General Education Report from the Department of Sociology 2020-2021

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May 27th, 2021

Executive Summary

The benchmark was met for all of the general education SLOs. These SLOs were measured using a direct assessment of students who completed Sociology 201 during the 2020-2021 academic year. There is a substantial increase in the average scores from the previous academic year for all three student learning outcomes. For SLO 7-e, the score increased from 68.61% to 81.76%. For SLO 7-f, the score increased from 72.66% to 92.70%. For SLO 7-b, the score increased from 70.60% to 85.48%.

Sociology 201 is taught primarily as a traditional course, with some hybrid/online courses offered over the past five years. The department sought to offer fewer hybrid/online courses because previous analyses revealed that overall scores were higher in traditional courses compared to other formats; however, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the department offering more hybrid/online courses this past academic year. Despite the pandemic, the department was able to implement the action plan and increase student scores for all SLOs.

The department will continue to focus on the action plan outlined below in order to further enhance scores and meet benchmarks in the future. The department intends to continue increasing student understanding by continuing to incorporate written assignments and class discussions that emphasize the application of sociological concepts to the real world in all courses.

General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Competency	Courses	Assessment *See attached assessment instrument	Evidence 2019-20 2020-21
7-e: Recognize how other influences affect individual behavior.	SOCI 201	Assessment items #1 & #3	68.61% 81.76%
7-f: Recognize how other influences affect collective behavior.	SOCI 201	Assessment items #2 & #5	72.66% 92.70%
9-b: Ability to think critically.	SOCI 201	Assessment items #2 & #4	70.60% 85.48%

Total number of students assessed: 252

SLO 7-e: Recognize how other influences affect individual behavior. SLO 7-e was assessed using two items from a direct measure of student knowledge in seven Sociology 201 courses (see appendix for the assessment). Scores for these two items were combined to create an average score. The baseline is 68.61%. The benchmark is 80%. The average score of students for SLO 7-e is 81.76%. The benchmark for AY 2020-2021 was met. The target average score the department would like to achieve is 85% in five years.

SLO 7-f: Recognize how other influences affect collective behavior. SLO 7-f was assessed using two items from a direct measure of student knowledge in seven Sociology 201 courses (see appendix for the assessment). Scores for these two items were combined to create an average score. The baseline is 72.66%. The benchmark is 80%. The average score of students for SLO 7-f is 92.70%. The benchmark for AY 2020-2021 was met. The target average score the department would like to achieve is 85% in five years.

SLO 9-b: Ability to think critically. SLO 9-b was assessed using two items from a direct measure of student knowledge in seven Sociology 201 courses (see appendix for the assessment). Scores for these two items were combined to create an average score. The baseline is 70.60%. The benchmark is 80%. The average score of students for SLO 9-b is 85.48%. The benchmark for AY 2020-2021 was met. The target average score the department would like to achieve is 85% in five years.

Action Items

1. SLO 7-e: Recognize how other influences affect individual behavior. Given the increase in student scores for this competency area, the department plans to continue its work in order to maintain and also further increase student scores within the next five years. Written assignments and class discussions that highlight application and critical thinking were incorporated into all Sociology 201 courses (including those held in an Online format). The writing assignments presented in 201 courses remain vast and require student participation. These assignments include: applying concepts (e.g., health care) to media, observations of real world phenomenon, such as the division of household labor, and using Internet resources. Faculty will continue to use instructional films on certain topics, such as poverty, health care, and immigration. Such films are regularly used to initiate class discussions. These assignments and discussions help to both maintain and further improve student scores in this area in the future. The benchmark for AY 2020-2021 was met.

2. SLO 7-f: Recognize how other influences affect collective behavior. During the previous academic year, the department planned to increase student scores by stepping up efforts on emphasizing collective behavior in lectures and assignments. This effort was met with a substantial increase in student scores, thus meeting the benchmark. However, in order to maintain this success, the faculty will continue to emphasize the importance of collective behavior during lectures including extensive discussions of norms, conformity, and social movements. In addition, the faculty will continue to incorporate videos and discussion to continue enhancing student learning in this area.

3. SLO 9-b: Ability to think critically.   Student scores increased in this competency area for the current academic year. The benchmark was met. The department plans to continue incorporating writing assignments and exam questions that emphasize critical thinking skills, specifically applying sociological concepts to real world events and individual experiences. Faculty will continue to utilize assignments that require students to critically apply concepts. During this academic year, the faculty utilized more specifically focused assignments to further illustrate how sociological concepts are applicable to the social world. One assignment that is consistently used involves students creating a budget based on poverty thresholds. This links sociological concepts and ideas to the real world, and media and film are routinely presented in 201 courses to further initiate critical thinking about students.

Appendix

SOCI 201 General Education Assessment Questions

1. Why would sociologists who study academic performance be interested in the lives of college freshmen before they enter college?
    a. Sociologists are particularly well equipped to study individuals' intelligence quotients and the impact of intelligence on academic performance.
    b. Sociologists are particularly well equipped to study the influences of students' backgrounds—such as family influences—on academic performance.
    c. Sociologists who took sociology courses in high school are particularly well equipped to study the academic performance of students entering college for the first time.
    d. Students who excel academically are likely to attend schools closer to home.

2. If you possess a sociological imagination and someone asks you to study unemployment rates in a city of 50 million people where 15 million are unemployed, what would you conclude?
    a. We should consider the economic and political structures of the society.
    b. We should consider the work ethic of the average citizen.
    c. We should worry about the intelligence level of the workers who have lost their jobs.
    d. We should teach people how to take better advantage of their opportunities.

3. Which of the following statements is **TRUE** in society?
    a. Peoples' lives are influenced primarily by the decisions they make.
    b. Everyone who works hard will become successful.
    c. People will most likely remain in the class they are born into.
    d. Institutions cannot discriminate.

4. A _____ would view crime as serving a purpose for society, while a _____ would view crime as a result of lacking resources (e.g., unavailability of jobs).
    a. Functionalist; Conflict Theorist
    b. Conflict Theorist; Functionalist
    c. Symbolic Interactionist; Social Constructionist
    d. Social Constructionist; Symbolic Interactionist

5. Which of the following is **NOT** an example of how norms influence collective behavior?
    a. People clap at the end of a speech.
    b. People look both ways before crossing a street.
    c. People flee from bear attacks.
    d. People face the doors of an elevator.