

## Sociology

### Student Learning Outcomes Assessment, 2013-2014

#### BA Sociology SLOA Report 2014

##### I. Table Summary of 2014-2015 Academic Year SLO Assessment

Goals and Objective(s) Assessed	Direct Assessment(s), Sites	Indirect Assessment(s), Sites	Brief Analysis of Results for Direct Assessment	Brief Analysis of Results for Indirect Assessment
Goal #1 in Sociological Knowledge, Objectives A-F Assessed	Evaluation of Final Papers in Capstone Course; Explanation of Data Collection, Analysis and Rubric Provided	Major Survey Collected in Three Upper Division Courses; Survey Questionnaire and Descriptive Statistics Provided	Scores from the graded papers indicate overall proficiency for Goal 1. However, a few specific areas of average or below average performance have been identified, particularly relating to Objectives E and F. Also, methods of evaluation for Objective A should be modified.	Data from the survey indicate that student self-efficacy in regard to Goal 1 is above average. Faculty would desire percentages on all objectives to be slightly higher and in particular percentages relating to Objectives E and F.

Action Item(s) for Assessment Tool(s) for 2015-2016 Academic Year	Action Item(s) for Assessment Results for 2015-2016 Academic Year
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Revise goals corresponding objectives based on assessment findings. Particularly consider Objectives A, E and F. Revise rubric for direct measure scoring as well as survey questions for indirect measurement accordingly.</li> <li>2. Survey all graduating seniors in both fall and spring semesters.</li> <li>3. If Objective A is retained, consider a future method of assessment of this objective.</li> </ol>	<p>Once Objective F is reworked, the faculty will identify areas of possible curricular or course activity/assignment changes to more deeply embed not only the identification of the source of social problems but also possible modes of implementing social change on individual, community and institutional levels. In addition, as the new curriculum is implemented while keeping objective F in mind, future assessment of Goal 1 will measure and compare the SLO for Objective F to measure the impact of the new sequenced curriculum.</p>

##### II. Goal and Corresponding Objectives Assessed

###### Goal in Sociological Knowledge

Students who complete the program will be able to utilize their sociological imagination in order to articulate and demonstrate understanding of basic sociological concepts as well as particular substantive areas of inquiry at micro, meso and macro levels of analysis and practice.

### Objectives in Sociological Knowledge

Students will be able to:

- A. Articulate a basic understanding of the historical and contemporary development of the discipline of sociology.
- B. Articulate the complex interplay of history, social structures and personal biography in order to critically evaluate social patterns.
- C. Articulate the core concepts and research findings relative to human development, socialization, group dynamics and life course processes.
- D. Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships among various religious, civic, economic, familial, correctional, educational and mass media social institutions.
- E. Articulate the core concepts and research findings relative to the production of social power, resource allocation and ideological legitimations in the context of bureaucratic organization, various arenas of social conflict and processes of social change.
- F. Demonstrate the ability to identify the sources of societal problems of publics with differing and multiple interests and be able to propose and assess possible policies, interventions and/or modes of advocacy for addressing these issues.

### III. Direct Measurement Summary

#### Data Collection

In order to directly assess students learning outcomes for the six objectives comprising Goal 1 in General Sociological knowledge, final papers in the SOC 457 Social Stratification Capstone course were evaluated. These papers are individual research projects in which students investigate a social problem. The goal is for them to provide adequate empirical data to evidence the problem, develop a conceptual framework to explain and analyze of their chosen area of inequality, and then to provide support for possible pathways for social change. This site was chosen because these final papers should serve as a final culminating project for Sociology Majors and thus should demonstrate the working knowledge and skill sets described in Goal 1. As this is a capstone course most of these students were graduating Seniors, but it should be noted that several of them are 1<sup>st</sup> semester Seniors and 2<sup>nd</sup> semester Juniors. The department has recently redesigned its curriculum, which will take effect in Fall 2014. The new curriculum has more strict pre-requisite requirements for students before they are able to take the capstone course. The significance of these curricular changes will impact future SLOA assessment efforts as capstone projects/papers in the redesigned curriculum and course should be more effective for assessing graduating majors' learning outcomes.

#### Rubric and Evaluation

A rubric (Appendix A) was constructed by simply using Objectives A-F and scoring each on a scale of 0 to 10, totaling a possible 60 points for each paper/student. Although for SLOA purposes the averages across each objective was a more important piece of data than the total score as would be used in grading. Three faculty members, Dr. Lee Williams (Rater 1), Dr. Patricia Claster (Rater 2) and Dr. Samuel Claster (Rater 3) each independently scored all 19 papers on the SLOA rubric. After each rater completed their work, all 57 completed rubrics were entered into an excel file with columns for each of

the six objectives by each of the three raters. Sum/total and average/mean columns and calculation were also included in order to analyze the data. 19 total student papers were evaluated to provide this assessment. Results were then discussed by the raters and used by the department to produce the analysis and results that follow.

### Analysis and Summary of Results

The chart below is a condensed version of the data set displaying the average score (for all three raters) for each student paper by objective. The bottom means represent the average score for all papers by objective. The score of 7.6 represents the average of Objectives B-F (Objective A was excluded for reasons explained below) and thus a total score for the direct assessment of Goal 1. After discussion, the faculty find this number quite positive given the state of our current program (e.g. lack of prerequisites for capstone course, inconsistent curricular flow, staff changes). Although, we do believe that improvement can and will be made on strengthening the learning outcomes related to this Goal as our new curriculum and requirements are engaged.

Paper #	Obj. A/Average	Obj. B/Average	Obj. C/Average	Obj. D/Average	Obj. E/Average	Obj. F/Average	Goal 1 Average
1	2.3	7.3	7	7	6.3	4.7	
2	5.3	8.7	9.3	9	8.7	9.0	
3	6.0	7.0	7.7	8	7.3	8.0	
4	4.0	8.0	7.3	7	6.0	5.0	
5	3.3	7.3	6.7	6.3	6.7	5.7	
6	6.0	9.0	8.7	9.0	8.7	8.3	
7	6.0	7.7	6.7	6.7	6.3	4.7	
8	5.0	8.3	9.7	9.7	9.3	9.0	
9	5.3	6.0	5.0	5.3	5.7	5.3	
10	5.0	10.0	9.3	9.3	9.0	9.7	
11	4.0	8.3	8.0	8.0	7.0	7.7	
12	4.0	7.7	8.3	7.0	7.3	7.3	
13	3.3	7.7	6.3	7.7	7.0	6.3	
14	4.7	7.3	7.7	7.3	7.3	6.7	
15	5.3	7.7	8.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	
16	4.3	8.3	8.7	8.0	8.3	8.3	
17	3.7	9.7	8.3	7.7	7.3	9.7	
18	3.7	7.7	6.7	7.7	7.7	7.0	
19	4.0	9.3	8.7	8.7	7.7	8.0	
<b>MEAN</b>	<b>4.5</b>	<b>8.1</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>7.6</b>

The first significant finding is that students were not scored as performing very well on Objective A. The faculty concluded that this is not because of student learning deficiency, but rather because this capstone paper is not an adequate assessment of Objective A. Thus, there is a mismatch between the assessment tool (based on the objective) and the student work assessed, and as already mentioned, for the purposes of this report this learning objective will not be addressed.

Objective B was clearly the strongest and is considered above average for our purposes, while Objectives C and D can be considered solid, while Objectives E and F are in need of some attention. It should be noted that when looking at the complete set, it became clear that on Objectives B and C, Rater 1 scored student papers on average 1 point lower than Raters 2 and 3. While this is not a major difference, the raters and faculty discussed this

issue. The discrepancy between Raters 1 and Raters 2 and 3 was mild, yet the faculty had a fruitful discussion that will help serve to increase inter-rater reliability and the coding schema during future assessment efforts.

Objectives E and F received by far the lowest scores in this analysis. These are sections of the curriculum that seem to require attention based on this direct assessment. The faculty discussed these findings and decided that future departmental meetings and curriculum discussions are necessary to address these issues. Through deliberation and reflection on the assessment process, the faculty also discussed the possibility of streamlining some of the objectives making them more specific and thus reducing overlap between the objectives relating to the same goal. Again, we believe that some of the soon implemented curriculum changes will likely lead to increases in each of these measures.

#### IV. Indirect Measurement Summary

##### Data Collection and Instrument

In order to indirectly assess student-learning outcomes a Sociology Major Survey was constructed. This survey (Appendix B) contains 21 questions that mirror all of the objectives corresponding to each of the 5 Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Goals for this program. This survey will be used in future years to allow the compilation of longitudinal data regarding student's self-perceptions of learning outcome attainment. Students completed the survey by responding to each Objective on a five point Likert-type scale ranging from "Poor" to "Excellent." 29 total students were surveyed from SOC 457 Stratification and SOC 440 Advanced Qualitative Methods Courses. These two courses were chosen for sampling because our curriculum and program are in flux and students close to completion could be found in both of these upper level courses. Future SLOA endeavors will be able to survey only those students in the new SOC 499 capstone course as it will contain students whom are close to program completion. As this year's SLOA is concerned with Goal 1, only the data on questions relating to Objectives A-F were analyzed.

##### Analysis and Summary of Results

Frequencies and percentages (Appendix C) were generated for the 29 students surveyed. The table below displays percentages for each Goal 1 Objective. While percentages are not the best reflection of results for such a small sample size, it still serves as a description of patterns in the data. There were no participants that selected "Poor" on any of the six Objectives while taking the survey otherwise this category would have been combined with "Below Average." Therefore, three categories were created to display the data. "Below Average" and "Average" remained their own category and "Above Average" and "Excellent" were collapsed as they represent the two categories above the mid-point on the five point scale.

Objective	Percent “Below Average”	Percent “Average”	Percent “Above Average” and “Excellent”
A	0%	37.9%	62.1%
B	3.4%	34.5%	62.1%
C	0%	34.5%	65.5%
D (1 case missing)	3.4%	10.3%	82.8%
E	10.3%	24.1%	65.5%
F	10.3%	31.0%	58.6%
Goal 1 Average	4.6%	28.7%	66.1%

From the data, it becomes clear that the overwhelming majority of students selected “Average” or above for Objectives A-D. While this infers average or higher learning for nearly all students, 62% to 66% of students selected “Above Average” or “Excellent” for these four Objectives. The faculty feels that this denotes room for improvement and that percentages above 70% would be more desirable, particularly for the total score of 66.1% for the Average of all six Objectives for Goal 1. A point of note on Objective D is that 82% of students selected “Above Average” or “Excellent”. Regarding Objectives E and F, the percentage of student selecting “Below Average” was higher. Again, percentages are misleading with a small sample; note that this is a total of three students out of 29. Nonetheless, the data does indicate that students do not feel as confident in attainment of Objectives E and F. The faculty discussed these trends in student self-efficacy and noted a need to focus particularly on Objective F.

## V. Final Summary and Action Items for SLOA for Forthcoming Academic Year

### Summary of Assessment Findings

Regarding the indirect SLOA assessment, the faculty feels that student’s self-efficacy as reflected by the survey data should be a bit higher overall. However, the faculty was very pleased that the majority of students indicated above average or higher on all indicators. This finding was fairly consistent with the results of the direct assessment as the majority of students scored above a 7 out of 10 on five of the six objectives. While the overall assessment of Goal 1 would indicate that students subjective perceptions as well as faculty evaluations of student learning is above average, the department should strive to implement changes that result in stronger assessment results in the future. Overall, it can be stated that Sociology Majors are meeting Goal 1 in General Sociological Knowledge, but there are a few specific areas of possible improvement. Specific analyses of each Objective within Goal 1 are addressed below.

The direct results for Objective A clearly necessitate either a reconsideration of this Objective and how it is phrased, its importance to the program, and how it might be better measured. If the faculty choose to keep this as a component of Goal 1, a change in the assessment measure for this objective will be necessary. Simply put, capstone papers on inequality do not include a strong demonstrated knowledge of the history of the discipline of Sociology. Thus, the faculty would recommend that a more valid measurement/tool be constructed and implemented in order to accurately evaluate Objective A the next time that Goal 1 is assessed.

The direct results for Objective B are above average to excellent, while the indirect results are to be above average. This would seem to indicate that both faculty and students believe that sociology majors are quite comfortable with and adept at articulating the interplay of her/history, social structures, and personal biography, and well able to critically use these ideas to evaluate social patterns. As the objective, maybe more than any of the others in this list, that captures the essence of our discipline, we are pleased with results. Although, pleased, we will continue to endeavor to increase our foundational success in this area.

The direct and indirect results for Objective C suggest that student's score average to above average on both indicators. What this suggests is that again faculty and students share much across their assessment of this learning objective. Again, faculty rated this area of learning quite highly and students did as well. Both believe that sociology majors have a strong understanding of core concepts and research findings relative to human development, socialization, group dynamics, and life course processes.

The indirect results for Objective D were above average to excellent while the direct measure can be considered average to above average. While the faculty would like to have seen stronger abilities to identify the interrelationships among social institutions from our majors, students believe they are quite adept in this area. We believe it a good sign that students feel so strongly, and that we as faculty would like them to be even stronger in this area. This objective speaks to the needs of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century citizen-worker-adult more than any of the others and seems to bode well that our students feel confident in their understanding of the relationships between various religious, civic, economic, etc. organizations and institutions based on what they gained from our program. It also suggests that we as faculty identify this as an important need and will continue to remain focused on enhancing this learning objective.

Regarding Objective E, the direct measures suggest students believe they are average to above average to excellent, and in some cases even below average in this area. Department faculty seem to agree that this is an area that we need to improve upon. The faculty discussed that notions of power, resource distribution, ideology etc. should be more adequately demonstrated in the capstone papers in future semesters once the new curriculum begins. This is because students will be required to take two of four possible courses dealing with different social identities and inequalities and thus forms of oppression (i.e. Race, Gender, Social Class and Disability). In addition, this learning objective connects directly to Objective F below and suggestions for improving in this area will also add value to students' abilities to better understand and act to change the social inequalities they see in society.

Regarding Objective F, both the direct and indirect the assessment results indicate that there is slight deficiency in this objective when compared to the others. The faculty and students agree that the entire BA SOC program needs to focus more on solutions to social inequality and different forms and modes of social change in regard to policy, advocacy, institutional transformation and individual action. This is a comprehensive goal of the

program that will have to be addressed in a number of courses and aspects of the program in order lead to improvement in this area.

Action Item(s) for Assessment Results for 2015-2016 Academic Year

The department will focus efforts on the continued implementation of Objective F in the curriculum. The department will make this a focus of departmental discussions and identify specific practices where the identification of social problems as well as the offering of solutions for social change becomes salient. As this is a comprehensive goal and is a part of much of the curriculum, the department will discuss new strategies to focus this effort. Specifically, the implementation of the new curriculum should allow for students to obtain the requisite skill before taking the SOC 499 capstone and thus giving them the tools necessary to complete a comprehensive project on social inequality that not only identifies the sources of social problems but offers solutions of the amelioration of oppressive conditions.

Action Item for Assessment Tool(s) for 2015-2016 Academic Year

Three action items have been identified as in need of implementation in regard to assessment tools. First, the process of assessment this year has necessitated that the faculty review the objectives attached to each goal and streamline, clarify and make parsimonious any objectives that lack these qualities. As this was the first year that these new goals and objectives were assessed, this does not come as a surprise and will only strengthen future assessment effort. This will be the primary assessment tool action item for 2015-2016. The second goal will be to distribute the indirect assessment major survey to seniors graduating in each of the fall and spring semesters. This will give an accurate measure of SLO's and the effectiveness of the new curriculum in time. The third assessment tool action item is to develop a separate evaluation measure for Objective A. This will not have to be done until the next time that Goal 1 is assessed. As the department's five goals are assessed once per year, this will be an assessment tool action item for the 2020-2021 academic year. However, this may or may not be necessary because Objective A is one of the objectives that is being considered for revision.