06-07 Assessment Report

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1. What goals or learning objectives/outcomes were assessed in AYs 2006-2007?

http://www.csus.edu/psa/soc_v1/1Acad_LrngGoals.htm).

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?
   a. Describe the measures you used and the information gathered. (Description, date administered, results)

   We acknowledged, based on discussions within and outside of the department (which was also confirmed in our recent 5 year review by an outside reviewer) that our measures of assessment are only indirect measures. This past year we implemented an exit exam for graduates in which students answer multiple choice questions concerning their knowledge of Sociology and sociological concepts. Multiple questions measure each learning objective, allowing us to more directly assess the information gained by our students as majors, and ultimately to better evaluate the learning objectives of our department. It should be noted that this is the first time this measure has been implemented, and further adjustment to the exit exam is needed to better assist in our assessment.

   Regardless, as with our indirect measures, students showed overall an excellent knowledge base concerning our program goals, with a high percentage of students correctly answering a majority of the questions.

   In terms of potential difficulties, students struggled most with global-based questions, and the self and social psychological questions, although, these were not overwhelmingly poor in their responses. In first reviewing these questions, there is a potential bias in the questions in relation to the terms used within them. This is part of the initial process of evaluating the survey as an assessment tool, while simultaneously measuring the learning objectives. Before responding to either, however, we will wait until data from a few more semesters has been gathered to determine any potential problem.

   b. As a result of these assessments what did you learn about the program’s success in helping its students achieve these learning outcomes?

   Looking at the last year’s indirect measures of our learning objectives through our graduating senior surveys that we administer at the close of each semester, we can see that over 70% of our students feel they have gained significant knowledge
about all of the learning objectives, except for their perceived skills in methods and statistics in terms of gaining information about the social world. Still, all of our graduating seniors in the past year believed they were at least somewhat able to engage methods and statistics in their attempts to gain information about the social world, meaning no students felt they were only slightly able to do so, much less unable to do so at all. Still, using a more qualitative analysis of the production of student research in our research methods sequence, we can determine that the majority of our students are able to engage in the use of methods and statistics in their study of the social world, as they are required to conduct a research project, including writing a social research paper that explains the entire process they undergo in the development of this project. This shows us that, as has occurred in past assessments, while students are less likely to perceive they have thoroughly developed the skills, the projects the produce during the research methods sequence shows us directly that they have gained the skills.

A positive outcome our assessment has shown us over the past years is our students’ greater perception in their understanding of the global world. In past assessments, our students tended to have a weaker perception of their understanding of the social world in a global context. In response to this, we added several courses that directly address this topic (e.g. Sport in a Global Perspective, Immigration Studies), as well as implementing more global discussions in other courses (family, education). Based on our recent assessment, our students are now showing greater belief in their knowledge about the global world. Our indirect measures show higher percentages of students have a strong belief they have gained skills to understand the global world, and have readily challenged their ethnocentric views (just under 70%). What is even more important to note is that over the course of the semesters, we have seen an increase, meaning each semester students feel more confident in their skills concerning the global context. It should be noted that this issue was identified in our previous 5 year review, and we began to implement changes to our curriculum the following two years, meaning those students who are now graduating have been benefiting from these changes for most of their time spent as Sociology majors, further validating our claims that we have made important changes to address the learning objective of students understanding the global world and their place in it.

3. **As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated?**

Ultimately, we feel the majority of our majors are gaining the knowledge and ability that we set forth for them to learn. This, however, does not mean we will not continue to evaluate and adjust our program to better meet the needs of our students.
Based on comments from the outside reviewer during our five year review that occurred last year, we are planning on reviewing our entire assessment program with the intent to better structure all of our measures.

a. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics or course alignment?

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year?

More specifically, as was suggested by the reviewer, we may focus on two or three learning objectives each year. This will allow us to focus solely on a couple of topics to more fully understand, and potentially address any changes that need to occur, or to more easily recognize the impact we are having on students in relation to the learning objectives under study. As well, we would like to discuss student writing and to work to identify a way to better evaluate student writing. We are going to meet this summer to address these issues.