

# STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

**PROGRAM:** Sociology (BA)

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**DATE:** September 30, 2018

**BRIEFLY DESCRIBE WHERE AND HOW ARE DATA AND DOCUMENTS USED TO GENERATE THIS REPORT BEING STORED:** Departmental Canvas Site

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Program description from the Course Catalog: Please copy and paste the current year's catalog description of this program. This is generally a one- to two paragraph description immediately following the name of the program. Please be sure to include the listing of program outcomes as printed.

The sociology program at Marymount fosters critical reflection on global issues of diversity, inequality, and social justice. The curriculum challenges students by taking an analytical approach to understand social life. Through coursework, research, and community-based learning, students develop career skills as well as an appreciation for the importance of community engagement.

Students gain analytical skills in the practical application of social theory and research design, and learn to apply these skills to address social injustice locally and globally. Applied theory and research methods are woven throughout the coursework. The culminating senior experience provides students with the opportunity to gain practical experience in real-world settings.

The Bachelor of Arts degree in sociology at Marymount University will provide students with a global perspective and cultural competence, preparing them for a wide range of career paths. Upon successful completion of this program, students will be able to:

- apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing;
- apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue;
- demonstrate an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice when working in community engagement settings such as the internship; and
- demonstrate effective presentation skills within the discipline.

List all of the program's learning outcomes: *(regardless of whether or not they are being assessed this year)*

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year	Year of Next Planned Assessment*
Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing	2014-2016	Yes	2017-2018
Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue;	2014-2016	Yes	2017-2018
Demonstrate an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice when working in community engagement settings such as the internship;	N/A	No	2018-2019
Demonstrate effective presentation skills within the discipline.	2013-2014	No	2018-2019

\* We received a year off on submitting our assessment report because of program review, so we shifted the dates forward by 1 year.

**Describe briefly how the program's outcomes support Marymount's mission, strategic plan, and relevant school plan:**

University mission: Marymount is a comprehensive Catholic university, guided by the traditions of the Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, that emphasizes intellectual curiosity, service to others, and a global perspective. A Marymount education is grounded in the liberal arts, promotes career preparation, and provides opportunities for personal and professional growth. A student-centered learning community that values diversity and focuses on the education of the whole person, Marymount guides the intellectual, ethical, and spiritual development of each individual.

The sociology major is focused on addressing inequality and achieving justice in a world of diversity and difference. All required courses in the major contribute to this departmental focus (i.e., Working for Justice, Working for Change; Social Justice; Addressing Injustice: Research Methods. In addition, electives explore aspects of diversity or inequality (i.e., Gender Inequality; Global Inequality and Community Development). Sociology courses support the university's mission by cultivating an appreciation of the value of difference and an understanding of the structural foundations of social injustice. Sociology students make the world their classroom, whether it's through regular short-term study abroad offerings, our globally networked classrooms, or global internships and study-abroad. As an applied program, our classes also provide undergraduates with the skills to make meaningful change in this world. We are committed to building a community of students and faculty who share the common interest in understanding the importance of global connections and the benefits of cultural diversity.

We've taken our RSHM heritage to heart -- the mission offers a message of inclusion: "So that ALL may have life, and have it to the full." Our social justice-oriented program also provides students with the foundation knowledge to effectively address community needs. We focus on empowering students to value diversity as strength, recognize internationality as a gift and understand the dynamics of inclusion. We accomplish these goals in terms of what we do and how we understand our place in the world -- how we work collaboratively with the many communities that we serve. Our program takes an applied approach -- our majors get a liberal arts degree with analytical skills that prepare them to adapt to new situations, synthesize multiple perspectives, and to work with and inspire others. These transferable skills enable students to demonstrate the impact of intellectual curiosity on the job and in their communities. Many of our students enter social justice-type careers with non-profits or NGOs, pursuing jobs in local or international community development.

**Provide a brief description of the assessment process used including strengths, challenges and planned improvements to the process, and provide evidence of the existence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment (generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points):**

A culture of continuous improvement requires that departmental faculty engage in conversations about the connection between the sociology curriculum and student progress through that curriculum for the purpose of developing a shared understanding of the best strategies that can contribute to this connection. Our guiding question is - *How well does our program support sociology majors toward the goal of achieving the intended program learning outcomes?*

Description of the assessment process: We followed up on two areas for the evaluation: apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing (Outcome #1), and apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue (Outcome #2). We assessed student products from the Senior Practicum as our direct measure of these learning outcomes - the Senior Research Report. Indirect measures include the following two sources of information: 1) results of the *Graduating Student Survey*, which is administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness; 2) focus group conducted by an Administrative Assistant in the School of Education and Human Services conducted with students who were completing the Senior Practicum, and 3) Alumni Survey administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. The three faculty members were involved in applying the evaluation rubric to evaluate student work. The same faculty members were involved in analyzing the results reported in this document.

Strengths: All faculty in the program are involved in the assessment process. In addition to the full-time faculty we initiated program improvement conversations with adjunct faculty working with the program's foundation course -- SOC 131 Principles of Sociology. We continue convening all instructors of this course in an effort to standardize course content and sync the course with the latest disciplinary recommendations. All sections of the course require a common assignment so that we could compare student progress across sections of the course. During the final exam period we bring all sections of the course together for a culminating event (Sociology Innovation Lab) that emphasizes how sociology informs social action as well as career applications. The conversations that were initiated in the context of SOC 131 have led to a reflection on the program overall as well as specific curricular improvements such as the additional electives which will be added in Fall 2018.

**Challenges:** We continue to work around limited staffing as well as staff turnover. With the exception of the 2 full time faculty, different faculty members have participated in these continuous improvement conversations over the period of review, making it difficult to build a common foundation of understanding from which to implement change. This is particularly true as we attempted to expand our data collection to the research methods course (which had 3 different instructors over a period of 3 years). We continue having program improvement conversations with our full-time faculty and adjunct faculty. Our departmental culture is based on coordinating efforts among those who are teaching sociology courses as well as the constant reflection on student accomplishment. We generated shared meaning as a result of these assessment conversations, and that shared understanding became the foundation for modifying course assignments or making new course recommendations.

**Describe how the program implemented its planned improvements from last year:**

Since writing the previous report, we've completed program review. Our conversations regarding the sequencing of research methods and writing skills were expanded to include the integration of career/transferrable skills across the courses in the program. We initiated this planning process by focusing on our foundation course - SOC 131 Principles of Sociology in Global Perspective. This discussion delayed adding electives – that is planned for Fall 2018. We've added a section of SOC 251 Working for Justice, Working for Change to each semester and we now offer a writing-intensive elective during the regular academic year as well as the summer session. In addition, we expanded data collection by examining questions about how the program contributed to student development on the Graduating Student Survey.

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update <i>(Indicate when, where, and how planned improvement was completed. If planned improvement was not completed, please provide explanation.)</i>
Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing.	Students suggested we increase the number of electives, as they would like "(m)ore group discussions on SOC addressing social justice, topics in human rights, addressing injustice and advocacy." In response we've added a new course SOC 251 Working for Justice, Working for Change to be offered in Spring 2017. The course is intended to introduce students to a range of career opportunities available in a variety of organizations as well as the inquiry learning process. We will also evaluate the feasibility of increasing the number of writing-intensive electives offered. In addition, we will discuss ways we might scaffold the writing objectives across course levels, particularly in conjunction with development of critical reasoning and inquiry skills.	✓ As a result of the program review process we expanded this discussion to include career and transferable skills. We will add electives that compliment our program's focus on community development and urban planning, that reinforce writing, research and career skills and that further distinguish our program relative to others in the metro area.
Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue	We revised the research methods sequence, requiring one course that focuses on the basic process of empirical testing. We also can identify major electives that reinforce research skills in some of these courses. Familiarity with the scientific method is problematic for some students who are in need of additional exposure. We will review which inquiry skills are introduced at specific points in the program, with attention to the skills that are introduced in residency requirement courses. This should ensure that we are able to strengthen research skills for transfer students as well as those who begin our program at Marymount.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Revised the research methods sequence to one basic course [SOC 351 Addressing Injustice: Research Methods]</li> <li>✓ Focused our efforts on career skills (versus inquiry skills) per results from our program review.</li> <li>✓ Discussed ways to reinforce research skills for majors, given that many of our students are also transfer students.</li> </ul>



**Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report:**

University Assessment Committee comments: A thoughtful and comprehensive summary of the past and of the present transitional efforts. Because the program is in transition, there was a good faith effort to continue effective efforts. There was also a realistic effort to move forward. The outcomes have changed since the last report. The new outcomes, assessed for the first time, are responsive to the UAC feedback and appear to be workable for the program. The expansion of opportunities to collect relevant data is encouraged. The analysis is relevant and useful to the program's efforts at continuous improvement. It is clear that the program is using the assessment process to improve effectiveness. Continue in the process you are using for assessment. Strive to maintain stable core outcome variables so you can develop trend data. It is clear the program is committed to continuous improvement. Continue to use this collegial approach to your assessment activities.

As requested, we kept our learning outcomes consistent and continued our collegial approach to assessment activities.

**Outcomes Assessment 2017-2018**

**Learning Outcome 1:** Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing

**Assessment Activity**

<p><b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i></p>	<p><b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i></p>	<p><b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population</i></p>	<p><b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i></p>
<p><b>Direct measure: Senior Papers</b> Three faculty members evaluated 14 Senior Research Projects, which were completed in the SOC 495 Senior Practicum. This outcome was assessed using the following two dimensions of the evaluation rubric: a) Sociological imagination: Issue/problem is described and analyzed by considering the interaction of social forces, structural constraints, social context, and/or human agency. b) Effective writing: Information is effectively integrated, interpreted, and evaluated in support of a coherent thesis.</p>	<p>An acceptable level of student performance is a rating of 3.00/5.00, with a majority of students earning a rating of 3.00 or above on the sociological imagination and effective writing criteria.</p>	<p>All 14 research reports completed in Senior Practicum during the review period were evaluated. These reports were written in SOC 495 Senior Practicum – the course was offered twice during the evaluation period (9 for 2016-2017 &amp; 5 for 2017-2018).</p>	<p><b>1) Analysis process:</b> Sociology program faculty evaluated the Senior research reports using a custom designed rubric that was developed through group discussion (Attachment A). Before the rating process occurred, all papers were de-identified and made available electronically. The 3 raters discussed the three criteria: sociological imagination, written communication and research methodology, and then independently assigned a numerical value to each criteria on the rubric for each individual paper (individual scores). Subsequently the three raters met to discuss their ratings on each paper and then assigned a collective rating to each rubric dimension. Both scores were recorded. We continue to find conversations shared during the evaluation process to be valuable for the purpose of strengthening the program and we plan to continue this type of collaboration when conducting assessment in the future.</p> <p><b>2) Findings</b> (see Appendix B) <b>a) Sociological imagination: 79% acceptable rating</b></p>

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process.  2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
			<p>3 of 14 student projects were rated between a 4 and 5 out of 5  8 of 14 student projects were rated between a 3 and 4 out of 5  3 of 14 student projects were rated between a 2 and 3 out of 5</p> <p><b>b) Effective writing: 64% acceptable rating</b>  5 of 14 student projects were rated between a 4 and 5 out of 5  4 of 14 student projects were rated between a 3 and 4 out of 5  5 of 14 student projects were rated between a 2 and 3 out of 5</p>
<p><b>Indirect Measure: Senior Focus Groups</b>  At the end of the Senior Practicum course, the Administrative Assistant conducted the Focus Group in Fall 2017 (See Appendix C). Responses from all questions are included where relevant.</p>	<p>An acceptable level is that students are able to articulate what they have learned and that a majority of student comments identify a positive relationship between their program experience and their learning.</p>	<p>The Administrative Assistant convened a focus group in Fall 2017 with a total of 5 students contributing.</p>	<p><b>In addition to noting that they valued learning about social justice issues in a global context, students specifically mentioned several high impact practices used in our department such as study abroad, experiential learning and globally networked learning:</b> “Studying what is going on around the world as a sociology major you discover how you can make a change. Important to see the injustice out there.”; “Studying abroad in the Netherlands and going on one of the tours we went on (in) a refuge boat and it was freezing and we learned what refugees go through. We had a refugee talking with us”; “The human rights courses are very good. When you have to talk with students from another country by conference call. ...It was interesting to be able to interact with other students from Mexico”; “The Global Village we had to do an assignment with other students from around the world. That course led us to some interesting discussions. I thought thee certificate for being in the Global Village (SOLIYA project) was nice.”</p> <p><b>Students also mentioned developing their critical thinking and writing skills in courses such as SOC 350 Social Justice and SOC 495 Senior Practicum.</b> “Senior seminar helped develop my writing skills.”; “SOC 350 was one of the first classes that challenged me. We had to do reading before</p>

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process.  2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
			each class and write in a concise and informed way about the reading. You had to analyze everything you were reading. I could see my progress from the beginning to the end of the semester.”
<p><b>Indirect Measure: Graduating Student Surveys</b> are administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Survey questions analyzed</p> <p><u>Evaluation of Preparation:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Apply knowledge and skills to new situations</li> <li>- Develop a coherent written argument</li> </ul> <p><u>Evaluation of development:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I have the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective at making positive changes in my community</li> <li>- Awareness of global issues</li> <li>- Interest in cultures different from your own</li> </ul>	An acceptable level is for a majority of responding students to register “good” or “excellent” responses.	There were 4 respondents for AY 2016-17 and 5 respondents for AY 2017-18. Not all respondents answered all survey questions therefore results will be reported as % of those responding.	<p><b><u>Apply knowledge and skills to new situations</u></b>  2016-17: 75% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.  2017-18: 60% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Develop coherent written argument</u></b>  2016-17: 75% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.  2017-18: 60% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Knowledge and skills for positive change in my community</u></b>  2016-17: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.  2017-18: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Awareness of global issues</u></b>  2016-17: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.  2017-18: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Interest in cultures different from your own</u></b>  2016-17: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.  2017-18: 100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p>

## Interpretation of Results:

Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing

**Describe the extent to which this learning outcome has been achieved by students** (*Use both direct and indirect measure results*):

A majority of our students met this learning outcome (79% on sociological imagination; 64% on effective writing). On the Graduating Student Survey, when asked 100% of our students rate their experience “good” or “excellent” regarding if they have the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective at making positive changes in their community, their awareness of global issues, and interest in cultures different from their own.

**Briefly describe program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**

Strengths:

When it comes to stimulating their sociological imagination, students appreciate the high impact practices used in our department such as study abroad, experiential learning and globally networked learning. At the program level, we stress the interplay between social context, social structure, and human agency as the principal building blocks of contemporary sociology. A review of their work indicates that our students wrestle with sociological questions that are contemporary, far-reaching, and consequential. Senior projects examine the relationship between global forces and local structures, and the ways this relationship can impact individuals and communities.

Opportunities:

We will continue to emphasize themes across courses in the entire program. We hope to encourage students to take the sociological imagination even further by using this perspective to motivate research into the social world that is relevant, career focused, and directed toward positive social change.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**

- Strengthen development of writing skills in the courses that focus primarily on critical reasoning and rhetoric/argumentation.
- Maintain the emphasis of writing skills in courses that focus on inquiry.

**Learning Outcome 2:** Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue

### Assessment Activity

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process. 2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
<b>Direct measure: Senior Papers</b> Three faculty members evaluated 14 Senior Research Projects, which were completed in the SOC 495 Senior Practicum. This outcome was assessed using the	An acceptable level of student performance is a rating of 3.00/5.00, with a majority of students earning a rating of 3.00 or above on the research method and/or analysis criteria.	All 14 research reports completed in Senior Practicum during the review period were evaluated. These reports were written in SOC 495 Senior Practicum – the course was	<b>1) Analysis process:</b> Sociology program faculty evaluated the Senior research reports using a custom designed rubric that was developed through group discussion (Attachment A). Before the rating process occurred, all papers were de-identified and made available electronically. The 3 raters discussed the three criteria: sociological imagination, written

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<p>following dimension on the evaluation rubric:  A research method is identified, data is collected somewhat systematically, and some analysis is performed.</p>		<p>offered twice during the evaluation period (9 for 2016-2017 &amp; 5 for 2017-2018).</p>	<p>communication and research methodology, and then independently assigned a numerical value to each criteria on the rubric for each individual paper (individual scores). Subsequently the three raters met to discuss their ratings on each paper and then assigned a collective rating to each rubric dimension. Both scores were recorded. We continue to find these conversations shared during the evaluation process to be valuable for the purpose of strengthening the program and we plan to continue this type of collaboration when conducting assessment in the future.</p> <p><b>2) Findings</b> (See Appendix B)  <b>Research methods: 64% achieved an acceptable rating</b>  1 of 14 student projects were rated between 4 and 5 out of 5  8 of 14 student projects were rated between 3 and 4 out of 5  5 of 14 student projects were rated between 2 and 3 out of 5, which is below acceptable.</p>
<p><b>Indirect Measure: Senior Focus Groups</b>  At the end of the Senior Practicum course, the Administrative Assistant conducted the Focus Group in Fall 2017 (See Appendix C). Responses from all questions are included where relevant.</p>	<p>An acceptable level is that students are able to articulate what they have learned and that a majority of student comments identify a positive relationship between their program experience and their learning.</p>	<p>The Administrative Assistant convened a focus group in Fall 2017 with a total of 5 students contributing.</p>	<p><b>When it comes to feeling comfortable using research methods, many of our students continue to express a desire for additional preparation.</b> “Research methods did not adequately prepare us for the senior seminar. I felt I learned most of my writing for sociology in the study abroad class and internship and the senior seminar. This senior seminar was difficult for many of us as we didn’t have a good experience in research methods.”; “The research methods course I took at Marymount was not helpful.”; “The structure of the Research Methods course was more self-taught than anything.”; “In research methods it would be helpful to learn how to make surveys and questionnaires...”</p>
<p><b>Indirect Measure: Graduating Student Surveys</b> are administered by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Survey questions analyzed:  Evaluation of preparation:  - Conduct research to support position</p>	<p>An acceptable level is for a majority of responding students to register “good” or “excellent” responses.</p>	<p>There were 4 respondents for AY 2016-17 and 5 respondents for AY 2017-18. Not all respondents answered all survey questions therefore results will be reported as % of those responding.</p>	<p><b>Conduct research to support position</b>  2016-17: 75% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.  2017-18: 60% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p> <p><b>Use quantitative/qualitative techniques in field</b>  2016-17: 75% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.</p>

<b>Outcome Measures</b> <i>Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.</i>	<b>Performance Standard</b> <i>Define and explain acceptable level of student performance.</i>	<b>Data Collection</b> <i>Discuss how the data was collected and describe the student population</i>	<b>Analysis</b> <i>1) Describe the analysis process.  2) Present the findings of the analysis including the numbers participating and deemed acceptable.</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use quantitative/qualitative techniques in your professional field</li> <li>- Solve problems in your field using your knowledge and skills</li> </ul>			<p>2017-18: 60% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Solve problems in field using knowledge &amp; skills</u></b>  2016-17: 75% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 4 students responding.  2017-18: 80% registered good or excellent when evaluating their preparation, with 5 students responding.</p>
<p><b>Indirect Measure:</b> The Marymount Alumni Survey by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Survey questions analyzed:</p> <p>How well did your education prepare you to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- conduct research to support a position</li> <li>- use quantitative/qualitative techniques within your professional field</li> <li>- apply knowledge and skills to new situations</li> <li>- solve problem in your field using your knowledge and skills</li> </ul>	<p>An acceptable level is for a majority of responding students to register “good” or “excellent” responses.</p>	<p>There were 2 respondents for AY 2015-16 and 1 respondent for AY 2011-12.</p>	<p>The findings on the alumni surveys regarding research methods stand in stark contrast to statements made by graduating seniors who are completing their senior practicum project:</p> <p><b><u>Conduct research to support a position</u></b>  100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their educational preparation, with 3 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Use quantitative/qualitative techniques within your professional field</u></b>  100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their educational preparation, with 3 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Apply knowledge and skills to new situations</u></b>  100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their educational preparation, with 3 students responding.</p> <p><b><u>Solve problem in your field using your knowledge and skills</u></b>  100% registered good or excellent when evaluating their educational preparation, with 3 students responding.</p>

**Interpretation of Results:**

Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue

**Describe the extent to which this learning outcomes has been achieved by students (Use both direct and indirect measure results):**

A majority of our students (64%) received an acceptable rating on identifying a research method is identified, collecting data systematically, and performing an analysis. The most common reason for falling below this standard is that some students failed to move beyond conducting a literature review. The Senior Focus Group (which was conducted at the same time students were completing their senior research project) captured their discomfort with doing independent research. One student expressed an interest in learning how to construct a survey (this was added to the last revision of our research methods course). As an interesting contrast, the small group of students who responded to the Alumni survey felt very comfortable with their preparation for conducting research.

**Briefly describe program strengths and opportunities for improvement relative to assessment of outcome:**

**Strengths:** The overall score on Research Methods significantly increased since the last time we assessed this component (from 40% to 64%). Students were aware of exposure to research methods in multiple courses beyond SOC 351 Addressing Injustice.

**Opportunities:** Students express a desire to have better preparation in their research methods course. It is possible that the timing of the Focus Group comes as students are struggling with the inevitable end of semester challenges that accompany a senior research project. We will work on opportunities for students to improve their construction of research questions/topics and to match methodologies with operationalized concepts. We anticipate that the proposed departmental research project will provide an opportunity to reinforce connections to methodological skills as well as to spark intellectual curiosity when it comes to posing researchable questions.

**Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:**

We plan to consult with our contacts in a range of community organizations to re-evaluate the types of methods most useful to community organizations. Following such consultations we will work to ensure our required and elective courses provide students with sufficient exposure to those methods of data collection and analysis. Doing so across our program should ensure that transfer students also receive solid training in research methods.

In addition, we'll use the Omeka site from the departmental research project to:

- help students identify the connection between "inquiry" and the process of research, and
  - emphasize multiple research methods systematically across program electives.
-