

## **SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017**

### **I. Program Assessment Meetings**

The Sociology and Anthropology faculty met throughout the academic year as needed to conduct the business of the program. Professors Olson, McClusky and Renfrow met Friday, September 9, 2016 to discuss assessment work done the previous year during Professor McClusky's sabbatical leave. Professors Olson and Renfrow explained the rationale for their course-by-course assessment for the previous year. Professors McClusky and Renfrow met again on Friday, May 12, 2017 to discuss the 2016-2017 Annual Report and revisions to the Assessment Plan. Professor Olson was on sabbatical leave at that time. Professor Renfrow shared information learned from prior EPC workshops. They discussed the limitations of previous assessment strategies and ultimately decided to reconsider the usefulness of the Assessment Plan from 2010. To start this process, they decided to compile course goals from current courses and to use them as a basis upon which to update the document. Moreover, they decided that Professor McClusky would take the lead on drafting the new Assessment Plan and Professor Renfrow would take the lead on drafting the 2016-2017 Annual Report focusing on the senior experience.

### **II. Closing the Loop**

Last year's action plan stated that the Sociology and Anthropology faculty would meet at the beginning of the next academic year to begin the assessment process. As noted above, Professors Olson, McClusky, and Renfrow achieved this goal by meeting in early September to review the assessment conducted the previous academic year and to discuss how the process would proceed this year given Professor Olson's upcoming sabbatical leave. They decided to continue compiling course summaries—which they did throughout the semester—and to meet later in the semester to revisit the assessment discussion.

### **III. Examination of Data**

The Sociology and Anthropology faculty decided to conduct a major revision of the Assessment Plan this year. They decided to use this period of revision to focus this year's assessment on the senior experience. All Sociology and Anthropology majors must complete a senior thesis, present their research to the community through a poster session, and complete comprehensive exams. During the 2016-2017, four students (out of the five person cohort) successfully completed all of these requirements. In the sections that follow, we provide evidence that the three components of the senior experience met our Program Goals.

*Program Goal 1: to develop informed critical scholars who can communicate in the language of sociology and anthropology*

All five seniors successfully completed senior thesis research earning a C or higher. Each student designed and conducted a research project using appropriate theoretical frameworks

(Learning Objective 2) and applying appropriate research methods and methodologies (Learning Objective 3). Each student presented their work in a written research report (Learning Objective 1). Four students presented their work in a poster presentation on April 20, 2017 (Learning Objective 1). One student was not enrolled in the Spring semester and had already left campus.

All five seniors successfully passed the comprehensive exam (four Passes and one Pass with Distinction). The comprehensive exam asked students to reflect on the totality of their experiences as Sociology and Anthropology majors and to write a short essay describing what they will take away from these experiences. The exam prompt is attached. Using quotes from student responses, we assess how our program as a whole achieves Program Goals 2-4.

*Program Goal 2: to introduce students to timely and enduring issues in sociology and anthropology*

Seniors generally agreed that the experiences they had as Sociology and Anthropology majors (coursework, internships, off-campus study, etc.) helped them develop their sociological imagination (Learning Objective 6) and the anthropological perspective (Learning Objective 7). As one student explained:

The practice of understanding intersections began in SOC 151 and is, of course, at the heart of C. Wright Mills “sociological imagination”. Throughout the years, my coursework and experiences have enabled me to develop and apply this tool in multiple dimension. Naturally, the process began at a personal level and I have been instilled with an understanding of how my identities situate me within dynamic contexts. Such ability to assess social location is something that I feel has been a critical outcome of my education in the major. In both my personal and professional life, being able to do this evaluation better prepares me for being able to relate to a multitude of individuals, communities, and organizations and be successful in various relationships and circumstances.

Another student stated:

Taking anthropology has forced me to look outside my own culture and focus my attention on other cultures not just within the US but also those outside the US. By looking at other cultures/societies I could reflect on the various ways of being human because anthropology teaches you to respect other ways of life and to use cross-cultural behaviors as a mirror from which we can reflect on the things we do within our own culture. ...[The major] pushed me to think critically and stop taking things for granted by learning basic sociological concepts, and how these concepts can help us understand our social surroundings, locally and globally.

Together, these statements indicate that—as a whole—our program helped students to critically analyze the world around them from both the sociological and anthropological perspective.

*Program Goal 3: to open students’ eyes to structural injustices and develop an appreciate for diverse lifeways*

Three reflective essays (out of the five) indicate that coursework and other experiences in the major helped students develop a deeper understanding of how and why social forces impact individuals' lives (Learning Objective 8). One student, for example, explicitly attributed this outcome to specific readings. As she explained:

Systemic oppression occurs when laws, customs, and practices systematically reflect and produce inequities based on someone's membership in a social identity group. All my sociology and anthropology classes discussed systemic oppression and challenged my previous beliefs. Three books which have particularly influenced me include Sidewalk, Hand to Mouth, and The New Jim Crow. Sidewalk showed me those living on the sidewalk as vendors, door openers or fulfilling other functions on the streets, are not a danger to my safety. ...In fact, homeless individuals keep people on the street safe because they are witness to potential crimes. Hand to Mouth taught me that economically disadvantaged individuals' situation cannot simply be fixed by getting a job and not being lazy. ...I now understand the complexities of moving up in economic class and succeeding in a system that works against economically disadvantaged people. The New Jim Crow opened my eyes to the racially biased criminal justice system in the United States. I did not realize the amount of systemic racial oppression that still exists in today's society.

Students also reported a deeper appreciation for diversity and other lifeways (Learning Objective 9). These students often associated this outcome with anthropology coursework and off-campus experiences. One student discussed the way these two experiences work in tandem:

While my experiences in the major have equipped me with a systems-level way of thinking, they have also demonstrated the importance of community-based approaches. Time and again, including during ANTH 161, Maya Ethnography, and my coursework and daily experiences during my semester abroad in Belize, I was brought to understand that work that is culturally relative and culturally sensitive must be derived from locally-based knowledge and community involvement. Though cultural relativism is a concept often related to the global context, it is equally as important to apply domestically since there are so many different cultural groups who are touched by the work that my studies have guided me towards.... My courses in anthropology, particularly one in Belize on development from indigenous perspectives, have instilled within me a demand to have my efforts in this work be community-driven and community minded to as great extent as possible.

These statements suggest that courses on our campus—as well as those offered in off-campus program such as the Belize Program—support Program Goal 3.

*Program Goal 4: to allow students the opportunity to think about creating a more just, equitable, and sustainable world*

Four of the reflective essays discussed students' increased awareness of societal inequalities and issues related to sustainability (Learning Objective 10). One student, for example, discussed her desire to share her newfound understandings with others. As she explains:

I can now go out into the world and create change and help make everyone else aware because this was the intention of early sociologists: to erase the false consciousness by educating everyone.

Students used these statements to explain that they envision sociology and anthropology not only as academic disciplines but a set of “perspectives and approaches” that they can draw upon in their professional and personal lives.

One of the things I appreciated most about majoring in sociology and anthropology was that the utility of my experiences was not something that was ever hypothetical or something that I was unsure about. Through summer internships off-campus and extra-curricular activities on campus like planning Activism Symposium, I had opportunities throughout my time as a major to actually experience the way my education in sociology and anthropology was reshaping my understanding of the world and preparing me for professional success. In short, the experience of being a major in sociology and anthropology is not and never will be just an academic endeavor, because I will continue to carry the perspectives and approaches that I have gained throughout my personal life and into my professional ventures. My education allows me to learn from what has come before me and work to navigate through contemporary contexts and structures to improve what is yet to come for our communities.

In sum, these data based on the senior experience indicate—in a general sense—that the coursework and other experiences are achieving our Program Goals 1-4. As we describe below, we collect data in the coming year to assess the Program Goals in our revised Assessment Plan.

#### **IV. Program Changes**

The Sociology and Anthropology faculty are not proposing any major changes to major or minor requirements at this time. In particular, they will keep the current senior experience in place at least one more year before considering modifications. During this academic year, they have worked to revise their Assessment Plan. They will continue this work in the coming year. They intend to use this revision process as an opportunity to identify where particular literatures are covered within existing courses and to explicitly articulate this in course descriptions. Moreover, they are using this process—which happens to coincide with the approval of new general education requirements—to consider if any current courses should be deleted (eg, SOC 365) and if new courses should be added. In particular, they will consider the possibility of moving SOC 235 to the Criminal Justice Program and of developing new courses that may benefit other programs such as Film and Media Studies.

#### **V. Action Plan**

The Sociology and Anthropology faculty thoroughly revised the Assessment Plan this academic year. While the four Program Goals remain unchanged, many of the learning objectives and measurable outcomes have been modified. A copy of this revised document is attached to this report. At the beginning of the next academic year—when Professor Olson has returned from

his sabbatical leave—faculty will meet to discuss the revised document. Throughout Fall and Spring semesters, faculty will collect the necessary data to assess Program Goal 1. The Assessment Plan identifies specific courses and success standards for each measurable outcome associated with this Program Goal.

## Appendix Materials:

### **SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY COMPREHENSIVE EXAM FOR 2017**

As a sociology and anthropology major, you have spent several years studying new ways of looking at the world around you, and through these efforts, you have acquired new frameworks and tools (i.e., concepts, theories, methods, etc.) for making sense of this world. **Reflecting on the totality of your experience as a sociology and anthropology major (i.e., coursework, off-campus study experiences, internships, and the senior thesis and poster presentation), write a 4 to 5 page essay that identifies and explains 3 or 4 of the most important tools and/or understandings you have learned.** *In short, what do you take away from this experience? Why should someone study sociology and anthropology? In this essay, you should also explain how these specific tools and understandings might help you in the future.* (Please go beyond “I will need these tools for graduate school.” Approach this in terms of your daily, non-academic life.)

Deadline: A hardcopy of your essay is due Friday, April 28 by noon. Please deliver it to Professor Renfrow in ZAB 008.

# Senior Thesis Poster Session on April 20, 2017

