



Memorial

University of Newfoundland

Office of the Dean
Faculty of Arts

September 11, 2006



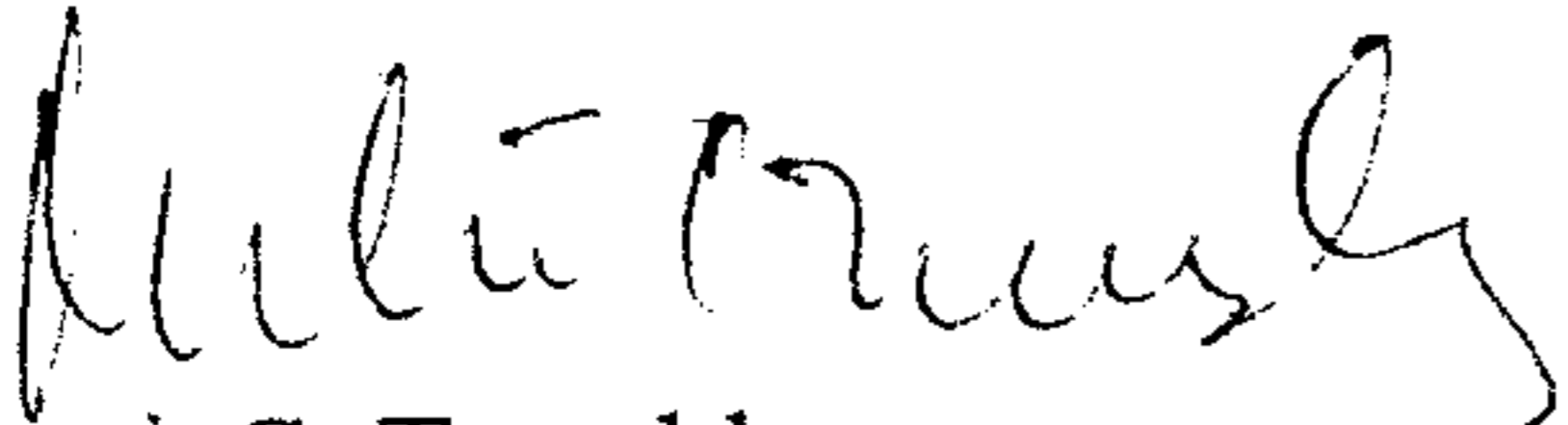
TO: Head, Department of Sociology

FROM: Reeta C. Tremblay
Dean, Faculty of Arts

SUBJECT: Academic Programme Review Report

As per the *Procedures for the Review of Units and Programs*, I attach the report submitted by the APR panel for circulation within your department. I would be grateful to receive the department's response to the recommendations contained in the report no later than **Monday, October 9, 2006**, so that work on drafting the Action Plan can take place.

I look forward to receiving your comments on the recommendations contained in the report.


Reeta C. Tremblay
Dean, Faculty of Arts

c: Vice-President (Academic)
Ms. Robyn Saunders, Academic Program Review Coordinator

Dean of Arts

SEP 07 2006

Received

September 6, 2006

To: Dean of Arts

From: Phil Branigan, Chair of the evaluation committee for the Academic Program Review of the Sociology Department.

Subject: Report of the Committee

Enclosed is the report of the committee, with corrections made and responses giving to the issues raised by Dr. Wolinetz after the initial submission of this report. Please feel free to contact me concerning any language which still needs clarification.

I would like to bring to your attention that some members of our committee have expressed concern about certain aspects of the APR process as it is conducted at present at Memorial. Members with experience in conducting such reviews at other institutions have found it at odds with the typical practice to have the Dean review the initial submission and then request changes in the text before the report is accepted. It has been suggested in our discussions that a more effective and appropriate way to deal with errors or ambiguities would be for the administration and the department to simply correct errors in their own discussions after the report is submitted, as part of the process of dealing with the report's recommendations.

Phil Branigan

**Report of the Academic Program Review Panel
On the
Department of Sociology
Memorial University of Newfoundland**

Review Panel Members:

Phil Branigan, Associate Professor of Linguistics, MUN, Chair

Susan McDaniel, FRSC, Professor of Sociology, University of Windsor

John Phyne, Professor of Sociology and Program Coordinator, Interdisciplinary Studies
in Aquatic Resources, St. Francis Xavier University.

C. Michael Wernerheim, Professor of Economics, MUN

Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....

1.0	Introduction
2.0	The Review Procedure
3.0	Administrative Structure
3.1	Support Staff
3.2	Academic Staff
4.0	Undergraduate Programs
4.1	Undergraduate Curriculum
4.2	Distance Courses
4.3	Interdisciplinary Programs
4.4	Sociology/Anthropology program
4.5	Women's Studies
4.6	Law and Society
4.7	Police Studies
4.8	Cultural Studies Program
4.9	Response from Students
5.0	Service Teaching
6.0	Graduate Programs
6.1	Graduate Curriculum
6.2	Funding and Growth of Graduate Program
6.3	Response from Students
6.4	Research, Scholarship and Interdisciplinarity
7.0	Community Service and University Citizenship
8.0	External Research Support

- 9.0 University Support
- 9.1 Space
- 9.2 Faculty Renewal
- 9.3 Library Resources
- 10.0 Conclusions
- Summary of Recommendations

1. Introduction

This is the first time the Department of Sociology is undergoing academic program review. This limits somewhat the benchmarks against which the performance of the Unit can be measured. We have therefore taken as our primary basis for evaluation prevailing national standards in the discipline.

We find that the Department of Sociology at Memorial is an excellent academic unit on all fronts:

- Sociology at MUN has been and continues to be known and very well respected across Canada. It is a Department of which Memorial University can be justly proud.
- There are many indicators of Departmental excellence, a few of which include
 - 1) the striking success many faculty have with obtaining not only research funding, but highly competitive large research strategic funding totaling millions of dollars where faculty in Sociology at MUN are most often in the lead. Examples include Barbara Neis who is associated with grants well over \$11 million and has been instrumental in huge research projects with national and international significance such as “Coasts Under Stress” and “SafetyNet”; Peter Sinclair whose grants total over \$10 million; and Larry Felt who is leading a Community-University Research Alliance project that involves the Inuit of Northern Labrador, one of several in which he has been instrumental.
- the outstanding research productivity of members of the department at all ranks This accompanies better than average, by far, success with obtaining research funding in addition to the very large projects mentioned above the fact that one of the leading Sociology journals in Canada, *The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, is located in Sociology at MUN, under the Editorship of Marilyn Porter. Stephen Riggins serves as Book Review Editor of that journal.
- the extensive participation of members of the faculty participate in professional activities including on a wide range of journals’ editorial boards at regional, national and international levels.
- the high visibility of the faculty in Sociology at MUN in professional service on national and international adjudication boards; one faculty member, Barbara Neis, serves on the Council of SSHRC.
- Faculty in Sociology have been elected to executive positions in the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association – Marilyn Porter has served as President and Stephen Riggins served as National Program Chair for the annual meetings

for a three-year term.

This is truly a Department of distinction among Canadian Sociology departments.

In its basic operating functions, this department is working quite effectively. The Department has fine leadership with Stephen Riggins as Head. It has had the good fortune to have continuing dedicated leadership by Bob Hill in coordinating the graduate program. It is a highly collegial department with very good working relations among colleagues, not always typical of Sociology departments. It is a Department with good morale as well. It is a Department which attracts large numbers of majors and minors in Sociology – a total of 446 in the 05/06 academic year.

This Department has an active and well respected MA and Ph.D. program, attracting very good students. One indicator of the quality of the Ph.D. students is their recent impressive success rates with Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council graduate fellowships, an intensely competitive nation-wide system.

The Department has extraordinarily proficient support staff, working well beyond what their job descriptions suggest and consistently being cheerful and helpful.

All this said, the Department is at a serious historic crossroads at present with impending retirements, few faculty in the middle to take on the major leadership roles as senior faculty retire or as they wind down careers. There is a clear need for active and immediate renewal in order for the current stature and known strengths of the Department not to be lost. We specify our concerns about this in recommendations below. The Department needs to consider strategically its future and concomitant implications for curriculum development. We would emphasize that delay in engaging in such planning may be quite hazardous to the ongoing quality of both research and teaching in this department.

2.0 The Review Procedure

Members of the Review Panel (henceforth referred to as the *Panel*) were selected in accordance with the procedures set out in “Procedures for the Review of Units and Programs,” a copy of which was provided to us. Dates for the site visit were agreed upon prior to the visit in consultation with us and those involved in the review process.

Our site visit to Memorial University took place May 10- 13, during which time the APR Review Panel worked as a team to undertake the review.

We appreciate the opportunity to read in advance and during the site visit the following:

- Procedures for the Review of Units and Programs
- Academic Program Review Self-Study Report, Department of Sociology, March 2006

- Statement of Memorial University's Principles and Goals
- Memorial University's Fact Book 2004
- Celebrate Memorial! A Pictorial History of Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Memorial University Calendar/Catalogue
- School of Graduate Studies Guide for New Students
- Detailed enrolment information for undergraduates in Sociology courses and programs
- Information on Current Graduate Supervisors by area of interest for recent years

The Panel met with members of the senior administration on the evening of May 10. Present from the administration were the Vice President (Academic), Dr. H.E.A. (Eddy) Campbell, the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr. Noreen Golfman, the Interim Dean of Arts, Dr. Steven Wolinetz, and Ms. Joan Bessey of the Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning. General perspectives and specific issues were discussed. We are grateful for the insights gained and the time shared with us.

The Panel again met with Dr. Campbell, Dr. Golfman, and Dr. Wolinetz, in an exit meeting on May 12. The meetings with the Department were scheduled for May 11 and May 12. An itinerary was provided by Ms. Bessey (see Appendix). The meetings with faculty, staff and students were all very well attended and participants expressed a high level of interest and involvement in Departmental affairs. The Head of Department, Dr. Steven Riggins, and several faculty members availed of opportunities to meet individually with the Panel. One faculty member who was unavailable for on-campus meetings, Dr. Marilyn Porter, was later interviewed by telephone by the Chair, Dr. Phil Branigan.

We particularly are indebted to Joan Bessey for her coordination of our visit and her very generous assistance to us during the site visit. We are also indebted to Stephen Riggins, Head of the Sociology Department, for his insights, his time and willingness to respond fully to our many questions. We thank members of the Sociology department – faculty, students (both graduate and undergraduate), and staff for sharing their experiences and insights.

3.0 Administrative Structure

In the Self Study the Department was reluctant to comment on its cost effectiveness or to consider more closely the statistics presented in Table 24 (p. 79) of the Self Study document. This is surprising giving the favourable picture of the Department that emerges from a comparison of its performance relative to that of the Faculty of Arts as a whole. To begin with, in 2003-04 the Department has 1.2 times more registrations than the average for the Faculty of Arts, and it ranks second (2) in Faculty in terms of registrations per regular full-time faculty as many as 3.3 times more than any other department. Sociology registers more students per tenure-track faculty member. The ratio

of registrations in Sociology compared with other departments in the Faculty of Arts indicates that Sociology registers more students per tenure-track faculty member than any department in the Faculty except English. Similarly, the number of majors and minors per faculty complement is higher in Sociology than the average for the Faculty of Arts.

Turning to the monetary indicators reflecting aspects of cost efficiency for which we have data, it appears that of fourteen Departments in the Faculty of Arts, only four (4) spend fewer dollars per lecture registration (Political Science, Religious Studies, English, and Classics). In terms of dollars spent per FTE undergraduate major, only two (2) do so. Using the ratio of total expenditure per lecture registration (CIAP Fact Book 2004, Academic Unit Profile), Sociology is the most cost effective teaching unit in the Faculty of Arts.

Furthermore, the full-time academic salary per registration (\$289) is well below the average for the Faculty of Arts (\$345), with only three departments spending less (Classics, English, and French/Spanish). Another measure that can be used is the number of majors per full-time faculty member. In comparing the ratio of majors to full-time faculty members in the 'traditional' social science disciplines, the figure for Sociology is 13.9:1¹. This is second highest (Geography is 21.2:1) amongst the social science disciplines.²

The Department of Sociology is doing very well also in terms of research funding awarded from all sources. In 2003-04, Sociology ranked third in the Faculty in terms of research funding awarded. Higher dollar amounts were recorded for only two departments (History and Anthropology) in that year. The Department attains the same ranking (third) when the metric of research dollars per regular full-time faculty is used. This level of performance is consistent with that of previous years (CIAP Fact Book 2004, Table 22D).

1

The 'traditional' social science disciplines are defined as: Anthropology (all units in the calendar), economics, geography, history (although defined as a humanities discipline at Memorial), linguistics, political science and sociology.

2 These data are based upon the figures for majors in Table 9 (pp. 24-45) of CIAP (2004) and the list of faculty in the 2005-06 Calendar (Memorial University of Newfoundland 2005). In calculating these data, we removed the names of professors emeriti, honorary research professors and adjunct professors from the list of faculty. Only full-time faculty involved in teaching are included. Since there are two university research professors in sociology, we included them as part of the full-time teaching faculty, despite the existence of course relief. It would have been difficult to exclude them since we do not know the teaching commitments of university research professors in other social science departments. If the two university research professors are removed in sociology then the full-time complement in the classroom becomes 16 and not 18. In this case, the majors/faculty ratio increases to 15.6:1.

Finally, a useful output measure is the number of undergraduate degrees conferred by first major. In 2004, the Department of Sociology accounted for almost ten percent of the undergraduate degrees conferred in the Faculty of Arts. Only English and History reported higher rates, eleven and 24 percent respectively (CIAP, Fact Book 2004).

From these indicators one can conclude that, in a relative sense at least, of all Faculties and Schools, the Department of Sociology delivers its undergraduate programs most cost effectively.

3.1 Support Staff

The Department of Sociology has two full-time administrative support staff persons, which is comparable to other departments in the faculty. The Panel learned that a substantial portion of the work done by the staff in this department is in administering the grants awarded to faculty. Given the amount of funding which this department obtains, it is clear that the staff are burdened by this work beyond the norm in the Faculty of Arts. We would expect that job reclassification of one position, perhaps to the Administrative Assistant level would be appropriate in these circumstances. Judy Smith is retiring in the near future. Judy and Audrey both appear to be very efficient and experience a high degree of job satisfaction generally. Judy Smith received the President's award for Exemplary Service in 1997.

Support Staff are performing some duties would be better handled by the Head or Delegate (undergraduate student advising), or faculty members (the minutiae of administering individual faculty's grants). The Panel has concerns about such work being done by staff 'de facto'.

Recommendation 1: Immediate attention to renewal of staff, so that knowledge transfer can occur prior to retirement.

Recommendation 2: that the position of Administrative Secretary be upgraded to Administrative Staff Specialist II to accord with work currently done by the Administrative Secretary.

3.2 Academic Staff

The Department is comprised of 17 full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members and five academic staff members have 8-month contracts (based on data in the Table entitled: Department of Sociology: Breakdown of Faculty by Rank, Age and Gender as of March 31, 2006). Seven people are expected to be retired within the next five years, and ten within the next ten years.

We commend the quality of the contributions being made by contractual faculty to the undergraduate program in Sociology. There is clearly excessive reliance on sessional

instructors to provide undergraduate teaching. The core of the undergraduate curriculum is largely taught by sessionals.

It was pointed out to the Panel that it is possible for a student, even majors, to complete an undergraduate degree in Sociology without having ever been taught by a senior faculty member. Insufficient contact between students and regular faculty puts students at a disadvantage when seeking supervision for the Honours program, among other things. It was reported that almost 50% of the undergraduate courses offered are taught by Sessionals.

We are concerned, as well, that the increasing teaching load (class size) of contractual faculty will jeopardize the quality of undergraduate education in Sociology at MUN.

Given the research monies secured by senior faculty, the university should be in a better position to offer longer contracts than the current eight-month contract. This is a disadvantage for sessional instructors given that their pay begins in September, but they need to prepare for instruction in August. A twelve-month contract, at minimum, would at least provide remuneration for sessional instructors who are also trying to complete their Ph.D.

4.0 Undergraduate Program

The Department is the second largest in the Faculty of Arts in terms of full-time undergraduate enrollment. In 2004, the Department of Sociology counted 244 majors, compared with 482 majors for the Department of English (CIAP, Fact Book 2004).

A good indicator of learning outcomes is the number of degrees conferred per year. In 2004, 53 undergraduate degrees in Sociology were conferred. Only two departments in the Faculty of Arts confer more undergraduate degrees. They are History (59) and English (132) (CIAP, Fact Book 2004).

4.1 Undergraduate Curriculum

There appears to be a generally recognized need within the department to comprehensively review the curriculum in order to ensure that graduating students have a better training in the discipline and its methods, and to ensure better continuity in the course offerings. The concept of a 'smorgasbord' was used by a faculty member to describe the existing undergraduate course offerings. Specifically, in the past there seems to have been too much ready dismissal of quantitative methods, and not enough emphasis on how sociological theory can help students think better about problems in the world, regardless of the kind of research they are involved in. In this regard, a course in research design would help students conceptualize and formulate research tasks. In short, there is a need to tighten the curriculum by exposing all students to both theory and empirical methods at an earlier stage in the undergraduate program, and to eliminate

course selection options that currently allow students to circumvent or delay to the last term the theory courses students would benefit from having taken at an early stage.

The Panel was told that pre-requisites were often lacking, or circumvented, allowing students to enter their final semester without previous exposure to theory (classical or contemporary).

The Panel is confident that the Department performs its teaching function well, but that for various reasons the GPA of graduating students is not sufficiently high to allow most student to go on to graduate studies. The Department appears aware of this problem and is currently undertaking revisions to its undergraduate curriculum. The Panel feels that the revisions currently under consideration will render the undergraduate programs sufficiently rigorous and consistent with similar programs elsewhere in Canada.

We share the concern expressed by many with whom we talked that there could be more attention in the specified undergraduate curriculum to contemporary theoretical issues as well as to research design/conceptualization of research problems. The Department may consider renaming Sociology 3160 – Selected Topics in Contemporary Theory. The term ‘modern’ is problematic for post-modern scholars. Furthermore, the scope of ‘modern theory’ has changed considerably since the term emerged in the post-WWII period. A required second course called Selected Topics in Contemporary Theory would be flexible enough for faculty to devote time to a theoretical direction of their interest such as: cultural studies, post-modernism, feminism, the risk society and political economy to name some of the current theoretical issues in the discipline.

We also share concerns expressed that students are not required to take core theory and methods courses early in their program. This may be solved by making it mandatory for students to complete required theory and methods course by the end of their third year of study.

We heard from one faculty member that the teaching of Research and Writing courses is not working out as envisioned in this Department. We have not been able to assess this situation but urge the Department to ensure that it is in compliance, in spirit and letter, with Faculty Policy in this regard.

Recommendation 3: that the feasibility of developing a co-op program or an internship program be explored.

Recommendation 4: that the Department be strongly encouraged to continue the process already begun to consolidate/review the undergraduate curriculum. In particular, the Department should consider offering the first (classical) theory course consistently and in lock-step with the methods course and the second (contemporary) theory course.

4.2 Distance Courses

Some students expressed concern about the uneven quality of courses taught as distance courses. More students were emphatic that there should be a means for them to communicate with someone about the state of a distance course as the course is in progress, and that they should be better informed about what recourse they might have in dealing with problems which might arise with distance courses. This was not felt to be a problem unique to the Sociology departments distance courses, but the difficulty which students have in simply registering for the courses they need to complete their degree in Sociology means that they are more vulnerable to any general problems which arise in with distance courses.

Recommendation 5: that the effectiveness of distance courses be comprehensively reviewed (WebCT, course evaluations).

4.3 Interdisciplinary Programs

This is a Department deeply engaged in interdisciplinary (ID) research, programs and teaching. Issues relate to the support for ID research and programs in the Faculty and University.

4.4 Sociology/Anthropology program

Compelling reasons exist for discontinuing the S/A program, as made in the Self-Study document, but not the existing S/A courses. In particular, we accept the argument made in that document that the structure of the S/A program makes it impossible to ensure that students will take the necessary foundational courses before they register for upper level courses, as discussed in section 4.1 already. Adoption of our recommendation 4 appears to us to require that the S/A program be discontinued, but we leave it to the department to determine how best to follow through on this. Dropping the program will not impact the breadth of coverage. Courses can be cross-listed with Anthropology and other units. Implementation of this would assist in the first recommendation to help the department establish a consistent core set of required courses in methods and theory for every student.

4.5 Women's Studies

The Panel heard that it is very time consuming for faculty to get involved with Women's Studies (WS). The low participation rate in turn makes it difficult to get the benefits of tenure-track appointments in the area. The success of graduate program in WS is tenuous because the lack of dedicated faculty resources.

Given that WS wishes to become an autonomous academic unit with capacity to hire, it is

necessary now to find answers to the questions what will be the future relationship of Sociology to WS and how can this department contribute to WS.

Recommendation 6: that the Department develop a plan and policy outlining how they will collaborate in future. This will enable all the parties involved in WS to better anticipate what their own role in the continuation of WS must be, at both the departmental and faculty administrative levels.

4.6 Law and Society

This is a multidisciplinary program, which in addition to some designated Law and Society courses offers courses cross-listed with several departments in the Faculty of Arts, including Sociology. Given the strong and growing interest in criminology, deviance, and related subjects in Sociology, and given the interests in multi- and interdisciplinary endeavours within the Department, the Panel urges the Department to review its involvement with the Law and Society program. We sense that this is a matter of urgency if indeed the University wishes to retain the Law and Society Program.

The reason is that the existing Law and Society program is in a vulnerable position at present, since it is currently being directed only by a retired faculty member, in the hope that someone will step forward and champion this program. The program is delivered largely by outside professionals (lawyers otherwise practicing in St. John's). It appears natural to us that leadership for this program might be found within the Sociology department. Cross-listing more courses with Sociology (and perhaps other disciplines as well) offers the possibility of an administrative solution with minimal resource implications. However, some level of administrative support for this Program needs to be considered.

Recommendation 7: That the Department provide a departmental forum to investigate to what extent they wish to make continued involvement in the Law and Society program an integral part of the Department.

This forum might serve as well to examine the question of the interrelationships within the Sociology program between Law and Society and the Police Studies program.

4.7 Police Studies

Courses in criminology and deviance are in high demand at Memorial. Much of this demand comes from the program in Police Studies. A complaint from sociology students is that they find it hard to get into these courses because they are heavily subscribed by students in other program (Police Studies).

The current place of the Police Studies program within the Department's offerings is problematic. The necessity of staffing the Police Studies courses, and of ensuring that

class space is available for Police Studies students, has the effect of distorting the entirety of the Sociology program, particularly by compromising Sociology majors' access to courses. The Panel was told that students in the Police Studies Program get priority in registration, and that such students can get course requirements waived in ways not open to other students. Any negative implications of such practices for Sociology students needs to be assessed.

This program ties faculty to servicing a program which was imposed on the Department, without the Department being compensated, or being consulted in the design of the program. Had the Department been involved in development of the program, it would have been more fully integrated with the Sociology curriculum.

Any consideration of a Master's program in Police Studies would require a greater faculty complement in criminology/deviance. It is, however, up to the Department to determine what proportion of their future resources they should devote to this program, and how this program should fit into the undergraduate program as a whole.

Recommendation 8: that the Dean of Arts together with Dean of Graduate Studies find some mechanism to explore what support is necessary for the delivery of interdisciplinary programs, both undergraduate and graduate and then commit to providing such support.

Recommendation 9: that the Dean of Arts review the faculty's commitment to special or interdisciplinary programs such as WS, Police Studies, Law & Society.

4.8 Cultural Studies Program

The proposed program in Cultural Studies appears to be a good fit for the Department but the foundations of the program need to be clarified.

4.9 Response from Students

The undergraduate students with whom the Panel met were generally very satisfied with their professors and the quality of instruction they received whether regular or contractual/sessional faculty. But concern was expressed about the difficulty of getting into 4000-level courses and other courses in high demand. This can have implication for the time-to-degree-completion. Some on-campus students therefore resort to enrollment in Distance courses as a means to get the courses they need. Other students expressed satisfaction with the availability of distance courses as they are easier to fit into a schedule of work outside the University.

The panel also heard complaints about the difficulty of getting questions about the programming answered in a clear and timely manner. The Panel was told that Judy Smith acts as a de facto student advisor whose wealth of experience and helpful attitude

are widely appreciated by both students and faculty. Nevertheless, students often have to resort to seeking help from the Registrar's Office for matters that arguably should be handled by the Department. Students also expressed a desire for more hands-on skills and instruction in how the course work relate to the needs and demands of the work place.

It was noted that very few courses introduce faculty research into teaching.

Given the demands imposed upon the Department especially with regards to the Police Studies Program, we recommend that access to Sociology courses for majors and minors should be reviewed. As things stand, students (as noted above) are often denied seats in courses because of the contractual arrangements whereby the university has to give preference to members of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary.

Recommendation 10: that the Department appoint an undergraduate coordinator and/or find a way to ensure that regular faculty are available to guide students in their undergraduate programs. An undergraduate coordination should ideally be given a course remission as an incentive to undertake this important task.

5.0 Service Teaching

The Sociology has a large number of majors and minors and does considerable service teaching. A case in point is Sociology 2000: Principles of Sociology. This course is taken by a large number of students. Between 1997 to 2003, enrolment in this course constituted anywhere from 20 to nearly 40 per cent of all enrolments. Other high enrolment courses include S/A 2270: Families; S/A 2230: Newfoundland Society and Culture and S/A 3314: Gender and Society (Department of Sociology 2006). Although specific enrolment data are not provided, the Department also provides considerable service to the deviance and criminology courses that are part of the Police Studies program. These courses are also a popular specialty for sociology majors.

The Head expressed concern about the level of service teaching, and about the evaluations of the sessional instructors.

Although informal mentoring is occurring, there is a need for a more structured approach to the issues confronting new faculty, especially sessional instructors.

Recommendation 11: that a mentoring program be instituted to deal with teaching-related issues involving sessional instructors and new faculty.

6.0 Graduate Programs

The Head expressed concern about the current "fragility" of the graduate programs. There is uneven distribution of graduate supervisors among faculty, and some challenges

in having more faculty teach in the graduate program.

The Panel also heard that the areas of student interest also narrows the pool of possible supervisors. The Panel recognizes that there may be a problem of separating cause and effect here as the areas of student research interest is at least partly a function of available expertise. One area is deviance and criminology. There is enough expertise to provide supervision at the Masters level, but students in this area are encouraged to go elsewhere for their Ph.D. studies. This is due to the shortage of full-time expertise in this area.

The Panel finds that the main impediment to growing the graduate programs in Sociology is that some faculty are not interested in participating and promoting graduate programs. The students added that the ‘doors of faculty who do much of the supervision is always open’.

The Department has been making no attempt as a Department, at recruiting students from outside the Province. Yet, the Panel heard that currently more than 50 percent of graduate students are from outside the Province. This is testimony of the reputational draw of faculty in the Department. There has been little attempt to recruit at all in recent years as the faculty members involved in the graduate program are already burdened by existing numbers of recruits. We also learned that Graduate Studies does little in the way of external recruitment. The central role played by this unit is in the internal governance of Graduate Studies programs. If improved external recruitment is to be made, both the Department and Graduate Studies need to be involved in the coordination of an effective strategy.

6.1 Graduate Curriculum

Traditionally, the Department has had a commitment to research related to the Province, and to international projects. This has been expanded somewhat with recent hires, and will possibly change radically with the looming retirement of faculty whose research and teaching is largely in the “traditional” areas.

The Panel heard evidence of successful graduate program delivery despite limited resources. The running of the graduate program in all its dimensions (teaching, advising, supervision, supervisory committees et cetera) falls to a surprisingly small number of faculty members. The data provided to the Panel indicate that at present 12 faculty members are involved with Master’s thesis supervision. Seven of that same group also supervise PhD students. Since 1990-91, 61 Master’s degrees and eleven PhD degrees in Sociology have been awarded (CIAP). The average time to completion for FT master’s students is currently 35.6 months (SGS). In the period 1992/93-2005/06 the annual MA registrations have ranged from 17 to 25, and the PhD registrations from two to eight.

The Department has no seminar series or other research seminars organized by graduate students themselves. There is also a question as to whether the graduate programs

receive adequate attention in terms of development relative to undergraduate programs.

The Panel heard that the APR process has lead to more and better discussion of the graduate program. It has also helped diffuse some of the tension about hiring.

The Panel finds that the issue underlying the need to revisit the undergraduate curriculum applies equally to the graduate program.

Recommendation 12: that a regular departmental seminar series be instituted, providing speaking opportunities for faculty and graduate students in the Department as well as to visiting scholars.

Recommendation 13: that the Department consider participating in development of interdisciplinary programs at graduate level.

Recommendation 14: that the Department investigate the feasibility of Internship or Co-op programs at the Masters level.

Recommendation 15: that the Department require a second theory course in Contemporary theory, the content of which could vary depending on who is teaching it. Five current faculty members appear to be willing to teach such a course on a rotating basis.

Recommendation 16: that a Sociology-specific graduate handbook be developed that outlines the Sociology graduate program requirements and the processes by which to navigate the program.

Recommendation 17: that the Department revisit its requirements on the timing of writing of comprehensive examinations, which seem unnecessarily onerous.

Recommendation 18: that the Department pursue a more active graduate student recruitment program, particularly in light of its very active research profile, provided it has the support to do so and to support the graduate students once recruited.

Recommendation 19: that the Department involve graduate students in Departmental issues/decisions that concern them.

6.2 Funding and Growth of Graduate Program

Research productivity, scholarship and community involvement are important to the goals of this Department. Individuals and groups within the Department, often with interdisciplinary linkages, are supported with substantial external funding. These individuals and groups are important in the training of large numbers of graduate students. Some members in these groups are at the top of their fields. The Panel finds

that the Department is vulnerable to losing these individuals through retirements or otherwise. Steps need to be taken urgently to secure continuity of the success achieved by the Department in teaching and research in areas of strategic advantage to Memorial.

6.3 Response from Students

The Graduate students with whom we met were positive in their views of the quality of instruction they are receiving and the relationships they have with their supervisors and with the department as a whole. They expressed considerable frustration about the lack of space available to them, as discussed above. There was, as well, some concern about the lack of clear information available to graduate students about the program itself, about their place within the department, and about procedures such as library book acquisition. These concerns form the basis for our recommendations 16, 17, and 19.

6.4 Research, Scholarship and Interdisciplinarity

As already discussed above, the research profile of this department is absolutely exemplary, and is recognized as such at the national level. We are concerned about one of the proposals made within the self-study, however, which was brought to our attention as well during several of the interviews. The terminological change proposed in the description of this department's area of expertise, which would subsume Maritime Sociology under Environmental Sociology, appears to us less apt in characterizing one of the major research areas than the original language was. What is more, the existing research focus on Maritime Sociology is a more natural fit with the Memorial's Strategic Plan. A significant cluster of people in this area is replicated in only a limited number of post-secondary institutions in Canada. Other institutions in Atlantic Canada (and elsewhere) have, at most one or two people in this area. The absence of a maritime sociology specialty at Memorial would be akin to the University of Saskatchewan having no significant cluster of specialists in the sociology of agriculture and rural economies.

Recommendation 20: that further consideration be given to retaining Maritime Sociology as an area of Departmental strength, for which it is and has been widely known. This also fits in with the University's Strategic Plan.

7.0 Community Service and University Citizenship

Members of the Department have a commendable long-standing record of diverse and appropriate contributions to the local community, the Province, and Canada. These contributions reflect the scholarly interests of members of the Department, and often demonstrate a commitment to fostering interdisciplinary links with community organizations, as well as universities in Canada and abroad.

The Senior Administration and the Department appear to have somewhat different conceptions of community service and citizenship. For the former, citizenship deals

primarily with sitting on committees essential to the running of the university. On that front, they find the department to be lacking. However, the department has a more expanded view of citizenship which includes their significant involvement in interdisciplinary research at MUN, their contribution to regional and national affairs pertaining to the discipline of sociology, and their involvement in the wider community of Newfoundland and Labrador through projects such as CURA grants, and other forms of community involvement. In our interviews, it was clear that there were almost 'two solitudes' in the area of citizenship.

Recommendation 21: that the administration and department open lines of communication. We feel that the difference of perception might be resolved if the Administration recognizes the intense commitment of Sociology faculty to community (National, international) involvements; and the Department recognizes the value of participating more fully in the running of the University and the Faculty.

Recommendation 22: that the Department of Sociology should do more to communicate what it is doing to the rest of the University community and more widely.

One step in this direction would be for each faculty member to have their own web page linked to the Sociology Department web page. At present, very few faculty have even basic information about their research programs, etc. accessible on the Sociology web page.

Doing this may necessitate some additional resources. A second step would be for Sociology to publicize their work and accomplishments on a routine basis with the MUN community.

8.0 External Research Support

In terms of total external research support, the Department of Sociology ranked third in the faculty of Arts in 2003-04, the most recent year for which we have data. In that year, the Department reported seven (7) projects accounting for a total of \$708,149. The only two departments reporting more projects and funding were History (9 projects and \$891,428) and Anthropology (24 projects and \$767,412). Overall, the Department of Sociology accounted for 8 percent of the research projects receiving external support in the Faculty of Arts, and just over twenty-one percent of the dollar amount received (CIAP, Fact Book 2004).

Table One: External Research Grants Received by the Department of Sociology as a Percentage of All Grants in the Faculty of Arts, 1999-2004

Year	Amount	Total Amount in the Faculty	Percentage of Total in Sociology	The Rank of Sociology (out of 17 units)
1999-00	176,288	1, 396,049	12.6	3
2000-01	176,975	2,624,476	6.7	5
2001-02	211,274	3,059,152	6.9	4
2002-03	244,267	2,784,411	8.7	3
2003-04	708,149	3,339,047	21.2	3

Source: Based upon data contained in: “Table 22A: Total External Support by Department 1999-2000 to 2003-2004.” Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP, Fact Book 2004). Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2004, p. 51.

Table One summarizes the external research grants secured by Department members from 1999 to 2004. Over this time frame, the Department ranked very high amongst the units in the Faculty of Arts. In three out of the five years, it ranked third out of the 17 units in the Faculty. This impressive record is underscored by research of pertinence to Newfoundland society. And, those who specialise in maritime sociology, gender and work – a key specialisation in the Ph.D. program secured significant funding during this time period. **This is not to take away from the monies secured by individuals in other specialities.** However, if the Ph.D. program is to maintain its linkages to maritime sociology, gender and work, it is important that funding secured over not only the time period in Table One, but since the early 1980s, be recognised in terms of measures taken to renew these areas as key people begin to retire.

9.0 University Support

The Department does not see any of the overhead that is paid on faculty research support. The Panel heard the view expressed that this University policy appears to “penalize” the Department for its success.

As well, the Department seems not to be benefiting from the substantial research funding its members bring to the University in terms of space for graduate students, for research and social space (coffee room for faculty and students to talk informally). This seems to us perplexing in light of the substantial overheads that come to the University from research funding generated in Sociology.

Recommendation 23: that the Administration should find a mechanism by which the Sociology Department be given some amount of the research overheads that faculty generate.

9.1 Space

Faculty, Staff and students all lamented the near desperate lack of space for core activities (offices for faculty and seminar space) to combined social and learning space for undergraduate as well as graduate students.

The physical space available to the Department is inadequate for teaching purposes. The Department lacks space for contractual faculty who currently have inadequate work space to the extent that informal arrangements amongst themselves have to be made to secure necessary privacy for student consultations. Graduate students also lack office space as well as computers and work stations.

The space available to the faculty and students for seminars and meetings is very cramped and generally inadequate for the intended purposes, including teaching.

Space is extremely cramped relative to other Sociology departments across country with comparable graduate enrolments.

The Panel noticed potential for reallocation of space to Sociology which is very active in research and graduate education and which has recently grown past manageable limits, and which should grow further.

We saw no research space for graduate students. More than 30 students share a single small working office. There is no teaching space which would allow students working as GAs to advise undergraduates. Graduate students must now resort to informal arrangements in order to get the privacy needed for undergrads to discuss their work with them. We heard that some of the current graduate students had been waiting three terms for a study carrel in Library.

There is no coffee room in the Department, and no social space for undergraduate students. There is no departmental reading room. The complete absence of social space cripples the workings of a student Sociology Association, which should be able nurture intellectual creativity and involvement of students both undergraduate and graduate in life in the department, Faculty and University.

In general, it appeared clear to us that existing space allocations to Departments in Sociology's neighbourhood could and should be revisited in light of the research and graduate activity of Sociology relative to other units at MUN.

Recommendation 24: that the Department Head work together with the Administration to organize reallocation of space to Sociology.

Recommendation 25: that the Administration find Sociology a room immediately to serve as social space, and graduate student work space.

9.2 Faculty Renewal

Faculty renewal is undoubtedly the most serious problem facing the Department. The bimodal (“hourglass”) demographics of the faculty complement, with a wave of imminent retirements signal an urgent need to replace, in particular, faculty members who currently hold core teaching, research and administrative appointments, notably the graduate program coordination and the Headship. The difficulty in replacing the outgoing Head last year was in large measure due to the hourglass demographic profile of the Department. With few exceptions, senior faculty had all taken at least one turn at the job. It was generally felt that it was not timely for junior members to take on this task. Dr. Steven Riggins willingness to serve is greatly appreciated but is unlikely to extend beyond his current three-year term.

The Department has many active scholars with national and international reputations. Some of these faculty members currently attract and supervise a large share of the Master’s and PhD students. These are also faculty members who are nearing retirement. There is a real concern about the impact of the impending retirements on graduate student recruitment. While recent research-oriented junior faculty will bolster the graduate programs, there remains an urgent need to replace retiring faculty in areas in which there is a growing need, and in which the Department has a strategic advantage. The Panel is concerned that the Department’s commitment to graduate studies will be challenged unless new tenure-track hiring of research-oriented faculty begins in earnest.

Some senior members expressed the view that “Memorial has been an exciting place for sociologists” but the Department is now at a turning point where new consensual focus and effort is needed to tackle the main challenge of attracting new high-quality faculty.

The Department is on the cusp of a crisis in faculty ranks which will be addressed in part by faculty renewal but the lack of experienced faculty and specifically of faculty in key areas of historic strength will necessitate development of a strategic vision, which will inform core areas of excellence and curriculum review and development. The Panel is reluctant to advise on specifics but we see a need for the Department and the Administration to recognize that adaptation to the changing make-up of this Department must be timely in order to retain the excellent reputation of the Department nationally and the involvement of senior faculty with their wisdom and experience in the transformation of Sociology at MUN.

Recommendation 26: that the process of faculty renewal be accelerated.

9.3 Library Resources

The university library maintains good holdings in Sociology. We observed that the level of student understanding of how to access the library holdings could be improved. In

particular, information should be made available to all students on how to access journals, particularly electronically.

Recommendation 27: that graduate students in Sociology be connected with the Library Committee in the Department, and informed about the process by which the University Library is notified of the Department's acquisition priorities.

10.0 Conclusions

The Department can take enormous pride in its accomplishments and should be commended for the extent to which they have sustained their research activities. But it is an excellence in jeopardy. Impending retirements present the most urgent challenge--a challenge which can be met effectively only if the department and the upper administration work in concert to address the issues discussed above.

The Department is leading in terms of intellectual interconnectedness. The Department as a whole appears to recognize a certain administrative insularity and this has disadvantaged the Department within the University.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Immediate attention to renewal of staff, so that knowledge transfer can occur prior to retirement.

Recommendation 2: that the position of Administrative Secretary be upgraded to Administrative Staff Specialist II to accord with work currently done by the Administrative Secretary.

Recommendation 3: that the feasibility of developing a co-op program or an internship program be explored.

Recommendation 4: that the Department be strongly encouraged to continue the process already begun to consolidate/review the undergraduate curriculum. In particular, the Department should consider offering the first (classical) theory course consistently and in lock-step with the methods course and the second (contemporary) theory course.

Recommendation 5: that the effectiveness of distance courses be comprehensively reviewed (WebCT, course evaluations).

Recommendation 6: that the Department develop a plan and policy outlining how they will collaborate in future. This will enable all the parties involved in WS to better anticipate what their own role in the continuation of WS must be, at both the departmental and faculty administrative levels.

Recommendation 7: that the Department provide a departmental forum to investigate to what extent they wish to make continued involvement in the Law and Society program an integral part of the Department.

Recommendation 8: that the Dean of Arts together with Dean of Graduate Studies find some mechanism to explore what support is necessary for the delivery of interdisciplinary programs, both undergraduate and graduate and then commit to providing such support.

Recommendation 9: that the Dean of Arts review the faculty's commitment to special or interdisciplinary programs such as WS, Police Studies, Law & Society.

Recommendation 10: that the Department appoint an undergraduate coordinator and/or find a way to ensure that regular faculty are available to guide students in their undergraduate programs. An undergraduate coordination should ideally be given a course remission as an incentive to undertake this important task.

Recommendation 11: that a mentoring program be instituted to deal with teaching-related issues involving sessional instructors and new faculty.

Recommendation 12: that a regular departmental seminar series be instituted, providing speaking opportunities for faculty and graduate students in the Department as well as to visiting scholars.

Recommendation 13: that the Department consider participating in development of interdisciplinary programs at graduate level.

Recommendation 14: that the Department investigate the feasibility of Internship or Co-op programs at the Masters level.

Recommendation 15: that the Department require a second theory course in Contemporary theory, the content of which could vary depending on who is teaching it. Five current faculty members appear to be willing to teach such a course on a rotating basis.

Recommendation 16: that a Sociology-specific graduate handbook be developed that outlines the Sociology graduate program requirements and the processes by which to navigate the program.

Recommendation 17: that the Department revisit its requirements on the timing of writing of comprehensive examinations, which seem unnecessarily onerous.

Recommendation 18: that the Department pursue a more active graduate student

recruitment program, particularly in light of its very active research profile, provided it has the support to do so and to support the graduate students once recruited.

Recommendation 19: that the Department involve graduate students in Departmental issues/decisions that concern them.

Recommendation 20: that further consideration be given to retaining Maritime Sociology as an area of Departmental strength, for which it is and has been widely known. This also fits in with the University's Strategic Plan.

Recommendation 21: that the administration and department open lines of communication. We feel that the difference of perception might be resolved if the Administration recognizes the intense commitment of Sociology faculty to community (National, international) involvements; and the Department recognizes the value of participating more fully in the running of the University and the Faculty.

Recommendation 22: that the Department of Sociology should do more to communicate what it is doing to the rest of the University community and more widely.

Recommendation 23: that the Administration should find a mechanism by which the Sociology Department be given some amount of the research overheads that faculty generate.

Recommendation 24: that the Department Head work together with the Administration to organize reallocation of space to Sociology.

Recommendation 25: that the Administration find Sociology a room immediately to serve as social space, and graduate student work space.

Recommendation 26: that the process of faculty renewal be accelerated

References

Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning (CIAP) (2004) *Fact Book 2004*.

Department of Sociology (2006) *Academic-Program Review: Self-Study Report, March 2006*.

Memorial University of Newfoundland (2005) *Calendar 2005-2006*.