

**Academic Program Review**  
**University of Tennessee-Chattanooga (UTC)**  
**Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography (SAG) programs**  
**within the Department of Social, Cultural, and Justice Studies**

**Conducted by:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marieke Van Willigen', with a large, stylized initial 'M' and a long, sweeping tail.

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## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The Department of Social, Cultural, and Justice Studies represents a relatively new merger of faculty within the Department of Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography and the Criminal Justice and Legal Assistant Studies faculty. The task before this reviewer was to focus on the work of the Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography faculty and the programs to which they contribute: the undergraduate degrees in Sociology and Anthropology and the minor in Geography. The Self Study provided focused only on these faculty and these programs, not the Criminal Justice or Legal Assistant programs and faculty.

The Department was founded in 1968, with three fulltime sociologists who were soon joined by two cultural anthropologists, an archeologist and a linguist. The Institute of Archaeology was established in 1975 by Dr. Jeffrey Brown, for whom it was later named. The department has experienced a number of transitions in faculty, as would be expected over the length of its existence. However in recent years much of that transition has been among the Sociology faculty. The Department currently has four tenured Anthropology, two<sup>1</sup> tenured Sociology, and one tenured Geography faculty members; two tenure track Sociology and one tenure track Geography faculty member; and one Sociology and one Anthropology Senior Lecturer. These faculty and students are served by one administrative staff member.

The department seems to be well-integrated into the University as a whole. The SAG faculty teach ten courses which count towards the university's General Education requirements. In addition, SAG courses are recommended or required by many programs across campus. Faculty are involved on a number of university committees, and are active members of professional associations and reviewers and/or editorial board members for publications in their respective disciplines. The Chair of the Department Pamela Ashmore is an active member of the Chairs Council and is clearly well-regarded by faculty and campus administrators.

As stated above, the department faculty recently merged with department faculty in Criminal Justice and Legal Assistant Studies. The faculty are housed in two different buildings which are not adjacent to one another. Although the Criminal Justice and Legal Assistant faculty will be moving to a new space, the two faculties will still be separate. As will be discussed below, this merger and physical separation is cause for concern among the faculty.

The undergraduate program includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology & Anthropology and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Anthropology. The SAG faculty also offer a

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<sup>1</sup> The self-study documents lists three tenured Sociology faculty, but I count only two.

minor in Sociology, a minor in Anthropology, and a minor in Geography. Within the BS degree program students choose to pursue either a Sociology or an Anthropology concentration.<sup>2</sup>

## **PART I – Learning Outcomes**

In 2013, the Sociology and Anthropology faculty engaged in a curriculum mapping process which appears to have resulted in a common understanding of what program Learning Outcomes the faculty are working towards and how each course fits into this process. The program has clearly established learning outcomes. As the Sociology and Anthropology curriculum are offered within one degree program, the Student Learning Outcomes for the two concentrations are the same. Fortunately there is a great deal of commonality in what the national bodies of each discipline agree should be the learning outcomes of these undergraduate programs. For example, the American Anthropological Association<sup>3</sup> in their review of learning outcomes reported by 30 programs across the country. Specifically this review found three common themes among SLOs: 1) Theoretical development, 2) Research Engagement, and 3) Skill Development. The American Sociological Association similarly identifies as common learning outcomes knowledge and application of sociological theories and concepts, the understanding and application of various research methodologies with an emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative methods and data, and the ability to articulate how culture and social structure operate. Supporting the program’s emphasis on “articulating ethical standards, values, and responsibilities related to social science research” the American Sociological Association has a current initiative on teaching ethics across the curriculum<sup>4</sup>. Thus, while the overall program Learning Outcomes are necessarily broad enough to accommodate both disciplines, they do so in ways that reflect the national norms within each discipline. Importantly multiple sections of the same courses (eg. Cultural Anthropology) have common Learning Outcomes.

The primary means by which the faculty assess whether students are meeting the Student Learning Outcomes set out by the faculty is through written products generated through the Research Methods/Ethnographic Methods and Research Seminar courses in each discipline. In the first course students complete a research proposal; in the second a research paper which is also reflected in a research poster. In keeping with the ASA’s assertion that “(a)ssessment

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<sup>2</sup> Like many institutions, including my own, the department discontinued the Bachelor of Arts degree program due to declining interest in the Foreign Language requirement.

<sup>3</sup> Jackson, Palmyra, Karina Nogueras, and Daniel Ginsburg. 2017. “A Review of Undergraduate Learning Outcomes in Anthropology.” American Anthropological Association. Accessed at <http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/FileDownloads/pdfs/Learning%20outcomes%20report.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.asanet.org/teaching-learning/faculty/teaching-ethics-throughout-curriculum/>

requires attention to outcomes but also and equally to the experiences that lead to those outcomes<sup>5</sup>” the faculty teaching these courses have clearly given a great deal of attention to how the various assignments/exams in the course contribute to students’ learning. For example, the SOC 3140 Research Methods course has a very deliberate set of tasks associated with it which each contribute in one way or another to the mastery of the learning outcomes of the program.

In reviewing the self-study documents it is unclear that the faculty have established agreed upon criteria to evaluate achievement of intended program outcomes. It appears that the faculty have not established agreed upon bench marks for whether students have mastered each of the learning outcomes. It is typical in most assessment plans with which I have had experience to establish a benchmark that reflects whether the program is meeting its goals (eg. 70% of our graduates will have achieved mastery of SLO1 as reflected by a score of 4 or above on the final capstone paper). While establishing this level of specificity feels like just bean counting, in my experience at two institutions this is what has been required during SACS reviews. Thus while I expect that the faculty “know it when they see it”, I am not convinced that sufficient evidence is being provided for future such reviews.

Further, it appears the data which the university is collecting from the programs represents the assessment of the faculty teaching these capstone courses rather than data that reflect the conclusions of the program faculty as a whole. This is not in keeping with what I understand to be accepted standards in assessment practices. For example, it is typical to have written products produced by students evaluated by a committee of program faculty rather than the faculty member who taught the course.

Like most of us the department does not have systematic data on where graduates are going and how their experience at UTC has contributed to their life outcomes. This is a common problem in higher education and one which we must all grapple with in the near future, given the increasing demands by state legislatures to justify our programs and expenditures.

These concerns notwithstanding, the Department does appear to be making good use of various types of evaluative data to improve its programs on an ongoing basis. The self-study points to a number of curriculum revisions that have resulted from faculty assessments of what students are producing in their courses. In my mind, no assessment data are worth collecting if they are not going to be used to make improvements. Having served on a number of College or University level assessment feedback committees, my experience has been that this is the part of the process that most often gets forgotten.

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<sup>5</sup> ASA Task Force on Assessing the Undergraduate Sociology Major. 2015. “Creating an Effective Assessment Plan for the Sociology Major.” American Sociological Association. p. 6 Accessed at [http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Assessment\\_Final\\_Copy\\_2005.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/sites/default/files/savvy/documents/teaching/pdfs/Assessment_Final_Copy_2005.pdf)

## **PART 2 – Curriculum**

The undergraduate program includes a Bachelor of Science degree in Sociology & Anthropology. The SAG faculty also offer a minor in Geography, which will be discussed later in this section. Within the BS degree program students choose to pursue either a Sociology or an Anthropology concentration. In the current environment of higher education in which numbers of majors is a vital component of perceived health of a program, the department is using the combined degree program structure effectively. That said they are combined in name only; the only cross-pollination across the disciplines is that students in both concentrations are encouraged to complete the SOCI 2500 course for their Statistics General Education requirement. The two concentrations effectively act as free-standing degree programs.

### ***Anthropology:***

The Anthropology concentration requires 33-34 hours of Anthropology courses. Following the school of thought in contemporary American Anthropology, the Anthropology concentration includes courses across all four fields of Anthropology – biological, cultural, archaeology, and linguistics. Rather than offer one four field Introduction to Anthropology course, the department has four 1000-level Introductory courses, one for each subfield. Anthropology majors are expected to complete three of the four. This creative solution to the problem of introducing students to the four subfields is possible because three of the four courses count in the General Education requirements, insuring adequate enrollment.

All Anthropology students complete the Ethnographic Methods course, the Anthropological Theory course, and the senior-level Research Seminar. In addition to these major requirements and 12 credits of elective Anthropology courses, the program also requires an additional field or laboratory course – Media and Communication Laboratory or Archaeological Field Methods. This strikes me as a particular strength of the program as it ensures that students gain hands-on experience within their program. The incorporation of student assistants in the Mysteries of the Human Journey and Biological Anthropology courses, the Archaeology lab, and other independent studies reported also provide important hands-on experiences for students.

The Methods and Research Seminar classes appear to be well-designed. Students with whom I met in the Research Seminar were articulate in describing the research proposals they had developed in the first semester and the work they were currently doing to collect and analyze their data. Students were quite enthusiastic about their projects. The fact that these courses are taught by the same faculty member likely aids students in their productivity on their projects. That said, the faculty in both Sociology and Anthropology report that this is a draining sequence to teach, which is not surprising as it is akin to leading multiple research projects across the course of a year.

As the American Anthropological Association<sup>6</sup> notes, Anthropology programs' strengths vary in their representation of faculty across the four sub-fields and therefore in the degree to which each subfield is a strength. The UTC Anthropology faculty are relatively diverse in their representation across the four fields. That said, it is clear from the distribution of independent studies, there is a strong interest in Archaeology among students which has been met by only one archaeologist, Dr. Honerkamp. Dr. Honerkamp's upcoming retirement will leave a significant gap in the training for students as well as leadership of the Institute.

Sample syllabi for core courses indicate rigorous and appropriate coverage of their subject areas, and clearly present expectations to students.

***Sociology:***

The Sociology concentration within the BS degree begins with the ubiquitous Introduction to Sociology course. This course and the Sociology of the Family course were cited most often by Sociology majors as the mechanism by which they were recruited into the degree program. Students also complete a course in Diversity in American Society, Modern Social Theory, Research Methods, and the senior-level Research Seminar. To address the weaknesses in writing which many institutions of higher education observe among their students, the program faculty have worked with the faculty in the English department and now require ENGL 2830-Writing for the Social Sciences. This is a recent innovation, which will hopefully bear fruit. Students also complete 15 credit hours of Sociology electives.

The Methods and Research Seminar classes follow the same format as the Anthropology sequence, with students working on a research proposal in the first semester and following that project through data collection, analysis, and writing in the Research Seminar. This is in keeping with how many Sociology programs, including my own, incorporate research into a capstone experience for students. I was not able to meet with the Sociology Research Seminar students to judge their progress on this process. As stated above, the faculty members teaching the Sociology and Anthropology Methods and Research Seminar courses report that this is a draining sequence to teach, which is not surprising as it is akin to leading multiple research projects across the course of a year.

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<sup>6</sup> Jackson, Palmyra, Karina Noguera, and Daniel Ginsburg. 2017. "A Review of Undergraduate Learning Outcomes in Anthropology." American Anthropological Association. Accessed at <http://s3.amazonaws.com/rdcms-aaa/files/production/public/FileDownloads/pdfs/Learning%20outcomes%20report.pdf>

The Sociology undergraduate degree concentration reflects most of the recommendations for undergraduate programs made by the American Sociological Association<sup>7</sup>, particularly those regarding program structure and sequencing of courses.

Sample syllabi for core courses indicate rigorous and appropriate coverage of their subject areas, and clearly present expectations to students.

### ***Geography***

The Geography minor requirements introduce students to the two principle subfields of Geography through its GEOG 1010 Physical Geography and GEOG 1040 Cultural Geography courses. Students then complete 12 other credit hours of Geography courses. Students have a wide range of upper division courses from which to choose, which is impressive given the fact that there are just two faculty members offering these courses.

The Geography courses are well-integrated into the University curriculum as a whole. Three introductory level geography courses are included within the options to fulfill the General Education requirements. These courses and/or the 2210 Maps and Mapping course are required for degree completion in nine degree programs across campus, including programs in Education and in Environmental Sciences, and are course options within two other degree programs. Upper division Geography courses are required options within two other degree programs and elective options in three degree programs and three minors external to the program. I note in particular the contribution of geography faculty to the BS in Geographic and Cartographic Sciences program on campus, nine Geography courses are listed among the curricular requirements of that degree program.

Sample syllabi for core courses indicate rigorous and appropriate coverage of their subject areas, and clearly present expectations to students.

### ***Overall:***

The department appears to be regularly engaged in revising its curricula to ensure its currency and that student needs are met. A number of significant and appropriate revisions were made to both the Sociology and Anthropology curricula in 2013-2014 mostly to streamline the curricula for students. These included revisions to ensure community college students could appropriately transfer in courses, reducing the number of theory courses required in the sociology curriculum, providing more flexibility in 3000 level Sociology requirements, deleting the four field Introduction to Anthropology course from the Anthropology requirements, deleting three credits of Introductory-level Sociology from the Anthropology curricula, and

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<sup>7</sup> McKinney, Kathleen, Carla B. Howery, Kerry J. Strand, Edward L. Kain, and Catherine White Berheide. 2004. "Liberal Learning and the Sociology Major Updated: Meeting the Challenge of Teaching Sociology in the Twenty-First Century." Washington, DC: American Sociological Association. Accessed at [http://www.asanet.org/images/teaching/docs/pdf/Lib\\_Learning\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.asanet.org/images/teaching/docs/pdf/Lib_Learning_FINAL.pdf).

deleting a lab requirement. All of these changes keep the program in line with expectations in their respective disciplines, while assisting students in moving effectively through the curriculum towards graduation. The addition of a writing course requirement for Sociology students seems a logical decision to address a common issue observed within Sociology programs nationwide. The department intends to conduct another review of its curricula this coming year.

The Sociology, Anthropology, and Geography curricula all allow students the opportunity to earn credit for participating in research projects and/or individual studies. Sociology and anthropology both also allow students to earn credit for completing and/or internship or thesis. The data indicate that students in Anthropology are taking advantage of a wide range of these opportunities and are being supported in doing so by all of the faculty to varying degrees. As is the case at my own institution, the Archaeology lab in particular tends to involve a large number of students, but Dr. Miles and Dr. Ashmore have also created innovative opportunities for students through their courses. In Sociology Dr. LeMoyne is carrying the lion's share of the load in this respect. Most of the faculty in Sociology are tenure-track faculty and as such are just becoming known to the students. Given my interactions with them, I expect they will be leaders in this regard as well. The senior full professor in Sociology does not appear to work individually with students. The uneven distribution of this kind of work with Sociology students may explain in part why the students seem relatively unaware that such opportunities exist. The Geography faculty are both involved in individual work with students and express an interest in continuing to build their program.

The department faculty are engaged in a number of initiatives through their teaching that offer impactful learning experiences for students. Four courses within the department are certified as experiential learning courses (ANTH 3350, GEOG 2210, SOC 3140, and SOC 4140). Within Anthropology, opportunities for laboratory analysis in Archaeology have been provided by Dr. Honerkamp. These experiences as well as the field schools provided by Dr. Honerkamp each summer have likely contributed to the strong employment patterns among students graduating with an interest in Archaeology. I note in the self-study that undergraduate students are given the opportunity to gain field school supervision experience; this is a unique benefit of being in a department without a graduate degree where graduate students would take all of these opportunities. Hands-on experience during university years is critical to gaining employment in the Cultural Resource Management field, and job opportunities are readily available even for graduates of undergraduate programs.

Another opportunity provided by the lack of graduate students is to the option to act as course assistants in the Mysteries of the Human Journey course and in the biological anthropology laboratory. These opportunities provided by Dr. Miles and Dr. Ashmore provide students with invaluable experiences as leaders of active learning. Several students spoke highly of these experiences.

A review of the Sociology project topics also indicates that a number of students have branched out from traditional “additional reading” projects to applied work which has the potential to benefit community agencies. This includes work with the Chattanooga Office of Probation & Parole, the Women’s Fund of Greater Chattanooga, the Health Department, the Urban league, etc.).

Although now ubiquitous in geography curricula, I would be remiss if I were not to mention the important training in Geographic Information Systems provided by Geography faculty. This is an important data analysis skill in many fields including Geography, but also Archaeology, Urban Planning, Environmental Science, Health Management, etc. In addition, Dr. Laing’s innovative development of Google Earth exercises for five of his upper division courses is noteworthy and likely leads to engaged conversations within his courses. He has given presentations on his approach at professional conferences and, in this way, is impacting pedagogy within the discipline.

The UTC SAG faculty have only recently begun offering online courses and online enrollments have steadily grown as the offerings have expanded. This is consistent with national trends. I noted in the Spring and Fall 2018 course schedule that the online courses were mostly fully enrolled, indicating strong interest in these courses. If our own experience is any indication, the Department will likely find that it will need to consider how much it plans to invest in online courses. Once students get the flexibility of some online courses, they tend to ask (if not expect) more.

### **PART 3 – Student Experience**

During my visit I met with the senior Anthropology Research Seminar students, as well as an interdisciplinary group of students enrolled in an upper-division Environmental Sociology course. The senior Anthropology students with whom I met expressed strong enthusiasm for the program and its faculty. Most were engaged in research projects, work in the Archaeology lab, and/or applied work off campus (eg. a local museum, the zoo, etc). The students found the program requirements to be clear, most had at least one identified faculty member who they could describe as a mentor, and the overall assessment of their experience within the program was quite positive. I left with the impression that the Anthropology students were engaged and had been provided with strong advising.

The Sociology students enrolled in the Environmental Sociology course were considerably more confused regarding program expectations and opportunities than were the Anthropology students. They expressed concerns regarding the advising they were receiving as well as inconsistencies in what they had been told about opportunities such as internships. Unfortunately, because I was not able to meet with the Senior Sociology students I am not able to make a direct comparison between these groups. However a subsequent discussion with the

department chair substantiated my impression that advising in the Sociology program was uneven. I provide some suggestions below as to how this might be addressed.

Perhaps as a result of uneven advising and mentoring, the Anthropology students appear to be more engaged in opportunities outside the classroom as evidenced by the Self Study as well as student reports. Students reported excellent experiences working with the Archaeology lab, the Hunter Museum, and the Zoo, for example. This is likely in part an artifact of the differences in the two disciplines, particularly given the many hands-on experiences available through Archaeology. Even so, the data suggest that the Anthropology faculty are more involved in providing opportunities to students outside of a traditional classroom setting than are the Sociology faculty. These opportunities are more unevenly distributed among the Sociology faculty. I expect this will change as the junior faculty develop relationships and projects in the community with which students can become involved. For the time being, however, attention needs to be paid to making Sociology students aware of opportunities which do exist and of the processes by which they can avail themselves of these opportunities. In the absence of a close mentoring relationship with a faculty member, Sociology students may be missing out on discussions which would lead to these kinds of pursuits.

Support services provided on campus were rated by students and alumni as quite strong. One alum declared that he would not have graduated without the assistance of the Writing center. Another student remarked favorably on the support provided by Disability Services. All of the students with whom I spoke were pleased with the new Library and the services it has to offer.

#### **PART 4 – Faculty**

The Department is fortunate to have a well-qualified faculty. All but one hold the PhD and that one exception is a senior lecturer in Sociology who is working on his dissertation towards a PhD in Sociology. To my knowledge there is only one part-time, temporary faculty member, hired specifically for his expertise in family services.<sup>8</sup> The faculty are diverse with respect to gender, ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation. This is an asset for the department in recruiting and mentoring of students.

As stated above, the Anthropology faculty are relatively diverse in specialty areas for a small group. This provides students with a diverse group of course offerings and opportunities to work one-on-one and in research groups with faculty. The upcoming retirement of Dr. Honerkamp will leave a significant gap if not quickly addressed, preferably with a well-experienced, potentially senior hire. Indeed, given the clear interest among students, the potential for expansion, and the employment outcomes for these students, I would recommend that a second Archaeology tenure-track position be allotted to the department. The workload which Dr.

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<sup>8</sup> I found it noteworthy that he was included in the visit and applaud the department for doing so.

Honerkamp has maintained is unrealistic for most people and students would benefit from training from more than one person. There is clear room for expansion in this area and archaeological training does lead to a clear career path for students with the undergraduate degree, as is evidenced by the job placement data provided in the self-study. This is an investment worth making.

There are currently one Professor and one Associate Professor among the Sociology faculty. To my knowledge the tenure-track faculty have not been exposed directly to the conflicts that have occurred between these program faculty; however, they are feeling the impacts of the fact that the only two tenured faculty cannot be in the same room. It is reasonable to expect that this places more pressure on tenure track Sociology faculty to fill in the cracks when it comes to service. There is no sense of cohesion among the Sociology faculty. Given the non-renewal of the one of the Sociology tenure-track faculty, the program will experience yet another change in staffing in the coming year. There is a feeling of uncertainty among the tenure-track faculty which is not surprising. The senior department faculty across all three disciplines will need to cultivate the remaining two Sociology tenure-track faculty so as not to lose them as well. Both appear to be quite talented and ready to make good contributions to the program.

The department's Rank, Tenure, and Reappointment criteria appear to be appropriately rigorous and appropriate. I applaud the department for its regular peer review of faculty teaching. If done correctly, this can be a formative process for both the individual being reviewed and the reviewer. The four peer-reviewed article expectation for tenure and/or promotion to associate and six for promotion to full professor are appropriate in my opinion, given the department's teaching load. I also applaud the department for recognizing the importance of quality of publications, not simply quantity.

The department recently revised its EDO Performance expectations in light of the recent merger with Criminal Justice and Legal Assistant Studies. I applaud its setting of baseline expectations for Meeting Expectations. Especially with regard to Teaching and Service this baseline allows the Chair to have a meaningful conversation with department faculty who are simply not pulling their weight. That said, I do think the baseline for Meets Expectations under Research could allow a faculty member to be evaluated as Meeting Expectations having not published an article nor even attempted to publish an article nor presented a paper at a conference in 10 years. I wonder if the department would find this as truly meeting expectations if it were part of a multi-year pattern (as opposed to just for one-year). For example, in my own department a faculty member on a 4/4 load is expected to present conference papers, publish book reviews or encyclopedia entries, and the like to "meet expectations".

The work of the department faculty clearly reflects the university's strategic mission to link with the community. I note in particular, Dr. Guo's Veteran's Affairs funding for his Wheelchair Tai Chi program. Dr. Laing's and Dr. Trivette's regular presentations to community groups and Dr. McCarragher's work on the Tennessee Clear Water Network Board are two other

examples. As noted above there are also numerous examples of department faculty encouraging applied work which directly benefits community organizations through students' independent studies and internships. In her first year at UTC, Dr. Ward is already making connections with community organizations to establish internship opportunities and research connections.

## **PART 5 – Learning Resources**

Although not a point of extensive conversation, I do have the sense that the department chair has a good sense of the strengths and weaknesses of the department's facilities and equipment. One point which came out over and over again from faculty and was also addressed by the chair is the unfortunate bilocality of the department's faculty. Locating the Criminal Justice and Legal Assistant faculty in a different building than the SAG faculty does not help to promote departmental unity. In fact it cannot help but do the opposite. It also impedes the efficient operation of the department. The Department Chair, for example, has an office in the building housing the SAG faculty but has to walk across campus to the building housing the Criminal Justice faculty in order to have any meetings with them. I did not have the opportunity to meet with those faculty, but I can't help but wonder if they feel they have direct contact with her than the SAG faculty, and how that is impacting them – especially those on the tenure track.

There are a number of other issues with the physical layout of the faculty that are not ideal. For example, some faculty are housed within the department suite with the administrative assistant and the chair, while others are housed in shared office space. The only space for meetings is also a space used by temporary faculty and student groups. Addressing these issues would obviously involve significant renovations of the existing building or a move to a new facility.

Dr. Honerkamp did report some issues with moisture in the collections storage area. This is of concern, as maintaining collections in an appropriate setting is an ethical responsibility of archaeologists who work in the field.

The relatively new UTC library facility is impressive. The location of most students support resources within this building is in keeping with the current trend in academic library services. During my visit the library was quite active with students coming and going and many working on computers throughout the space. A quick review of the library holdings suggests that they are adequate to support an active research agenda, especially when interlibrary loan is now so readily available. Alumni and current students reported that the library staff, the office of disability services and the writing center were quite helpful.

## **PART 6 – Support**

The state operating budget for SAG is small, particularly for a department with the equipment needs of an Archaeology lab. Although I understand that the Institute for Archaeology is a non-profit separate from the University, the Archaeology lab space is used for teaching and therefore maintenance of the space and the equipment is critical to the teaching mission of the program. In addition the small operating budget provides little funding for faculty participation in professional conferences, which is especially critical to those on the tenure-track. Given the already low salaries of the faculty, a small travel allowance can also impede the recruitment and retention of good faculty.

The fact that Dr. Honerkamp has funded his field schools on grants from the Georgia Department of Natural Resources has saved both the department and the students from bearing the additional expense associated with these experiences. These kinds of resources may or may not be available to the next occupant of his position, depending on where future field schools are held. If the department were to obtain a second tenure-track line in Archaeology it might be advantageous to provide some more locally based field experiences, which – while cheaper – might not be covered by funding agencies. Many universities have course fees attached to their field schools; my own as just recently switched to an operating budget for field school (currently \$4000).

The senior faculty report disappointment with the support provided for research at the university-level. In their opinion, the research support office staff are overworked as a result of understaffing. Faculty described instances in which deadlines were missed as a result of this understaffing.

## **PART 7 – Summary Recommendations**

### **Program Strengths**

- The SAG faculty and programs are well integrated with the UTC Mission and Strategic Plan, in its goals to “provide meaningful learning experiences; inspire, nurture scholarship and discovery; ensure stewardship of resources through strategic alignment and investments; and embrace diversity and inclusion as a path to excellence and societal change.”<sup>9</sup> Both concentration areas within the degree program provide students with opportunities to complete internships and research projects. The faculty have also developed courses that involve hands-on experiences. I note several exciting

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<sup>9</sup> [https://www.utc.edu/strategic-plan/index.php?utm\\_source=utc&utm\\_medium=website&utm\\_content=primarynav-link&utm\\_campaign=strategic-plan](https://www.utc.edu/strategic-plan/index.php?utm_source=utc&utm_medium=website&utm_content=primarynav-link&utm_campaign=strategic-plan)

collaborations between community organizations and department faculty and students. As detailed above, faculty are engaged in research and outreach efforts directly connected to local social and economic issues. It is particularly noteworthy that the “younger” faculty seem to have quickly developed connections in the community and are establishing themselves to make long term impacts in ways that will both support their own research agendas but also improve the quality of life in the region.

- The Department has interdisciplinary connections through teaching, research, and governance. As such, the Department stands in stark contrast to the “siloeed” Department in which faculty and students are unaware of other programs’ similar interests or initiatives, or where unit resources are narrowly applied at the expense of collaborative opportunities.
- The Department makes substantial contributions to the University’s General Education curriculum, offering ten courses which meet General Education requirements. Most of these courses are taught by fulltime, permanent faculty. A review of the online Spring 2018 schedule indicated good enrollments in these courses. I am particularly pleased to see the Sociology Statistics course as a General Education offering. In my experience students learn Statistics best through an applied course, rather than strictly from a math perspective.
- The department appears to be making good use of its personnel resources. A review of the Spring 2018 indicated a large proportion of full or nearly full course sections.
- The Student Learning Outcomes of the SAG programs are appropriate and reflect those of the discipline’s national organizations. The Sociology and Anthropology program’s capstone research project during the senior year is an engaging and appropriate means by which to assess the program. The faculty teaching those courses are highly committed to student learning.
- Alumni and students in both concentration areas report that faculty are committed and caring. Undergraduate students report feeling highly supported by the Department, in a number of ways. Most impressive was my conversation with the Anthropology undergraduates. A number of students related instances in which a faculty member had personally reached out to them and provided the encouragement needed to succeed in their academic work.

### **Areas for Improvement**

- In their Self Study, the program faculty identified a need to grow the major. That said, the number of students in Anthropology is fairly typical of what I have seen on the two campuses on which I have worked. In my experience, however, the number of Sociology students would normally be higher. These are challenging times to recruit students into

Liberal Arts degrees but my suggested targets would be 75-100 in Anthropology and 125-150 in Sociology. To that end, I would suggest...

- Doing a “pitch” of the major to each Introductory-level class just prior to the registration period each semester. In my experience, having another faculty member do this pitch can be particularly effective, rather than simply the instructor of record. The pitch should include “what you can do with a Sociology/Anthropology degree”.
  - Sponsoring high profile events (interesting speakers, film series, etc) and providing material about the major at these events.
  - Ensure that undeclared advisors are familiar with your major and related job opportunities, and also why your Introductory-level courses are useful for students of varying majors.
  - Organize an alumni speaker series.
- Tenure-track faculty are approaching the promotion and tenure process with varying levels of understanding of the expectations for promotion and tenure. The recent merger with Criminal Justice has resulted in a change in expectations and a new group of senior colleagues, who – some tenure track faculty worry – may have different expectations of the SAG faculty than those with which they have been accustomed. The recent non-renewal of a tenure track faculty member has also generated some concern, not surprisingly. The mentorship program seems to be uneven in its impacts, with some faculty developing strong relationships with their mentors and others having little to no contact with their mentor. To address these concerns, I suggest....
    - The Department Chair and the Chair of the Rank, Tenure, and Reappointment Committee annually meet with the group of Tenure-Track faculty to discuss expectations and procedures related to the tenure review process. By the time an individual goes through tenure review they should have this “talk” memorized, which is all to the better as they can mentor people behind them. While not a substitute for individual meetings, a group discussion ensures that everyone feels they are being provided with the same information.
    - The Department Chair check in regularly with mentors to ensure that they are meeting with their mentees. Ask that mentoring activities be included on a faculty member’s annual report. This will hold individuals’ accountable for this commitment. Also check in with junior faculty to assess their perception of the mentoring relationship.

- Establish the expectation that all tenured faculty should be informally mentoring junior faculty (whether assigned as mentors or not). Ask that mentoring activities be included on a faculty member's annual report.
- Specifically discuss progress towards tenure during the annual evaluation process, if this is not being done already (I assume it is).
- While undergraduates were happy with the quality of their relationships with faculty, Sociology students reported some inconsistency in the levels of expertise of their assigned advisors. These students mentioned mistakes in advising and did not appear to have developed mentoring relationships with their advisors. To address this issue, I suggest...
  - In the absence of “professional” advisors, one must assign faculty who are good as advisors. A poor advisor can be worse than no advisor. However, this typically leads to a workload inequity which must be addressed.
  - Group advising might meet the needs of some students. Good group advising would be preferable to poor advising.
  - Encourage faculty to take a few minutes at the beginning or end of a class to cover some advising points, particularly as major deadlines approach (eg. deadline to apply to graduate, advising week, registration, etc). Faculty can also cover the benefits of internships and other extracurricular activities in a few minutes of course time. (In my own Statistics course, I show statistics on the benefits of internships for employment just before our internship information session. It's a statistics example and an advising point.)
- Students in both concentrations expressed a desire for more elective options. Students in Anthropology specifically identified Osteology and Linguistics as courses they would like to take. Students in Sociology were more concerned with flexibility in course schedules to accommodate work schedules. These students mentioned online and evening courses as options they would like to see expanded, as well as multiple sections of electives offered in different time slots. To address these courses...
  - Expanding elective options in Anthropology can be difficult as faculty positions are rare. One option is to hire a part-timer or pay someone from another department to teach an occasional overload. For example, we have hired a faculty member from Kinesiology to teach Osteology on an overload basis. But the reality is we can't offer everything. The department needs to make decisions on expanding elective options based on enrollments in other courses.

- As noted above, the expansion of online courses will meet the needs of some students but needs to be approached carefully. In my experience the more courses you offer the more students come to believe that they should be able to complete the degree online. This may or may not be a direction the department wants to move in.
- The evening courses offered in Sociology during the Spring 2018 appeared to have experienced healthy enrollments. Thus a similar number of evening courses is probably sustainable in future semesters. The Department might experiment with whether additional evening courses yield similar levels of enrollments. That said, if one wants to retain students who truly need all online and/or evening courses then the required courses would need to be rotated into these time slots as well.
- Concern was expressed by both senior and junior faculty about a lack of cohesiveness between the SAG and CRMJ faculty. Senior faculty in particular expressed concern that the lack of a single physical space for the department faculty might create a new divisiveness in the department.
  - The University should prioritize finding one physical space in which both faculties could be combined.
  - Until that time, the chair and other senior faculty must make it a priority to meet regularly as a group, preferably both formally and informally, to ensure that faculty from both groups get to know each other. A brown bag series of work in progress might be one mechanism to accomplish this goal.
- The pending retirement of Nicholas Honerkamp presents a potential threat to the Institute for Archaeology as well as to the Anthropology concentration. Dr. Honerkamp has accomplished much over the years with relatively little. There is clearly interest among students and Archaeology is an area in which there are clear employment opportunities. With more faculty offering classes and field/lab training, I expect the Anthropology concentration would grow.
  - The department needs to make a good hire, perhaps bringing in a senior faculty member.
  - And, as I mentioned above, the university would be well-advised to support the hiring of two Archaeology faculty – perhaps one senior and one junior – to allow this aspect of the program to grow.
- While the capstone research project is an appropriate means by which to assess the program outcomes, I was surprised to find that the course instructors themselves were

providing the data for the assessment reports, rather than a committee of program faculty as is the protocol I have experienced on multiple campuses. I was also not made privy to any benchmarks set by the faculty to establish whether the students are meeting programs goals with respect to the Student Learning Outcomes. That said, I don't see any evidence that the program is not in compliance with university-level expectations for conducting assessment.

- I leave it to the university assessment team to conclude whether they are comfortable with the department's assessment process. Future feedback from SACS might require that this process be changed.
- However the data are collected and assessed, the most important point is that the results of the process lead to meaningful change, as necessary. That appears to be happening.

## **IN SUM**

I was impressed with the department's programs and faculty. They have done much with relatively little. The Department is fortunate to have a strong department chair in Dr. Ashmore, who is a strong advocate for the department and its faculty. It was clear from my conversations with her that she has felt keenly the struggles of building cohesion within the group of SAG faculty and now the Criminal Justice and Legal Assistant faculty. She is also quite concerned with maintaining equity while holding all faculty to high standards. It was also clear in my discussions with the faculty that the vast majority hold a high level of commitment to these goals as well.

This is a group of faculty making excellent use of the resources they have to provide quality education to students in and outside of the classroom. Despite heavy teaching loads they have also remained research active and active within their communities. I have no doubt that any infusion of resources to the department would be used in a manner appropriate to the mission of the university and to the betterment of the community.