

Statement to the Florida Board of Governors on the Proposal to Remove SYG 2000 Principles of Sociology from the General Education Core Course Options

We, the undersigned chairs of Departments of Sociology, or departments where sociology programs are housed, within Florida's public universities, write to strongly object to the removal of SYG 2000 Principles of Sociology course from the state's list of general education core course options. This course, often listed under the titles of Introduction to Sociology or Introductory Sociology, is a foundational course in a social science discipline that has been an integral part of higher education for nearly two centuries.

Sociology is the science that seeks to understand the social causes and consequences of human behavior. It seeks to identify patterns of organization and change in social life. As such, it is concerned with a wide range of issues, including occupations and work, knowledge and technology, aging and the lifecycle, population dynamics and migration, crime and deviance, and the social dimensions of law and medicine, to name only a few. Students have long gravitated to introductory sociology courses because they understand that they will gain a broad perspective on the social forces that influence their lives and life chances. This is the intrinsic benefit that introductory sociology brings to the core of general education, and it is also what makes it an important component of the civic literacy that we have defined as a goal of higher education.

The knowledge and skill sets that come from the study of sociology (for example, critical thinking, communication, data analysis and information literacy) are important resources for students confronting an ever-changing job market. The value of these skills has been recognized by such tech giants as Apple and Microsoft, as well as employers in health services, marketing research, and many other fields. The exam that determines entry to medical school (MCAT) contains sociology questions because the medical profession recognizes that this knowledge is fundamental to good health care. Coursework in sociology is recommended as preparation for passing this important exam and its removal from the list of general education options could delay progression to graduation. Students preparing for the LSAT exam have a similar motivation to take a sociology course.

At the same time, the value attached to introductory sociology by students has been recognized in other fields through its inclusion as a common prerequisite in degree programs such as social work, public health, and nursing. A major reduction in introductory sociology course offerings is likely to put pressure on students trying to complete their degree requirements and could also result in delayed graduations.

For all of these reasons, SYG2000 has been a very popular general education choice among students across the SUS. For example, annual enrollment in the course averages about 2,000 at the University of Central Florida, 1,700 at the University of South Florida, 1,600 at the University of Florida, 1,200 at Florida State University, 1,000 at Florida Atlantic University, and 850 at Florida International University. Removal of SYG2000 from the list of options from which

students can choose will not only reduce viewpoint diversity in the general education curriculum, but it may also have negative consequences for the SUS that are not as obvious. Sociology faculty bring in millions of dollars of external funding in the form of grants from the National Science Foundation, the National Institute of Health, and other federal funding sources. Highly productive sociology faculty are already being recruited by universities in other states, and the loss of undergraduate tuition revenue associated with SYG2000 may make it more difficult for departments to recruit and retain faculty in the future.

We recognize that the removal of introductory sociology from the core curriculum does not mean that the course cannot be taught; we will continue to offer it. But a major reduction in the number of sections we offer will inevitably result in far fewer students benefiting from a sociological education and an impoverishment of the general education curriculum overall.

We respectfully request that SYG 2000 Principles of Sociology be reinstated in the General Education Core Curriculum.

Sincerely,

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