

Grant Request: DISCOVER Curriculum Development Grant

Requestor: Laura Nichols, Associate Professor of Sociology

Date: 30 December 2006

SUMMARY OF GRANT REQUEST

This request seeks funding to hire a student research assistant and for copying/buying materials to incorporate vocation throughout the course Applied Sociology. Beginning in 2007-2008 this course will be required of all Sociology majors and although taught for many years in the department, the course has never had a deliberate focus on vocation. Now the course is positioned to be the last course that sociology majors will take, providing an excellent opportunity for students to reflect on how their knowledge, skills, and experiences can be combined to consider the future life they would like to live.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES

Since coming to Santa Clara University in the Fall of 2000 I have been teaching the department's Applied Sociology (Sociology 170) course. Applied Sociology has been an elective course that students can choose to fulfill their upper-division sociology requirements. In addition, the course has been required for those students seeking an emphasis in Applied Sociology: Business and Human Services. The course has focused on showing junior and senior sociology majors how they can use the skills and concepts learned in the major (especially research skills) to improve the functioning of organizations, families, and communities. As part of the course each student works on an actual applied research project for a local organization.¹

After going through a program review, including the visit of and report by two external reviewers in the Spring of 2005, the Department of Sociology changed the curriculum requirements for the major. As part of that change, the course—Applied Sociology—is now required of all sociology majors. Therefore all majors will now take two capstone courses: Research Practicum where they learn how to conduct traditional applied research or do intense study and writing about a particular subfield in sociology, usually taken in the Fall of their senior year. And Applied Sociology, typically taken in the Winter of their senior year. The first cohort of students going through the revised curriculum requirements will take Applied Sociology in the Winter of 2008.²

¹ Articles about these projects and the course itself have been highlighted in a special publication in the College of Arts and Sciences about research opportunities for undergraduate students:

<http://www.scu.edu/cas/research/organizational.cfm>

and an *Explore* issue on Community Based Learning:

<http://www.scu.edu/ignatiancenter/bannan/publications/explore/fall04/measuringsuccess.cfm>.

² A number of departmental objectives, although covered in many of our courses and the major as a whole, are directly addressed in this course, Applied Sociology. For a listing of those objectives see the Appendix.

Because Applied Sociology is now required of all sociology majors, and is the last capstone class that majors will take (and for many the last sociology course they will take before graduating), I would like to revise the course to include a more deliberate focus on vocation. In the past the course has included a few elements to help students think about what they could do with their sociology major, but these have been limited to having a few people who do applied research come talk to the class as guest speakers, reading assignments from the book “Careers in Applied Sociology”, and week nine of the class has been devoted to talking about careers in sociology including a visit by Enzie Lagattuta from the Career Center (current syllabus is attached). But this approach has seemed incomplete. Many of our majors are attracted to sociology because they want to “change the world” and/or improve the communities where they were raised. Most of our students have participated in community based learning through the Arrupe Partnerships and many have gone on university-sponsored immersion trips. But what does “changing the world” mean and how can their skills and knowledge in sociology combined with their various experiences be applied to these purposes? These are a few of the questions I would like to explore over the next year in order to greatly enhance and enlarge the vocational focus of the Applied Sociology course to be ready for students in Winter of 2008.

PROPOSED APPROACH TO REVISING THE COURSE

- Research current sociology courses that are focused on vocation or include vocational components.
- Find and procure any literature on vocation integration within majors and the skills/tools available to help students discern their vocations.
- Talk to staff and faculty on campus who are knowledgeable in this area and research their suggestions.
- Secure a list of SCU sociology major alumni who would be willing to be interviewed by students in the Applied Sociology course about their vocational paths.
- Research approaches to helping students incorporate community-based learning and immersion experiences into course curriculum with the goal being that students can ultimately see how knowledge and their experiences can be brought together in ways that affect how they live their lives in the future.
- Anything else that is necessary to construct a coherent course ready for students by Winter 2008.

FUNDING REQUEST

An important part of fulfilling the goals/approaches listed above is to be able to work with a student research assistant who can not only help me do the research and contact alumni, but who can also give me feedback on assignment ideas, readings, etc. Having a student assistant will also hold me to a higher standard and ensure that I spend the time necessary to attend to this important task. Therefore, I would like to hire a student research assistant (preferably a student who is a senior and who has taken the applied sociology course) during the Spring and Summer of 2007.

BUDGET

Student Research Assistant	5 hours a week for 15 weeks @ \$12/hour	\$900
Copying/Purchase Materials		\$100
TOTAL GRANT REQUEST		<hr/> \$1,000

WHY ME?

Because I was hired by the department as the applied sociologist I am currently the most logical choice to revamp the course. I have been teaching the course since my arrival in the Fall of 2000 and am scheduled to continue to teach the course. In addition, I plan to present my ideas for changing the course to the faculty of the department to receive their feedback and buy-in. Hopefully this will help institutionalize some of the components of the course should others do the teaching at some point in the future. I was partially hired to teach the course because I have experience not only working in academe, but also in direct-service non-profit organizations, as a program evaluator, and in a policy-focused think-tank in Washington, D.C. Further, I have become interested in the wider notion of vocation through my participation as a SCU faculty member in an immersion trip to El Salvador (Summer 2004), a participant in Collegium (2003), a delegate on an Ignatian immersion trip to Spain-Rome (2004 [tough assignment!]), a member of the Arrupe Partnerships steering committee, (2001-present) and a member of the Ignatian Faculty Forum (2002-2005) among other great opportunities.

STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FROM SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT CHAIR, DR. MARILYN FERNANDEZ:

I am delighted to support Dr. Nichols' application for the Discover Curriculum Development Grant. Systematically incorporating student centered vocational exploration is the next logical step in the further refinement of Sociology 170, Applied Sociology. Starting in Winter 2007, Sociology 170, was made one of two capstone

courses required of all Sociology majors. This was one of the significant curricular revisions that followed from our program review and external reviewers' visit. Sociology 170 is a logical choice to infuse explorations of vocation in the Sociology curriculum for several reasons. (1). It is a course that all Sociology seniors will complete typically in the penultimate quarter of their senior year just as they are getting ready to graduate. (2). This course has routinely given students a chance to apply their research and other sociological skills to help local non-profit organizations address their needs. I became personally aware of the usefulness of the evaluation reports that Sociology 170 students prepared when I served on the Board of Grail Family Services, a local non-profit organization. This grant is an excellent opportunity for Dr. Nichols to take the next step and focus more systematically on the sociology students' vocation.

Furthermore, at this time, Dr. Nichols is the logical best choice in the department to receive this grant because of her expertise in applied sociology and program evaluation, and because she has been, and will continue, teaching Applied Sociology for the foreseeable future. Also, given the Sociology department's ongoing curriculum review protocol, curricular changes, particularly to capstone courses, will be reviewed by the whole department for feedback and buy-in.

APPENDIX: DEPARTMENTAL OBJECTIVES THAT ARE ADDRESSED IN THE APPLIED SOCIOLOGY COURSE

Objective 8: Students will demonstrate awareness of some ways sociological concepts and tools are used to address challenges commonly faced in families, organizations, and communities.

Goal 6: Promote service engagement of faculty and students as sociologists committed to applying sociological frameworks, knowledge, and skills, in addressing social problems or organizational challenges on campus, in surrounding localities, and in religious congregations, service organizations, businesses, and professional associations.

Objective 13: Encourage student and faculty involvement in university, organization, and community research projects aimed at contributing to better understanding of needs and policy/program effectiveness. (In any given year, at least one student and one faculty member will play a significant role in a campus, community, or organizational research project.)

Objective 14: Encourage faculty and student service involvement in the management and/or operation of campus committees, public service organizations, religious congregations, and professional associations. (In any given year at least two students and half the tenured and tenure track faculty will have at least one resume worthy service commitment on campus, with organizations in the community, or in the profession.)