

The College of New Jersey

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Strategic plan (approved Spring 2012)

The Department of Sociology and Anthropology has completed a valuable time of self-study during its 2010-11 program review. We received valuable feedback from our external reviewer, who confirmed the quality of our courses, the direction and scope of our specializations, and our long range departmental plans. The external reviewer identified personnel shortage as the most serious problem facing the department, threatening the integrity of the sociology major and jeopardizing the future development of the anthropology program. We concur with the reviewer's assessment of our pressing personnel needs, and are pleased by the important strides made this year to reduce our reliance on adjunct faculty.

The department implemented the reviewer's recommendations by requesting a tenure-track faculty line for a medical sociologist who could also support the sociology major core requirement by teaching quantitative research methods. Thanks to the support from Dean Rifkin and the Provost, the department conducted a successful search and hired our top-choice candidate, Dr. Lynn Gazley, who will join the department in Fall 2012. As a result of this hire, the department will finally be able to staff its sociology core requirements with full-time faculty again, something we have not been able to do in a long time.

The department also worked with the History Department to request a cultural anthropologist to teach cultural anthropology as well as Latin American history courses. With the support of the Dean's office and Academic Affairs, the department conducted a successful search with the History Department that resulted in the hiring of the top candidate, Dr. Miriam Shakow, who will join the college in Fall 2012. The department focused on these two faculty searches during this academic year, as well as upgraded its staff position to a program assistant and hired its first choice candidate, Ms. Kate Koenigsnecht, for that position in mid-January. With those most pressing personnel issues resolved, the department turned to the other issues in our program review, and developed this strategic plan. After extensive discussion, the following is the department's short-term, medium-term and long-term strategic plan.

Short-term strategic plan (to be accomplished within 1-2 years)

- (i) Advising—To address the external reviewer's recommendation of restructuring the way the department organizes advising so that advisors do not feel overwhelmed and to avoid a sense of inequity, the department will establish a Department Advising Task Force in AY 2012-13 to study the issue. The Task Force will be charged with studying the strengths and weaknesses of the existing advising system and come up with recommendations to address the issues of equity, advisor overload, as well as ways to further improve the quality of the department's advising.

- (ii) Specialization—To address the external reviewer’s recommendation of changing the name of the Non-Profit and Community Development specialization to include the social work element, the department will charge the Department Curriculum Committee in AY 2012-13 with the task of reviewing this specialization, including its courses and appropriateness of its current name.
- (iii) Study Abroad—The external reviewer pointed out that sociology majors study abroad at lower rate than other majors. This was a surprise as the department has always been highly supportive of students pursuing any form of study abroad. The department will form a Study Abroad Task Force in AY 2012-13 who will be given the charge of studying this matter and identifying a set of recommendations for increasing the number of sociology majors who will include studying abroad in their program.

Medium-term strategic plan (to be accomplished within the next 2-4 years)

- (i) Sociology curriculum—The program review gave the department an opportunity to take a critical look at how well our curriculum was doing. We were pleased to find that our sociology major curriculum is well-designed to impart important skills in students in a developmental fashion, largely reflecting the best practices identified by the American Sociological Association. The self-study also allowed us to see how detrimental the personnel shortage has been to the department’s ability to implement its well-designed curriculum. Now that the personnel shortage is less severe with the hiring of a full-time sociologist and a jointly appointed anthropologist, the department can begin to review how to implement the full sociology core curriculum. The department will let the two new faculty members settle into their teaching and research at TCNJ over the next year and begin to involve them fully in a discussion on this matter which may involve the creation of new courses to fulfill the junior-level tutorial requirement over the next few years.
- (ii) Community-building among faculty—The department’s chronic, severe personnel shortage has taken a toll on the sense of community among faculty. While there is high degree of collegiality among the faculty and we work very well together, we know that more can be done to foster a learning community among the faculty. With the hiring of our program assistant, the department will be organizing department events that can truly foster a sense of community among the faculty and students. Since the program assistant is still under training and will be quite occupied in the near term, the department will spend the next two years experimenting with various ideas. After identifying what works well, we plan to implement regular department events to foster the learning community among faculty, staff and students in the sociology and anthropology programs.
- (iii) Community-building among students—The external reviewer recommended that something be done to strengthen a sense of community among students, such as the establishment of the Sociology Club. The department used to have a vibrant Sociology Club and a very active AKD Sociology International Honors Society that published a sociology newsletter. Due to the

serious personnel shortage over the past years, the department was unable to attend to the Sociology Club. Thankfully, our honors society, with the help of our program assistant and the department chair, has selected a vibrant core group of new nominees who in turn have launched an ambitious effort to do community service over the summer and develop several programs during the next academic year. In the medium term, the department will work with the Honors students to examine how best to revive the Sociology Club and to ensure smooth leadership transition so that both can foster a sense of community among our sociology majors.

Long-term strategic plan (to be accomplished within the next 5-10 years)

With the arrival of our new half-time cultural anthropologist, the department will continue its efforts toward the establishment of an anthropology major. We will do this three ways: first, by having more of our course offerings taught by full-time faculty and providing a sufficient faculty-to-anthropology student ratio so that minors and self-designed majors can readily access the advising and mentoring they seek; second, by requesting both a half-time renewable and full-time tenure-track position in biological/physical anthropology, to ensure that invaluable and high-demand courses in physical anthropology can be offered regularly by a high-quality instructor; and third, by increasing course offerings in physical anthropology and building interdisciplinary connections with other departments and programs on campus. Once this biological/physical anthropology personnel situation gets stabilized, and the necessary course infrastructure put into place, we will develop two applications: for an anthropology major, and for a 7-year joint anthropology BA/MD degree program. To achieve this, the department will need to hire at least one tenure-track biological/physical anthropologist.