

General Education Report from the Department of Sociology 2021-2022

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May 16th, 2022

Executive Summary

The benchmark was not met for the general education student learning outcomes (SLOs) measured by the Sociology Department, specifically addressing Goals 7 and 9. These SLOs were measured using a direct assessment of students who completed Sociology 201 during the 2021-2022 academic year. There is a substantial decrease in the average scores from the previous academic year for the three student learning outcomes. For SLO 1 (Gen Ed Goal 7), the score decreased from 81.76% to 63.02%. For SLO 2 (Gen Ed Goal 7), the score decreased from 92.70% to 75.57%. For SLO 3 (Gen Ed Goal 9), the score decreased from 85.48% to 70.27%.

The scores for this academic year are more similar to the scores from the 2019-2020 academic year. During the 2019-2020 academic year, the score for SLO1 (Gen Ed Goal 7) was 68.61%, the score for SLO 2 (Gen Ed Goal 7) was 72.66%, and the score for SLO 3 (Gen Ed Goal 9) was 70.60%. One potential explanation for the dramatic increase in scores during the 2020-2021 academic year was the flexibility in course offerings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The department offered more hybrid/online courses and the assessment was distributed online. The majority of 201 courses this academic year were taught face-to-face. Ten sections of Sociology 201 were offered, and four were online classes. However, two of these four classes were dual-enrollment courses.

The department will be revising SLO 2 (Gen Ed Goal 7) from recognizing how sociocultural processes affect collective behavior to emphasizing the ability to recognize diverse social and cultural practices. This revision will better align SLO 2 with General Education Goal 7. This change will be discussed further at the department's first meeting during the fall 2022 semester. The department will revise the assessment that is currently used to better ascertain students' ability to recognize diverse social and cultural practices.

Moreover, the department will execute the action plan outlined below in order to increase scores and meet benchmarks in the future. The department intends to increase student understanding by incorporating more assignments, discussions, and revising lecture materials. The department aims to increase 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	
			2020-21	2021-22
SLO 1 (Gen Ed Goal 7): Recognize how sociocultural processes affect individual behavior.	SOCI 201	Assessment items #1 & #3	81.76%	63.02%
SLO 2 (Gen Ed Goal 7): Recognize how sociocultural processes affect collective behavior.	SOCI 201	Assessment items #2 & #5	92.70%	75.57%
SLO 3 (Gen Ed Goal 9): Ability to think critically.	SOCI 201	Assessment items #2 & #4	85.48%	70.27%

Total number of students assessed: 233

SLO 1 (Gen Ed Goal 7): Recognize how other influences affect individual behavior. SLO 1 was assessed using two items from a direct measure of student knowledge in ten Sociology 201 courses (see appendix for the assessment). Scores for these two items were combined to create an average score. The baseline is 81.76%. The benchmark is 80%. The average score of students for SLO 1 (Gen Ed Goal 7) is 63.02%. The benchmark for AY 2021-2022 was not met. The target average score the department would like to achieve is 85% in five years.

SLO 2 (Gen Ed Goal 7): Recognize how other influences affect collective behavior. SLO 2 (Gen Ed Goal 7) was assessed using two items from a direct measure of student knowledge in ten Sociology 201 courses (see appendix for the assessment). Scores for these two items were combined to create an average score. The baseline is 92.70%. The benchmark is 80%. The average score of students for SLO 2 is 75.57%. The benchmark for AY 2021-2022 was not met. The target average score the department would like to achieve is 85% in five years.

SLO 3 (Gen Ed Goal 9): Ability to think critically. SLO 3 was assessed using two items from a direct measure of student knowledge in ten Sociology 201 courses (see appendix for the assessment). Scores for these two items were combined to create an average score. The baseline is 85.48%. The benchmark is 80%. The average score of students for SLO 3 is 70.27%. The benchmark for AY 2021-2022 was not met. The target average score the department would like to achieve is 85% in five years.

Action Items

1. SLO 1 (Gen Ed Goal 7): Recognize how other influences affect individual behavior.

Given the substantial decrease in student scores for this competency area, the department plans to increase the scope of their lecture materials and assignments to emphasize the influence of social forces on individual behaviors. The department aims to emphasize this area to increase student scores within the next five years. Written assignments and class discussions that highlight the application of societal structures and forces on individual attitudes, choices, and behaviors 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 creating a budget based on the poverty threshold, 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. Moreover, faculty plan to incorporate projects in addition to writing assignments and films that will allow students to apply their personal, real world experiences with larger society. The department aims for such assignments and discussions to improve student scores in this area in the future.

2. SLO 2 (Gen Ed Goal 7): Recognize how other influences affect collective behavior.

The General Education Goals have changed in recent years, and the department recognizes that Goal 7 now includes the following: “The ability to recognize diverse social and cultural practices and to articulate connections between individual behavior and sociocultural processes.” The part of Goal 7 that emphasizes “the ability to recognize diverse social and cultural practices” can be measured by the Sociology Department; however, the assessment will need to be adjusted accordingly. The department plans to discuss this modification at the first department meeting of the fall 2022 semester. The items that assess how other influences affect collective behavior will be replaced with items that align more with Goal 7 and “the ability to recognize diverse social and cultural practices” for the next General Education I.E. report (AY 2022-2023).

The benchmark for SLO 2 was not met. Although SLO 2 will be changing next year, the faculty will increase their efforts in the classroom to emphasize the importance of social factors and collective behavior. These efforts will include incorporating videos, discussion, and in-class assignments that emphasize the importance of culture, norms, conformity, and social movements on group choices and behaviors. Stepping up efforts in these areas should increase student knowledge in this area.

3. SLO 3 (Gen Ed Goal 9): Ability to think critically.

Student scores decreased in this competency area for the current academic year. The benchmark was not met. The department plans to increase their efforts in this area by incorporating more writing assignments and exam questions that emphasize critical thinking skills, specifically applying sociological concepts to real world events and individual experiences. Adopting projects that enable students to apply their own lives to societal processes will serve to increase students’ critical thinking skills as well. During this academic year, the faculty utilized specifically focused assignments to further illustrate how sociological concepts are applicable to the social world as a whole and to individuals. These assignments include, but are not limited to: creating a budget based on poverty thresholds, comparing gender roles in the context of

household labor, completing the 20 statements test to determine if one is more individualistic or group oriented, and completing assignments based on culture, racial/ethnic discrimination, and health care on a global basis. Such assignments and videos link concepts and ideas to the real world, which aims to foster student critical thinking skills in Sociology 201 courses.

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.