

Part I. General Information

Program(s) Discussed: Undergraduate Sociology & Criminology

Current Semester: Summer 2015

Date of Assessment Meeting(s) April 27, 2015

Participants in Assessment Meeting(s): The entire Department: Medora Barnes, Richard Clark, Duane Dukes, Kenneth Eslinger, Penny Harris, Susan Long, Gloria Vaquera, and Wendy Wiedenhoft-Murphy (We use part of our monthly dept. meetings to discuss ongoing assessment issues)

All Annual Assessment Reports are available to the appropriate Associate Dean, Dean, and the Provost, as well as to other administrators for institutional effectiveness and accreditation purposes. Please indicate the degree to which your program would like this information more widely shared.

On-Campus Users

- Freely available
 Available upon request
 Unavailable

Off-Campus Users

- Freely available
 Available upon request
 Unavailable

Part II. Assessment Process

Prompt: In one or two paragraphs, describe your assessment process. Did you gather data on all of your program's student learning goals? If not, which student learning goals did you measure in this assessment cycle? What tools did you use to attempt to measure student learning? Where and how were they administered? Who scored them?

There are four student learning goals for the program (which I have attached) and we yearly assess all 4 goals. We assess the goals through a number of different measures direct and indirect: MFAT scores; a newly designed rubric that assesses student learning goals through the evaluation of the final paper in the new SC 351 (Research Methods II) course, which will be implemented in Spring '16; student course evaluations; senior exit surveys; alumni surveys conducted every 3 years; and student awards and honors.

This year for the assessment process we looked at two measures: a direct measure MFAT scores, and an indirect measure, senior exit surveys. The MFAT is a standardized comprehensive written exam that is divided broadly into two sections: core sociological concepts and critical sociological thinking, which aligns with the department's first 3 student learning goals. The MFAT was given in March to all senior majors graduating in May and in the previous fall to students graduating in January. The exam is proctored by a faculty member and then is sent to Educational Testing Service to be scored. Then the results are discussed with the rest of the department at a department/ assessment meeting and students are sent a letter and e-mail with their individual results.

The senior exit survey is distributed in April in the 6 courses in which senior majors are most likely to be taking. It is distributed at the end of a class session and the faculty member then leaves the room. It is filled out anonymously. A student takes the responsibility of collecting the surveys, placing them into an envelope, and bringing it to the department's administrative assistant. The administrative

assistant initially tabulates the results and gives it to the chairperson to check and review. The results are shared with the department.

Part III. Findings

Prompt: Along with this report, please submit the data charts the program used during the assessment meeting. Describe, in words, what your program learned about student learning during this assessment cycle. What were your strengths? In what ways did students fail to meet the goals you set for them?

The table of MFAT results for the program is attached. The department has kept a record of the student's performance on this test since Fall 2003, so we can look at any trends that have developed. The table shows the number of MFATs taken, the number of students passing on the first attempt, the percent of students who pass on their first attempt, and the number of student scores equal to or higher than the 85th percentile. This fall the student MFAT scores in terms of the percentage of students who passed on the first attempt, was lower than previous years (66%), though everyone passed the comprehensive exam on the second attempt. However, the Spring' 15 scores (79%) were comparable to previous years. So was this dip indicative of a problem in the program curriculum or was it idiosyncratic to this group of students? The findings are inconclusive.

In addition, this is not an easy exam, so we consider students who achieve a score of $\geq 85\%$ as excellent. The number students this year who attained a MFAT score $\geq 85^{\text{th}}\%$ was comparable to previous years, though on the lower side (16% for the Fall cohort and 21% for the spring cohort). However, this year totally 26 out of 34 students (76%) passed the test on the first try and all the students passed a comprehensive test on the second try. And overall across all the years the students achieving a score of $\geq 85\%$ was $M=32\%$, and the percentage of students passing on the first attempt was $M=86\%$. Thus, overall the students are doing well and meeting the learning goals, though the somewhat lower scores this year need to be watched.

The indirect measure used to assess if the departmental learning goals were being met was the senior exit surveys. In April 2015, the survey was distributed to all graduating sociology majors ($N=32$) and 24 were returned, a 75% response rate. Based upon the findings of this survey (see attachment), the department is meeting all its intended goals. Questions 1-11 relate to the departmental student learning goals. Questions: #6 (critical thinking), #8 (exposure to different world views), and #9 (impact of social structure) assess learning goal 1. For question #6, 96% of the students agreed that the courses provided training in critical thinking; #8, 100% of the students said courses exposed them to different world views; and #9, 100% of the students responded that the courses increased their understanding of the impact of social structure on individuals and society. Questions: #5 (core courses provide solid foundation for the discipline), and Question #6 (critical thinking), assess learning goal 2. For question #5, 96% students said that core courses provide solid foundation for the discipline; and #6, 96% of the students agreed that the courses provided training in critical thinking. Questions: #7 (core courses provide training in skills to evaluate research) and #8 (exposure to different world views), assess learning goal 3. For question #7, 96% said the core courses provided skills to evaluate research, and #8, 100% of the students said courses exposed them to different world views. Questions #1 (major connects to university mission), #2 (participating in track helps with pursuing career goals), #3 (participated in internship), #4 (participating in internship helped clarify career goals), #10 (major affects interest in community service), and #11 (major affects personal growth) assess learning goal 4. For question #1, 96% of the students agreed that the major connects to the university mission; #2, 88% of the students said participating in a track helped with career goals; #3, 67% of the students surveyed did an internship and 63% (#4) said the internship helped clarify career goals; #10, 88% agreed the major affected their interest in community service; and #11, 88% of the students said the major had effects on their personal growth. Thus from the senior exit survey, overwhelmingly the student learning goals are being met.

In summary, from looking at all the data from the MFAT scores and senior exit interviews, the sociology majors are very definitely meeting all the learning goals. The students MFAT scores in the fall and somewhat in the spring were a little lower than usual, but the findings are inconclusive, so it is difficult to say if this is a trend. The strength of the department is that the faculty has incorporated the learning goals into their courses and doing a good job of teaching to them.

Name(s) of file(s) containing data charts: 1) Dept. learning goals, 2) MFAT results 2003-2015, and 3) Senior exit survey 2015

Part IV. Planned Changes to the Assessment System

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your assessment system? (Questions to consider include: 1) Do your measures and processes provide useful data with a reasonable amount of effort? and 2) Are your measures reliable, valid, and sufficient?) On which student learning goals do you plan to focus your attention during the next assessment cycle? Do you need to implement additional formative assessment tools to better understand some of your findings? If so, describe those here.

The departmental student learning goals are being met and the assessment measures are adequate, valid and reliable, and easy to administer. The findings from both measures are in agreement. For the next year we will continue using these two tools to assess all 4 goals, and also add a new direct measure of the learning goals. As stated above, a newly designed rubric that assesses student learning goals through the evaluation of the final paper in a new course SC 351 (Research Methods II), will be implemented in Spring '16. The department has made a major change in the sociology curriculum by adding an additional research methods course to further increase student research skills. Such a change was suggested in our alumni survey undertaken a few years ago, and it has been a topic of discussion at our curriculum meetings for the last few years. This rubric will be used to evaluate the final research paper in the second methods course. Ten papers will be randomly drawn each time the course is taught and will be evaluated as regards the student learning goals by three faculty members: two methodologists and the department chairperson.

Part V. Planned Changes to the Program in Response to Data

Prompt: What changes, if any, do you need to make to your program in response to what you now know about student learning? (Possibilities include changes to learning goals, pedagogy, assignments in particular classes, activities, and curricular requirements and/or structure.) What is your anticipated timeline for both implementation and assessment of the planned changes?

The evidence indicates that no major changes need to be made to the existing program at this time. However, because of the somewhat lower student scores on the MFAT last fall and spring, we will have two review sessions run by faculty to help students study for the MFAT exam. We do run one study session already, but this year we will institute a second review session giving students more opportunity to attend one or both review sessions. This will be implemented this October before the fall MFAT is given and again in March before the Spring MFAT is given. The department had planned to institute these two review sessions this spring; however, one of the sessions was on a day that the university was closed due to inclement weather, and the session was not able to be re-scheduled. In Spring 2016, we will examine the MFAT scores to see if the second review session has had an effect.