1. Graduation rates for sociology majors and ways to improve them

The Sociology program has one of the highest four year graduation rates for majors at Eastern (94% - see attached). In fact, among the larger programs (30 or more majors), the sociology program has the highest four year graduation rate at ECSU. Further, the sociology four year graduation rate stands 11% higher than for all majors at ECSU (83%). Despite having a near 100% four year graduation rate, the faculty in the sociology program unanimously support trying to increase this rate by:

   a. Improving advising

       Several faculty members have agreed to participate in group advising on an experimental basis, to see if this might benefit sociology majors and improve advising within the program. Feedback will be given to the department on an ongoing basis to determine not only if the program was useful to both students and faculty, but also if it had any impact on graduation rates.

   b. AKD mentoring/tutoring program

       Many students in the STEP/CAP program typically choose sociology as a major. According to staff in the STEP/CAP program, peer mentoring is critical to success of their students and a sociology peer mentoring program through the sociology honor society was a “fantastic idea.” Dr. Bergstrom-Lynch and Dr. Lugo have already contacted the honor society, and students have responded with interest in the mentoring program. During the spring 2012 semester, when the new honor society initiates have been selected, a formal mentoring program will be established for new STEP/CAP students.

2. High impact practices within our curriculum

   a. Writing Intensive Courses

       i. SOC 350: Methods of Social Research
          - current logjam over class size- this has been a problem, and the department is looking for ways to remedy it, while keeping SOC 350 a writing intensive course.

       ii. SOC 400: Senior Seminar
          - This is the department’s capstone course and has been writing intensive for some time.
iii. Propose expansion of each to 4 credits in order to allow students to be more engaged in the material.

- Faculty who teach both courses have been preparing submission materials for the curriculum committee to expand each course to four credits. This process should be completed by the end of the academic year.

b. Undergraduate Research
   i. Encourage student participation in the A&S Student Research Conference
      - All faculty in the program will encourage all students in their upper level classes to participate in the A&S Student Research Conference. Regular updates will be provided by faculty in the department meetings.
   ii. Develop 4-credit Senior Thesis option (in lieu of SOC 400) for exceptional sociology majors.
      - Course description will include “Exceptional students who have successfully completed SOC 300, 350, and 351; Instructor permission and departmental approval.” A more detailed rubric of expectations will be determined by the department.

c. Internships
   i. Develop and submit proposals for SOC 375, SOC 480/481, and SOC 490/491 for LAW!

d. Capstone Courses/Experiences
   i. SOC 400: Senior Seminar
   ii. Develop 4-credit Senior Thesis option (see above)

e. Diversity/Global Learning
   i. The majority of our courses are informed by diversity/global learning
   ii. The department voted to update course catalog to delete courses not currently taught by full-time faculty
   iii. All faculty in the program agreed to encourage student participation in study abroad and student exchange programs.

f. At least two full-time faculty members already participate in the FYP; faculty have also participated in LAP 130 & FYR 174. Faculty are engaged in several collaborative efforts across the University, such as GC, University Hour, etc.

3. Overall Curriculum Goals and Assessment

   A. Goals- during the retreat, sociology faculty approved the following curriculum goals:

1. Students will understand and apply sociological theory, understand the role of sociological theory in building knowledge, and be able to compare and contrast different theoretical orientations.
2. Students will understand how to ask and answer sociological questions through gathering, analyzing, and reporting sociological data.
3. Students will understand the sociological relevance of issues related to global diversity, including gender, race, class, sexual orientation, etc.
4. Students will understand the interrelationships between individuals and society, including how individuals influence society and how society influences individuals.

B. How should we assess these goals/learning outcomes?

All sociology majors will be expected to complete an assessment designed to measure the extent to which the Department is accomplishing the 4 goals outlined above. The assessment will be administered to students enrolled in Senior Seminar (Soc 400), preferably towards the end of the semester.

Other Details
1. Students will not be asked to include their name or any other identifying information on the assessment itself. Their anonymity will be assured, and they will be informed that their performance on the assessment test will have no effect on their course grades, graduation plans, etc.

2. On the assessment, students will also be asked:
   a. To answer several demographic questions designed to measure race, gender, age, etc.
   b. To indicate which of the required courses (i.e., Soc 100, 300, 350, 351) they have successfully completed at the time of the assessment.

3. The implementation of this assessment plan shall commence at the end of the Spring 2012 semester, so as to allow enough time for the development of questions measuring students' mastery of theory, methods, data analysis, diversity, and interrelationships between individuals and society.

C. How often should we assess students?
Students should be assessed every year in which Soc 400 is offered, beginning in Spring 2012.

D. Develop an assessment plan and implementation timetable.
After each academic year assessment, results from all assessments will be tabulated and distributed to Sociology faculty. Results will be used to determine which areas, if any, need additional attention. Based on assessment results, modifications will be made to course curricula as necessary.

In the future, we will work to establish a minimum competency level that satisfies the implementation and achievement of departmental goals. Also, in the future we will consider the possibility of additional assessment techniques (e.g., developing a pre-test
assessment to be implemented earlier on in the student’s academic career) as necessary.

Nick Parsons will be responsible for compiling a draft of the assessment test prior to Spring 2012 semester. Other departmental faculty members are welcome and encouraged to assist in the modifying of the initial assessment draft prior to implementation.

Other questions:

What is the “niche” (i.e., distinctiveness) of the majors curriculum that is unique for our region/audience? One of the unique aspects of the Sociology program at Eastern in comparison to other majors within Eastern as well as in comparison to sociology departments at other schools, concerns our explicit focus on issues of national and global diversity throughout a variety of required and elected courses.