

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. CST

Session Organizer: Aaryn L. Green, American Sociological Association

Fee: \$200 for Department Affiliates, \$230 for Non-Affiliates

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

Margaret Gough Courtney, Director, Program and Research, ASA

Heather Washington, Executive Director, ASA

Adia Harvey-Wingfield, President, ASA

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

Wendy Naus

Executive Director, Consortium of Social Science Associations (COSSA)

10:30 AM – 10:45 AM | Coffee Break

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

◆ *Concurrent Roundtables I*

1) **Mastering Institutional Program Reviews: Strategies for a Stronger Assessment**

How to prepare for and navigate the review process effectively.

Enrique Pumar

Fay Boyle University Professor, Department of Sociology, Santa Clara University, and ASA Program Reviewer and Consultant

2) **New Chairs, Big Challenges: Essential Resources and Strategies for Success**

Practical advice for new department chairs navigating leadership, administration, and faculty dynamics.

Anne Nurse

Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Wooster University

3) **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.

Margaret Gough Courtney

Director of Programs and Research, ASA

4) Rethinking Graduate Program Leadership

Approaches to attracting students, enhancing program quality, and supporting graduate success.

Ghassan Moussawi

Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Department of Sociology, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

5) Preparing Undergraduate and Graduate Students for Fulfilling Careers in Applied Settings (Session 1)

Insights and tips from undergraduate and graduate students and applied sociologists on preparing for rewarding jobs in non-academic settings, based on findings from an NSF-funded study.

Chloe Bird

Director, Center for Health Equity Research, Tufts Medical Center & Professor of Medicine, Tufts University School of Medicine

Catherine Mobley

Research Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, Clemson University

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

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM | Session 3: Aligning Department Goals with University Priorities

Michelle Camacho

Dean, College of Social and Behavioral Science, University of Utah

Department leaders must balance administrative responsibilities, advocacy for their faculty and students, and the challenges of leading through political and institutional uncertainty. This session will share insights on navigating changing expectations, 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 II*

1) **Leading Multidisciplinary Departments: Strategies for Collaboration and Success**

Best practices for managing faculty across diverse disciplines while maintaining a strong departmental identity.

Nazneen Khan

Chair and Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Anthropology, & Criminology, Randolph-Macon College

2) **Supporting Teaching Excellence in Challenging Environments**

How department leaders can advocate for faculty and maintain high-quality instruction amid shifting challenges.

Paromita Sanyal

Professor, Department of Sociology, Florida State University

3) **Beyond the Numbers: Rethinking Metrics for Faculty Evaluation**

Exploring more fair and meaningful assessment methods for evaluating faculty performance.

Daniel Bartholomay

Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, University of North Dakota

4) **Creating an Ethos of Care: Faculty Voice and Feelings of Belonging**

Using data to highlight the importance of a supportive departmental environment that minimizes inequity and promotes greater engagement.

Madeline Troche-Rodriguez

Associate Professor of Sociology & TBLC Faculty Director, Department of Social & Behavioral Sciences, Harry S. Truman College, City Colleges of Chicago

Leah Page

Professor of Chemistry, Harry S. Truman College, City Colleges of Chicago

5) *Preparing Undergraduate and Graduate Students for Fulfilling Careers in Applied Settings (Session 2)*

Insights and tips from undergraduate and graduate students and applied sociologists on preparing for rewarding jobs in non-academic settings, based on findings from an NSF-funded study.

Chloe Bird

Director, Center for Health Equity Research, Tufts Medical Center & Professor of Medicine, Tufts University School of Medicine

Catherine Mobley

Research Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Criminal Justice, Clemson University

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

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