

WCU Faculty Forum
Scholarship of Teaching and Learning: Course-based Undergraduate Research at WCU
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THE SOCIOLOGY MAJORS PROJECT—The SMP (began Fall 2015, run 5 times)

- Issue: what are the jobs, careers, and ongoing education of sociology alumni from WCU
- What is SMP? A study of sociology alumni from WCU that gives students in 2 sociology courses (SOC of Work; SOC of Organizations) a structured research experience. In phone surveys, alumni are asked about jobs, ongoing education, and careers post-WCU. In five cycles, we have surveyed about 50 sociology alumni who graduated between 2011-2018, who responded to my email request, and volunteered for the study. Roles in work groups include: data collection, entry, analysis, social media promotion, and alumni development.
- The study can be beneficial to multiple constituents (WCU, College, Department, students). But – at this point – students who enroll in each course have benefitted. They reflect on jobs, jobs with a SOC degree, and valued human capital in jobs today. And they obtain a documentable certificate and research role experience for resumes.
- Potential entrepreneurial value for disciplines & universities

The vision for making this project beneficial to all constituents and providing maximum benefits to students has been slow because of the University context, organizational interface with the Foundation, and the IRB.

THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT, ORGANIZATIONAL INTERFACE WITH THE FOUNDATION, AND THE IRB

The University: SCH

- To have course enrollment @ 20 or below, the elective course is offered only once/year in spring

The Foundation

- I never know what to expect each spring (I contact them in winter break)! Staff attrition has been a constant, rules have changed. In 2013, I asked the Foundation and they GAVE us complete data and contact information on all sociology alumni. We contacted alumni directly. Then in 2016/17, the Foundation had to do the initial email blast to alumni for the requested years, and—after they did this—they only gave us names of alumni (no phone, email) afterward. This spring 2019, they only did an email blast to requested alumni and I was told that they OWN the data per an agreement with the University. To obtain ANY contact data on alumni, we have to make a request through the Dean and so on...

The IRB

- Rules have tightened. I began this project filing an IRB in summer when I had more time. Now, IRB wants student CITI certificates in the application that gets filed.
- From the add/drop period, discussion of SMP, students complete the CITI training and give me a certificate, I add them to a new IRB application and submit it, IRB takes 2-3 weeks for review and approval...5 weeks have passed. 7 weeks remain to administer surveys with volunteering alumni, and work individually with each of the 4-5 roles/groups over that time (in addition to meeting to cover the course material).
- Slow progress is being made collecting data and developing roles for SMP. In preparation for each cycle, I refine roles and further develop ideas to bridge the gap between sociology alumni and current students.
- A new SMP cycle begins this spring with the Sociology of Work course. A flyer and syllabus are here—please advise your students who are looking for a structured and documentable research experience to consider this course!