

**FINAL REPORT ON THE COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE
BACCCALAUREATE DEGREE IN SOCIOLOGY**

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Major Findings of the Program's Quality and Productivity

I would rate the program as *above average* in quality and *above average* in productivity, and generally concur with the assessment of the program's faculty (much of the language below is taken from the program's self statement).

Program Quality: Above Average

- **Teaching.** Faculty keep current on their discipline, are very knowledgeable about pedagogy, bring their research into the classroom, bring their international experience into the classroom, are responsive to student questions and concerns, and above all else, care about student learning.

The program is also strong in faculty advising. Faculty use the online Degree Evaluation Record to go over degree progress with advisees. This ensures reliable and consistent advising that is not necessarily present when advisors use printed degree requirements. However, as the outside review team points out, it is important that faculty members in the program share advising duties equitably.

The outside review team also raises concerns about having a trained anthropologist teaching core courses in Sociology. It appears to me, however, that Professor Studstill, a cultural anthropologist, has demonstrated, both by his multifaceted educational experience and by his syllabi and teaching record, that he is qualified to teach whatever courses are assigned to him by the Department.

- **Curriculum.** The program has a healthy and strong curriculum which responds to social and economic change while meeting the needs of students. It is well grounded in the

discipline, following American Sociological Association recommendations for evaluation, design, and modification.

The outside review team suggests that the program is perhaps dominated by a focus on African Studies and the African Studies certificate program. To some extent, of course, this is a natural result of the interests of the faculty members currently participating in the program. However, while I believe that program faculty should be aware of—and take seriously—this concern, I do believe that an adequate variety of Sociology courses is currently offered, at least given the number of faculty members.

- **Service.** Faculty exhibit a very strong commitment to service which is demonstrated by the many public lectures given by faculty, the many community organizations to which faculty and students interact through internships, service-learning, or volunteering, and the many Department, College, and University committees on which they serve.
- **Support of the CSU Mission.** The Sociology program strongly supports and contributes to the CSU mission. The CSU Mission statement is:
 - to achieve academic excellence through teaching, research, creative inquiry and student engagement;
 - to achieve excellence in the student experience and prepare individuals for a life of success, leadership, and responsibility through community awareness, engagement, and service to others; and,
 - to achieve recognition as a leader in community development, regional economic development, and public-private partnerships.

The Sociology program supports and contributes to all of the goals set out in the *Columbus State University Strategic Plan*.

- **Program responsiveness to change.** Program modifications are consistent with evolving University needs and disciplinary expectations.

Program Productivity: Above Average

- **Productivity.** I concur that program faculty have been productive. The graduation rate for Sociology was 50% for students graduating by the end of F.Y. 2008, and this seems to be in line with other CSU major programs. However, Sociology is not a degree program at CSU that is routinely chosen by entering freshmen. Generally, most Sociology majors at CSU declare the major only after being exposed to it in the core and changing from another major or transferring from another institution. The Sociology program's retention rate (71.4% in F.Y. 2008) also seems to be in line with other

programs at CSU and even the institution as a whole (the university's current overall retention rate is 64.64%). However, while retention and graduation rates may be in line with other CSU degree programs, the Sociology program showed a relatively consistent increase in degree productivity from F.Y. 2004 through F.Y. 2008 with a net increase of 179%. From F.Y. 2006 through F.Y. 2008, the Sociology program awarded on average 30 degrees per year (39 students earned their B.S. in Sociology during the F.Y. 2008—ranking Columbus State University's Sociology program 6th in the state in degrees awarded). Even excluding F.Y. 2008, Sociology was graduating about the same or slightly more than other programs—programs with much larger enrollments.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality (From Faculty Self-Report)

- A better method needs to be found for maintaining up-to-date information on alumni status.
- *A student's evaluation of faculty advising* needs to be in place by spring 2010.
- Majors in both Criminal Justice and Sociology would benefit from a computer lab exclusively for majors.
- Increase the number of full-time faculty. There are not enough full-time faculty teaching upper division course work. More faculty would increase the number, diversity, and frequency of course offerings. (See also below, "List of Recommendations for Improving Program Productivity").

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Productivity (From Faculty Self-Report)

- Though the Sociology program graduates students at a rate equal to or higher than most other CSU programs, enrollment is lower than we would like to see. We believe the new curriculum, as currently being reviewed by college and university curriculum committees, will raise enrollment as it offers majors more options. When combined with the change in the statistics requirement (i.e., replacing the statistics course taught in the Mathematics department with one taught in-house by Sociology faculty using social science data and examples), we believe enrollment will increase.

- Increase the number of part-time faculty teaching introductory sections. Greater efforts should be made to recruit highly-qualified part-time faculty to teach introductory sections at both the main CSU campus, at the Ft. Benning facility, and at our new facility in West Point, GA. The introductory course is a great recruiting tool for the Sociology program. Many current majors changed their degree program after taking the introductory class. In addition, the introductory course is an Area E option in the core.
- Increase the number of full-time faculty. There are not enough full-time faculty teaching upper division course work. More faculty would increase the number and frequency of course offerings which would in turn increase enrollment.
- While faculty advising prior to and during student registration provides an opportunity for faculty to answer questions and provide academic guidance, it is not enough if we are to take retention seriously. Faculty of Sociology should mandate student/faculty sessions at other points during the term. As Ken Bain points out in his book “What the Best College Teachers Do,” student/faculty interaction outside of the classroom is hugely important to student success. Faculty who take the time to get to know their students provide students with the feeling that faculty actually have an interest in them and their academic success. These mandated, but informal and relaxed student sessions should take the form of faculty inquiry into how the student is performing in his/her classes, pointing out academic resources, offering academic support if it can be provided, and helping the student to start thinking about his/her future—employment or graduate school.

List of Recommendations for Improving Program Quality (From Outside Review Committee Report)

- The addition of at least one (preferably two) full-time Sociology faculty members.
- Continue efforts to increase the diversity and frequency of course offerings in Sociology.
- Lessen the Sociology Program’s involvement in African studies and the African Studies Certificate Program. While this area of study is no doubt important and legitimate, it appears to be overwhelming the program and limiting student success.
- Implement a comprehensive, long-term assessment plan, to more effectively assess sociology majors and alumni.
- Create a more equal division of advising responsibilities and internship supervision between all Program faculty.

Conclusion about the Program's Viability at CSU (From Faculty Self-Report)

The faculty of Sociology offer the following in support of their belief that the program is highly viable:

- the competitive number of degrees awarded annually.
- the low-cost provision of a sociological education to CSU students.
- the program's ability to adapt to educational, social, and economic changes.
- strong teaching provided by an informed faculty.
- a dedication to service by faculty and students.
- the program's ability to support all goals as outlined in the University Mission statement and the program's ability to respond to all goals as outlined in the CSU Strategic Plan.
- anticipated enrollment growth resulting from the adding of concentrations to the curriculum and the new departmental affiliation of the Criminal Justice and Sociology programs.

Program Improvement Plan

After reviewing the materials from the Department of Criminal Justice and Sociology, the Review Team, and the CPR Committee, **it is my recommendation that the Sociology program be maintained at its current level of support.** The major concerns of the Review Team and Committee are summarized below with an action plan to address these concerns.

1. The Program Suffers from an "Over-Emphasis on African Studies"

The faculty in the Sociology program disagree with this premise, and are committed to emphasizing course offerings in all aspects of Sociology. To that end, the program will balance course offerings to include an offering in African Studies course per semester (fall and spring) and courses in other areas in Sociology in a manner that ensures a course rotation leading to progression toward a degree for students while meeting core requirements for all students. All course schedules are approved by both Department Chair and Dean.

2. The Program Should Hire "Full-Time Tenure Track Faculty" in a variety of areas of sociology.

I concur with the Review Team, CPR Committee, and program faculty that the Sociology program would benefit from new faculty with teaching and research interests different from

those of the current faculty. I hope to be able to recommend a search for a new sociologist as soon as the budget situation allows. However, it is also important that current members of the program begin to work together in a more productive and collegial manner. Until relationships improve, it would not, in my view, be appropriate to expose a new assistant professor to a potentially non-supportive atmosphere. I am encouraged by recent discussions that have taken place between program faculty, and I am very hopeful that reconciliation is occurring. If and when such reconciliation takes place, I will be strongly supportive of growing the Sociology program.

3. Problems Exist in the Area of Faculty-Student Interaction, Particularly Involving One Faculty Member

Understandably, the Review Team report does not name the problematic faculty member, so it is not possible to address this point specifically. The program faculty, however, all pledge to treat students with courtesy and respect, and I will certainly hold them responsible for meeting that expectation. In addition, the program intends to solicit student evaluations of faculty advising and also to conduct a survey of Sociology alumni. I will ask the Department Chair to monitor the results of those surveys, as well as all course evaluations, to check for any indications that students are not being treated properly.

4. Program Assessment Tools are Currently Inadequate

The program currently uses the Sociology Major Field Test (ETS) and a qualitative instrument to assess learning outcomes and student satisfaction. They are extending their efforts this year to include a survey on advising and a survey of alumni. I will work with the Department Chair and program faculty to develop and hone specific learning assessment tools both for the program and for each of the individual courses. I will expect these to be fully implemented no later than the Spring 2011 semester.

5. Advising and Internship Responsibilities are Shared Unequally

I will work with the Department Chair and program faculty to ensure that such responsibilities are distributed as equitably as possible.

I look forward to consulting regularly with the Chair of the Department of Criminal Justice and Sociology, as well as the Department's three sociologists to ensure implementation of this action plan.