

Sociology

Department and Program Review (2025-2026)

Section 1: Report on Previous Goals & Requests

Previous APR Goal	What Happened
Be responsive to current social events	Sociology faculty, Ken Ruettgers and me (Tom Barry), regularly review academic and popular press articles and books addressing contemporary happenings. The content we review is as expansive as the discipline itself. We track the political economy, politics, entertainment, technology, and culture in the United States and other countries. We incorporated information from these reviews into class lectures and assignments.
Devote more dedicated study and instruction related to the criminal justice system and punitive punishment in the United States	Our intention was to dive deeper into understanding, analyzing, and critiquing the criminal justice system in the United States. We do some of this work in our core offerings of Introduction to Sociology, Sociology of Race, Class, and Gender, and Sociology of Deviance. Due to staffing changes, including loss of a full-time position and me, the only full-time faculty member, taking on department chair responsibilities, we did not have the time to invest the energies to significantly expand our knowledge and instruction in this area.
Engage in regional, national, or international ethnographic experience	Since the previous APR, we lost one of our full-time sociology positions. Prior to the loss of that position, Ken and I visited England, Scotland, Denmark, Norway, and Iceland. Background readings and information gathering was conducted before we visited these countries. Upon return, we met to share information and perspectives about the history, political economy, and culture of these nations and how they compare to the United States.
Put together an annual panel discussion on contemporary social issues	In 2022, Owen Murphy organized an Earth Day event. This event included various presentations by community members and faculty. I organized and led a panel discussion on the intersection of biology, human behavior, and cultural and political perspectives on the use of public land. While I and attendees appreciated the panelists and their contributions, I decided that rather investing in organizing additional panels that I would focus energies on curriculum development and expanding online course offerings.

Section 2: Fulfilling Your Mission

The Social Sciences mission statement is as follows: Social science engages students to create an inclusive environment which fosters personal growth, appreciation of local and global diversity, and critical thinking to understand complete social issues. The general social science mission statement captures the spirit of programs in the Social Sciences department. A few years ago, a mission statement tailored to sociology was developed: Sociology encourages students to apply the sociological perspective and imagination to understanding the diverse social world. This includes applying theories and concepts from the micro to macro level with the objective of advancing an understanding of how individual experiences are influenced by broader historical and cultural forces.

Courses offered through the Sociology program provide students with instruction in sociology. These courses satisfy AAOT and other program and certificate requirements. In addition to fulfilling degree, program, and certificate requirements, sociology courses prepare students for careers in law, medicine, mental health, business, public service, education, and criminal justice. The sociology program is committed to facilitating critical thinking about the interrelationships between individuals and cultural and social forces. Through enhancement of such critical thinking student achieve more objective understandings of human behavior and develop knowledge and skills beneficial to living in a diverse world and working with a diverse population.

At the time of the last APR, sociology faculty included two full-time positions and two part-time positions. Due to decreased course demands resulting from COVID and regional economic conditions, one full-time position was converted to an adjunct position. In addition, one of our part-time faculty took a full-time faculty position at an Oregon university. Since the past cycle, I filled in two terms as department chair while Andria Woodell was taking a sabbatical. Starting in fall 2025, I stepped into the department chair position full-time.

To innovate, respond to student demand, and mitigate teaching burn-out, I moved most of my course offerings online. Student feedback has been positive. Courses are most often enrolled at capacity and student evaluations indicate these classes are appreciated and valued. To address student and college interest in sustainability, I added Sociology of the Environment (SOC 228) to the course offerings.

The result of these changes is that we offer fewer face-to-face sociology course offerings and few offerings on the branch campuses. Ken Ruetters, the adjunct faculty, teaches almost all face-to-face courses.

Over the past two years, Owen Murphy and I instituted the first focus awards, Social Justice and Sustainability respectively, at the college. With these focus awards we hope to make students more aware of the courses in these areas and to increase enrollment in those classes.

Section 3: Fulfillment of College Goals and Initiatives

COCC's mission is to empower students and engage communities through high-quality, equitable and accessible lifelong education. The Board's vision includes a dedication to equity, inclusion, and sustainability.

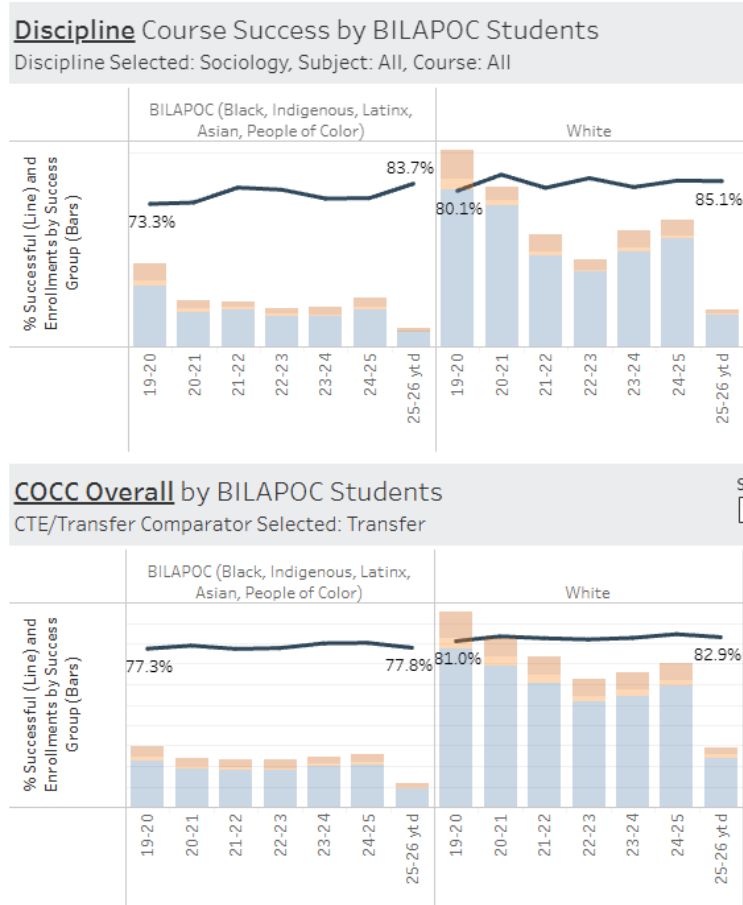
During the COVID years, ranging from when the physical campus closed to a return with social distancing, sociology faculty adapted courses to meet college policy standards and student needs. Moving all classes to remote and online during the early COVID years provided an opportunity to develop technological and instructional skills in these areas.

To serve Redmond, Prineville, and Madras in ways sustainable to faculty and practical for the required travel time, sociology normally offers a hybrid-format sociology class on each of the branch campuses once a year. Offering courses in this format enables us to fulfill the college's mission and vision of providing high-quality and accessible courses at our branch campuses.

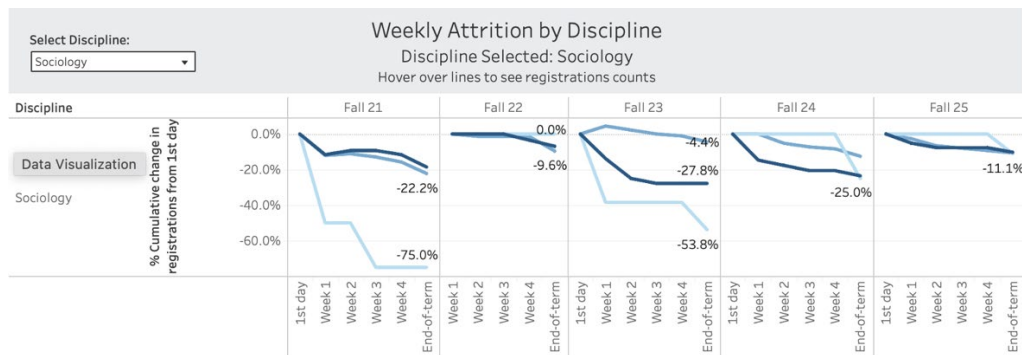
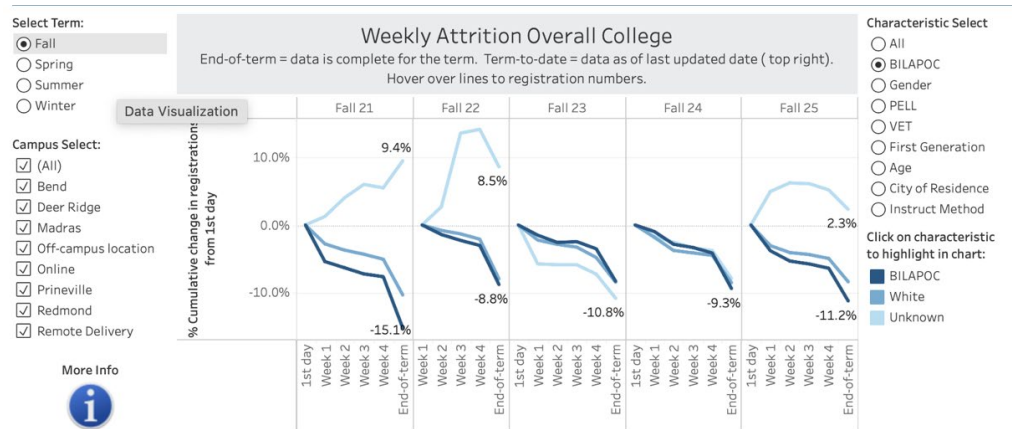
Equity, inclusion, and sustainability are addressed - and values toward them supported - in all sociology courses. A core focus of sociology is on analyzing structured privilege and disadvantage with the goals of fostering empathy and the encouragement of equitable and inclusive policies and social conditions. While SOC 212 (Sociology of Race, Class, and Gender) most directly addresses equity and inclusion, these topics are integrated into all sociology courses. To promote critical thinking about and support for sustainability I established SOC 228 (Sociology of the Environment), a class that explores the links between the environment, politics, the economy, and mass consumption.

Section 4: Diversity and Inclusion Insights

I noted a few trends with BILAPOC and female students taking sociology courses. Since the 2019-2020 academic year, BILAPOC students' course success rate increased 10%, putting their success rate above the college average. During this same time, the success rate for white students also increased (5%). As indicated by the chart, the course success rate for students taking sociology courses is higher than for the general population of transfer students.

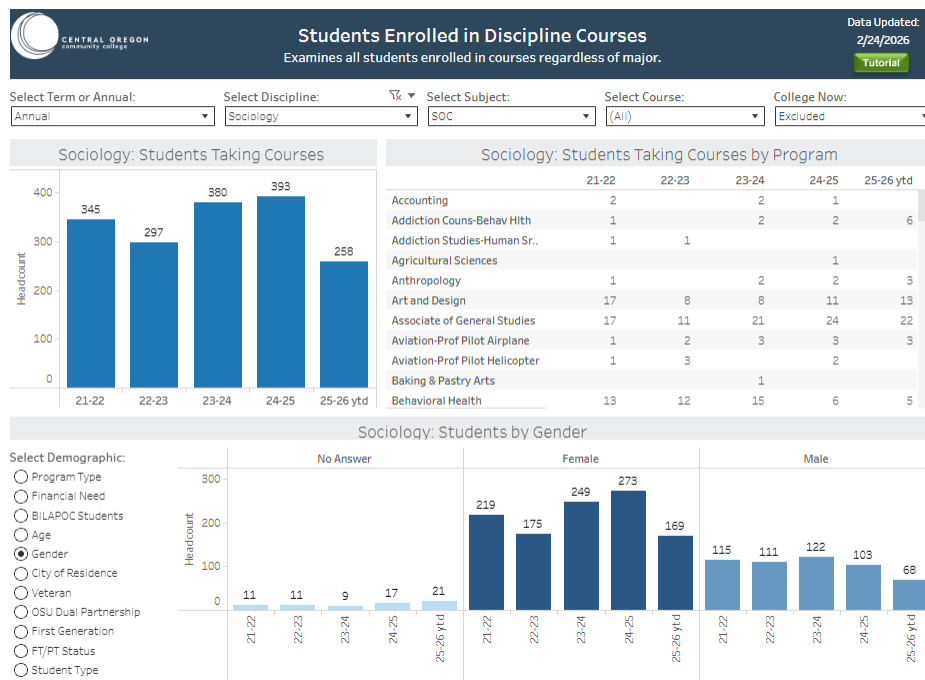
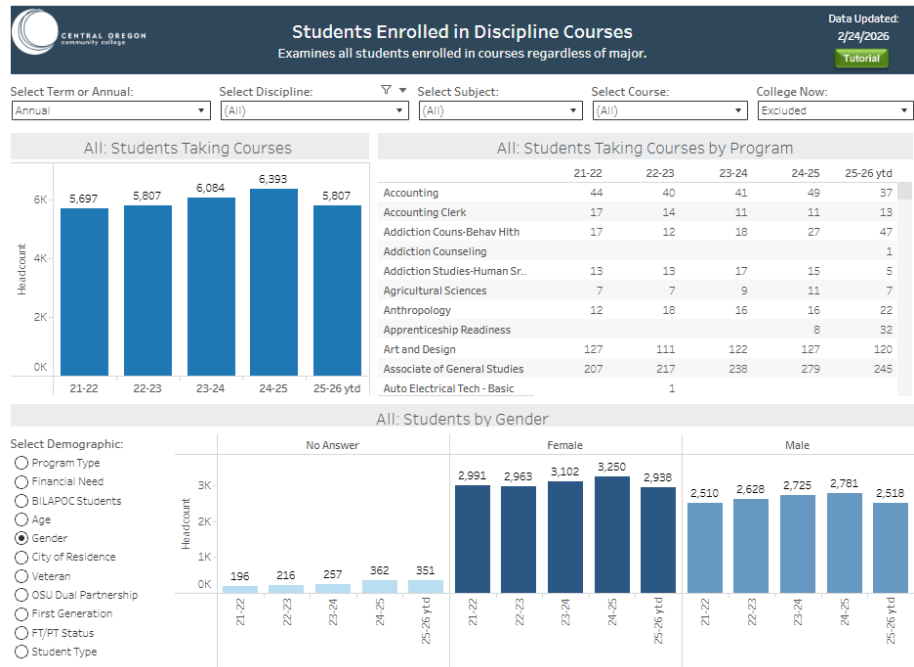


The weekly attrition rate of BILAPOC student taking sociology courses significantly varied the past 5 years. While this is the case, the past three years a positive trend occurred, with course attrition rates dropping from 54% (fall 23), 25% (fall 24), to 11% (fall 25). Fall 2025 attrition rates for students taking sociology courses is the same that for the college overall.



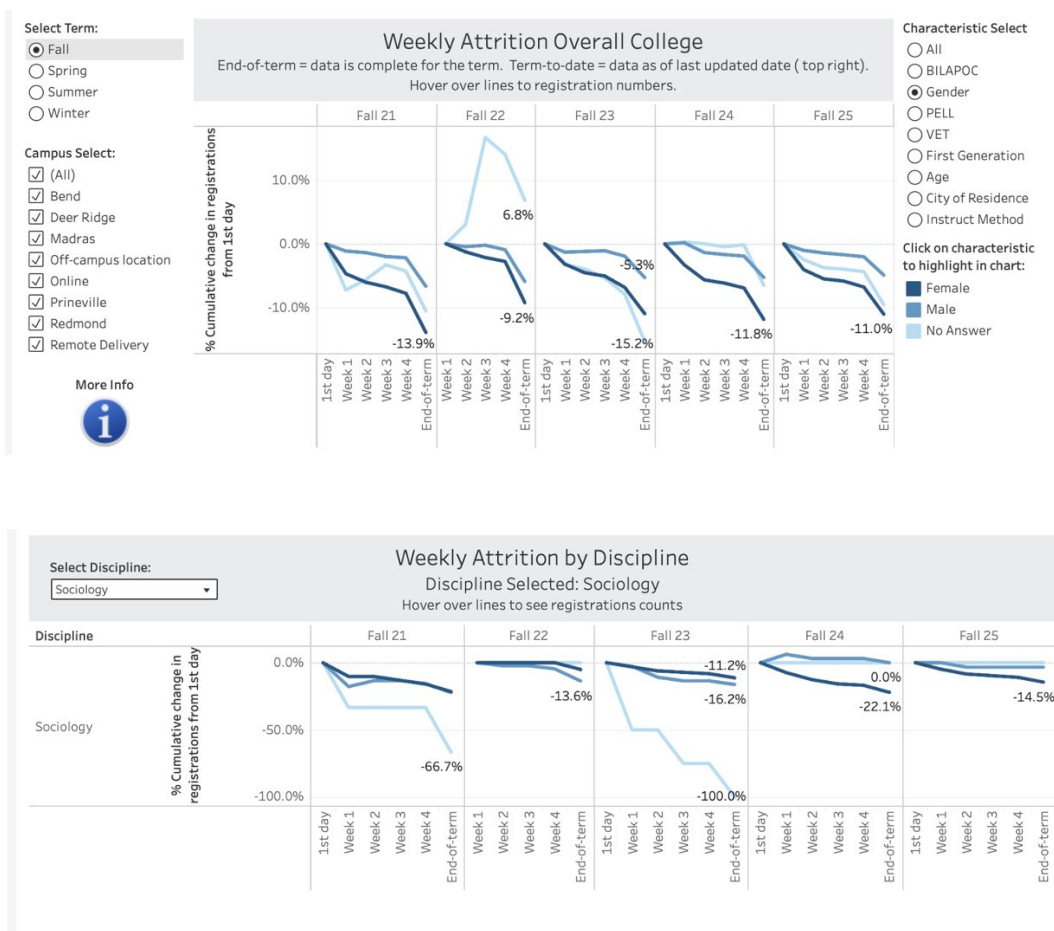
The data does not show the factors related to these changes. Possible reasons are as follows. First, sociological approaches to understanding human behavior and society, including addressing social class, race, and gender inequalities, will likely appeal to students who have experienced these forces. It is possible that interest levels and course success and attrition rates are connected. Second, a cultural shift, starting with the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, may generate student interest and engagement in sociology and its approach to understanding the social world.

COCC's female student population outpaces the male student population. For the 2024-25 academic year, students enrolled in all discipline courses by gender were as follows: female (3250, 51%) and male (2781, 44%). When taking account of only sociology courses, the % of female students increases to 65%; male students constituted 26%.



Finally, female attrition rates across the college are higher than for male students. As with data points on BILAPOC students, it is difficult to establish trends due to the variability across academic years. While that is the case, a 22% attrition rate for female students taking sociology courses in fall 2024 is relatively high (twice the attrition rate for female students across the college). I am uncertain of the reasons for these higher attrition rates for female students. A possible reason I considered whether these rates result from, to some degree, shifting more classes to an online environment. But even with this possibility, I struggle to determine why this would impact attrition rates.

Future DPRs should examine the same data sets for gender and BILAPOC students to better determine trends and, if need be, generate plans of action to ensure underrepresented students are as successful in sociology courses as white and male students.



Section 5: Program Strengths and Accomplishments

Aside from providing course offerings in various formats and campuses to respond to student demand, Ken and I are proud of the continued focus on curriculum development. Both of us work to ensure students are provided with course content that connects their journey to the

broader social world. We believe that our courses facilitate critical thinking and encourage empathy, essential traits for living in a diverse social world and for advancing equity and social justice.

Over the past few years, Ken and I have reviewed podcasts, popular press, and journal articles for content that we believe is relevant and engaging to students. Such content includes podcasts from a female biologist discussing her academic work on sexuality and gender and the myth of meritocracy and articles addressing structured inequality and identity politics.

In spring 2025 I started working with Isabel Engel, Program Facilitator at High Desert Museum, to offer their High Desert Project to our students. After coordinating and planning, we decided to provide this opportunity to students fall 2025. Those enrolled included COCC, OSU-C, and dually enrolled students. The program consisted of five meetings. The first took place at the High Desert Museum. At that meeting, they explored meanings of nature and the wild. The remaining meetings were out in the field, including talking with a Smith Rock Park Ranger and a biologist who was instrumental in reintroducing wolves to Yellowstone National Park. Isabel and I plan on annually offering this program to our students.

Since the last APR, all sociology courses have completed the institutionally required assessments. We designed the assessments to be efficient, to produce valuable feedback, and to facilitate course revision. Based on assessment outcomes, we have adjusted curriculum. A key area of revision is making more concrete understanding of the relationships between individuals and social forces, with an emphasis on challenging the dominant cultural value of individualism.

Section 6: Challenges

The primary challenge we face is staffing shortage. As we moved from two full-time faculty positions to one and two part-time faculty to one, we could no longer provide as many course offerings as possible in various instructional formats.

On March 12, I reviewed the part-time applicant pool. Only one of the seven applicants was qualified or was not seeking to teach only online. I left a message with this applicant but have yet to hear back.

Recruiting, hiring, and keeping faculty from underrepresented populations has been a challenge across departments and programs. In Section 7, I provide a general plan for recruiting my replacement when I retire.

Over the past two years, Ken and I have talked quite a bit about the increased availability and student use of AI. Both of us recognize the ways in which AI searches can facilitate learning. We also recognize the challenges AI poses to ensuring authenticity of student work. Based on our discussions and general investigations into how instructors are adapting, we altered course assignments to be more AI “resistant.” In the past, we would ask questions that required defining and explaining a theory. We altered these questions to require students to apply theories and

concepts to specific events or cases, thus limiting the likelihood of students copying and pasting or overly relying on AI. Ken and I will continue to review and refine our assignments as we learn more about how students use AI.

Section 7: New Goals and Resource Needs

Goal	Timeline for achieving goal	Resources needed
Continuation of curriculum evaluation and revision	Work on this goal will occur throughout this DPR cycle.	None
Each term evaluate mix of instructional formats (online and in-person) to best ensure meeting student needs	Work on this goal will occur throughout this DPR cycle.	None
Increase student success rates for those taking online sociology courses	Work on this goal will occur throughout this DPR cycle.	I will consult with eLearning to determine if course setup and/or requirements might be impacting student success. I will survey online sociology students to gain their perspective on course design, requirements, and other aspects of the course that might influence their success.
Recruitment of faculty from underrepresented groups	During the 2027-2028 and 2028-2029 academic years, I will engage in conversations with faculty and the Diversity and Inclusion Office about recruiting for a full-time tenure track position. I plan on retiring after spring term 2029. With planning and outreach, my hope is the we can recruit and hire a faculty of color or faculty member from an underrepresented group.	I will collaborate with the Department of Diversity and Inclusion to increase the visibility of the position. I will also explore putting the position opening on listserves and publications that market to underrepresented faculty.