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Section: Program Planning in Academic Settings

Sociological Practice Editors

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Program Planning in Academic Settings

Since the late 1970s, sociology departments around the country have shown an increased interest in offering courses and programs in sociological practice. Various factors point to why there has been a renewed interest in clinical and applied sociology. Howery (1983:3) notes:

> The student culture of the 1960s pushed for relevance and concern with social problems; their successors in large numbers now bail out of the liberal arts and opt for vocational and professional degrees, choosing to come to college primarily for occupational training. Faculty in liberal arts departments, including sociology, feel the pinch of retrenchment in academic jobs and the decline in academic enrollments.

Clark and Fritz (1986:175) concur that students are becoming increasingly practical about their approach to a college education and "look for assurance regarding the use of their education and skills in the job market after graduation." This concern is coupled with declining enrollments in the social sciences and the expectation that employment of sociologists is expected to increase more slowly than the average for all occupations through the mid-1990s.

Demographic shifts also have had an impact on program revisions. There has been a decrease in the number of college students between the ages of 18–24, and an increase in the number of older, returning students.

Despite what appears to be a need for rethinking and perhaps restructuring our academic program offerings, there are serious concerns about what changes may mean for individual departments and for the discipline of sociology. A major obstacle is what Mauksch (1983:2) refers to as "the subculture of the sociological community in academia," which extols "the pursuit of conceptual and theoretical issues with little regard to their application." Others fear the emphasis will shift completely from sociological theory to skills and techniques, and that the discipline of sociology will be sacrificed to the vocational training of our students.

The articles in this section were selected because they would be useful to

those considering the development of a practice program and to those who would like to modify an existing one. The articles address many of the concerns raised by Mauksch and others about program establishment. Of particular interest is the fact that the authors agree that sociological practice is not a body of knowledge distinct from the core of the discipline, but a use of that core for practical purposes.

The first article is Frank Blackmar's "Reasonable Department of Sociology for Colleges and Universities." We reprint this article, which first appeared in a 1914 issue of *The American Journal of Sociology*, to show a concrete example of the similarities between program development in 1914 and in the 1980s.

Blackmar presents four major groups of courses: 1) Bio-social Group; 2) Pure or General Sociology Group; 3) Applied or Specialized Group; and 4) Social Technology and Social Engineering. The latter two groupings are clearly of interest to us as is Blackmar's (1914:263) statement that "the whole aim is to ground sociology in general utility and social service."

In the following two articles, Carla Howery, and Elizabeth Clark and Jan Fritz, discuss modern day formats for revising academic programs in applied and clinical sociology. Howery in "Models for Applied Sociology Programs at the B.A. Level" addresses the need for carefully articulated learning goals and cautions against hurried curriculum revisions in order to reverse declining enrollments. She also describes the value of practical experience for students and encourages career counseling specific to sociology.

Clark and Fritz's article, "The Clinical Approach to Successful Program Development," appeared in the 1986 issue of the *Clinical Sociology Review*. The authors present guidelines for sociology departments to use in developing, assessing and implementing a new program and underscore the importance of the program's label. The authors use, as an example, the development of a clinical sociology program, but the points they make also apply to the development of a program in applied sociology or a complete program in sociological practice.

The last article in this section is about the development of a community-based research center. "Establishing a Local Research Center at a College or University" was written especially for this journal by Stephen Steele, E. Joseph Lamp, Harold Counihan, and Joan Albert. The center they have developed provides applied research services to the community. The points they make, however, are valid for a center that provides clinical as well as applied services.

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Reasonable Department of Sociology for Colleges and Universities

Frank W. Blackmar
  University of Kansas

The division of social sciences into departments in universities is largely for pedagogical reasons. It would be possible to put them all under one head with different lines of work, such as economics, sociology, history, politics, ethics, and anthropology; for they have a correlated interest and the courses of study in each could be made to fit a general plan of instruction. But the trend in recent years has been to differentiate these main lines, and to some extent divorce them from the close relationship which their nature and purpose imply.

Sociology, the last of these main divisions to be developed, like the others, has a central idea of its own, yet bears a close relationship to all the others. Yet sociology as a distinct department must be broad enough to include many subjects and lines of work in order to maintain its independence. If it is to be social philosophy only, it could well be placed in the division of philosophy; if it is to be merely social psychology, it could be included in the department of psychology; if merely the history of social and political movements, civil government and history could include it. Even in this case, the central idea of the general forces, laws, and problems of social generalization would be lacking. Assuming that sociology has developed a scientific purpose not possible to obtain under the present organization from the other social sciences, and that it can and ought to maintain a separate pedagogical department, what should be the nature and scope of its subjects? There is a chance for great difference of opinion in the scope of the organized group of studies in the department of sociology. In the University of Kansas the department is trying to work out its position in accordance with the following plan:

Department of Sociology

I. Bio-social Group
    *1. General Anthropology
    *2. General Ethnology
     3. Social Evolution
     4. Criminal Anthropology
     5. Race Problems
    *6. Eugenics (graduate)
    *7. American Ethnology (graduate)
     8. Seminar in Bio-social Research
II. Pure or General Sociology Group
    *1. Elements of Sociology
    *2. Socialization and Social Control
    *3. Psychological Sociology
     4. Geographical Influence on Society
    *5. Development of Sociological Theory
    *6. Seminar of Sociological Research (graduate)
III. Applied or Specialized Sociology Group
    *1. Principles of Applied Sociology
    *2. Rural Sociology
    *3. Social Pathology
    *4. Remedial and Corrective Agencies
    *5. The Family
    *6. Socialism
    *7. Contemporary Society of the United States
    *8. American and European Charities (graduate)
    *9. Seminar of Social Research (graduate)
IV. Social Technology and Social Engineering (carried by advanced students and instructors)
    *1. Preparation for Social Service (graduate)
    *2. State Work in Connection with the Conference of Charities and Correction
    *3. State Work in Connection with State Board of Health
    *4. State Work in Relation to the Board of Control
    *5. Field Work in Relation to Penal and Reformatory Practice
    *6. Field Work in Social Surveys of Rural and Urban Communities
     7. Municipal Engineering

*Course already given in the University of Kansas or field work already done.

While the general scheme will be subjected to few changes, some of the details would be greatly modified as the opportunities for development increase. The courses of study marked with a star are the ones which have been given in the University of Kansas, and all other subjects that have been scheduled have been treated to a greater or less extent in a partial manner. When the force of instructors is sufficient, changes will be made in some titles which will permit a closer classification of the subjects.

The whole aim is to ground sociology in general utility and social service. It is a preparation for social efficiency. It is the purpose of the department to emphasize the fourth main division by enlarging state service. In developing its state service the purpose is to reform social conditions and direct social movements by a well-organized system. County, city, township, and rural surveys are being carried on now, and a plan for the survey of the whole state will be undertaken next year. By organizing the whole community to conduct its own survey under the direction of the instructors in the department, a social consciousness is developed and a permanent organization established for efficient work. Such a plan has its own difficulties but it discounts the work of the social revivalist.

Models for Applied Sociology Programs at the B.A. Level

Carla B. Howery

Ideally, a department's curriculum is a statement of its collective instructional goals and can be said to represent a contact with its students. The diversity and dissension in the discipline of sociology is reflected in most departmental curricula. In 1971, Bates and Reid examined undergraduate curricula to draw inferences about the core of sociology as it was presented to students. They found that the "lack of consensus on requirements, the diversity, and, in many instances, the marginality of courses required convey the idea that it makes little difference what the student takes so long as he accumulates enough credit hours" (Bates and Reid, 1971:248). Course sequencing, another measure of systematic curriculum planning, is notably absent in sociology, in contrast to other fields.

This disarray is accelerated as some departments try hurriedly to add an applied curriculum. Mauksch (1981:3) warns against curriculum revisions motivated by "the search for a formula which will attract students, increase enrollments, and enable the sociology catalogue to compete with other offerings for the 1980s."

There are good reasons for arguing that the undergraduate level is the most strategic place for departments to start the development of applied curricula. First, the terminal B.A. student has always been "applied" in that he or she has not sought employment in academic sociology. The current attention to providing jobs after college has several positive ramifications: departments are thinking about ways to assist undergraduate students with job placement; existing curriculum and course requirements are being examined; and course sequencing

and groupings (tracks) are improved. One effect of developing an applied program will be the placement of students in internships and subsequently in jobs where their sociology skills will be made visible. Sociology may be better understood and more generally appreciated by the public and private sector employers, government officials, and the general public than it has been in the past. In the near future, the demonstrated utility of sociology may come primarily from our *undergraduate* majors, as they pursue their internships and postcollege roles.

Second, sociologists argue within academia for the discipline's importance to the liberal arts and its relevance to professional degree programs. We assert that nurses should take courses in marriage and the family and that a course in formal organizations is essential for business majors. Apparently, we believe that sociology *applies* to jobs for our majors and for students with other career aspirations. These connections need to be explicit in our course and curriculum goals.

A third reason for starting applied sociology at the undergraduate level is that curriculum revisions may be the easiest to implement. Many graduate-level courses are the exclusive domain of a particular professor, reflecting his or her research interests and closely linked to personal idiosyncrasies. Undergraduate courses are more often the collective property of a department, sometimes doled out haphazardly or with mild coercion to ensure that all offerings are covered. If undergraduate courses belong to the group rather than to individuals, they may be more easily modified. The blunt reality is that faculty jobs rest on enrollments in undergraduate courses.

Instructional Goals for an Undergraduate Curriculum

Olsen and DeMartini (1981:2) define applied sociology as "sociological knowledge and action oriented toward intentional social change to achieve desired goals." For the B.A., M.A., Ph.D., or post-doctoral student, then, this orientation uses the concepts and theories of sociology, appropriate methodology, and a sensitivity to the policy process to connect practical knowledge and social change (Dorn, 1982). The basic difference between each level of student training is the sophistication of the material.

For the B.A. student, this definition of applied sociology is operationalized in three general ways: a set of specific skills in which the student is deliberately trained; substantive concentration in sociology specialties that are built into the curriculum; and job-hunting advice and assistance. All these elements may be present to some degree in an existing sociology program. The process of making these features explicit and coordinated is one of the benefits of implementing an applied program. If a department can collectively agree upon its goals for training students in applied sociology, this intentionality of purpose may have

a positive spill over into the department's *entire* teaching mission. In short, a department should not focus on overhauling its program, but rather on making it clear, cohesive, and linked to learning goals.

Training in Job-Related Skills

Training students in specific skills can occur within any of the curricular arrangements for applied sociology. In most programs, five groups of skills seem to be emphasized. Although these same skills could be developed within a standard major, the applied emphasis is usually more skill-oriented. The categories of skills most prevalent in applied programs are:

1. Qualitative research skills, including evaluation research, impact or needs assessment, research design and instrument construction, and data analysis;

2. Problem solving skills, including qualitative indicators, problem framing, case-study analysis, and identification of relevant variables;

3. Counseling skills, or social intervention at the individual, group, or community levels, including training in clinical sociology, social casework and groupwork, and administration of social services.

4. Special substantive knowledge and skills concerning particular policies and trends in the areas of children and families, gerontology, urban and community work, medical and legal institutions, and the criminal justice system; and

5. Skills in oral and written communication, to include public speaking, translating of social science information to a lay audience, clear and concise writing, and interviewing.

Field Experience

Practical experience of one of three basic types seems to be an integral part of many applied programs:

1. *Internship*: an off-campus experience under the supervision of a field placement advisor on location. For the B.A. student, the supervision is usually not from a sociologist; the student usually carries out a project for the placement and learns about the setting.

2. *Practicum*: on or off-campus, students work *with* a practitioner, preferably at a job level similar to one they might assume on completion of their undergraduate degree.

3. *University consulting and research centers*: on campus, students assist faculty in conducting research in-house for the institution by contract from bidders, or as a service to the community. Faculty members can control the field experience of the student and better coordinate it with coursework.

Career Counseling Programs

Curricular change to applied sociology may not imply a change in courses and content as much as in assisting students in job-hunting strategies and career planning. Dorn (1983:16) suggests that one goal of an applied program is the establishment of a vehicle by which students are linked with the career placement center on campus and introduced to sociologists who have experience working in applied settings who can serve as role models.'' The sociology department itself may choose to offer a credit or non-credit course in job hunting. Other suggestions for assisting students in making connection between their skills and possible jobs include: guest presentations from applied sociologists (especially alumni) in classes throughout the curriculum; establishment of a sociology club for undergraduates, with some program time devoted to job-hunting topics; coordination with the placement service and career counseling staff for workshops that might particularly help liberal arts majors; sponsorship of undergraduate research conferences to give students practice in written and oral communication of their work; a departmental handbook on career opportunities for the various tracks and emphases offered by the department; and participation in career day events.

Conclusion

Applied sociology programs require carefully articulated learning goals. Changes in both the organization and content of the curriculum can be major or minor, as these goals dictate. The process of curriculum revision may well have payoffs for the entire curriculum as a collective product of a department's mission for its students. Students graduating in sociology may be better equipped to get jobs using their identifiable skills in theory and method and are thus important disseminators of information about our discipline.

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The Clinical Approach to Successful Program Development

Elizabeth J. Clark
Jan M. Fritz

ABSTRACT

To more adequately meet the needs for the decade ahead, it is essential that sociology departments evaluate their existing curricula and plan new programs or concentrations that will interest and attract students. Using the example of clinical sociology, this article focuses on general guidelines for developing a variety of program models in sociological practice. The guidelines are divided into the three parts of assessment, planning, and implementation, and an inventory of ideas and suggestions are given for each phase. Relevant issues of the importance of labels, leadership and independence, and rationales for program development are discussed.

There are over 90 graduate programs in sociological practice in this country (American Sociological Association, 1985) and a growing number of undergraduate ones.[1] Over the last five years, we have served as consultants to many departments and conducted study visits to other colleges and universities to learn about their sociological practice programs, their plans, and their problems. We also have been involved with a variety of experiential education and adult learning program models. On the basis of this work, we have developed some guidelines for departments interested in starting a new program or concentration in sociological practice or improving an existing one. One of the first concerns of these departments is understanding the similarities and differences between clinical sociology and applied sociology.

Defining the Field

Sociological practice has been part of American sociology since the beginning of the field in the late 1800s (Fritz, 1985), and many of the early sociologists were reformers interested in social progress and intervention. The "practical sociology" of the early 1900s (Barnes, 1948:741) has influenced the two contemporary areas of sociological practice—clinical and applied sociology.

Clinical sociology is sociological intervention. It is the application of a sociological perspective to the analysis and design of intervention for positive social change at any level of social organization from the micro to the macro. Clinical sociologists have specialty areas—such as organizations, health and illness, forensic sociology, aging, and comparative social systems—and work as action researchers, organizational development specialists, sociotherapists, conflict interventionists, social policy implementors and administrators, to name but a few. Many clinical sociologists, depending on their level of training, also have the skills of an applied sociologist and use qualitative and/or quantitative research skills in assessment and evaluation in their intervention work. The field is humanistic and interdisciplinary.

Applied sociology refers to methodology and "includes the research model of problem solving, the research model of formulating and testing options, and the research model of evaluation" (Mauksch, 1983). Olsen and DeMartini (1981) suggest that applied sociology uses five general research methods: problem exploration, policy analysis, needs assessment, program evaluation, and social impact assessment. The applied sociologist, then, is a research specialist, and not necessarily a direct interventionist, who produces information that is useful in various kinds of problem solving.

The comparison of the two approaches of clinical and applied sociology is not meant to say that one is a better approach than the other. It is meant to emphasize that the two approaches have a somewhat different, but compatible focus. Sociologists tend to have early knowledge of emerging social problems. Research about these problems is essential; so is the development of specific intervention strategies that relate to these emerging social problems.

Sociological practice programs may emphasize one area or the other, but it is our hope that programs will realize the importance of providing training in both clinical sociology (intervention) and applied sociology (research). A program that provides this combined training will offer students broader career options as well as train better researchers and intervention specialists.

Before providing program planning guidelines, we would like to identify several important issues that need to be discussed by a department before it begins a planning effort: the importance of labels, leadership and independence and a rationale for program development.

The Importance of Labeling

Does it matter whether your practice program is identified as *sociological*? Yes, it does. Your label—sociological practice, clinical sociology, or applied sociology—will let potential students know what you offer and will let employers know that it is sociology—not criminal justice, business or allied health—that provides the training in this area. The generic label should be paired with a functional specialization, such as policy development, forensic counseling, or program design. This combination of labels lets the community know that sociology provides the education and training and pairs this discipline with well-known functional job titles. If we don't begin to pair the discipline with the functions, other disciplines, departments, and organizations will, and they will be offering the education and training in a number of years rather than sociology.

Leadership and Independence

A lot of time is spent talking about the value of leadership with regard to program development. Leadership, in this case, means assessing what is going on in the national and local community and making some decisions about what your department would like to be doing now and in the future.

More than likely, your department will be interested in what other departments, fields, and organizations are doing in your areas of specialization or in trends that would affect your program. Studying these developments is interesting and rather comfortable for departments. Leaders know, however, that a study phase (or avoidance phase) should end at some point, and that new directions need to be established. What would happen if every department waited to see how sociological practice programs fared somewhere else? Take up the challenge and break new ground. It's exciting for a department to test a national model.

While working cooperatively with other disciplines and being interdisciplinary is stressed in sociological practice, too often this has meant that sociology departments decide to "cooperate" in a venture in which the other discipline or group controls the jobs that are available at the end of the education period. A sociology department needs to recognize that there are times to be independent. Controlling or housing the interdisciplinary program and being a primary influence on the targeted job market can be very beneficial for the maintenance and growth of the department and of the discipline.

Rationale for Program Development

During this difficult economic period, students are becoming increasingly practical about their approach to a college education. They look for assurance

regarding the use of their education and skills in the job market after graduation. This concern is coupled with declining enrollments in the social sciences—a decrease of 19% since 1977 (National Institute of Education, 1984). Additionally, the employment of sociologists is expected to increase more slowly than the average for all occupations through the mid-1990s.

According to the 1986–87 edition of the *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (U.S. Department of Labor, 1986):

> Bachelor's degree holders will find few opportunities for jobs as professional sociologists . . . [and] persons with a master's degree will find few, if any, academic positions, even in junior and community colleges. They also will face strong competition for the limited number of nonacademic sociology positions open to them . . . [at the doctoral level], an increasing proportion of Ph.D.'s will enter careers in sociological practice.

The *Handbook* says there is expected to be a strong demand for those with clinical and/or applied training in criminology, environmental sociology, medical sociology, social gerontology, and demography.

Demographic shifts also will necessitate some program revisions. The number of college students in the 18–24 year range will continue to decrease throughout this decade, and there has been a steady increase in the number of older, returning students. Clinical and applied sociology courses often appeal to these older students, who want to combine their college education with their already established career plans and experiences.

Given these facts, it is essential that sociology departments evaluate their existing curricula and add new or revise existing programs or concentrations to interest and attract students to sociology. The following suggestions are for faculties who want to refocus their offerings and ensure the success of their new and revised programs.

Program Planning Guidelines

We have found it helpful in working with teaching units to provide some general guidelines for program development. The following suggestions are intended to be of use for a variety of program models. The guidelines presented here emphasize the development of a program or concentration in clinical sociology.

We have emphasized clinical sociology, in part, because any kind of grounded example will help to enliven a general discussion. But mainly we have been concerned that most of the sociological practice programs now in place are not labeling, and in some cases not even recognizing, the clinical

components of their programs. We hope, by providing this example, to facilitate and strengthen the development of these programs.

The guidelines are divided into three major sections—assessment, planning, and implementation—and are intended as an inventory of ideas and suggestions for each of the phases.

Guidelines for Assessment

Futuring. Imagine what you and your department would like for the future.

Assessment of Occupational Trends. Look at national and international developments in other fields and assess how these affect sociology. Study trends in sociology enrollments and occupational prospects.

Assessment of Community Needs. Identify the community you are serving or would like to serve, and assess the needs of this community.

Employer Needs. Understand employer needs. What are the competencies employers expect? These competencies are often in addition to traditional skills and techniques in social research.

Student Survey. Ask your students what they would like. What would be helpful to their career goals? Remember that the audience for a clinical sociology program does not have to be restricted to sociology majors.

Inventory of Faculty Strengths and Weaknesses. What are the current capabilities and what would faculty like to do in the near future?

The program areas that can be covered successfully by the available faculty should supply the direction and foundation for the program or concentration.

It would be very difficult for a clinical program to cover all levels of intervention. It is generally useful to specialize in one or two (e.g., organizational development, conflict intervention, sociotherapy).

Any new program should begin in an area of strength.

Areas to check include: substantive experience, interdisciplinary training, qualitative skills, quantitative skills, practice experience (including consulting, contract research, direct delivery of services, community networks), availability.

Assemble and Review Available Resources. While it is important to individualize your program, do not omit checking resources that are already available such as syllabi sets, textbooks, and journals. Order these for your department and your library.

Set a Firm Date to Move out of the Assessment Phase.

Guidelines for Clinical Program Planning

General Considerations for Program Development
Program should match the basic values of the field. This means, at least, content should be humanistic and interdisciplinary.

Program should not be purely utilitarian. It also should have a strong theoretical base in sociology.

Program should be developed in light of any existing program standards.

Program Content

1. **Sociological Core**

   Provides program unity for majors no matter what their program options.

   Identifies the discipline and its concepts.

   Includes separate or combined courses in sociological history, social theory, methods (qualitative as well as quantitative), stratification, and other courses covering the major areas of sociological concern.

2. **Clinical Sociology Track**

   Fundamental sociological concepts, theory and methods should be part of each course.

   Separate or combined courses should be offered covering:

   Clinical sociology (survey course including some information about each of the major levels of practice).

   History of sociological practice (clinical and applied).

   Social theory for practitioners.

   Methods (including hiring and evaluating a research consultant, video techniques, report writing for different kinds of audiences, executive summaries).

   Courses in selected areas of specialization such as sociotherapy and counseling, organizational development, community organizing, conflict intervention or policy development and implementation.

   Practicum (internships).

   Ethics.

3. **Internships**

   Supervised training ideally should be provided by a certified clinical sociologist.

   Experimental learning in a practice setting should have the roles of the intern, faculty supervisor and immediate supervisor clearly defined.

   One or more internships should be included in each area of specialization.

4. **Special Techniques and Skills**

   The intellectual process of application should be part of each course.

   Courses should include the following skills:

   Problem-solving skills (e.g., problem framing, impact or needs assessment, case-study analysis, program design, grant proposal writing).

   Communication skills (e.g., appropriate language skills, report writing, interviewing, in-service education, group dynamics, formal presentations, providing expert testimony).

Intervention skills in specialty areas (e.g., consulting, sociotherapy, organizational development, community organizing, mediation, administration, policy implementation).

Qualitative skills (e.g., listening, observing, interviewing).

Quantitative skills (e.g., evaluation research, research design and instrument construction, data analysis, computer skills)

Integration skills (e.g., integration of social science theories, recognition of different levels of focus).

5. Interdisciplinary Component

This requirement may be met in a variety of ways;

Student may complete a second degree or a certificate program in a related field.

Student may have one area of specialization in a related field.

Required interdisciplinary course(s) may be part of the sociological core.

Required course(s), structured alternatives or electives may be part of each area of specialization.

Course(s) may be interdisciplinary in nature.

Guidelines for Planning Implementation

Operationalize goals and desired outcomes. Determine sequence and realistic timeframe for implementation. Identify personnel for specific tasks, and if necessary, do the following:

Retrain some current faculty (e.g., encourage attendance at workshops and training events, taking part in guided consultancies).

Include faculty from other departments (this adds to the interdisciplinary nature of your program).

Hire additional personnel (sociologists in practice settings often make excellent adjunct faculty).

Develop a strong system:

Establish both intra- and interuniversity linkages.

Locate community support. You may find it useful to establish an advisory committee composed of internship supervisors or potential employers of your graduates. Or you may agree to offer continuing education for selected professional groups.

Be creative in seeking financial resources:

Check foundation funding for developmental activities and/or apply for small grants for start-up activities such as printing of new brochures or advertising.

Assess potential for organizational backing for such activities as establishing an endowed chair for a visiting professor of sociological practice.

Anticipate resistance and develop strategies for employer and university acceptance.
Establish plan for data collection and design both process and outcome evaluation measures.
Design faculty evaluation to match program building efforts.

Conclusion

Successful program planning depends on a variety of factors. It should be based on need and must be comprehensive and multifaceted. Support for the program needs to be developed and this should be done, in part, by documenting positive change and disseminating this information.

The guidelines presented here focus on the development of a clinical sociology program or concentration and are based on the experiences of a variety of programs and practitioners. As such, they are intended to be used as an aid for sociology departments that want to develop programs which will more adequately meet the needs of their students during the next decade.[2]

Notes

1. This figure is based on the programs listed in the "Index of Specialties" in the *1985 Guide to Graduate Departments of Sociology*, Washington, DC: The American Sociological Association, 1985.
2. The authors would appreciate receiving any suggestions you may have about these guidelines. They particularly would like to hear from any department that uses the guidelines as part of their development process.

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Establishing a Local Research Center at a College or University

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This article presents basic information for those interested in starting a local research center. Relying largely on our experiences in a small college environment, these practical concerns became apparent as we developed our Center for the Study of Local Issues.

CSLI

The Center for the Study of Local Issues (CSLI) was established in 1978 at Anne Arundel Community College in Arnold, Maryland. Our goals are to teach applied research methods to students and interested faculty, to provide faculty with applied research opportunities and to produce high quality, low cost information for the area served by our college. Faculty and students work together to develop, refresh and exercise research skills by helping solve local problems facing business, government and community organizations. In addition, the center operates as an educational clearinghouse, linking academic resources with community and regional needs.

CSLI has provided expertise to a wide variety of community organizations. Among the projects we have undertaken:

—Field research resulting in a book for the handicapped that assesses the accessibility of business, recreational and government facilities in the county

—Interviews, for the county Office of Economic Development, of over 150 chief executive officers from local businesses to assess attitudes toward business operations and expansion

—A survey for the county executive to provide him with a better understanding of citizen attitudes about the way in which work was done by county departments and agencies

Since our inception, CSLI has held community workshops focusing on such topics as youth and sexuality, the family, gun control, futuristic thinking and stereotyping. During the last few years we also have conducted some workshops around the country for faculty members who are interested in learning about community-based applied research.

Choosing a Model

Beginning a local research center requires "vision." The group of action-oriented people who start the center need to share a view of the end product. Words like "mission" and "goals," as vague as they seem, must have a defined meaning for all those involved. Professional staff, support staff and students need to understand the center's guiding principles and the originators of a center need to consider factors such as the importance of cost effectiveness, faculty development, innovative pedagogy and choice of funding sources. Knowledge about the research center's general structural model is useful in establishing the center's "vision."

The list of models we offer here is by no means exhaustive. However, in the national workshops we have conducted, we have found these models either support an existing notion or stimulate the development of a hybrid version. We offer these four models as a starting point.

A center created by administrative mandate. The college president, dean or board of trustees create a local research agency as an extension of the college mission.

A center which is an appendage of an academic department. Social science or business departments or divisions recognize important community-based research needs and a center emerges to accommodate these needs.

An extension of a college institutional research office. The internal research functions performed by the college institutional research office may be directed outwardly into the community.

A foundation-sponsored agency. Under the college's fund raising foundation, a separate non-profit agency is created to handle local, community-based research.

Knowledge about these general models is helpful but to be viable your research center also will need to demonstrate specific external and internal needs as well as supports.

External Needs: Who Needs to Know What

If you are affiliated with a college which is primarily a teaching institution, you may be told that your college "does not do research," that your institution "doesn't have the capability to do research" and, of course, that "nobody wants your research anyway." These are common misconceptions.

Here is a list of some of the groups and individuals who have contacted CSLI in the last two years:

—Local hospital
—Department of parks and recreation
—City police department
—Office on aging
—Commission for the arts
—Two small research firms
—Veterinarian
—Two neighborhood community associations
—Two churches
—County health department
—County library
—Three local newspapers
—County department of drugs and alcohol
—Local hardware store
—Radio station
—Metropolitan television station
—Interested citizens
—Local politicians
—Group of local clergy

While CSLI did not undertake projects for all those on our list, we conducted research for many. At this point our relationship with our parent institution is one in which serving those listed above is a logical evolution of our college community service mission. This is a position which is valuable to our college and our community and, of course, to us.

Our markets range from small to large clients with the modal client being a small to medium size organization with a small or non-existent research budget. A little work on your part may be very important here to make a local business or government office recognize the need for applied research expertise.

What is the role, if any, between the applied research center and the growing linkage between college and business? For those who view the business and college relationship solely in terms of job training, the idea of an applied research center's involvement with business may seem novel. However, it makes a great deal of sense when it provides students with marketable skills and serves as a resource for local economic data.

Here are some examples of linkages between businesses and our applied research center:

—A survey of the business climate among a cross-section of firms. Student interviewers were trained and met with local executives to learn their views on the county as a business location, their company's growth plans and their assessment of selected county services. The data were used as an employment-counseling tool.

—A market survey for a small town with a growing tourist industry. The tourism council commissioned a study of visitor's socio-demographic backgrounds, their reasons for visitation and their spending patterns. Faculty were recruited to gather and analyze the data. Results are being used to define target populations for advertising purposes.

—An evaluation of the effectiveness of a media campaign conducted in a large city. A marketing firm commissioned the applied research center to gather longitudinal data to assess the impact of an image enhancement campaign. The results are being used as a measure of accountability.

—A readership poll by a newspaper in a rural mountain locality. The applied research center developed an instrument, trained students and analyzed the results. The information is being used to assign priorities for newspaper stories.

—A biannual survey of consumer trends conducted by a college's students and faculty and sold on a subscription basis to local businesses. The results are helping local business personnel plan inventories and promotion campaigns.

Community-based research centers can help meet the information needs of local businesses while training tomorrow's workforce in necessary research skills.

An Internal Assessment: Identifying Needs and Supports

The complement of a receptive environment is a receptive internal organization at your institution. It is very helpful for a college administration to actively

support applied research as a part of the institution's mission and as a form of faculty development. Institutional commitment of resources and moral support is important in the beginning and in the future. If, in addition, a number of faculty members have an interest in interdisciplinary applied research, research training and a willingness to work on "problem-centered" rather than disciplinary specific projects, the center has excellent prospects.

A word of caution: Don't assume faculty will be lining up at the door to participate! Faculty generally will say that a center is a good idea and they would like to get involved "sometime." Do not base your faculty participation estimates on a "do it sometime" commitment. Based on our experience, "sometime" usually means "never."

We have found two important factors which guide us in faculty inclusion on projects:

—A passion for doing the project, augmented by money. Enthusiasm is a good start, but don't let your colleagues "do you favors." Pay faculty participants. Volunteers may not assign the same priority to a contractual obligation as a client or center director.

—Do not assume that basic research skills directly translate to applied research skills. Faculty may need retraining or, at least, redirecting.

A center is an excellent opportunity for students to take part in the process of information generation. Your academic program should allow students to select practical research internships, applied research courses, independent study options as well as less formal opportunities for involvement. While graduate students have long been involved in an apprentice relationship, we have found that many undergraduates (even at the first year and sophomore levels) handle research responsibilities very well.

A local research center can provide a number of valuable experiences for students. They can receive job experience, credentials, access to a network of opportunity, money, college credit, extra credit and, of course, information. Students can make major contributions to the center through their involvement in technical, managerial and clerical projects. Completing center work appears to have a positive impact on student self-esteem and builds recognition of social science research as a credible and practical experience.

Our center runs an intern program for selected undergraduates, in our case first year and sophomore students. At CSLI interns engage in applied research and receive exposure to a broad range of social science research techniques. We expect each intern to be able to do the following:

—Conceptualize a research problem with a community research client
—Learn and apply basic research design
—Learn and apply questionnaire design and question construction
—Learn and apply computer software
—Develop a basic understanding of descriptive and inferential statistics
—Learn and apply report writing skills
—Assist in supervision of CSLI telephone surveys

In addition to evaluating student, faculty and administrative resources at your college, you should consider and assess the following:

—Community-centered mission
—Valuable connections with the community (networking)
—Available hardware (e.g., buildings with conference rooms and accommodations for the center; telephones; duplicating machines; computers)
—Support services (e.g., accounting through the college business office; printing through the college printshop; catering, food service; support staff including secretarial, legal and work-study assistance)

Finally, here are a few simple but important guidelines. Don't buy anything your organization already has that may be used or reworked for your purposes. Remember, too, that you don't have to invent a new procedure if one already exists. On the other hand, take the initiative to invent a new procedure if one doesn't exist.

Important Considerations

Since this article only covers the basics of getting started, where we stop is where you begin. Based on our experience, we would like to suggest the following:

Find a team with a passion for the project. CSLI staff have been approached by numerous persons who have received sabbatical leaves, grants and leaves of absence to "study the feasibility" of a local research center. While thorough study is valuable, a center actually emerges where there is enlightened enthusiasm and feasibility. Even those research centers supported by large grants need energetic leadership. Dedicated support staff also are essential; poor support staff—secretarial, data entry/analysis—will sink a viable operation.

Don't wait for a grant. Our concern here is that you may wait a very long

time, get fatalistic and quit. Multiple solutions exist to the problem of starting a research center. As we mentioned earlier, you already probably have many of the essentials.

Create a base of operation which minimizes overhead. Use what you have. You may have to redefine current facilities with the telephones in the faculty offices becoming a ''phone bank'' and the copy center emerging as a local ''publishing house'' for your reports.

Get institutional support. Applied research is very often (maybe always?) political and successes and failures can reflect positively or negatively on the college. Seek and obtain at least ''moral support'' from your president or the appropriate dean. After you've established support, try to keep college officials aware of what the center is doing. Administrators hate surprises.

Do a high quality, successful project. Showing your strengths and abilities in research may be the best way to dispel damaging stereotypes and obstacles to this endeavor. A demonstration project funded by a local agency (a newspaper, government agency or business, for example) may be designed to financially ''break even,'' but gain credibility. Here are some possible categories of ''first projects:''

   —Conduct surveys (e.g., telephone or mail)
   —Host local public and professional workshops on important issues
   —Initiate projects with other research agencies (solicited or unsolicited)
   —Hold professional seminars on conducting local research
   —Create a local information network
   —Develop evaluation research projects

Applied research is a multidisciplinary activity. No single discipline owns applied, problem-centered research. The center should draw information from a variety of subject areas and professionals. The authors of this article, for instance, represent three different academic disciplines.

Conclusion

Creating a successful local research center produces a variety of valuable outcomes. A center can teach, produce information and support faculty development. In addition, it can become a source for employment opportunities now and in the future. A local applied research effort can make local research an acceptable and valuable part of the mission of a community college or university.