

Sociology & Anthropology Program Review

Faculty of Social Sciences, College of Arts

Dean's Summary

Submitted by:

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte, Dean of the College of Arts

Accepted by:

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Program and Unit Review: Sociology and Anthropology, in the Department of Social, Cultural, and Media Studies

Dean's Summary Report

Dr. Jacqueline Nolte October 2014

In October 2013, the External Review Committee visited UFV to conduct an evaluation of the Sociology and Anthropology programs in the Department of Social Media and Cultural Studies (SCMS). SCMS is a large interdisciplinary unit made up of 12.5 permanent faculty in the College of Arts. It houses seven disciplines and area studies including Sociology, Anthropology, Media and Communications, Latin American Studies, Global Development Studies, Women's Studies and Indo-Canadian Studies. The External Review Committee was asked to focus their comments on the Sociology Major, Sociology Extended Minor and Sociology Minor as well as the Anthropology Extended Minor, Anthropology Minor and the joint Anthropology-Sociology Major; other disciplines and related credentials will be evaluated at a later date.

The External Review Committee (ERC) consisted of members from other Canadian universities; two faculty with expertise in Anthropology and two faculty with expertise in Sociology.

The process of review was complicated and contested from the outset due to the interdisciplinary nature of the department and inherent tensions between department members and disciplines. The review began in late spring of 2012 under leadership that changed twice over the course of the review. Caucuses decided to submit separate self studies for each of the program areas. Two additional reports were developed, one introductory report that addressed the review process and overlapping concerns of the separate self study documents and a second report that addressed the operating and functionality of the department. The latter, dealing with internal administrative issues, was addressed by the Dean but was not communicated to the External Review Committee which was asked to focus on curriculum review. Internal issues were raised by department members with the ERC.

The External Review Committee submitted a report that recognized the academic credibility of all of the programs reviewed. They provided positive comments on the large and growing student numbers in the programs, on levels of student satisfaction, levels of dedication to teaching amongst faculty and on the impressive array of scholarship initiatives amongst faculty. This was accompanied by a very frank critique of internal issues related to the administration and governance of the unit.

The first action implemented by the Dean on receipt of this review was to introduce an interim Head from outside of the department to lead the unit in drafting an Action Plan.

What follows is the Action Plan worked on with the department and the interim Head. The department has recognized the need for and welcomes a clearer organizational and administrative structure for the unit. Department members recognize that transparency and a clear set of procedures around decision making will contribute to a better functioning unit.

Governance and Departmental Organization/Administration

- a. Ensure a clear and transparent set of expectations
- b. Ensure clear communications between the Department Head, the Dean, and the Provost and Vice President, Academic
- c. Develop a curriculum committee with disciplinary representation with, for the time being, an external chair
- d. Make teaching assignments based on expertise and availability, not seniority
- e. Ensure equal access to courses for faculty with expertise and desire to teach particular courses
- f. Course assignment decisions need to be made by the Department Head
 - i. Establish a “clean slate” for course assignment decision making
 - ii. Remove “ownership” of courses

Action Items Re: Governance and Departmental Organization/Administration

- A. Appointed an interim Head to the department in order to oversee the implementation of new procedures and processes and lay the groundwork for the successful transition to a SAC selected Head
 - a. Subsequently, the appointed interim Head was promoted to the Associate Dean of Students. An internal interim Head was appointed. While an internal Head, she is still appointed by the Deans’ office and has a mandate to continue the action plan outlined by the response to the external review. The Associate Dean of Students will continue her work with the department.
- B. Establish clear and open communication within the department and with the Dean and the Provost and VP, Academic
 - a. At the September 2014 department meeting, department members will be finalizing an agreed upon code of conduct for departmental business and communications. These guidelines emphasize open, respectful, and professional communication.
 - b. Given the ongoing involvement of the Associate Dean of Students with curriculum and program revision in the department, as well as support of the new interim Head by both Associate Deans, lines of communication between the Deans’ office and the department are open.
 - c. The Dean has communicated the External Committee’s comments to the Provost and continues to alert APPC to recurring themes of Program Reviews related to leadership responsibility of department heads and evaluations of courses and teaching at UFV.
- C. Develop curricular guidelines for the department and its disciplines and use these as the basis for decision making at a departmental and curriculum committee-level
 - a. Sociology largely has these in place. There is a clear rationale for how level is assigned to courses and the skill development which takes place by level in the program.

- b. Anthropology has identified skills that students develop, but has yet to frame program and offerings in a way which reflects laddering and a set of curriculum guidelines upon which courses may be evaluated.
 - i. This work began over the summer and will continue in the fall under the direction of the Associate Dean of Students.
- D. Recognize faculty expertise regarding teaching areas
 - a. This has been done to some degree. There is still some tension within Anthropology, but overall there are criteria in place for vetting expertise.
 - b. Work has been done to do this more systematically for sessional faculty, too, in an attempt to move away from the onerous hiring of sessional faculty by course. Instead, CVs and materials are being reviewed to identify multiple areas of expertise at time of hire, rather than requiring existing sessional faculty to constantly apply for specific courses.
- E. Survey faculty regarding current and desired teaching assignments
 - a. This has been done. In particular, conversations have taken place regarding cross-listed courses and who has the required expertise and interest.
 - b. Further, courses without a specific faculty member attached have been identified. This is particularly an issue in Anthropology. Ongoing curriculum review will see these courses either claimed by a faculty member (and taught on a 2-year rotation) or removed from the calendar.
- F. Re-assess how courses are assigned and scheduled and aim for a clear, transparent, equal, and rational process guided by the Head
 - a. The interim head called for faculty to outline their desired 2-year rotation. Most Sociology faculty have done this. Anthropology faculty have not done this and this work has not been done for LAS.
This work will be continued by the new interim Head.
- G. The formation of a single curriculum committee will be considered once Anthropology has arrived at greater consensus regarding their program focus.

Department Dynamics

- a. Build a collegial and respectful work environment
- b. Address individual and collective conflicts
- c. Engage in teambuilding
- d. Ensure strong leadership by the Department Head

The department is committed to building a shared vision for its dynamic and multi-disciplinary department, based on a sense of unity.

Action Items re: Department Dynamics:

- A. Review institutional documents on departmental codes of conduct and create one for SCMS
 - a. As per above, this document will be finalized in September 2014

- B. Have the Head and all department members work together to ensure a collegial and respectful departmental environment
 - a. The department is committed to this. The establishment of clear, agreed upon guidelines will ensure the upholding a collegial and professional environment.
- C. Emphasize shared goals, commitments, and vision and departmental unity
 - a. Student success has become the unifying vision.

Department Planning and Vision

- a. Identify medium-term and long-term plans for the department and for each discipline and program
- b. Articulate departmental strengths, as well as areas for future growth and development
- c. Define a central focus for each area of study which contributes to the larger vision of the department
- d. Identify learning outcomes for each program that address both knowledge and skills acquisition
- e. Articulate hiring priorities should the opportunity arise

As noted by the reviewers, there are many things that Sociology and Anthropology faculty do well. Commitment to teaching and students tops the list. Many faculty members undertake rich programs of research and scholarship. The department will benefit from identifying the strengths that exist within areas of expertise so as to identify a clearer focus and foundation for future growth. The Head will need to encourage collaborative teaching and research.

Action Items re: Department Planning and Vision

- A. Identify and articulate areas of strength regarding teaching areas, research, pedagogy, etc.
 - a. This has largely been done. The areas have identified their expertise and how this informs their teaching and their research. Faculty are working to integrate these and, often, their teaching areas reflect their areas of research.
- B. Make decisions regarding disciplinary directions and where best to allocate resources
 - a. Sociology – In the short term, they have begun the process of removing courses from the calendar that are not being taught. They have also revised the Social Research Concentration to make it more flexible for students. In the medium-term, they plan to develop a new course on race at the 300-level to replace two courses that will be removed (one 200-level and one 400-level). In the long term, they plan the growth of the social research concentration.
 - b. Anthropology – There is significant work to be done in order to revise and revitalize the Anthropology courses and programs. Faculty are currently engaged in a visioning exercise as they decide what they would like to be and what direction they would like to take in their programs. Tied to this is significant curriculum revision and a desire to include more applied components in the courses and programs.

- C. Work with each discipline and area of study in the department to identify central foci for distinct and shared program paths
 - a. Sociology – This has been done. The group has identified their core thematic areas and will ensure that program and curriculum development addresses these core areas.
 - b. Anthropology – This work is ongoing under the direction of the Associate Dean of Students.
- D. Work with the department to identify a larger vision that is unifying and inclusive
 - a. This has largely been done. All emphasize a commitment to students and to teaching and learning.
- E. Outline and agree upon the learning outcomes for each program
 - a. Each area has identified program outcomes.
- F. Outline and agree upon a ladder skill progression within each program
 - a. This largely exists in Sociology. There is a clear progression from 100-level to 400-level in terms of expectations of students and skills acquisition.
 - b. Anthropology has agreed upon a set of skills their students require, but has not yet mapped how these skills are developed through their courses and programs. This work continues under the Associate Dean of Students.
- G. Identify a longer-term vision of the programs which could inform potential hiring decisions
 - a. Sociology – Gender and Feminist specialization which could interface with one of the three areas of program growth in SEM
 - b. Anthropology – Health specialization

Curriculum and Course Offerings

- a. Review all programs
 - i. Focus on what the department can do well and where resources are best allocated
- b. Develop a 2-year rotation plan for all courses
 - i. Produce course offering plans which can be clearly communicated to students
- c. Remove disciplinary-based seat reserves within SCMS and replace with single-block reserves for cross-listed courses
 - i. Ensure all students in the respective disciplines have equal access to courses
- d. Review all cross-listings
- e. Review all courses
 - i. Delete courses which have not been offered regularly
 - ii. Delete courses which cannot be offered within a 2-year rotation
 - iii. Review all courses for content overlap and delete and/or merge courses with similar content
 - iv. Review the expectations and content of every course to ensure it is reflective of the level at which it is taught
 - v. Where multiple faculty teach a single course, such as SOC 101, consider establishing agreement on a common foundation to be taught by all

- f. Pay careful attention to lower-level and upper-level course offerings to ensure a balance between the two
 - i. Pare down first-year ANTH offerings
- g. Increase experiential and applied learning within courses and programs

Members of Sociology and Anthropology are ready to undertake a comprehensive review of their courses and programs with an eye towards leaner offerings. The department will be considering ways to better serve students.

Action Items re: Curriculum and Course Offerings

- A. Using the suggestions outlined in the External Review Committee report, with sensitivity to the particular needs of programs within the department, undertake individual course reviews and program/discipline course reviews and program restructuring
 - a. Sociology:
 - i. All courses have been reviewed
 - ii. A set of courses is slated for deletion; process begins September 2014
 - iii. Social Research Concentration reviewed – minor changes to make program more flexible – before CACC September 2014
 - b. Anthropology:
 - i. All courses have been reviewed
 - ii. A list is being developed of courses to be deleted
 - iii. Work is underway to more firmly identify the focus of the program and the courses offered
 - iv. A list is being developed of courses that will be merged (i.e. two become one)
 - v. A list is being developed of courses that ANTH faculty will not be teaching, but which SOC faculty might (e.g. Food courses)
 - vi. ANTH extended minor and minor are under review
- B. Explore UFV and SCMS policies around cross-listing, develop departmental cross-listing criteria, and evaluate existing cross-listed courses
 - a. This work has begun and will be informed by conversations taking place in the UEC working group. The unit will be guided by institutional direction on cross-listing.
- C. Develop a two-year rotational plan for most courses
 - a. The interim Head called for faculty to outline their desired 2-year rotation. Most Sociology faculty have done this. Anthropology faculty have not done this and this work has not been done for LAS.
 - i. This work needs to be continued by current interim Head.
- D. Evaluate different models of seat reserves and change departmental practice as needed
 - a. For Winter 2015, seats will no longer be reserved based on discipline within SCMS (i.e. so many for SOC, so many for ANTH, etc.), but rather as blanket designations for all SCMS program paths.

- E. Work towards establishing a balance between lower-level and upper-level course offerings
 - a. This work is ongoing. Sociology has largely achieved this with their planned 2-year rotations. More needs to be done to address this in Anthropology.
- F. Review course offerings and look for places to increase experiential/applied learning in courses and programs
 - a. Sociology offers students numerous opportunities for applied learning. Anthropology is committed to doing the same.

Scholarship

- a. Encourage a positive and inclusive tone around the expectations of scholarship which is accommodating of career stage and different forms of scholarship

This is part of a larger discussion taking place within the institution. Faculty Standards Sub-Committee of Senate has articulated principles by which rank and tenure will be decided at UFV. This includes the nature of scholarship in a teaching intensive institution. The College of Arts has an agreed upon set of standards approved by Council that will guide department deliberations.