Susan J. Ferguson, Ph.D.
ASA Department Resources Group
Statement of Consulting Approach

My consulting work is greatly informed by my own undergraduate background as a first generation college student. I never planned on becoming an academic, but quickly fell in love with learning and the transformational process that a higher education provides. My purpose in getting a Ph.D. was to obtain the credentials to teach at the college level and to share that power of learning with others. I currently teach at a selective liberal arts school, Grinnell College, where I have chaired the Department of Sociology multiple times and helped my own department conduct self studies/external reviews. After initially revamping our curriculum 14 years ago to better align with the ASA goals found in *Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major* (McKinley et al. 2004), the number of sociology majors grew substantially. We currently are revisioning our program again to address the 12 new ASA recommendations in *The Sociology Major in the Changing Landscape of Higher Education* (Pike et al. 2017) and to better accommodate the needs of majors with a limited number of faculty.

I utilize a multifaceted approach when working with departments and programs that are conducting self studies or curriculum reviews. I believe in identifying the various actors involved and finding out what their impressions and concerns are regarding a department. All faculty within the department should have confidential one-on-one contact with me not only during the campus visit, but also before and after the site visit. I also think it is important for student voices to be heard during the review process, and I often ask for some classroom time to spend with them. My pre-report focus is on collecting multiple sources of data that inform the current department’s strengths and directions for growth. In addition to interviewing faculty and students within the program, I like to review the course catalog, the departmental mission and goals, and any learning assessment plans they may have. After the site visit and my report, I welcome further dialogue about what can be done to help the department/program progress.

My particular strengths that I bring to consulting work are my extensive involvement in several national curricular projects in sociology including the Measuring College Project, where I co-authored the white paper on “Measuring College Learning in Sociology.” I also co-chaired the ASA Task Force on Undergraduate Education that authored the Pike et al. volume referenced above. I have attended many hours of DRG training on how to conduct self studies/external reviews, and I have completed over 17 external reviews on other campuses. Every department or program I have visited is unique, and I learn a great deal from studying them. My consulting work also is enhanced by my interdisciplinary academic background and by my training in Gender and Women’s Studies. I also am active in the ASA Section on Teaching and Learning, and I have offered several teaching and professional workshops at regional and national meetings. Most importantly, I have the communication skills to work with diverse groups of people, from administrators, to faculty, to students and staff. I listen closely to my clients and believe that I can communicate their needs well. At all times I see my primary role as that of an advocate for the sociology department or program under review.

Susan J. Ferguson, Ph.D.
Department of Sociology
Grinnell College
Grinnell, Iowa 50112
641-269-3133
fergusos@grinnell.edu