

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

DOCUMENTS AND PROCEEDINGS
OF THE GRADUATE COUNCIL

MINUTES

May 2, 2002

Room 4.03.08
John Peace Library Building
3:30 p.m.

The seventh meeting of the graduate Council for the 2001-2002 academic year was held in Room 4.03.08 John Peace Library Building, May 2, 2002.

- I. The meeting was called to order at 3:46 p.m. Twenty-three voting council members and two *ex officio* members were in attendance.
- II. A typographical error was identified on the previous minutes. Su Zhu's name was misspelled. The minutes were approved as amended for this.
- III. Reports.
 - A. Council Chair. Dr. Shih discussed the creation of an ad hoc committee to create a College of Graduate Studies.
 - B. Interim Dean of Graduate Studies. Dr. Flannagan gave an update on the Ph.D. proposals and distributed a proposed generic recommendation form for admissions (see Attachment A of Documents And Proceedings, page 2358). She requested feedback on the form and indicated that some departments have already said that they do not intend to use a standardized form of this nature (Art, Art History, and Music).
 - C. Secretary.
 1. Dr. Walz requested a vote to suspend the bylaws to allow a change to the agenda. She requested that the report from the Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation (Agenda item III.F) be moved to precede the report from the Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses (Agenda item III.D). The latter committee report was motivated by a program changes which were recommended in the former committee report. A motion was made and seconded and the council members voted unanimously change the agenda.
 2. Dr. Walz presented membership changes. These included replacements for the representative for the MA in History and the MA in Counseling (which has 2 representatives). Dr. Golden (who is the department chair) was allowed to replace Dr. Orange, who cannot serve, because the only other faculty member eligible (Dr. Borman) is already serving.
 3. Dr. Walz announced Dr. Horowitz, who presented a slate of nominations from the Nominations Committee for the Graduate Council Committees and student representative assignments. She called for nominations from the floor. None were forthcoming. A motion to accept the slate of candidates was made and seconded, and the Council voted unanimously.
 - D. <note change to agenda> Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation. The committee report described the outside evaluation report (Attachment A), and

endorsed the reviewers' recommendations to eliminate the GRE and decrease the number of core courses. After some discussion, a motion to accept the committee's recommendations was made and seconded and the council voted unanimously in favor.

- E. Membership Committee. Two slates of members were presented (Attachment B) by Dr. Colpitt. The first slate consisted of three candidates for special membership – one from the COLFA and one from the COS. These candidates' applications were reviewed and unanimously recommended by the entire membership committee. The council approved the committee's recommendations. The second slate contained candidates whose applications had not been submitted in time to be approved by the Committee. Twelve candidates for special memberships were presented – four from the COLFA, four from the COE, and four from the COS. These special memberships were requested urgently so that the candidates would be eligible to serve on thesis / dissertation committees for students graduating in May. Dr. Colpitt was the only committee member who reviewed these applications. A proposal was made and seconded to allow the council to vote on these candidates based on Dr. Colpitt's recommendations. The council voted unanimously to accept Dr. Colpitt's recommendations. The remaining committee members will still be asked to review the applications and they will be informed of the council vote.
- F. <note agenda change> Dr. Walz (standing in for Dr. Fuhrman) presented the recommendations of the Committee on Graduate Programs and Courses. The committee unanimously approved two catalog changes requested by the Department of Sociology for the MS in Sociology. The changes were based on recommendations from the program's recent outside review and on the recommendations of the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee. Two proposals were submitted: First, to drop the GRE requirement for admission, and second, to reduce the number of core course requirements from 12 to 6 hours and to increase the number of required elective hours from 6 to 12. A motion to accept the committee's recommendation was made, seconded, and unanimously approved by the council.
- Dr. Romo, speaking for the department, also proposed a change to the title of SOC 5333, from "Linguistics and Society" to "Language and Society". The committee did not have time to consider this proposal prior to the meeting. A motion to approve the proposed title change was made, seconded, and unanimously approved.

G. Committee on Academic Policy and Requirements. No report.

- IV. Unfinished business. (none)
- V. New business. Dr. Horowitz requested that the council request a formal response from the provost to all reports and recommendations based on outside program evaluations. After some discussion, a motion was made to send Dr. Skekel's report to the provost's office requesting a response to the department and the council. Dr. Shih pointed out that we had just lost our quorum and could not vote on this issue. The issue was tabled and will be placed on the agenda as Old Business for the next Graduate Council Meeting in the fall of 2002.
- VI. The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 p.m.

Attachment A

PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE
MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SOCIOLOGY

Report Submitted to the
Graduate Council

By the

Committee on Graduate Program Evaluation

May 1, 2002

PROGRAM EVALUATION OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN SOCIOLOGY

The Graduate Program Evaluation Committee of the Graduate Council has reviewed the Master of Science in Sociology program. This report is based on the *Self Study of the Master of Science in Sociology*, discussions with the external reviewers, and the *Report of the External Committee to Review the Sociology M.S. Program*.

The external reviewers were Dr. Nijole V. Benokraitis, Professor of Sociology, University of Baltimore and Dr. Lionel A. Maldonado, Professor and Chairperson, Department of Chicano Studies, California State University, Los Angeles.

The external reviewers visited the UTSA campus on March 8, 2002. They met with the following people: the most of the members of the sociology faculty, the Chair of the department, the Graduate Advisor of Record, the Dean of Graduate Studies, members of the Program Evaluation Committee, and graduate students.

The following are the findings and recommendations of the Graduate Program Evaluation Committee. Following a brief background section on the sociology program, the discussion focuses on the strengths, weaknesses, and recommendation in four major areas: student issues, curriculum, faculty issues, and facilities/equipment and related support.

Background of the Sociology Program

The UTSA Master of Science in Sociology was approved in 1996 and offered its first classes during the summer of 1997. The Self Study report notes that the program is intended "to provide students with advanced education and training in sociology, including sociological theory, principles, and research methods." Students who complete the program are expected to be more competitive candidates for admission to Ph.D. programs in sociology and more qualified for employment where the ability to conduct sociological research is a prerequisite.

Seventeen students were enrolled or participating in the program during the Spring 2002 semester. As of Spring 2002, the program was supported by 10 tenured or tenure-track faculty members. Six of the faculty members were teaching a reduced load due to administrative responsibilities.

STUDENT ISSUES

Strengths

The external reviewers noted that of the eight students who have already graduated from the program, four went to highly regarded PhD. programs. These students reported that they felt their MA-level course work at UTSA helped prepare them to compete successfully in their PhD. programs.

The external reviewers also reported that many students continue to maintain contact with their professors at UTSA. On the other hand, the Self Study states that those students who did not continue their graduate education after obtaining an MA have been very successful obtaining responsible jobs consistent with their training. The average length of time to complete the program is 1.8 years.

According to the external reviewers' report, students complimented the statistical lab facilities of the Department, the availability of a graduate student lounge, and the opportunity for research training through the Metropolitan Research and Policy Institute (MRPI) and the Hispanic Research Center (HRC). They also praised the research opportunities of working with faculty members' ongoing projects. The large number of projects that so many faculty members in the Department have is a major strength that offers outstanding opportunities for graduate students to be involved in any number of research projects.

The Self Study states that there has been significant growth in the number of graduate students who have made conference presentations, submitted manuscripts for review by journals, and/or published research as a result of their work in the program.

Weaknesses

The external reviewers expressed that the program's enrollments have not increased enough from year to year. They especially expressed concerns that the undergraduate program seems not to be a "feeder" to the graduate program.

At the same time they noted that retention is very low and, drawing on some of the student's comments, they attribute part of the problem to the level of dissatisfaction with the program's structure, content, and implementation.

According to the external reviewers the absence of a well-organized, well-oiled, and effective recruitment strategy at UTSA reflects a major Achilles heel in attracting new students. They consider the \$800 recruiting budget to be meager.

Recommendations

The external reviewers provided a number of recommendations regarding how to improve enrollment, attrition and recruiting, including providing institutional support for recruitment and supporting faculty who visit high schools in south Texas as well as neighboring colleges and universities. They also recommended a change in the structure of the program (addressed in the curriculum section below) that will help in this regard as well.

The external reviewers also recommend dropping the GRE requirement for enrollment. In the current catalogue, the GRE is not required for enrollment, but rather it is used as a diagnostic tool. This is a moot point, however, because recent changes in the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board's policies regarding the use of scores on standardized tests including the GRE. The committee recommends that the department undertake a review of its general policies regarding standard tests and various other measures that might be considered in the evaluation of the potential for success of individual applicants.

The Self Study report points out that the program would improve its enrollment and retention if more GIT money were available to hire qualified graduate students. While current financial support for students generated from several outside grants and programs (MRPI, HRC, etc.) is commendable, the University has provided little direct financial support for students in this program. The university's financial commitment to the students in this program should be expanded. The current budget (\$ 11,000) and the next year's budget (\$ 5,000) are clearly insufficient in this regard.

CURRICULUM

Strengths

The external reviewers conclude that the faculty expertise and the courses offered in the program offer excellent opportunities for student's research training and professional socialization. According to them, the students have a wide array of options for that involvement, both in terms of topics to study and approaches, theoretical and methodological.

Weaknesses

The external reviewers feel that the Graduate Sociology degree is only partially meeting its objectives. According to them, it appears that too much emphasis is placed on preparing students to enter a PhD. Program. The structure of the program makes it unattractive to the students who see the M.S. degree as a "terminal" degree that improves students' post-graduate employment possibilities.

However, the external reviewers larger concern is with the program requirements in terms scheduling core and elective courses. Sociological Theory (SOC 5003) is critical to any graduate Master's

course, however, they do not understand why two quantitative courses (SOC 5013 and SOC 5023) are required both because they overlap and because they emphasize measurement techniques and statistics that are usually covered in PhD rather than Master's programs (e.g., log-linear analysis, logistic regression, and discriminate function analysis). They note that, according to several accounts they have heard, the core courses are too rigid, quantitative, narrow, and technical.

At the same time they point out that although, according to the course requirements, a student may take Quantitative Research Methods (SOC 5023) or Qualitative Research Methods (SOC 5033), the Qualitative Research Methods has been offered only twice (Fall 1997 and Spring 1998). Thus, Qualitative Research Methods appears to take a back seat to the Quantitative Research Methods courses even though both approaches are important and respected in the sociology profession and literature. The external reviewers also question requiring Evaluation Research (SOC 5043) as a core course. They consider that evaluation can be covered in a qualitative or quantitative course.

Scheduling is also a perceived as a problem by the external reviewers. According to them students (in oral and written statements) complained that the Sociology Department does not offer enough electives to graduate within even three years.

The external reviewers point out that it is not clear why the Sociology program requires the Graduate Record Exams (GRE) for admission. They mention how several Ivy League and "top 50" state institutions do not require these exams because they do not predict a student's intelligence, ability, or success in completing a graduate program. Additionally, for students who want only a Master's degree the GRE is cumbersome, expensive, stressful, and may discourage applications to a program because it presents one more "obstacle."

Finally, the external reviewers consider that one of the reasons for the program's low applications and high attrition rates may be that the graduate program does not involve most of the Sociology faculty. They mention some students' accounts in which they complain about the entire program being taught by only three professors. The reviewers add that their interviews with the faculty showed that planning and implementing the courses was far from democratic. Some of the faculty could not teach the courses they wanted to teach.

Recommendations

The external reviewers suggest that there should be more emphasis on applied Sociology to better serve students who do not plan to pursue a PhD degree. According to them, the students who are only seeking a masters degree should have the option of preparing a Master's paper based on one or more internships in lieu of writing a thesis.

Another recommendation advanced by the external reviewers is that the Department should rethink the content and number of required core courses. One possibility suggested is a required logic of inquiry (epistemology) course coupled with an option between a qualitative or quantitative second

methods course. Or, after taking Sociological Theory, requiring two Research Methods courses that emphasize both qualitative and quantitative approaches as well as some intermediate statistics would give students a good foundation for both immediate employment or further graduate study.

The external reviewers also recommend that the sociology faculty might consider organizing the current electives into two or three specializations (such as Organizations, Institutions, Stratification, or Comparative Studies). Such a structure would streamline the course offerings and ensure the participation of more faculty members in the graduate program.

While the committee respects the suggestions of the outside reviewers and recognizes their concerns regarding individual course requirements and content, we believe that the most important recommendation in this area is that the Sociology faculty should undertake a complete review of the degree requirements. This review should include a reexamination of the number and structure of the required core classes as well as course content throughout the curriculum.

The curriculum review should focus on finding ways to make the program attractive to a broader range of student goals and interests. This should, in turn, enhance enrollments significantly. Without change, the small enrollments in the program may ultimately bring its viability into question.

FACULTY ISSUES

Strengths

The external reviewers note that the faculty members' graduate training indicates success in broadening the representation of sociological fields of inquiry, theoretical orientations, and methodological training. At the same time they point out that the faculty members are active and visible in the sociological profession and their research appears to be well conceived, competently executed, disseminated in a wide array of peer-reviewed outlets, and well received by professional peers. As a group, Department members' scholarly productivity is steady and consistent. Most are able to generate external funds to support their work. A good proportion has experience teaching and carrying out research abroad. Combined, these activities have created a solid base for the Department and provide a wide array of benefits for students in the graduate program. The international connections that several faculty have offer yet another Department strength.

Weaknesses

The external reviewers expressed some concern about the declining numbers of Latino professors during the last couple of years. Additionally, they were literally "puzzled" by some students' comments that there appears to be a "tension" between qualitative and quantitative faculty and that these perspectives appear to be politicized in some classes. The reviewers believe that such politicizing is unprofessional and totally inappropriate in the classroom, and that class discussions should not include departmental politics, because such discussions are detrimental to student confidence in the program and perhaps may affect the undergraduate students' interest in enrolling in

the graduate program.

The external reviewers state that if the university expects faculty to have a research reputation consistent with what would be expected of a research based program, then it must do more to assist the faculty. In particular, the reviewers mentioned the need for additional support for travel to professional meetings and course releases for those professors with an active research or grant agenda.

Recommendations

The external reviewers think that there should be more institutional support for productive faculty who publish and obtain grants.

FACILITIES/EQUIPMENT AND RELATED SUPPORT

Strengths

The Self Study notes that facilities for graduate student research and graduate level instruction are adequate. The report also notes that the working relationship between the librarians and sociology faculty have been excellent.

Weakness

The Self Study mentions the limitations in library holdings (specifically journals) as being a problem.

The external reviewers note that they have the impression that the online materials are inadequate or that students (and some faculty) are not aware of such gold mines.

The external reviewers point out that, according to what they have heard from several faculty members, it seems that computer resources are limited or outdated. At the same time they mention that the Student Computing Services office offers basic training that is too limited for graduate research work.

Recommendations

The external reviewers point out that there should be continuous computing training for both faculty and students:

The Self Study and the external reviewers agree that the university has to spend money on computers, other technology and library resources that are needed to support the sociology program.

RECOMMENDATION FOR
GRADUATE FACULTY MEMBERSHIP
(Which have not been approved by the Committee)

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL AND FINE ARTS

Special Member:

Anthropology

Bousman, Charles Britt

Hill II, Robert M.

Tomka, Steve A.

English Classics and Philosophy

Narain, Mona

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

Special Member:

Electrical Engineering

Cotae, Paul

Grigoryan, Artyom

Mechanical Engineering

Dodge, Frank T.

Enright, Michael P.

COLLEGE OF SCIENCES

Special Member:

Biology

Revised on 5/2/02

McAlister-Henn, Lee

Computer Science

Hiramoto, Robert

Earth and Environmental Science

Amsbury, David Leonard

Windhager, Steve

RECOMMENDATION FOR
GRADUATE FACULTY MEMBERSHIP

COLLEGE OF LIBERAL AND FINE ARTS

Special Member:

English Classics and Philosophy

Hum, Sue

COLLEGE OF SCIENCES

Special Member:

Biology

Agrawal, Chandra Mauli

Nir, Izhak