

ANS Pilot Program: Learning Outcomes Assessment Summary: Anthropology and Sociology Majors

Review Process:

As a direct result of the Policy 101 review of the Anthropology and Sociology program over the summer of 2009, the faculty decided to devote time and effort in the capstone senior seminar to assessing the degree to which the formally stated learning outcomes of the program are realized. To achieve this, we decided to require students in the senior seminar to submit portfolios of their work that they felt represented their achievement of each learning objective. The Policy 101 Review committee favorably reviewed this assessment practice by the sociology department at Castleton, and we decided it was a good practice to adopt.

This assessment process is still in its infancy. Due to a small cadre of seniors in our program, we have not offered the senior seminar this academic year. We have accommodated this year's seniors by allowing them to count other, topical seminars as their senior seminar requirement or, in one case, by offering an independent study. Each of these four students has submitted a portfolio. We are reviewing these with the stated objective of assessing the learning outcomes as well as with a view toward refining the process.

Learning Outcomes Assessment Review for Anthropology and Sociology Majors

1. Knowledge of the principal concepts, theories, and methodologies of Anthropology and Sociology.

The portfolios provide initial evidence that our students have a good command of the concepts, theories, and methodologies of our disciplines. In our own observations of our majors in classes with students from other disciplines, it is obvious to the faculty that our majors have command of a useful vocabulary and a knowledge base that contributes to the learning of those not fully initiated.

2. Knowledge of cultural and social processes and their impact upon personal life choices, community relationships, national issues, and global dynamics.

The portfolios offer clear examples of the ability of our students to apply their understandings of social and cultural processes to all of the targeted issues. Some of these are dramatic and impressive. This outcome is clearly related to Number 6 below, about which further evidence will be offered.

3. Critical thinking that is holistic, integrative, and interdisciplinary. To be manifested through skills that are oral, written, computer-based, and with resource-based support.

The portfolios offer evidence of our students' critical thinking and their ability to communicate their thinking in well-researched and well-written work.

4. To be able to evaluate and communicate the “big picture” of societal institutions and cultural forces.

Our students' work reflects this ability in practically every example they offer. Beyond the portfolios, discussions from the last senior seminar (Fall '08) indicate our students' consciousness of this perspective as part of the uniqueness of being anthropology and sociology majors.

5. Appreciation of cultural diversity that acknowledges the vast array of beliefs, values, norms, languages, symbols, and technologies that characterizes peoples across the globe.

The portfolios reflect this appreciation and acknowledgement. So does the fact that a campus student organization, A Global Partnership: Students for Children's Rights, was co-founded three years ago and led from its founding until this semester by several Anthropology and Sociology majors. A December '09 graduate, one of the leaders of this student group and one who submitted a portfolio, currently works in an orphanage in Guinea in eastern Africa.

6. Understanding the power of social and cultural dynamics to shape personal life choices and civic responsibility.

The portfolios, each in their own way, reflect a passion for active civic participation. A current graduate (Spring '10) won the 2009 Madeleine M. Kunin Award, a state-wide award to the college student who demonstrated outstanding public service and leadership. A December '09 graduate won the Johnson State Community Service Award. A Spring '09 graduate served as President of the Student-Athlete Advisory Committee and started a “Drop ‘n Swap” day to recycle clothes within the campus community and donate the surplus to people who need them.

7. Preparedness to pursue further education or to enter careers that require interpersonal and multicultural knowledge, that is –“people skills” of many kinds.

As mentioned above, one recent graduate works in an orphanage in Africa. A current graduate completed an internship this past semester working in the state legislature. Another currently works for a local social service agency. One recently worked for the JSC Office of

Admissions, recruiting high school students. Another works for JSC's Conferences and Event Services. Several have been accepted into graduate schools, including a public administration program at U.V. M. We feel these examples indicate success in this learning outcome.