

# **Program Review Executive Summary**

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## **Western Oregon University: Sociology Department (Social Science Division)**

### **Majors Reviewed:**

- Sociology

### **Minors Reviewed:**

- Sociology

**Dates of Program Review: Academic Year 2018-19**

**Report Submitted: March 2019**

(External review waived due to faculty health issues followed by COVID-19)

**Date of Executive Summary: July 2021**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:  
SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT (SOCIAL SCIENCE DIVISION)**

The Sociology Department conducted a formal program review during the 2018-19 academic year, submitting its self-study report in March 2019. An external review by Dr. Michael Harrold, originally scheduled for Fall 2019, was postponed to March 2020 when Dr. Peter Callero, author of the self-study, suffered a sudden health crisis. The onset of the pandemic then delayed the review further, until finally the external review was waived altogether. Meanwhile, both Dr. Callero and Dr. Dean Braa submitted retirement notices sooner than was anticipated in the self-study report.

Under these unusual circumstances, the Dean and Provost took up the one of the report's primary recommendations—a shift toward a social work emphasis—and work toward that goal is presently underway. The Dean has held several virtual and face-to-face conversations with the Sociology faculty as a whole, with Dr. Maureen Dolan, and with Dr. Mary Pettenger, Social Science Division Chair, as well as with the provost. Many of these conversations have focused on the suggestion of building a social work emphasis option into the Sociology Degree. The consulting services of Dr. Michael Taylor, retired Social Work faculty member at Portland State University, have been engaged in order to facilitate this process.

The program review emphasized the following programmatic strengths:

- a. Outstanding, award-winning faculty members
- b. Innovative and abundant high-impact practices, such as Latino Mentors program and community organizing, with robust network of community partners
- c. Strong emphasis on social justice and equity
- d. In-depth senior capstone experience
- e. Excellent record of service to local Hispanic community
- f. Spanish language study abroad opportunities (pre-pandemic)
- g. Course enrollment means bolstered by popularity of Sociology emphasis with generalized Social Science majors
- h. Program strongly aligned with national American Sociological Association best practices
- i. Strong student research component

The following challenges were identified:

- a. Sudden retirements by 2/3 of TT faculty members (with a third retirement expected soon)
- b. One TT faculty member shouldering all departmental responsibilities singlehandedly (this situation was anticipated in the report, though a longer timeline was projected)
- c. Decline in number of minors after removal of WOU minor requirement
- d. Have not fully leveraged institutional career services to support student workplace readiness
- e. Have not fully explored opportunities to be more explicitly interdisciplinary
- f. Limited course modality options (note that this report was prepared prior to the pandemic, which necessitated a sudden pivot to emergency remote instruction and has significantly ameliorated this concern)

Opportunities include:

- a. Projected job growth in fields related to sociology, especially (though not only) in the area of social work
- b. Well positioned to make critical contributions to university's work toward becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution
- c. Recent experiences have expanded department's capacity with regard to multiple course modalities
- d. Opportunity to build new, more flexible minor
- e. Opportunity to increase collaboration with other disciplines
- f. Opportunity to engage more vigorously with Career Services

As stated above, the emergencies and sudden reduction in TT faculty have created an unusual trajectory for the implementation of program review recommendations. The matrix below shows some of the key developments since the time the self-study was completed.

**IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX**

<b>New Program-Driven Initiatives</b>	<b>Completed/ Ongoing</b>	<b>Underway (Target Completion Date)</b>	<b>To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)</b>
Develop new Social Work concentration, with a strong interdisciplinary component		X (Submit curriculum Fall 2021; search 21-22; implement Fall 2022)	
Revise Sociology minor	X		
Lobby for the hiring of replacement TT faculty		X (budget-dependent)	
Continue to develop coursework in multiple modalities		X (ongoing)	
Hire strong NTT faculty to cover curriculum during this interim period	X		

<b>Continuation of Ongoing Effectiveness</b>	<b>Completed/ Ongoing</b>	<b>Underway Target Completion Date)</b>	<b>To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)</b>
Continue to engage in exemplary work with Hispanic community	X		
Continue to engage with community partners for high-impact learning experiences	X		
Continue to offer exemplary curriculum emphasizing student research experiences	X		

LAS Dean Recommendations	Completed/ Ongoing	Underway Target Completion Date)	To Be Done (Will be Ongoing)
Update web site and marketing materials to appeal to diverse students; engage in vigorous marketing efforts			✗ – Start in AY 2021-22
If faculty FTE allows, explore whether it will be beneficial to offer sociology coursework in Salem			✗ – Start in AY 2021-22
Engage explicitly with Career Services to promote student workplace readiness			✗ – Start in AY 2021-22

As stated above, the necessary work toward building a social work concentration with a strong interdisciplinary focus, as well as a possible bilingual social work option, is well underway. This was the key recommendation in the self-study. This effort, combined with continuing the department’s already strong service to the Hispanic community, will position Sociology well for long-term growth and sustainability. Given the challenge of undertaking such an extensive endeavor with only one TT faculty currently managing the program singlehandedly, it will be vital for WOU administration, including the Social Science Division Chair, LAS Dean, Provost and others, to continue to support this effort.