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**ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW - CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY -
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY MAY 19-23, 2012**

During my visit to Central Washington University, I had the opportunity to visit with Provost Marilyn Levine, Associate Provost Dr. Pellet, Dean Kirk Johnson, Department Chairperson Delores Cleary, the majority of the department's faculty, and students in two classes - one comprised primarily of sociology majors and the other social services majors.

My comments will focus on curriculum, staff, facilities, and program as identified in the Self Study and my observations.

Curriculum:

The curriculum meets national standards as outlined by the American Sociological Association. The department is encouraged to continue reviewing the curriculum with an eye toward improvement. Specifically, courses in the catalog that are currently not being offered should be removed. Additionally, I would suggest that the department **develop a curriculum sheet** that is available to the student that is current. After discussions with the Chair, it is clear that some courses that are listed in the catalog are not being taught and have been eliminated. The curriculum sheet would help alleviate this problem, and students would be informed of requirements and courses available. There are some courses such as SOC 291, SOC 296, SOC 299, SOC 496, SOC 498, and SOC 499 which have no course descriptions - **course descriptions** should be developed. I would suggest, for example, that SOC 496 could be written in such a way that a student who desires to go to graduate school could gain additional research experience working independently under the supervision of a faculty member that could result in a publication for the student independently or a coauthored publication with a faculty member. A review of the placement of their students revealed that very few go on to pursue advanced degrees in Sociology. If students are more engaged with the faculty and their research, this trend could be reversed. For example, a student could begin work during one quarter and continue their research into the next quarter.

There are some **courses that should be renamed**. For example SOC 307 (Individual and Society) and SOC 340 (Social Interaction) are really Social Psychology courses as identified in their descriptions. A question that the department must address is "Do they really need two courses whose content is quite similar?" The same can be said about SOC 354 and SOC 365. These courses deal with minority groups, and it is my opinion, regardless of whether one is primarily for sociology majors and the other ethnic studies. There are **single** textbooks available that cover the

contents outlined in their course descriptions. If one of these courses is eliminated, the faculty who teaches these courses can devote their time to teaching other existing courses or develop some new course.

A related concern is that there is an ethnic studies component to this department. This is good; however, the department should be encouraged to seek the development of a Center for Social Justice - as a stand-alone center. This center could then house African American Studies, Native American Studies, Latino Studies, Women Studies, and GLBT. Such a center would benefit students tremendously. Here, a minor could be established which would make students more marketable because students could seek employment in areas that focus on these groups or in industry or the private sector. Here, students could demonstrate to potential employers that they possess basic knowledge of the discipline and the requisite theoretical and research skills but additionally they possess specific knowledge that would benefit the employer. The faculty could be given joint appointments with their major discipline serving as the tenure home.

The Senior Seminar should be re-evaluated in terms of its content and delivery. In some schools the Senior Seminar is a review of the discipline, in others, it focuses on such things as resume writing, jobs applications, career options, etc. The department must decide the relative merits of each way the course is handled and decide if the current format is the most desirable or if changes should occur.

The department uses the portfolio as an assessment tool and this is good; however, I would recommend that it be instituted earlier in the student's matriculation. This would demonstrate to the student their growth over time, and it would help the department identify areas where its curriculum can be strengthened.

Additionally, the department must not only assess its courses, but it must also assess its major. Exactly what is it that a graduate of this program should know, and are they accomplishing this goal? I would suggest that the department not only assess its current student's knowledge and perception, but also include alumni, and their employers. The department could ascertain from its graduates, for example, students who have been out of the program for five years their perception of the value of the education they received. Did their education benefit them in their current position or was something lacking? The same information could be gained from employers who hire their graduates. Do CWU students bring to the job the necessary skill set or are they lacking in some areas? These are the kind of data the department needs to ascertain if they are meeting the students' and employers' needs in this competitive society. If they are not meeting their needs then the curriculum should be revamped.

Faculty

The Department of Sociology has a fine faculty who provides excellent service to their students and the discipline. Several faculty members serve in multiple capacities, and because of this some time that could be devoted to the departmental needs is spent performing other needed services for

the university. A careful review of the Self Study indicates that the department could benefit from at least one additional hire. Particular attention should be paid to Table 2 (Section II, A), Chart on page 23, and Sample Table 3 (Section II, B), page 20. The department contributes tremendously to the General Education curriculum and to the Interdisciplinary Social Science major. I would encourage the Department to seriously consider placing the Ph.D. faculty member who earned her degree from the New School to a tenure track position. The second hire should/could be a person who could contribute to the "Center for Inclusion."

The faculty attends primarily regional association meetings; however, a couple do participate in our national meetings (ASA). I would encourage the faculty to attend other regional association meetings such as the Midwest Sociological Association, North Central Sociological Association, etc. This will increase the department's visibility in the discipline and benefit students as well because they will be exposed to experts who do not attend the Pacific meetings. The faculty should be encouraged to increase student participation in these meetings as well. If the course content (i.e., description) for Soc 496, students would be able to present their research findings. This also would increase their likelihood of gaining admittance to graduate programs other than those that exist within the State of Washington.

The faculty teaches TOO much and a system should be established to allow for release time so that a faculty could devote more time to their research. This is critically important since tenure and promotion decisions often rest on publication activity. A related point is that faculty should be encouraged to update their vitas.

Facilities

The building where Sociology is housed is in desperate need of attention. More pressing however, is that the Computer Lab in the department is inadequate. If students are required to take Research Methods and Statistics, it is critical that they have access to an updated computer lab. The computer lab needs at a minimum 25 work stations with the latest software installed such as SPSS, SAS, or other software as determined by the teachers of those courses. Additionally I would recommend that the department be given at least two smart carts so that a faculty can deliver his/her courses more efficiently. I would also recommend that the University consider establishing a Research Center that could provide needed services to agencies and corporations in the region. This research center could serve as for profit entity while simultaneously providing additional training for undergraduate students. Many faculty are involved with many social service agencies and consequently could assist them in answering questions needed to improve their operations.

The bulletin board in the department office is nice; however, I recommend that it include the accomplishments of the faculty and students. Additionally, I would recommend that these accomplishments be placed on the department's website . . . which is in need of updating as this serves as a major recruiting tool.

Program

The department has a well-defined program, good students, an effective chairperson, and a fine faculty. The Self Study was well developed not only in terms of identifying the department's strengths and areas where additional work is needed. I would strongly encourage the department to consider changing the name of the Bachelor of Science in Social Service Major. A careful review of its curriculum reveals that the department should consider developing an undergraduate major in Social Work. The curriculum essentially fits a social work model and if the name is changed, then the curriculum should align itself with established social work curriculums. It would also present potential employers with a degree that they are familiar with.

The department has to develop a better tracking mechanism of determining exactly where its students are - those who have graduated. One way to do this is during the exit interview ask students to provide an address where mail most likely will get to them. Also the department needs to develop a database and a way in which they can begin to do this is through the use of social networking venues such as Facebook. This will help the department to learn of the accomplishments of its graduates which could be reflected in an Annual Newsletter. Not only does this aid in recruitment but provides a steady base of alumni who could come to campus for special lectures designed to help current students decide on career choices. In addition to using alumni in this manner, the department has an AKD Chapter and as such should call on the national office to help sponsor speakers to come to campus. Also, the department should utilize AKD in another manner that is seeking funds for students who will be presenting papers at regional and national meetings.

The department should continue to review its curriculum and continue to develop its assessment strategies.

The students were very vocal in discussing their perceptions of the curriculum, quality of instruction, advising, and other programmatic needs. Generally the students were pleased with the variety of courses offered and the instructors who teach them. They noted that they liked how the theories presented in class were related to "real world issues." The sociology students would like more internship opportunities. In this regard, the department should consider assigning one faculty member who will coordinate the internship experience. It should be noted that the Social Service majors were quite pleased with their internship opportunities. I met with a few students who were interested in attending graduate school; however, they had no clue as to what graduate schools existed outside the State of Washington. I would recommend that the department purchase two things: (1) Careers in Sociology published by the American Sociological Association and (2) Guide to Graduate Sociology Programs also published by ASA. There is an area that concerns the students and that is advising in general and the quality of advising available for transfer students. Several transfer students indicated that they were told things that they had no knowledge of how to do what was told them such as accessing the computer system that would allow them to select courses.

Finally, the department should continue offering courses at the university's satellite sites; however, because of the limited number of qualified faculty to teach many of those courses the department must move cautiously in determining which courses can be realistically be offered. The ultimate goal is that all instruction reflect deep quality.