

February 3, 2016

PROFESSOR Akos Rona-Tas, Chair
Department of Sociology

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for the Department of Sociology

Dear Professor Rona-Tas,

The Undergraduate Council discussed the Department of Sociology's 2015 Undergraduate Program Review at its January 8, 2016 meeting. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the Department. The Council's comments centered on the following:

Faculty teaching and resources. The subcommittee mentioned a lack of consistency in the way introductory courses are assigned to faculty, with the introductory, foundational courses being taught by newer faculty and lecturers. The Council agrees with the subcommittee's recommendation to structure the faculty course preference process in a way that assures that required lower division courses are covered by more senior faculty and encourages faculty alternates.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Department in Spring Quarter 2017. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Department for their engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey Cook, Chair
Undergraduate Council

cc: R. Continetti
T. Javidi
C. Padden
R. Rodriguez
B. Sawrey
M. Sidney

Department of Sociology Undergraduate Program Review, May 28-29, 2015

Professor and Program Review Chair Ross Frank, Department of Ethnic Studies, UC San Diego
Professor Dan Hallin, Department of Communication, UC San Diego
Professor Maria Charles, Chair, Department of Sociology, UC Santa Barbara

During its review of the Sociology Undergraduate Program, the committee consulted the Departmental Self Study, a comprehensive set of departmental data covering the 2009/10-2013/14 academic years, a number of student surveys including CAPE, UCUES, Post-Baccalaureate, College Deans of Advising, and Career Services, and the previous departmental review conducted in 2007. In addition, we met with the Associate Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Sociology Chair and Director of Undergraduate Studies, MSO and 3 person advising staff, 12 faculty members (in 2 groups), 2 lecturers in the department, 3 Sociology Graduate Student Teaching Assistants, 4 undergraduate majors, and the Sixth College Dean of Academic Advising. The committee wishes to thank the Academic Senate staff, the office of the AVCUE/Dean of Undergraduate Education, and the Sociology Department for providing excellent materials and access to the review committee.

Overall, the Committee finds that the undergraduate Sociology program at UCSD is in good shape. We were impressed with the commitment to undergraduate education shown by faculty (ladder-rank and adjunct), graduate students and staff, by the positive curricular changes since the last review in 2007, and by efforts made by current and recent department leaders to improve the recruitment, training, and career outcomes of undergraduate students. In this report we identify areas where we think useful improvements could be made.

A. A brief description and analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the current operation of the department

General Description

The Department of Sociology offers a General Sociology major, and since its last review in 2007, has created 7 concentrations in: International Studies; American Studies; Science and Medicine; Culture and Communication; Social Inequality; Law and Society; and Economy and Society. All majors take a sequence of lower division courses, Sociology 1, 2, and 60, and 1 course from a group of 5 introductions to the various concentrations, SOCI 10, 20, 30, 40, 50, and a new course, SOCI 70. Majors must take a theory course, SOCI 100, and a methods course from SOCI 103-110 (and variants), as well as 10 other upper division electives for a total of 12 upper division courses. A total of 16 courses are needed for the major, and the minor requires 7 courses: 2 lower division and 5 upper division.

The department currently has 26 faculty, including 3 recently hired assistant professors and 2 additional new faculty joining the department in the 2015-16 academic year. This compares to 30 faculty members at the department's last review in 2007. Sociology faculty participate fully in the undergraduate program, teaching 72.4% of the courses offered in 2013-14, and over 80% of lower division classes. Annual faculty teaching responsibilities generally comprise of 3 undergraduate courses and 1 graduate course each academic year. Sociology faculty offer

courses in support of International Studies, college curriculum such as Making of the Modern World in Eleanor Roosevelt College, programs including Urban Studies and Planning, Critical Gender Studies, and Public Health, as well as many minors across campus. In general, faculty receive very high CAPE scores: 91% recommend the instructor on average; 94% median.

According to the various student surveys made available, Sociology majors express general satisfaction with the major. UCUES data shows that UCSD Sociology majors track closely to those in Sociology at other UC campuses in most categories, and do comparatively better in attracting majors that evince intellectual curiosity, interest in the subject, and who felt that they could choose the major that they want. The surveys also show that the UCSD Sociology department does less well than their counterparts in participating in group study and projects in courses, assisting in faculty research, making in-class presentations, and interacting with faculty, both in and out of class. The department has just instituted an additional survey taken by students newly coming to the major in the Fall quarter, and a follow up at the end of the academic year. The Fall survey asks students why they chose the major and about their expectations, and the Spring survey gauges their satisfaction with their experience, likes, and dislikes, and areas for improvement. The review committee recognizes these surveys as a proactive step to increase communication with majors and improve the flexibility of the department in response.

Time to Degree and Enrollments

Freshmen and transfer students who major in Sociology move through the major relatively smoothly. During 2012-13, the most recent year of the data set provided, the mean time to degree for freshman, 12.77 quarters, stood slightly lower than 12.97 for the campus as a whole. Transfers fared far better than the campus, completing the degree in 6.67 quarters compared to 7.78 for all transfers. Interviews with the students and student surveys credit very strong advising within the department and college and good availability of courses at the various stages of the program (lower division, theory and methods, upper division courses within the concentrations) needed to complete the major. One of the most unexpected UCUES responses indicated that only 10.9% choose the Sociology major because they could not get into their first choice, compared to 17.7% of their peers at other UC campuses. Apparently, significantly fewer undergraduates at UCSD come to the Sociology major after disappointment with their major of choice than at other UC campuses.

Although the number of Sociology degrees granted to undergraduates has risen gradually and consistently from 2009-10 to 2013-14, in the last 2 years, the number of minors completed has decreased noticeably, as have declared majors and minors, and general enrollments. These declines may reflect changes in campus GE requirements. The department has initiated a number of laudable efforts to increase interest in the major and to broaden the appeal of Sociology courses to students of other majors.

To improve their yield of admitted students, the department hired current Sociology majors to contact 50% of those admitted freshmen and transfer students who indicated an interest in the major in order to encourage them to accept their UCSD offer. The 50% who were not contacted will serve as an experimental “control group.” The yield from the two groups will be compared to assess effectiveness of this recruitment experiment. The committee was impressed by this

departmental initiative.

The department assists the undergraduate-run Sociology Club in publicizing events. The review committee suggests, in addition, a partnership between department faculty, advising staff, and the Career Center to identify alumni speakers who might be able to assist the Sociology Club in reaching a wider audience. Undergraduate alumni are potentially very effective spokespeople who can help energize majors and provide insights into how successful graduates employ their Sociology interests and training. The students who met with the review committee and the student surveys agreed on the need for greater understanding of how the major could be used outside of the academy. The review committee points out that fulfilling this expressed need also assists in the work that majors generally do to influence others to take Sociology classes, and perhaps declare a minor or major.

The review committee also heard about the fairly extensive volunteer effort by one of the adjunct faculty in career coaching of Sociology majors and suggests that the department consider working to formalize this important service, perhaps (again) in connection with the Career Center and the Sociology Club.

Finally, the advising staff pointed out that a modicum of faculty involvement provides important recruitment benefits at advising fairs and events such as Triton Days for admitted freshman and transfers.

Appendix B, *Analyzing the Decline of Sociology Majors, 2007-Present*, included in the departmental self-study points out that the largest decline in the number of new Sociology majors appears among California Resident Transfer students. The study suggests a number of intriguing factors why this might be the case. However one weighs the possible causes, the review committee suggests establishing connections within the regional transfer institutions to publicize the UCSD's Sociology major and to emphasize the availability of transferable courses on each community college campus. Faculty mentioned in our discussions that several graduate alumni from the department now teach at community colleges in the region, and we suggest that the department use these contacts to establish a network for encouraging and recruiting prospective Sociology transfers. This strategy dovetails with the implementation of the UC-wide Transfer Initiative begun in 2013 by President Napolitano.

In summary, review committee finds that the undergraduate major in general operates smoothly, and communication among staff and faculty works well. Morale among faculty (regular and adjunct), staff, and undergraduate students appears high.

B. Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum

New Courses and Diversity

The department of has also begun to address recruitment of students to Sociology courses and to the major through recent curricular changes. In order to attract students interested in the medical sciences, the department has introduced Sociology 70, General Sociology for Premedical Students. Taught for the first time in Winter 2015, the course drew 108 students who reported nearly 100% approval in CAPE evaluations. Discussions are underway with Psychology over a

possible course in social psychology and with Economics over a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) course on socio-economic inequality. A possible course on the analysis of big data would likely be of interest to STEM students. The review committee commends the department on thinking strategically to build these curricular bridging courses that meet the needs and opportunities of students in other departments with large enrollments and that intersect with the research expertise of Sociology faculty.

The Sociology major also serves a very diverse set of students, and works actively to build on their success in this regard. During the current academic year the department taught for the first time an upper division fieldwork course titled Diversity in San Diego. The course enrolled over 20 students in its first iteration, and focused on creating undergraduate team projects through collective ethnography in partnership with underserved communities near UCSD. This course, designed to satisfy the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) campus requirement, provides a welcome connection between undergraduates, faculty members, and community organizations and neighborhoods. The departmental Diversity Committee encourages faculty to develop other DEI-designed courses and notes that some others are newly approved or in process.

Concentrations

As mentioned above, the 2007 Review faulted the coherence of the 4 “clusters” offered previously and questioned their contribution to training majors in core sociological competencies. Following that review the department created 7 areas of concentration (International Studies, American Studies, Science and Medicine, Culture and Communication, Social Inequality, Law and Society, and Economy and Society), each mapped to or encompassing central areas of sociological knowledge production. Upper division courses apply to one, or more (infrequently) of these concentrations, and they appear as lists of courses approved for each concentration. At present, about half of the majors have chosen one of the concentrations, which are noted on their degrees at graduation. Concentrations have gained ground among Sociology majors since 2010, when only 33% had selected a concentration and majors with concentrations represented only 21% of degrees granted. In the Spring of 2014, the number of majors in each concentration ranged from 2 in the American Studies track to 65 in Law and Society. The variation in numbers did not reflect class availability, according to the majors interviewed and the list of courses offered during the last 5 years. On the other hand, 27% of the courses listed for all concentrations had been taught only once, or in a few cases twice in the 2009-14 period. For the individual lists, courses offered infrequently ranged from 41% of the classes in the International Studies concentration to only 14% for American Studies. Undergraduate interviewees did mention a lack of variation in courses offered from year to year, perhaps because with many courses appearing infrequently, some are offered very frequently. The committee suggests that the department develop longer-range curriculum planning processes to regularly remove courses that will no longer be offered, to create new ones by interested faculty to refresh and update the concentration course listings, and to schedule a more frequent rotation of courses offered from each list. In addition, building in some information about the concentrations as part of the Sociology 1 and 2 required courses could provide guidance to students thinking about the major.

Curricular Discussion and Content

A larger concern of the review committee involves the degree to which the faculty have

developed a shared understanding that informs the content of the lower division courses and coordination of the Sociology 1 and Sociology 2 sequence to give undergraduates a clear understanding about the scholarly nature of Sociology early on in their exposure to the discipline. The committee repeatedly heard interviewees voice the question of whether the department intended the lower division courses to be a comprehensive introduction or a set of examples of specific research areas, or “snapshots”. A number of different groups expressed concerns about inconsistency in course content and emphasis when taught by different instructors and a sense that the connection between Sociology 1 and 2 lacked coherence, that the courses did not build off each other (in contrast to the catalog description of SOCI 2), and together gave students a disjointed sense of the core principles of sociological approaches to knowledge production. Despite the changes to the major in response to the 2007 Review, this issue still lingers. Undergraduates raised a related issue about the content of Sociology 60; they understood the course as a comprehensive survey of methods but felt that some Sociology 60 instructors focused on just a few methods.

The review committee came to understand that 1 or 2 faculty generally teach large required courses. Although this is understandable given the time and effort that goes into new course preparations and the different areas of expertise covered by the faculty, a sense of course ownership creates scheduling difficulties – for example when the person who regularly teaches a course goes on sabbatical, takes on other responsibilities, or leaves the department. The review committee sees this as a manifestation of a general paucity of collective discussion about shared interests in curricular content.

Unlike Sociology, many campus departments place syllabi for previous courses on the departmental web site or at courses.ucsd.edu. Some Sociology faculty mentioned that the staff collected syllabi and would share them upon request, but we heard from others, including some lecturers and associate-instructors that they had not been provided access to previous syllabi for courses that they had agreed to teach for the first time. The department has recently initiated a lunch meeting at the beginning and end of the year in which Sociology faculty, lecturers, and temporary instructors meet together to discuss teaching experiences, pedagogical best practices and skills. Discussion at these meetings might usefully be expanded to cover course content and teaching/learning goals within sociology.

Collective Curriculum

The review committee discussed a number of ideas that the department might consider, beginning with a discussion about the articulation of the core content in Sociology 1 and 2 within the Undergraduate Program Committee, and then the faculty as a whole. The lunch events for the discussion of pedagogy and teaching best practices could be expanded to include a separate discussion about curricular content, beginning with the required undergraduate courses and eventually covering general guidelines for upper division offerings. Course syllabi should be made readily available through courses.ucsd.edu and linked to the departmental web site. Beyond providing a starting point for discussions about course content and curriculum, syllabi allow students to see what is covered in a course otherwise described only by a formal title and generic 50 word catalog description. Syllabi help students especially when course content changes regularly under the same course title. Majors felt that the upper division courses overlapped quite a bit. Although some of the overlap may be the result of teaching majors and

non-majors in the same upper division courses without prerequisites, discussions about the content of courses in the catalog may help to address this perception.

A more fundamental administrative change that could encourage faculty to pay attention to curricular content, goals, and continuity would involve changing the manner in which the faculty request annual teaching assignments. At present, each faculty member submits a preference for courses they wish to teach the following academic year. Undergraduate Advisor Shannon Goodison initially populates the teaching grid using faculty preferences “which are pretty predictable.” During the winter quarter, a committee made up of the Undergraduate Advisor, Director of Undergraduate Studies, Chair, and MSO begins to fill in the gaps with lecturers and graduate associate-ins, and the chair negotiates with faculty to fill critical courses where needed. The department might consider authorizing the existing Curriculum Committee to structure the faculty course preference process in a way that: 1) assures that required lower division courses (SOC 1, 2, and 60) are covered and encourages faculty alternates; 2) prioritizes the methods courses (SOC 20, 30, 40, 50, 70) and SOC 100-110 so that they are offered predictably and develop faculty in rotation; and 3) manages the rotation of upper division courses in the concentrations and the solicitation of new courses. Asking faculty to select a small number of courses that they may not normally teach, but could envision themselves offering, helps to initiate and expand discussions about curricular approaches and content among faculty. Consultation with other departments in the division would add a range of current practices to consider. In order to encourage faculty recruitment for the Sociology 1 and 2 sequence (and 60 if needed), and also to develop more faculty available for rotation, the department might consider a ½ course release for each SOC 1 and 2 quarter taught.

Undergraduate Engagement with Faculty and Graduate Students

As mentioned earlier, UCSD Sociology majors responding to UCUES questions about the level of their engagement with faculty ranked lower than Sociology majors at the other UC campuses. UCSD majors were less likely to: assist faculty in research for course credit (8.7 to 18.7%), assist faculty in research for pay (2.9 to 7.3%), assist faculty in research as a volunteer (6.5 to 12.2%), take a small research-oriented seminar with faculty (19.2 to 26.9%); talk (somewhat often or often) about issues and concepts outside of a course (36.3 to 43.3%); interact (somewhat often or often) with faculty during lectures (32.6 to 40.9%); and make a presentation in class (54.7 to 74.4%). Undergraduate interviewees confirmed this impression, saying that there were not many opportunities for research with faculty and that they were unaware of the Faculty Mentor and other similar programs at UCSD.

The department already has some plans that will improve opportunities for undergraduate research and mentorship activities. The majors we interviewed who had enrolled in the Honors program appreciated the recent mentorship offered voluntarily by graduate students, and responded with enthusiasm to the department’s planned introduction of a program for undergraduate research assistants to work with advanced graduate students. Graduate TAs in upper division courses would also help improve undergraduate exposure to Sociology mentors. The department could consider offering graduate students who mentor Honors and Assistantship undergraduates credit in a teaching apprenticeship course (599 or equivalent), and might consult with graduates to devise other arenas for graduates to work with majors.

More substantive curricular changes by faculty could involve integrating into courses more project-based assignments and other innovative research components, as well as providing undergraduate majors with chance to work with or alongside faculty. Further faculty discussion of ideas within the department and with the newly organized Teaching Commons will identify other techniques and resources.

The department does offer a significant number of methodology courses. These were praised by undergraduates as offering particularly valuable opportunities both for interaction with faculty and for the acquisition of skills that would be particularly valuable after graduation. These classes are relatively small and hence resource-intensive, but the Review Committee considers them a particular strength of the department's undergraduate program and supports the department in maintaining these classes.

Honors Request

Honors participants expressed to the Review Committee that they have too little time during the 2 quarters to pursue their research. During their experience a student had taken an incomplete and 3 dropped out of the Honors program due to inadequate time to complete their research. They would like the department to consider extending the Honors program to 3 quarters, with a quarter to pursue research in the Winter quarter between SOCI 196A and B. Perhaps the already chosen faculty mentor could supervise research during the quarter, and advanced graduate students could convene periodic meetings of the Honors cohort to advise, mentor, and encourage, without utilizing more faculty resources. An alternative is to retain the 2-quarter sequence but improve departmental support and coordination starting in the prior Spring Quarter. Early advice and support by faculty mentors and introduction of formal graduate student mentorship where available would help ensure that Honors students are prepared to hit the ground running at the start of the Fall quarter.

Teaching Assistant Resources

Teaching Assistants in Sociology serve in the lower division courses, SOCI 1-2 and 10-70, now all part of the major requirements as well as open to students from across the campus. This review committee, as well as the one from 2007 think that large upper division courses should have the support of graduate TAs from Sociology. The current alternatives seem to be reliance on Readers drawn from outside of the department to grade student papers and exams, or the elimination of assignments that require substantial student research and writing. Apart from a general insufficiency of funds to support upper division TAs in the Divisions of Social Science and Arts & Humanities, the problem has become more severe in the wake of budget cuts of recent years. In response to the 2007 Review, Sociology has made an effort to experiment with TAs in a few upper division courses. Student evaluations showed substantial benefits, but the budget crisis made permanent implementation impossible. On an experimental basis, the department added a few upper division TA assignments this quarter (Spring 2015), and intends to expand the practice as funding permits.

The Review Committee fully supports the department's expansion of graduate teaching assistants to larger upper division courses and calls on the Divisional Dean and EVC to develop funding in order for departments to develop and maintain substantial research and writing components in their courses. The only other possible current source of funding comes from

temporary FTE funds used to employ lecturers, and to the extent that reducing the number of lecturer-taught courses decreases the total number of courses offered, the department will suffer a decrease in allocations that could be used to support teaching assistantships in a subsequent year.

Although the upper division courses in Sociology do not require TAs to hold sections, helping students with writing assignments in office hours and grading the assignments can be very time consuming for TAs. The department will have to pay careful attention to student caps per section and hours required for grading in order to successfully recruit Sociology graduate students for upper-division TAs and stay within union contract guidelines. Teaching Assistants interviewed mentioned confusion about their contracts and the TA assignment process. Any such confusion or lack of transparency should be addressed by the department.

As one graduate student put it, “graduate students are an untapped resource” who want to participate in the life of the department in ways not currently fully accommodated. Areas identified in which further graduate-student participation in the undergraduate program might prove useful include institutionalizing research and mentoring opportunities and teaching apprenticeships for course credit (mentioned above), and developing ways to solicit TA feedback about undergraduate teaching, curriculum, and undergraduate learning outcomes.

C. An analysis of strengths and weaknesses of the department in the context of campus and University policies

Graduate Teaching Resources

Several recent UGC departmental reviews, particularly in the Divisions of Social Science and Arts & Humanities, have suggested that the formula used by the campus disadvantages some departments by not recognizing their particular strengths or needs. As discussed above, Sociology faces continuing pressure to offer large upper division courses with readers drawn from outside of the department and without teaching assistants, or to reduce reader support for faculty. Neither choice serves the undergraduate program or the department, and this situation has changed very little since the 2007 Review. Under the circumstances, similar issues will likely present themselves at the next review unless campus policies are reevaluated.

Time to Degree Concerns and Enrollments

The campaign to reduce the time to degree for freshman and transfer undergraduates at UCSD has resulted in a process of reducing departmental and college requirements. Streamlining majors affects the number of courses taken to a degree, but the reduction in college General Education requirements takes a larger and cumulative toll on enrollments. Departments across campus experience these effects unequally, as the enrollment changes in Sociology and other departments suggest. These campus and university policy changes and their varied effects on enrollments need assessment before embarking on further measures intended to improve time to degree.

D. Recommendations for alleviating any shortcomings suggested by the description and analysis

- 1) In addition to the current initiatives to increase enrollments, the department could consider

the following measures:

- Partner with the Career Center and the undergraduate Sociology Club in inviting Sociology alumni to link the major to career possibilities.
 - Utilize faculty to enhance campus recruitment opportunities.
 - Formalize program of career coaching modelled on current efforts of one adjunct faculty member.
 - Work with Sociology PhDs now teaching at community colleges in the region to recruit transfer Sociology majors.
- 2) The department should take steps to create a culture of curricular discussion and development that might include the following measures:
- Build on newly initiated lunch meetings about pedagogy and best practices by adding discussions about course goals, content, and coordination.
 - Fine-tune the system for soliciting faculty teaching preferences by supplying initial guidelines to ensure coverage of required and prioritized courses and to encourage alternate faculty or a rotation system for critical courses.
 - Consider a partial course reduction for each time faculty teaches large and critical courses, such as Sociology 1 and 2, as a way to encourage more faculty to take on these courses (and to facilitate curricular conversation).
 - Develop a shared understanding about the content of lower division courses and coordination between Sociology 1 and 2.
 - Offer access to current and past course syllabi from the Sociology web site linked to courses.ucsd.edu.
 - Update regularly the lists of courses available for the Concentrations and explain them in some manner within Sociology 1 and/or 2.
- 3) Facilitate further undergraduate engagement through the creation of additional opportunities for exchange, research and mentoring, including:
- Formalize graduate participation in the planned undergraduate research assistance program and in the mentoring of Honors students by offering graduate credit in a teaching apprenticeship course (599 or equivalent).
 - Consult with graduate students to devise other arenas for them to work with Sociology majors.
 - Utilize the new Teaching Commons and faculty experience with project-based assignments and other innovative research components in class, and consider other ways of providing undergraduate majors with chance to work with or alongside faculty.
 - Consider either: 1) the undergraduate request to allow more time for Honors student to pursue research during the Winter quarter between the current SOCI 196A and B courses; or, 2) departmental measures to provide Honors students the guidance and support to enable them to jump-start their research effort early in the Fall quarter.
- 4) The Sociology department needs increased TA funding in order to staff large upper division courses. Solutions might include:
- Convert Reader support to Teaching Assistantships for large upper division courses when and where possible.
 - Consider carefully the balance between undergraduate instructional resources, graduate

- student support and recruitment potential, and faculty workload.
 - Ensure a commensurate graduate workload and compensation for TAs assigned to lower and upper division courses (i.e., courses with and without sections).
 - Evaluate the guidelines and selection procedures for TA hiring to ensure appropriate equity and transparency.
 - Consult the Divisional Dean for assistance in order to implement an expanded and fiscally sustainable TA staffing plan.
- 5) The current methods of allocating funds to departments to hire adequate and effective Teaching Assistants to support the undergraduate teaching and learning mission has come under scrutiny in recent Undergraduate Program Reviews. From UGC's perspective, the formulae constrain departments in ways that appear to threaten teaching pedagogy and effective curricular planning and implementation. EPC, Graduate Council, and UGC, in consultation with the Deans of Graduate and Undergraduate Education, should evaluate this component of recent departmental reviews to determine whether the current process and structure warrants reappraisal.