

Review for Sociology, Anthropology and Public Health (SAPH)

submitted by

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Overview:

This is a highly functional and collegial department, that is complex and interdisciplinary. The department currently has 18 faculty (2 full professors, 13 associate professors, 1 assistant professor, and 2 lecturers) and also relies heavily on a number of dedicated adjunct instructors. The Department houses three distinct programs with majors and minors, and serves multiple centers including the Center for Health, Equity, and Aging, and offers a Certificate in the Social Dimensions of Health at the undergraduate level, and at the post-baccalaureate level they offer a Certificate in the Non-Profit Sector, a Certificate in Applied Social Research Methods, and a Certificate in the Social Determinants of Health.

A deep commitment to students and the department was evidenced in our conversations with not only full time faculty and students but also by adjunct faculty and staff. It is noteworthy that the adjunct faculty we spoke with are interested in finding avenues for even more engagement with the department and opportunities for professional growth and service.

The department has benefited from the innovative Postdoctoral Fellow for Faculty Diversity program at UMBC and is poised to successfully recruit a second tenure track faculty member through this initiative. This approach to diversity and inclusion, with such strong institutional support and professional development opportunities that provide a path into a permanent position, contributes to research and teaching excellence.

Due primarily to faculty shortages and turnover, the service load of all faculty members is quite high. This is especially worrisome for assistant professors. The strong commitment to providing student-centered teaching; high-levels of departmental service and leadership; and maintaining active research agendas all require significant time commitments.

Review for SOCIOLOGY PROGRAM

The overarching goal of the Sociology program is: *“to prepare students broadly for career opportunities in entry-level positions that value skills gained through social science, critical thinking, writing, and basic data analysis as well as prepare students for graduate and professional schools”*.

The **overall goals** of the undergraduate and graduate Sociology programs are **appropriate and align with the curriculum**. The undergraduate program assessment data provided (Table 11) presents only one objective/competency from one elective course in Spring 2020. It would be useful to have more robust Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) data from additional required courses that provided a clearer program-level assessment of program objectives. Creating a rubric that can provide more systematic and detailed data will assist in identifying specific areas of success and challenges and will guide future curriculum development and changes.

The undergraduate and graduate students that we spoke with provided a **clear and unanimous positive assessment of the Sociology faculty**. They provided numerous examples of the ways that faculty encourage and support students and, in particular, how faculty members throughout the entire department know their students and are approachable.

The program is located in a spacious and modern building that provides adequate office and meeting space. It is noted that until recently, department courses were rarely assigned to the classroom space in the building. Continuing to work with course schedulers to **increase the number of classes in the building** can help bring students and faculty together. The program use of resources appears to be **appropriate and effective**.

The M.A in Applied Sociology *“aims to produce well-trained research analysts who excel using a variety of methodological approaches, in developing relevant research questions, writing literature reviews and research reports, and analyzing data.”* The **program curriculum and capstone experience align** with this program goal.

The program centers on faculty expertise to provide rigorous training and marketable skills. The graduate SLO data (Table 12) uses criteria across two required courses. Course and assignment grades are used as performance measures. Based on these results, it appears that both the undergraduate and graduate programs are **meeting their goals**. We **recommend developing a SLO rubric** that can provide a more detailed and comprehensive assessment of outcomes beyond simply grades.

Post-Baccalaureate Certificates have been popular but difficult to manage due to challenges of consistently offering the required courses. Assessing whether it is feasible to continue offering all three certificates, given faculty commitments and student interest, is recommended.

One of the future goals indicated in the self-report is to begin **collecting and reporting student accomplishment and employment data**. We agree that doing so will be beneficial both in terms of documenting program success as well as also greatly assist recruitment efforts.

The majority of faculty in the Sociology program are Associate Professors. Given the high-levels of service and leadership common at this rank, it is imperative that strategies and resources are provided to enable faculty to continue advancing their research agendas. **Continued enhancement of the research reputation of the program should be a priority**. Such a focus can help elevate the profile of the program within the UMBC campus (which could also increase student interest and enrollment) as well as UMBC national reputation as an R1 university.

The Sociology program specifically asked for guidance on how to acquire additional funding to support GAs in order to be more successful in recruiting strong applicants. This is a difficult question to answer since external reviewers are not aware of how funding decisions for these lines are made at UMBC. Successful graduate programs require the contributions of motivated students in GA roles both to provide the needed teaching and research support to faculty and to provide the training and skills needed for success upon graduation for the students. **Funding these lines should be an institutional priority**.

Review for Anthropology Program

The **goal of anthropology** worldwide is the comparative study of humankind, past and present, with cultural anthropology as its quintessential key component. The Anthropology Program at UMBC focuses on cultural anthropology with supplemental courses in biological anthropology. The focus on cultural anthropology is appropriate disciplinarily and in terms of faculty strengths.

Students highly value the faculty and the quality of the program. Students underscored the extensive personal attention that they feel like they receive from the faculty – “They know you personally.” Students also appreciated the high quality of the

curriculum which they felt likely prepared students well for graduate school, however they would have appreciated courses (or recommendations of courses) that might have applicability towards working directly after the undergraduate degree. In addition, students felt that they would benefit from help translating their skills from anthropology to a language employers might understand.

Anthropology centrally contributes to the College and UMBC mission through its extensive attention to developing student critical thinking, research, and engagement skills across cultural worlds and communities. The **overall quality of the program** – its commitment to a strong personal attention to each student combined with excellent quality student learning (particularly in its extensive commitment to offering writing intensive courses to improve student writing skills) – **is nothing short of astonishing**, especially given its small size of only three TT faculty, one of whom is the chair, and one visiting professor teaching full time in the department. Given its small size, the proposed overall **planned directions** for focus in terms of curriculum refinement and connection-building are appropriate and fit with the goals of the department, college and university, particularly in terms of 1). honing the curriculum to enhance research methods training which would also help meet student desire to enhance their practical skills, 2). aligning with current faculty expertise, 3). continuing to close the loop using student course assessments to improve courses regardless of instructor, 4). considering increasing the three offered writing intensive courses to four credit hours to align credit hours with actual workload, 5). considering outreach to the community colleges (perhaps in terms of offering to give guest zoom lectures instead of course alignment that would involve decreasing quality expectations for UMBC coursework), and, 6). fostering greater connections within the department, perhaps considering how a co-taught or mixed methods course might give students both exposure to ethnographic and to quant/survey methodologies which would be useful for the workforce while potentially opening up some space in teaching schedules for teaching special topics or upper level courses that more align with faculty research. Finding ways to build more synergies between teaching and research, perhaps through upper-level courses in research areas, may help mitigate some of the stress on faculty while offering excellent learning or research opportunities for undergraduates.

The quality of the curriculum is excellent, however given the small size of the department, a reduction in the number of courses might be warranted until resources can be made available to expand the number of faculty. The **specific objectives of the program** are its five student learning outcomes: understanding of key concepts of cultural anthropology [especially, culture, social structure, agency, colonialism/decolonialism (power), and the positioning of knowledge], cultural diversity, social science research ethics and methods particularly of cultural anthropology,

historical and contemporary theories and debates in anthropology, and the ability to apply knowledge in terms of analyzing and discussing anthropological materials and the ethical and policy implications of research. In mapping out the curriculum with respect to SLO assessment in the two 400 level courses clearly demonstrates student majors have the opportunity to master the SLOs making them well-prepared for graduate study in the field.

The **quality of the scholarship for the TT faculty** in this program is excellent. The nature of cultural anthropological research often involves work in different corners of the world as is true for at least two of the TT anthropologists in the department. Given the exceptionally high attention to excellent teaching, they are really strapped for time to do their research and scholarly engagement.

The **facilities** are adequate for fulfilling the current work of the program. If in the future there is expansion into biological anthropology, then laboratory facilities may be necessary.

Program resources are being used effectively however they are stretched very thin without the bandwidth to imagine or develop new or local research programs in which to more actively engage students. The **most urgent need** is additional personnel.

Anthropology has **potential for growth**, particularly with an additional line in cultural or medical anthropology to help relieve the service burden of the small size and expand the research and learning opportunities of students. Given that there is enormous growth in human-centered design work that calls for undergraduate level training in anthropology, this is a significant opportunity for the program, although it might mean reorienting some courses as well as the overall graduate-school prep focus of the curriculum. In addition, the program might consider developing a Certificate in Cultural Competence, building on the departmental certificate patterns, and using the cultural competence language that increasingly has favor in the medical and business worlds.

Review for Public Health Program

The **primary goal** of public health is to **protect, promote and improve the health of populations**. This is done through implementing the **core functions of assessment, policy development and assurance and the ten associated essential services**. Goals and objectives of a public health professional preparation program should be grounded by both core functions and essential services.

The reported **goals and objectives** of the UMBC undergraduate Public Health Program **are opaque**. In the self-study section on *Public health educational goals, learning outcomes, and program assessment plans* the educational goals and learning outcomes are not clearly stated. For example, the narrative in the self-study highlights the process undertaken to develop program learning objectives but the general goals are not presented. Specific objectives (competencies) are provided in the **Public Health Curriculum Map** and are based on Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH) competencies. A solid presentation of the goals and objectives of the program provides the lens by which all other aspects of the program can be assessed. Suggest clarification of the goals and objectives of the program.

CEPH competencies includes 11 foundational domains, 12 cross-cutting concepts and 2 public health competencies. The UMBC **Public Health Curriculum Map** is framed by 12 core competencies, 11 professional competencies, 4 health administration competencies, 5 health policy competencies, and 10 public health competencies. The Public Health Curriculum Map, for the most part, reflects a solid content and conceptual grounding in CEPH domains, concepts and competencies in the objectives. The CEPH cross cutting concepts of community dynamics, and systems thinking were not clearly identified in the competencies in the Public Health Curriculum Map. There is no doubt that community dynamics and systems thinking are covered in required courses, however, to keep in alignment with CEPH language it would be appropriate to include community dynamics, and systems thinking as separate competencies or incorporate in the current competencies.

The undergraduate program in public health currently has healthy enrollments and as more faculty are added and as the program becomes better known enrollments will continue to grow. There is every indication that the program will be popular and exceed enrollment expectations.

The current **courses in the public health curriculum are well designed and implemented**. The teaching approaches and methods are consistent with what is generally accepted as sound pedagogy and integration of technology into courses.

Higher education faculty and administration need to be responsive to all program related assessments - student feedback, internal program feedback, and administrative feedback to better understand program effectiveness. Second, any changes made should be data driven. Whenever outcome data are collected faculty and/or department meetings need to be scheduled where the data are shared and strategies identified to address problem areas or perceived problem areas. Since public health is so competency driven and framed around outcomes, it is easier to identify problems.

UMBC appears to have excellent instructor resources if help is needed to improve teaching and learning strategies.

It appears that the public health faculty and administration do an excellent job of procuring student feedback from graduates. The self-study highlighted that *students are surveyed upon graduation to assess their perception of achievement of program learning objectives in the program curriculum. **Recent survey results** have indicated **competencies in data and statistics, health science, health policy, communication, and program implementation would benefit from additional instruction.** In addition, **survey results have pointed to the need for student skill building in networking, organizational development, and professionalism.** Students felt they are very well prepared in the areas of critical and creative thinking, determinants of health (social, political, and economic), major causes of morbidity and mortality, and understanding of the US healthcare system.* Any revisions, including development of new courses, must reflect responsiveness to the survey results.

At this time, there are too few public health core faculty (3 core faculty as of April 26, 2022). The three core faculty are all active in scholarship and appear very passionate about research and especially providing research opportunities for students. The scholarly work of public health faculty is impressive given the demands on their time needed for teaching and advising. Two additional faculty have been hired and will start in Fall, 2022 resulting in a total of five core faculty. This will be helpful in sharing the teaching and advising load given the 250+ majors and 34+ minors. As the program grows, more public health core faculty will be needed.

Adjunct public health faculty were extremely dedicated to the program and students. The adjunct faculty appear to **exceed expectations and continually go the undemanded mile** in their contribution to all parts of the program. Adjunct faculty stated they would like to be more involved in the program.

The Department suite of offices are nicely designed and promotes easy interaction between faculty and staff in all three areas. The classrooms are very nice and contain state of the art technology to deliver course content. It appears that program resources are being used effectively. These resources ranged from investment of significant amounts of funds for faculty professional development, support working with post-doctoral students, and other important activities.

Public health is interdisciplinary and the work of Public Health is grounded by content, theories and models from other disciplines, in particular, Anthropology and Sociology. Public health should never be in a “silo” because successful public health

requires collaboration. To that end, it is recommended that a “**core**” of classes be identified that would **be taken together by all Anthropology, Sociology, and Public Health majors**. These classes would serve as an incubator for students to develop an appreciation for each discipline through learning about the important relationships between the disciplines.

It is strongly recommended that the public health degree awarded be the Bachelor of Science in Public Health (**BSPH**), **CIP Code 51.2201**. This would ensure the degree is truly a public health degree and not a hybrid or public health degree that is more of a track in a different major. In addition, offering/awarding the BSPH under CIP Code 51.2201 will help in both recruitment of majors and post-graduation job placement.

Finally, it is also recommended that the Public Health program pursue **CEPH accreditation** which will ensure that the program remains focused on **public health competencies**. **Also, CEPH accreditation** will also help in marketing, recruiting, and procurement of additional resources. To that end, begin a dialogue soon with CEPH for advice on next program steps in standing for CEPH accreditation in the near future.

Overall Recommendations:

The department might benefit from developing a vision statement (What the department wants to become: e.g. Understanding and facilitating well-being locally and globally). Developing a thematic focus that builds on the distinct contributions of each of the three programs could further develop a cohesive vision for the department. This is a potential growth opportunity that could build on the unique strengths of each disciplinary program while providing students and the broader community a clearer understanding of the contributions of the department.

In addition, a departmental vision statement could be used as touchpoints for mission statements that could be developed within each program. While each of the programs has defined student learning outcomes, a mission statement that includes all of the activities of each program (including teaching as well as research, service, and community engagement) might help integrate each of the programs while maintaining overall alignment with the vision of the department.

The high-impact advising that is currently implemented throughout the department could be expanded with additional advising staff. Shifting student advising from faculty to professional advisors, while maintaining faculty mentoring connections with students,

might help better prepare students for careers and also provide more time for faculty to devote towards research.

In addition to advising service, across SAPH, faculty work to protect pre-tenure peers by taking on additional service. As a short term strategy of a year or so, and if that workload can be equitably distributed, this is fine as it is normal for service expectations for associate professors to be higher than for assistant professors. However, the length of time at the associate level for a number of faculty across the department is a sign that the service expectations for associate professors are too high and associate professors are being asked to serve at the cost of their research. Additional permanent lines, either tenure track or teaching professor with strong service expectations, would enable SAPH to fulfill its commitment to support faculty research and enable pathways for promotion for associate professors.

Supplemental Questions and Recommendations:

1. In the post-COVID era, how should we be planning our curriculum in terms of online teaching vs. in person vs. hybrid asynchronous/synchronous? Are there lessons and skills learned during the Covid period that we should take forward?

- This may not have a universal answer across the department. There may be particular courses that could be taught online by adjunct faculty that would enable the remote but highly committed adjunct faculty to continue to have an important role of educating students while also potentially freeing the on-site faculty to provide courses in smaller sections which would facilitate the contagion of the enthusiasm and passion for their subjects we saw evidenced in each faculty member.
- If a joint SAPH course were developed within the department that encouraged all students to have familiarity with the basic concepts, strengths, and synergies across all three disciplines, while the department may be tempted to offer it online to accommodate the expected high numbers of students, given that part of the purpose of such a course would be to build synergies across the department, including between students studying in the different programs, teaching such a course in person is likely to be more productive.

2. How can programs and faculty better communicate to their majors the job skills obtained through their BA, and how can we better prepare them for post-BA employment?

- Career development plans for each student, using a template perhaps developed in conjunction with recently successful graduates. The template then could be modified in conversations with advisors and faculty mentors and be altered as students develop over the course of their studies.
- Career development workshops that help students translate their experiences and competencies in ways that employers recognize.
- A major sheet for each program that identifies what courses they should take if they want to (a) go to graduate school, (b) workforce
- Tracking outcomes of graduates (in terms of employment or graduate school) and initiating a virtual networking event for majors with recent graduates might help current students begin to think about how their skills could transfer to employment opportunities

3. How can we support our faculty's own research and scholarly advancement, while maintaining our commitments to our teaching and leadership at the university – and still being whole, healthy people? Are there more creative ways to manage our commitments to teaching, administrative, and scholarship that are often in competition?

- Reconsider the expectation that a representative from each program is needed on all department committees. Reduce and rotate committee assignments.
- Ensure that reward structure reflects the expected balance of research, teaching and service
- Consider a mixed methods course (possibly co-taught) designed for students in all three programs
- Consider exploring collaborative interdisciplinary research projects that incorporate skills and areas of expertise across the department so that individual scholarly work can move forward without the extra lift of doing everything as an individual (grants, research, write-up)
- Expand the writing tutor model to train undergrads to help with writing feedback

4. Are there additional creative or innovative ways our department or programs may employ or communicate our strengths as an interdisciplinary department?

- Highlight the ways that faculty research and teaching across all three programs center around a common theme (e.g. life course and health outcomes)
- Consider framing communication about SAPH as the department focused on human well-being – how to study it locally and globally, and how to improve it.

5. A. As the MA Program in Applied Sociology has become more competitive nationally and increased the number of strong applicants, how might we acquire additional funding to support students as GAs? This may take the form of expanding the number of funded positions or offering larger stipends. We currently lose admitted students to other programs as a result of our funding levels.

- **Expanding the number of funded positions and providing larger stipends** are both necessary in order to attract and retain strong graduate students. This has been the trend in Sociology graduate programs across the country at peer- and aspirational-institutions. As noted above, institutional support for GA positions is crucial and the benefits to both the teaching and research mission of the university are clear. Additionally, the number of positions can be expanded through **increased external funding** awards. External grants can fund RA positions that will contribute to the research productivity of the department and also free up extant GA lines.

5.B. How might the Public Health Undergraduate Program establish a unique identity among other Maryland and Mid-Atlantic undergraduate programs in Public Health?

- In our conversations with Anthropology, Sociology and Public Health students, faculty, staff, and administrators it was clear that the content/courses in Anthropology and Sociology contained strong health and public health related content and concepts. Given the importance of Anthropology and Sociology in public health it would be wise for public health to include both Anthropology and Sociology in the core and relevant tracks. Sociology, Anthropology, and Public Health have an opportunity to develop a synergistic identity, building a common core in the curriculum.
- Further, curriculum revisions will help for the undergraduate program to have a niche that will help in recruitment and procuring resources. To that end, the UMBC undergraduate public health program could be focused on public health core responsibilities and essential services as they relate to **health disparities/social determinants of health**. With this focus, the whole department would be included in the undergraduate public health program. In a short period of time the program will be known for the focus on health disparities/social determinants of health.
- It is also recommended that the undergraduate program be reset to better interface with CEPH. The **current public health core** is 27 hours with with no epidemiology, environmental health, health behavior, or social determinants of health included . Courses in epidemiology, environmental health, health

behavior, and social determinants of health should be included in the core. Many of these courses already exist and could be moved to the core from tracks which would then go from 27 hours to 45-48 hours.

5. C. How might the anthropology program strategize resources to best serve the university and her students over the next decade. We are looking for guidance about 1). how we can improve communication about our program to potential majors, our colleagues across campus, and the general public; 2). Whether and how to maintain our time-intensive emphasis on reading and writing in our courses; 3). What the potential is for including biological anthropology in our curriculum; and 4). How to maintain a regular pool of faculty given program size and extensive demands on faculty time.

- Anthropology, particularly with its strength in cultural anthropology, is well positioned to serve the university and her students over the coming decade as UMBC (and the rest of the country) work on continually improving norms for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Indeed, although the terminology of DEI in higher education is new, **anthropology as a discipline has for over a century been centered on what is now called DEI**. In terms of the health fields, anthropology focuses on making the “other” familiar, appreciated, and integrated, and thus **anthropologists are experts in what is now called “cultural competence”**; anthropologists are able to train future health care providers and professionals to understand and integrate appreciation of cultural variety in the provision of care for the patient-at-hand and in recognizing the culturally salient needs of communities that are pressing for health prevention initiatives. The anthropologists at UMBC are poised to make a significant contribution to areas of growth at the university level, if their workload were amenable to taking on the service and curricular development work needed.
- **Anthropology as a discipline has a marketing problem.** Anthropologists are so committed to complexity that we are not good at communicating what we do and why it is critically important in the kinds of simple ways that would attract students scheduling for courses, or remind organizers of relevant initiatives across campus to invite an anthropologist to the table. As short staffed as the anthropology program is, they simply do not have the bandwidth needed to develop and maintain communication strategies for students and colleagues across the university. The program might consider partnering with UMBC’s marketing department and, if they offer such a thing, offer the anthropology program as a capstone project in which marketing students would then develop and implement a marketing campaign. Another idea would be for the program to develop and build an outreach strategy and hire a student worker to implement it including a strong social media presence.

- The Anthropology faculty's deep commitment to student reading and writing is highly commendable and it causes intense pressures on faculty time. In addition to the recommendation to **consider making writing intensive courses worth 4 credits to match the level of work**, the program **might consider reducing the number of writing intensive courses that are offered from three down to two**. The **writing tutor model** developed in the public health program, might also be utilized in the anthropology program.
- The adjunct faculty who currently teaches **biological anthropology** in the department is highly committed and offers students a wonderful learning opportunity. However to develop a strong program in biological anthropology, the program would need at least two biological anthropologists in permanent lines. The program and the department may wish to consider whether they would want to work towards such a long term goal when the immediate needs are for the current strength in cultural anthropology to be shored up with additional permanent lines.
- The anthropology program relies heavily on adjunct teaching to offer its courses because of the small size of its permanent faculty, which was further reduced when Dr. Chard became chair. The **greatest need is for at least one new permanent line and preferably two**. One line would compensate for the redistributed workload of the chair, and two would significantly reduce the service load on the anthropology faculty, reducing stress and enabling them to conduct research at the level one would expect of an R1 institution.