

**Undergraduate Research Initiative
Request for Proposals
*Models for Recognizing Undergraduate Research in Teaching Loads***

UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH INITIATIVES: DEPARTMENT PROPOSAL

1. Title: Extending the Research of Sociology Majors and Furthering their Professionalization in the Discipline
2. Project Description (5 pages maximum including a specific description of the project as well as a brief discussion of how undergraduates will be benefit from the project and how the project integrates with the students' overall education; if a new courses are proposed, also include course titles, numbers, descriptions and anticipated enrollments; note: enrollments in a single course may be less than 10)

SUMMARY

This project proposes building on the already strong research sequence that we require of our majors by capitalizing on and extending what has been the ultimate fruition of their work: a senior research paper, completed in the Fall quarter of the senior year. We propose formalizing three components of our current, albeit not consistent, practices in the department to ensure that students have more opportunity to extend their research and faculty are given the necessary time and space to help in this process. Therefore we propose the following: 1. The development of a new course that will focus on helping students turn their senior capstone research papers into presentations and/or publications. 2. Time for faculty to orchestrate, edit, and finalize the production of our in-house publication of the best student research, *Silicon Valley Notebook*. 3. A means to create a more structured connection between the department curriculum and our undergraduate research conference as well as other venues.

BACKGROUND

Except during the 1970's when there were an extraordinarily high number of sociology majors, there has been some form of an advanced research/writing project required for the major. Until the early 1990's the structure of the senior thesis was as follows: each senior sociology major would work individually with two faculty members (a primary advisor and secondary reader) on an independent thesis on a topic chosen by the student. However this model was not sustainable and sometimes led to poor learning outcomes. In its place a research sequence was developed in the form of three classes that students take their junior year (theory, quantitative methods, qualitative methods) and Research Practicum took the place of Senior Thesis as a formal class, taught by one faculty member who chooses a broad topic and then guides students through the collection and analysis of data and in writing their own focused paper within the larger topic. Our assessments of the quality of these senior theses have found them to be quite high most years. For example, in 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005 our students won undergraduate paper awards from the Pacific Sociological Association and the California Sociological Association for the quality of their research practicum papers. Those years the faculty member teaching the course (Dr. Powers) worked extremely hard to prepare students to present at these conferences and submitted their papers for the awards. But faculty time to devote to these "extra" endeavors is not standardized and intermittent depending on the actual time that a faculty member has in any given year.

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We continue to feel, and external reviewers have confirmed, that our research sequence, culminating in the research practicum course, is the strongest component of our major. Almost all of our departmental goals and objectives for student learning are captured and ultimately tested in the research practicum class.¹ However, while changing the structure to a course format has taken a burden off of all of the faculty in the department, it has isolated it to the faculty member who teaches the course. Because all students must complete the class to graduate in the major, and the intensive nature of leading all students in writing a full length, scholarly paper that includes data analysis and often data collection, teaching the class is a heavy commitment of time.

In an attempt to capture the great work that students produce in the practicum class, provide a venue that will help students in applying for graduate school, and show-off the work of our students to the larger community, in 2002 we developed the *Silicon Valley Notebook* (SVN), a collection of the best student papers from the research practicum class. Our past practice has been that it is the instructor of the practicum class who is responsible for putting this publication together, with the help of the department chair. This is no small task, requiring soliciting submissions during the last week of Fall quarter, selecting the papers to be included, final editing of each paper, writing a 1-page introduction, and formatting and finalizing the product. Our current model of producing the SVN is not sustainable. Further, the quality of the Silicon Valley Notebook as well as if students take their research projects to presentation and possibly publication depends on faculty members' ability to spend time on top of their established teaching, advising, and mentoring load as well as scholarship and service. As a result we are seeking a way to capitalize on the great research that our students do and give faculty the time and resources to effectively mentor students to the next stage of their professional development.

PROJECT GOALS

It is hoped that this project will accomplish the following goals:

- Extend the professionalization of the students who produce the best 121 papers by continuing to work with them to put together the *Silicon Valley Notebook*, presentations, and/or publications.
- More consciously work with majors who are excellent candidates for graduate school.
- Produce an even higher quality in-house publication as well as extend its range of distribution and reach.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS

The creation of this new course and the ability to institutionalize responsibility for helping students move their work to presentation and possible publication will certainly benefit those students who take advantage of this opportunity. As you see in Table 1, by their senior year students are well trained to conduct research, think deeply about their topic, and write a formalized paper. These papers range in quality, but our assessments of them has shown that

¹ For a complete list of our mission, goals, and objectives see: http://www.scu.edu/cas/sociology/upload/Sociology-Department-Mission-Goals-and-Objectives-_Updated-June-2008_-2.pdf

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most years the majority of papers are above stage appropriate standards with at least three or more of very high quality. The opportunity for students to continue to work with their papers in the winter quarter will increase their likelihood of presenting their papers and perhaps submit for publication. Often we find that the practicum class excites students about being researchers. Certainly the new course will be helpful for them in thinking about and better preparing them for graduate studies.

Table 1. Current and Proposed Course Sequencing for Sociology Majors

Winter Quarter Jr. Yr	Spring Quarter Jr. Yr	Fall Quarter Sr. Year	Proposed Course: Winter Quarter Sr. Yr
1. Quantitative Methods and Applied Statistics 2. Sociological Theory	3. Qualitative Sociology	4. Soc. 121. Research Practicum	5. Soc. 199. Sociological Professionalization (Optional course)

PROPOSED COURSE: (we still need to refine this as a full department)

Soc 199. Sociological Professionalization (tentative title)
Offered: Winter 2010
Proposed Enrollment: 4-10

Proposed Course Description: An opportunity to work with a faculty member to refine your Soc. 121 paper for presentation and or conceivably for publication. Information will also be provided about the process of journal publication, conference presentation, graduate school application, and overall professionalization in the discipline. Prerequisite: Successful completion of Sociology 121 and permission of instructor.

This course will be taught by the faculty member who taught Sociology 121 in the Fall. We rotate who teaches Soc. 121 every two years. All tenured and tenure track faculty teach Soc 121 at some point. Leading 27-34 students through their own individual research paper takes an inordinate amount of time and dedication. Having the proposed course in the winter will both help reward the faculty the quarter after they teach the course and also provides the time for faculty and students to work together to move their research beyond the paper for one or more of the following: (1) our in-house publication, *Silicon Valley Notebook*, (2) presentation at our undergraduate and/or other appropriate research conference, (3) possible submission for publication in other outlets (there is a new journal publishing undergraduate research), (4) submission as a writing sample for graduate school applications. Further, if faculty know that they will be working with students on their topics for two quarters, this will likely encourage faculty to make sure to choose broader topics that correspond well with their own research interests and areas of scholarly research.

We propose that the course meet weekly in a seminar format for 3 hours and count as one full course in the faculty member's course load. The first week of the class students will come up with their own workplan and timeline that would be approved by the faculty member.

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Subsequent classes will be a mix of formal presentations by the faculty member teaching the course (and other faculty in the department) about publishing, presenting, conference attendance, graduate school, the life of a sociologist in higher education, etc. and time for students to get peer editing, meet with the professor, and work on their research.

The faculty member teaching Soc. 199 would also be responsible for the production of the *Silicon Valley Notebook*. This involves soliciting submissions during the last week of Fall quarter, selecting the papers to be included (this is done with the Chair of the department), final editing of each paper, writing a 1-page introduction, and directing a hire in formatting and finalizing the product.

3. List of participating faculty and a description of their role in the project
 Laura Robinson is the next faculty member scheduled to teach Soc. 121. She would therefore be the one slated to teach this new course in the winter. If we are able to institutionalize this we would rotate the class among our full-time faculty as they are teaching 121. At the invitation of the faculty member teaching the course, potentially all faculty would be invited at some point to voluntarily come to speak about graduate school, publishing, etc.

4. Timeline

Fall 09: Soc. 121 taught to Sociology majors, class of 2010

Winter 10: Soc 199 taught

Winter 10: *Silicon Valley Notebook* published

Spring 10: Students present at our undergraduate research conference (usually in April) and/or other suitable conference.

Spring 10: Students attend Pacific Sociological Association meetings, Oakland, April 8-11, 2010.

5. Estimated Budget and Justification

Student Attendance at PSA Conference (for 6 students)	150.00
Student Membership \$15 + Conference Fee \$20 - Student Contribution \$10	
Hotel Accommodations and Food (2 rooms)	1,000.00

Production of *Silicon Valley Notebook (SVN)*

Currently the SVN is edited and formatted by the faculty member who taught Soc 121 and the Chair. We then distribute the volume on campus and make it available to students for purchase for use in their research sequence courses. We would like to hire someone to do final editing and formatting as well as replicate and distribute to a larger audience including off campus. The off campus audience would depend on the topic of the overall volume in hopes that student research could help inform the work of others in the community. The costs are estimated ones.

Editing and Formatting	3,000.00
Replication and Distribution	2350.00

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TOTAL 6.500.00

6. Current CVs for participating faculty
We are attaching the CV of the next faculty member slated to teach Soc. 121 (Laura Robinson), although all faculty in the department would be included in some way in this class and initiative. Our full-time faculty are: Charles Powers, Alma Garcia, Marilyn Fernandez (on sabbatical 09-10), Laura Nichols, Anke Schulz, Laura Robinson, Regina Davis-Sowers (post-doc), and a possible AYL.
7. Statements of support from Department Chair and Dean
This proposal was written by Laura Nichols, the current department chair. In a preliminary charting out of courses we need to offer next year for both the department and the current and new Core we believe that the addition of Soc 199 to our courseload will not prohibit our ability to offer necessary courses.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this proposal. Regardless of the outcome we would be happy to receive feedback on our proposal as well as our overall initiatives within the major to increase undergraduate research opportunities.