

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY AND ANTHROPOLOGY
STRATEGIC PLAN
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Section 1: Description of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology.....	2
1.1 Mission, Vision, and Goals.....	2
1.2 The Program.....	2
1.3 Support Relationships.....	3
Section 2: Strategic Review.....	3
2.1 Strategic Issues.....	3
2.1.1 Internal Strengths.....	3
2.1.2 Internal Weaknesses.....	4
2.1.3 External Opportunities.....	5
2.1.4 External Challenges.....	6
Section 3: Strategic Initiatives.....	6
Goal #1: Excellence in Teaching and Learning.....	6
Goal #2: Support for Diversity and Social Justice Issues.....	7
Goal #3: Development of Students’ Understanding of Real-World Issues, Social Action, and Policy.....	7
Goal #4: Students’ Acquisition of Information Fluency, and Research and Analytical Skills...	7
Section 4: Assessment.....	8
Assessment of Goal #1: Excellence in Teaching and Learning.....	8
Assessment of Goal #2: Support for Diversity and Social Justice Issues.....	9
Assessment of Goal #3: Development of Students’ Understanding of Real-World Issues, Social Action, and Policy.....	9
Assessment of Goal #4: Students’ Acquisition of Information Fluency, and Research and Analytical Skills.....	10

Section 1: Description of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology

1.1 Mission, Vision, and Goals

Five full-time faculty members, (two tenured associate professors and three non-tenure track professors) and one part-time administrative assistant comprise the sociology and anthropology (S/A) department. As of May 2020, it had 30 majors and 21 minors. In 2019-2020, S/A courses serviced 642 students with 4.83 full-time faculty members.

The S/A department supports the college's liberal arts' goals and mission, including community, diversity, justice, and service. The department's mission is to foster in its students: a) curiosity; b) open-mindedness; c) respect for other cultures and experiences; and d) engagement with pressing social problems and the world's greatest challenges. It focuses on sociology's ability to foster in students the skills to analyze "public issues that underlie private troubles" and anthropology's capacity to promote cultural understanding (Mills, C.W., 1959). The department prepares students for graduate school and professional programs, and the 21st century workplace. The S/A department produces life-long learners who think critically, analytically, and independently.

S/A faculty envision a department that focuses on four unifying themes - global issues, diversity, social policy, and social justice. Students gain a foundation in each discipline, giving them the ability to understand domestic and global cultures, institutions, and various forms of inequality. The department prepares students to be able to define and solve the greatest challenges of our times by understanding the complexity of social and cultural processes. By drawing on the strengths of both disciplines, including their theories, basic concepts, and research methodologies, its curriculum serves students and interdisciplinary programs.

To achieve its mission and work towards its vision, the department established the following goals:

Goal 1: Excellence in teaching and learning

Goal 2: Support for diversity and social justice issues

Goal 3: Development of students' understanding of real-world issues, social action, and policy

Goal 4: Students' acquisition of information fluency, research and analytic skills

1.2 The Program

The S/A department's course offerings and major support its aims, mission, and expectations. Reflective of the department's emphasis on diversity, social justice, social policy, community service, health, and research skills, its courses include "Social Inequality," "Race and Ethnicity," "Social Problems," "Kinship and Marriage," "Family Dynamics," "Criminology," "Drugs and Society," "Globalization," "Urban Anthropology," "Economic Anthropology," "Sociology of Medicine," "Death and Dying," "Body Perspectives," "Environmental Anthropology," "Sociology of Aging" and "Sustainability and Human Nature."

In addition to four electives and two introductory courses (“Introduction to Sociology” and “Cultural Anthropology”), S/A majors are required to take two theory courses (“Sociological Theory” and “Anthropological Theory”), and “Research Methods.” The senior capstone course ties the major together, requiring students to independently collect data and conduct their own ethnographic research, analyze their data, link their data to conceptual issues and theory, formulate a clear argument based on their data, and write a final paper which is the equivalent of an undergraduate thesis.

1.3 Support Relationships

The S/A department does not require courses outside the department to complete the S/A major. Many interdisciplinary programs on campus, however, require S/A courses or count them as electives. They contribute to Japanese Studies, African Studies, Latin American, Latinx, and Caribbean Studies, Gender, Women, and Sexuality Studies, Peace, Conflict, and Justice Studies, Public Health, and Environmental Studies.

Departmental course offerings also support the Education and Nursing majors. S/A courses are recommended for pre-law students and required, key courses for several pre-professional programs in the health sciences. The revised Medical College Admission Test’s (MCAT) now has a section on behavioral and social sciences that focuses on sociology and psychology. This makes S/A courses (especially “Introduction to Sociology”) a required, key part of the pre-medicine curriculum.

Many campus offices support the department by providing technical, administrative or specialized services. The Gustavus Technology Services, Office of Advancement, the library, Research and Sponsored Programs, the Center for Inclusive Excellence, the Kendall Center, and many other offices offer invaluable services to the department. Faculty also work closely with the Academic Support Center and Gustavus Center for Career Development in advising students.

Section 2: Strategic Review

2.1 Strategic Issues

In 2019, the S/A department held three strategic planning retreats in preparation for its ten-year review. Faculty discussed and collaborated on a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis to summarize and analyze strategic issues for the department.

2.1.1 Internal Strengths

The department’s greatest strength is its faculty. It has well-qualified faculty who are well-qualified and deeply committed to excellence in teaching at all levels and for all students. S/A faculty have a depth of teaching experience, global and interdisciplinary expertise and interests, and specializations in social policy and inequality (e.g., public health, social gerontology, family, workplace transformations, environmental sustainability, and links between social inequality and the criminal justice system).

Drawing on their knowledge and experience, department faculty develop students’ critical thinking skills and their ability to examine complex cultural issues from a range of perspectives.

In their courses, they incorporate public policy issues and debates, discuss the linkages between public policy and social inequality and systems of power, and do an effective job teaching basic research methods and qualitative data collection (e.g., ethnography and qualitative interviewing) and analysis.

The department aims to foster academic excellence in students. Its faculty provide them with high-quality, innovative learning opportunities that develop students' intellectual curiosity. Its classes offer multiple modalities of teaching and include learning opportunities on campus and off campus. The department houses chapters of two national honor societies – the sociological honor society, Alpha Kappa Delta, and the anthropological honor society, Lambda Alpha.

The faculty's expertise and devotion to teaching is reflected in a growing number of majors. The department has been making systematic efforts to recruit majors such as reaching out to interested students in S/A courses and publicizing the major in introductory courses, around campus, and at the annual Majors and Minors Fair.

2.1.2 Internal Weaknesses

While the S/A department has many strengths, it faces significant challenges in several key areas. The most pressing challenge for the department is its chronic understaffing. Currently, the S/A department only has five members. Of these members, only two are tenure-line members, compared to five in 2012. Nevertheless, the department continues to teach significant numbers of students (642 students in AY 2019-2020), consistently having one of the highest enrollment/FTE ratios on campus (e.g., 133 in 2019-2020) and close to double the average enrollment/tenure-track line ratio in 2018. From 2018-2020, S/A majors almost tripled to 32 and the minors grew to 21. The lack of staffing and consistently high enrollment/FTE ratios constrain the department's ability to grow and to serve its majors, its minors, students throughout the campus, and the college.

The department has difficulties staffing the required and elective courses for a major and minor that serves two distinct disciplines. It is difficult to provide a basic coverage of one, much less two disciplines, with the only five departmental faculty. The S/A department needs to offer a broader range of electives and more varied perspectives from within the two disciplines to give its majors and minors a solid academic foundation in sociology and anthropology. To fulfill student and majors' interests and needs, the department needs to have a community service-learning course.

A significant problem for the department is the lack of a quantitative sociologist and an imbalance in the department's methodological offerings. Almost all sociology undergraduate programs nationally (including those at peer institutions) offer quantitative methods or basic statistics courses. The department, however, cannot offer them because the department lacks a sociologist with a quantitative background.

This lack of a quantitative sociologist means that S/A students' needs for quantitative methods are not being met at Gustavus. As the department's last 10-year review and employer surveys emphasize, quantitative proficiency is necessary for students to obtain jobs and acceptance into graduate school and professional programs. Although other social science departments on

campus offer courses in quantitative methods, these courses emphasize quantitative methods (e.g., experiments) that are not common in sociology. Not having a quantitative sociologist means that the department cannot give its students a varied, broad, and comprehensive set of methodological perspectives and skills. It also limits the types of research opportunities and student/faculty research that the department can offer its students. Having a sociologist, specializing in quantitative methods, would also further college's goal of developing students' abilities to evaluate, understand, and apply information through varied research methods.

Another challenge that the department faces is to better serve its students of color. Many (40% in 2019-2020) of S/A majors are students of color, including many first-generation college students. Because the department has a higher percentage of students of color than most other majors, its chronic understaffing disproportionately affects them and hinders the faculty's ability to advise and serve them.

2.1.3 External Opportunities

Faculty have pursued professional development opportunities for improving their teaching. They regularly attend on-and off-campus workshops and training opportunities, and consult disciplinary teaching resources (e.g., the American Sociological Associations' TRAILS, an online peer reviewed library of teaching resources).

Surveys of prospective students and admissions data show a strong, consistent interest in sociology and anthropology. According to Provost Office's data, 878 prospective students indicated interest in sociology or anthropology (approximately 9% of prospective students) from 2017-2019. Consistent with the Gustavus data, 6.4% of prospective students nationally have an interest in sociology and almost 3% of them have an interest in anthropology, according to the nation-wide CIRP Freshman Survey (2013-2017). The interest from prospective students and the increase in majors reflect student interest in community service, social justice issues, and different cultures as well as a robust job market for graduates in sociology and anthropology.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and employer surveys show a strong market demand for sociologists and anthropologists. Alumni post-graduate successes demonstrate the usefulness of the S/A major, the knowledge that sociology and anthropology offer students, and the skills that the two disciplines teach them. Among the skills that the alumni data highlight as especially valuable for their postgraduate successes are research, information fluency, and communication competences, and the ability to think critically, analytically, and independently. This is not surprising given that employer surveys and BLS data highlight similar skills needed for students' postgraduate success, especially the ability to conduct data collection and analysis, to examine complex cultural issues from a range of perspectives, to critically assess different information sources, and to communicate effectively.

S/A faculty would like to continue to take advantage of on-campus and off-campus opportunities available for faculty-student research and interdisciplinary collaboration. Time and human resources, however, are constraints given the department's high full-time equivalent (FTE) faculty ratio and lack of tenure-track faculty.

2.1.4 External Challenges

Geographic location is an external challenge that may negatively impact the department's ability to attract diverse faculty. St. Peter's rural and homogenous population is barrier to recruiting diverse faculty that could help serve S/A majors and the college.

Given that students and their parents are focused on well-remunerated careers, a degree in sociology and anthropology from a liberal arts college may be less attractive than a career-track program. Community college and on-line courses compete with liberal arts colleges for students who are concerned about student loan debt. The department realizes that other liberal arts colleges and ELCA church-related schools are also competitors for prospective students.

Section 3: Strategic Initiatives

The S/A department based its strategic initiatives on its four key goals. It seeks to enhance its strengths through continuing the excellent work that is currently taking place and taking better advantage of available opportunities. Department members also desire to work to overcome weaknesses and adapt to the challenges that the department faces.

Goal #1: Excellence in Teaching and Learning

- 1.1 Foster academic excellence in students and provide them with high-quality, innovative learning opportunities
 - 1.1.1 Provide a solid academic foundation in sociology and anthropology for students
 - 1.1.2 Emphasize critical thinking and writing in S/A classes
 - 1.1.3 Incorporate perspectives from multiple disciplines and makes interdisciplinary connections in S/A classes
 - 1.1.4 Provide multiple modalities of learning in S/A classes
 - 1.1.5 Include campus learning opportunities (e.g., Nobel Conference, Mayday, and Building Bridges) in S/A classes
- 1.2 Support on-going professional development of faculty
 - 1.2.1 Continue to develop the department's on-going peer mentor program
 - 1.2.2 Encourage continual professional development of teaching skills and knowledge through the Kendall Center, professional associations, and workshops
- 1.3 Provide excellent, effective student advising
 - 1.3.1 Relate S/A classes and advising to common careers and career paths
 - 1.3.2 Continue to work with the Academic Support Center and Gustavus Center for Career Development
- 1.4 Review and strengthen the department's curriculum periodically

- 1.4.1 Ensure a robust and varied selection of class offerings for students
- 1.4.2 Offer new, specialized sections of introductory courses (e.g., an introductory sociology course concentrating on medical professions to be piloted in Fall 2021)

Goal #2: Support for Diversity and Social Justice Issues

- 2.1 Help students develop an appreciation of diverse perspectives and social justice
 - 2.1.1 Include multiple, diverse perspectives in S/A classes
 - 2.1.2 Integrate diversity and social justice issues into all S/A courses
 - 2.1.3 Provide class activities and assignments that emphasize diversity and social justice
- 2.2 Help students acquire global and intercultural competencies
 - 2.2.1 Encourage study abroad or internships that expand students' experiences
- 2.3 Recruit diverse faculty and students
- 2.4 Continue to request a faculty position focusing on race and ethnicity or immigration

Goal #3: Development of Students' Understanding of Real-World Issues, Social Action, and Policy

- 3.1 Build on the department's strengths in social and public action and policy (e.g., medical, environmental, criminal justice, and aging)
- 3.2 Develop students' abilities to recognize and address local, national, and global policy issues
 - 3.2.1 Incorporate social and public policy issues and debates in S/A classes
 - 3.2.2 Include research addressing societal and global problems in S/A classes
 - 3.2.3 Link social and public policy to social inequality in courses
- 3.3 Include service-learning components in departmental courses
 - 3.3.1 Build community partnerships for service learning
 - 3.3.2 Plan and develop a "Sociology of Community" course
- 3.4 Plan to establish a social work minor
- 3.5 Develop a family science certification program

Goal #4: Students' Acquisition of Information Fluency, and Research and Analytical Skills

- 4.1 Develop students' abilities to conduct independent research and data analysis

4.1.1 Provide opportunities for independent student research in the “Research Seminar in Sociology and Anthropology” (S/A 399)

4.1.2 Promote opportunities and grants for student research

4.1.3 Encourage presentation and dissemination of student research

4.1.4 Support faculty-student research

4.1.4.1 Investigate opportunities and grants for student-faculty research (e.g., FYRE and Presidential)

4.1.4.2 Increase support for Qualitative Research Lab

4.2 Plan to develop information fluency and quantitative methods courses

4.2.1 Request a faculty position, emphasizing information fluency and quantitative methods

Section 4: Assessment

The S/A department already has several procedures in place to assess and evaluate the department’s progress toward its strategic initiative’s goals. These include assessments efforts, annual exit surveys of graduating seniors, alumni surveys, and periodic reviews of the department by the Provost’s Office or external reviewers. Complementing these on-going efforts are goal-specific assessments (e.g., consultations with the Center for Inclusive Excellence about S/A courses, their syllabi, and their content). The following section details these efforts to assess the department’s progress toward achieving its strategic plan’s goals.

Assessment of Goal #1: Excellence in Teaching and Learning

- Examining course offerings to ensure that they are providing a solid foundation in sociology and anthropology
- Monitoring enrollment in S/A courses
- Tracking the number of S/A majors and minors
- On-going formal assessments of S/A courses, including surveys of a rotating subsection of S/A courses that carry general education credit, annual course-embedded assessments of the department’s required courses, and yearly, in-depth course-embedded assessment of the major’s capstone course, “Research Seminar in Sociology and Anthropology”
- Annual exit surveys of graduating S/A majors to assess what they have learned from the major and their perception of the department’s curriculum and courses
- On-going analyses of data about S/A alumni and their career paths, including departmental alumni surveys and information from Advancement Office

- Periodic appraisals of the department's assessment plan to evaluate if its assessment tools are measuring excellence in teaching and learning
- Regular reviews of the department and its program by the Provost's Office or external reviewers (e.g., the department's 10-year external review)

Assessment of Goal #2: Support for Diversity and Social Justice Issues

- Content analyses of course syllabi to assure that all S/A classes cover diversity and social justice issues comprehensively
- Consultations with the Center for Inclusive Excellence about S/A courses, their syllabi, and their content to make sure that diverse voices and perspectives are included in S/A courses
- Examining data about S/A majors and minors to ascertain if the department is continuing to attract and retain students of color as majors and minors
- Annual exit surveys of graduating S/A majors to assess what they have learned from the major, including their understanding about diversity and social justice issues
- On-going analyses of data about S/A alumni, including departmental alumni surveys and information from Advancement Office, to ascertain how S/A alumni are doing in their careers, especially those connected to diverse communities and social justice issues
- Periodic appraisals of the department's assessment plan to evaluate if its assessment tools are measuring students' understanding about diversity and social justice issues
- Regular reviews of the department and its program by the Provost's Office or external reviewers (e.g., the department's 10-year external review)

Assessment of Goal #3: Development of Students' Understanding of Real-World Issues, Social Action, and Policy

- Collection of data about the number of students who take part in IEX career explorations or semester-long internships, and common internship sites for S/A students
- Tracking community partnerships and service sites where S/A students work, volunteer, or have internships
- Evaluating departmental contributions to campus efforts to increase students' community engagement
- Recording S/A faculty's community contributions and their use of campus and off-campus resources (e.g., workshops) about students' community engagement
- On-going formal assessments of S/A courses, including surveys of a rotating subsection of S/A courses that carry general education credit, annual course-embedded assessments

of the department's required courses, and yearly, in-depth course-embedded assessment of the major's capstone course, "Research Seminar in Sociology and Anthropology"

- Annual exit surveys of graduating S/A majors to assess what they have learned from the major,
- including their knowledge about real-world issues, social action, and policy
- On-going analyses of data about S/A alumni, including departmental alumni surveys and information from Advancement Office, to ascertain how S/A alumni are doing in their careers, especially those involving jobs focused on community or non-profit work
- Periodic appraisals of the department's assessment plan to evaluate if its assessment tools are measuring students' acquisition of knowledge and understanding about the real world, social action, and policy
- Regular reviews of the department and its program by the Provost's Office or external reviewers (e.g., the department's 10-year external review)

Assessment of Goal #4: Students' Acquisition of Information Fluency, and Research and Analytical Skills

- Keeping records about, original student research, independent studies, honor theses, faculty/student research grants, and the presentation of student research at off-campus conferences and on-campus events like the Celebration of Creative Inquiry
- Tracking the number of S/A majors and minors who enter research-oriented graduate programs
- On-going formal assessments of S/A courses, including surveys of a rotating subsection of S/A courses that carry general education credit, annual course-embedded assessments of the department's required courses, and yearly, in-depth course-embedded assessment of the major's capstone course, "Research Seminar in Sociology and Anthropology"
- Annual exit surveys of graduating S/A majors to assess what they have learned from the major, including their acquisition of research methods and data analysis
- On-going analyses of data about S/A alumni, including departmental alumni surveys and information from Advancement Office, to ascertain how S/A alumni are doing in their careers, especially those involving jobs that require research and data analysis skills
- Periodic appraisals of the department's assessment plan to evaluate if its assessment tools are measuring students' acquisition of information fluency, and research and analytical skills
- Regular reviews of the department and its program by the Provost's Office or external reviewers (e.g., the department's 10-year external review)