STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT REPORT

PROGRAM: SOCIOLOGY
SUBMITTED BY: Matt Bakker
DATE: September 30, 2020

Executive Summary: Description of Assessment Process

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

Learning Outcome	Year of Last Assessment	Assessed This Year *(Y=Yes)*	Year of Next Planned Assessment
Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing	2017-18	N	2022-23
Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue	2017-18	N	2022-23
Demonstrate an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice when working in community engagement settings such as the internship	NA	Y	2024-25
Demonstrate effective presentation skills within the discipline	2013-14	Y	2024-25

Provide a <u>brief</u> description of the assessment process used including how results are shared and discussed and strengths, challenges, and planned improvements to the <u>process</u>, providing evidence of a culture of continuous improvement based on assessment. If there is something that is impeding your ability to implement improvements, please comment on those issues *(generally not more than two paragraphs, may use bullet points)*:

As we've noted in previous reports, our department's culture of continuous improvement is marked by regular communication and conversation among Sociology faculty members focused on the connection between our curriculum and student progress through that curriculum. Our 3 full-time faculty members are regularly involved in those discussions and we invite our adjunct faculty to participate sas often as they can. At the beginning of each of the last two academic years, for example, we brought together all faculty – full-time and adjunct – to plan for the new year, discuss program objectives, and share best practices. Through on-going conversations in this and other settings, anchored in the findings of our past assessment, we develop and reinforce a shared understanding of the best strategies to ensure that our students succeed and that our program achieves its learning objectives.

For this assessment report, our assessment process involved gathering student products from required courses at two stages in our major: presentations from our senior-level Community Engagement Experience (497) course and research reports from our second-year requirement Working for Justice, Working for Change (251). Our sample included each presentation submitted in 497 during the Spring 2019 and Spring 2020 semesters (a total of fourteen presentations) and a sample of 22 research reports from 251 courses taught during Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019, and Spring 2020 (since this course includes majors and non-majors, we included papers from the 11 majors who took the course during the reporting period and an additional 11 papers randomly sampled from the non-majors who took the course throughout the period).

With our sample of student work gathered, the department's three full-time faculty members independently rated each student product using a custom rubric designed to measure the two learning outcomes assessed in this report. Once that was complete, summary statistics (mean and median score on each of the three dimensions of our rubric broken down by course and student type (major and non-major)) were prepared and reviewed by all three faculty members. Finally, we convened a meeting in mid-September among the three full-time faculty members to review our results. With this meeting we hoped to identify both how to improve our assessment process going forward and how to use the results we've come up with to improve our program effectiveness and individual teaching. In this meeting, faculty shared overall impressions about the student work and the assessment process. Faculty reviewed together a few of the student products with the widest discrepancy in ratings to determine how and why these papers or presentations had received such divergent ratings. Through this conversation and review, faculty noted the difficulty

we faced in applying our rubric to an assignment (the research report in SOC 251) that was not intentionally designed to align with the two program outcomes (this difficulty arose particularly in relation to Learning Outcome #1 assessed below). As a result, we identified the need to integrate across our curriculum more student activities and assignments that can be used to directly assess our program outcomes.

Closing the Loop: Progress on Planned Improvements from Prior Year

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

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update
Apply a sociological imagination to global issues through effective writing	• 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	Faculty are now incorporating writing as a major component all across our curriculum. Various writing skills are scaffolded at different course levels. In lower-level courses, for example, students are asked to develop note-taking skills (203 and 204) and practice writing reflection papers (222 and 251) to both summarize content and begin analyzing academic articles. In higher level courses, students write lengthier papers that demand both the synthesis of research and analysis of sociological content.
Apply a relevant quantitative, qualitative, or visual research method to analyze a sociological issue	Consult contacts in community organizations to identify methods most useful to community organizations. Following such consultations, ensure that our required and elective courses provide students with sufficient exposure to those methods of data collection and analysis. 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.	Through conversation with contacts in community organizations and a review of job advertisements, we identified a range of analytic, communication, relationship, and research skills valued by community organizations and non-profit advocacy organizations. Faculty in the department are emphasizing research application and skill development in most of our courses, asking students to combine both traditional and experiential research methods, and to develop professional presentation skills to share results. Examples include: in our SOC 261 course, students are asked to use visual research methods. They go into local neighborhoods to take photographs capturing the themes of diversity, community, and culture. Combining these photographs with a description of the relevant social context, students conduct sociological analysis and communicate their findings to the class through a visual narrative presentation; in our 306 course students use research to better understand the dynamics of social mobility and social inequality in a historically Black community in Arlington. Students begin by reviewing online maps and Census data describing the area and then visit the neighborhood to make and record observations. While on site, students are encouraged to use the Zillow mobile app to compare and contrast properties values of houses that draw their attention.

Outcome	Planned Improvement	Update
		Finally, with colleagues from the Library and the English department we've defined the structure of the Omeka site (e.g., identifying layout and defining a controlled vocabulary for archiving). As part of a class project, students organized oral histories conducted with residents of the Green Valley neighborhood. The resources on the Omeka site will be available in coming years for students carrying out independent research in SOC 495.

Provide a response to last year's University Assessment Committee review of the program's learning assessment report:
In general, the committee offered very positive feedback on our program's previous assessment report, commenting in conclusion "Keep up the good work!" The committee did comment on the target used for our assessment measures. The committee suggested that, by simply aiming for a majority of student work products to achieve our acceptable level of performance, our "target might not be sufficiently challenging." We have taken this comment into account during our current assessment process. For this year's report, we have assessed student work products at both the 200-level and the 400-level. At the 200-level, we continue to use the 50% standard. But we have bumped up our standard to 60% for student work products at the 400-level with the belief that students' skills and level of performance should increase as they progress through our program.

Learning Outcome 1: Demonstrate an understanding of the value of diverse perspectives for achieving social justice when working in community engagement settings such as the internship

Outcome Measures *Explain how student learning will be measured and indicate whether it is direct or indirect.*	Performance Standard *Define the acceptable level of student performance.*	Data Collection *Discuss the process for collecting this data: who conducted the assessment, when, and how?*	Result *Did you meet your target? What was the result?*
Direct measure: Student presentations from SOC 497	A rating of 3 or higher on the first two dimension of our rubric is an acceptable level of student performance. We aim for at least 60% of student work products at the senior level to be rated at or above this standard.	Data collected: All final student presentations submitted in SOC 497 were collected. This amounted to 14 presentations. The course was offered twice over the reporting period (Spring 2019 and Spring 2020). 7 presentations were submitted in each of the two semesters. The analysis process: In mid-September 2020, the department's three full-time faculty members independently reviewed and rated the presentations using a rubric designed for this assessment. Our assessment rubric – included as an attachment below -- had 3 dimensions, which were: "Addresses social justice issues"; "Understanding the value of diverse perspectives"; and "Professional presentation". The independent ratings of the three faculty members were averaged to come up with a final score for each student work product along each of	**We met our target** for this measure. 10 of 14 student presentations (**71%**) were rated 3 or higher on the first dimension of our rubric. 11 of 14 student presentations (**79%**) were rated 3 or higher on the second dimension of our rubric. Here is a more detailed breakdown: • 5 of 14 student presentations were rated at 4 or higher on our 5-point scale for the *first* dimension of our rubric. • 5 of 14 student presentations were rated between 3 and 4 on our 5-point scale for the *first* dimension of our rubric. • 4 of 14 student presentations were rated below 3 on our 5-point scale for the *first* dimension of our rubric, which is below the acceptable rating. • 6 of 14 student presentations were rated at 4 or higher on our 5-point scale for the *second* dimension of our rubric. • 5 of 14 student presentations were rated between 3 and 4 on our 5-point scale for the *second* dimension of our rubric.

		the 3 dimensions of our rubric.	• 3 of 14 student presentations were rated below 3 on our 5-point scale for the *second* dimension of our rubric, which is below the acceptable rating.
Direct measure: Student research reports from SOC 251	A rating of 3 or higher on the first two dimension of our rubric is an acceptable level of student performance. We aim for at least 50% of student work products at the 200 level to be rated at or above this standard.	Data collected: All student inquiry reports submitted by Sociology majors in SOC 251 during the reporting period were collected. The course was offered four times during the period (Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019, and Spring 2020). 11 inquiry reports were submitted by Sociology majors over these 4 semesters. 11 additional student inquiry reports were randomly selected from among all those submitted by non-Sociology majors over the same four quarters. These reports were selected because the Inquiry project in this course has traditionally asked students to volunteer for a minimum of 10 hours in a social change organization or movement and combine this experiential learning with more traditional academic research to strengthen their understanding the dynamics of social change work (the volunteering expectation was eliminated in the Spring	**We met our target** for this measure. 16 of 22 student inquiry reports (**73%**) were rated 3 or higher on the first dimension of our rubric. 12 of 22 student inquiry reports (**55%**) were rated 3 or higher on the second dimension of our rubric. Here is a more detailed breakdown: • 7 of 22 student presentations were rated at 4 or higher on our 5-point scale for the *first* dimension of our rubric. • 9 of 22 student presentations were rated between 3 and 4 on our 5-point scale for the *first* dimension of our rubric. • 6 of 22 student presentations were rated below 3 on our 5-point scale for the *first* dimension of our rubric, which is below the acceptable rating. • 5 of 22 student presentations were rated at 4 or higher on our 5-point scale for the *second* dimension of our rubric. • 7 of 22 student presentations were rated between 3 and 4 on our 5-point scale for the *second* dimension of our rubric.

		2020 semester due to Covid-19).	• 10 of 22 student presentations were rated below 3 on our 5-point scale for the *second* dimension of our rubric, which is below the acceptable rating.
		The analysis process: In mid-September 2020, the department's three full-time faculty members independently reviewed and rated the papers using the rubric described above. The faculty's three independent ratings were averaged to come up with a final score for each student work product along the 3 dimensions of the rubric.	
Indirect measure: Graduating Student Surveys, 2018-19 and 2019-20	At least 80% of responses are "Agree or Strongly Agree" or "Somewhat or To a Great Extent" (depending on the scale used for each question) on relevant questions from the Graduating Student Survey for each of the two academic years reviewed in this report.	Data collected: We have drawn from the reports on Sociology students' responses to the Graduating Student Surveys conducted by PIE for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20. These reports contain data pre-analyzed by PIE and offer summary measures of the mean response and percentage of respondents answering with one of the two highest responses on the scale. We have chosen the two items from the survey most relevant for Learning Outcome 1. Those are: student responses to the statement "I'm confident in my ability to work collaboratively with people of diverse backgrounds and experiences" and student answers to the question of how well their education	**We met our target on this measure.** In both survey years, 100% of students either "agreed" or "strongly agreed" to the statement "I'm confident in my ability to work collaboratively with people of diverse backgrounds and experiences." In both survey years, 100% of students either responded "somewhat" or "to a great extent" to the question about how their education contributed to their development of "[t]he ability to collaborate with others from different backgrounds and experiences."

		contributed to their development of "[t]he ability to collaborate with others from different backgrounds and experiences." While the Graduating Student Survey asks students about their entire Marymount education, student responses on these surveys reflect in no small measure their experiences and academic development in our program.	

Interpretation of Results

Analysis and Implications: *What does this result tell you about the extent to which your students achieved this outcome? What are the strengths and weaknesses that this result highlights, and what are the implications for your curriculum or your program?*

Overall findings:

A solid majority of our students, at both the senior level (71% on our first dimension; 79% on our second dimension) and the second-year level (73% for our first dimension; 55% for our second dimension), met Learning Outcome 1. In addition, the indirect evidence we have from the Graduating Student Surveys from the last two academic years suggests that our students are prepared to engage productively with diverse perspectives as they move into their careers and work for social justice, as *all* graduating Sociology students feel comfortable and believe that their Marymount education strengthened their ability to collaborate with others from different backgrounds and experiences.

Strengths:

Our program's unique approach to Sociology centers the *real-world application* of our discipline's concerns with issues of social justice, diversity, and difference. Across our full range of courses, students participate in discussion and debate within the classroom, they share ideas and experiences with their classmates, and they're asked to draw from a diversity of perspectives as they sharpen their understanding of complex social patterns and phenomena. The findings from this assessment exercise demonstrate that a sizeable majority of our students both gain the skills and aptitudes to recognize and value the importance of diverse perspectives when working for social change and justice *and* are able to apply these skills and aptitudes when engaged in career-oriented settings. Additionally, we see progress as students move through our program as senior-level ratings on the second dimension of our rubric are much higher than the ratings of students at the second-year level.

Weaknesses and implications:

Although we met our assessment targets for this learning objective, our program is clearly not perfect as significant numbers of student work products still fall below our performance standard. We believe that this is due, in part, to recent challenges in placing all students in relevant internships and/or community engagement opportunities. Meaningful participation in relevant community settings is the *sine qua non* for students to solidify their understanding of just how valuable it is to consider diverse perspectives when working for justice and change. We may need to identify existing barriers that leave some of our students unprepared for or unable to access high-quality internships or community engagement experiences.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements for this year based on assessment of outcome:
- Identify barriers to securing internships
- Strengthen coordination with career services with the goal of broadening the range of internships available and making it possible for students with limitations to meaningfully participate in these experiential-learning opportunities
- Solidify department connections with community organizations that offer valuable internship opportunities

Learning Outcome 2: Demonstrate effective presentation skills within the discipline

Outcome Measures	Performance Standard	Data Collection	Result
Direct measure: Student presentations from SOC 497	A rating of 3 or higher on the third dimension of our rubric is an acceptable level of student performance. We aim for at least 60% of student work products at the senior level to be rated at or above this standard.	<u>Data collected:</u> All final student presentation submitted in SOC 497 were collected. This amounted to 14 presentations. The course was offered twice over the reporting period (Spring 2019 and Spring 2020). 7 presentations were submitted in each of the two semesters. <u>The analysis process:</u> In mid-September 2020, the department's three full-time faculty members independently reviewed and rated the papers using a rubric we designed collectively for this assessment. These 3 independent ratings were averaged to come up with a final score for each student work product.	**We met our target** for this measure. 9 of 14 student presentations (**64%**) were rated 3 or higher on the third dimension of our rubric. • 6 of 14 student presentations were rated at 4 or higher on our 5-point scale for the *third* dimension of our rubric. • 3 of 14 student presentations were rated between 3 and 4 our 5-point scale for the *third* dimension of our rubric. • 5 of 14 student presentations were rated below 3 on our 5-point scale for the *third* dimension of our rubric, which is below the acceptable rating.
Direct measure: Student research reports from SOC 251	A rating of 3 or higher on the third dimension of our rubric is an acceptable level of student performance. We aim for at least 50% of student work products at the 200 level to be rated at or above this standard.	<u>Data collected:</u> All student inquiry reports submitted by Sociology majors in SOC 251 during the reporting period were collected. The course was offered four times during the period (Fall 2018, Spring 2019, Fall 2019, and Spring 2020). 11 inquiry reports were submitted by Sociology majors over these 4 semesters. 11 additional student inquiry reports were randomly selected from among all those	**We did not meet our target** for this measure. Only 8 of 22 (**36%**) of the research reports were rated a 3 or higher. • 3 of 22 student presentations were rated at 4 or higher on our 5-point scale for the *third* dimension of our rubric. • 5 of 22 student presentations were rated between 3 and 4 our 5-point scale for the *third* dimension of our rubric.

Outcome Measures	Performance Standard	Data Collection	Result
		submitted by non-Sociology majors over the same four quarters. The analysis process: In mid-September 2020, the department's three full-time faculty members independently reviewed and rated the papers using the rubric described above. The faculty's three independent ratings were averaged to come up with a final score for each student work product along the 3 dimensions of the rubric.	• 14 of 22 student presentations were rated below 3 on our 5-point scale for the *third* dimension of our rubric, which is below the acceptable rating.
Indirect measure: Graduating Student Surveys, 2018-19 and 2019-20	At least 80% of responses are "Good or Excellent" on relevant questions from the Graduating Student Survey for each of the two academic years reviewed in this report.	Data collected: We have drawn from the Graduating Student Surveys conducted by PIE for the years 2018-19 and 2019-20. 6 graduating Sociology students responded to the survey in both years. These data were pre-analyzed by PIE and contained summary measures of the mean response and percentage of respondents answering with one of the two highest responses on the scale. We have chosen the two items from the survey most relevant for learning outcome 2. These asked students how well their Marymount education had prepared them with the career skills of "[developing] a coherent written	**We met our target for this measure** In the 2018-19 survey, 100% of students responded either "good" or "excellent" to both questions. In the 2019-20 survey, 100% of students responded either "good" or "excellent" to the question about their ability to deliver a coherent oral presentation while 83.3% of students responded either "good" or "excellent" to the question about their ability to develop a coherent written argument.

Outcome Measures	Performance Standard	Data Collection	Result
		argument" and "[delivering] a coherent oral presentation." Students were asked to respond to these questions on a 5-point scale from "poor" to "excellent."	

Interpretation of Results

Analysis and Implications: *What does this result tell you about the extent to which your students achieved this outcome? What are the strengths and weaknesses that this result highlights, and what are the implications for your curriculum or your program?*

Overall findings:
The findings reported above for Learning Objective 2 are a mixed bag. At the second-year level the majority of our students' Inquiry reports did not meet our standard of performance; only 36% of the Inquiry reports were rated at 3 or above, which fell below our target of 50% at or above this level. At the senior level, however, 64% of student presentations were rated at 3 or above on the third dimension of our rubric. In addition, the indirect evidence we have from the Graduating Student Surveys suggests that the vast majority of graduating Sociology students feel confident in their ability to present their ideas and findings in a professional manner; 100% of our students responding to the survey over the last two years responded either "good" or "excellent" when asked about their confidence in their ability to make a coherent oral presentation, while 92% of our students responding to the survey answered "good" or "excellent" when describing their ability to develop a coherent written argument

Strengths:
While our findings are not all positive, they do suggest important progression in professional presentation skills across our curriculum. By the time our students complete all program requirements, a solid majority of them have developed presentation skills that are appropriate for our discipline and for the social change workplace. And, upon graduation, the vast majority of them express confidence in their ability to deliver an oral presentation and develop a written argument both of which are fundamental elements in any professional presentation of ideas and research findings.

Weaknesses and implications:
The findings from the 251 reports highlight a specific weakness that we can work to correct. In part, we believe that the low ratings students' Inquiry reports received on this measure were due to the nature of the assignment itself, which may have emphasized the inquiry process and the critical analysis of social change activities to the detriment of professional presentation skills. That could be easily corrected by making minor revisions to the assignment in this course, but we'll also take this as evidence for the need to emphasize even more the development of discipline-specific presentation skills across our entire curriculum.

Discuss planned curricular or program improvements <u>for this year based on assessment of outcome:</u>

- Strengthen emphasis on presentation skills across the entire curriculum
- Ensure that assignments and learning activities provide direct measures of program learning objectives

Appendices *(please only include items that will help reviewers understand your process – for example, test questions, rubrics, survey questions, more detailed description of assessment measures, summary tables of survey results, etc.)*

Please find attached the following items:

Brief description of 251 assignment;
Brief description of 497 assignment;
Evaluation rubric;
Table 1: Summarized ratings

Brief description of SOC 251 assignment

For their final Inquiry report students were given the following instructions:

Approximately 1500 words
Your paper should include:
· a broad overview of the issues, causes, social contexts, and ultimate objectives of the organization or movement;
· the theory(ies) of change (implicit or explicit) animating its efforts;
· the indicators of success for this movement or organization; and
· the obstacles it faces in its efforts to meet with success.
To complete your paper, you will need to apply relevant concepts learned through course readings and discussions.

Brief description of SOC 497 assignment

For their final presentations, students were given the following instructions.

Inquiry presentation: On doing sociology

How has your sociological understanding been enhanced or changed by this experience?
Using your journal posts as a point of reflection, construct a professional presentation that describes your sociological understanding of your field placement. The format of this presentation is flexible (powerpoint, or video clip).

Evaluation Rubric

Criteria	Rating					Score
	1 low	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5 high**	
Addresses issues related to social justice	None of the student's materials (blog posts and/or final presentation) address social justice issues.		Issues related to social justice -- such as policies and/or practices related to the equitable treatment of groups and individuals, respect for cultural identities and differences, and a fair distribution of opportunities and resources -- are addressed in the student's materials.		Social justice themes are frequently addressed and student acknowledges the complexity associated with working toward social justice.	
Understanding the value of diverse perspectives	No mention in student's materials of the value of diverse perspectives. Student primarily focused on their own perspective without considering alternative views.		There is some mention of diverse perspectives and consideration of how different groups and individuals experience and/or think about the issues under consideration.		Student provides a direct and in-depth reflection on the how results/end product benefits when taking advantage of the insights gained from diverse perspectives.	
Professional presentation	Students written work and research findings are rarely presented in a professional manner; it may require major editorial revision and/or lack appropriate citation of sources.		Students written work and research findings are generally presented in a format and style appropriate to the discipline.		Student's presentation of written work and research findings approximates best practice in the discipline.	
					TOTAL SCORE =	

Table 1: Summarized ratings

File	Social Justice	Diverse Perspectives	Professional Presentation	Combined Score	Course
1	3.00	2.67	3.33	8.0	251
2	3.50	3.00	2.17	11.0	251
3	4.00	4.17	2.67	11.0	251
4	3.33	3.00	2.33	9.0	251
5	3.50	3.17	2.00	8.5	251
6	2.67	2.33	1.67	6.0	251
7	4.50	3.50	3.67	12.5	251
8	2.17	2.00	2.00	6.0	251
9	2.33	1.83	2.33	6.5	251
10	3.83	4.00	2.83	10.5	251
11	2.83	2.50	2.67	8.0	251
12	4.33	4.00	3.67	12.0	251
13	4.00	3.67	3.33	11.5	251
14	3.50	2.83	3.00	10.0	251
15	4.17	4.67	4.33	14.0	251
16	4.17	3.50	4.00	11.0	251
17	3.83	3.33	4.17	11.0	251
18	2.83	2.50	2.00	7.5	251
19	3.17	2.67	2.33	8.5	251
20	3.83	4.17	2.33	10.0	251
21	2.17	1.67	1.67	6.0	251
22	4.17	2.83	2.83	10.0	251
23	2.50	1.67	2.00	6.5	497
24	3.00	3.33	3.67	9.0	497
25	4.00	4.67	4.50	12.5	497
26	3.83	4.17	4.00	12.0	497
27	4.50	4.83	4.67	14.0	497
28	3.83	3.67	3.83	11.0	497
29	4.17	4.67	4.33	13.0	497
30	4.17	3.83	3.50	12.0	497
31	3.33	3.33	2.83	9.5	497
32	2.00	2.00	2.33	6.0	497
33	3.83	4.00	4.33	12.0	497
34	2.83	2.17	2.00	7.0	497
35	2.83	3.17	2.33	8.0	497
36	4.17	4.50	4.67	14.0	497