Executive Summary: Department of Sociology

Mission

Sociology offers a distinctive perspective on the understanding the social world, emphasizing how institutions and structural forces outside the individual—the family, organizations, politics, economics, culture—shape individual and group behavior, opportunities, and histories.

Faculty

The department consists of twenty “regular” faculty members (two Distinguished Professors, seven Professors, four Associate Professors, and seven Assistant Professors). We ensure that our students learn the skills of critical inquiry and analytical evaluation. Sociology plays a significant service role as faculty have affiliated roles in more than a dozen other units on campus and 74% of our student credit hours are taken by non-majors. The department is currently home to the journal, *The Sociological Quarterly* and, in 2008 we helped develop C-CHANGE (Climate Change, Humans, and Nature in the Global Environment), a $3.2 million National Science Foundation Integrative Graduate Education and Research Training program in interdisciplinary climate change studies.

Bachelor's Degrees (BA, BGS)

The department offers BA and BGS degrees, an Honors designation, and internship opportunities. Award-winning faculty provide an intellectually engaging curriculum, introducing students to the unique and interesting sociological perspective, and preparing them for advanced training in ours or other disciplines and professions. We create a blend of student-centered teaching, usually associated with small liberal arts colleges, with the exposure to current research, the hallmark of a major research institution. Our external evaluators declared: “We applaud the department for their evident commitment to quality instruction.” Student feedback has been equally positive. According to the 2009 Senior Survey of majors, 92.3% rated "The intellectual challenge offered by the courses in my major field of study" as "Satisfactory" or "Very Satisfactory" while fully 100% of those students rated the "Overall quality of instruction in my major field of study..." as "Satisfactory" or "Very Satisfactory." Twelve percent of our graduates go on to enroll in graduate studies.

Masters Degree (MA)

In fall of 2010, 17 of our 43 graduate students were Masters of Arts candidates; 25 new MA students applied to our program, 16 were admitted and 9 enrolled. Rather than treat our MA degree as a separate program, the MA is now more integrated into the PhD program. We refer simply to "our graduate program" and see our two-year accelerated MA degree as one milestone toward the PhD.
In fall of 2010, 26 of our 43 graduate students were Doctoral candidates. That year, 22 PhD level students applied to our program, 10 were admitted, and 4 enrolled. We pride ourselves on the professional development of our students. We have a very strong record of academic placement as nearly all our Ph.D. graduates obtain teaching positions in higher education. Our external evaluators noted: "...we were truly struck by the high degree of satisfaction expressed by the graduate students. Indeed...we had not met with such positive responses from graduate students in any of the other reviews we have done over the years. This speaks volumes about the high quality of the individual mentoring, the accessibility of the faculty, and the transparency of department decisions and procedures." Successful graduate recruitments in recent years have produced strong entering cohorts with noticeably higher GRE scores. The portion of our graduate students who identify themselves as ethnic minorities has increased recently. And we have been recognized as one of the top six departments in the US to receive the "Stamp of Excellence" in Gender & Feminist Studies from Sociologists for Women in Society for creating a departmental climate that welcomes diversity and where faculty identify gender or inequality among their specialties.

Changes as a Result of the Review Process

Undergraduate: We re-structured our major curriculum and substantive elective courses to have appropriate prerequisites where both depth and integration in the major and higher order thinking skills developed. We now require all students intending to major in Sociology complete SOC 104, MATH 101 and one other course with the SOC prefix and they must achieve a minimum 2.5 admission GPA. We created a set of shared, measureable learning goals and outcomes connected to multiple courses and will assess student on a regular basis.

Graduate: We have: re-structured the program such that students should be able to move from BA to PhD is six years (2 years to MA and 4 years post-MA to PhD); instituted a system of Professional Portfolios; eliminated MA thesis vs. paper option; eliminated PhD qualifying exams. Students now complete two Area Studies Dossiers. A faculty committee decides what work products will complete the dossier such as a synthetic review essay, seminar papers that have been revised and submitted for publication, a syllabus developed for a course in the field, a research proposal, or an annotated bibliography; instituted stricter deadlines for each step in the program and enforce them; and revised our graduate student funding plan that reduces the teaching responsibilities but holds firm the number of years of support.

Defining our identity: We now define our major strengths as: Culture and Religion, Family and Life Cycle, Gender and Sexualities, Global and Transnational Studies, Medicine and Health, Politics, Conflict, and Social Change, Race and Ethnicity, Social Inequality and Stratification, and Economic Sociology. At least two faculty members identify with each area and we teach at least one “core” seminar frequently. Faculty affiliated with these areas develop master reading list for each of the areas. Students are required to take at least two “core” seminar in an area of choice.
Overall Evaluation

Sociology plays a vital role in the teaching and research missions of the College and the University. We offer instruction that helps undergraduates deepen their understanding of the social context of their own lives and those around them. We provide graduate students with a strong foundation in our field as they earn advanced degrees that launch their professional careers. And we generate innovative research and new knowledge that contributes to our collective understanding of contemporary social life in an increasingly globalized world. Our continued value may be best summed up by our external evaluators when they wrote: “Overall, we are very optimistic about the future of the Department of Sociology at the University of Kansas. Its faculty is strong and becoming stronger with the large number of recent hires. The departmental leadership is excellent and, given the department's long-standing culture of collegiality, will be able to guide the collective discussions required to assess the department's future direction. With a new foci and some reorientation of its graduate program and decision-making processes, the department is in position to increase its prominence in the discipline as a center of excellent research, graduate training, and undergraduate education.”
Highlights: Department of Sociology

- Kansas Sociology was founded in 1890, making it the oldest academic sociology program in the US.

- Significant investments were made in the department during the past CLAS strategic plan, especially in key areas in Global and International Studies, Social Structures and Public Policy, and Quantitative Analytics. Nine faculty members were hired between 2002 and 2010.

- In the three years prior to our external program review in 2008, faculty published approximately 19 scholarly monographs and books, wrote more than 70 peer-reviewed articles and 38 book chapters, and presented 152 papers at academic meetings. These books and chapters were published with prominent publishing houses and the articles have appeared in the top journals in our field. During this period, we also received 18 grants/contracts for a total of $813,259 as well as a number of national fellowships.

- In 2008, Sociology faculty took the lead in creating C-CHANGE (Climate Change, Humans, and Nature in the Global Environment), a $3.2 million National Science Foundation Integrative Graduate Education and Research Training program in interdisciplinary climate change studies.

- Sociology is currently home to editorship of The Sociological Quarterly, a leading generalist journal in the field.

- The department offers Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of General Studies degrees, a minor, an Honors designation, and an internship program. The number of our undergraduate majors increased 31% between 2007 and 2010 (from 121 to 159) and the numbers minoring in Sociology have nearly tripled over the period (from 26 to 74). Over the last decade, the proportion of our students who identify as ethnic minorities has risen from 14.9% to 22.8%.

- Graduate students earn a Master of Arts degree as a step toward the Doctor of Philosophy. The department educates professional sociologists for careers in teaching and research and for fields of practical application. However, nearly all Ph.D. graduates obtain teaching positions in higher education.

- The Graduate Program was recently recognized as the sixth most highly ranked department in the US to receive the “Stamp of Excellence” in Gender & Feminist Studies from the Sociologists For Women in Society.
“Sociology… because we investigate the institutions and social processes that shape human behaviour, histories, and opportunities.”

Department of Sociology
University of Kansas

Program Statement

Who We Are

One could argue that academic sociology in the United States began at 5:00 pm on Monday, February 3, 1890, when Professor Frank Wilson Blackmar convened the first “Elements of Sociology” class at the University of Kansas. A course by that title has been taught at KU every semester since. From those early days as the first sociology department in the United States to the present, the Department of Sociology has played a vital role in the teaching and research missions of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences (CLA&S) and the University of Kansas.

The goal of a liberal arts education is to develop a citizenry that is broadly informed and capable of critical appraisal. The discipline of sociology is central to this task. Sociology is the study of social life, social change, and the social causes and consequences of human behavior. Since all human behavior is social, the subject matter of sociology ranges from the intimate family to the hostile mob; from organized crime to religious cults; from the divisions of race, gender and social class to the shared beliefs of a common culture; and from the sociology of work to the sociology of sports. In fact, few fields have such broad scope and relevance for research, theory, and application of knowledge. The field offers a range of research techniques that can be applied to virtually all aspects of social life.

Currently the Department of Sociology consists of twenty-one “regular” or “tenure-track” faculty members (eight Full Professors, four Associate Professors, and nine Assistant Professors). Collectively, they constitute 19.0 actual Instructional FTE. Each faculty member holds the Doctoral degree in Sociology (one in Social Policy) from a major research university. Since our last Self-Study in 2002, we have taught some twenty-five thousand students, published dozens of books, articles, chapters, and other research products, and secured hundreds of thousands of dollars in internal and external research funds.

What We Do

As a major teaching and research unit, we seek to ensure that the knowledge imparted to our students is current and that they learn the skills of critical inquiry and analytical evaluation. We offer instruction that helps students deepen their understanding of the social context of their own lives. Fully integrated into the College, Sociology faculty have joint appointments, teaching faculty status, or administrative and advisor position in more than a dozen departments and units on campus.
Teaching Focus

One of the strengths of our program is the quality of our award-winning teaching faculty. We offer an intellectually engaging curriculum, introducing students to the unique and interesting sociological perspective, and preparing them for advanced training in sociology or other disciplines and professions. In our major, we try to create a blend of student centered teaching, usually associated with small liberal arts colleges, with the exposure to current research that is the strength of a major research institution. In our graduate program, we train future practitioners and scholars in the theories, methods, and substantive topics of our discipline.

We offer BA and BGS degrees, an Honors designation, an internship program, and areas of concentrations within the field. Approximately twelve percent of our graduates go on to enroll in graduate studies. We also offer a full graduate program in Sociology leading to the M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, educating sociologists for careers in teaching and research and for fields of practical application. We pride ourselves on our support for the professional development of students and we have, given our size, an extraordinary record of successful academic placements. Nearly all our Ph.D. graduates obtain teaching positions in higher education.

Research Focus

KU sociology has been well-know for research in social theory, gender studies, and historical sociology; we are also identified for our strengths in qualitative and interpretive research methods. Yet today, faculty in our unit employ the full range of both quantitative and qualitative tools to understand the social world including statistical modeling and demographic methods, ethnography and participant observation, textual and historical analysis, interviews, surveys, as well as field experiments and audit studies.

Faculty members are currently engaged in research in a number of sub-fields that cluster around three core themes:

**Social Inequalities:** This cluster includes topics such as class analysis: the examination of social, political, and economic bases of power at national and international levels; studies of occupational and educational attainment; differential access to health care; and analyses of the gendered, race/ethnic, and class-and age-based processes sorting people into different positions within systems of social inequality.

**Social and Cultural Diversity:** This theme centers on variety and the human experience and includes culture and its material products, ideas, and symbolic meanings as well as popular culture and the media; sexualities, gender and work, health, politics, social control and family, in national and global contexts; as well as the social construction of race and ethnicity; the history of racial and ethnic groups; study of comparative process of racialization.

**Globalization:** The focus of this cluster is on the increased complexity and density of economic, political, technological, and cultural structures and processes within and among countries. Topics include nationalism, demographic shifts and migrations, political cultures and ideologies, the
transition from state socialism, comparative welfare state policies, the processes and structures associated with economic organizations, production, consumption, labor markets, and social networks, as well as the human dimensions of global climate change.

Our Recent History

Significant changes have taken place in our department since our last Self-Study in 2002. Just four years ago, Sociology was “top-heavy” in rank and dwindling in numbers with just 14.8 actual instructional FTE. During the intervening period, KU embarked on a designed Tuition Enhancement Plan that generated $43 million over five years with $8.4 million earmarked to hire 100 new faculty members across the University. The Sociology Department has played a significant role in this initiative, especially in several key conceptual areas that were identified by the former Dean in Global and International Studies, Social Structures and Public Policy, and Quantitative Analytics. Beginning in the fall of 2008, eight of the department’s twenty-two regular faculty members will have joined our ranks since 2002. They include (in order of hire and noting their extra-departmental affiliations or joint appointments):

**Kelly Haesung Chong** (Ph.D. Chicago), gender and religion in South Korea and the global context (Affiliation: Women’s Studies).


**Mary K. Zimmerman** (Ph.D. Minnesota) increased her appointment to .50 in Sociology. International/comparative health systems social inequalities; and gender and social policy (Affiliation: Institute for Public Policy and Research as well as joint appointment with Health Policy Management with the School of Medicine).

**Elif Andaç** (Ph.D. Washington), state building and social change in the Balkans and the Middle East (Affiliation: Institute for Public Policy and Research).

**Meredith Kleykamp** (Ph.D. Princeton), quantitative methods, demography, and military sociology (Affiliation: Institute for Public Policy and Research).

**Tracey LaPierre** (Ph.D. Duke), quantitative methods, gerontology, and the life course, cross-national health systems (Joint Appointment: Gerontology).

**Ebenezer Obadare** (Ph.D. London School of Economics) comparative societies, transnational migration, and social change, and development in Africa (Affiliation: African and African American Studies).
Jessica Vasquez (Ph.D. University of California, Berkeley) Race/Ethnicity, Mexican Americans/Latinos, Family, Identity, and Culture (Affiliation: Institute for Public Policy and Research)

ChangHwan Kim (Ph.D. University of Texas at Austin) Stratification and Inequality, Demography of Labor Force, Race and Ethnicity, Immigration, Korean Studies, Quantitative Methodology and Statistics (Affiliation: Institute for Public Policy and Research)

This talented and diverse group of new faculty have already enriched our department and they will continue to enliven our curriculum, stimulate new lines of research, attract students from the US and abroad, and increase external funding in our own department and throughout CLA&S.

During the period since our last Self-Study we have also experienced a significant increase in our undergraduate majors; the total peaked in 2004 with over 300 declared and “interest-coded” students and has now fallen back some. We also added a minor in the field. The portion of our majors who identify themselves as ethnic minorities has increased from 10% to 19%. Following recommendations set out by the ASA, we increased our degree requirements by making a previously optional statistics course mandatory and created a set of prerequisite-based levels that foster depth and integration in the major. We have also added a half-time CLA&S Advising Specialist which has helped ensure our students are on track in our major.

At the graduate-level, while the numbers of our students in the program has remained stable, we have had more successful recruitment efforts with several strong cohorts of entering students with noticeably higher GRE scores. The portion of our graduate students who identify themselves as ethnic minorities has increased from 6% to 9%. Graduate teaching Assistantships, our main source of graduate student funding, have increased from 14.5 to 21.0 (18 base budget and 3 off-base) and the average stipend paid has increased from $11,500 to $14,000.

We have already accomplished several goals put forth in our Strategic Plan developed in 2006: 1) we have helped create a interdisciplinary Hall Center Seminar in Globalization 2) we have secured funding for an NSF-IGERT grant for $3.2 million and we have brought the editorship of The Sociological Quarterly, a well respected, forty-three year old general journal, to our department; and 3) we identified and recruited underrepresented groups into our faculty ranks and our student body.

Since the last Self-Study, our program has been recognized as one of the top six departments to receive the Stamp of Excellence in Gender & Feminist Studies from Sociologists for Women in Society for creating a departmental climate that welcomes diversity and where faculty identify gender or inequality among their specialties. In one national study (Burris 2004), of all 94 public and private PhD granting departments in sociology, we rank 35th in the number of graduates employed in all current PhD granting departments, having placed 13 graduates in these highly coveted positions. In this study, we ranked third among Big 12 schools and, among the non-Big 12 schools, we bested the likes of Illinois, SUNY-Albany, Connecticut, Florida, Rutgers,
Virginia, Maryland, Boston College, North Carolina State, as well as UC San Diego, Santa Cruz, and Riverside. We eagerly await findings from the recently conducted National Research Council assessment of our graduate program.

**Challenges We Face**

The five years of Tuition Enhancement dramatically changed the resource landscape at KU in general and in our department in particular. With increased support from the administration we have been able to hire new colleagues, better reward our talented faculty and support staff, recruit fine students, and, we have no doubt, enhanced our reputation in our discipline. Yet, there are obstacles to our continued progress:

- Our undergraduate major is treated like a second-class member of the CLA&S since a number of programs, in fact, a good number of our fellow social science departments, are permitted to have “entry” GPA requirements and the like while we have been denied this advantage. This structural inequality unfairly “privileges” certain disciplines over others. Worse, the presence of numbers of low performing students in the classroom limits our ability to provide more challenging learning experiences for our other majors.

- As has become evident, the structural position of the social sciences in CLA&S, relative to our colleagues in the physical sciences and humanities is deeply problematic.

- Adjustments need to be made and organizational resources, policies, and procedures need to be reconfigured if the social sciences are to truly thrive. The following points are related to this issue:

  - Research support must become a priority. There needs to be programs that go beyond the General Research Fund to create incentives for the development of new research agendas, interdisciplinary collaborations, and external grant submissions. This includes the creation of “think tanks” for intellectual innovation and exchange, interdisciplinary seminars, enhanced technology, and support staff to manage and facilitate this agenda.

  - In order for recruit and retain the very best faculty, our salary structure will need to be adjusted to reflect the competitive nature of higher education and keep pace with our peer institutions.

  - Lack of competitive support for graduate students will continue to undermine our ability to attract the best student, especially those outside the region and international students. More support for recruitment programs and attractive funding packages will help potential students from beyond the Midwest think of Kansas as a real option.
Our Plans and Goals

In crafting our plan for the future, we seek to build on this extraordinary momentum by beginning the next phase of development of our program of research and teaching in several key areas. Our future plans include:

• Publish and post a clear mission statement and goals; develop a capstone/research seminar; offer more exposure to research opportunities; design activities to help students integrate their educational experiences across disciplines; encourage active learning experiences and service leaning opportunities that develop students’ critical thinking skills and prepare them for lives of civic engagement.

• Expand existing and offer new courses that enhance a multicultural and global curriculum by building our emerging reputation in Globalization Studies by expanding and thematically organizing our course work in the area at the graduate and undergraduate levels and at both the Lawrence and Edwards campuses. Our discipline’s emphasis is on theorizing and understanding globalization and its consequences such as racial/ethnic/gender inequalities, national and international conflicts, the possibilities of democracy, and consequences of global popular and consumer cultures.

• Renew and expand our participation in international exchange programs with a number of universities throughout the world including new initiatives at universities in Azerbaijan, Canada, Italy, Peru and Turkey. In addition, we propose to develop courses that begin in the classroom at KU and end in a study abroad experience. For example, students might study the issue of Latino/a migration to the US and then go and spend time in several villages in Mexico.

• Continue to aid in establishing a Qualitative Analysis Minor modeled after or incorporated within the proposed new Quantitative Minor in CLA&S. Play a central role in the development of both qualitative and “multi-method” approaches in the social sciences that would ultimately lead to a graduate certificate in qualitative methods. Use the proposed 8-week class scheduling to offer “Short Courses” in particular methods and data analysis techniques. Seek funding for a NSF-Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU) summer program in “Multi-method” approaches in the social sciences.

• Build on our inherently interdisciplinary nature by expanding our partnerships with other departments and programs through the extensive cross-listing of classes, the training of graduate students outside our department, and fostering of faculty participation in other units including new roles in the International and Global Studies Center, Latino/a Studies Program, IPSR, and the KU Medical Center.

• Enhance our role in the study and use of social theory. Our goal is to help better equip graduate students throughout CLA&S in units such as American Studies, History, Philosophy, Women's Studies, Political Science, and Anthropology with the conceptual
tools necessary to understand the contemporary world. Given additional resources, we would be interested in developing a graduate certificate in social theory where faculty across CLA&S would teach and co-teach classes in the different schools of social theory.

- We will seek resources that would fund competitive “seed” grants for projects that leverage external grant applications and offer graduate and undergraduate students the opportunity to participate in research.

- Continue to engage in “institutional building” by playing a central role in 1) the NSF-IGERT for interdisciplinary social and physical science project with a focus on the human dimensions of climate change; 2) the development of a CLA&S Global Studies Center; 3) the Institute for Public Policy and Research, and 4) the Center for Data Analysis.

- From the above projects, we would help assemble an interdisciplinary team to seek funding from the KU's Research Development Fund to compete for even larger awards from national funding agencies such as MacArthur Foundation's Program on Global Security and Sustainability, as well as the Ford, Rockefeller, and Gates Foundations and the National Science Foundation's recent initiative, Human Dimensions of Global Change.

- Continue to seek out and recruit faculty, students and staff from under represented groups. Given the nature of our discipline and the opportunity created by support from the Provost’s Office, we believe that we can recruit very strong and talented underrepresented faculty. We will make a concerted effort to continue to diversify our student body by recruited students from the McNair Program and through programmatic affiliation with the new Multi-Cultural Resource Center.

**Resources**

In order to meet these challenges, we need to fill key positions in several areas and therefore we request:

- **Assistant Professor** with a primary research and teaching interest in **globalization**. There are several crucial aspects of globalization and its consequences which we need to strengthen such as racial/ethnic/gender inequalities, national and international conflicts, the conditions under which democracy and political and social equality flourish or languish, or the characteristics and consequences of global popular and consumer cultures.

- **Associate Professor** with a primary research and teaching interest in **environmental sociology**. This hire would address issues such as the human dimensions of global environmental change. An Associate-level hire would permit this faculty member to step-
in and support students and the administration of the NSF IGERT and the Center for Research on Global Change.

- **Assistant Professor** with a primary research and teaching interest in **social theory**. This hire would expand our depth in both classical and contemporary theory and support our initiative to offer throughout CLA&S the conceptual tools necessary for graduate students to understand the contemporary world.

- **Assistant Professor** with a primary research and teaching interest in **gender and social inequality**. Persistent “glass ceilings,” wage disparities, unequal access to educational opportunities, and political access are possible areas to be addressed.

- **Assistant Professor** with a primary research and teaching interest in **medical sociology**, especially as it relates to the **social inequalities** and access of medical care and pharmaceuticals and/or the global dimensions of diseases such as HIV/AIDS, avian flu and the like.

- **Assistant Professor** with a primary research and teaching interest in **social movements** who would examine the dimensions of contemporary social movements such as AIDS activism, indigenous peoples, global justice, ethnic, disability, sexualities rights, and environmental justice.

Any of these hires would also be expected to contribute to our efforts in strengthening instruction in core theory, methods, and statistics courses.

- Given our increase in the number of faculty, we require additional support staff and request that our current half-time Administrative Assistant position be increased to full-time.

- Given our numbers of majors, we request that our CLA&S Advising Specialist be increased to full-time.

- Given our space constraints (see below), we request that funds be allocated to reconfigure some of the space on the 7th floor of Fraser.

**Governance**

The Department of Sociology is governed though a comprehensive set of written documents including Bylaws, Faculty Evaluation Plan, and Guidelines for Tenure & Promotion (see Appendix 4 Governance) that outline the organizing structure of the department and define the membership, rights, privileges, and responsibilities of members of the department. As these Bylaws state, we are founded on the idea of “a collegium in which the source of power and authority lies in the faculty.” This foundation of shared governance has been an important part of the culture of our department for some time and continues to be a guiding principle. Our
collaborative spirit and cooperative decision-making continue to serve as a model for any academic department.

**Facilities Needs**

We occupy the seventh floor of Fraser Hall. When the office space was designed with the help of faculty in the mid-1960s, there were fewer faculty so some offices are very large, each faculty member had both an office and research space, and shared space included small group laboratories and photography darkroom. Today, the space barely contains us; it is inefficient, too rigid, and not very user-friendly. While plans have been drawn up to remodel the entire building floor-by-floor, lack of funds could mean it will never happen. In the meantime, we could take much smaller steps to redesign some of the existing space to increase capacity and gain efficiencies.