It is recommended program assessment results be used to celebrate achievements of student learning as well as to identify potential areas for future curriculum improvement.

Please email this completed form as an attachment to thatcherk@slu.edu

CAS PROGRAMS: Please email this completed form by July 1 to Donna LaVoie lavoiedj@slu.edu

1. Degree Program(s) included in this report: M.A. in sociology
2. Department: Sociology and Anthropology
3. School/Center/College: Arts &Sciences
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Instructions: Please answer the following five questions to the best of your ability for each degree program offered within your department.

1. Summarize your assessment activities during the past year for each degree program and how this work relates to the established assessment plan (e.g. what program outcomes were assessed, faculty discussions, new survey design, data collection, revised assessment plans or learning outcomes, etc.). Please include how Madrid courses/program were involved.

This assessment report is for the MA program in sociology. This is the first year of the assessment process plan as approved in October, 2015. Learning Outcome 1 (Knowledge of theory) and Learning Outcome 2 (Critical Thinking) were scheduled for review under this plan. As such, the assessment process is not complete yet. Materials have been gathered for assessing the outcomes (i.e. papers, proposal defenses, thesis defenses and theses). These are to be reviewed by the faculty and a summary report prepared as scheduled during June. This summary report will then be presented to all departmental faculty members for review and discussion at the annual faculty retreat at the end of August, 2016. Madrid is not involved in this assessment.

2. Describe specific assessment findings related to the learning outcomes assessed for each degree program, including any pertinent context surrounding the findings. Please include the learning outcomes themselves. (e.g. Our goal was that 75% of students performed at the “proficient” level of competency in problem solving, using a new scoring rubric. 81% of students performed at the “proficient” level in problem solving, exceeding our expectations.) Do not include student-level data. Data included in this report should be in aggregate. Please include how Madrid courses/program were involved.

Assessment findings for Outcome 1:
Demonstrate an ability to apply sociological theory or concepts and the sociological imagination to social institutions, groups, issues and problems (Knowledge – Theory)

and for Outcome 2:
Demonstrate an ability to dissect and critically analyze existing social research (Critical Thinking).

The goal was to demonstrate that students were able to utilize, incorporate and demonstrate sociological theory and critical thinking in their writing for course papers, thesis proposals and thesis defenses. The department has a scaffolding process built into the curriculum. The incoming cohort of graduate students are required to take Soc 5010 – ProSeminar in their first semester and encouraged to take Soc 5100 – Organizational Theory (also required) in their first semester.

In Soc 5010 – ProSeminar, students are required to choose the topic for their thesis research and/or final papers and write a literature review of existing research on this topic, among other things. In a coordinated fashion, these same students are required to create a theory paper, preferably on the same topic, in Soc 5100 – Organizational Theory.

In addition, these students are to contact and discuss with faculty in the department (one-on-one) as to the viability of the faculty member as a mentor for the thesis topic. This is designed to help the student develop a stronger theoretical base for the topic and be able to present it clearly and succinctly to the faculty member.

Thus the goal is to have 100% of the cohort having a thesis or paper topic in place, as well as choosing a mentor and committee based on an understanding of the theoretical background for the topic. While the goal was to have this done by the end of January, it took until March to satisfactorily reach the 100% level. This glitch in the assessment time frame will be evaluated as part of the assessment review process.

Additionally, students are expected to demonstrate their ability to apply said theoretical knowledge in the form of a literature review. Again, all students in the cohort (100%) are expected to have completed this by April 2016. This did, in fact, occur. More importantly, was how well the students applied this knowledge. The evaluation of this work is still ongoing at this point in time. Our goal is to have at least 80% of the students performing at an “adequate” level (scoring level of 3) or better, which is sufficient to pass the proposal defense. These papers are still being evaluated. (Rubric attached)

One additional measure of these objectives is being able to pass the proposal defense. In making such a defense, a student must be able to demonstrate his or her ability to connect existing theory with the issue to be researched. This requires that such a defense be readied. Our goal was to have at least 50% of the cohort have and pass a proposal defense by the end of the spring (second) semester. In this case only 40% of the cohort had and passed such a defense, where they demonstrated their knowledge and application of
sociological theory. This number was affected by the fact that one student had to take a maternity leave in the spring and two students are in extended time to degree formats. In this case, one student is in the dual MA/JD program and her scheduling does not follow the normal MA curriculum. The other student is a full-time SLU employee who is only able to take the program one course at a time. This basically leaves only one remaining student in the cohort who did not adequately meet the criteria. That student is currently being counseled to get him back on track.

*Please attach any tables, graphics, or charts to the end of this report.

3. Describe how assessment feedback has been provided to students, faculty, and staff. (e.g. report for faculty, executive summary for the dean, web page for students, alumni newsletter, discussion with students in class or club event, etc.)

Once the review process is complete and discussion is had at the faculty retreat, the final report on the issue of knowledge and application of theory will be distributed to all faculty and graduate students, as well as in the departmental newsletter, which is also distributed to alumni.

4. In what ways have you used assessment findings to celebrate student achievements and/or to improve the curriculum this past year? (e.g. prizes to students, hosting student parties, changes to curriculum, student projects, learning goals, assessment strategies, etc.)

Since this is the first year of this assessment process, we have yet to reach that point as to how this set of findings are to be used. We don’t have something to use as yet.

We do use the learning outcomes, in general, in recognizing the achievements of our students. From the previous cohort, two completed their thesis defense and graduated in May. Both were awarded outstanding status by the faculty of the department. One of these students began his own consulting service and the second was accepted to the Ph.D. program at the University of Illinois. He received full support for his admissions.

5. Describe any changes to your assessment plans, or any challenges or educational experiences with the assessment process this past year that you would like to share.

Since we have yet to complete the first year of this assessment process, it is difficult to indicate any changes that might need to be made. One process that has not worked and could not be implements was the use of a portfolio process. We plan to review this in more detail in August.

Please submit any revised/updated assessment plans to the University Assessment Coordinator along with this report.
Rubric for evaluating a sample of papers from graduate students in the MA program in sociology.

1 Does the paper/proposal/thesis show appropriate breadth of theoretical review?

| 1 Unacceptable | 2 Weak | 3 Adequate | 4 Good | 5 Excellent |

Comments regarding the breadth of theoretical review in paper:

2 Does the paper/proposal/thesis show appropriate depth of theoretical review?

| 1 Unacceptable | 2 Weak | 3 Adequate | 4 Good | 5 Excellent |

Comments regarding the depth of theoretical review in paper:

3. Does the paper/proposal/thesis demonstrate the ability to dissect existing research and theory on a particular topic and critically analyze the connections between the various components discussed?

| 1 Unacceptable | 2 Weak | 3 Adequate | 4 Good | 5 Excellent |

Comments regarding the ability to bring together theory and research in the paper:

4. Does the student clearly present his/her arguments regarding theory and research literature and does so in a manner that demonstrates a command of the topical subject matter?

| 1 Unacceptable | 2 Weak | 3 Adequate | 4 Good | 5 Excellent |

Comments regarding the communication of theoretical and critical review in paper:

5. At what level would you place the theoretical and literature review work of this student?

| 1 Beginning Undergrad | 2 Senior Undergrad | 3 Master’s | 4 Doctoral | 5 Professional |

Comments regarding the level of theoretical and critical review in the paper: