courses like urban education, higher education, education and stratification or work; and four (?) courses in the sociology of education concentration, selected from: childhood, children’s literature, adolescence, juvenile delinquency, family, and other designated courses. (Ideas for this concentration are also discussed on pp. 2 and 7 of the Self-study.) There was also mention of a possible Center for (the study of) School Violence.

Because of the number of students already in this dual major (approximately 50) and the potential for more with additional freed-up credits from the GER to be put toward dual majors, building up this concentration seems logical.

Hiring implications: Another faculty member with expertise in the sociology of education, especially areas not already covered, should be considered.

**“Urban, Regional, Mid-sized City, Suburban” Concentration:** This would replace the urban “minor” as a concentration. The rationale, as laid out in the self-study, would be to contribute to the regional mission of the college. (Self-study p. 22)

Students concentrating in Urban Studies (or whatever title the concentration has) could take the required sociology core courses plus four (?) of the urban concentration courses, including an internship. Students completing this concentration are prepared to work in city offices, urban
planning…(determine other employment possibilities and prepare students for these with courses offered in the concentration.) Note: Also see discussion of Local Research Centers, p. 12.

Hiring implications: A new faculty member with expertise in urban ethnography (Self-study, p. 22), regional planning, research in urban areas, or other specialties appropriate to the concentration should be considered.

Criminology: This concentration was abolished when criminal justice became a major. It was taken by sociology majors or by dual majors in sociology and criminal justice. It provided a sociological perspective on deviance and crime, and gave those planning to enter the field a depth of sociological understanding of the CJ system.

Graduate School Preparation: This would formalize the concentration for students planning to attend graduate school in sociology. Students concentrating in the graduate school track would take additional theory and methodology as well as core courses in the major substantive areas of sociology such as social psychology, organizations, institutions and diversity.

Applied Sociology: Students concentrating in Applied Sociology would take the required courses plus substantive area courses and several courses in applied sociology. This concentration would prepare students to work in government, business or social service agencies, doing needs assessment, program planning, program implementation, organizational intervention, public management, evaluation research, and other applied areas.

Note: Some faculty members suggested having a 3/2 applied program, combining 3 years of undergraduate education with 2 years of graduate education for a masters in applied sociology.

Diversity: Race, Class, Gender and Third World (Cultural) Studies: This concentration would expand the present Third World concentration. Students concentrating in Diversity would take the required sociology courses plus courses in at least three of the four areas of the concentration (listed in title) for a total of four courses. The concentration prepares students for work in organizations, communities, schools, and other settings.

Inequality/Stratification: (This could also be part of the Diversity concentration.) Students concentrating in Inequality/Stratification would take the required sociology courses, diversity, social stratification, plus 4 courses in the concentration. This concentration prepares students to (indicate job possibilities).

Work and Organizations or Social Institutions: This concentration would focus on macro-level institutions and organizations in each area including family, religion, education, politics, economics, and medical sociology. Courses could include social organization, work, bureaucracies, change, and technology. (Note: This does not seem as strong as other concentrations in terms of future job possibilities.)

Other Possible Concentrations: Several other possible concentrations were mentioned including Self and Identity and Future/Technology studies.
Suggestions: Select several foci, but not too many to avoid the danger of diluting the program. Be sure courses in each concentration can be developed where needed and staffed now or in the near future. Market the concentrations to students. Also consider whether sociology minors should be required to have a concentration. (Self-study pp. 3-4)

Once tracks are decided, a brochure describing the sociology major and the concentrations, stressing what students can do with each concentration, could be developed to market the program.

Other Curriculum Issues:

Several mentions were made in the self-study that students should work more with faculty, contribute to the community, and get “hands-on” experience. Several curricular modifications can add these elements:

1. **Internships:** These are currently available through the Criminal Justice program, but if the sociology program adopts concentrations, internships could be planned for in each of the concentrations. Consideration should be given to whether an internship in certain concentrations (i.e. urban, applied) should be required. I understand that there will be a faculty member working with the college to help organize and set up internships and/or service learning opportunities; this could ease the burden of having to contact agencies for placements. I believe ASA has a book with guidelines for establishing internships and sample forms now available.

   Concern was expressed about how much credit should be allowed for internships. This should be discussed with consideration given to what percentage of a student’s program credits should be obtained through internships, the minimum and maximum number of credits of internship students can take, and what length of time is necessary for the experience (one term, a summer, a “break”?)

2. **Service Learning:** To help students gain experience, this option was mentioned as a possibility. This option is very rewarding for students but also time-consuming for faculty to coordinate. This would be an excellent option, especially if there is help in the organizational aspects of setting up sites. (see Appendix D for sample guidelines)

3. **Web-based and Distance Learning:** This was mentioned in meetings with faculty and in the self-study. The main message I gleaned was that faculty members do not want to be forced to develop these courses, but some might want to participate voluntarily. If there is need for a sociology distance learning course, there are some “canned” courses that could be used to reach students.

4. **Culminating experience:** To provide students with an experience that ties together their sociology major courses and measures the effectiveness of the sociology program, several possibilities could be considered:
Senior Projects would require students to demonstrate their mastery of the “sociological imagination” and use their theoretical and methodological skills to produce a product (to be determined by the program faculty members) that would pull together substantive information in their program concentration. Some projects might be tied in with the summer research program through Summer Mentor program.

A Capstone Course could be organized in several different ways: as an overview of the field with different faculty members presenting their specialty or research; as a forum for students to work on a project in their concentration, or as coordination for Service Learning projects. (ASA Teaching Resources Center has a publication on the capstone course.)

A senior year Service Learning project in the student’s area of concentration could provide experience in the field, contacts for job possibilities, and a means of utilizing and assessing knowledge and skills learned in the major.

5. Local Research Center: Some sociology programs have had success developing Local Research Centers. These centers combine several functions: providing inexpensive research help to local area organizations; giving students research opportunities, sometimes paid; and giving the department visibility in the community and on campus, potentially attracting majors. This would also help develop applied or urban concentrations at the undergraduate and/or graduate level and open up job opportunities for students. If a concentration in urban studies/mid-sized cities is developed, the Center could serve as a focal point for research in this area. Such a Center would need to have at least a part-time director, but might also bring in some research funding and serve as a methods/research class.

I could not determine if the Institute that is being directed by a sociology faculty member might be merged with a Local Research Center or if their purposes are too divergent to consider this possibility.

Suggestion: If the Local Research Center seems like something worth pursuing, contact Dr. Stephen Steele at Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland. He has done many workshops for departments about starting Centers and has run a thriving Center on his campus. (I believe his current e-mail address is sf.steele@comcast.net)

Sociology Masters Degree

Mention was made of having a sociology masters degree. If the masters provides a specialty that is in demand, it could fill a “niche” in the area, something that was mentioned as a goal. The sociology program members could consider an applied masters, perhaps with specializations in strong areas such as criminology. The applied program would provide students with skills needed to work in the community.
Suggestions: The sociology program needs focus as agreed by most participants. It cannot be all things to all people; resources limit that. Therefore, planning for what concentrations to offer based on student needs and program ability to offer these should be discussed.

Relationship between Sociology and Criminal Justice

Faculty members expressed support for the joint program, for working together, and for offering joint courses. At the same time, there was some sentiment to keep the sociology courses in criminology as courses with specific sociological content. Because there is only one person with a criminal justice degree, although there are several who are full-time in the criminal justice program, a concern was expressed that the criminal justice person not be marginalized, and that the person be given a major voice in the direction of the criminal justice program.

IV. Other Observations

Advising

The current advising system seems labor-intensive. With an average advisee load of 70 students per faculty member and the requirement that each advisee see an advisor two times a year in order to register, I calculate approximately 20 hours a term only for scheduling per faculty member.

Although it is admirable to have advisors meet each student at least twice a year to get advising and permission to register, with limited faculty resources and heavy advising loads, there may be ways to streamline the process of advising without sacrificing quality of interaction. The Self-study (p. 5) suggests the possibility of group advising. This could be accomplished by having times set aside for advising groups. In addition, advising days before registration (perhaps with incentives such as cookies?) could help. If it is not imperative that students meet only with their assigned advisor every term, faculty members could take turns doing group advising. In addition, forms for students to fill out before seeing their advisors might help; this could be filled out ahead by the student and checked/signed by the advisor. Perhaps students could be required to talk with their advisor once a year to be sure they are on track, and do a more speedy advisor check for the other term. This would cut advisor loads almost in half. Of course, students can and should be able to seek advisor help throughout the term. The above ideas would simply cut the hours spent each term.

Another option would be to rotate the advising load, having one or two faculty with the primary advising load for a year for a reduced teaching load, or have routine scheduling handled by one or two faculty and other faculty available for more lengthy advising discussions with students.

Space

Space for offices appears to be in short supply; with new faculty members coming on board and no room to double up in offices, more faculty offices will be needed. It is important to keep the faculty members in the same area, especially new faculty needing to be integrated into the department.
Visiting lecturers now have no place to meet with students or put down their books and coats. They use the ___ space when it is available, but even this is tenuous, depending on whether there is a meeting scheduled in the space. For an institution that seems to value faculty-student interaction and that has a large number of visiting lecturers teaching students, a space for them to work with students seems to be an important priority.

In addition, the office for the one secretary who works with the sociology and criminal justice faculty is too small even for the files; no equipment such as a fax machine or Xerox fit in the office, and work study students have no place to work. An additional or larger office for the secretary seems important to the smooth functioning of the department.

**Attracting Majors**

The number of students majoring in sociology is impressive, but to keep majors, offer a solid program, provide meaningful concentrations, and prepare students for jobs after college, several ideas might be considered. One question is how to market or “sell” the major to students and sell graduates to employers. The idea of concentrations and internships in those concentrations (discussed above) should increase marketability. That in turn should increase student interest in the major.

One faculty member felt that the quality of sociology majors could be raised by increasing the GPA necessary to enter the program; this would have to be weighed against the potential loss of majors and other implications for who enters the program.

Students with majors in sociology are prepared to hold many careers with their knowledge and skills in areas such as diversity, working with others, and change processes. Courses in applied sociology would provide skills in program evaluation and market research. A senior experience would provide majors with a product to show to potential employers and job market contacts. Taking advantage of summer grants for research and extra credit hours (freed up in the new GER requirements) could allow students to take two concentrations or other students to double major.

**Assessment**

Having an overall assessment plan, including steps to be taken when problems are discovered, seems to be a requirement of the college, state or both. The data collection should include measures of several aspects of the program such as what students know, students’ preparation for jobs, and how effective faculty members are. An assessment plan could include student evaluations (quantitative evaluations are required by the union and qualitative could be solicited by faculty members), alumni surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, exit exam, portfolios, senior projects or experience, longitudinal studies of students, employer interviews, qualitative teacher evaluations, and surveys to evaluate advising effectiveness. A number of assessment plans and instruments can be found at [www.assessment.ilstu.edu/resources/assessment links.htm](http://www.assessment.ilstu.edu/resources/assessment links.htm). The ASA Task Force on Assessment is gathering tools and information, and the ASA has a booklet called “Assessing Undergraduate Learning in Sociology.”
Current assessment measures include the Alumni Survey (Self-study pp. 12-13) and student evaluations of faculty, mandated by the Union contract. These provide some baseline information about students’ overall view of the value of their major and student assessment of faculty. I am not clear whether anything is done with this data. One element of useful faculty evaluation is qualitative comments; faculty members could seek these in midterm evaluations that often provide the most useful formative evaluation information for change and improvement.

Assessment of sociology majors: alumni surveys, focus groups, exit exam, senior experience assessment.

Assessment of faculty teaching and advising: student numerical evaluations, peer review, teaching portfolios, chair classroom visits, advising evaluations (see Appendix E).

Assessment of Visiting Lecturers: Chair classroom visits, student evaluations.

Assessment of course offerings: check courses offered against the course catalog and against standards for the discipline. (see Appendix F and G)

Departmental Interaction
Several faculty members mentioned that they would like to see more departmental interaction—brown bags, “firesides”, and other means for sharing research and ideas. There may be potential for a slight rift between junior faculty and senior faculty, but I sense a desire not to have this become a dominant issue; sensitivity to this will prevent a rift. In addition, the Self-study and several faculty members indicated that more interaction with students is desirable; possibilities include departmental functions once a quarter (picnic?), and a student symposium.

Rapport between faculty members and with visiting lecturers seems good. In my limited visit I did not detect any serious breaches that would affect the department’s ability to work together cooperatively on issues.

Departmental Staffing
Depending on and subject to curriculum decisions on concentrations, the following areas should be considered for faculty hiring priorities: methodology—applied, ethnography, and qualitative; urban (perhaps urban ethnography); sociology of education (to balance specialties of the new faculty member); a part-time faculty member who could lead the Institute or Local Research Center (if adopted). Also important in hiring is to review the courses not now being taught and determine which areas need to be covered.

V. Recommendations (also see “Suggestions” throughout document)

Certain assumptions underlie the following recommendations; the department wants to offer a solid sociology major. The backgrounds and interests of students should play into the programs being offered in sociology. Most students are local, from working class backgrounds, and many are first generation college students. They and their parents want them to be able to
DO something with the degree; most are not studying for the sake of knowledge, but to improve their position in life. Love of learning may come later. Therefore, sociology must “sell” itself as a major that can meet the needs and expectations of students and their families. Having concentrations, internships, and showing students actual job opportunities and graduate school possibilities will enhance the appeal of sociology as a major. Of course students also want interesting subject matter and classes.

The following are general recommendations, most based on the preceding discussion and suggestions:

1. Plan a retreat to discuss the suggestions and recommendations. This will provide a concentrated time to focus on the program and possible changes and modifications.

2. Document where sociology faculty members’ time is allocated--teaching GER courses, teaching major courses, teaching CJ courses, teaching in interdisciplinary programs, administering programs, and other responsibilities. Are these other responsibilities contributing to or draining resources from the goals of the department? Are additional faculty lines needed to cover essential offerings?

3. Evaluate the course offerings to determine what courses are offered every semester, every year, every two years, sporadically. Does this pattern fit with the goals of the department and needs of majors? Consider dropping courses that have not been taught in several years or adding courses needed for concentrations. (see Appendix F for list of courses not taught in several terms)

4. Redesign the curriculum to sequence courses from beginning core offerings to advanced major courses. Determine what courses, if any, should precede or be prerequisite to others. Consider placement of required courses.

5. Consider adding experiential components to student learning in the major. This might include required internships, service learning, senior research projects, or other experience such as work in a “Local Research Center” that would give students experience, make them more marketable, and attract students to the major.

6. Develop concentrations of courses with specific requirements and related experiences. Be sure faculty resources are sufficient to offer the concentration, or that new faculty hires can supplement existing resources. Also, “sell” the sociology major and concentrations by marketing with brochures that indicate what students can do with their major.

7. Hire new faculty members to meet major needs, build concentrations, reduce advising loads, and reduce reliance on VL.

8. Streamline advising to reduce hours spent but still provide a quality experience for students. This might be done in several ways (see discussion above).
9. Determine key library resources (journals, encyclopedias and other reference books) in concentration areas and put resources into these, with other materials to support concentrations purchased as funds permit.

10. Determine what computing, written and oral, critical thinking, and math skills students need when they graduate and purposefully build these into the curriculum. Be sure core courses are taught by full-time faculty and VL are achieving their goals.

11. Formalize a few assessment measures of key program goals and carry these out on a regular basis. Build in a plan for evaluating the findings from assessment and making changes as deemed necessary. If the chair finds problems in teaching, a plan (perhaps with the help of ____) could be prepared to help the faculty member work on teaching. At this point there seems to be no clear mechanism for dealing with poor teaching, although there may be no need for this at the present time. Wise to be prepared!

12. Develop marketing materials to attract students to the major and concentrations. Also, work with feeder schools to develop articulation agreements, making it easy for transfers to fit into the sociology program.

   Again, I enjoyed my visit to ___ and learned a great deal. I offer the above suggestions and recommendations for discussion in the department.

   ASA Department Resources Group Reviewer,
   Jeanne Ballantine, Professor, Sociology.

Appendix F

**Courses Not Taught in over 3 Terms**

To determine which courses have not been taught, I reviewed the course offerings for several terms. Based on these reports, I hope my assessment is accurate. Such a list is the basis for an evaluation of the curriculum and offerings. (Provided listing here)
IV. Helpful Documents for Program Reviews

American Sociological Association
Annual Meeting 2002
Workshop: Program Review

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Top 14 Lessons I've Learned Doing Program Reviews

14. Structural constraints can be substantial.

13. Departmental politics and personalities.

12. The role of a well-designed self-study.

11. The importance of data on students and alumni.

10. The importance of connections with the larger general education curriculum and critical thinking.

9. The importance of goals for the sociology program.

8. The curriculum needs some order, with particular attention to study in depth.

7. Examine each course-relevance, frequency of offering, level.

6. The role of a comprehensive program handbook.

5. The use of diverse pedagogical strategies.

4. Student concerns.

3. Public relations.

2. Careful attention to process.

And the number one lesson I've learned is:

1. The importance of working collectively.
PROGRAM REVIEW: PROCESS, PRODUCT AND PLAN
Jeanne Ballantine

1. Program review continuous process--cycle of activity. All states have some form.
   a. Not just crisis intervention
   b. Data collection ongoing and includes multiple measures
   c. Structured reviews generally every 5 to 7 years

2. Types of program review
   a. Often mixed purposes which muddles process
   b. Determine why and for whom doing review

3. Goals:
   a. to determine extent to which program goals are appropriate and being achieved
   b. b. For planning and implementing program improvement
   c. Ultimately for program improvement

4. Purpose:
   a. Formative= self-improvement, goal-attainment, honest.
   b. Summative= judgmental, administrative review, put best foot forward.

5. Process: generally involves several steps. Typical pattern includes:
   a. Plans for review, cycle, future plans
   b. Self-study: includes
      educational goals and rationales that go along with institution mission measures
      of whether goals being met; OPERATIONALIZE INDICATORS identification of
      problem areas
      short and long-term plans and recommendations for dealing with problems,
      weaknesses.
   c. Analysis by external reviewers

6. Result of good program review= improved programs and decision making; shared goals and
work toward bringing programs in line with goals, strengthening.
   a. Identify program improvement needs including budget implications
   c. Budget= determine initial allocations and permanent additions

7. Additional things to think about in review plans:
   a. Faculty involvement in process
   b. Student outcomes at center. Involve students in process!!
   c. Agreement on goals, evaluation methods, resulting recommendations, and plans
   d. Budgeting to meet agreed-upon plans.
   e. Some plans written several years ago. Any changes needed?
   f. Any reviews done according to draft plans? Use pilots to see where change needed
   g. What is involvement of institutional research or other sources of information? Can
      these be routinized to provide ongoing data?
h. Ways to disseminate information on campus about review process:
Overall goals and purposes, process, role of units, who controls process.

8. Preparation and training:
   a. Fine to talk about measures, but most don't know how to do them. Provide ideas, models, and training for multiple measures.
   b. Review each other's models--some very different styles and points
   c. Have a budget plan and means to distribute based on recommendations. Will budget go to weak programs, model or outstanding programs, startup for new programs? Who decides?
   d. Who makes program and budget decisions? Faculty senate? Local administration? State-wide administration?

9. Efficacy of the process and use of results:
   a. Process only as good as the goals, their fit with the mission, information that goes into it, who buys into the goals, and mechanisms for change and budget where needed to bring about change.
   b. Use of results: easy to continue in "same old" and ignore results, especially if means change in people's routines. Therefore, need involvement of those who will bring about change.
   c. Ways to communicate validity: to whom??
   d. Ensure that end results are used:
      1. End results will be only as good as process which led to them
      2. Motives important. If departments understand its fight for money, will present best picture. If money for improvement, will be more honest about where weaknesses.
      3. Who determines goals also important in how much change takes place.

10. Ways to report uses:
    a. If rewards (budget) for strengths and weaknesses, or let units prioritize what needed, based on discussions with disciplinary outside evaluators
    b. Then have "best practices" information about who's doing what as result of review so units are rewarded for honesty AND implementing recommended changes.

SUMMARY of KEY IDEAS:

    Key steps in process?
    Who's it for?
    What is role of faculty?
    What will happen to results and recommendations? Budget implications?
    Student outcomes and student involvement?
PROGRAM REVIEW: CAMPUSES

Best chance of making a difference is if there is buy-in by key players, encouragement for units to be honest and to see a positive result from being honest, and to have budget to back up recommendations for change.

Easiest if processes is routinized, especially in terms of collecting regular data (focus groups, enrollment data, etc.)

Why are you doing this? Who is mandating and why?

Does each institution have a different mission?

How do/should these affect review guidelines?

Who is involved in actually DOING the reviews?

How much involvement do faculty and students have?

Have you compared plans across campuses?

Have plans been tested? Carried out? Where and when? Any changes needed?

How are data (variables) being operationalized and data collected? Is there consistency? (Operationalized demand, quality, cost)

Is there a clear plan for determining needed change and implementing it?

What budget is available? Is it a competition for resources? Which programs will win?
The Curriculum

Keith Roberts-Hanover College

Sociology Curriculum Goals: Core Skills and Knowledge of Sociology Majors

An undergraduate student who has majored in sociology at Hanover College will complete her or his program possessing fundamental skills which are important for their lives as professionals in the workplace and as citizens, and a base of knowledge for understanding society, social processes, and social organizations.

In addition to specific areas of competence that are unique to each student (depending on the selected courses), the Sociology and Anthropology Department is committed to developing the following competencies in every student majoring in sociology.

Students majoring in sociology

1. have essential comprehension and interpersonal communication skills, which include

   a) analyzing a social problem, a social process, or an organization from a sociological perspective.

   b) applying sociological understandings of human behavior to practical, everyday situations.

   c) reading critically and thinking independently about social issues and social policy.

   d) communicating ideas clearly and effectively, both orally and in writing.

   e) developing an original thesis statement, supporting that thesis with logical rationale and appropriate evidence, and presenting the thesis in a convincing fashion, orally and in writing.

2. possess social research and data-analysis skills. These competencies include

   a) knowing the distinctive features of empirical research of human behavior, including limitations of this way of knowing about the world. This includes understanding of both qualitative and quantitative methods of research.

   b) conducting original sociological research. This includes definition of the problem, review of the literature, development of a research design, gathering of data, and analysis of that data in a meaningful report.

   c) entering quantitative data into the SPSS computerized statistical program and conduct an analysis of those data using the computer as a research tool.

   d) using current technological search mechanisms to access scholarly materials.
e) reading statistical reports of research—including tables and graphs, measures of association, and significance tests —and analyzing them.

f) critiquing an empirical social science study (recognizing strengths and weaknesses of the methodology and the data analysis).

g) use the internet as a research tool and evaluate the quality of internet sources.

3. think critically about social systems, including the ability to

a) view things from alternative perspectives—to step imaginatively outside of their own social and cultural context in order to critique it or step outside of their own experience to get a new point of view.

b) move easily from comprehension to application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

c) recognize methodological and value assumptions in an argument.

d) present opposing viewpoints and alternative hypotheses on various issues.

e) show how historical background illuminates understanding of a social process.

f) explain the relevance of cross-cultural comparative data in examining human behavior within a system.

g) understand and explicate the interdependencies of global systems.

h) recognize the entanglement and intricacy of social forces in any social environment and the complexity of causality in human systems.

i) identify and analyze solutions to organizational dilemmas and problems in the society.

4. can explain how institutions and organizations work, including interdependence of social systems and conflicts of interests within and between social units.

5. can elucidate problems in the functioning of societies and comprehend how social units change.

6. can decipher the causes and consequences of inequalities rooted in gender, race, ethnicity, age, class, and sexual orientation. This includes understanding of cross cultural variations and global patterns regarding these components of stratification.

7. can illustrate how both other people and social structures influence the perceptions, attitudes, and actions of individuals.
8. can clarify the causes and consequences of conformity and deviance within a social system (at a micro, meso, or macro level).

9. can critique a social policy and recognize possible manifest and latent consequences of social policy ideas.

10. can discern the sociological approach to the analysis of values, including
   a) understanding how personal and cultural values result from social forces and structures.
   b) understanding the complex and sometimes conflicting relationships between beliefs and behavior.
   c) understanding issues of ethics regarding research on human subjects.

11. can explicate the role of theory in sociology, including an ability to
   a) define theory and describe its relationship to sociological knowledge and research.
   b) compare and contrast basic theoretical orientations.
   c) identify assumptions underlying particular theoretical orientations or arguments.
   d) describe and apply the major theoretical perspectives of the discipline in at least one subfield of sociology.
   e) generate reasonable predictions regarding outcomes of social forces based on sociological propositions.
   f) use their own personal biographies as starting points for sociological reflection and as a way to understand why they are attracted to a particular sociological paradigm.

12. can compare and contrast sociological insights regarding human behavior with those of related disciplines.
Curriculum Issues Relevant for DRG Consultants

1. Basic issues, based on the literature and my own experiences
   a. The key is some overriding goal(s) and some effort at integration
   b. In most cases, faculty take an individualistic approach
   c. Too often faculty are wedded to what is and their approach to curriculum change is piecemeal, incremental, and unplanned
   d. Important to take a “zero based” approach by looking at what an ideal curriculum would look like
   e. Faculty and administrators know little about curriculum review and are hampered by uncertainty and protectionism
   f. Need to address the specific curriculum but also its connection to liberal education (critical thinking, literacy, numeracy, historical consciousness, scientific reasoning, values, arts, global and multicultural exposure)
   g. Need to focus on the overall curriculum, but also be prepared to address course development
   h. Consultants need some specific strategies to
      i. Get people to work together to accept mutual responsibility for both the curriculum and the courses within it
      ii. Assess the current curriculum
   i. Consultants need to have some ideas about alternative approaches to the sociology curriculum, perhaps even their “ideal” curriculum
   j. There is very little literature
   k. Leadership is crucial--one of the most significant correlates of successful change is the chair
   l. In short, need to address content and process

   a. His experience shows the following conditions to be essential:
      i. Faculty must have ownership
      ii. Must have administrative support and resources
      iii. Priorities must be established, projects selected, resources allocated
      iv. Evaluation must be an integral part of the process, with changes in student performance being the criterion variable
      v. Support team must be available for planning, production, implementation, and institutionalization
   b. Phase 1: project selection and design
      i. Project generation and selection
      ii. The “ideal” selection, which has the following planning inputs:
         (1) domain of knowledge: essential content
         (2) student knowledge, attitudes, abilities, goals, priorities, reasons for enrolling
(3) societal needs: basic competencies based on discussions with alumni, employers, professional association, etc.
(4) research: discipline related and pedagogy
(5) educational priorities of program but also the school

iii. Operational sequence, which has the following project-specific factors:
(1) research: instructional tools and techniques
(2) goals
(3) time available and required
(4) resources: people, material, facilities, fiscal
(5) students: number, backgrounds, goals, location

c. Phase 2: production, implementation, and evaluation for each unit
   i. Determine objectives
   ii. Select instructional formats
   iii. Evaluate and select existing materials
   iv. Produce and field test new and available materials
   v. Coordinate logistics for implementation
   vi. Implement, evaluate, and revise

3. Project for Area Concentration Achievement Testing (PACAT) is the only study of sociology curricula I could find, and it’s unpublished
   a. Sent survey to 1,074 sociology departments in 1992 and got 516 responses (48%)
   b. 82% of the curricula fell into this pattern:
      i. Common content areas (i.e., required): research methods, theory, statistics
      ii. Optional content areas (select 7): criminology, deviance and corrections, marriage and the family, race and ethnic relations, social anthropology, social change, social problems, social stratification, society and the individual, and a combined area including medical sociology, sociology of the aged, and urban sociology
   c. The remainder of the curricula required fewer optional areas
   d. The most commonly taught courses, in order: marriage and family, race and ethnic relations, criminology, social problems, deviance/corrections, stratification, aging, gender, juvenile delinquency, medical, social anthropology, organizations, society and individual, social change, work

4. Study in depth
   a. What it is: focus on the inquiry process, focus on discipline’s structuring of knowledge, theory/methods core, range of topics, sequencing, demonstrate mastery, and focus on key questions/arguments in the field
   b. My own research (TS, Oct 93) shows that there is limited study in depth in all disciplines, and that sociology majors experience less than most
   c. Push hard ASA’s Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated, especially
      i. Possible goals:
         (1) the discipline and its role in understanding
         (2) the roles of theory, evidence, and quantitative and qualitative methods
         (3) basic sociological concepts
         (4) functioning of culture and social structure
         (5) connections between individuals and society
(6) macro/micro analyses
(7) concentration in one area
(8) internal diversity of American society and global context
(9) think critically
(10) develop/articulate values

ii. Recommendations:
(1) state goals/rationale for program
(2) assess students’ needs and interests
(3) increase the intellectual development of students via active learning
(4) levels in a sequential curriculum, including a capstone
(5) connect sociology with other disciplines
(6) give practice in posing questions and addressing them with data
(7) promote a learning community
(8) help students integrate their experiences within and across departments
(9) underscore differences by race, gender, class
(10) expose to comparative/international materials
(11) develop sociological literacy and application of knowledge
(12) include higher order thinking skills
(13) assess the major with multiple sources of data

5. Connect with assessment
a. Assessment of learning and assessment of curricula
b. Political, academic, accreditation, and professional association forces
c. The essence: identify learning outcomes and measure them
d. The trick: to make the curriculum an integrated process that fosters these outcomes
   The key mechanisms: collective spirit, a focus on the program instead of just courses, lots of discussion, learning what others have done
External assessing from the U.S. News and World Report
- One of the most commonly noticed and quoted to assess quality in higher education
- Annually basis
- Basically draws together data of several different kinds, blending them into a single set of rankings for different kinds of institutions
- Makes use of data about inputs
  - Gathers data about the college or university’s financial resources
  - Measures how much an institution spends per student, or/and on instruction
  - looks at faculty resources: the average salary of its faculty members, percentage of its faculty members who are full time, the percentage of faculty with highest degrees in their field, overall student/faculty ratio, and class size
  - student selectivity is another measure—looks at entering student scores on SAT or ACT tests and the percentage of students graduating in that top 10 percent of their high school class
    - used for looking at how capable or prepared the students are when they enter a college or a university
- makes use of data about outcomes
  - graduation and graduation rates are used for this
  - measure what percentage of an institution’s first year students return for a second year and what percentage of students graduate within six years
- third use of data is about reputation
  - survey presidents, provosts and deans of admissions at institutions of similar types, asking them to rate dozens of colleges or universities on a five-point scale from distinguished to marginal
    - has a superficial appeal, “Ask the Experts Approach”
- another way of external assessment: The Templeton Guide
  - relies on assessments by “experts”
    - seeking to identify and focus attention on colleges that encourage character development
      - invites colleges and universities to nominate their own programs in ten categories
- a third way, is my surveying recent alumni

Because higher education is becoming competitive, governments, accreditors, and campuses are coming to the realization that their traditional systems of academic quality assurance are inadequate.

In the U.S., universities and colleges want external quality-assurance mechanisms that add value but are not a burden.

State systems and accreditors also want to ensure that institutions maintain their standards while improving student learning.

External audits look deeply into the heart of the academic enterprise:
- They test whether institutions and their faculties honor their responsibility to monitor academic standards and improve student learning.

The academic audit was first initiated in the United Kingdom and has been adopted in Sweden, Finland, New Zealand, and Hong Kong.

How they impacted these programs abroad:
- They have made improving teaching and student learning an institutional priority:
  - The public nature of the process and the publication of the reports has helped put improvement of teaching and student learning firmly on the agenda of the institutions.
  - Many of the changes in institutional policies would not have been under way or implemented without the external pressure from the audits.
- The audits have facilitated active discussion and cooperation within academic units on means for improving teaching and learning:
  - Faculty members increased collegial discussion and cooperative activity about improving student learning.
- Helped clarify responsibility for improving teaching and learning at the academic unit, faculty and institutional level:
  - Made them share this responsibility for improving learning as well as to monitor it.
  - Provided information on best practices within and across institutions.
- Overall, there is evidence showing that an academic audit offers a number of possible improvements for higher education in other countries:
  - In response to the audits, institutions have changed their internal norms and policies for academic quality assurance.

In the U.S.:
- Academic audits will most likely become an incremental reform due to the fact that there are many existing academic quality assurance programs.
- The Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) is implementing a new process for professional teacher education programs based on academic auditing:
  - The process if very focused on examining and verifying the evidence that the institutions have for the claim that they prepare competent, caring, and qualified professional educators.
  - Institutions must submit a “Inquiry Brief” that documents that the program’s students have learned what was expected of them, that the program’s quality-assurance system yields information leading to program improvement, and that its assessments of student learning are valid.
  - A team of trained auditors are then sent out to visit each institution to examine the processes through which a programs’ faculty determines its...
objectives, assesses the quality of its programs, learns from such assessments, and takes steps to improve

- The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC)
  - The agency has actively studied external audit methodologies and have sent teams to Hong Kong and England to review audit processes
  - Ask universities and colleges to prepare a two-page response to questions such as
    - How do you decide what you want your students to learn?
    - How do you communicate these expectations to students?
    - How do you know that students are learning and graduates are achieving the goals of the program?
    - How do you use information on student learning to improve your program?
  - Also audited where academic program quality, promoting faculty and staff learning, supporting student learning, and monitoring institutional quality
    - A general consensus was that the audit format has significant promise

- The State of Illinois Board of Higher Education
  - Is weighing the sue of academic audits to ensure that processes are in place and effectively functioning

- Issues in audit
  - Audits are sharply focused on quality-assurance processes (less so on resources or outcomes)
  - Might also be effective in ensuring quality in an undergraduate component unique to the U.S. higher education----GENERAL EDUCATION
  - Auditors can help identify flaws in the curriculum designing and assessment processes throughout which the quality of general education is maintained
  - Can pinpoint weaknesses or strengths in an institutional process for approving, reviewing, and improving general education courses.
  - That are conducted independently of other reviews and produce freestanding reports
  - A special problem to adapting this kind of review is training people to do the audit
    - Many people now trained in traditional review may be ineffective as auditors
  - An extensive self-study of the institution would not be advised
    - Audit submissions are best limited to short “reflective accounts”
      - Here the institution should just describe their quality-assurance approaches and append representative evidence drawn from the processes in question.
  - Must examine the interaction between institution-level activity and that of faculty at the department level
    - Can follow an audit trail to do so—select certain quality assurance decisions and follow them through the institution
    - Or visit a sample of departments and review their processes as a way to test the effectiveness of institution-level processes
  - Audits must be published
Making them public serves an important accountability function—it tells the public that each institution is fulfilling its responsibility to ensure the quality of its programs and degrees

- Audit follow up and quality enhancement
- Progress reports

Overall, an academic external audit can help build the capacity of a college or university to compete in the new environment of higher education. This can be done by strengthening its internal web of academic accountability—ensures that academic standards and learning outcomes that the public and the market expect are carried out!


- Higher education is increasingly subject to evaluation by external quality monitoring bodies
- External evaluation fails to ask significant questions about the reality of the learning experience for students
- Who are quality monitors?
  - Evaluation is both external and internal to the higher education institution
  - Most countries have developed some form of external evaluation of higher education but very few institutions have the luxury of operating without any internal evaluation mechanisms
  - External evaluation
    - Quality monitoring agencies in most countries tend to have some statutory basis especially where they have accreditation responsibilities.
    - In many cases accreditation of institutions was formerly a government activity that has been delegated to agencies and this is often the case with program accreditation
- What do they evaluate?
  - Evaluation, undertaken by quality monitoring agencies, includes most aspects of higher education
  - Learning and teaching is a primary area and tends to include curriculum content and delivery, teacher performance, assessment/grading of students, standards of academic attainment or competence and, employability of graduates
  - Resources are a conventional concern of external agencies and provide an easy way of measuring inputs: for example, floor space per student, number of volumes in the library, number of computer terminals per student, the qualifications of staff and the entry qualifications of students
    - The quality of management in rarely evaluated
  - Research is another major area of evaluation: outputs and costs are evaluated
  - Also examines external links with the community and with other stakeholder, notably employers.
- Why evaluate?
  - To accredit or license institutions
  - Accredit programs of study
  - Assess research projects/proposals
  - Set or define academic standards or standards of competence
- Ensure conformance with regulations or procedures
- Gauge effectiveness (of management systems, quality systems, and teaching and learning)
- Ensure value for money
- Develop a system of credit transfer
- Disseminate good practice
- Audit institutional procedures
- Assess the quality of teaching
- Assess research outputs
- Check levels of academic standards or standards of professional competence
- Assess consumer satisfaction with services provided
- Evaluate the quality of improvement process
- The purposes are many and is suggested that evaluation is addressing many facets of higher education

- **What is the focus of the Evaluation?**
  - Focus of evaluating a program is assessing quality and standards

- **How do the quality monitors evaluate?**
  - Surprisingly there is a lot of conformity on the methods that are adopted to evaluate
  - Three basic elements
    - Self-assessment (submission of documentation)
    - Peer evaluation
    - Statistical or performance indicators
  - Process
    - Typically a self-evaluation report or some other form of submission for assessment is submitted
    - The reports are scrutinized by an external body
    - Peer-review panel visits the institution (usually lasting 1-4 days)
      - Attempt to relate the self-assessment documents to what they see or hear
      - In some cases, the team may observe the actual facilities or even the teaching and learning process itself

- **Critique of the Process**
  - Evaluative tools have their limitations as measure of quality performance
    - Politicians still like to use quantitative indicators of higher education even though there is a good deal of skepticism
      - They are a quick-fix
    - Quantitative indicators are a way of life for the United States; however, based on peer reviews, there has been a gradual shift towards placing more credence on qualitative assessments.
  - Self-evaluation is useful for encouraging reviews of objectives, practices, and outcomes
    - However, there are questions about the frequency and depth of self-assessment and the relevance of the different models.
    - The less threatening the evaluation process, the more open, honestly reflective and useful is the self-evaluation process.
o Peer review
  ▪ Not particularly an effective or efficient means of unraveling what is really going on
  ▪ Peer-review teams make judgments based on what they are told and tend to look for discrepancies in the story
  ▪ Tends to be a significant gap in the perceptions of peers and the authors of self-assessment documents
  ▪ Peer groups see little as they spend most of their time in a room having discussions with group after group of selected discussants
  ▪ Also unusual for the reviewers to have detailed documentations
    • Even if they observe the facilities and practices first hand, they tend to see and assimilate only a little bit of the entire institutional operation
  ▪ Peer reviewers are encouraged to ask questions but they are generally not trained as investigators, sometimes they are not even trained at all
    • They are rarely trained on how to identify and interpret what they see

o Setting
  ▪ Self-evaluation and peer review can be a significant insight to fundamental self-reflection
  ▪ If the institution wants to explore its purpose, its areas of effectiveness and weaknesses, along with future opportunities, than self-evaluation and peer-review can be an valuable tool
    • Can help develop a future strategy for continuous improvement
  ▪ The long-term effectiveness is entirely dependent on the establishment of internal procedures and the development of a culture of continuous improvement
    • Overall, there is a consistency of approach in evaluating the effectiveness and quality of programs in higher education
    • External quality monitoring is primarily to ensure accountability and conformity
      o Improvement is an “add-on”
      o If you comply with the method, improvement can result


- The further assessment is from the classroom, the weaker it becomes
- Assessment in university settings takes place at institutional, school, department, and classroom levels
- While we take a multilevel approach, too often program assessments are overly general and developed by administrators
• The focus is often on students’ academic achievement rather than the functional value of the program in students’ future endeavors.
• As a result, the information gathered is not specific enough to program goals and fails to contribute to program improvement in meaningful ways.
• Instead, assessment of program effectiveness and instructional quality should be developed by the faculty responsible for implementing the program and should be specific to goals.
• Decided to use an alumni survey.
• Developed and administer a set of assessment questions that related to our program goals.
• Wanted to use open-ended questions related to the quality of the program and some related to the assessment of application and preparation for work or leadership roles in the field.
• Open-ended questions allowed students to comment on their experiences in relation to the quality of the program, the quality of the instructor and instruction, and how applicable the program was for their work in the field.
• Survey mailed to alumni who had graduated within the last 10 years.
• Response rate was 13 percent but was adequate enough for a pilot study.
• Overall, the responses gave them insight to how applicable the programs were for their development as a student and as a professional.


• Discusses university quality audits in Australia.
• Schools (universities and colleges) are audited every 5 years.
• The audit is of the whole organization and addresses the effectiveness of each university’s quality management for all its activities.
• It focuses on resourcing and infrastructure, learning and teaching, governance, review and overall direction-setting, service and entrepreneurial activities, research and scholarship, support for staff, and support for students.
• The audit entails an institutional self-assessment which results in an “audit portfolio”
  o This is followed by a site visit from trained auditors in which the veracity of the self-assessment is tested.
  o An audit report is produced.
  o Then a check that key improvements identified in that have been addressed.
• Benefits of an external audit:
  o The changing environment of education can be helped (decreased public funding, need to find new sources of income, increased competition, growing student expectations, spreading student consumer rights movement).
• Many universities are now committed to making their strategic developments and quality improvement priorities.
  o An external audit makes it more evidence-based (uses sound data and analysis procedures).
This addresses what needs to be done for the institution

- For teaching and learning purposes
  - The audit can focus on assisting faculties and units to identify their core key improvements and developments for the coming year from tracking data that showed where they needed to be made
  - It would then assist them to identify wise and workable solutions to these priorities through networked learning and then help them see these improvement solutions effectively into practice

- Overall, the unique benefit of an upcoming external quality audit for an institution (higher education) is the motivation it will provide for that specific institution to document, critique and enhance its internal capability.
  - This would on ensure continuous quality assurance, improvement and innovation

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- external quality monitoring has bee one of the most characteristic trends in higher education in the last 10-15 years
- has been introduced as a indirect government pressure (Netherlands) or as a direct governmental initiative (France and the UK) to change the steering of and/or renew the higher education sector
- the governmental interest has many facets and is linked in various ways to a range of other policy and reform initiatives in higher education
- quality monitoring has many uses:
  - improve the quality of higher education provision
  - inform students and employers
  - ensure accountability for the use of public funds
  - undertake a quality check on new institutions
  - stimulate competitiveness within and between institutions
  - assign institutional status as a response to increased diversity within higher education
  - support the transfer of authority between institutions
  - assist mobility of students
  - support the transfer of authority between states and institutions
  - to make international comparisons due to increasing mobility of students and staff

- Four elements of quality measure
  - A national co-coordinating body that administers the evaluations conducted
  - An institutional self-evaluation phase
  - External evaluation
  - The production of a report

- some problems with external quality measuring
many obvious methodological problems that are attached to studying the effects of the many initiatives in higher education
one is how do we know that a certain external initiative is causing experienced internal effects
quality work and evaluations of quality are only some of the many external and internal processes and reform measure that higher educational institutions continuously handle and react upon
  - isolating the effects of a processes is difficult
measuring quality is also difficult given the complexity of colleges’ and universities’ forms of information-processing and decision-making traditions
• increased attention towards the quality of teaching as a result of the external assessments can be identified
• researchers from Denmark and Sweden claimed that in a study of quality audit procedures
  - it created an atmosphere of trust and openness triggering learning both by institutions and by the intermediate bodies initiating the evaluation procedures
• some external assessment exercises in the UK have been found to establish an institutional compliance culture to these requirements
• may have an impact on organizational management and decision-making
• seems that externally measuring quality has made the “black box” more open
• need to balance internal and external assessment of higher education