Central Washington University  
Assessment of Student Learning  
Department and Program Report  

Please enter the appropriate information concerning your student learning assessment activities for this year.

Academic Year of Report: _2014___ College: ___COTS_________
Department ___Sociology__________ Program: Sociology _

1. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

Building on the foundation laid in the previous years, the Department of Sociology assessed two student learning goals this academic year: #3 and #6 in the Sociology assessment plan and Social Services assessment plan. Both goals apply to both sociology and social services programs.

Student Learning Goal #3: Students are expected apply a sociological perspective by describing the similarities and differences between sociology and other social sciences, identify the contributions of sociology to understanding social reality, define key concepts and apply key sociological concepts. These outcomes are related to Theme 1 of the CWU strategic plan, objective 1.1, outcome 1.1.1 Students will achieve programmatic learning outcomes and Theme 2 Diversity and Inclusion, Objective 2.2, Outcome 2.3. It relates to the department goal of developing students’ interest and involvement in social policies and community service organizations that elicit social justice and social change. This goal was selected for assessment because the department wanted to know whether students were acquiring and applying the sociological perspective to their communities and daily life.

Student Learning Goal #6: Students are expected to show knowledge in substantive areas within sociology. Outcomes include the ability to summarize existing knowledge, current questions, and important issues in at least one substantive area within sociology and to suggest specific policy implications of research and theory in one area. Outcomes are related to Theme 1 of the CWU strategic plan, objective 1.1, outcome 1.1.1 Students will achieve programmatic learning. The goal is also related to the college goals 1& 2 of providing an outstanding academic and student experience. It relates to the department goal of offering a sociology program that emphasizes critical thinking and problem solving skills. This goal was selected for assessment because the department wanted to know student’s level of competence in the substantive areas within sociology and their ability to apply theory in analyzing social problems.

2. How were they assessed?

1. Student Learning Goal #3 was evaluated through the course work, including an essay exam, which included questions related to issues of social justice, diversity, inequality
and social change, in the senior seminar class SOC 489 in Fall, Winter and Spring quarters 2013-2014. This course is required of all those majoring in sociology. One hundred seventeen students took the essay exam in the Senior Seminar course during the 13-14 academic year, and answered a question that directly dealt with diversity and inequality. Ninety percent of students were able to identify the contributions of sociology to understanding social reality, define key concepts and apply key sociological concepts. Ninety percent of students were able to indicate that they had an interest and were involvement in social policies and community service organizations that elicit social justice and social change.

2. Student Learning Goal #6 was assessed in the Senior Capstone course SOC 489. Evidence used for the assessment of student knowledge in the substantive areas of sociology included the use an essay exam question, which asked students to answer essay exam questions in two substantive areas. Faculty teaching the course the extent to which students were able to define and apply key sociological concepts in specific substantive areas. Students were able to choose two questions from a series of question from different substantive areas. Student responses to those questions were assessed using a rubric designed on a pass/fail basis. Minimal level of mastery is 90% of sociology/social service majors earn a passing grade on those two questions. More than 90% of the 117 students that were assessed Fall, Winter and Spring quarters met the standards established in the take home essay exam rubric.

3. What was learned?

The Sociology Department is pleased with the results of student learning assessment. Students’ work and performance was overall very solid. In the assessment of these two learning outcomes 90% or more students met or exceeded departmental standards and earned a passing grade. All department majors graduated with GPA at or above 2.25. In addition all graduating seniors were able to apply the sociological perspective and showed substantive knowledge in sociology as indicated in the responses to the essay questions.

4. What will the department or program do as a result of that information?

Our assessment data confirmed that we offer a strong academic program and students are doing well in their coursework. We will continue offering high quality courses to serve our majors as well as students in other disciplines.

The department assessed two student learning goals primarily through the senior seminar course, taught by different faculty members in fall, winter and spring. The primary measure for outcomes #3 and #6 was a departmental assessment exam that was taken by all graduating seniors. It would be beneficial to use a variety of assessment measures in the future, which could include the portfolio in which students submit work from other
courses, focus groups, and the exit interview. We developed common measures for the Senior Seminar course, including common rubrics and common course requirements used by the diverse faculty who teach this course.

5. What did the department or program do in response to the feedback from last year’s assessment report?

Only direct assessment methods were used. Course grades are not an acceptable method to evaluate specific learning outcomes. Course grades may be based on several learning outcomes. It is possible a student could receive an acceptable course grade while not being proficient in a specific learning outcome. Course grades are not accepted by accreditors as a valid method of measure specific learning outcomes.

In response to the above recommendation, the SOC 489 course has specific questions that address each learning outcome and the faculty assessed the student on the basis of a particular question related to the outcome. This was to address the issue of looking at a global measure to address a particular outcome.