**Department of Sociology**  **Student Outcomes Assessment Report**: **2015 – 2016**

**Learning Outcomes:**  For Fall 2016, we assessed Soc 131, *Sociology of Sex and Gender,* as per our five year SOAP plan. For this activity, we assessed two of our departmental student learning outcomes:

Sociology Department Learning Outcome A2: *The student will be able to apply the sociological imagination, connecting personal troubles to larger social issues, resulting in a deeper understanding of the relationships between personal experience and the social world.*

Sociology Department Learning Outcome B5: *The student will be able to demonstrate information literacy and examine social phenomena, making connections between issues and institutions.*

**Instrument/Measure:**To accomplish this assessment, we used a direct measure in the form of a pretest/posttest. The pretest was part of an early assignment for this course and required students to include materials from an interview/discussion they conducted with a family member or close friend on this topic. The posttest was part of the final exam and students were asked to support statements with points from assigned readings for the course. The prompt for the pretest and posttest was the same: *How would* *your life, life chances, and opportunities change if you were born of the opposite sex?*

A sample of 15 sets of pretest/posttest essays was drawn from Dr. Kubal’s class that represented the range of those submitted. Two instructors (Kubal and Helsel) read the ranked the essays, scoring them from 1-5 according to the attached rubric. The following comments on essays refer to the posttest essays which reflect the learning that took place over the course of the semester in this Soc 131 course.

**Results and Conclusions:** The reviewers’ rankings were very similar: Kubal’s overall average was 3.8 and Helsel’s was 3.5. About 80% of the students scored at least 3/5.

The best essays utilized references to multiple course readings and resources to support points; they provide a more thorough and detailed explication of the life consequences of changing sexes. These essays offered insights into the changes in the interactions with and effects of multiple institutions (economy, politics, education, healthcare, family) secondary to changing one’s sex. They expressed a deeper understanding of gender differences while avoiding the tendency to essentialize those differences.

The weaker essays tended to rely to some extent on stereotypes and simply summarized data and research from the readings without connecting it to specific observations or projections about life as the opposite sex. These essays had a much more limited list of institutions whose interactions and effects were included in those impacted by a change in one’s sex; most of the weaker essays limited their discussion to effects on family and occupational choices. Many of these weaker essays also had problems with basic grammar, editing and coherence. In general, however, it was apparent that this was an assignment that the students actually enjoyed. Even in the weaker essays that needed significant editing and revision the student was obviously engaged with the topic and described life as the opposite sex with energy and either horror or enthusiasm.

**Recommended Changes:** It may benefit the students’ awareness of their own experiences to reiterate throughout the semester the effects that gender stereotyping can have on life chances and choices. When students are reminded of how often we encounter gender essentialism (assumptions that there are unique male and female traits that make men and women “naturally suited” to different roles), they may be better able to identify and analyze the real-world consequences of these attitudes on their own lives. Classroom discussions about such instances can also help by making it acceptable to reveal familial or cultural expectations around appropriate gender roles.

As is generally the case, some students need more experience summarizing and organizing information from readings and resources to support the points they made in their written work. The weaker essays often included basic reports on points made in the assigned readings without actually connecting these points to the analysis of their own experiences. This represented a compartmentalization rather than a synthesis and application of information, which is one of the goals of the course. Classroom discussions on the intersection of social institutions and gender followed by short, in-class writing assignments that summarize relevant points may help students accumulate, assimilate and utilize information.

**Assessment Activities for 2016-2017**: In 2016-2017, we will be assessing data from the Fall 2016 semester of Soc 165 (*Family*) We intend to use a direct measure in the form of an exam question. We intend to assess learning outcome A2 (*Students will be able to apply the sociological imagination, connecting personal troubles to larger, social issues, resulting in a deeper understanding of the relationships between personal experience and the social world*.) The prompt used will enable us to ascertain whether students are cognizant of the intersections and interactions between social institutions. We also intend to administer an alumni survey in the next two years so we will begin writing that instrument as well as our new five-year SOAP plan.

**Program Review Action Plan Progress**: The Department of Sociology made excellent progress this year on the recommendations from our previous action plan. Those recommendations included adding a qualitative methods course, revising our quantitative research course offerings, reviving a classical sociological theory course, and hiring more faculty. Working toward those goals, we accomplished our first major curriculum revision in over a decade. We added Soc 176 *Qualitative Research Methods* and made it a Tier 2 requirement; we have also revised our quantitative course offerings. We revived and are currently offering Soc 152 (Classical Theory). Courses in theory and research methods were converted to 4-unit classes. We have also hired several new faculty who bring depth to our course offerings as well as unique areas of specialization. We are now in the process of completing another Program Review and look forward to building a new action plan based on those recommendations.