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Date: May 21, 2008

Michael K. Mahoney

From: Michael Mahoney, Provost and Vice President, Academic Affairs

To: Diane Beeson, Chair, Sociology and Social Services
Benjamin Bowser, Interim Dean, CLASS

Subject: MOU Meeting – B.A. and M.A. in Sociology

On May 20, 2008, I met with Diane Beeson, Chair, Sociology and Social Services; Benjamin Bowser, Interim Dean, CLASS; Janet Patterson, Associate Dean, CLASS; Aline Soules, Chair, CAPR; and Carl Bellone, AVP Academic Programs and Graduate Studies to discuss the Program Review for the B.A. and M.A. in Sociology and to develop an MOU as required by CAPR 9.

Sociology is the study of society and patterns of relationships so there are many interesting subfields within the department including sociological theory, research methods, family, gender-race, medical sociology, social services, and social policy. The department anticipates adding the subfield of global and transnational.

The Sociology and Social Services Department has a large service learning component. Of the 350 current majors about 40 are working in community-based organizations as part of their academic credit. Often these service learning experiences lead to jobs.

The Masters of Social Work grew out of the Department which resulted in the loss of some faculty. The B.A. in Sociology is a major feeder for the MSW supplying about 50% of the students for the MSW.

The B.A. in Sociology is one of the largest majors in CLASS, and the number of majors has grown over the past five years. The Department has faced the challenge of having three chairs over the past three years.

The M.A. in Sociology has a great track record of placing people in top notch Ph.D. programs. The Department puts a lot of time and effort into its graduate program without adequate resources. There are not enough faculty members to do thesis advising.

At the time of the last five year review, the Department had 12 full-time faculty members. It is now down to 7. There is a need to increase some lecturers appointments to 1.0 (i.e., full-time) so they can do advising and be eligible for assigned time to work on needed projects. Currently no lecturers are full-time. This leaves a small number of full-time faculty members to advise the 350 majors. As a result, the Chair does a lot of advising which takes away from other chair duties.

The Department has a practice of demanding written papers in all classes which is great for improving the writing and critical thinking skills of the students but a lot of work for faculty who have to grade the papers.

Understandings

The CAPR review of Sociology (2007-08 CAPR 14) made four recommendations: 1) work out a fully-developed specific 5-year plan, 2) develop a clear plan for future tenure track faculty hiring, 3) consider a plan for replacing vacated or vacating faculty positions, and 4) work with the College to review the administrative support and office needs.

The results of the MOU meeting are as follow:

1. The Sociology and Social Services Department is encouraged to develop a specific 5-year plan in the 2008/09 academic year. The Department has already indicated that they are planning to do this and have begun preliminary discussions. The 2008-09 incoming chair (Dr. Ben Bowser) will soon be in place and will provide leadership.
2. The Department is searching for a new faculty position this year and has requested two additional positions for next year—one of which is high on the CLASS priority list. The Department and the Dean's Office should consider the possibility of moving one or more lecturer positions to 1.0 appointments to help with the faculty workload such as student advising. Funding this in 2008-09 will probably be a challenge, but funding levels are expected to improve after that.
3. The new chair will work on a developing a long-term plan for tenure track hiring that will take into account faculty turnover and retirements.
4. The need for administrative and office support has been resolved by separating the shared administrative support between Sociology and Anthropology and by an increase in the administrative support given to Sociology by the Dean's Office.

AVP Carl Bellone and I sincerely appreciate the challenges that the Department of Sociology and Social Services has faced with a nearly 50% reduction in tenure-track faculty. We are thankful for the considerable efforts of the remaining faculty to keep this important department in good shape. With the return of Dr. Bowser and additional full-time faculty to be hired over the coming years, the department's situation will improve. We'd also like to thank the CAPR members for their time and informative report.

Cc: Aline Soules
Hank Reichman
Carl Bellone
Janet Patterson