1. HISTORY AND CONTEXT OF DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM

As outlined in the department’s QER, the Department of Sociology was organized in 1918 under the leadership of Raymond Bellamy, for whom the Social Sciences building is named. Establishment of the Sociology Research Laboratory in 1953 gave rise to the Center for Demography and Population Health and the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy. The Sociology PhD program was established in 1954, with the first degree awarded in 1958. The Master of Science program in Demography was established in 1984, and the Master of Applied Social Research in 2000. The Department developed its first online courses as part of the Interdisciplinary Social Science bachelor’s program in 2000.

Sociology offers undergraduate, master’s (applied and traditional), and doctoral degrees, and provides most of the support for the interdisciplinary master’s degree in Demography coordinated by the Center for Demography and Population Health (CDPH). Two faculty members are formally affiliated with the College’s master’s program in Public Health, requiring that they teach one public health course each per semester.

The doctoral program is organized around a core of theory and research methods courses, plus coursework in one of the three major areas of Demography, Health & Aging, and Inequalities & Social Justice. The Department added Social Psychology as a specialty area in 2005-2006, but this was eliminated effective Fall 2013 due to faculty losses in the area. The curriculum for each major area is managed by a separate faculty committee. The curriculum for the master’s in applied social research (MASR) emphasizes training in research methods and statistics. The MASR allows an optional concentration in Aging & Health, which includes an internship.

As noted by the outside evaluator, Dr. Ireland, a department’s reputation is driven in large part by the strength of its faculty. FSU’s sociology PhD program is ranked 39 overall by U.S. News and World report (these rankings are largely reputation based), and ranked 24 among public universities. The overall rank represents an improvement from 47 in 1998 and 42 in 2005. The National Research Council, which ranks programs based on a greater number of criteria, ranks FSU in the second quartile among public universities and in the top quartile for research activity.

2. STUDENT BODY: ENROLLMENT, RETENTION, AND GRADUATION

2.1. Graduate Student Numbers and Quality

Table 10.1 from the QER, and reproduced below, indicates that PhD program cohort size has ranged from 7 to 16 over the past five years. The department states that the small size of the 2009 and 2010 incoming cohorts (7 each year) was a response to constraints imposed by the College in
funded assistantships. The recommended cohort size in the last departmental review was 18, but that goal was premised on an expectation of substantial growth in faculty positions. Given that faculty positions decreased by a net of five tenure-track faculty members since the last review, the department feels that a cohort size of approximately 10-12 is more appropriate. This cohort size also provides a manageable number of students – in combination with M.S. in Demography students – for the required statistics courses (i.e., approximately 20-25).

Table 10.1 Cohort Size and Degree Progress and Completion: Incoming PhD Cohorts, 2004-2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort Year</th>
<th># of entering doctoral students</th>
<th># leaving the program without a master’s or doctoral degree</th>
<th># leaving with a master’s degree</th>
<th># completing master’s but not taking prelims (yet)</th>
<th># passing prelims but not defending prospectus (yet)</th>
<th># defending prospectus but not PhD (yet)</th>
<th># completing PhD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008-09</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: These data are from departmental records. Our record of the number of entering doctoral students differs from that produced by Office of Institutional Research due to different criteria for inclusion (e.g., the treatment of students enrolling in summer versus fall and those switching between FSU programs).

Indicators of overall student quality are displayed in the following table (reproduced from the Sociology & Demography Data Booklet prepared by the Office of Institutional Research). It is important to note that the table combines scores of Ph.D. and MASR students. Scores increased over the first three years of the period. In the last two years the revised GRE scoring system is used, making over time comparisons somewhat difficult. However, a drop in scores over the past two years is noted, but this corresponded with increased applications to and enrollment in the MASR program. In general, these data and discussions with the Sociology chair and faculty indicate no concerns with the quality of the students in the program.

Table 10.2 Graduate Admissions – Average GRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Semester</th>
<th>Number of GRE Scores</th>
<th>Quantitative Average</th>
<th>Verbal Average</th>
<th>Total Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2009</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>531</td>
<td>508</td>
<td>1039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2010</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>608</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>1110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>1209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012*</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2013*</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Fall 2012 and Fall 2013 are GRE2 scores.

2.2. Graduate Student Recruitment

Recruitment strategies have varied over time with changing graduate directors. The department has been able to attract high quality applicants to the PhD program without much recruitment effort.
Recently, more attention has been given than in the past to recruitment of students for the MASR program, with efforts focused on FSU undergraduates. This is due to their ability to pay in-state tuition, which makes the program especially attractive, and because sociology departments elsewhere in Florida are vying to maintain their own master’s programs, making it difficult for FSU Sociology to recruit students from those programs. The department feels that limited financial resources pose a challenge when recruiting students for the MASR program, speculating that the strongest applicants often decide to attend programs at other universities likely due to the department’s inability to provide competitive funding. Some MASR students are supported through mentorships in online classes, but these positions are enrollment-driven which prevents guarantees of funding. These efforts are also hampered by the program’s limited track-record with applied master’s students, and low demand relative to other opportunities such as the master’s program in Demography at FSU.

Recruitment strategies include the following: (1) the graduate director visiting required sociology courses to show a brief PowerPoint presentation and answer questions about the programs; (2) emailing the PowerPoint slides to Departmental faculty and grad student instructors, requesting they make it available to their students; (3) participating in campus recruitment events; (4) emailing sociology majors and all students enrolled in sociology courses to describe the programs; (5) holding special office hours for prospective graduate students; and (6) updating recruitment materials and working with COSSPP’s Director of Communications to produce recruitment materials. In addition to these efforts that are aimed at attracting applicants to the MASR and PhD programs, an open house is held each spring, inviting all newly-accepted students with the aim of convincing them to accept their offers. This event has been coordinated with visits from outside speakers as well as a picnic at the FSU Reservation attended by current graduate students and faculty.

Numbers of applicants, ranging from 57 to 78, are fairly stable over the period. Acceptance rates have been more variable, ranging from 24% to 49%. Enrollment rates also have varied – from 29% to 45%. The highest acceptance and lowest enrollment rates were in the most recent year of the period, which the department attributes to more competition with prestigious universities than in the past. Many of the most sought-after students enrolled in more highly-ranked programs, including the University of Michigan, the University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill, and Indiana University.

2.3. Graduate Student Retention

Information from the chair, faculty, and current students indicates that retention problems are minimal. Table 10.1 above shows that in most recent years, very few doctoral students leave the program without receiving a PhD, and of those who do leave, most receive a master's degree. The 2012 cohort was an exception. Five students left the program during that year, though three obtained a master’s. Compared to earlier years, students have also been finishing the program more rapidly, on average. The department has engaged in concerted efforts to reduce completion times from a typical range of 7-10 years in the period prior to 2007, to a range of 4-6 years in the more recent period.

2.4. Graduate Student Evaluation Procedure

The department's “Guide to Graduate Studies” outlines a thorough evaluation process for conducting annual reviews for all graduate students. The Director of Graduate Studies is tasked with compiling information on each student from all faculty who have interacted with them through courses, research collaboration, or supervision on committees. Information is reviewed by the Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid Committee, and a rating is assigned. Based on this review, the committee also advises the Director of Graduate Studies of any student who should be
dismissed because of inadequate progress or unsatisfactory performance in meeting program requirements.

2.5. Graduate Student Ethnic and Gender Diversity

In the five most recent cohorts, between 65 and 88 percent of incoming students were women, consistent with national trends in the field. The department also has a fairly high level of racial-ethnic diversity. At present, 69% of graduate students are white, 10% are Black, 9% are Hispanic, 5% are other (Asian or multiracial), and 5% are nonresidents. These figures are basically unchanged from 2009 when the graduate student body was 73% white, 11% Black, 6% Hispanic, 13% other, and 6% nonresidents. One-third of the incoming PhD cohort in fall 2014 was nonwhite. The department also has a high percentage of minority students holding fellowships.

3. PLACEMENT INFORMATION AND OTHER INDICATORS OF THE QUALITY OF
THE GRADUATE PROGRAM.

The majority of MASR and PhD students receive placements after graduation. All MASR graduates except the most recent two have found relevant employment. Of the 41 graduates from the PhD program in the past five years, all but two (one of whom just graduated in summer 2014) have found employment. Thirteen have tenure-track jobs, three have post-docs, eight have teaching positions, and fifteen have research jobs (e.g., at state agencies and private corporations).

3.1. Comment on the numbers of students (particularly doctoral students) who publish their research and make presentations at meetings or make presentations/exhibitions or publish their creative activities. Describe any other indicators of student quality and success such as student awards, students obtaining fellowships or grants, etc.

The majority of PhD graduates have published within a year of graduation (Table 11.1). Of the 2013-14 graduates, 80 percent have published a paper. Although the percentage was lower in the preceding year (56%), earlier years were more comparable with the latest figures – 90% in 2011-12, 100% in 2010-11, and 63% in 2009-2010. These numbers represent an improvement since the prior QER, and appear to be largely due to a concerted effort on the part of the department to increase student publications. These efforts have included a focus on informing faculty about this goal, and focusing the research practicum—required of all PhD students in their second year—on developing writing skills. All PhD students have presented papers at conferences within a year of graduation. Moreover, in the past five years, sociology doctoral graduates have won six University-level awards, six national or regional paper awards, and 13 other awards from national or international associations.

3.2 What do current and former students say of the program’s quality?

The GPC subcommittee spoke at length with a large contingent of current students from the department. They expressed general satisfaction with the program, and reported being pleased with the quality of instruction that they receive from the faculty, as well as the availability of opportunities for collaboration with faculty. There was also consensus that the department is very responsive to student needs, though several students expressed a desire for more formal mechanisms for student input. Students are also quite pleased with the level of support for travel to conferences, computing resources, and available office space. Funded students were very satisfied with the level of funding they received.

Some concerns were expressed by students, including a desire for more minority mentoring, as well
as greater clarity on how a student might move from one assignment to another (e.g. from a
teaching assistantship to a research assistantship), and how to move from an initial faculty mentor to
a different doctoral advisor. It seems that much of this sort of practical knowledge is passed from
student to student, when it may be more efficient to add it to the graduate student handbook.

The GPC subcommittee was unable to speak with graduates of the program, and the data in the
QER on alumni attitudes towards the program is limited.

3.3. For doctoral programs comment on the quality of the student’s dissertations.

The committee reviewed a variety of dissertations on topics ranging from health-risk behaviors in
the transition to adulthood, to weight and sexual orientation stigma, to income differences in use of
non-maternal childcare. These projects used various different qualitative and quantitative methods,
drew on a diverse theoretical and empirical literature. However, one common thread throughout
was that they appear to be well-conceived, well-supported theoretically, carefully designed, and
well-executed.

3.4. What is the external reviewer’s assessment of the program’s quality?

The external reviewer, Dr. John Iceland, was generally positive about the quality of the program,
though he did note some challenges that it faces, at least partly due to budgetary constraints and the
related scarcity of hiring. For example, he notes the following:

“With regards to the graduate programs, the PhD program is generally functioning
well, though it currently has some mismatch between faculty strengths and the
interests of the students. In part because of the decline in the number in faculty and
steady undergraduate enrollments, there is increasing reliance on graduate
students to teach undergraduates. This has implications for the structure of the
graduate program that a department committee should fully explore.”

“Overall, the curriculum is satisfactory and not unlike those of other R1 programs;
it is especially strong in quantitative training, with less strength in qualitative
training.”

“The sociology department has an accomplished faculty, generally well-functioning
graduate programs with good placements, and a strong undergraduate program
that has been delivering an increasing number of enrichment opportunities for its
students.”

4. CURRICULUM

Faculty size has decreased over the review period, creating challenges in meeting teaching
demands. Despite these difficulties, the department claims to offer the required classes regularly
(i.e., qualitative methods, quantitative methods, theory, practicum, pro-seminar, and teaching
sociology), and each semester an array of substantive classes allows students to meet their area
requirements. The course requirements and offerings are in line with the current state of the
discipline and provide thorough and well-rounded training in sociological theory and research.

Master’s Degree Requirements
A minimum of 34 semester hours is required, with a minimum of 21 hours on a letter-grade basis in
graduate level courses in the Department of Sociology. Students must satisfactorily complete a
number of core courses in theory and research methods/statistics and have their master’s research paper approved by their supervisory committee. Students are encouraged to spread their elective courses over the major areas in the department. The degree usually is completed in two years.

Students must complete both of the following courses:
- SYA 5305 Introduction to Research Methods
- SYA 5406 Multivariate Analysis

Students must complete one of the following courses:
- SYA 5315 Qualitative Methods
- SYA 5355 Comparative Historical Methods
- SYD 5135 Techniques of Population Analysis
- SYD 5137 Fundamentals of Epidemiology

PhD Degree Requirements
Formal admission to the doctoral program requires the approval of the Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid Committee and Graduate Director. Students with Master’s degrees normally enter the doctoral program after they have completed the departmental core requirements and after their previous graduate work has been evaluated and approved by the faculty. A student officially becomes a candidate for the PhD degree upon successful passage of the major area preliminary exam. Students must complete core courses and program area courses; a written examination in their major program area; teaching of an undergraduate course; and doctoral dissertation.

Students must complete the following core courses:
- SYA 5018 Social Theory
- SYA 5305 Introduction to Methods
- SYA 5406 Multivariate Analysis
- SYA5407 Advanced Quantitative Methods
- SYA 5515 Sociological Research Practicum
- SYA 5516 Reporting Sociological Research
- SYA 5625 Proseminar in Sociology
- SYA 5946 Supervised Teaching
- SYA 8976 Master’s Paper Completion
- SYA 6660 Teaching Sociology
- SYA 6933 Intro Qualitative Research Methods
- SYA 8967r Preparation for Major Area Prelim Exam
- SYA 8962r Major Area Doctoral Prelim Exam
- SYA 6980 Dissertation
- SYA 8985 Dissertation Defense

Doctoral students must specialize in, and complete five additional courses in, one of three areas of study, which include Health & Aging, Inequalities and Social Justice, and Social Demography.

4.1. Are there difficulties in course scheduling and availability? Are there an undue number of cross-listed courses (undergraduate versus graduate or masters vs doctoral)? Are course enrollments appropriate? Are there bottlenecks in the program? Are students able to find appropriate thesis or dissertation directors?

All required core courses, as well as a wide variety of area-specific courses, appear to be offered with sufficient regularity. Course enrollments are appropriate, and there do not appear to be bottlenecks in the program. Indeed, students are completing the required curriculum more quickly in the past several years than in prior years. There are also no indications that students have trouble finding appropriate thesis or dissertation supervisors. However, several students did express
concern over the apparent mismatch between the number of faculty in each of the specific areas of study relative to the number of students for whom this is the primary area of interest. Specifically, it appears that over half of the PhD students have a primary interest in the area of Inequalities & Social Justice, but only about a third of the faculty fall in this area. Though it appears that the students in this area have been able to receive appropriate advising and mentoring, it may be an issue that the department will want to discuss and possibly address.

The graduate curriculum appears to be up-to-date. The required methods courses provide training in the major approaches used in the discipline. Additional, optional methods courses train students in cutting-edge methods. The curriculum’s currency is also maintained through faculty’s annual updating of reading lists for preliminary exams.

4.2. Comment on the distinction between the various graduate degrees offered by the department, are the degrees sufficiently distinct?

The doctoral program and the master's programs (applied and traditional) are clearly distinct.

4.3. How are students advised? Are advising loads appropriate? Does the program have a graduate student handbook and is the handbook adequate?

Graduate students are assigned to faculty advisors based on their research interests, prior to their arrival on campus. Students are free to seek out other faculty to serve in this role, and they often do so before beginning their master’s papers in the second year. Students receive advising from three main sources – their faculty advisors, the Director of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Program Coordinator. They also receive advising from the Department Chair, who teaches the year-long pro-seminar for first-year students.

The department provides several resources to assist students in understanding and navigating graduate programs. The primary resource is the “Guide to Graduate Studies.” This is an extensive and exhaustive resource providing information on degree requirements, program areas, courses, preliminary exam procedures, dissertation requirements, assistantship responsibilities, and evaluation procedures. The department also provides a handbook on “Teaching in the Department of Sociology at FSU,” as well as a “Doctoral Program of Study Schedule” and a “Program of Study for Master's of Science in Applied Social Research.”

4.4. Do the students understand how to navigate the programs? What do current students say about the curriculum?

Students express general satisfaction with the course offerings, though several expressed a desire for more regular offering of the qualitative methods course, and others expressed a desire for more than one theory course. Several students also wished there were more opportunities to take courses outside of the department. Students in the master's in applied social research program expressed a desire for advanced statistics courses in the summer, and also wished that more courses from outside the department were allowed to satisfy degree requirements.

5. PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF THE STUDENTS

5.1. Describe what the program does to prepare students for their professional roles whether they are academic or nonacademic, research, or teaching. If students in the program are supported as teaching assistants, what is done to prepare them for their teaching role?
Students in the graduate program in Sociology are provided with research and teaching skills that are valued in a number of different settings. Of particular relevance to the graduate program is the extensive collaboration of faculty and students. One or more current or former students are included as coauthors in over half (52%) of the articles and book chapters published by the faculty since 2012. Graduate students’ training is also enhanced by faculty’s diverse theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches to a wide range of sociological questions. The program cultivates students’ ability to identify sociologically-relevant, empirical research questions and to envision and conduct studies to address them.

Students receive training in the major methods employed by the discipline along with PhD specializations in three central areas of focus in the field. The curriculum is current and has been streamlined to facilitate student progress. Students learn about research and publishing through collaborations with faculty, and they gain valuable teacher training and experience. The vast majority are employed as teachers or researchers during their graduate program.

Most of the students graduate with scholarly publications—an increasingly necessary product for many search committees in the hiring process, and many have received awards from FSU or national or regional associations. Students also have access to facilities, equipment, and other resources through the Sociology Department, as well as through the Center for Demography and Population Health, and the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy. In conversations with the sub-committee, students recognized and appreciated the research support and learning opportunities. As a result, the program provides students with skills that are attractive to employers in academic and non-academic settings. There has been solid success with student placements across these different settings since the last review.

Directly related to employment, a year-long pro-seminar, taught by the Department Chair, provides students with information about a variety of career options. In addition, either in-person or via Skype, former graduates and other colleagues have described their jobs in teaching universities, research universities, non-profit and for-profit research organizations, postdoctoral appointments, and state agencies, and answered students’ questions. In the past several summers, the Department Chair has also run a job-search workshop for advanced students.

With regards to teaching, the department offers a great deal of oversight and help for students teaching their own courses. Graduate students who teach in the department are required to take a 3-credit hour course on teaching sociology and to design and teach a course on their own. Most students take the teaching course in the summer following their first year and complete the teaching requirement in the summer or fall following their second year. Most students teach more than the one required course, often graduating with two or more course preparations that they have taught several times.

Prior to the start of the semester, the chair reviews each graduate instructor’s syllabus to ensure it conforms to University standards and to offer suggestions on content and design. Another faculty member is the Supervisor of Graduate Teaching Assistants and assists with any teaching issues that arise over the semester. An additional requirement that began in Fall 2014 is that students in their first teaching semester (or prior to it) are required to take three credit hours of supervised teaching with a departmental faculty member, who will assist with course content, design, and feedback on classroom interactions.

All students also are required to complete the FSU Graduate School’s Program for Instructional Excellence TA training. Sociology graduate students have been very active in this program over the years, with students serving as Program Associates in almost every year since the program’s inception. This involvement has contributed to a graduate student culture that values teaching, as
evidenced by a vibrant calendar of teaching-related events and award-winning TAs and graduate instructors.

5.2. Describe how the program addresses the issue of scholarly integrity and professional standards and practices. Are such issues dealt with formally in a seminar or colloquium?

Based on a prior program review, the department developed and implemented a pro-seminar course which covers a variety of topics related to the professional development of graduate students. In addition to introducing students to the faculty and covering topics such as time management, effective writing, and the review process, the course also includes a unit that informs students on the ethical standards in the field. This is a two-semester course taught by the department chair, and it is required for all doctoral students.

6. FACULTY AND INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL (at all graduate levels)

6.1. Are there sufficient numbers of faculty to offer all the elements of the curriculum? If there are gaps, does the department have a plan for dealing with them? Comment on faculty teaching loads. Has the number of faculty grown or shrunk in the last five years and are there anticipated changes in the size of the faculty?

As of Fall 2014, the Department will have 20 full-time faculty members, including 17 who are tenured or tenure track (TTF) and three who are specialized teaching faculty (SF) on continuing contracts. From the self-analysis completed by the Sociology department, the number of TTF is down by eight from its high of 25 in the mid-1990s, and by five since 2006. The department has, by their count, have lost 11 TTF since 2006, including five full professors (three due to retirement) and one associate professor, and have hired six assistant professors. The current faculty includes six Professors, nine associate professors, two assistant professors, one teaching professor, and two teaching associate professors.

In terms of seniority, five faculty were hired in 1999 or earlier, seven from 2000-2004, four from 2005-2009, and four since 2009. Two retirements are scheduled: Quadagno in May 2015 and Eberstein in May 2016. Permission has been requested to recruit two assistant professors over the next year in support of the College’s initiative on Successful Longevity. Although such permission was not granted, permission to hire up to three senior tenured faculty was granted to the College, and Sociology is eligible to contend for one or more of these positions. Faculty are distributed evenly across three major areas, with eight listed in Health & Aging and seven each in Demography and Inequalities & Social Justice (some are double counted because they contribute to more than one area). In addition, affiliation with the College’s master’s program in Public Health requires two faculty members to teach one graduate course each in Public Health every semester and to assist with master’s papers and program support. Similarly, faculty members in Demography also support the MS-Demography program, which includes supervising master’s papers and other service. Faculty members in the Pepper Institute contribute a service function to the unit’s operation.

The reduced size of the faculty was a theme in the last department review in 2006-2007. Faculty losses since then have made this issue even more problematic. As noted in the self-analysis report, Sociology was poised for growth following their last review, with the Dean’s action plan calling for “adding four or five faculty lines over the next 5-7 years” (VP Bradley memo to Provost Abele, “College of Social Sciences Quality Enhancement Review,” August 30, 2007, Exhibit J, page 21). However, there has been a net loss of five faculty since that time, with two senior faculty scheduled to retire in the next two years.
This shortage of faculty is compounded by the fact that several existing faculty have teaching and service commitments in other units. Two faculty members have additional formal commitments to the College’s master’s program in Public Health requiring each of them to teach one graduate course in Public Health every semester as well as to assist with master’s papers and provide routine program support. Similarly, faculty members in Demography also support the MS Demography program, which includes master’s papers and other service.

6.2 Teaching loads

Tenure-track faculty teach a 2/2 load. Specialized teaching faculty members teach 4/4, usually operationalized as between 300-400 students depending on the specific classes (e.g., small enrollment honors courses versus large lectures) and subject to other factors in their assignment (e.g., Director of Undergraduate Studies or online course development).

7. RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION (The below are only considered to the extent that they affect academic quality, in the judgment of the subcommittee)

7.1 Departmental governance

Department governance is managed by the Department Chair who serves a four year renewable term. If needed, the Chair may appoint an Associate Chair to assist with administrative duties.

A Graduate Director is appointed by the Department chair. The Graduate Director is responsible for oversight of graduate programs, including recruitment, admissions, advising, assistantships, general advising, and comprehensive examinations.

A Department Policy Committee (DPC) is advisory to the Chair and is comprised of seven faculty and two graduate students. The DPC is elected once per year. Other standing committees include a Personnel Committee that oversees annual evaluations of faculty, a Promotion and Tenure committee, Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid, and an Undergraduate Program committee. Core area committees are also appointed by specific area of study.

7.2 Budget

7.2.1 Student funding:

The stipend level for doctoral students is $20,500 per calendar year and is quite competitive with other peer programs around the U. S. and certainly within the University. Most students are supported through College-funded assistantships and online teaching and mentoring.

Students also are supported through research assistantships funded by the Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy. Budget documents indicate that from Fall 2013 through summer 2014, 49% of graduate student funding came from the Department’s regular college allocation ($446,703), 41% came from distance learning ($372,802), in the form of mentorships for distance classes ($348,432), and 10% came from “other” ($88,935), mostly from direct appointments in the Pepper Institute ($69,018). Over the past five years, an average of 42% of students were funded by Other Personnel Services funds (OPS) provided by the College, 28% by distance learning, 7% by grants, 5% by fellowships, and 18% by personal funds.
7.2.2 Faculty support:

As noted below, physical resources for the Department in support of the faculty are good, and office operations appear to be running smoothly. Faculty have been supported to attend professional conferences and to give presentations. Graduate assistant and research assistant support appears to be good. As noted elsewhere, seed money to support research projects just getting off the ground and encouragement to seek grant monies seem to be at a low ebb. Collegiality appears to be sound and most indications are that the faculty are supportive of each other. Other areas are noted below.

7.3. Library and information resources

Support from Strozier is excellent. The department’s own conference, library and reading room(s) appear to be in very good condition and well-maintained.

7.4. Equipment and other moveable resources

Students have access to the computer lab on the 5th floor in Bellamy (10 computers). The lab provides the major software packages needed for sociological research (e.g., Stata and Mplus for quantitative analyses and NVivo for qualitative analyses). Extensive renovations to the lab, completed in Summer 2014, offer students new, state-of-the-art computers and stations for connecting laptops. During our meeting with students, there was some concern expressed for more “dual monitor” stations which could speed data analysis.

7.5. Building and space resources

All faculty have private offices. Graduate students are provided with office space, either in the Sociology Department, Center for Demography and Population Health, or Pepper Institute on Aging and Public Policy. When students are teaching their own classes, every effort is made to provide them with offices designed for two students, rather than group offices, an effort that is usually successful.

8. SUMMARY ANALYSIS

Overall, the Sociology department is a strong one with nationally recognized and respected faculty, a very good national ranking among public universities, and a very solid population of graduate students. Of particular note is that students are finding jobs upon graduation.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

1) The Department of Sociology should prepare a strategic plan to guide the unit over the next decade. In the self-study, the department acknowledges that a planning effort was not pursued after the last university review in 2007. Developed by the faculty in the unit under the guidance of the Chair this plan should identify enrollment, teaching, contract/grant and research goals, and articulate a hiring strategy for the unit should it be granted new lines. It would also allow the current faculty to work together with knowledge and forethought, especially in light of the pending retirements of senior faculty.

2) The department’s faculty expressed significant concerns about having too few faculty members, and the subcommittee shares those concerns. The current complement of 17 tenure track faculty as of August 2014 is down from 22 in 2006 and 25 in the mid-1990s, despite maintaining...
overall PhD program enrollments. Given that faculty members are collectively responsible for the department’s research mission and graduate program, such declines in faculty numbers will make it increasingly difficult to maintain the current high level of quality in the education and mentoring of graduate students in Sociology. The subcommittee recommends that additional faculty lines be granted to the Department of Sociology. In addition, to maintain the high ranking nationally, there is a need for signature senior hires, especially in the Eminent Scholar position.

3) Many recent hires granted by the College have included requirements that the new faculty members be partly committed to other centers, institutes, and initiatives within the College. In order for the Department of Sociology to better address its programmatic needs, we recommend that at least half of any future hires not be constrained by any commitments to specific research areas, centers, or university initiatives.

4) There is clear evidence from student and faculty feedback of a “mismatch” between graduate student interests in the Inequalities & Social Justice area and the number of faculty that teach and undertake research in this area. This problem, if it persists, could quickly result in longer “time to degree” issues for students as well as advising overloads for faculty in these high demand areas. We recommend that the Sociology faculty assess this issue and determine whether adjustments can be made that are consistent with the goals of the department, which might include adjusting admission decisions to take into account desired areas of study or adjusting hiring priorities to augment study areas with fewer faculty relative to student demand.

5) Doctoral students currently teach a high load of distance learning (DL) classes for undergraduates which in turn supports stipends for graduate students. At present, this appears to be a very creative and workable solution as designed by the department chair. However, doctoral students might benefit from less teaching and more time for research, including the possibility of non-duty assistantships or fellowships that would enable them to give more effort to their dissertation research. Moreover, a greater concern is that the DL classes may not be a viable long-term solution, especially if state wide resources for undergraduate teaching on-line become limited or restricted. We recommend that the faculty discuss the potential impact, both current and future, of this heavy reliance on DL teaching for funding the graduate program, and attempt to identify any alternative options.

6) The subcommittee recommendation is that the MASR and PhD programs should be continued.