

Sociology 101: Introduction to Sociology Learning Outcomes Assessment Project Executive Summary

Stage 1: Designing and Proposing a Learning Outcomes Project

The faculty team decided on a pre-test/post-test design. The team developed a multiple choice instrument, as a suitable normed instrument was not identified. The instrument is a compilation of the instructors' "best effort" questions for each objective. The pilot took place Fall, 2003, with full data collection in Spring, 2004 and Spring, 2006. The implementation of a research project and standardized paper on social class (this was also used as the GREAT assessment) took place during Spring, 2006 in order to determine any influence on post-test student performance. The team acquired an outside expert with both learning outcomes assessment and sociological expertise to provide feedback on how well the test questions match the common course objectives. Consultant Anne Gupman, NIH Researcher, was reimbursed for her time and input.

Stage 2: Implementing the Design and Collecting and Analyzing the Data

Pre- and post-test data were collected during the Spring, 2004 semester. Students improved overall on the test, but there was some concern over their performance on the research methods questions on the test. African American student performance gaps were also a focus of discussion, although overall the African American students improved more pre- to post- than their White counterparts.

Stage 3: Redesigning the Course to Improve Student Learning

The SOCL101 team decided to implement a research proposal assignment in all sections of SOCL101 during the Spring, 2006 semester to provide consistent student practice of research process in the course. The group also assigned the Social Class short paper assignment in all sections of the course (also used as the GREAT assessment) to provide another student experience consistent across all sections of the course.

Stage 4: Implementing Course Revisions and Reassessing Student Learning

The SOCL101 faculty team was pleased to discuss the overall improvement of students in the course as assessed by the pre-/post-test. The two objectives that showed a decrease in scores ("sociological perspective" and "deviance" in the 2006 assessment) will continue to be areas of focus as the group agrees that they are critical to the Introduction to Sociology course. Discussions of the research methods issue will continue, although the scores were not significantly changed with the implementation of the research project. Overall, students continued to score below the 60% passing rate on both the pre and post-test, which directed the team to revisit both the questions included on the instrument and current teaching strategies to meet the objectives, as well as to consider more qualitative assessments in the future.

Stage 5: Final Analysis and Reporting Results

Ann MacLellan, Coordinator, Sociology, Anthropology, and Political Science, Catonsville Campus, and Bill Barry, Coordinator, Labor Studies, Dundalk Campus will collaborate (along with John Hutchinson, Essex Coordinator, and Ira Albert, Dundalk Coordinator, Social Sciences) on the implementation of the above recommendations, beginning with a spring semester

curriculum event during the first week in June. The team concluded that the collegial exchange of teaching strategies/assignments is the most valuable outcome of this project and agreed upon continuing this exchange across the campuses, with adjunct faculty and through advisory council activities for curricular improvement with staff at external agencies.