

**1. Title Page**

**University of North Alabama  
Academic Department Program Review**

Department of Sociology

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## 2. Five-Year Departmental Enrollment and Faculty Data

Five-year enrollment data provided by the Office of Institutional, Research, Planning and Assessment (OIRPA) for the Department of Sociology indicate a slight decrease in the number of full-time majors from Fall 2003 to Fall 2007 (approximately 20%). However, when the data is examined in greater detail (by academic year) the number of majors may actually be increasing. According to OIRPA data the number of full-time Fall 2007 majors stood at 62: a 24% increase over the reported 2006-2007 academic year figure. The Department also experienced a 19% increase in the number of full-time students between the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years. Focusing on those latter years, the data suggest a slight 6% decrease in the number of full-time majors (53 to 50) and a 42% decrease in the number of part-time majors (36 to 21) from 2004 through 2007. Although there appears to be an overall decline in majors and minors these trends should be examined in light of institutional history.

The separation of what had been a highly successful joint department involving Sociology and Criminal Justice (see 2000-2001 Bulletin for program descriptions) occurred Fall 2000. Up to this point in time the interdisciplinary focus of the programs had produced a substantial number of double majors in Sociology and Criminal Justice as well as a highly successful graduate program in Criminal Justice. Beginning Fall 2000 and for the next three/four years students seeking the double major were moved through their individual programs of study to graduation. The OIRPA provided data identifying 114 and 95 unduplicated majors for the 2002-2003 and 2003-2004 academic years respectively. For the 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years, 89, 78 and 71 total majors are presented respectively; these latter three years present more valid data for the Sociology Department as they are no longer skewed by institutional history.

In some respects the data reflect a national cyclical trend where growth in political science, criminal justice and economics may be drawing students away from Sociology. This trend is not cause for alarm as political and economic uncertainties will likely draw students back to the discipline that has historically encouraged critical thinking and objective research revolving around national and global social problems and issues. A recent Yale Daily News article (<http://www.yaledailynews.com/articles/view/24025>) noted that the national decline in sociology majors has some benefits including increased one-on-one contact with professors and more effective undergraduate advising. As this report will clearly show, UNA's Sociology Department excels in these areas while maintaining its solid academic footing.

With its four full-time instructors (including the department chair who has a one-course reduction each semester) the department averaged (2004-2007) approximately 15 full-time students and 840 credit hours per faculty member over a typical academic year (including summer). On average, 22 students enrolled in each Sociology class. The department's average cost per credit hour was approximately \$97.00 compared to the University average per credit hour tuition cost of approximately \$144.00 over the same time period. Despite a 24% increase in cost per credit hour during the 2004-2007 period, the department efficiently controls its costs (for comparative purposes, the department

saw an approximate 6% increase in cost per credit hour from 2004-2005 through 2005-2006). Since 2005, the department expenditures increased by \$43,212 but approximately \$15,000 of this amount is attributable to our departmental secretary moving from a part-time to full-time position on Oct. 2006. This increase brought us to a level of personnel support that nearly all academic departments had enjoyed for many years. The increase must also be understood relative to a faculty promotion which went into effect Fall 2007 as well as substantial cost of living and salary adjustment increases during the 2006-2007 academic year.

### **3. Assess the department as it relates to students**

#### **Enrollment**

The OIRPA data describing enrollments are presented below. Produced across the five-year period the department averaged approximately 3,450 student credit hours. A more valid assessment of departmental productivity, achieved from averaging the data for the latter three academic years (i.e., 2004-2005, 2005-2006 and 2006-2007) is approximately 3,358 student credit hours. Prior to the 2005-2006 academic year, approximately 5% of the department's total student credit hour production came from distance learning/on-line courses. Over the last two years approximately 19% of the total credit hours produced in the department came from distance learning courses.

## **Degree productivity**

Sixty-seven sociology majors graduated from the program between Fall 2004 and

“agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their required courses helped them understand social forces. Further, approximately 81% of our seniors (i.e., 95 of 116) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that our required courses prepared students for graduate study.

<b>Table 2.</b>	<b>Required Courses Trained Students to Understand Social Forces (Benchmark Met)</b>
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<b>Table 5.</b>	<b>Instructors Prepared Students for Graduate Studies (Benchmark Met)</b>					
	2002-2007	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
Strongly Disagree	1 (.9%)		1 (4%)			
Disagree						
Neutral	2 (1.7%)	1 (4%)		1 (3.4%)		

<b>Table 7.</b>	<b>Department Alumni Perceptions of Current Occupational Satisfaction</b>		
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
1. Low Satisfaction	1	2.0	2.0





the ten cohorts exceeded the national average on the Deviance & Social Problems assessment indicator as did six of ten cohorts on the Social Psychology assessment indicator and six of ten cohorts on the Multiculturalism assessment indicator. A similar achievement was noted on the Demography & Community assessment indicator.

Beginning Fall 2008 we will have in place course redesigns for Introductory Sociology (SO 221) and Social Problems (SO 222) that will, consistent with the University's goals, emphasize more global content. Since these are both required courses in the major, we

## **Research productivity**

As highlighted below (see 9. Program Overview), the sociology faculty have been actively involved in research activities beyond and above the expectation standard set by the Department. Despite our rather heavy

2008 - Panelist for session on Underage Drinking Prevention Strategies, The Alabama State Underage Drinking Conference, Florence, AL.

2007 and 2006 - Prepared and made a presentation to parents whose children were enrolled in the Kilby Child Development Center. This presentation was titled "Pre-School and the Organizational Child: An Informal Presentation of Kilby CDC Parents.

Since 2003 - Participated in 10 interviews for articles on various social issues that subsequently appeared in the Florence Times Daily.

Dr. Alex Takeuchi:

2008 - Offered "Iaido Seminar" to introduce a traditional martial art of Japan at the 19th Annual World Tang Soo Do Association Masters' Clinic organized jointly by UNA Department of Geography and North Alabama Tang Soo Do.

2006 - Organized through UNA Sociology Club and Alpha Kappa Delta "Charitable Dinner" to raise fund for female victims of sexual abuse in local shelter.

2005 - Organized through UNA Sociology Club "The 2nd Annual Life Raft Debate" as a significant portion of the admission fees collected was donated to help hurricane Katrina victims.

2003 - Organized through UNA Sociology Club house building activity for the local chapter of Habitat for Humanity.

Since 2003 - Participated in 8 interviews for articles on various social issues that subsequently appeared in the Florence Times Daily as well as a national (i.e., Main Street) news papers.

#### Service to the professional community

Dr. Jerri Bullard:

Since 2006 - UNA Learning Communities Coordinator.

Since 2001 - UNA Summer School Coordinator.

Dr. Tom Kersen:

2005-2008 - Served as Communications Directors for the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association.

Dr. Craig Robertson:

2008 - Presenter at UNA's Distance learning Best Practices Conference. Presentation titled: "Best Practices for the First Two Weeks of Class."



application technology, emphasize the importance of such skills, and increase the likelihood that students will gravitate toward our research applications course and their own research paper presentations. As noted earlier, respondents in our Senior Exit Survey and Alumni Survey indicated that they would have liked to have had greater opportunity to develop these skills.

### **Equipment**

The Department has an annual budget of \$6,000.00 for equipment and supplies. All faculty have personal computers and printers that are updated through the University technology fund on a regular basis (historically on a 3-year rotation). These computers



**Response:** The departmental faculty engages in an annual discussion of our MFT results and the data are expressed in each Annual Report produced by the department. We consider the above stated recommendation/goal as a realistic objective and take seriously observed shortcomings and impediments threatening this objective.

2. Greater than 50% of responses to the departmental alumni follow-up study shall indicate adequate self-reported employment or graduate school preparation.

**Response:** The departmental faculty, as noted in the above Tables, clearly have met these goals though we acknowledge that our students would likely experience greater overall satisfaction after graduation were they better prepared in terms of applied research skills. As noted above, we proactively addressed this matter with creation of the SO 311 course.

3. Greater than 50% of department faculty will exhibit a commitment to research and scholarly activity as demonstrated through attendance or presentation at professional association meetings.

**Response:** Review of faculty summary evaluation report and goal planning forms suggest that the department faculty reach or actually exceed this goal on an annual basis. Despite involvement in research activity, the faculty are hampered in presenting their work at conferences in part because of the limited travel budget. Approximately 70% of the standard individual allocation can be consumed by attending, for example, the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Associations annual meeting. Attending the regional Mid-South Sociological Association annual meeting will consume the standard individual travel allocation. The department has not fulfilled this responsibility on a consistent basis. (work at conf

Committee, Research Committee, and is currently serving as Learning Communities Coordinator and Summer School Coordinator.

Dr. Craig T. Robertson has served on the following committees: General Studies Degree Committee, SACS Steering Committee Memb



Department Mission Statement: The Department of Sociology's mission is to serve the university, community and region through our collective effort, combined knowledge and unique skills as a group of educators in the scientific discipline of Sociology. The academic major aims to prepare students for citizenship in the global world by giving them a better understanding of their social, cultural, economic and physical environment and a set of conceptual and research tools to build upon that understanding.

The Department's mission statement complements the University's mission to teach, conduct research and engage in service that, combined, maintain opportunities for students while advancing their interests and those of the immediate community, state and region.

Program Goals and Objectives: Flowing from the University and Department mission statements, the department faculty identified a set of basic student-centered learning goals. Our goals and objectives were developed, assessed and refined as a product of our own long-term assessment efforts and were recently reviewed and approved in a report ("*Department of Sociology Program Assessment for the Baccalaureate Program*") submitted January 2008 to the College of Arts and Sciences Dean.

Student Learning Goals - Upon completion of the academic major in Sociology we expect students to demonstrate the following:

Goal 1 - Understand the sociological imagination and the conceptual links between individual and group experiences and broader social forces and between social forces and history.

Goal 2 - Understand issues, such as generally agreed upon social problems, relative to the forces of culture and social structures, the relationships between individuals, groups and society, effects of stratification systems and apply to those issues the macro and micro levels of analysis.

Goal 3 - Understand how to conduct, interpret and apply sociological research, review and understand the existing research literature, critically assess the advantages and disadvantages of research methods specific to research questions.

Goal 4 - Understand the role of sociological theories and demonstrate the ability to discuss, apply, and describe some basic theories or theoretical orientations and apply them to issues of interest.

Goal 5 - Students will be satisfied with the support they received while enrolled in the Sociology program.

Evidence of program performance related to these stated goals is presented below in the section titled "Program Evaluation".

Research Goals and Objectives - The departmental faculty are expected to engage in research activity with this expectation being expressed such that “greater than 50% of department faculty will exhibit a commitment to research and scholarly activity as demonstrated through attendance or presentation at professional association meetings”. The faculty’s research efforts enhance our program by enhancing classroom instruction, improving interaction and extra-curricular instruction with select students and enhancing personal and professional development.

During the 2003-2004 academic year the Department of Sociology faculty engaged in research activities with half of the departmental faculty (i.e., Dr. Jerry Miley and Dr. Craig Robertson) attending various regional association meetings. The research activities and interests among the faculty also benefited the immediate community via interviews given by Dr. Alex Takeuchi and Dr. Craig Robertson to the local newspaper. In an excellent demonstration of their commitments to research and community service, Dr. Jerri Bullard and Dr. Craig Robertson separately assisted local agencies in their grant writing efforts (see annual goals statements for these faculty).

During the 2004-2005 academic year the Department of Sociology faculty engaged in research activities with 100% of the departmental faculty (i.e., Dr. Jerri Bullard, Dr. Tom Kersen, Dr. Craig Robertson and Dr. Alex Takeuchi) attending various regional association meetings. As a department we set as our annual goal in our 2003-2004 report greater than 50% participation of department faculty in scholarly activity as demonstrated through attendance or presentation at professional association meetings. Dr. Takeuchi presented original co-authored work at the annual meeting of the Pacific Sociological Association. His attendance at this meeting in Portland, Oregon was facilitated by additional funds obtained from Dean Vagn Hansen and from funds disseminated to the general faculty by President Cale. Dr. Tom Kersen's research efforts were featured in a publication by the American Academy of Pediatrics titled "About Childhood: An Authoritative Resource on the State of Childhood Today". Dr. Kersen also co-authored a paper presented at the 2005 annual meeting of Population Association of American. Finally, Dr. Kersen attended the annual meeting of the Southern Sociological Society

accepted for publication in the prestigious journal *Marriage and Family Review*. Dr. Takeuchi also coauthored an article on the historical development of Japanese samurai swords and their mountings. This article will be published this summer by the Macau Public Museum of Art in China.

Dr. Jerri Bullard, Dr. Tom Kersen and Dr. Craig Robertson attended the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Alabama-Mississippi Sociological Association. Dr. Tom Kersen attended the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Southern Demographic Association.

**Service Goals and Objectives:** The departmental faculty are expected to engage in professional service to the University and community. An accounting of the faculty's extensive history of University service was highlighted above. No direct program or

areas and an overall high level of student satisfaction with the department. However, it should be emphasized and appreciated that such strain adversely affects faculty research productivity and service.

**Goal 3** - Understand how to conduct, interpret and apply sociological research, review and understand the existing research literature, critically assess the advantages and disadvantages of research methods specific to research questions. Discussions of applied research in the elective courses, including the strengths and weaknesses of particular research designs, are central to teaching all subject matter in the Department. Many of the elective courses require assignments where students must review and summarize published academic research articles thus exposing them to applied research and functional methodologies. Sociology majors are required to take Methods of Social Research (SO 310W) and strongly encouraged through academic advisement to take Computer Applications in the Social Sciences (SO 311).

**Goal 4** - Understand the role of sociological theories and demonstrate the ability to discuss, apply, and describe some basic theories or theoretical orientations and apply them to issues of interest. Simply put, every course taught in this department contains a solid theoretical component. Focused study of historical as well as contemporary theoretical concepts, logic, propositions and derived hypotheses takes place in the following required courses: History of Social Thought (SO 423) and Modern Sociological Theory (SO 428).

Governance Structure of the Program: Not Applicable

Admissions Requirements: Not Applicable

Degree Requirements, Curriculum and Prerequisites: In addition to completing the General Education Component and an academic minor (minors often involve 18-24 credit hours), Sociology majors are required to complete the following course requirements with a minimum total, within major and within minor, cumulative grade point average of 2.00. Including Area V requirements, the Sociology major consists of 36 hours. Students are also required to take the Major Field Test in Sociology as a final graduation requirement.

Students may elect to pursue either a Bachelor of Science or Bachelor of Arts degree program. During the last five years approximately 12% of all Sociology majors have pursued the Bachelor of Arts degree. This degree option is recommended by the American Sociological Association and students are encouraged to pursue this option during academic advising.

The overall curriculum is designed around our mission statement and its specific goal of preparing “students for citizenship in the global world by giving them a better understanding of their social, cultural, economic and physical environment and a set of conceptual and research tools to build upon that understanding”.

<b>Required Courses</b>	<b>Elective Courses</b>
<p>Intro. Sociology (SO 221 – prerequisite to all courses except SO 223)  Social Problems (SO 222)  Methods of Social Research (SO 310W)  History of Social Thought (SO 423)  Modern Sociological Theory (SO 428)</p> <p><b>Area V Requirement</b>  Marriage and the Family (SO 223)  Computer Instruction (CS 110, 120 or CIS 125)</p>	<p>Students complete 15 hrs. of electives that can be completed in part by choosing an area of concentration. Concentrations are not required.</p> <p><b>Gerontology Concentration</b>  Medical Sociology (SO 307)  Death and Dying (SO 308)  Aging and Society (SO 309)  Gerontology (SO 403)</p> <p><b>Criminology Concentration</b>  Criminology (SO 323)  Juvenile Delinquency (SO 330)  Theories of Deviance (SO 400)  Law and Society (SO 430) or  Social Psychology (SO 442)</p> <p><b>Consult UNA Bulletin for entire list Sociology Department electives</b></p>

Associated Institutes and Centers: Not Applicable

Involvement of External Constituents in Establishing Goals: Not applicable in terms of some formally organized entity. Alumni data are employed however as questions are designed to assess most and least effective courses. Our academic Dean has been consulted for his input concerning goals and assessment strategies.

Community College Articulation: Not Applicable

Program Productivity – Majors & Degrees Conferred: This issue was addressed above in number 3. Degree productivity.

## **10. Program Evaluation**

Means of Assessing Student-Learning Outcomes: Student learning outcomes have been assessed continuously since May 2001 using survey instruments (i.e., Exit Survey and Alumni Survey) developed by the faculty. The Exit Survey (available upon request) is administered to each graduating cohort before they take the required MFT Examination which is another assessment tool employed each semester. The Alumni Survey (available upon request) is also administered annually to the previous year’s graduating cohort. It is designed to acqui

Aiming to continuously improve our courses and teaching methods as well as demonstrate our continued commitment to assessment, the department implemented for the Spring 2008 semester a pre- and post-test assessment plan specific to select required courses in the major. The pre- and post-tests are designed to measure how much students have learned from each class across relevant content dimensions. We will expand this aspect of our program assessment to include all required courses in the major during the 2008-2009 academic year.

Selected data from the Senior Exit Survey were presented above in Tables 1 through 6. Data from the Alumni Survey are presented below. The data presented reflect basic skills (Tables 9-14) that we would anticipate to be expected of all college graduates generally and Sociology majors specifically (Tables 15-18). The minimum measure of successful goal attainment is defined as a 70% rating of “average” or “outstanding” or evidence that, if a 70% rating is not met, there is movement over time toward meeting that benchmark.

<b>Table 9.</b>	<b>The Sociology Department Prepared Me to be Diligent in Task Completion (Benchmark Met)</b>					
	2002-2007	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007
Below Average						
Average	9 (18.4%)	2 (15.4%)	2 (18.2%)		3 (27.3%)	2 (25%)
Above Average	24 (49%)	5 (38.5%)	6 (54.5%)	5 (83.3%)	4 (36.4%)	4 (50%)
Outstanding	16 (32%)	6 (46.2%)	3 (27.3%)	1 (16.7%)	4 (36.4%)	2 (25%)
Total	49 (100%)	13 (100%)	11 (100%)	6 (100%)	11 (100%)	8 (100%)
Missing	1 (2%)		1 (8.3%)			

<b>Table 10.</b>	<b>The Sociology Department Improved my Writing Skills (Benchmark Met)</b>					
	2002-2007	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007

<b>Table 11.</b>	<b>The Sociology Department Improved my Oral Communication Skills (Benchmark NOT Met)</b>					
	2002-2007	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007
Below Average	3 (6%)	3 (23.1%)				
Average	19 (38%)	4 (30.8%)	6 (50%)	3 (50%)	5 (45.5%)	1 (12.5%)
Above Average	18 (36%)	4 (30.8%)	5 (41.7%)	1 (16.7%)	3 (27.3%)	5 (62.5%)
Outstanding	10 (20%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (8.3%)	2 (33.3%)	3 (27.3%)	2 (25%)

<b>Table 14.</b>	<b>The Sociology Department Prepared Me to Better Understand Social Problems</b>					
	2002-2007	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007
Below Average	2 (4%)	1 (7.7%)			1 (9.1%)	
Average	4 (8%)	2 (15.4%)	1 (8.3%)			1 (12.5%)
Above Average	15 (30%)	5 (38.5%)	3 (25%)	3 (50%)	2 (18.2%)	2 (25%)
Outstanding	29 (58%)	5 (38.5%)	8 (66.7%)	3 (50%)	8 (72.7%)	5 (62.5%)

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<b>Table 17.</b>	<b>The Sociology Department Prepared Me to Better Apply Research Methods (Benchmark Met)</b>					
	2002-2007	2002	2003	2004	2006	2007
Below Average						
Average	13 (26%)	4 (30.8%)	2 (16.7%)	1 (16.7%)	2 (18.2%)	4 (50%)
Above Average	21 (42%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (41.7%)	3 (50%)	5 (45.5%)	1 (12.5%)
Outstanding	16 (32%)	2 (15.4%)	5 (41.7%)	2 (33.3%)	4 (36.4%)	3 (37.5%)
Total	50 (100%)	13 (100%)	12 (100%)	6 (100%)	11 (100%)	(100%)
Missing						

A balance must certainly exist between the deductive and inductive orientations in science and, with strong theoretical and research methods skills, our students can competently express those orientations. Ho

note that the percentage of earned “A” and “B” grades declined since the 2003-2004 academic year while the general trend of earned “D” and “F” grades as well as variations of withdrawals trended higher. We see this increase in “Ds”, “F’s” and “withdrawals” coincide with lower than average performance on our MFT. The data indirectly suggest that the faculty are maintaining high standards in their courses and that coveted “A” grades are being earned by a small and rather exceptional group of students. “B” grades, the modal category in our data array, are attained by most students though slight percentage differences exist between “B” and “C” grades. This probably should be the case as “A” and “B” grades must remain reserved for the truly “above average” student. One might conclude that Sociology courses are appropriately designed (i.e., with an array of assignments working in concert with exams) so that students must push themselves to truly differentiate themselves from the average pack. Of course, these data are difficult to interpret in light of the University’s traditionally liberal policy of course withdrawals. Approximately 11% of the grades recorded during the five-year period involved “withdrawals” and this percentage figure increased during the program assessment period. The department will more carefully examine our “withdrawal” data to better understand this pattern by obtaining the following information:

- Student’s grade at withdrawal point
- Student’s estimated absences at withdrawal point
- Student’s admitted reason for dropping

<b>Table 19.</b>	<b>Departmental Five-Year Grade Distribution in Percent (All Classes)</b>					
Grade	2002-2007	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007
A	17.16%	18.13%	17.58%	18.11%	16.78%	15.15%
B	29.36	31.18	28.20	32.64	27.71	27.09
C	26.22	24.93	27.44	24.18	29.15	25.34
D	9.74	10.33	10.43	8.16	9.40	10.29
F	6.10	5.34	6.49	6.17	5.18	7.38