

Leading Through Uncertainty: Strategies for Building Resilient Departments

2025 ASA Department Leader Preconference
Chicago, Illinois

August 8, 2025

8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Registration Fee: \$200 for Department Affiliates/\$230 for Non-Affiliates

Session Organizer: Aaryn L. Green, American Sociological Association

Today's rapidly evolving higher education landscape presents increasing challenges for department leaders. As the discipline navigates heightened tensions, building stronger, more resilient departments is critical to its future, and department leaders are in need of more comprehensive approaches to tackling today's challenges.

This preconference is designed for chairs and directors of graduate and undergraduate studies to connect with peers, share insights, and develop strategies needed to navigate conflict, policy shifts, and institutional change. Discussions will examine:

- the impact of federal and state policies
- evolving faculty expectations and evaluations
- strategies for supporting teaching
- attracting and retaining majors
- best practices for program reviews, and more.

Join us for a day of engagement, practical takeaways, and peer support as we tackle the pressing issues facing sociology departments today.

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM | Registration & Breakfast

Check-in and networking

9:00 AM – 9:15 AM | Welcome & Opening Remarks

Speakers: Aaryn L. Green, Interim Director of Research, Professional Development, and Academic Affairs, ASA; Heather Washington, Executive Director, ASA; Adia Harvey-Wingfield, President, ASA

9:15 AM – 10:30 AM | Address: Understanding Today's Policy Landscape

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM | Coffee Break

10:45 AM – 12:00 PM | Session 2: Program Review and Strategic Planning

(Concurrent Roundtables)

- **Mastering Institutional Program Reviews: Strategies for a Stronger Assessment**
How to prepare for and navigate the review process effectively.
- **Expanding Your Department's Impact: Building Partnerships and Community Connections**
Leveraging outreach and collaborations to strengthen your department's reputation, funding, and student opportunities.
- **The Sociology Job Market: What You Should Know**
A look at the ASA Job Market Report and how departments can adapt to changing job landscapes.
- **Rethinking Graduate Program Leadership**
Approaches to attracting students, enhancing program quality, and supporting graduate success.
- **Maximizing the Impact of Undergraduate Internships: Best Practices for Sociology Departments**
How to create meaningful, career-relevant internship opportunities that benefit students and strengthen your program.

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM | Lunch & Networking

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM | Session 3: Aligning Department Goals with University Priorities: Balancing Advocacy, Conflict, and Institutional Pressures

Department leaders must balance administrative responsibilities, advocacy for their faculty and students, and the challenges of leading through political and institutional uncertainty. Panelists will share insights on navigating changing tenure expectations, funding threats, responding to external policy changes, and general tips for positioning departments for long-term stability and growth.

2:15 PM – 2:30 PM | Break

2:30 PM – 3:45 PM | Session 4: Managing Department Dynamics

(Concurrent Roundtables)

- **Leading Multidisciplinary Departments: Strategies for Collaboration and Success**
Best practices for managing faculty across diverse disciplines while maintaining a strong departmental identity.
- **New Chairs, Big Challenges: Essential Resources and Strategies for Success**
Practical advice for new department chairs navigating leadership, administration, and faculty dynamics.
- **Supporting Teaching Excellence in Challenging Environments**
How department leaders can advocate for faculty and maintain high-quality instruction amid shifting challenges.
- **Beyond the Numbers: Rethinking Metrics for Faculty Evaluation**
Exploring more fair and meaningful assessment methods for evaluating faculty performance.
- **Creating an Ethos of Care: Strengthening Faculty Morale and Retention**
Proven approaches for creating a supportive department climate that prevents burnout and boosts engagement.

3:45 PM – 4:00 PM | Closing Reflections & Next Steps

- Key takeaways from the day.
- Opportunities for continued collaboration.