



2018-2019 PERIODIC PROGRAM REVIEW

Sociology Program
Department of Sociology

Part One – Program Self-Study Outline

I. Executive Summary

The major in sociology is a robust program providing students opportunities to develop and strengthen traditional liberal arts skills in critical thinking and written and oral communication. That, combined with sociology's "big-picture" conceptual lens and applicable skills in research and data analysis, foster students' employment prospects or entry into graduate school. Our program's strength is validated by several indicators, which are summarized here and detailed throughout this report.

Since our last Periodic Program Review (PPR) in 2013-14, we have continued to have 100 or more majors each year (115 in fall 2017). Moreover, our courses are in high demand, with course fill rates averaging over 90% for this academic year (93% in fall 2018; registration for spring 2019 shows a fill rate of 95% across all of the offerings). Finally, student satisfaction data from spring 2017 also revealed that nearly all of our major respondents found our courses stimulating, of high quality, and helped them understand the impact of larger social forces. We have formal course-sharing arrangements with our Criminal Justice and Social Work departments, which facilitates our students' double-majoring with these programs if they desire. We have also created a dual degree pathway with our Masters in Public Administration.

The Sociology department's faculty are highly committed to an engaged teacher-scholar model. Our students are our priority, but we also have produced high quality scholarship and contributed valuable service to the communities in which we live and work. Faculty have supervised over three dozen student projects, including independent studies, Honors theses, internships, or other work since the last PPR. At the same time, faculty produced at least 17 peer-reviewed publications, including journal articles, book chapters, and a major textbook, and just as many presentations at international or national venues in the same timeframe. Faculty also have invested substantial time and energy in service activities for the department, college, profession, and wider community. Through these efforts and more, we make vital contributions to our current institutional strategic plan emphasizing The College at Brockport's being: a great place to learn, engaged with its community, a sustainable institution, and a great place to work.

Faculty staffing has reached our past peak level of eight full-time, tenured/tenure-track faculty roughly around 2005. We add adjunct faculty as needed (e.g., filling courses for someone on leave). At this time, we think we are able to offer a well-balanced curriculum, including courses in the discipline's main areas of social problems, institutions, identities, change, and inequalities. We also are offering exciting electives and have a strong presence in the college's General Education program.

We are proud of the departmental culture which we have fostered over time. We are known as a collegial department, and we encourage and support faculty members' initiatives to continue their professional growth in various ways. We have also been successful in recent Appointment, Promotion, & Tenure (APT) decisions, the most recent of which were two people awarded tenure or promotion in fall 2018. We feel equally confident in the two strong hires just made to start the 2018-19 academic year.

Assessment of student learning is important at the college and in our program. Prompted by the college, the department has revised assessment plans twice in the past five years. We have revised student learning outcomes, mapped them into our course curriculum, and identified benchmarks and more specific criteria of success. We continue to reflect on our assessment efforts in order to strengthen our program and improve student success.

The College's PPR process results in formulating a Joint Action Plan laying out recommendations and proposed actions in the quest for continual improvement. We completed most of what was set out in that document at the finish of the last cycle. Accomplishments include successful hires of highly qualified candidates, piloting a capstone experience, creating a communal space for students, and revising our assessment process. Other recent innovations include creating a new minor in Interdisciplinary Social Research Methods and adding new courses.

Nonetheless, the program does have its challenges, both internal and external. Higher education has no shortage of critics, with many questioning the value of a traditional liberal arts education as preparation for jobs in the current economy, especially given the high cost of higher education today. We feel we do need to think more about how to work more intensively to have our students career-ready for satisfying employment. Our students' readiness for college-level work can be frustrating. The current cultural emphasis on convenience coupled with time-constrained students pressure colleges to deliver on-demand, online programs, something which our program cannot do at this time.

II. Program curriculum

A. Mission, goals, and outcomes

1. Program mission -- *State the program's mission and explain how it links to specific goals of the [College's Mission Statement](#) and the [College's 2017–2022 Strategic Plan](#).*

Department Mission: The Department of Sociology creates and shares new critical knowledge about how our lives and social behaviors are shaped by social institutions, social ties, and social inequality.

College Mission: The College at Brockport is an inclusive learning community that inspires excellence through growth, engagement, and transformation. The College has four goals (each with many specific objectives):

1. To be a great college at which to learn
2. To be a college engaged with its community
3. To be a sustainable institution for the 21st century
4. To be a great college at which to work

As an academic program (and department), Sociology most directly contributes to the college goal of being a great place at which to learn. Our faculty are exemplars of the teacher-scholar model, engaged in substantial research and sharing what they learn with our students. Students, too, often engage in the high-impact practice of conducting research with faculty supervision, whether in independent studies, small advanced seminars, or in classroom projects. Students' reactions often testify to the growth and transformation they experienced as a result of these opportunities. Our curriculum, mirroring the larger discipline of sociology, focuses on social problems, social institutions, inequalities, identities, and social change, thus having much to offer students that is relevant in our turbulent times. Studying these topics provides ample opportunity for our students to understand issues of diversity and inclusion, which is critical to supporting the college's second, broad strategic goal of being engaged with our community and its more specific objectives related to equity, diversity, and inclusion. Students' work through the curriculum also strengthens critical thinking skills, and they develop more specialized knowledge and skills in gathering and analyzing data. Our program also contributes significantly to the college's General Education program. Nearly half (44%) of our current courses fulfill one or more general education requirements, and seven of them meet the college's Diversity and/or Perspectives on Gender designations.