

Internal Academic Review 2006-2007
Department of Sociology
Internal Academic Review Committee Report to Senate

The Internal Academic Review (IAR) of the Department of Sociology is now complete. The Internal Academic Review Committee (IARC) has taken into consideration all of the submissions related to the IAR of the Department of Sociology and respectfully submits the following report. The IARC Report to Senate is intended to supplement the findings of the attached Review Team Report and to provide a mechanism for the Head of the Department and the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science to jointly report on the progress in addressing the Review Team recommendations (please see the “Outcomes” section of this report).

Summary of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of Sociology

The Department of Sociology is to be applauded for its multiplicity of approaches to teaching and research, and its ability to create a stimulating and intellectually challenging environment for faculty members and students. The IARC encourages the Department of Sociology to continue its consistent improvement in the area of research and applauds the many faculty members who are recognized nationally and internationally.

The IARC compliments the Department of Sociology for its admirable leadership in creating an environment that supports equity and diversity, particularly in recruitment of faculty members and among the student population.

The IARC agrees with the Review Team report highlighting the need for a collective strategic planning session to address future directions, goals and ways to build a stronger community within the Department. Particular attention should be paid to determining resolutions that eliminate potential divisive environments within the Department. The IARC agrees with the recommendations of the Review Team that workable approaches and improved communications among the existing schismatic streams of curriculum will contribute to an environment that encourages interactions and learning opportunities for faculty members and students across sub-disciplinary boundaries and outside their areas of specialization.

The IARC agrees with the Review Team report recommendation that a thorough review of the governance mechanisms in the Department would be beneficial with a view to maintaining a balance of participation from faculty members, staff and students. While the IARC commends the Department of Sociology for its tradition of inclusiveness and support of students, the Committee would concur with the Review Team recommendation to assign one student representative to participate in each of the Departmental meetings and committees to speak on behalf of the larger student body.

The IARC acknowledges the Department's improved research profile and encourages the Department to continue to pursue this on a national and international level through enhanced internal communications across research areas and an emphasis on publishing in peer-reviewed venues, wherever these exist and as appropriate.

The IARC recognizes the Department of Sociology for its progress and strength in teaching and learning and fully supports the Department as it explores new ways to address the recommendations outlined in the Review Team Report.

Outcomes of the Internal Academic Review of the Department of Sociology

*Joint response submitted by the
Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science and the
Head of the Department of Sociology*

1. With the support of the Faculty of Arts and Science, members of the Department of Sociology held a collective, two day strategic assessment and planning session in June 2007, which was highly productive. Among the most important outcomes were the following:

a) Members of the Department reviewed in detail the reports and recommendations from both IAR and OCGS reviews. In a frank, animated discussion, the Department explored its strengths, perceived weaknesses, and untapped potential, with the goal of establishing future directions and goals.

b) Members of the Department agreed on an overall plan that prioritized future hiring needs. This plan addresses the Department's current research and teaching strengths,

explicitly draws together the Department's four areas of identified strength, and recognizes the need to introduce additional expertise to train students in qualitative research methods.

c) Members of the Department developed a number of strategies to ensure that current interactions among faculty and students from the four areas of identified strength are not only sustained but enhanced. These strategies, coupled with improved communication across core areas, are expected to build upon the existing synergies in the Department and foster a cohesive approach to future Departmental challenges.

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that graduate students “be required to take courses from at least two streams and that training and information sessions for graduates be taken from faculty spread across these divides.” Professor Carroll concurs: “If most of the doctoral coursework is also narrowly

focused in one area, students are unlikely to acquire a sufficiently comprehensive knowledge of the discipline.” This point is extremely important given these students will be moving on to academic positions elsewhere. To be effective scholars they need to have not only depth in an area of concentration, but breadth so that they can become

Carroll's suggestion that a third-year course in qualitative methods be introduced. The

Faculty are well-balanced across the ranks from assistant to full professor. It is clear that the Department has strengthened its faculty complement. This has addressed some of the

concerns raised in the previous IAR with respect to research capacity, graduate student supervision and scholarship. For instance, as a result of these new hires, research funding has improved substantially. However, for this Department to achieve national and

recently, a Killam Research Fellowship. The committee recognises the huge leap forward since the last IAR but also acknowledges a lack of integration in the department, which the consultants' reports identified. The Department should consider how and in what areas it sees itself moving forward, and how continued research advancement might situate the Department nationally and internationally. Professor Brewer commends the

to raise the bar of its ambitions and to think of ways in which it can break through and

- The Department should examine its space resources and attempt to provide its graduate students, particularly TAs, with additional office space.
- All faculty in the Department should participate in collective, strategic planning sessions to determine future directions and goals. An off-site retreat is recommended to foster dialogue and establish a coherent strategic plan.

Faculty should observe the recommendations made by the external reviewers with

regard to limiting the number of students participating in Department meetings and serving on Departmental committees. Student participation should be limited