Review of Graduate Programs
Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work
Texas Tech University
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Program Overview and Vision:

The Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work seems to be in a state of paralysis. At best it is a department on hold, waiting for something to happen. Many of its faculty members continue to do an admirable job of teaching, and some of them are doing good research, but there has been no change, no progress on the goals stated in the 2003 vision statement or in the department's Strategic Plan. Even the Strategic Plan has not been revised since 2003. The faculty members report that last year there were only two department meetings. Within the last two years, there was a committee formed by the departmental chairperson to deal with salary compression. According to one of its members, "we did a good job, but he [the departmental chairperson] hit a brick wall." Except for this committee, there seems to have been no movement forward for the past few years.

The divisions within the department are very clear. They are the remnants of two previous departments (the Department of Sociology and the Department of Anthropology). When the Program Review Team tried to meet with the department's faculty members, it was told that it had to have two separate meetings—one with the sociology faculty members, and one with the anthropology faculty members. These meetings took place separately as requested. One of the department members said that "on the people-to-people level, we get along okay; for the most part we are collegial." It seems clear, however, that the gap between the two programs has grown even larger within the past few years.

Both programs want to work toward obtaining the Ph.D. degrees. The "Program Overview" in the Graduate Program Review states that "Within the Big XII, only Texas Tech has the terminal master's degrees in Anthropology and Sociology." Here too, there has been no movement. Both groups expressed some good ideas concerning how they might develop the doctoral degrees, yet they seem to have no means of carrying out their ideas. Perhaps they are waiting on more support and leadership from the administration.

Since nothing has been done insofar as program planning, vision, or revision of the Strategic Plan since 2003, it is hard to give a good or even satisfactory rating to this section of the program review. As indicated in the following sections of this report, the faculty and students are doing a good job of teaching, learning, and research. But the department's organization and its visions and plans for the future are much too out-of-date and hazy.

Rating: Poor

Faculty Productivity: Overall, the Graduate Program Review document did not provide an adequate amount of accurate information regarding productivity of faculty in the department.
Discussion with the Chair revealed that information included in the document was incomplete because several faculty members had not provided necessary information when the document was prepared. Reviewers had to partially rely on data from the “Universal Quantitative Data” generated by the Institutional Research and Information Management of Texas Tech University to judge faculty productivity.

**Teaching Load and Productivity:** Based on the total FTE reported for the department, the teaching load for the departmental faculty appears to be about average in comparison to the College teaching load. However, given that most graduate students are employed as Teaching Assistants and are counted in the FTE calculation, the effective teaching load of faculty is in fact very high. Though accurate data is not available, discussion with faculty suggest that many tenured/tenure-track faculty carry a heavy teaching load of 5-6 courses a year. The Graduate Program Review document did not provide any information regarding teaching effectiveness of the faculty. Graduate students of the department, however, spoke very highly of faculty’s commitment to teaching excellence and students’ personal and professional growth.

**Research Productivity:** Data reported in the Graduate Program Review document on the number of funded research proposals, award amounts, publications and creative activities, point to very low overall research productivity for the departmental faculty. Research funding (by Home Department) averages at a little over $27,000 per year (between FY01 and FY06) for the department as a whole, and the accuracy of this data was confirmed with the Office of Research Services. According to the report there were only 0.6 refereed articles/books/abstracts per faculty in FY06, which is similar to the publication record for previous years. However, the reviewers are uncertain about the accuracy of this data on publications and creative activities based on comments from faculty during personal interviews.

**Total Faculty Workload:** The total policy workload for the department is reported in the Graduate Program Review document to be 13. This compares unfavorably with the College average of 17 and the university average of 16. The faculty of the department, however, does not believe that the reported policy workload accurately reflects their various involvements with committee assignments within and outside of the department.

**Rating:** Satisfactory/Poor

**Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates**

The Graduate Program Review report describes the demographics of the graduate student applicants and enrolled students, their test scores, GPAs, employment locations, financial support and their creative activities/publications. In summary, for fall 2007, 15 students were enrolled (9 male, 6 female). The majority were Caucasian (10), 4 Hispanic and 1 Native American. Currently, there are 35 enrolled graduate students (20 male, 15 female). The majority were Caucasian (23), 8 Hispanic, 1 Black, 2 Native American and 1 unknown. The average GRE score for enrolled students was 982 for 2006. The GPA for new graduate students was 4.0 for the Anthropology Program and 3.74 for Sociology Program for 2006. Financial assistance was available to students in a variety of forms (scholarships, teaching and graduate assistantships, fellowships, and travel funds). Concerning productivity for 2006, 3 students completed theses
and 3 did poster presentations at conferences. The data on graduates’ employment was limited. From 2001-2006 it appears the student profiles have remained fairly consistent.

The evaluation team met with 6 graduate students from the Masters of Art Program in Sociology. All of the students were teaching assistants; 5 were in their last semester completing their theses. One student was in his second semester. The students were eligible for 2 years of funding.

When asked why the students’ were interested in a doctoral program, students’ responses were:

- “My undergraduate was in political science. Since being here I have learned to love sociology more and more. The faculty and program has stirred up so much passion. One of my professors opened my eyes. He is why I am here right now. I love what I do now. There are so many issues. I ask myself why. I love to do my own research to find out why. This is very fascinating.”

When asked about whether they would prefer to teach or engage in research, the students said:

- “I want to see if I enjoy working at a community college prior to pursuing a Ph.D.”
- “I came into the master’s program and did not know what I wanted to do. After one semester I knew I wanted to do a Ph.D. program. If I had gone into another program I would have dropped out.”
- “I am more excited about research. New urbanism, diversity, a cohesive neighborhood are my areas of interest. I like learning.”
- “I flunked out. I was given another chance. Once I got here one professor’s classes spoke to me. Research is blasé. I discovered teaching is wonderful. I am going to change the world.”

When asked about how the program has prepared them, students responded with:

- “The program has surpassed its ranking as a Tier 3. Dr. Tsai is a dedicated professor. The professors give you what you put into the program. I am going to have an article published.”
- “The younger professors, Drs. Wasserman and Bratston, are fine. Very passionate. They know about publishing right now.”

The strengths of the program include:

1. Program has prepared students well by engaging them in research with faculty so they can present and co-author publications.
2. The Chair of the Department, Dr. Williams, has ensured students receive funding for two years.
3. The faculty has made a point of mentoring the students. The students stressed the importance faculty/mentors have played and continue to play in their lives.
4. The Department clerical staff has been very helpful to the TAs in demonstrating how to use equipment, complete forms, etc.
5. One student was given the opportunity to be the instructor of record for the courses he is teaching.
6. The students have developed a cohesive group. One student stated: “Everyone knows what each other does. They share publications with one another. The stat class bonded everyone. We have had parties now and brown bag lunches last year.”
7. The Sociology 533 class is a very beneficial course. “We have to update the professor about our progress on our theses.”

The major improvements the students suggested were:

1. The need for a Ph.D. program: Five of the students who are graduating and are applying to other universities for doctoral programs stated they would have applied to TTU if we had a Ph.D. program. These students’ families live in the Lubbock area.
2. The need to interact and network with other departmental students, especially those who are not funded by the Department.
3. Students should either do a thesis or a comprehensive examination. Now they are required to do both.
4. More course offerings are needed.
5. The department should have specialized areas like criminology; the department might really focus in one or two areas.
6. The department should seek more funding for students.
7. A four-hour orientation for teaching assistants at the beginning of the academic year is needed. A TA handbook needs to be written and disseminated to the TAs during this orientation.
8. The students being assigned to different faculty every semester can be problematic. For example, the workload can be more than 20 hours per week if a student is assigned to a professor who is teaching a large class of 100-200 students.
9. Pay for health insurance for TAs.
10. Put the programs on one floor. The students said, “The anthropology and sociology programs are physically located on different floors; therefore, we do not see one another.”

One student summed up this meeting with:
“I have enjoyed my masters. If you are not committed to sociology then you will be overwhelmed. Those students who take a long time to graduate may take even a longer time.”

Rating: Good

Curriculum and Programs of Study: Overall, the department’s graduate programs in Sociology and Anthropology prepare students adequately for the targeted job market and for doctoral education at other universities. However, the scope of the programs has remained stagnant over the years and has failed to evolve with the changing needs of the profession and the student body. The graduate programs currently suffer from a lack of strategic focus. During the interviews, there were many good ideas that were discussed in order to strengthen the graduate program offerings of the department, including a M.S.W. program, Ph.D. programs in sociology and anthropology, concentration in forensic anthropology, emphasis in criminology, etc. In fact, many of these ideas were addressed in the 2003 Strategic Plan, but evidently very little has been done since then to further strengthen the graduate offerings of the department.

Rating: Satisfactory/Poor

Facilities and Resources:
The chart dealing with departmental facilities within the Graduate Program Review report submitted by Dr. Williams was not completed. During the initial meeting with Dr. Williams, suggestions were made about where he could find this information and therefore complete the chart; however, this was not done. During a subsequent meeting with Dr. Jeff Williams where space issues were discussed with this evaluation team, the following concerns were identified:

1. There is not a room dedicated for the Department’s faculty to use.

2. Space on the second floor has been requested but not granted to the Department. They still need the space.

3. A proposal for a forensics lab was denied but is still desired.

4. Funding is needed for the replacement of equipment, computers, and instructional materials.

5. A concern was expressed about the possibility of the anthropology murals on the second floor being painted over by the History Department without consultation with Dr. Williams.

6. The Anthropology Program needs more space. In the past they had more space then they currently have now.

Rating: Poor

Recommendations:

- The Strategic Plan should be updated. Without planning, none of the programs in the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Social Work are going to progress.

- Both sociology and anthropology have expressed the desire to seek a Ph.D. program. In order to begin movement for these programs, both sociology and anthropology need to elect representatives that will meet with Dr. Fred Hartmeister, Dean of the Graduate School, Dr. Clifford Fedler, Associate Dean of Graduate School in charge of Program Development, and then with Vice Provost Elizabeth Hall, or some other representative of the Provost’s Office. These meetings will give the representatives of sociology and anthropology information about what the Coordinating Board will expect when applications for the doctoral programs are sent forward. They will then be able to begin to establish what is needed for the doctoral programs and to formulate realistic applications. Faculty members also expressed a need for a master’s degree in social work. A similar procedure needs to be followed for this program. Without careful planning, no new programs are likely to be developed. Texas may indeed need these programs, but the faculty members and the department chairperson must work hard in order for the programs to be realized.
- More attention needs to be paid to the graduate students. The Graduate Student Handbook should be updated and revised. There should be a carefully organized orientation for graduate students. Based upon what they said, the teaching assistants need more funding. The workload of the teaching assistants should also be reviewed. It should consistently be 20 hours per week. There needs to be a recruitment plan and an updated brochure for graduate students. Help with funding for any new brochures may be sought through the Graduate Enrollment Enhancement Fund that is available through Associate Dean Duane Crawford’s office.

- The website should be updated for recruitment purposes.

- The department is split apart physically. In order to facilitate interaction among faculty and students, some consideration should be given to relocating classrooms and office spaces. More space is needed.

*Data was gathered from interviews (during the spring of 2008) with the department chair, faculty in the programs of sociology and anthropology, students from both sociology and anthropology as well as a Graduate Program Review report submitted to the Graduate School in December, 2007.*