

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN
AND
2016/2017 AY UNDERGRADUATE SOCI PROGRAM REPORT
Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice

Contributors (in alphabetical order):

Patricia Herzog (Chair, Undergraduate Sociology Committee)

Lori Holyfield (Undergraduate Director and Instructor - SOCI 4043)

Bill Schwab (Instructor - SOCI 4043)

Anna Zajicek, Department Chair

July 5, 2017

Statement of Mission: Undergraduate Program in Criminal Justice

The mission of the undergraduate program in criminal justices to provide the learning environment to meet the program goals and develop the skills listed below. As a faculty, we have evaluated each of the CMJS courses to determine which of the program goals should be emphasized in each course.

Program Goals (3-4)

(Program goals are broad general statements of what the program intends to accomplish and describes what a student will be able to do after completing the program. The program goals are linked to the mission of the university and college.)

The baccalaureate program in Criminal Justice is designed to prepare individuals to contribute to the development, articulation, and implementation of effective, fair, ethical, and humane criminal justice systems. Hence, of particular importance to the criminal justice undergraduate program are the following general goals, which draw upon a strong base in the social sciences:

1. to provide a comprehensive view of Criminal Justice as a field of study;
2. to provide intellectual and practical tools to examine the strengths, problems, and issues relating to the victims of crime, offenders, and the needs of a broader society;
3. to provide habits of thought and investigation useful in later life;
4. to encourage exploration and development of ethical values; and
5. to provide the necessary foundation for professional competence or further training in professional or graduate schools.

Student Learning Outcomes (6-8)

(Student Learning Outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will know and be able to do as a result of completing a program. These student learning outcomes are directly linked to the accomplishment of the program goals.)

By graduation, students with the B.A. Degree in Criminal Justice should be able to:

1. effectively use critical thinking, to include the ability to analyze arguments, to understand theoretical and ideological assumptions that underlie different arguments; to create and defend a coherent argument;
2. effectively use communication skills in writing, to include the ability to clearly communicate both description and analysis; how to present original ideas and the work of others;
3. effectively use problem solving skills to include conceptualizing problems, effective reasoning and decision making;

In addition, students with the B.A. Degree in Criminal Justice should have acquired the more specific set of skills:

1. an understanding of the theoretical foundations of criminal justice;
2. an understanding of the methodological foundations of criminal justice, to include the ability to analyze qualitative and quantitative data;
3. an understanding of the criminal justice system (police, courts and corrections) and how it is affected by and affects the larger society;

Process for Assessing Each Learning Outcome

(A process must be defined and documented to regularly assess student learning and achievement of student learning outcomes. The results of the assessment must be utilized as input for the improvement of the program.)

In the Department of Sociology and CMJS, the undergraduate CMJS committee has the responsibility for reviewing and evaluating our assessment procedures, and for offering suggestions to the faculty. The undergraduate committee is also responsible for developing, administering, and reviewing the alumni survey, and for informing the faculty of the results of that survey.

1. Timeline for assessment and analysis

(Must include specific timeline for collection and analysis of assessment data.)

- Data collection takes place on an annual basis during spring and fall semesters.
- In 2016/2017, data collection will take place between March 15 and May 1 and November 15 and December 15.
- The analysis of assessment data will take place between May 1 and June 1.

2. Means of assessment and desired level of student achievement

(Must include at least one direct and one indirect method of assessment for each learning outcome.)

We use two methods of assessment: 1) a required senior research paper, and 2) exit surveys and exit interviews with graduating seniors. In addition, we do follow-up assessment through an alumni survey.

- The research paper is the same as the one required by the College of Arts and Sciences and follows the guidelines currently in practice for the department. This paper requires that the student demonstrate skills in the areas described above.
- The exit survey gives us an objective measure and the exit interview a subjective measure of the department's effectiveness at meeting the students' goals.
- Finally, the follow-up alumni survey helps us determine if our program has been successful in preparing students for careers and/or further professional study.

3. Reporting of results

(Must at least report annually to the Dean of college/school.)

- Result will be reported annually by July 14

2016/2017 Academic Assessment Report

DEGREE PROGRAM: SOCI, BA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (July 7, 2017)

The Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice employed several measures to assess the academic achievement of its criminal justice and sociology majors:

- A. A research paper
- B. A capstone course
- C. An exit survey

The results of these various methods indicated that the department was performing well and accomplishing its goals.

The Research Paper

All students who graduated during AY 2016-2017 submitted adequate analytic/research papers in accordance with our and the College of Arts and Science's writing requirement.

The Capstone Course and Exit Interviews

SOCI 4043, Senior Seminar, is the capstone course for the undergraduate degrees in sociology and criminal justice. There were 35 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043: Senior Seminar during Fall 2016. Among them, 31 students (88%) passed; two students withdrew, and two students received an "I." There were 35 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043 during Spring 2017. Of these, 83% (N=29) passed and six students withdrew." The capstone course is used to conduct exit interviews for sociology majors and sociology and criminal justice double majors.

A 30-minute exit interview for the majors is an integral part of the course, and the instructors interview all graduating seniors through this course. The instructors conducted exit interviews in two sections of the course, Fall 2016 and Spring 2017 semester. The interviews were informal but used the same series of open-ended questions.

During the fall 2016 semester, the instructor, Bill Schwab, conducted exit interviews in one section of the course (n = 25), in the Spring 2017, he also conducted interviews in one section (n = 18). The interviews were informal but used the same series of open-ended questions.

In addition, during the spring semester of 2017, 12 exit interviews were conducted in Dr. Holyfield's section of 4043, Senior Seminar Capstone course. Two were in essay format. In her report, Dr. Holyfield provided feedback from students in response to six general questions about their experiences in the department. The seventh question was added at the end to essay responses. General findings are presented and followed up with individual student answers.

SOCI 4043 (Bill Schwab's sections) Fall and Spring

The Interview Protocol

The instructor explained the purpose of the course to each student, described the types of information to be collected, and how this information would be used to improve the quality of our undergraduate programs. The instructor also informed each student that the interviews were confidential, the information would be reported in a way that he/she could not be identified, and that she/he could opt out of the interview or stop the interview at any time. All students participated.

Questions

1. Why did you choose the major?
2. If you had to do it all over again, would you choose the same major?
3. Would you describe your favorite courses?
4. Would you describe the courses you liked least?
5. Is there a professor that you would like to talk about?
6. Did you have trouble getting core courses in a timely manner?
7. Can you suggest changes in the curriculum?
8. What are your plans after graduation?
9. How well did we do in preparing you for the job market or graduate/law school?

Findings

- The vast majority of Criminal Justice majors chose the major as freshmen; Sociology majors often took a more circuitous route declaring the major later in their career.
- All the students said they would choose the major over again. Many interviewees were enthusiastic about the degree program.
- Students tended to focus on favorite professors rather than specific courses—they mentioned Chris Shields most often.
- *Social Data and Analysis* and *Social Psychology* were the students' least favorite courses. In the past *Research Methods* and *Theory* were the courses students liked least.
- The majority of the CMJS majors mentioned Chris Shields as a caring and helpful professor whose mentorship, in some cases, changed the direction of their careers and lives. Students mentioned other members of the faculty, but not with the same frequency. A significant

number of students experienced problems in the courses of one professor. The chair has already been informed of the problems with this faculty member

- This is the second year where students did not mention the problem of a backlog in core courses. It appears that the department has successfully addressed this issue.
- Students want more electives. They feel that we do not teach important and timely topics in the fields of criminal justice and sociology in our curriculum. This is currently being addressed by the department.
- Approximately 30% of students are planning to attend graduate or law school, or law enforcement after graduation. Walmart and Sam's is a major employer of our CMJS graduates. The rest are looking for jobs. No student mentioned pursuing a career. They are looking for a job. This is a significant change in the attitudes of students towards their future in the labor market.
- In the past, students were unhappy with the department efforts in job placement. It was described as informal at best, and non-existent at worst. Chris Shield's work on expanding the internship program and sponsoring departmental job fairs has addressed this complaint. Approximately a third of the students mentioned Dr. Shield's efforts in the interviews.

INSTRUCTOR'S OBSERVATION: The first three weeks of the course focus on resumes, cover letters, personal statements, interviewing, job-hunting strategies, using social media, etc. Also, three members of career services meet with the class, as well as recruiters from our graduate program and law school. As in past semester, students are woefully unprepared for the job market. In the fall semester, the majority of the students had not prepared or updated their resume, cover letter or contacted career services about interviews and job placement. Few had taken advantage of our internship program.

Questions asked included

What is your fiveyear goal?

Approximately two-thirds of students in Senior Seminar intend to continue their education with either graduate school, law school, or teaching certification. Those not continuing are either employed or intend to go into law enforcement/military.

How well do you think the program of study prepared you for this goal?

Most students responded to this question in a very positive way. There were several who found the use of CTR (Career Track Razorback) very helpful. Only one student felt sociology did not help in preparation but dropped sociology and the course after the exit interview. Two students were enrolled but had junior status and did not feel qualified to answer. Finally, four students explicitly added that CTR played a role in their feelings of preparation.

Would you choose this (major) again if you could do it over?

With the exception of one student who stated “50/50, I might possibly choose psychology or social work” (student#5), all students would choose the major again. One student stated architecture still first love but would major again.

What were three things the department did well?

Students felt that faculty in our department are very accessible and care about their success. They also feel that professors are knowledgeable in their field. Most were happy with their encounters with advising although some wished they had more information earlier. Among those who took the CTR, many stated in class that they wished they had started the development program earlier in their academic careers. Most were satisfied with the courses and times taught. Some listed specific professors that either inspired or helped them.

What three things could we improve on?

Interestingly, many spoke of the desire for *more undergraduate research and writing for non-honors students*. Other issues that came up are *class availability to rising seniors, non-prime courses for those who work, more course availability for required courses and better communication/marketing of our department, including information about the double major*. A few had negative encounters with one or more professors due to lack of response or engagement. Although students were either double majors or sociology majors, one student felt the sociology program was too liberal and dropped the double major. Another felt the connection between SOCI and CMJS should be made more explicit. Several students wanted *more functions or guest speakers*.

What wisdom would you share to a student who was considering majoring in either sociology or criminal justice?

With one exception, all students would recommend the department *and* the double major.

Online Survey, Spring 2017

An online, electronically administered twenty-seven-item questionnaire collected evaluations from students regarding the adequacy of their education and the skills they obtained. In contrast to previous years, in Spring 2017 we surveyed seniors only.

Of the 30 total subjects that replied to the survey request, 40 % (N=12) of respondents were male, 77% of respondents (N=23) were white, 7% (N=2) were Black; 17% of respondents (N=5) reported Hispanic origin. Many participants (38%) indicated they were combined SOCI-CMJS majors; 14% of the participants were dual majors with the second major other than sociology or criminal justice. All participants, except one, were seniors. With the exceptions of a few questions that some respondents skipped, the majority of findings presented are based on a total of 22 completed surveys.

Analyses show that students generally were satisfied with the content of course work in the major, the relevancy and difficulty of the curriculum, the depth and breadth of course offerings, and the adequacy of instruction and advising. A significant number of them planned to further their education, many would select their major again, and nearly everyone would recommend their major to others. We discuss specific findings in detail below.

Findings:

1. Quality of the curriculum. Students were asked to rate their satisfaction with the content, difficulty, and variety of the curriculum. On a scale ranging from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree, students rate their agreement with the statements “I am satisfied with the variety of courses offered by my degree program” (Figure 1) and “I am satisfied with the content of the major” (Figure 2). Overall agreement with the first statement was average, with 64% of students rating their agreement as 4 and higher; agreement with the second statement was also higher with 73% of respondents reporting their agreement as 4 and higher. Only a handful of students (14% and 9%, respectively) reported a rating of 2 and lower, indicating that a very few students expressed disagreement with these statements. These findings confirm the information received in the exit interviews regarding the overall satisfaction of our students with our curriculum.

Fig. 1

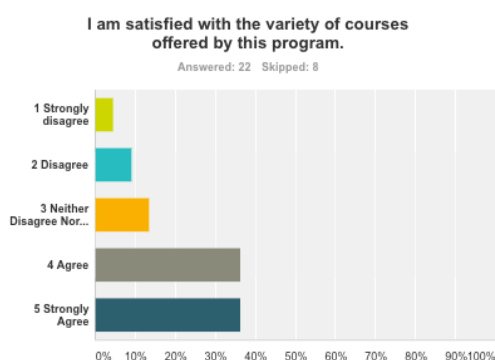
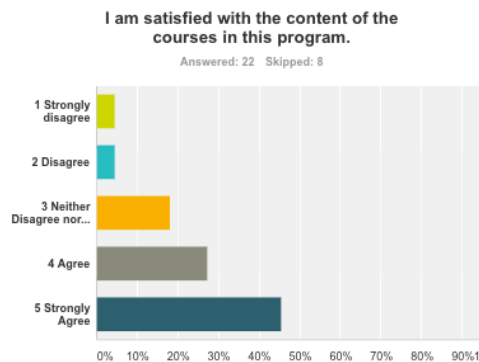
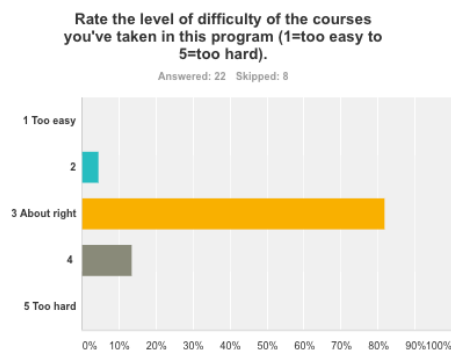


Fig. 2



2. Difficulty of the curriculum. Students rated their agreement with a statement of satisfaction regarding the difficulty of the curriculum. Figure 3 shows students indicating that the level of difficulty is “about right” (82%); only a handful of students (5%) indicated the courses are too easy.

Fig. 3



3. Program Goals 3 and 4. We measured our program goals 3 and 4 by asking students questions related to understanding of the historical, social, intellectual bases of human culture and environment, among others. Figure 4 indicates that students (90%) reported high level of insight in the relationship between individual and society. The majority of students (86%) agreed that their major helped them gain the ability to recognize diversity and inequality (Fig. 5).

Fig. 4

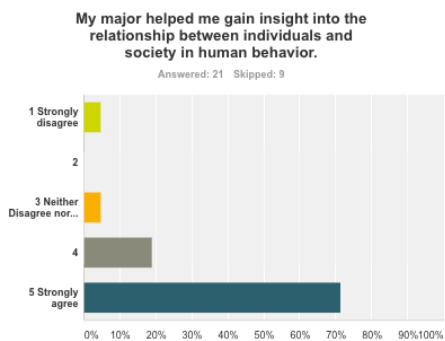
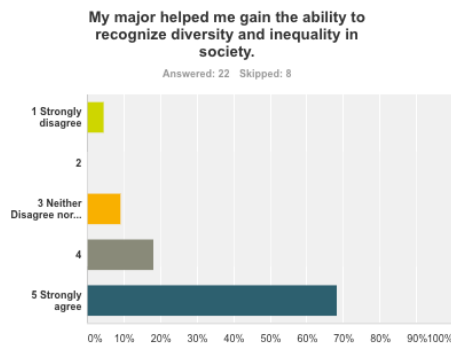


Fig. 5



As Figure 6 demonstrates, 64% of the respondents agree/strongly agree they have learned how to conduct research in their major area. Figure 7 indicates that 73% of our students agree/strongly agree that they have learned several theories in their area.

Fig. 6

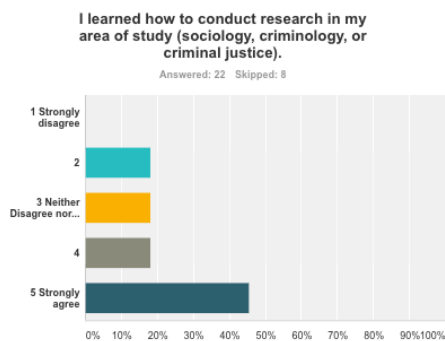
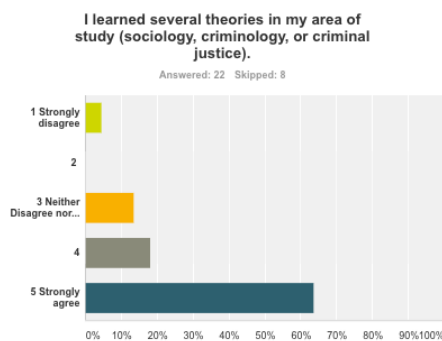


Fig. 7



4. Student Learning Outcomes (6-8). Finally, we asked a set of questions asking students to reflect on the knowledge, skills, and abilities that they have acquired and be able to do as a result of our program. Overall, students feel very positively about our performance. Responses suggest that the department is meeting the programmatic goals consistent with our mission. Specifically, Figures 8 through 12 indicate that students highly agreed that the major improved their ability to understand data (77%), fewer however agreed their ability to interpret data has improved (59%), or they developed the ability to make data-informed decisions (59%). With regard to writing and critical thinking abilities, 59% and 68% of the respondents strongly agreed with statements, respectively. This is the first time ever that we have asked questions related to data literacy. Our findings suggest that data literacy, writing skills, and critical thinking skills are some of the areas in which there is room for improvement.

Fig. 8

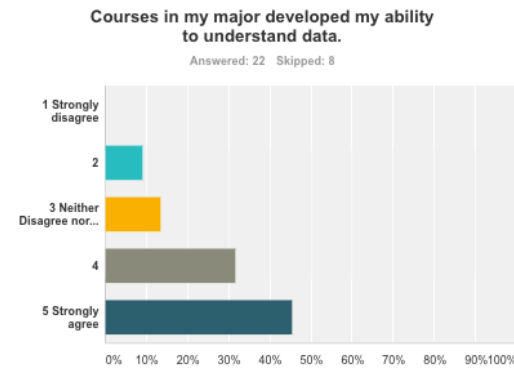


Fig. 9

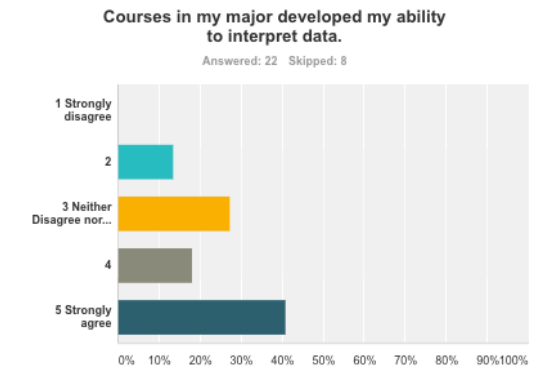


Fig. 10

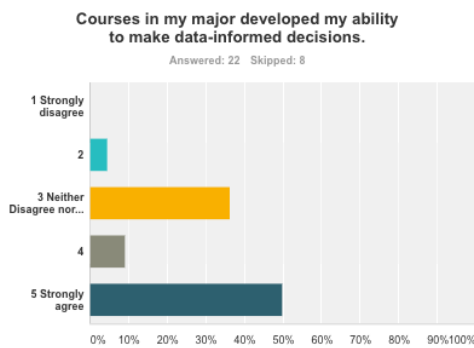


Fig. 11

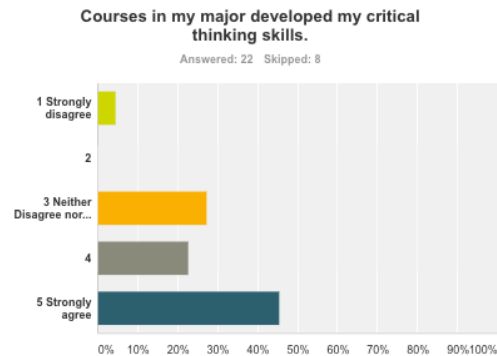
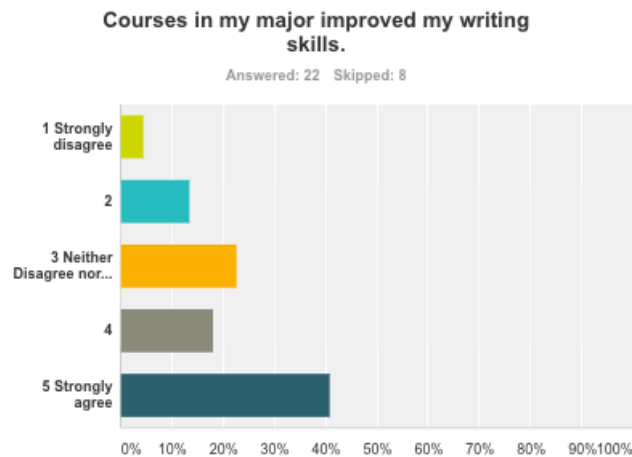


Fig. 12



Additional findings indicated that the majority (64%) of the respondents feel the degree is valuable (Fig. 13) and 86% of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they were glad they chose their major (Fig. 14). Seventy three percent of the respondents reported that they would recommend their major to others.

Fig. 13

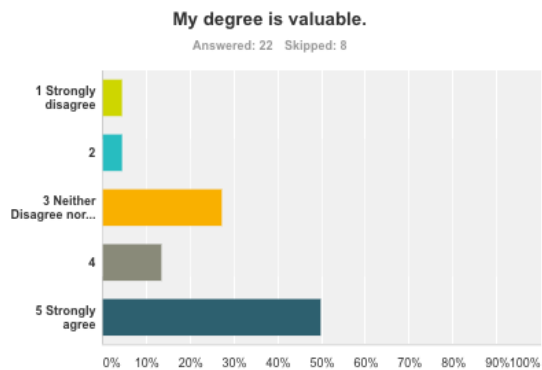
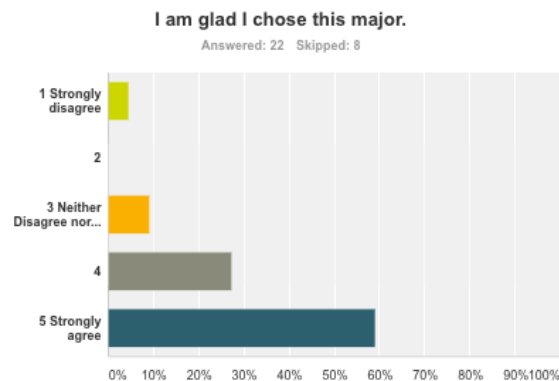


Fig. 14



Summary

In general, our survey findings confirm the information collected during informal interviews. The mixed-method results indicate that our department is performing well. Our students are satisfied with their experiences in the department, have positive experiences with the professors, and benefit from their courses. While we are meeting or exceeding all of our student learning objectives, we should strive for improvement in developing *research skills, data literacy, and critical thinking and writing skills*, as well as change student perceptions regarding the value of their degree. We have already begun addressing these issues. This coming fall the department will propose a social data analytics concentration within the SOCI major. Moreover, in line with our strategic priorities, during the summer of 2017, the department provided several faculty with additional funds (over \$4,000) to hire and work on several different research projects with our undergraduate majors. These funds will continue as long as the department has resources available to support undergraduate research.

We have already begun implementing career-oriented content in our courses and our internship program is one of the best in Fulbright College. Given the importance of the internship experiences, we will add internship-related questions to our next year survey.

Importantly, under Lori Holyfield's leadership, we have engaged in robust retention efforts. In January of 2017 we had 18 students at-risk (GPA below 2.0). As of July of 2017, we have 17 at-risk current students. What is most significant about these students is that only three students remain at-risk from the January report. Efforts will be made to reach out to the three remaining at-risk students as well as those newly identified as at-risk.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Career development needs to begin in our major's freshmen year with a practical, grounded 1-hour course coordinated with Career Services. With the help of Erica Estes, a member of the career services staff and a graduate of our MA program, sociology will pilot a program that will make career development a part of several required courses in the majors. The Senior Seminar will be used to complete the student's portfolio and liaison with career services for job placement and interviews.
- Development of *research skills, data literacy, and critical thinking and writing skills* is critical to the overall success of our students, especially to their post-graduation careers. The department will continue to support faculty efforts to engage our students in their research projects.
- Resource-wise, the Department is one of the largest majors in the Fulbright College, with over 450 majors in Sociology and Criminal Justice, but the Undergraduate Director position is budgeted at nine months only. Having the Undergraduate Director devoted to the issues of student success and retention as well as having the Director available through the summer to meet with our majors and counsel them regarding the skills they need and choices they have is a critical component of this effort.
- Student success and retention efforts are key components of our mission. We will use available resources and work on acquiring new resources to support this effort.