

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
8128 Social Science
1180 Observatory Drive
Madison, Wisconsin 53706-1393



608-262-1498
fax: 608-265-5389
oliver@ssc.wisc.edu
www.ssc.wisc.edu/soc

May 1, 2006

TO: Elaine Klein, Assistant Dean and Director of Assessment
College of Letters and Science
FROM: Pamela E. Oliver, Chair
RE: Assessment Plans

The Sociology Department has evaluated the assessment tools used for our prior assessments in 2003, and previously submitted to the College. We have concluded that these past instruments provide an acceptable baseline of indirect assessment of student learning by way of asking graduating seniors their perceptions of how much various skills have grown through their involvement in their sociology courses. We also surveyed faculty regarding their perceptions of student preparation for advanced courses. At the same time, we see room for improvement in several dimensions. First, we will consider whether it is appropriate to disaggregate our students more carefully in assessing their learning and to articulate more specific learning goals for different subpopulations of students. Students may be distinguished according to whether they come to the major relatively early or relatively late in their student careers. Students who declare the major late and postpone their required courses until their senior year may have markedly different learning outcomes from those who begin the major late in their sophomore year. Similarly, we will consider whether to distinguish learning goals for the Concentration in Analysis and Research from those for the major in general. Second, we will consider possible methodological improvements to our assessment repertoire. These include: (1) adding direct measures of student learning to our assessment; (2) conducting alumni surveys; (3) more clearly to distinguishing in faculty surveys between the skills students bring with them into their classes at the beginning of the term from what they learn from their classes.

In 2006-7, an assessment committee will prioritize these possible areas of improvement and design small-scale research projects to determine whether any of these improvements is worth implementing on a large scale.