

REPORT OF THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE TO THE REGULAR June 2012 SENATE

FOR INFORMATION

Recommendations and Commendations of ACAPLAN following the Undergraduate Program Review: SOCIOLOGY

Laurentian's Department of Sociology is responsible for programs not only at the main campus—in both languages—but also for a French program at l'Université de Hearst and an English program run out of Georgian College in Barrie/Ontario. The Department's self-study was completed in the fall of 2010, and on March 9 and 10, 2011, the review team arrived on campus. The English side was headed by Dr. Ralph Matthews, a Professor of Sociology at the University of British Columbia (and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Coordinator, Office of VP Research and International). On the French side, the review was led by Patrice LeBlanc, Professeur directeur de l'UER, titulaire de la Chaire Desjardins en développement des petites collectivités, Unité d'enseignement et de recherche en sciences du développement humain et social at the Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

Dr. Matthews intended to visit Barrie following the site visit on the main campus but was unable to do so because of a combination of weather and previous commitments. Professor LeBlanc, on the other hand, was able to drop by the Timmins campus of the Université de Hearst on April 12, and his review was informed by this visit.

Dr. LeBlanc's report was submitted on May 1, 2011, Dr. Matthews' on July 31. In October, Hearst responded to Dr. LeBlanc's report and by November 17, Laurentian responded to both reports that affected it. By that time, in Sudbury, the Department's composition had changed. For one thing, the former chair had been replaced by Dr. Benoit. More important, one of the professors on each of the francophone side and anglophone side had left and these departures were the culmination of ongoing faculty losses in the department whose cumulative total has helped place the quality of the program in jeopardy. It is for that reason that while ACAPLAN has several recommendations to make, *it wishes to highlight its endorsement of the Dean's recommendation to the Budget Committee that it agree to hire two new sociologists, one on the francophone side, the other on the Anglophone side, in areas consistent with the university's new academic plan.*

Per the IQAP Policy, ACAPLAN has formatted its commendations and recommendations so that they are clearly targeted to the group that can actually implement any recommendation.¹ While

¹ From the IQAP Policy Document: "This report normally includes both commendations and recommendations. It identifies significant strengths of the program, it identifies opportunities for program improvement and enhancement, and it sets out and prioritizes the recommendations that are selected for implementation. The report sets out who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations. ACAPLAN's report is transmitted to the program, the Dean and those responsible for implementing the changes."

ACAPLAN can only expect a report from the Department in 18 months on how it dealt with the recommendations directed to it, ACAPLAN hopes that any other group referenced in this assessment will also report within the same time-frame, in this case, September 2013. After review, ACAPLAN will table the reports it has received at Senate.

English Programs: Sudbury and Barrie/Orillia

I. Sudbury

The Department

Student Issues

1. Commendations

- a. Sociology students speak highly of their educational experience.

2. Recommendations

- a. The Department should have a Social research Lab particularly for upper level Majors.

Program Issues

1. Commendations

- a. For the most part, course outlines suggest that the content offered in sociology courses is both interesting, challenging, well-prepared, and of a high level. This is to the credit both of the full-time faculty as well as the sessional and part-time instructors.
- b. The Department has “embraced the concept of interdisciplinarity well in advance of the Senate endorsement of it” although the Department’s involvement has placed extra strain on its scarce resources. (“Interdisciplinarity without grounding in core disciplines seems a Quixotic goal.”)

2. Recommendations

- a. Within their courses, faculty should expose students to a variety of conceptual and methodological perspectives from which sociologists approach their discipline. This is particularly true in the first year class, SOCI 1015E, “Understanding Society.”
 - b. There needs to be more elective courses. This situation identified in the 2002 review has not improved. It has become worse due to an excess of methodology classes.
 - c. The Department should consider how to embrace the goals of the new academic plan and organize its curriculum so that the department becomes an indispensable part of the academic plan of the university. Among other things, this should involve an increasing emphasis on aboriginal issues.
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Faculty and Staff Issues

1. Recommendations

- a. There need to be clear lines of authority and responsibility between the head of the department and the other programs which draw members from it—but appear not be accountable to the department.
- b. The Department needs to continue to alert sessional instructors well in advance of start of term which courses are available to them.
- c. The department should review the range of programs it offers.

Research Issues

1. Commendations

- a. This is a faculty complement that is engaged in research, engaged in their community, and publishing well. ... It is a faculty whose scholarly involvement is at a level of which Laurentian can be proud.

The Budget Committee

1. Recommendations

- a) That the library's acquisitions budget be increased, and that part of that increase be directed to purchase sociology material.
- b) That a separate budget be established to purchase material for the university's program in Barrie.
- c) That the University agree to hire a tenure-track sociologist, preferably aboriginal, specializing in regional development with a focus on community and northern health. Expertise in health policy analysis would be an asset.

Rationale: Laurentian University is nationally recognized in the areas of resource-based economic development and environmental sustainability. The Department of Sociology hopes to build expertise in regional development with new courses in community and northern health that would serve students in Environmental Studies, Geography, Human Kinetics, Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work, Native Human Services and Indigenous Studies, among others, as well as professionals through the School of Mines' executive courses. Courses in community and northern health would parallel the existing program in *Études de la santé* (ÉSAN). There would be opportunities for partnerships with researchers in the *Centre for Rural and Northern Health Research* (CRaNHR), the *Centre for Occupational Health and Safety* (CROSH), the future Faculty of Health Sciences and NOSM. This position will support the MA in Applied Social Research, the MA in Human Development and the PhD in Human Studies.

2. Barrie/Orillia

The Department

Program Issues

2. Recommendations

- a. There needs to be a four year program in Barrie assuming it can be properly resourced.

French Programs: Sudbury and Hearst

I. Sudbury

The Department

Student Issues

1. Commendations

- a. Students in the program are satisfied, the small number of electives aside which sometimes forces them to take courses in English. They feel they are well prepared should they choose to do graduate work.

2. Recommendations

- a. As in Hearst, better mechanisms need to be put in place to track student progress.

Program Issues

1. Commendations

- a. The French program is different from the English program, and is properly inspired by the minority status of francophones in North-Eastern Ontario.
- b. The general objectives of the program reflect what would be expected in an undergraduate program.

2. Recommendations

- a. The Department should consider whether it should continue to allow distance education courses to be made available to students on campus since that strategy has consequences for course enrolments and course offerings—in both delivery modes.
- b. In order to attract students into upper level courses, the Department needs to rethink whether the first year course, Étude de la société, should be a necessary prerequisite for these courses.
- c. The Department might also consider an exchange program with Hearst in order to expand available electives.

Faculty and Staff Issues

1. Commendations

- a. The small number of faculty is of high quality and devoted to both the program and to their research.

Research Issues

1. Commendations

- a. Professors are active researchers who generally focus on regional issues, ensuring that the results are relevant not only to their students but to the wider society

The Library

1. Recommendation

- a. Professors and librarians should be proactive in identifying French titles for the library—by default, a preponderance of English titles will be ordered.

Information Technology

1. Recommendation

- a. NVivo, a piece of software that assists sociologists in doing qualitative research is not widely available on campus computers—this situation needs correction.

Liaison Office

1. Recommendation

- a. Given the small number of francophone students in the sociology program, most drawn locally, the liaison office should be proactive in attracting international students.

The Budget Committee

1. Recommendations

- a) The University must hire un poste en sociologie du développement ayant pour axe principal le développement de la population francophone du Nord de l'Ontario. La personne embauchée mènera des recherches sur les jeunes, l'exode rural, la migration interurbaine et l'impact de ces phénomènes sur les collectivités francophones en milieu régional.

Rationale: Nos professeurs sont reconnus pour leur expertise et leadership au sein de l'Institut franco-ontarien (IFO), du Groupe de recherche sur la santé des franco-ontariens du Nord (GR-SAFON), et du Centre international de recherche interdisciplinaire en sciences humaines (CIRISH) et à travers la revue *Nouvelles perspectives en sciences sociales* (NPSS), la *Revue du Nouvel-Ontario* (RNO) et la *Revue d'intervention sociale et communautaire* (REFLETS). Le

département de sociologie veut poursuivre ce rôle de « leader » au sein de notre institution. La personne embauchée trouvera en place un environnement propice au développement de cette thématique et à son intégration en milieu francophone. Ce poste contribuera à la maîtrise en recherche sociale appliquée, à la maîtrise en développement humain et au doctorat en sciences humaines

2. Hearst Program

The Department

Student Issues

1. Commendations

- a. All graduates of the program have successfully transitioned to the world of work—or in some instances to post-graduate study elsewhere.

2. Recommendations

- a. As at Laurentian, better mechanisms need to be put in place to track student progress.
- b. As with the faculty who have little contact one with the other on each campus, so too do students in the program feel isolated on each campus. Hearst needs to examine ways of overcoming these feelings.

Program Issues

1. Commendations

- a. This three year program is of good quality.
- b. Hearst has wisely eliminated first-year sociology as a prerequisite for sociology electives in upper year.

2. Recommendations

- a. There need to be more electives. The Department might consider an exchange program with Laurentian in order to expand available electives.
- b. There should be more emphasis on qualitative methods in sociology; quantitative methodology is sufficiently covered.
- c. Students would like to gain some experience in research
- d. There should be some standardization of syllabi.
- e. The creative cross-listing of courses has attracted students from other disciplines, bringing interdisciplinarity perspectives to the study of sociology and this is welcome so long as the courses remain anchored in the discipline. Particular attention needs to be paid to this issue.
- f. Some thought should be given to extending the program to four years, thereby allowing students to obtain this degree in Hearst rather than being forced to transfer elsewhere.

Faculty and Staff Issues

1. Commendations

- a. Three dedicated and dynamic professors anchor this program. They are all available to students when required.
- b. They have managed to meet monthly using video-conferencing.
- c. The cycling of courses has meant that not all students are at the same level and the professors have managed those teaching challenges creatively.

2. Recommendations

- a. Because each professor is based on a separate campus, each has had to move from campus to campus—and at least one day a week has been lost as a result. Hearst needs to explore alternative methods of course delivery, such as for example, videoconferencing. Extra teaching support may be required to allow each professor to adapt to new methods.

Research Issues

1. Recommendations

- a. More importance should be placed on research activities and mechanisms should be put into place to lighten the teaching load for faculty who are more actively involved in research. Research activities would enrich offered courses, contribute to the institution's outreach and may help anchor the University of Hearst in its community.

Resource Issues

1. Commendations

- a. The program benefits from its access to Laurentian's databases and the interlibrary loan system works well.