SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM EXTERNAL PROGRAM REVIEWS

AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

DEPARTMENT RESOURCES GROUP

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This document is the result of a discussion at the training sessions for the Department Resources Group at the 2008 ASA annual meetings in Boston. It was suggested that it might be useful for DRG members to have a set of sample recommendations that colleagues have included in reports written for external program reviews.

Upon returning from the meetings, I e-mailed members of the DRG to solicit sample recommendations. Seven members of the DRG responded. Some sent a list of recommendations culled from multiple program reviews. Others sent full reports. Still others sent sample recommendations from a single report. I took these materials and edited them. In that process, I did two things: 1) removed any identifying materials from the recommendations, and 2) removed most additional text from the reports. In some cases I left some of the surrounding text to give a sense of the logic of organization, and the context of the recommendations.

If you sent me materials and they were not included, please let me know and I’ll add them. Many days I receive over 100 e-mails. Several weeks ago I was out of town for an extended period while doing an external program review, and I fear that I may not have gone through my backlog of correspondence as carefully as I should have upon my return.

My original plan was to organize all of the recommendations by topic. After spending a full work day on the first wave of editing, I decided to scale back on the project. Since the question raised at the DRG training session simply suggested that seeing other recommendations would be helpful, it seems that this collation should serve the purpose.

What follows is the edited set of recommendations, grouped under the name of the person who used them in a report. I hope that this is useful to any of you who do future program reviews as a member of the Department Resources Group. As noted on the cover sheet, please do not circulate these materials to anyone who is not a DRG member.

All of these materials are direct quotations. I did not edit the wording of recommendations. In the cases where full reports were sent to me, I simply pulled the recommendations out from the longer text.

I give my sincere thanks to those who contributed to this project: Jeanne Ballantine, Jeffrey Chin, Carla Howery, Diane Pike, Tom Van Valey, and Greg Weiss.
SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM J. BALLANTINE

Organization of the report: The report for the undergraduate program and general practices such as assessment follow the external reviewer outline. “Suggestions” for consideration are included in sections of the report, and more general “recommendations” are included at the end.

Summary: Students should receive the background and skills recommended at the national level by the time they complete the required courses and electives. Honors in the sociology major should be seriously considered.

Suggestion: By assessing the writing skills of a sample of beginning majors at the outset of the Junior Seminar and again later in the program, the effectiveness of the Junior Seminar and other courses might be determined. The confounding factor is that it will be unclear whether it was sociology courses or others that made a difference.

Summary: The department should continue to implement the assessment plans and follow the guide through “improvement plans.”

R 2: Exit surveys, focus groups, or interviews as students prepare for graduation, and alumni surveys could help determine whether the program met its goals and the needs and expectations of students, and determine whether students understood the purposes of the program.

R 3: The department offers all of the strongly recommended courses except the Capstone. This course is on the books and faculty members are discussing what goals it should address and how to best offer this course or meet the goals of this course.

R 5: Four levels of tiered courses as suggested in the ASA recommendations work in four-year liberal arts schools with resident populations, but are more difficult to implement in commuter schools and those with high transfer rates. Hence, a minimum number of prerequisites may be more workable at _________. Sequencing of courses has the same problems. The theory and methods courses do have prerequisites, a standard in the discipline. (see recommendations below in R6)

R 6: The department should reconsider optional concentrations (or tracks or specialty areas) within the major. Students would take a concentration of courses in one area in addition to other courses and receive a certificate or note on the diploma indicating the concentration. With the strengths of the department, logical concentrations might be in inequality, family or life course (childhood, aging, etc.), applied sociology (requiring work in the Center for Community Initiatives and/or a practicum plus the applied methods course), or global sociology (although this might be more difficult with the current offerings unless anthropology is part of the concentration). Offering concentrations would require no additional faculty members, courses, or increased workload. Lists of courses and numbers of credit hours could be posted.

R 7: The “general sociology track” could require students to take courses in a couple of areas of sociology as a general introduction to the breadth of the field.

R 10: Opportunities to cross-list courses and offer interdisciplinary courses would meet this recommendation: “recognize explicitly the intellectual connections between sociology and other fields…”

R 12: Offering “community and classroom-based learning experiences” can be accomplished with practica, service learning, and through the Center for Community Initiatives.

R 14: “…effective advising and mentoring programs for majors.” Without a sociology advisor(s), this recommendation must be carried out in alternative ways. While it may be difficult to form an ongoing sociology
club, major career advice could be offered either in a designated class like the Junior Seminar (which already does some of this), in senior level classes or a capstone course, or in special programs for majors (pizza lunch anyone?).

1. Variety of courses: While the core courses in the discipline are offered, two students in the group of approximately 18 with whom I spoke commented that they have trouble scheduling enough elective courses to meet their requirements because there are not enough different upper-level courses. However, most faculty seem busy meeting the basic offerings of the department. I sensed some concern from administrators that some upper level specialty courses do not fill. Is this because of scheduling times or topics offered? This should be a topic of conversation in the department.

2. Time of offerings: Some students commented that there are many afternoon and evening classes and that they would like more morning classes offered.

3. Capstone: A capstone course is on the books but has not been offered. The purpose of capstone courses in the discipline differs, but they are often expected to provide a culminating experience that brings together the discipline topics and prepares students for jobs or graduate school.

The department should discuss possible ways this course could be offered, how it should differ from and build on the Junior Seminar, and constraints of offering two required career preparation courses. The capstone course takes a variety of forms in different institutions. (see ASA Capstone Course handbook for ideas.) Possibilities range from a free-standing course with specific goals for seniors to a requirements for seniors that could be met in several different course offerings.

4. Sequencing and tiers: The ASA guidelines recommend *tiered offerings*, the sequencing of courses into levels from introductory to advanced. Because students at [insert institution] enter the department at many points (from first year to senior), sequencing as laid out in the ASA document would be very difficult to accomplish at [insert institution]. However, the department should discuss what elements of sequencing could be reasonably accomplished, such as concentrations and some prerequisites of courses that majors and minors take and that are offered frequently.

Summary: Implementing honors in sociology seems a logical addition because the department is very involved in the honors program. Offer elective courses on a regular schedule (every 2 to 3 years); and consider implementing tracks.

Other forms of assessment could take place in senior courses: exit questionnaires about the major, focus groups of seniors, evaluations of knowledge, and alumni surveys. It is my understanding that the assessment office conducts senior exit surveys. However, the department would profit by having one geared to the needs and interests of students in the department.

Goal 1. *The Department will promote academic excellence through providing the highest quality instruction and learning opportunities for students.*

Action 1.1: The TLO opportunities are in the developmental stage. More departmental faculty members advising students about these opportunities will encourage more to take advantage of the trips. Continuing the training sessions and liaison building with community supervisors will develop the program and provide quality control.

Students would be well served by making practica/internships more readily available.
Outcome 1.1.3: A win-win for the department can be to involve students in faculty research. This is being done in several impressive projects such as the homeless and aging surveys, some through the CCI. Taking advantage of funds for faculty (especially junior faculty) to hire students in the summer to work on research projects is highly recommended. Grants may be available at the national level to support summer internships for minority students.

Outcome 1.1.5: Students with interest in and ability to do graduate work should be identified, nurtured, and given experiences such as research, teaching, and presenting papers that will help prepare them for future opportunities.

Action 1.2, Outcome 1.2.1 and 1.2.2: Peer review of untenured faculty should be done systematically. There are forms and guides for doing this. Unless sociology course content is the focus of the review, having people from the faculty development office conduct these reviews may be helpful.

Outcome 1.3.2: One suggestion would be to have faculty members teaching the same course agree on goals, content coverage, requirements, and assessment to assure consistency of experiences for students.

Continuous Improvement 1.4.1: If the graduate program is to continue, attracting new qualified students is essential. Most effective would be to develop a simple brochure about the benefits of the program and provide the director with a course reduction for at least one term in order to market and recruit students from the local area, from -------schools, and at professional meetings attended by potential students. (see graduate program discussion)

Action 1.6: The Department will develop and support the Social Welfare program.
The track is partly in place and ready for Fall 2008. The department needs at least one more full-time Social Welfare faculty member to teach specialized courses and supervise practica. If successful, this track could lead to a more developed Social Welfare program or major.

Outcome 1.6.3: Clear guidelines for the practica need to be in place. Some forms are on the department website and additional models are available form practicum sites on the Internet.

Action 2.1, and Continuous Improvement 2.1: Creative scheduling, released time, and summer research funds to work with students would be a great incentive to young faculty members, but it appeared to be difficult under the current budget constraints. However, I would encourage the chair to provide any incentives possible, especially releases for productive faculty. Faculty members who show interest and ability to do research should be encouraged if the university values these activities. Many institutions offer untenured faculty a term off from teaching and service before the tenure decision.

Continuous Improvement 2.2.1: This goal is to “enhance the incentives for faculty to procure external funding.” Applying for funds to support research has brought in money for 7 projects in 2006-2007. However, without incentives and with a heavy service load on top of teaching and other obligations, “enhancing incentives” may be a difficult goal to achieve. Faculty must have time to carry out the research. Buying off courses with research money and having adjuncts teach them would be one way to provide incentives.

Outcomes 2.4.1: Increasing cross-listed courses can enhance offerings for students and increase enrollments for sociology and other departments, give students interdisciplinary experiences and approaches, and increase cooperation between departments.

Outcome 3.1.1: If the graduate program continues to focus on applied sociology, graduate students in the Applied Sociology programs should have a practicum experience, even if they are in the work force and
attending part-time. Those students who are working may be able to do a project that utilizes their training in the graduate program for their practicum at their place of work.

Continuous Improvement 3.1.2: Community organizations are the natural recruiting ground for applied sociology programs. However, this takes recruitment efforts and pointing out to organizations the benefits for their workers in enrolling in an applied program. As suggested above, this requires time for the director to develop materials and recruit students.

Evaluation 4.1.1: The faculty search for a Social Welfare person is important to the development of the undergraduate track that should be very attractive to students and could lead to a future program should the department decide to move in this direction. The graduate Applied Sociology program could be enhanced by having expert community researchers and subject area experts offer courses. (see suggestion for weekend workshops)

Action 4.3: Professional development fund should be used as an incentive, especially for junior faculty.

Evaluation 5.2.1: It would be useful for the department to carry out assessment of the major through a senior capstone experience or required courses at the senior level. The form of evaluation could be focus groups, exit interviews, a survey, or evaluation of content learned. Questions should be focused on particular concerns of the department, and possibly cover student future plans. It appears that little emphasis is placed on assisting students with future planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS: UNDERGRADUATE

(Note: Specific “suggestions” for consideration are included in specific sections above.)

1. Do anything possible to provide incentives to junior faculty: provide stipends, grants (such as summer grants), a term reduction before tenure, reduced service load, opportunities to “buy out” of courses with research money, compensation to keep their salaries equivalent to new hires. The compensation package and start up costs are less competitive than some comparable universities (I do not have exact data on this.).

2. Consider optional specialized sociology major concentrations within the general sociology track. These could include methods/applied sociology, inequality, organizations and institutions, international, in addition to the new interdisciplinary Urban and Community Studies concentration (minor). Students could be awarded a certificate upon completion of the concentration.

3. Consider the role a Capstone course might play in the overall major curriculum. Such a course could provide a culminating experience to bring together research and theory, and for assessment of majors.

4. Consider making a practicum course strongly recommended and available to all sociology majors. This would require more faculty resources devoted to supervising the students, but would also provide an important pedagogical tool and a link between the department and the community (a goal of the university), provide potential job opportunities for students and job experience, and help meet the university goal and QEP of serving the community. A mini-version of this could be provided by service learning experiences in certain courses (this is already being done in some courses). Enhanced community connections could also attract graduate students.

5. The goals for the department as laid out in the Self-Study, Strategic Plans, and yearly reports seem on target and reflect many of the best practices in the discipline and for assessment. These plans are ambitious and department faculty members will need to be on board (see #9). Consider allotting time at
faculty meetings to discuss various aspects of the plans and reflect on the role of each faculty member in achieving the department goals. This could include an assessment of where each course fits into the overall goals for student outcomes and where each faculty member fits into the total picture. Consider future directions based on faculty resources and goals, assessment feedback from students, and the budget situation.

6. Continue to search for a Social Welfare faculty member. Until this is accomplished, highly qualified community social welfare workers might be brought in to cover additional offerings in this area.

7. Tiered courses in the curriculum and sequenced courses are limited in the curriculum for legitimate reasons. However, considering how some sequencing might be accomplished with the constraints of a commuter student body should be discussed in the department.

8. Evaluate the constrains on the lower division offerings from trends toward larger class sizes and fewer resources such as GTAs. What does this mean for quality education and how can the department prioritize to retain quality?

9. Faculty members should meet to discuss the “self study” goals and work together toward commonly agreed-upon goals. This means reviewing the goals in the self-study, determining where each faculty member fits in and contributes, what issues confront the department, and how to address those issues—including the graduate program.

THE GRADUATE APPLIED SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM

The program could have a graduate level “introduction to applied sociology” course. The program does not have a required practicum experience. This is one of the “CACS Standards” (“Standards”, p. 3 and 11-12) for graduate applied programs. In addition, “programs shall establish and maintain close, reciprocal, and ongoing relationships with sociological practitioners and practitioner associations.” This goal would be enhanced by practica for students.

Suggestions: The program should be able to find highly qualified community practitioners who could offer applied courses to enhance the curriculum. One successful idea that our program has tried is to offer weekend courses (workshops) on specialized topics in both research and substantive areas. These courses are one or two credits and focus on “focus group research, grant proposal writing, various statistical analyses, laws governing local institutions,” and so forth. These courses provide additional graduate level knowledge, give students training in special topics, and attract community members to the campus.

IV. Faculty/Staff (and students): The program needs an additional line dedicated to the program in order to offer more graduate level applied courses and the practicum. This faculty member could offer applied courses at the graduate level, run the program, and perhaps help with the undergraduate program by offering an applied sociology course. At this time there are several faculty members who teach courses that are in part applied, but they are piggy back courses; aging, childhood, demography, education, methods, and others are examples.

Faculty members need to be compensated for extra time spent working with graduate students on theses, practica, and special graduate projects in classes. Also, the standards call for resources to support participation in scholarly and professional organizations. In departmental discussion, some faculty members feel that teaching graduate students with undergraduates is working well, and others admit to problems in mixed classes.

Students:
Student enrollments at the graduate level need to increase if the program is to be strong and viable. The students should come if the program is marketed to the local constituency. I say this based on the number of strong applied sociology programs throughout the nation that serve their local communities. Theoretically, this program serves several of the university goals, including working with the community and providing service to the community. However, most people do not understand what applied sociology IS unless it is clearly explained. The program is not likely to sell itself without some written literature explaining the purpose and benefits to the organizations that might sponsor their employees to sign up.

RECOMMENDATIONS: GRADUATE PROGRAM

A number of suggestions for consideration are mentioned above. This section summarizes the most important recommendations for action.

1. The department should determine whether they have the enthusiasm and commitment from enough faculty members to offer a viable graduate program in Applied Sociology. Part of this decision depends on whether the department will receive any support from the administration to help the program grow, support and commitment that does not appear to be forthcoming to date.

2. The QEP program and the Applied Sociology program seem meant for each other. This goal of the university could be furthered by support of the sociology graduate program.

3. An inventory of resources to support the graduate program should be undertaken. This includes but is not limited to what faculty members are willing and able to teach, how many faculty members can teach graduate stand-alone classes and how many “piggy-back” courses are acceptable for a graduate program (generally the core courses should be taught at the graduate level), and how many faculty members are willing to work with graduate students without compensation.

4. The department and administration should work together to see what resources are available to strengthen the program. This might include released time and summer compensation for the director, funds to produce advertising materials, faculty member or community adjunct to supervise practica for graduate students, teaching or research assistants (who could provide valuable service to the university), and more opportunities for graduate students to work on faculty research or in the CCI.

5. Faculty members could be rewarded for their time-consuming work with graduate students by “banking” credit toward future courses off. This costs the university nothing now during the budget “crunch”, but gives faculty an incentive to put in the extra time to direct theses and practica.

6. Establish contact with other nearby programs such as the applied faculty at ------------------------ and -------- to help advise the program and perhaps give talks or weekend seminars to enhance the offerings.
SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM J. CHIN

Curriculum

• Consider initiating conversations about the future direction of the department’s sociology curriculum and schedule these discussions to occur at a regular weekly meeting time.
• Consider creating structure in the curriculum by providing an implicit set of tiers by numbering and/or an explicit set of tiers by imposing pre-requisites.
• Consider discussing the role of the social problems course in the curriculum.
• Consider partnering with faculty both in and outside the department to find possible cross-lists, creating course-offering efficiencies.
• Consider creating a program for students interested in human services.
• Consider holding regular meetings to discuss specific course content.
• The Division of Continuing Education must make all courses that bear the same name and number as a regularly offered course in the _________ Catalog a course whose content, frequency and instructor are under the complete control of the appropriate department.
• The division of Continuing Education must make all courses that do not duplicate existing courses in the Catalog courses whose content, frequency and instructor are under the complete control of the appropriate department.
• Consider putting the department’s curricular themes in all syllabi.
• Consider adding statistics to the requirements for the major.
• Consider developing a minor in sociology.
• Consider a series of conversations with the goal of constructing a zero-based curriculum.
• Consider establishing a series of regular conversations about the curriculum as a whole. In these conversations, consider ways to structure the curriculum.
• Keep an electronic as well as hard-copy repository of syllabi taught for each course available for all faculty to access.
• Schedule regular time to meet as a department or subgroups of the department to discuss syllabi and content of courses, especially those central to the major.
• Make syllabi available for students to review.
• Consider further discussions on the direction of the criminology program.
• Consider discussing the role of the cultural diversity concentration.
• Consider further discussions on the direction of the human services, health and social justice program.
• Create a concentration for all students who currently do not have a concentration and create curricular requirements that are consistent with the other concentrations.
• Consider including statistics, foreign language, social science research methods and professional ethics in the criminal justice curriculum.
• Consider establishing a series of conversations about the curriculum as a whole in the development of a capstone course.
• Consider creating a digital repository for all syllabi that can be easily accessed by all members of the department and perhaps others outside the department as well.
• Consider offering a course on professionalization.
• Consider making all syllabi for all courses available to all faculty to review.
• Consider removing names associated with courses in the Catalog.
• Consider whether and how the three 100-level courses can serve as alternative gateways and provide the necessary foundation for entry to the major.
• Consider making some 300-level courses areas for study in depth by making theory, methods, and statistics or other 200-level courses prerequisites.
• Consider the 2.5 minimum G.P.A. for declaring a major in sociology.
• Consider sequencing the curriculum in ways that are practical and bring more rigor to the major.
• Consider offering a full-semester course in statistics.
• Try to schedule courses so they do not compete with each other.
• Consider exploring ways to cross-list courses in the Justice Studies curriculum as sociology courses.
• Continue efforts to develop a capstone course as part of an integrated curriculum.
• Consider ways in which the delivery of the curriculum can be optimized while at the same time supporting untenured department members.
• Restructure the curriculum to a four-level sequence.
• Purchase syllabi sets from the American Sociological Association's Teaching Resources Center.
• Standardize department syllabi.
• The sociologists should discuss whether or not to restructure the sociology curriculum at this time or sometime in the future to conform to recommendations made in the ASA/AAC report.
• Consider reviewing the ACJS documents on curricula for baccalaureate programs.
• Consider continuing conversations about the future direction of the sociology curriculum during summer retreats and/or schedule these discussions to occur at a regular weekly meeting time during the academic year.
• Consider conversations about what SOC classes may be taken by non-majors without 101.
• Consider on-going conversations about elective courses with an eye to possibly reducing the number of 100-level courses.
• Consider further discussions of the criminal justice curriculum including re-naming it and adjusting its content.
• Consider a complete set of parallel and interconnected conversations about the criminal justice and sociology curricula with the goal of creating a separate student learning assessment plan for criminal justice.
• Consider renaming the social policy concentration and drop the Introduction to Social Work course.
• Consider sequencing the curriculum in ways that are practical and make clear the developmental nature of the major.
• The sociologists should discuss within the department what the criminal justice curriculum will look like in five years and perhaps also in ten years. What courses will be offered? Who will be teaching them? What will the role of adjuncts be? Share this vision with the Academic Vice-President.
• Separate the Department of Anthropology and Sociology into two distinct departments. The current configuration drains energy and effectiveness and currently offers little in the way of identifiable benefits for the sociology program.
• Consider a series of conversations about expectations for student work at each level of the curriculum.
• Continue discussions of anthropology and its role in the department’s curriculum.
• Reconfigure course offerings and perhaps add courses to better strengthen anthropological content and to link to study abroad experiences (pre and post) for students across the College.
• Consider merging the two theory courses to cover certain aspects of sociological AND anthropological theory in one and other aspects in the other, e.g., micro processes, the study of culture, large scale social issues, and so forth. Having this sequence and having both disciplines at the core, will strengthen the joint major.
• Sequence the curriculum in small ways that are practical for student needs and staffing, but bring more rigor to the major.
• Add an introductory level course (at the freshman-sophomore level) on “Cultures and Societies in the Global Context” that would serve as an entry point to the sociology-anthropology major (in lieu of 121 and 128) but would also attract students from other fields, especially those planning to travel abroad. This could attract large enrollments and would be team-taught by an anthropologist and sociologist.
• The department must decide what “niche” its criminal justice curriculum is to fill. At the present time, the criminal justice program is neither a liberal arts major nor is it a pre-professional program. The curriculum should be revised to fit whatever niche the department thinks the criminal justice major best serves.

• Look to create curricular linkages with other departments across the University. For example, the department should explore creating new courses or cross-listing existing courses such as social psychology (PSY), sociology of education (EDU), group dynamics (BUS), sociology of religion (THEO), etc. and building these courses into other departments’ major requirements. Encourage double majors that may provide special career preparation. Theology and Sociology, for example, is ideal preparation for those developing religious vocations with an inclination towards social activism. The Reverend Martin Luther King and Ronald Reagan, for example, earned their undergraduate degrees in sociology. Business and Sociology prepares students for careers in Marketing Research, Human Resources or Management.

• Revise the curriculum updating major requirements and course titles. Institute new courses or offer existing courses more regularly that provide students with a representative exposure to the field. The most important of these is stratification. There is no course on law and society. Social organization and deviance are not being taught regularly. Not adequately represented but arguably less essential to a small department is population/demography. Make better use the unique specialties of the faculty.

• Reduce the number of sections of Introduction to Sociology and Social Problems. We encourage the department to reduce their dependence on the Introductory course as the major recruiting tool for majors. All classes, campus activities, and department communications serve as recruiting tools.

• Eliminate the self and society course and replace it with one or more course with more explicit macro orientations and titles that reflect that orientation. The current self and society course contains too much overlap with the social psychology course.

• Faculty should consider participating in college-wide events that are designed to showcase the curriculum whenever possible.

Assessment of Student Learning

• Begin a fresh series of critical conversations about and analysis of the sociology curriculum in order to sustain the inquiry sequence, develop the entry and exit points of the major, and review the effectiveness of the upper division electives.

• Consider adding student learning objectives to all syllabi. Display these prominently on the first page of each syllabus and label the section “student learning objectives.”

• The college should consider instituting a series of steps and procedures that constitute a regular cycle of program review.

• Since the curriculum is the product of the faculty’s work, assessment of the curriculum should be a department-wide activity.

• The department should develop a sustainable Student Learning Assessment plan.

• Consider including an assessment item for the internship class in the student learning assessment plan.

• Consider examining the assessment strategies and continue with those that produce the information that is most helpful in “closing the loop”.

• Consider a standard format for presenting student learning assessment goals for every syllabus.

• Reassess the Assessment Plan to 1) reassess whether learning and program goals continue to be valid with the changes in curriculum, including the development of the capstone course; 2) routinize the assessment of learning goals to better assess changes in the curriculum; and 3) examine ways to ease the burden of assessment on a department with a large proportion of junior faculty.

• Identify a set of 3-5 core principles.
• Consider scheduling regular meetings to discuss curricular goals and ways that syllabi and the student learning objectives articulated in each syllabus contributes to these curricular goals.
• Rewrite the departmental Mission Statement.
• Identify core departmental goals to lead the process of curriculum revision.
• Consider finishing the task of writing a Mission Statement.
• Clarify departmental mission and orient central departmental goals toward that mission. The retreat should be lead by a trained facilitator since the department has experienced interpersonal difficulties in the past that have prevented them from operating at peak efficiency. The retreat should be held off campus, away from any possible distractions. Logistics of the retreat can be determined with input from all department members but it must involve all members of the department. The retreat should take a minimum of two days. It may be necessary to schedule a follow-up retreat to complete the task.

Advising

• Consider re-visiting having academic advising performed by faculty.
• Develop an advising process that insures (requires) faculty-student contact; augment this system with “group advising” through the sociology-anthropology club.
• Eliminate the practice of assigning only sociology majors to sociology faculty and criminal justice majors to criminal justice faculty. All faculty in the department should be sufficiently acquainted with both curricula to be able to advise all students in the department.
• Create a scale to regularize the load of student advising. We recommend a progressive scale where junior faculty carry a lighter advising load than senior faculty.
• Improve advising.

Personnel Issues on Review Visits

• Consider instituting formative classroom observations for all faculty.
• Consider regular summative evaluations for all adjunct faculty.
• Consider changing the roles and responsibilities of the standing committees so that every individual in the department feels that she/he has equal access to the development of policy and procedure and that each individual’s voice is heard and their comments valued.
• Consider ways to make sure that both task leadership and maintenance (socio-emotional) leadership work is completed.
• Consider having a (series of) meeting(s) with a trained mediator/facilitator, perhaps as a retreat, to break some of the patterns of behavior that create blockages and prevent individuals in the department from doing their best work.
• Consider brown bag teaching discussions as a way to promote shared understanding and respect for each other and to find common ground for collaborative projects.
• Consider instituting a department-wide mentoring program for all junior faculty.
• Consider conducting peer evaluations of courses for all department faculty.
• Explore ways to protect junior faculty from overload and establish a mechanism for all faculty to be compensated for internships.
• Consider providing orientations and workshops for adjuncts so that they have the same resources available as fulltime faculty.
• Develop community-building strategies including faculty, adjunct faculty, students and alumni/ae.
• Improve communication and involvement with adjunct faculty.
• Establish an effective mentoring program for junior faculty in the department.
• Strategize and prioritize to make best use of faculty energy and time. We hope these suggestions will be substitutes not additions. The faculty work hard and make many good contributions to the university and students.
• Review the administrative structure and job descriptions of the Department Chair, the Director of Criminal Justice and the Director of Sociology and consider combining them into one position of the Department Chair. Three administrative jobs, each with release time, in a department this size may be redundant and require more time in meetings, communication, coordination and conferences than is saved by the dispersal of duties. The structure itself may contribute to divisiveness when they want the programs to be integrated.

Distribution of and Competition over Resources

• Encourage the administration to work with the department to identify access to classroom space that will enable more variety in the format and size of courses at different levels in the curriculum. In addition, try to ensure that the classroom space is close to the department offices so as to encourage more interaction between students and faculty and among sociology students.
• The department chair might consider having conversations with other department chairs and the Dean about creative solutions to problems and share these with members of the department
• The sociologists and the psychologists should discuss the possibility of encouraging criminal justice students to take psychology courses such as personality, abnormal psychology, and others in partial fulfillment of their criminal justice requirements.
• The sociologists and the social workers should continue to discuss how to optimize the use of social work faculty in the criminal justice curriculum.
• Improve intra-departmental communications to facilitate decision-making and follow-through. Strengthened work practices contribute to more efficient and effective decision-making, a more positive work climate and a healthier faculty.

Other General Issues

• Look for ways to enhance communication with adjuncts and with students.
• Consider ensuring that all tenure-track sociology faculty regularly rotate through teaching at least one of the core courses.
• Consider ensuring that no faculty member be expected to or allowed to teach the same substantive course every semester, year after year.
• Promote sociology and the department outside of the curriculum.
• The faculty of the department should initiate a discussion with the department secretary to explore ways in which she can perform more work for faculty that they are currently doing themselves.
• If the department is authorized to hire an additional full time faculty, consider a sociologist with whose interests in criminal justice compliment rather than duplicate those already in place. Rather than a person with expertise in local law enforcement, consider a person with interests in restorative justice, social and economic justice, or for more traditional areas, law, federal law enforcement, social work with delinquents, etc. In addition to a Ph.D., such a person might also have a related degree, e.g., J.D., M.S.W.
• Consider finding regular meeting times to talk about teaching and courses.
• Consider instituting a series of conversations to share effective teaching strategies.
• Consider requiring students to use ASA style in their written work.
• Examine career resources available to students and develop methods to better prepare for using sociology in future careers.
• Consider instituting a series of discussions on pedagogy.
• Consider ensuring that core sociology courses are smaller – in the range of 20-25 – than substantive courses at the 100 and 200-level.
• Consider making the room dedicated to the gerontology program available for casual interaction.
• Examine career resources available to students and develop methods to better prepare for using sociology in future careers including getting the student sociology association revitalized.
• Consider asking the Office of Alumni/ae to collect data from alums and if they already do this, to prepare reports on these data for the department.
• Students should be encouraged to provide faculty with feedback on their courses on a regular basis. One way to facilitate this process would be to administer informal mid-semester student evaluations of courses.
• The department should hire a second sociologist with expertise in areas related to criminal justice.
• The sociologists should consider ways to attract students who have criminal justice interests other than local law enforcement. Consider ways to broaden the horizons of students whose vocational interests are limited to local law enforcement.
• The department should not add an anthropologist at this time. Revisit this question at the next evaluation.
• The university should hire a webmaster who will work with faculty who want to build webpages.
• The department and the academic administration should establish a system to account for work done supervising internships.
• Approach the Mathematics Department along with Psychology and other social science departments to create a statistics course dedicated to students majoring in social sciences and Psychology. Consider adding a lab component to the course.
• Initiate discussions with Psychology about adding coursework in social psychology.
• Consider allowing the Sociology Club to do non-academic programming that will stimulate student interest in official activities of the department such as academic programming and the curriculum.
• Look to create ways to improve the department’s visibility among prospective students. This involves working closely with the admissions office but only after having created a clear sense of image (see recommendation one).
• Follow-up on the Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis in the self-study and pursue the listed goals. The SWOT analysis was very well done. It is insightful, accurate, comprehensive and specific. It should provide a good context for using the strengths to address the weaknesses, handle the threats and pursue the opportunities.
• Review staffing levels and FTE credit hour production in comparison to other social science or comparable departments at UST and, perhaps, at peer institutions. Review the UST criteria for replacing faculty or creating new positions. Determine appropriate targets for staffing, credit hour production, enrollments, and numbers of majors and minors. Prioritize activities to meet these targets.
• Support an active student club revolving around the functional needs of students.
• Look to create ways to improve the department’s visibility among undecided first and second year students. This involves establishing a curricular toe-hold among all first and/or second year students such as the core or tandem courses. It also involves programming and some marketing.
• Strengthen the connection to department alumni/ae. We assume that many alumni/ae share the commitment and appreciation demonstrated by the students. More may be willing to volunteer their time and energy to help the department and students.
• Make more visible the department’s unique and integral contributions to the mission and vision of the University.
SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM C. HOWERY

☐ Convene an advisory board of alumni and potential employers (and internship sites)

☐ Develop course syllabi that have more integration of the social justice work into the core courses and more application of core material to social justice, as well as assignments that are tailored to build skills students will use in their future employment

☐ Launch the Social Justice Center such that contract research projects can be run through the center

☐ Revamp the Sociological Analysis course to be a practicum on important professional skills for an applied sociologist

☐ Collaborate with social work, public administration, business and other fields that have strong internship/field work programs, assessing whether some of the same sites can be used for the Sociology MA but with students working in a different part of the organization (e.g., the research department)

☐ Work with the Dean to establish several TA-ships where graduate students can assist with lower division sociology courses and receive some compensation to help with their graduate studies

☐ Make the final part of the MA degree a research practicum and seminar (to write up the research) with a bona fide project judged on its sociological soundness and usefulness to the real (or hypothetical) client.
SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM E. KAIN

Structure of the Report  The remainder of the report is divided into three sections. First, I summarize several major themes from my interviews and review of the materials on the program in sociology and anthropology. Second, I provide recommendations for the sociology and anthropology program by overlaying the national guidelines from the ASA, with the addition of the relevant considerations for anthropology, as a framework for evaluating the program. These recommendations include some that are aimed at the institution, and others that apply to the full program, often implemented by individual faculty members working as a team with their colleagues. Finally, the report has a brief concluding section.

Recommendation 1: Members of the department should look at the Assessment Plan and the webpage and use the statements there to frame a consistent mission statement that is found in both places. The current statements are solid; they simply need to be the same in both places.

Recommendation 2: The department should work toward framing its student learning goals as discrete, measurable student learning outcomes. It is also useful to include these learning outcomes on the webpage so that they are explicit to students.

Recommendation 3: The department should explore the establishment of a student organization for students who have an interest in anthropology and sociology.

Recommendation 4: The department should consider ways of involving anthropology and sociology students in research aimed at collecting data on the needs and interests of students in the program. Students could also collect data about alumni and post it on the departmental web page. With permission from those alumni, they could include contact information so that current students can network with graduates who majored in sociology or had a P.O.E. in anthropology.

Recommendation 5: The department should consider requiring statistics for the major in sociology.

Recommendation 6: The department should have conversations about the nature of the capstone experience in both anthropology and sociology.

Recommendation 7: The department should examine its curriculum, and evaluate the extent to which all majors, no matter what set of courses they take, are exposed to different methodological traditions. This diversity of approaches should include both qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Recommendation 8: The department needs to continue offering Principals of Sociology in multiple sections each semester, and Introduction to Anthropology each semester. Ideally, it would be good to have multiple sections of Introduction to Anthropology.

Recommendation 9: The department should re-examine the structure and sequencing of core courses in the sociology major and the anthropology minor. Course numbers should reflect increased levels of complexity. Student learning outcomes of increasing complexity should be attached to each level in the developmental curriculum, and should be listed in the course syllabi.

Recommendation 10: Among the student learning outcomes should be those related to information literacy in sociology and anthropology. Collaboration with the library liaison in sociology and
anthropology will facilitate developing a solid set of information literacy student learning outcomes that are linked to various levels of the curriculum.

Recommendation 11: In curriculum discussions, the department should consider the relative merits of separate majors (or, as in its current situation, a major in sociology and the availability of a P.O. E. in anthropology), or a joint major either with or without options to focus in anthropology or sociology.

Recommendation 12: The College needs to hire an additional tenure track sociologist, ideally with a specialization in some area of social change, such as globalization, transnational issues, and/or demography/migration.

Recommendation 13: The College needs to hire an additional tenure-track anthropologist, who is a cultural anthropologist.

Recommendation 14: The Department should explore the possibility of cross-listing courses that are offered in other departments that may be appropriate either for sociology or anthropology credit.

Recommendation 15: In the context of curricular discussions, the department should examine the extent to which issues of race/class/gender are integrated across the curriculum, particularly in courses required for the major.

Recommendation 16: The department should consider ways in which papers and presentations in the capstone courses might be used to assess the effectiveness of the majors in anthropology and sociology.
Recommendations in Three Critical Areas

1. Move Toward a Learning-centered Undergraduate Program

Short-term Recommendations

- Improve communication with undergraduates (e.g., create a listserv, use fliers, have a section on the department website and/or a newsletter, make class announcements, have a dedicated bulletin board in a student area)
- Expand out-of-class learning and interactions (e.g., Sociology club, Alpha Kappa Delta honorary sociology society -AKD- chapter, speakers, awards, research experiences, conferences *(take them to MSS this spring!)*, rituals/ceremonies)
- Offer some late afternoon-evening courses when possible
- Change/add timing of course offerings so that students majoring in sociology are not prevented from making timely progress or end up with awkward schedules that lack career mentoring and supervised research or service learning opportunities in their final year
- Share resources and opportunities connected with faculty joint appointments (e.g., research opportunities, internship placements, guest speakers, cross-listed courses)

Long-term Recommendations

- Build on the professional advisor model; conceptualize advising as more than just effective scheduling and planning but also as mentoring, faculty involvement, and career assistance
- Increase the functional reciprocal relationships between the graduate and undergraduate programs which will benefit both programs and sets of students (e.g. use undergraduates as teaching assistants paired with graduate TAs; have faculty-graduate-undergraduate research teams; develop a graduate student mentoring undergraduates program; have graduate students present their research at sociology club meetings)
- Use more diverse and innovative pedagogies (participate in faculty and graduate student teaching and learning development; practice active learning; include use of technology; build on teaching brownbags)
- Improve TA training (e.g., build on 593 course and open up opportunities for several faculty to be involved; provide more systematic and developmental processes and opportunities; use campus and disciplinary resources; model innovative teaching; start a teaching-learning library in the faculty-graduate student lounge)
- Obtain resources to improve the physical environment in classrooms and other space including updated technology, and find interaction and study space for undergraduates

Possible Processes to Use

- Hire a graduate assistant assigned to the Director of Undergraduate Studies (duties might include assisting with program assessment; organizing AKD; producing a newsletter; arranging teaching development opportunities; hosting sociology club with a faculty member)
- Offer faculty/TA teaching and learning brownbags
- Use ---------- Teaching Center resources and reward such efforts by faculty members
• Learn about and apply for resources such as McNair Scholars, NSF Research Experiences for Undergraduates, AKD travel money, ASA honors resources and teaching enhancement grants (this can be part of the work of GA working with DUS and or shared responsibilities of the Undergraduate Committee)
• Learn about and draw from model undergraduate programs of other R-1 campuses

2. Revise the Undergraduate Curriculum

Short-term Recommendations

• Establish a policy on the timing, rotation, and frequency of course offerings and faculty teaching assignments; increase the use of regular faculty for teaching core undergraduate courses
• Understand, clarify, and communicate current curriculum and major requirements to students under current catalog with special attention to communicating with current “applied” majors
• In 400 level courses that have both undergraduate and graduate students, develop criteria for admitting undergraduates and establish different standards for undergraduates and graduates
• Begin identifying internal and external internship opportunities
• Encourage and/or require or give class credit for student participation in appropriate out-of-class learning such as attending speakers
• Identify some learning goals for core courses; put these on syllabi

Long-term Recommendations

• Address the “applied Major”; revise, resuscitate, or remove; communicate this to students
• Rethink possible formal or informal substantive concentrations; build on current areas of expertise with the Department and in joint appointments
• Change a small number of upper division courses to be for majors only in terms of prerequisites, expectations, and standards
• Identify one, key theory course and focus resources on that course so that students have a shared theory experience
• Establish a required capstone experience(s)
• Given the ---------- location, develop service learning and/or community-based research opportunities (these may be versions of the capstone)
• Decide on a developmental order for 201 and 202 (statistics and methods) and require students take them in that order
• Conduct ongoing assessment of program learning outcomes
• Integrate methods across the curriculum (see “IDA model” from ASA)

Possible Processes to Use

• Create an Undergraduate Handbook (this might be a GA project)
• Hold faculty teaching and curriculum retreats (consider inviting students when appropriate)
• Expect faculty involvement in ongoing assessment via a committee with help from an undergraduate or graduate RA and/or project in a methods course; use assessment data to feedback into curriculum reform (this will also help build foundations for University expectations and accreditation)
• Set aside a space in the lounge and purchase resources on teaching, learning, and curriculum from ASA Teaching Resource Center, key books, and journals (we can provide a list); become a member of ASA Department Affiliates Program
• Reduce sections taught as a service to nonsociology students or in general education
• Reduce the number of small, narrow faculty specialty graduate seminars
• Involve students in governance (on committees as appropriate)

3. Change Rewards, Recognition, and Accountability

Short-term Recommendations

• Establish a division of labor and course rotation that is equitable and meets curricular needs of the undergraduate program
• Create department level awards and ceremonies that acknowledge contributions to the undergraduate program
• Provide one-time or occasional internal rewards for contributions to undergraduate program work (e.g. reassigned time to write or lead grants related to curriculum reform or teaching; extra travel money for taking students to conferences-- as Department Head deems possible)
• Include adjuncts and visiting faculty in Department life and governance (e.g., invite to faculty meetings, put on listserv, improve communication, include on appropriate committees)

Long-term Recommendations

• Increase faculty accountability in supervising and training graduate teaching assistants and instructors beyond Soc 593 (supervise graduate supervisors of TAs, provide ongoing developmental teaching training, have formative evaluation and feedback)
• Shift the faculty merit criteria balance to include the weight of teaching and service efforts and achievements
• Develop a written annual evaluation process that jointly assesses teaching contributions of joint-appointed faculty members to all areas involved.

Possible Processes to Use

• Work with students to create student-selected faculty awards
• Use recruiting and hiring to help change the culture by selecting new faculty strong in scholarship and teaching, and willing to contribute to the undergraduate program
• Discover, participate in and reward involvement in University-wide initiatives; highlight these activities in Department newsletters, listserv etc. that reward teaching
• Encourage, value, and reward the scholarship of teaching and learning
SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM T. VAN VALEY

Review # 1

I have developed a number of recommendations which I believe will enhance the position of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology and help overcome the concerns that I heard expressed by some of the members during my visit. The first set of recommendations is directed at the College of Arts and Sciences, since they are clearly outside the control of the Department. The second set is directed at the Department itself. A small set of recommendations is also included with respect to the review process itself.

The College

Ia. As noted above, I believe the Department should be allowed to hire new faculty, with special attention to areas that have potential for external funding. However, while the Department should make such substantive decisions in line with its strategic planning, the Dean can certainly guide them. In particular, the planning process would be facilitated if they were directly informed of the administrative priority for majors and graduate students relative to the production of student credit hours.

Ib. Given that one of the high demand areas in Anthropology is forensic, and given that a highly acceptable candidate in that area is already occupying a visiting position, converting that position to a tenure track would seem to be an immediate response to student demand and faculty need that could have positive long term consequences.

Ic. I believe the College would be well served by at least encouraging and perhaps supporting one or more one-day retreats for the Department at which an outside facilitator could help the Department initiate a strategic planning process. In my view, such a process should begin in the very near future, and needs to include all faculty members in the department. The facilitator should also be made aware of the lack of consensus that currently exists.

Id. The college could take the lead in rationalizing the classroom assignment process. That way, faculty would undoubtedly feel less dis-empowered by the process (given the responses of the other members of the Unit Review Committee to the discussions of this issue, it is also likely that other departments would perceive such a change in a highly positive manner). One option might be for the various department chairs to suggest more or less standard patterns of room assignments (“smart rooms” or other special facilities, numbers of seats, days, and times) for each quarter.

The Department

Iia. As I have noted elsewhere, I believe the Department definitely needs to develop a strategic plan. There is no clear consensus regarding the direction for the department beyond that of simply securing more resources. Moreover, on a department-wide basis, even that is undefined with respect to priorities. For example, would additional graduate assistants or staff positions provide acceptable short-term support in lieu of additional faculty lines? Would it be equally acceptable to all three constituencies? I encourage all members of the Department to engage in the process of developing a plan, but particular focus is required on its articulation among the three major constituencies, and the specific objectives, resources, and time frames that are necessarily involved.
IIb. As one of the elements of such a planning process, I would suggest that the anthropologists in the Department begin to explore the option of separating from Sociology. The Anthropology program has matured a great deal in recent years, and on the basis of both faculty scholarly productivity and the productivity of student credit hours, it appears to be at the point of viability. If more faculty and a graduate program are the prerequisites for such a goal, then they could develop a series of steps and a time line through which the process could be accomplished. Such a move will require time and deliberative efforts, however, and should also include consideration of the impact on Sociology and the potential danger to Anthropology that such a move might have in hard times.

IIc. On a similar note, the new MA program in -------------- appears to be meeting a market need almost as great as the MA program in ----------- (18 students versus 22). While I realize it would require going through the curricular process to have the program changed from a single cohort to a continuing basis, the number of students involved would nearly double the masters level productivity of the department. This is central to the provost’s announced plans for expansion at --------------.

IID. While adjunct and part-time faculty usage is clearly under control, one of the issues that I found troublesome was the long term impact of reliance on “early retired” faculty. It was not clear to me how long such arrangements last, or the level of involvement these faculty represent for the Department. If it is simply to provide stable part-time faculty for the introductory courses, it may indeed be a useful short term solution. However, since they do not appear to be involved with majors or graduate students, it does little more than divert resources that should probably be allocated on a long term basis. The Department should be encouraged to seek alternatives. These might include converting positions from visiting to tenure track or a rotating visiting position that would bring in people with special skills and interests.

IIe. Given the stated purpose of the Criminology major, “...designed for those students to [sic] who plan to pursue careers in some aspect of the criminal justice system...” (from the major sheet), a similar option for certain of the Criminology courses (e.g., Juvenile Delinquency, Penology, Community-Based Corrections) would be to use people from the community with real-world experience (e.g, police officer, probation officer, court official). As long as the practice is kept under control and well supervised, it helps relations with the local community and provides students with contacts for internship opportunities. If well done, it can enhance the utility of a criminology program for the students.

IIf. I encourage the Sociology constituency in the Department to incorporate the anthropologists more directly into the Sociology program. The criminologists already seem to be well integrated. At this point, it appeared that the two groups (Anthropology and Sociology) function almost independently of one another with respect to curricular matters (perhaps in other ways as well). If it is indeed to remain a joint department, then one might, for example, reasonably expect anthropologists to teach such courses as qualitative methods or comparative either within the undergraduate major or the graduate program.

IIg. While the department has managed the issue of undergraduate student advising well, the strategy of using faculty members for such a function has often been problematic at other institutions due to extremes in the quality of advising across faculty. It was not completely clear from the students that advising is uniformly well done by the faculty. In the long run, it might be converted to a staff function. This would provide continuity and reliability, especially for majors and graduate students. I encourage the department to consider this (and other) options. By the same token, having an untenured faculty member responsible for a community internship program is a substantial burden that has relatively little pay-off toward tenure, especially given the extraordinary amount of time that is involved. Indeed, our experience at ------------------------ indicates that it can be more easily done by a senior faculty member.

IIh. Due to the strong response of the graduate students regarding graduate research methods, I would suggest that the Department consider adding a second required course on the topic. While a
quantitative/qualitative split might be of interest, a data collection/data analysis option might be equally viable. In either case, a sequenced approach would seem to be desirable, given the students’ stated interest in more hands-on experience.

III. In recent years, the Department has made important efforts to add more structure to its curriculum. However, following the recommendations in the AAC&U/ASA report on Liberal Learning, more work on sequencing of courses is needed (I have enclosed a copy of the report). I would encourage the Department to look carefully at all courses within topic areas that are offered at different levels, and consider making the lower level course a prerequisite for the upper level course. While there will undoubtedly be situations where such a strategy will not work, or where permission of the instructor will also be required (e.g., to allow students from other programs into the courses), it could improve the focus of the department’s course offerings and reduce the service burden of the department in the upper level courses. This also sends the message to the students that Sociology is not a discipline that only requires one or two introductory exposures for entree to advanced skills and knowledge.

IIIj. The graduate students with whom we spoke indicated that they had already taken many of the courses offered in the MA program while they were undergraduates, and thus were interested in more variety. Since it appears that between one third and one half of them are graduates of --------, this is not surprising. However, it does raise the issue of cross-listed courses. The practice is presumably intended to increase the likelihood that 500-level courses will have sufficient enrollment. However, it appears that cross-listing may also have the opposite unintended consequence in some circumstances. The Sociology graduate students did comment that there are sometimes few new courses for some students to take. On a similar vein, some of the Anthropology undergraduate students indicated that there was not a lot of difference between the requirements for graduates and undergraduates who are enrolled at the same time in those 500-level courses. This should be reviewed to insure that graduate students do indeed receive qualitatively different instruction in a cross-listed course. Indeed, the general practice of cross-listing courses should be carefully reviewed, for several cohorts of graduate and undergraduate students.

IIIk. The Department has two full-time secretarial/clerical positions. ---------- has almost three decades of distinguished service to the university and twenty years to the department. There appears to have been considerable turnover with respect to the other position. When Ms. ---------- retires, the department will not only lose a valued staff member, it will also lose a significant portion of its institutional memory. Unless steps are taken, the transition is likely to be especially difficult for the department. By the same token, a total of two staff do not seem adequate for a department of nearly thirty faculty and four teaching graduate students (not counting the two journals and their graduate students). Strategies for increasing staff resources should be considered alongside any consideration of additional faculty.

III. A potent source of financial support for many departments derives from the contributions from alumni and emeritii, as well as friends both from academe and the community. Business and corporate support are also increasingly common, even in the social sciences. Given that -------- is undertaking a major capital campaign, this would seem to be a particularly good time for the faculty to participate in fund-raising efforts specifically directed at benefitting the department and its programs. It is a well known maxim in fund-raising that people give money to people they like and trust (and not to programs and institutions). The faculty, both current and emeritii, would seem to be extremely well positioned for such activities, especially given the extraordinary impact they can have on a department.

IIIm. It does appear from several sources that the faculty in the Department carry a substantial number of independent study and honors tutorial hours (and presumably extra graduate hours, in cross-listed courses). This also applies to those people who serve as coordinators for their respective disciplines. However, none of these hours seem to be taken into account in allocations of teaching load. It is also not clear (to me or to the faculty) whether they are recognized in annual evaluations. The department should develop some sort of
reasonable rubric for crediting such hours to a faculty members’ load. I have seen a wide range of formulae used (there are undoubtedly examples on the -------------- campus), and they all recognize the cumulative time and effort required and reduce the total teaching load accordingly.

II. Following from the previous recommendation, also given the large numbers of students accommodated in service courses, and the sizeable numbers of majors, the Department should probably consider alternative approaches to reducing teaching load as part of its overall strategic planning efforts. This would give faculty additional time to pursue other institutional objectives. The current approach appears to be the number of sections taught per quarter. One other approach is to simply offer fewer sections of service courses (or larger ones), and freeing up those faculty for a quarter - rather than assigning them another course. Another approach is to use the number of student credit hours per faculty member as a mechanism for allocation. Once a target number is established (for each individual, or for programs, or for the department as a whole), the number of sections taught per quarter becomes less important.
The Review Process

IIIa. While -------- is to be commended for instituting a regular and structured process of department/program review, a major element is missing in the form of interactive communication between the administration and the affected individuals (in this case, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology). It was clear to me that my presence and purpose (and that of the Unit Review Committee) in the department were quite mysterious to many of the faculty. We (the Unit Review Committee) found ourselves repeatedly explaining our purpose to the various groups with which we met. This was not unexpected among the students, but it was certainly surprising among the faculty. I would encourage early and repeated communications with faculty in affected departments/programs, both providing information and soliciting input. While some of these communications should certainly occur through chairpersons, it would empower faculty to have others sent directly. Along these same lines, it appeared that the campus-based members of the Unit Review Committee itself also received minimal communication. I recall at least one person saying that s/he had been appointed several months earlier and heard nothing until a short time before I arrived on the campus.

IIIb. The logistics of the review process could use review and evaluation. Although I received a good deal of communication from the Chair of the Department about the visit (and the Chair of the Unit Review Committee), many of the specifics were largely at my own instigation. I would suggest the establishment of some guidelines for the frequency and nature of communications with external reviewers and who should be responsible for those communications (e.g., the department chair or the chair of the unit review committee). In my case, the two chairs were quite flexible and accommodating, but this is not always the case. (Note also, given the earlier comment, these guidelines apparently should also apply to campus-based reviewers.)

For example, a draft itinerary should be provided in advance to the external reviewer, for review and suggestions. In my own case, I would have liked to speak with the chair of another department in the college and someone from the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs. Had I had the opportunity in advance, I would have suggested that such meetings be arranged. Once I was on campus, however, little time remained for additions.

Similarly, documents in addition to the departmental self study are useful in reviewing a department. While on campus, I requested (and was graciously provided by the Chair of the Department) copies of selected syllabi (e.g., the introductory course and required graduate courses), a recent Assessment Report, budgetary information, the master curriculum for the Department, a current schedule of classes - with instructor and capacity identified, and university catalogs, both graduate and undergraduate. It would have been useful to see at least some of those documents in advance. As an experienced reviewer, I did begin by reviewing the department’s web site (which, by the way, is quite good). However, that is often not enough preparatory material. Such materials are critically important in developing a complete understanding of a department and its programs within its institutional context.

IIIc. One of the striking omissions that I noticed in the structure of my visit was the complete absence of meetings with individual faculty. Moreover, the meetings with groups of faculty (and students as well) all included the entire Unit Review Committee. The only private conversations I had were with the Chair of the Department, The Associate Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, and the eight or ten faculty and graduate students that I managed to “catch” during the little free time I had available. In my experience, faculty (especially untenured faculty) are often unwilling to express their thoughts candidly in open forums. Therefore, it is far more difficult to develop a clear and accurate picture of the way a department is really working. I would definitely recommend several blocks of time when reviewers (both external and internal) can simply meet with individual faculty.

IIId. Finally, while the procedures for Academic Assessment (the documents on the web) are quite detailed and provide a useful view of the overall nature and purpose of the review, they are relatively silent on certain
procedural matters (such as, the involvement of the external reviewer in the numeric evaluations given to the Department as per Appendix B, the degree to which the thoughts of the external reviewer will be incorporated in the executive summaries as per Appendix C and Appendix D, or the degree to which the report of the external reviewer will be shared with the Department, the Unit Review Committee, or the Dean of the College). Since I am an experienced member of the Departmental Resources Group of the American Sociological Association (I have enclosed a descriptive brochure), and I have participated in about a dozen other department/program reviews, I have been proactive with respect to such matters. However, other external reviewers might not, without direction.

Review # 2

Recommendations to the Administration

I1. As noted above, we believe that, at the earliest opportunity, the Department should be allowed to hire new faculty, commensurate with its status as a PhD program. The specific substantive areas would be an issue for the department to decide in consultation with the Deans of the two colleges, but probably with special attention to areas/people that have potential for collaborative research and scholarly productivity.

I2. The department is fully occupying the space it currently has available (as are the other departments in the building). As the department expands - through the addition of faculty and/or staff, or through expanded services offered by Rural Life/Census Data Center, or through the establishment of a cooperative computer lab - additional space will clearly be required. It is already an issue with respect to the use of the conference room, since there are numerous competing demands on that single space.

I3. The department would be well served if the administration would encourage and perhaps support one or more one-day retreats for the department at which a facilitator could help the department work through some of the trade-offs implicit in designing a faculty replacement plan, not only for future recruitment but also for sabbaticals and perhaps other contingencies (e.g., overload teaching). Such a process should begin in the very near future.

I4. One of the major elements of the program that consumes faculty time is of course the number of thesis and dissertation committees on which the faculty serve. These not only represent a sizeable commitment of time in themselves, but also will often require faculty members to work outside of their areas of expertise and experience (which, of course, adds to the time required). Part of the reason for the significance of this issue is the size of graduate committees. For both the MA and the PhD, the number of faculty required to serve on committees seems unnecessarily large (4 for the MA, at least 5 for the PhD). While there may be institutional requirements that drive such requirements, there are good arguments for reducing them. An argument can be made that 2 departmental members are sufficient for a thesis and 3 for a dissertation. These minor changes would noticeably reduce the time burden on the faculty.

I5. The members of the review team were particularly struck by the impact of technology on the budgetary flexibility of the institution. Technology is extraordinarily expensive, and when it must come out of the general operating funds of an institution, the end result is likely to be the deterioration of programs and the physical plant. The administration’s efforts to institute a fee for technology or other such form of fiscal support should be continued, and if possible, pursued even more vigorously.

I6. While we were visiting the campus, we became aware that rumors were circulating among the faculty and staff. Most of them were negative regarding approaches to alleviating the faculty teaching load. For example, it was suggested that release time earned from advising theses and dissertations were only granted by
the administration if sections were combined (so the same number of students would be served). Similarly, it was suggested that sabbaticals were only approved when the department could absorb the loss of the faculty member without additional resources. Such rumors predispose the faculty against innovation because they fear that it will be penalized rather than rewarded. For that reason, as well as for the obvious need to maintain faculty morale in an uncertain budgetary environment, unambiguous messages regarding policies and procedures need to be communicated to the faculty.

Recommendations to the Department

The following quotation is taken directly from the department’s web site. It accurately reflects much of the tension that the faculty of the department face in maintaining the program and their own professional productivity. The nine faculty members of the Sociology Department teach undergraduate and graduate classes, advise and mentor undergraduate, Masters, and PhD students, conduct and publish research, and provide services to the community.

II1. Slim down the course offerings in the undergraduate program. Given the demographics of the department, attrition will soon provide the department with the opportunity to review the curriculum. They should be encouraged by the administration to make the necessary trade-offs that will facilitate the long term growth and viability of the graduate program, while maintaining the fundamental character of the core undergraduate program.

II2. Doctoral students in the program should be carefully prepared for college-level teaching (e.g., a teaching practicum, in addition to the existing professions course and the informal meetings conducted by --------), and then routinely assigned to teach courses at the introductory level. The graduate students desperately want to do so (and accurately see such experience as an advantage on the academic job market), and it could relieve substantial pressure on the teaching load of the faculty. This could initially be done on a trial basis, with a heavy evaluative component to insure that the undergraduates receive high quality instruction. It might also produce a publishable outcome of the experience (in Teaching Sociology, for example).

II3. The Boyer model, with its focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning, is one way that the department might turn a negative (heavy teaching load) into a positive (professional productivity). For example, the recent award to -------- of the Integrating Census Data project from the American Sociological Association is a good indication of willingness of some of the faculty to embrace change, at least as it relates to teaching. Given the visibility of that project, it is likely that presentations and publications will result from the experience. It would also increase the faculty level of involvement in professional associations with respect to teaching (e.g., the American Sociological Association’s Section on Teaching and Learning).

II4. Adjunct and part-time faculty could be employed to provide stable coverage for selected courses in the undergraduate program. While such individuals need to be screened and evaluated carefully, they may indeed be a useful short term solution to some of the faculty time issues. One possibility would be to institute a rotating visiting position that would bring in people with special skills and interests for a semester or two. This could also be a way of covering the courses taught by a faculty member going on sabbatical. A similar option for certain of the Criminology courses (e.g., Juvenile Justice, Criminal Law, Police and Community Relations) would be to use people from the community with real-world experience (e.g., police officer, probation officer, court official). As long as the practice is kept under control and well supervised, it helps relations with the local community and provides students with contacts for internship opportunities. If well done, such infusions can dramatically enhance the utility and appeal of a criminology program for the students.

II5. The several undergraduate clubs offered through the department clearly include some students who are interested and willing to be active participants. This is a strength, since many departments have organizations
that struggle for members and active involvement. Nevertheless, the students with whom we spoke indicated
that the level of faculty supervision and participation in the organizations could be improved. In particular, they
felt that the organizations could be better publicized within the student body. They also felt that more
opportunities for travel (to local facilities, to professional meetings) would be both beneficial to them and to the
recruitment of additional students.

II6. Advising and professional socialization at the graduate level are critical to the success of graduates, and
thus are at the very core of graduate education. Consequently, all of the faculty should be encouraged to
participate to the maximum extent feasible within the context of their professional productivity.

II7. While the department has managed the issue of undergraduate student advising well, the strategy of
using faculty members for such a function has often been problematic at other institutions, in part due to
extremes in the quality of advising across faculty, and in part due to the time commitments required. It was not
completely clear from the students that advising is uniformly well done by the faculty (in this or other
departments). In the long run, undergraduate advising might be converted to a staff function. This would
provide continuity and reliability, especially for majors and graduate students. It would also provide some relief
for the faculty. We encourage the department to consider this (and other) options for reducing the advising
burden at the undergraduate level. It would leave them more time for the kind of advising that often falls under
the rubric of mentoring - e.g., career advice and information, placement. It is also likely to result in an overall
more even level of student advising. An excellent source for information regarding undergraduate advising is
the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), which offers a set of academic advising standards
and guidelines as well as core values regarding advising.

II8. The responsibility for a community internship program also carries a substantial advising burden that
often has relatively little pay-off toward tenure, promotion, or professional productivity, especially given the
extraordinary amount of time that is involved. The department will need to keep this in mind at such time as the
current internship coordinator decides to leave or retire.

II9. Because of the substantial overlap between masters and doctoral requirements, we would suggest that
the department consider adding additional courses in research methods at the doctoral level. While continuing
the quantitative/qualitative split might be of interest, a data collection/data analysis option might be equally
viable. In either case, a sequenced approach would seem to be desirable, given the directions the discipline
appears to be moving. Along similar lines, the comments from the graduate students indicated that the
department might undertake a general review of the graduate curriculum, with an eye to increasing the depth in
key areas. While they were generally quite positive about the program, the faculty, and the preparation that
they were receiving, they specifically suggested a course on software–based research techniques as a topic that
would increase their short-term and long-term ability to compete in a research/scholarly environment.

II10. Over the years, the department has made substantial efforts to add more structure to its curriculum.
However, following the recommendations in the AAC&U/ASA report on Liberal Learning and the Sociology
Major, more work on sequencing of courses is needed. For example, we would encourage the department to
look carefully at all courses within topic areas that are offered at different levels, and consider making the lower
level course a prerequisite for the upper level course. While there will undoubtedly be scheduling situations
where such a strategy will not work, or where permission of the instructor will also be required (e.g., to allow
students from other programs into the courses), it could improve the focus of the department’s course offerings
and reduce the service burden of the department in the upper level courses. This also sends the message to the
students that Sociology is not a discipline that only requires one or two introductory exposures for entree to
advanced skills and knowledge.
II11. The Rural Life/Census Data Center has the expertise and the reputation to function as a fully functional applied social research center. This could be leveraged from relatively small infusions of funds from the Experiment Station or Extension. This would give it the potential for generating additional resources for the department. It should not be difficult to expand the operations from data access to consultation, market research, and evaluation. The faculty of the department have a wide range of applied research skills and experience, and they could serve as resources. Both the graduate and undergraduate students could participate (either paid or for credit), and would benefit in many ways from the experience. It would also serve as an excellent form of outreach within the region served by ----------, complementing the historic mission of the Extension Service. In addition to consulting and other forms of social research, the continuing availability of federal Safe and Drug Free School funds may allow the Center (or others) to investigate the possibility of carrying out substance use surveys in the state or region. The administration of such surveys provides an excellent service to school districts and communities that are attempting to plan or evaluate their own substance use education and intervention programs. It also provides students the opportunity to participate in on-going applied research.

II12. The Department currently has two full-time secretarial/clerical positions (one 12 month and one 9 month), plus another position supported on grant funds. The senior person, ---------- has almost three decades of distinguished service to the university and the department. There appears to have been considerable turnover with respect to the other position. When ---------- retires, the department will not only lose a valued staff member, it will probably also lose a significant portion of its institutional memory. Unless pro-active steps are taken, the transition is likely to be especially difficult for the department. In the same context, a total of one and three quarter support staff are not adequate for a PhD department. It is certainly not sufficient for a program with productive faculty and active graduate students. Strategies for increasing staff resources should be considered alongside the consideration of additional faculty (also see recommendation II7 concerning undergraduate advising).

II13. A potent source of financial support for many departments derives from the contributions from alumni and emeriti, as well as friends both from academe and the community. Business and corporate support are also increasingly common, even in the social sciences. Gifts and contributions could make a substantial difference in the resources directly available to faculty and students, especially given the extraordinary flexibility that such funds can provide to a department (e.g., equipment, travel support, seed money for research). It is a well known maxim in fund-raising that people give money to people they like and trust (and not to programs and institutions). The faculty, both current and emeriti, would seem to be extremely well positioned for such fund-raising activities.

II14. It does appear from several sources that the faculty also carry varying numbers of independent study hours (and presumably extra graduate hours, in cross-listed courses). This also applies to those people who serve as advisors for their respective specializations. However, it is not clear if these hours are taken into account in allocations of teaching load. It is also not clear whether they are recognized in annual evaluations. The department should develop some sort of reasonable rubric for crediting such hours to a faculty members’ load. A wide range of formulae are used (there are undoubtedly examples on the ------------- campus), and they all recognize the cumulative time and effort required and reduce the total teaching load accordingly.

II15. Opportunities for faculty development in research are available (at ----------, and through regional and national professional associations), but faculty need to take advantage of them, especially those faculty with less research experience. Indeed, the department needs to build its capacity for research in the same sense that it has built its capacity for teaching, both in the short term – by facilitating opportunities for those who are interested, and in the long term – by replacing people who leave or retire with people who are clearly committed to participation in scholarly activity.
II16. Several comments from faculty made it quite clear that sabbaticals have been rare in recent years. It seems that many faculty who are eligible simply disregard the possibility because they do not want to “dump” on their colleagues, who would be required to cover for them while they are gone. This, of course, works against the purpose of sabbaticals, which are intended to provide faculty with opportunities to complete projects, upgrade their skills, and refresh their professional perspectives. Similarly, it reinforces the attitude of resignation among the faculty.

II17. The level of travel support is clearly inadequate for a PhD program. One partially funded trip every other year is substantially below the level of support available in other doctoral programs. It isolates the faculty from the larger discipline, discourages higher levels of productivity, and makes recruitment of new faculty more difficult. It also helps to maintain the status quo with respect to participation in professional organizations (regional rather than national). At the same time, however, faculty could be more pro-active with respect to seeking additional travel support. Other sources exist, both on and off campus, and should routinely be pursued. Similarly, support for graduate students should be developed (see for example, recommendation II13 regarding contributions) to provide them with similar opportunities.

II18. In an effort to become more visible and active, and ultimately more productive, the faculty of the department should be encouraged to submit proposals for funded research and to volunteer for service on federal research review panels (since the latter is an effective way of determining what kinds of research a given agency is interested in supporting). In addition, faculty should be encouraged to work with graduate students to submit their own or collaborative research proposals (especially proposals that would provide thesis or dissertation support). Finally, faculty should be encouraged to apply for short-term development leaves (or longer-term sabbaticals) at a federal granting agency. All of these efforts can produce substantial and long lasting returns on the initial investments of time and effort.

II19. We also learned that there had been discussions between ------------ and at least one other department regarding the establishment of a cooperative computer lab. Such a facility could serve both the undergraduate and graduate programs. It would be an excellent addition, especially if the funding included provisions for staffing the lab and for technical/software support for the department. As rapidly as technology changes, it is inefficient to depend on volunteers and/or students to maintain and upgrade departmental equipment.

II20. Like some other departments, ----------- has not had many opportunities to hire in recent years. Therefore, for new faculty currently on board (and new faculty to be hired in the near future), serious consideration must be given to the mentoring of those new faculty so they rapidly move into the ranks of the graduate faculty. This will help with the burden of theses and dissertations, and increase the likelihood of success at achieving tenure and promotion.
SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM G. WEISS

Review #1

Recommendation 1: The Sociology Department should develop a formal set of learning goals and objectives and a specific plan for achieving them through the curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Delete courses that are not offered on a continuing basis (excepting special circumstances) from the college catalog.

Recommendation 3: Based on the learning objectives, reduce the number of courses offered on a regular basis to a number that is more appropriate for the number of faculty members in the department. Establish a more structured rotational basis for courses that are offered.

Recommendation 4: Establish separate Internship course listings for sociology, anthropology, and social work. Change the course description for Sociology 390 to delete reference to internships.

Recommendation 5: Use a "Soc" designation for sociology courses, an "Anthro" designation for anthropology courses, and a "SocWk" designation for social work courses.

Recommendation 6: Establish a minimum number of sociology courses per se that are required to earn the sociology major.

Recommendation 7: Consider establishing a required capstone course (possibly involving a group research project) for sociology majors.

Recommendation 8: Continue to encourage the best and most highly motivated students to engage a Senior Thesis.

Recommendation 9: Establish a minimum number of sociology courses per se that are required to earn the sociology minor.

Recommendation 10: Require that History of Social Thought, Methods of Social Research, or Modern and Postmodern Social Theory be required to be taken as part of the minor.

Recommendation 11: Establish a formal minor in anthropology.

Recommendation 12: Maintain the current level of social work offerings but add more structure to the social work curriculum.

Recommendation 13: As college funds and the reallocation of positions among departments permits, add a position in sociology.

Recommendation 14: Expand the anthropology position from halftime to fulltime.

Recommendation 15: Ensure that the combined responsibilities for Professor X are set at a reasonable level.

Recommendation 16: The department should agree to meet on a more frequent basis--perhaps gradually moving to once every other week or so. Alternatively, the department could continue to meet
just two or three times per semester to deal with ongoing department business but agree to meet as often as necessary to deal with specific issues and proposals.

Recommendation 17: Maintain a departmental goal for attendance and participation in professional meetings each year and continue to seek the financial support necessary to enable meeting attendance. Engage in more sharing of scholarly activities within the department and across the campus.

Recommendation 18: Explore the possibility of bringing someone to campus every year (or every second or third year) (perhaps in conjunction with other area colleges) to conduct a workshop on a designated subject.

Recommendation 19: Engage discussion of the optimal and maximal number of teaching preparations for each faculty member and make appropriate adjustments.

Recommendation 20: The department should consider establishing a required list of elements for course syllabi.


Recommendation 22: Investigate additional means of assessing the sociology program and implement those that seem most appropriate.

Recommendation 23: Subscribe to Teaching Sociology especially if the journal is not available to department faculty through personal subscription.

Recommendation 24: Ensure that Professors Y and Z each receive a new personal computing system.

Recommendation 25: Enlarge the Sociology Department budget.

Review #2

Recommendation 1: Develop more specific learning goals and objectives for students majoring in sociology and formulate a plan for achieving them throughout the curriculum.

Recommendation 2: Consider streamlining the sociology curriculum.

Recommendation 3: Consider adding an introduction to social welfare (social services) course.

Recommendation 4: Purchase a data analysis software package (SPSS would be an appropriate choice) and introduce students to it in whatever manner is most appropriate.

Recommendation 5: Review the many formats of program assessment currently being used in sociology and select a program that would be administered on a periodic basis.

Recommendation 6: The college should provide additional secretarial help for the department.
Review #3

Recommendation 1: Consider directing efforts to provide the necessary staffing to add courses in Demography, Criminology and Delinquency, and Gerontology.

Recommendation 2: Consider exploring options for increasing exposure to quantitative methodology within the curriculum.

Recommendation 3: Consider extending the number of pre-requisites for upper-division courses.

Recommendation 4: Consider formally studying the relative strengths and weaknesses of having the courses in theory and methods be taken early within the sociology major versus being taken later in the major.

Recommendation 5: When feasible, consider hiring a third sociologist. Consider hiring someone with expertise in quantitative analysis, use of computers in research and instruction, and in teaching Demography, Criminology, and Gerontology.

Recommendation 6: Consider the variety of possible uses that could be made of a reconfigured laboratory in X.

Recommendation 7: The Department and Administration should consider evaluation of the workload of sociology faculty and explore options for moderating work responsibilities.

Recommendation 8: Consider re-writing learning goals and objectives to outcomes-based rather than processual-based measures.

Recommendation 9: Consider evaluation of the Major Field Test in Sociology or an institutionally-created test as an alternative to the Graduate Record Examination Sociology Test as a comprehensive examination for majors.

Review #4

Recommendation 1: Consider reducing the number of required courses within the major from eight to five or six.

Recommendation 2: Consider adding a required senior-level capstone course that requires students to pull together information learned in their sociology courses.

Recommendation 3: Consider structuring the major in such a way that sociology majors initiate the required theory and methods courses earlier in their major studies (by spring semester of the sophomore year if possible) and complete them earlier (by no later than the end of fall semester of the senior year in order to do the capstone in the final semester).

Recommendation 4: Consider adding a course in "applied sociology" (or with an alternative name) under which both students and faculty could work on community- or campus-based research projects.
Recommendation 5: Consider the likelihood of additional resources being available to support a criminal justice major. Whether the decision is to seek a major or to maintain the concentration, consider reducing the number of required courses.

Recommendation 6: Consider the issues involved in creating social work courses within the curriculum. If these issues do not seem problematic, contact some liberal arts colleges (we would be happy to share our experience at X) with social work courses/programs.

Recommendation 7: Inventory and discuss the amount of exposure sociology students are given to global perspectives and the number of opportunities to use data to answer sociological questions.

Recommendation 8: Inventory and discuss the use of instructional technologies (including the amount of reading, writing, and oral presentation required of students and the use of computer-based instruction) within the department.

Recommendation 9: Require either one of the social theory courses or the research methods course as part of the sociology minor.

Recommendation 10: Consider conducting a periodic survey of sociology alums—especially those who have entered graduate programs—as part of the assessment program. Consider the value of on-campus focus groups as an assessment mechanism.

Recommendation 11: Consider seeking adequate on-campus and/or off-campus support to enable all sociology faculty to have a personal computer with Windows platform and appropriate software. As a long-term goal, consider seeking establishment of a high-tech classroom in Y.