

ACADEMIC ASSESSMENT PLAN

AND

2018/2019 UNDERGRADUATE CRIMINOLOGY PROGRAM REPORT

Department of Sociology and Criminology

Contributors (in alphabetical order):

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Statement of Mission: Undergraduate Program in Criminology

The mission of the undergraduate program in Criminology 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 criminology 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 Criminology 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 Criminology undergraduate program are the following general goals, which draw upon a strong base in the social sciences:

1. to provide a comprehensive view of criminology and 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 Criminology 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 Criminology should have acquired the more specific set of skills:

1. an understanding of the theoretical foundations of criminology and criminal justice;
2. an understanding of the methodological foundations of criminology and 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 Criminology, the undergraduate criminology 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 2018/2019, data collection took place between April 23 and May 27.
- The analysis of assessment data took place between May 30 and June 30.

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 8th.

2018/2019 Academic Assessment Report

DEGREE PROGRAM: CRIM BA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND CRIMINOLOGY

The Department of Sociology and Criminology employed several measures to assess the academic achievement of its Criminology 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 2018-2019 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 28 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043: Senior Seminar during Fall 2018. Among them, 28 students (100%) passed. There were 42 undergraduates enrolled in SOCI 4043 during Spring 2019. Of these, 96% (N=40) passed and one student withdrew. The capstone course is used to conduct exit interviews for sociology majors and sociology and criminology 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 instructor, Doug Adams, conducted exit interviews in one section of the course during the Spring 2019 semester. Specifically, the instructor conducted exit interviews with all seniors attending class on April 30. Each student was given an anonymous questionnaire to complete. After the individual questionnaires were completed, the students were put into groups of three people, and each group was asked to provide additional information.

General findings related to CRIM major are presented and followed up with individual student answers.

SOCI 4043, Douglas Adams, Spring 2019

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 feedback was confidential, the information would be reported in a way that he/she could not be identified. Each student was given an anonymous questionnaire to complete (questions are listed below). After the individual questionnaires were completed, the students were put into groups of three people, and each group was asked to provide additional information

Questions

1. What is your major?
2. When did you declare your major?
3. Did you do an internship?
4. Did you work with a professor on research?
5. Did you write a Senior Thesis?
6. Your favorite class?
7. Your favorite research topic?
8. Your favorite teacher?
9. How was your overall experience with the SOCI/CRIM Department?
10. What would you change about the Department?
11. Where do you see yourself in 5 years?
12. Graduate School?

What follows is a summary of student comments from the three-person group discussion.

Findings

- Greater emphasis should be placed on written, graded papers in upper-division courses in order to increase and improve "critical thinking" skill.
- Class discussion should be increased in the curriculum of upper-division classes
- Instructors should be rotated in upper-division courses so that the same instructor is not continuously assigned to the same course. Sometimes a change of Instructor is a good thing.
- Advisors are not well assigned, and "higher-level" advising (careers, vs. selecting classes)
- Access to faculty advisors
- Special Thanks to "B.J." in the Fulbright College Advising Center. He is an exceptional advisor.
- Information about opportunities for Internships, Service Learning, and similar options is perceived as fragmented/ inconsistent across message venues.
- More "things" to put on a resume is what is intended by the students.
- Additional questions students wish were asked of them include:
 - "How involved do you think you were working with professors? If you weren't involved, why not?"
 - "Do you think your degree will be useful? And "Will it help you get the job that you want?"
 - "Are there more class topics that should be offered?" "How has the program changed your view of the world?"
- Several faculty and classes were listed as favorite, including Adams, Barnum, Bradley, Bustamante, Drawve, Holyfield, Jackson, Shields, Jones, Sabon. Dr. Shields was mentioned most often, and Dr. Barnum, Holyfield and Sabon were mentioned more than once.

Online Survey, Spring 2019

An online, electronically administered twenty-seven-item questionnaire collected evaluations from students who have applied for Spring 2019 graduation regarding the adequacy of their education and the skills they obtained.

Of the 12 total subjects that replied to the survey request, 42 % (N=5) of respondents were male, 58% of respondents (N=7) were white, 33% (N=4) were Black/African-American; 8% of respondents (N=1) reported being multi-racial. 8% indicated they were of Hispanic/Latino origin. A third of participants (30%) indicated they were combined SOCI-CRIM majors; 50% of the participants were dual majors with the second major other than sociology/criminal justice. All participants were seniors. With the exceptions of a few questions that some respondents skipped, the majority of findings presented are based on a total of 12 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” (Q-6, Figure 1) and “I am satisfied with the content of the courses in this program” (Q-7, Figure 2). Overall agreement with the first statement was average, with 81% of students rating their agreement as 4 and higher (compared with 64% in 2017); agreement with the second statement was also higher with 91% of respondents reporting their agreement as 4 and higher (73% in 2017). Only one student reported a rating of 2 and lower, indicating that just one or two 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

Q6 I am satisfied with the variety of courses offered by this program.

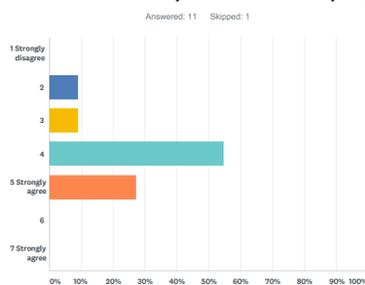
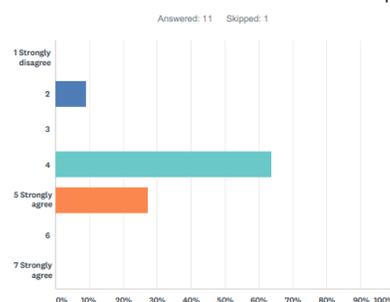


Fig. 2

Q7 I am satisfied with the content of the courses in this program.

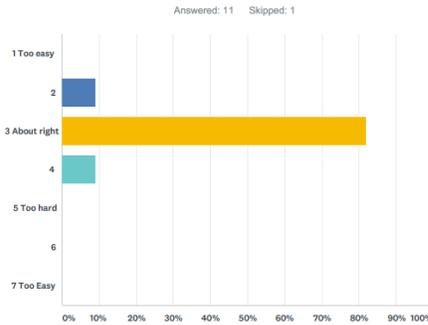


2. Difficulty of the curriculum. Students rated their agreement with a statement of satisfaction regarding the difficulty of the curriculum. Figure 3 (Q-8) shows students indicating that the level

of difficulty is “about right” (81%); only a handful of students (9% - 2 students) indicated the courses are too easy.

Fig. 3

Q8 Rate the level of difficulty of the courses you've taken in this program (1=too easy to 5=too hard).



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 (Q-14) indicates that students (100%) reported high level of insight in the relationship between individual and society. All students (100%) agreed that their major helped them gain the ability to recognize diversity and inequality (Fig. 5 Q-13).

Fig. 4

Q14 My major helped me gain insight into the relationship between individuals and society in human behavior.

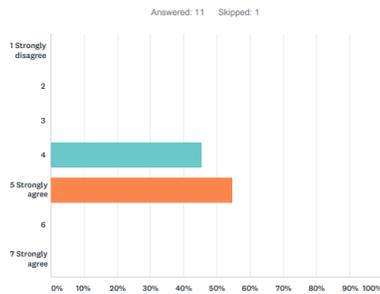
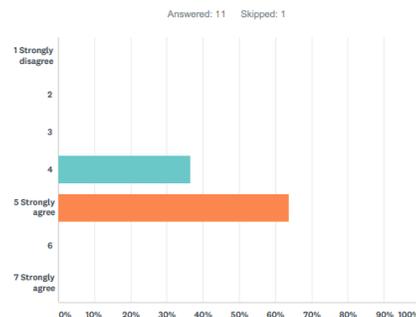


Fig. 5

Q13 My major helped me gain the ability to recognize diversity and inequality in society.



As Figure 6 (Q-12) demonstrates, 100% of the respondents agree/strongly agree they have learned how to conduct research in their major area. Figure 7 (Q-9) indicates that 100% of our students agree/strongly agree that they have learned several theories in their area. These responses indicate a substantive improvement over 2017, 64% and 73%, respectively.

Fig. 6

Q12 I learned how to conduct research in my area of study (sociology, criminology, or criminal justice).

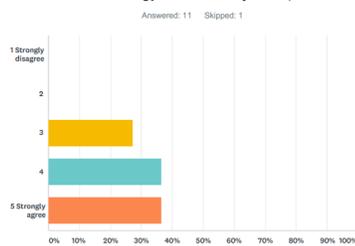
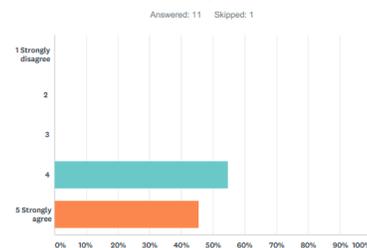


Fig. 7

Q9 I learned several theories in my area of study (sociology, criminology, or criminal justice).



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 the majority of students (80%) agreed that the major improved their ability to understand data (Q-17); similarly 80% of students agreed their ability to interpret data has improved (Q-18) or they (80%) developed the ability to make data-informed decisions (Q-19) These responses suggest a substantive improvement over 2018, the first year we asked this question. With regard to critical thinking (Q-20) and writing abilities (Q-21), 90% and 82% of the respondents strongly agreed with statements, respectively. This is another substantive improvement over 2017. This is the second time that we have asked questions related to data literacy. At the same time, the department began to place more emphasis on data literacy in our courses. Our findings suggest that data literacy, writing skills, and critical thinking skills represent the three areas in which we observe some substantive improvements. We will continue to monitor these areas.

Fig. 8

Q17 Courses in my major developed my ability to understand data.

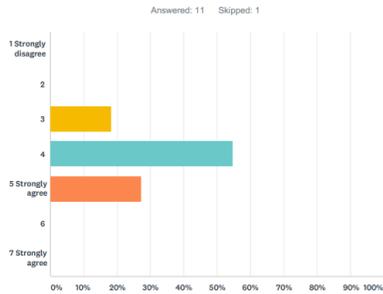


Fig. 9

Q18 Courses in my major developed my ability to interpret data.

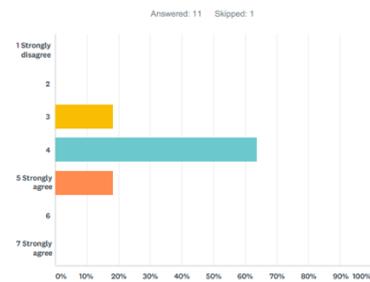


Fig. 10

Q19 Courses in my major developed my ability to make data-informed decisions.

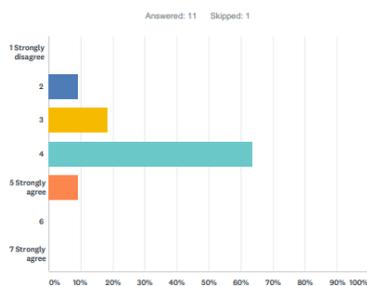


Fig. 11

Q20 Courses in my major developed my critical thinking skills.

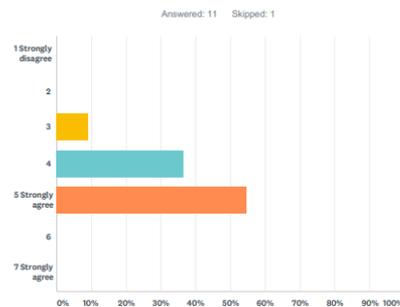
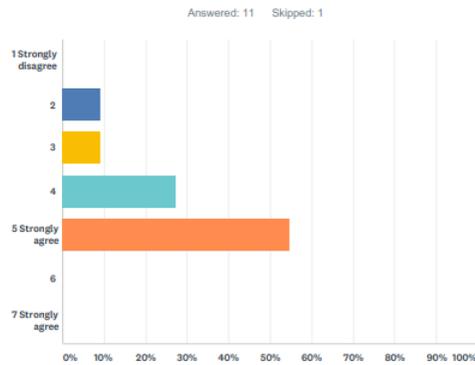


Fig. 12

Q21 Courses in my major improved my writing skills.

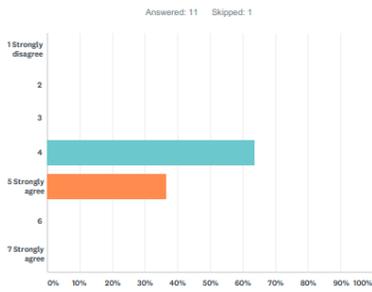


Additional findings indicated that the majority (100%) of the respondents feel the degree is valuable (Q-22, Fig. 13) and 90% of the respondents agreed/strongly agreed that they were glad they chose their major (Q-23, Fig. 14). Ninety percent of the respondents reported that they would recommend their major to others. All these numbers represent improvement over 2017 and 2018 surveys.

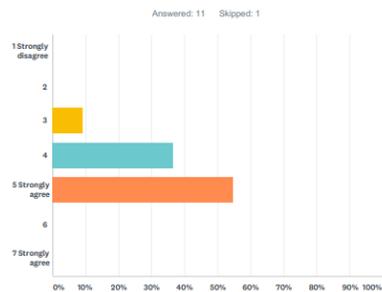
Fig. 13

Fig. 14

Q22 My degree is valuable.



Q23 I am glad I chose this major.



Summary

In general, our survey findings confirm the information collected during informal interviews and via questionnaire. The mixed-method results indicate that our department is performing well. Our students are increasingly 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 have improved several areas of our instruction, including the development of *research skills, data literacy, and critical thinking and writing skills*. The results regarding student perceptions of the value of their degree have also shown substantive improvement. In fall 2017, the department proposed a social data analytics certificate within the SOCI major. This effort was stopped by stakeholders from other colleges. In 2018, we worked with other colleges to propose a social data analytics concentration. This concentration should go live in 2020. Moreover, in line with our strategic priorities, during the

summer of 2017, the department provided several faculty with additional funds 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.

Furthermore, we have continued to implement 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.

Recruitment Efforts: During Fall 2017, the department added 8 new majors (7 CRIM and 1 SOCI). During the spring we received numerous new majors and anticipate more through the summer during orientation. Prior to orientation our new majors grew to 81 (58 new and 23 transfer).

Retention Efforts. Importantly, under Lori Holyfield's leadership, we have continued our robust retention efforts. In addition to our monthly "Pizza with a Prof," the undergraduate director contacted the at-risk students via email and met with approximately 30 students to discuss strategies for success. Regular emails to all majors included a variety of informational subjects, such as tutoring services, deadlines, and invitations for face to face meetings. However, while the 6th year graduate for SOCI Majors stay at the UA average, our six-year retention rate for CMJSBA is considerably below the UA rate.

Matriculation. In 2018, we matriculated 78 students with a BA in CMJS, nine more than in 2015. We also graduated 21 students with BA in SOCI, which represents considerable decline from 2015, when we graduated 43 students. Overall, this number is lowest since 2008. We will closely monitor this situation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 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 420 majors in Sociology and Criminal Justice, and 110 double majors, 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.
- We will consider introducing some rotation in upper-division courses.
- We will increase our recruitment for the Sociology major and retention efforts, especially in Criminal Justice. Changing the major from CMJS to Criminology and introducing Health and Well-being area in our department should help us address our recruitment and retention efforts.