



"As One Who Serves" ("Ut Qui Ministrat").

Together *They* Serve:
Department of Sociology & Social Studies External Review Report

July 8, 2026

Prepared by

Dr. Kimberley Ducey, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Winnipeg

Dr. Mavis Morton, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
University of Guelph

Dr. Sean Tucker, Professor (Human Resource Management), Faculty of Business Administration,
University of Regina

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1. Land Acknowledgement

The University of Regina and its federated colleges are on Treaty 4 and Treaty 6, the territories of the nêhiyawak, Anihšīnāpēk, Dakota, Lakota, and Nakoda Peoples, and the homeland of the Michif/Métis Nation.

2. Other Acknowledgements

The Review Team extends its sincerest appreciation for the warm hospitality and generous assistance offered by the Provost, V-P Academic, V-P Research, and Dean of Arts. We are especially grateful for the kind welcome, hospitality, and attention we received from the Department Head, Dr. Henry Chow, who generously guided us during our visit. We also offer our deepest appreciation to Kristina Eckel, Executive Assistant to the Associate Vice-President (Academic), and Erik Lillico, Administrative Assistant in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies. Finally, we express a deep gratitude to the faculty, students, and the university community members we spoke with during our site visit.

3. Executive Summary

Purpose

The Office of the Provost and the Council Committee on Academic Mission describes the purpose of the academic unit review as assessing how well the aims and objectives of the unit are being fulfilled considering the available resources. Its purpose is to identify strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges, consider program development and revision, and qualitative and quantitative information, and make recommendations that can be used for more focused planning. Such planning would address teaching and learning, research, and service opportunities, and unit infrastructure and administration.

Context and Preparation

The Review Team consisted of two external members, Dr. Kimberley Ducey, Professor, University of Winnipeg and Dr. Mavis Morton, Associate Professor, Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Guelph. The internal reviewer was Dr. Sean Tucker, Professor, Hill Levene School of Business, University of Regina.

Before our March 26 and 27, 2026, site visit we were provided with the Sociology and Social Studies Self-Study Report, which includes sections on Background, Staffing and Resource, Scholarly Output, Community Service Initiatives, Programs Offered, Unit Budget, SWOT Analysis, Curriculum Vitae, Undergraduate Program Requirements and Courses, and Graduate Courses.

The Self-Study Report, the Unit Review Policy, and supplementary information were made available to us. Supplementary information included the University of Regina's 2020-2025 Strategic Plan, the 2025-2035 draft Strategic Plan, the University Annual Report, the University Budget Plan, and data from the Office of Institutional Research (i.e., student registration statistics, supplemental registration reports, student convocation statistics, tuition fees and living costs, faculty and staff statistics, etc.). We also drew on the University's new 2026-2035 Strategic Plan.

Site Visit

To provide a broad context about the University of Regina, the site visit began with a meeting between the Review Team and Dr. David Gregory, who was at the time of the review the Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Dr. Nilgun Onde, the Associate Vice-President Academic, and Dr. Christopher Yost, Vice-President (Research). The site visit concluded with an Exit Interview with the reviewers, the Provost, the Vice-President (Academic), and the Vice-President (Research).

In summary, during the site visit, we met with the following groups and individuals:

- Dr. David Gregory, Interim Provost and Vice-President (Academic), Dr. Nilgun Onde, the Associate Vice-President Academic, and Dr. Christopher Yost, Vice-President (Research)
- Department of Sociology and Social Studies faculty and sessional instructors
- Subject Guide Librarian
- Dean of Arts
- Graduate students
- Dean of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
- Associate Dean Research & Graduate Studies
- Department Head of Justice Studies & Associate Head of Justice Studies/CRIM
- Department Head of Politics and International Studies
- Director, Finance & Administration, Faculty of Arts
- Undergraduate student representative
- Acting Associate Dean of Arts (Undergraduate)
- Centre for Continuing Education

Our report is organized as follows: Section A provides a short overview of the University of Regina and the Department of Sociology and Social Studies. Next, we provide a description of the undergraduate and graduate programs and student experience. Section B highlights the challenges of artificial intelligence (AI), and Section C offers insight into the department's research strengths and contributions. Section D describes the current service, administrative, and financial realities. The final section provides our recommendations to the Department, Faculty of Arts, and the University of Regina.

4. Departmental and University Context

Founded in the 1960s, the Department of Sociology and Social Studies is an integral part of the Faculty of Arts. Historically, the Department has had a strong reputation for high-quality

teaching and scholarship in sociology and, more broadly, has played an important role in delivering and supporting liberal arts education at the University of Regina.

For many years, the University of Regina, like other post-secondary institutions across Canada, has faced funding challenges and changes in student demand for programs. In the past decade, revenue from international student enrolments has helped support the university's operations. However, in 2025, the federal government significantly reduced the number of student visas offered to international students. This has resulted in a decline in revenue to the University of Regina. Modest increases in the current provincial budget to post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan have left the university with a projected budget shortfall of \$1 million in each of the next two years. This in turn has meant additional cuts to funding to all faculties at the university.

In 2016, the department had 11 tenured and tenured-tracked faculty members.¹ Due to retirements, internal and external moves by faculty members, the department currently has 8 members, including two new tenure-track hirings in recent years.² As the self-study report noted:

“These retirements and transitions substantially affected both teaching capacity and departmental leadership. Because not all positions were immediately replaced, the department faced ongoing challenges in maintaining instructional coverage and fulfilling essential service responsibilities.”

The last external review of the department occurred in 2010.

Truth and Reconciliation and Partnerships with Indigenous Organizations

Reconciliation is an ongoing responsibility embedded across learning, research, and service (governance) in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies. The University of Regina is in a unique and fortunate position to be beside one of three campuses of the First Nations University of Canada (FNU) and the federated college of the University of Regina. The Reviewers acknowledge the already existing deep relationships and engagement with Indigenous perspectives and worldviews between SOC and SOST faculty, sessional instructors, and students primarily through cross-listed courses, joint research initiatives, and interdisciplinary programs.

As one of three federated colleges affiliated with the University of Regina FNU has four campuses: Regina (main campus), Saskatoon, Prince Albert, and nēwoskan Traditional Campus (near St. Louis, Saskatchewan). Sections of SOC 100 and 215 are offered through FNU. FNU students may take other sociology and social studies courses as electives. As part of their program, University of Regina sociology students are required to take an introduction to Indigenous studies course (INDG 100). They may also take other courses from FNU as electives.

The department's reconciliation goals directly align with the broader university strategic plan, “kahkiyaw kiwâhkômâkaninawak/All our Relations,” which commits to integrating Indigenous worldviews into teaching and ensuring campus visibility for ceremony and language. Aside from FNU being federated with the University of Regina, it is our understanding that there is currently no formal partnership between the Department and FNU; however, some faculty would like increased communication and partnership/collaboration.

¹ One member held a joint appointment with another department in the Faculty of Arts.

² This includes one cross-appointed member.

5. Current State: Academic Programs, Student Experience, Research and Service

A. Together, We Teach & Learn: Structure and Quality of Undergraduate and Graduate Programs

Undergraduate Programs

At the undergraduate level, the University of Regina offers a four-year Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Sociology degree with a BA Honours option.³ The Department also offers a minor and certificate in Sociology.

The BA in Sociology is a flexible 120-credit hour (four-year) program. The BA Honours in Sociology requires an honours thesis/paper and oral defense, with a minimum 70% program Grade Point Average (PGPA). The Interdisciplinary Social Studies courses focus on integrating multiple social science disciplines.

Based in a liberal arts education, the undergraduate program explores, among other subjects, social structures, conflicts, and digital societies. The curriculum blends foundational theory with contemporary social issues. Core and elective courses are offered by the department, other departments within the Faculty of Arts, and First Nations University of Canada. Popular areas of study include, for example:

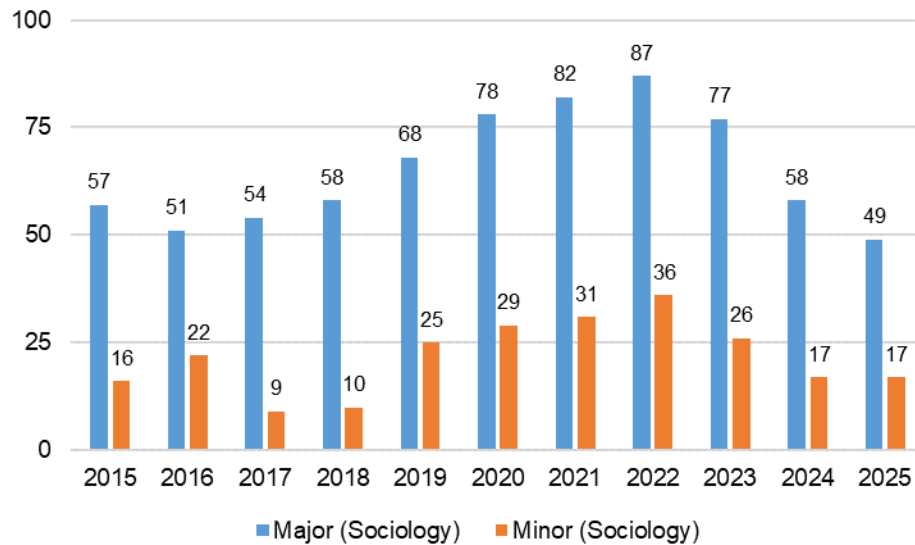
- Digital Society (i.e., social media, Big Data, surveillance capitalism, and AI)
- Inequality and Social Justice;
- Global Food Systems and the Environment; and
- Gender, Sexuality, and Families.

The program also provides applied career preparation through optional Arts Co-operative Education and Internships.

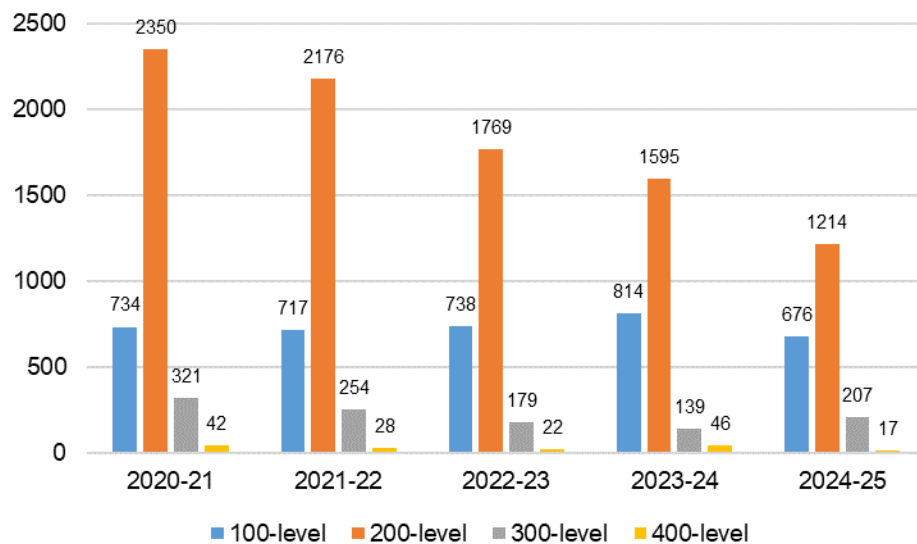
Curriculum at the undergraduate level provides a solid grounding in the traditional components of the discipline through theory and methods, and an emphasis on critical sociology as the program progresses across the four years.

Figure 1 shows that undergraduate student enrolments grew between 2016 and 2022. Since then, they have steadily declined. In the fall of 2025, there were 49 declared sociology majors and 17 minors. Enrolment in the certificate program (not shown in the figure below) has grown from one in 2017 to six in 2025.

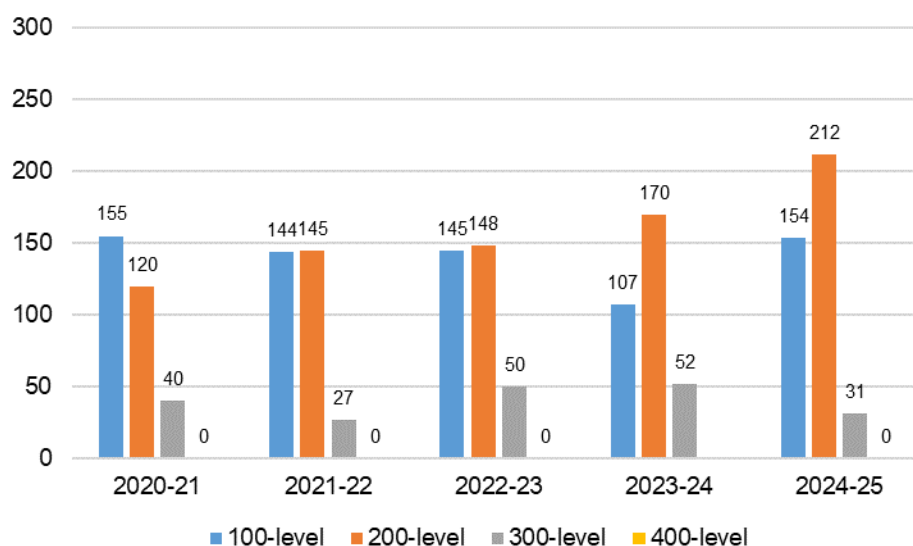
³ University of Regina, Calendar. <https://www.uregina.ca/registrar/assets/docs/pdf/calendar/2025-2026.pdf>

Figure 1: Sociology Undergraduate Major and Minor Enrolments, 2015 to 2025

Enrolment data show that recent enrolments in sociology courses vary by level and year. Student enrolment in 200-level courses has declined by almost 50% since 2020-21. It is unclear what factors led to this decline. In 2024-25, only 17 students were enrolled in 400-level courses.

Figure 2: Enrolment in Sociology Courses by Level, 2020-2025

The department also offers a limited number of undergraduate social studies courses. While overall enrolment in these courses is much smaller than in sociology courses, enrolment has increased in related 200-level courses in recent years and, overall, has remained more or less steady across other levels (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Enrolment in Social Studies Courses by Level, 2020-2025

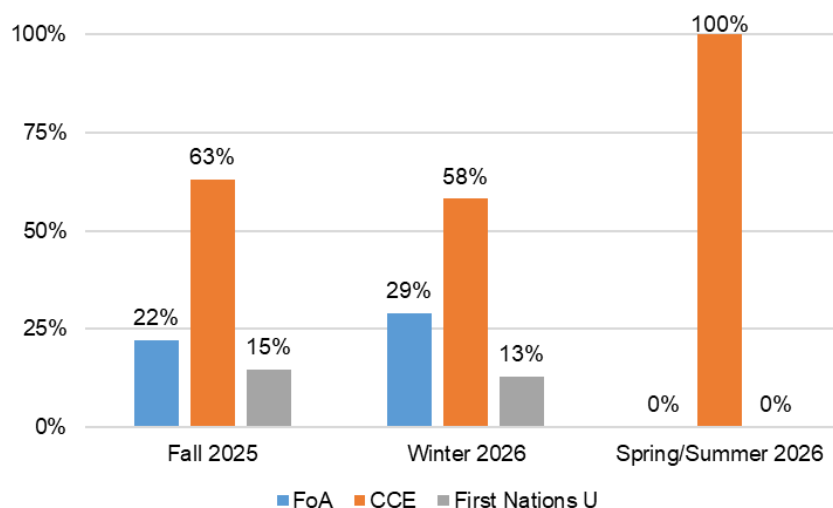
Centre for Continuing Education, First Nations University of Canada and Other Affiliations

The Centre for Continuing Education (CCE) operates as a joint revenue model with departments in the Faculty of Arts and currently offers approximately 30% of the courses at the university. In 2025, approximately \$57,500 or 5.5% of the department's overall revenue came from CCE.

A representative from CCE shared with us that undergraduate sociology students take an average of one or two classes through the Centre each year and that courses help to accommodate student daytime work schedules. CCE also offers sections of sociology courses for students attending regional colleges in Saskatchewan. It is our understanding that sessional instructors have typically been the ones to develop and teach classes through CCE. In recent years, due to limited capacity, sociology courses that were once offered by CCE have not been redeveloped.

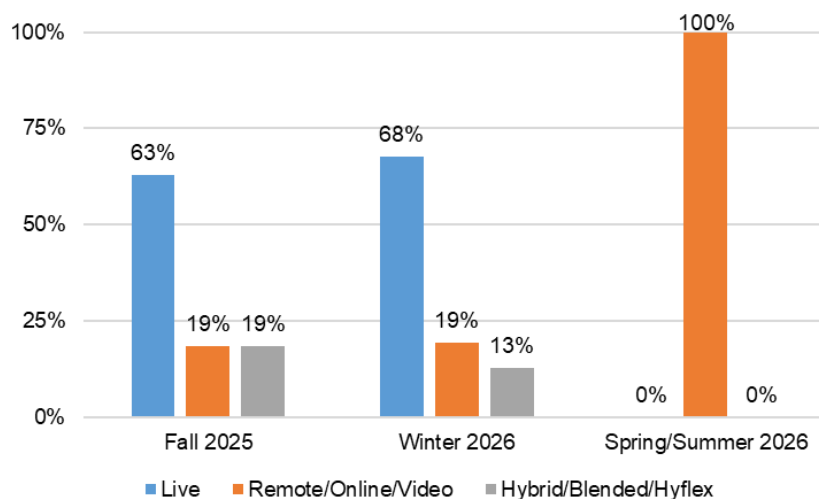
All in-person evening and online/video/hybrid courses are offered through CCE, although University of Regina students (and their instructors) may not be aware of this when they register in a course. As one faculty member noted, "the Centre's offerings create a form of flexible learning that functions almost as 'a second institution' with classes starting at 4:30 p.m." Other feedback questioned whether the number of CCE courses is too many and raised concerns about it detracting from the core courses offered by the department. We heard from one faculty member who believed the department has gone a bit too far with online teaching: "I think we got to this point in an ad hoc way. It made sense. They help with CCE funding. Other courses are important to offer in-person." The member added, "Sociology is one of the departments to offer the most online courses."

Figure 4 shows the percentage of undergraduate SOC and SOST courses (including labs) delivered by the Faculty of Arts, CCE, and First Nations University of Canada. Currently, the majority of courses are delivered by CCE, that is, in the evening or online/video/hybrid.

Figure 4: Undergraduate Courses Delivered by Academic Unit

Undergraduate Course Delivery Modality

Figure 5 shows the modality of undergraduate course delivery (including labs) for the Fall 2025, Winter 2026, and Spring/Summer 2026 semesters.

Figure 5: Modality of Undergraduate Course Delivery

Graduate Programs

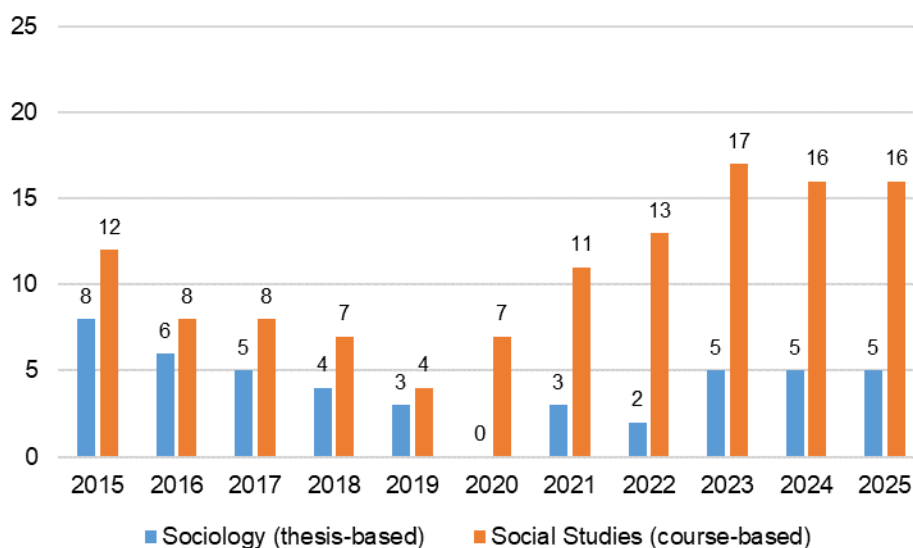
At the graduate level, the Department, under the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research offers separate thesis-based MA degrees in either Sociology (disciplinary focus) or Social Studies (interdisciplinary focus). There is also a course-based MA program in Social Studies.

The primary areas in which graduate students focus are critical social theory, environment and development, knowledge and technology, and rural sociology. The Master of Arts in Sociology programs (thesis-based) gives students a solid background in disciplinary approaches and methodologies and can offer training in practical research techniques. The Master's program in Social Studies (thesis-based) was developed as an interdisciplinary program that requires a course work component that is interdisciplinary and members of the thesis supervisory

committee will typically come from more than one department or faculty. However, some interviewees questioned how interdisciplinary the program is.

Figure 6 shows that annual enrolment in the thesis-based master's program fell between 2015 and 2020 and then rebounded to five students in recent years. The Social Studies course-based program follows a similar pattern, with recent enrolment numbers proportionately higher than those enrolled in the thesis-based degree. In recent years, just under half of all graduate students in the Department are international students. It is our understanding that international students are more likely to enrol in the course-based program.

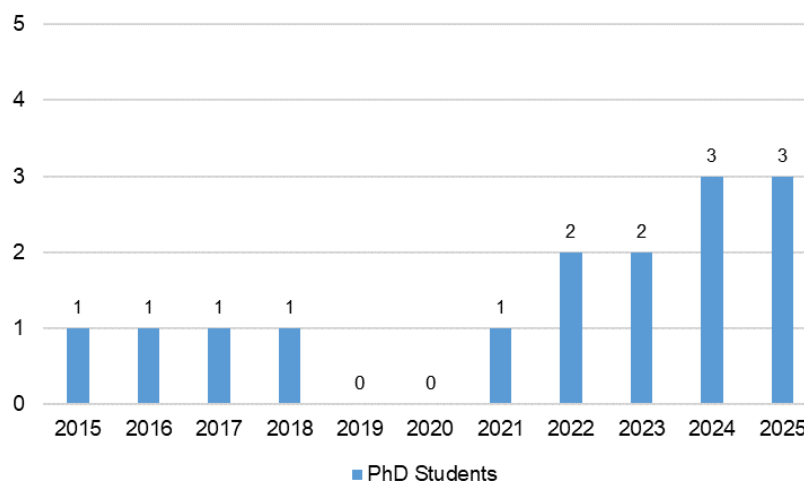
Figure 6: Sociology and Social Studies Master's Program Enrolments, 2015 to 2025



Currently, the Department does not offer a PhD program; however, students may undertake a doctorate on a “special case” basis through the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research under the supervision of a faculty member in the Department. Some faculty members suggested that the department develop a formal PhD program. However, this will require more administrative and faculty supervision support. Currently, the small number of full-time faculty means there is limited capacity for taking on graduate students. One faculty member noted: “We don’t have the numbers to supervise. If we cannot find them a supervisor, we offer them a course-based option.”

A formal PhD program will also have to provide guaranteed minimum funding to students for four years. However, as a formal program, the department will be in a better position to receive funding support from the University. Currently, the Department is only able to access funding after other programs that do have formal programs.

Figure 7 shows that the number of PhD students in the department has increased slightly in recent years.

Figure 7: PhD Students, 2015-2025

When asked what they hope comes out of this unit review, most faculty said more resources for graduate students. For example: "Resources for graduate students. More stable and predictable funding for graduate students. ... The challenge for [faculty] is the portion the supervisor has to contribute creates more pressure on us." Another added: "Four years is a long time. The department has to chip in on the fourth year and it's about \$30,000 for four years, or \$8000 a year. We need more resources." A faculty member described the pressures supervisors feel: "If someone has a three-year grant for a graduate student, three years of full funding, they are bringing in a student hoping for the fourth year of money." Another told us, "the challenge for us is the portion the supervisor has to contribute. This is more pressure."

Internal and External Student Recruitment

At the University of Regina, student recruitment is divided into external outreach (attracting new domestic and international students) and internal recruitment (promoting graduate studies or on-campus employment to current students). Sociology students are recruited — at least in part — through targeted high school outreach, international delegations, and undergraduate Arts Co-operative Education Program pathways. As one department member told us, "The Faculty of Arts does high school recruitment and bring high school students to campus to attend lectures."

The Student Recruitment Team conducts high school visits across Saskatchewan, western Canada, and participates in national educational fairs to attract domestic undergraduates. There is also the international pipeline, overseen by UR International. This involves international agents, digital marketing, and pathway programs to attract global applicants to both undergraduate and graduate sociology programs. Graduate funding, with offers of Teaching and Research Assistantships for thesis-based MA students to assist in data collection, co-authoring publications, and faculty research projects, also serves as a recruitment incentive. There was some concern expressed about the lack of understanding that the external recruitment unit has about the specific departments' programs and therefore their inability to promote and recruit students to specific programs.

Student Perspectives on the Department's Teaching, Supervision and Learning Environment Strengths in Teaching and Supervision

Students expressed strong appreciation for faculty and sessional instructors. Graduate supervisors are described as responsive to individual needs, proactive in checking in with students, and flexible in accommodating different preferences for support. Students also value supervisors' openness to incorporating student-selected theoretical approaches. Across both undergraduate and graduate programs, students emphasized that instructors are committed to student learning, noting that faculty "care that you understand the content and not just pass the course."

Desire for Greater Academic Community and In-Person Engagement

The thesis-based graduate students we heard from and some undergraduate students expressed a strong desire for a more cohesive academic community and to reduce the disconnection that they and many other students feel. Students reported limited opportunities to study and interact in-person, noting that a significant proportion of courses are delivered online or in hybrid formats. One undergraduate student reflected:

"I was so disappointed with online courses... When the pandemic started, I was in high school. The last thing I thought was that I would be entering university and still be in a COVID-like environment."

Another estimated that "six out of ten courses, if not more, are on Zoom or hybrid," expressing frustration with paying full tuition for predominantly online delivery.

Compounding this issue is the recent loss of a dedicated graduate student lounge, further limiting opportunities for informal interaction and community building. The elimination of the lounge represents a significant loss to a sense of graduate student community.

Students described the existence of, but the lack of activities of a Sociology and Social Studies Society. We recognize the existence of campus organizations ([URGSA](#): The University of Regina Graduate Students' Association operates under the umbrella of URSU and addresses the unique needs of U of R graduate students) however these are not internal to the department.

Collectively, these factors contribute to a sense of disconnection and a yearning for a richer social and intellectual environment.

Financial Pressures, Transportation, Housing, and Employment Concerns

Students raised concerns about experiencing financial pressure. A student put it more to the point: "I just wish there were more resources. I wish our department were bigger. I wish there were more money for students. There is only so much you can do for students with a limited budget."

Teaching assistant (TA) compensation was perceived as insufficient relative to other Canadian universities, with many indicating that "we cannot sustain ourselves with a TA'ship."

Housing insecurity further exacerbates these challenges. Some students described significant difficulty securing affordable accommodation in a competitive rental market, with those unable to obtain on-campus housing early often forced into expensive off-campus options. At the same time, on-campus housing was described by some as presenting its own challenges, including delayed maintenance, unresponsive management, and increasing demand.

Some students identified public transportation as a challenge affecting their ability to fully participate in campus life. Key concerns include limited late-evening service, indirect routing, reliability issues, particularly during winter months, and the financial implications of the mandatory U-Pass.

Similarly, another student told us:

"I wish universities were funded better. ... Our students all work here. We are fighting to survive. Nobody is ever on campus. We used to have a student lounge. We lost that space." The same student recounted the plight of an international student. The student worked a night shift and taught a seminar the very next morning. Without a car, the student takes a bus. ... There is a lack of resources for international students. I have the benefit of family and friends," continued the Canadian student. "My whole life is here."

Students emphasized that graduate student needs and circumstances are highly diverse. In particular, "student parents" face distinct barriers to participation in departmental culture. As one student noted, student culture may not always be their primary focus given caregiving responsibilities. "Some have kids. ... Maybe [student culture] is not their main interest," offered one student. We thus suggest that there are ways that "student parents" can be included rather than isolated from their peers.

Taken together, financial constraints, housing pressures, and transportation challenges limit students' ability to remain on campus for extended periods of study, research, and community engagement.

Graduate Program Restructuring and Faculty Capacity

Despite the strengths of the programs, there is agreement among faculty, students and administration that the graduate program would benefit from some restructuring.

One overriding concern shared by faculty was the need for additional faculty to support a regular graduate program and the students who are part of it. One faculty member posed the following questions about the potential for the program.

"We could be the specialists in these areas. Where do we want to be in five to ten years? Do we just want to survive? Or do we want to do something to contribute significantly to the discipline? Do we just want to increase student enrolments? We have international students who are willing to work and handle college education. But sometimes I have the impression that we don't have the resources to help them."

Another faculty member suggested there needs to be room for faculty to teach courses related to their area of research; currently this is not possible because there are not enough faculty to cover core courses in the program. A different faculty member similarly remarked: "We can only put on bare bones when it comes to what students need." In other words, the member suggests that the graduate program is already reduced to its most essential, basic elements. They liken the program to a skeleton, which is the "bare bones" of a body with no skin or muscle.

We note the conclusions of faculty self-study report that the Department of Sociology and Social Studies faces multiple challenges that affect teaching, supervision, and program delivery. With a small number of full-time faculty, the department's capacity to offer a wide range of undergraduate and graduate courses is limited. Graduate students we heard from expressed the desire for more variety of courses.

Despite these and other challenges highlighted in the Self-Study Report, the Department of Sociology and Social Studies is highly regarded by its students and other university members from across campus to whom we spoke. The students that we met voiced a deep appreciation for – among other things - intimate class sizes, research opportunities, and the Department’s focus on critical social theory, the environment, and social justice.

Climate of Inclusion and Relationship with other Departments

Creating a welcoming, safe, and accessible community where equity and respect enable people to thrive appeared to be a core commitment of all faculty and staff in the department. Indeed, replete in interviews with department members there seemed to be a genuine commitment of faculty to equity, diversity and inclusion. As one faculty member suggested, for example: “We have students from Nigeria, Ghana, and so forth, and we should think about having faculty from these areas. Most of our grad students are international.”

Speaking of their fellow faculty, another member said: “I love our department. I’m attached to it. We have an extraordinarily strong group of scholars. The department has a great deal of potential.” Still, some faculty described committee and supervision workloads as “fairly equitable. One person may do more department service, and some may do more supervision.” Also capturing the general sentiment among the faculty, another member told us: “I get to take up a lot of work I would like to do. We have a good sense of who does what. We could focus on what we like. At a department meeting [the Chair] will ask what people want to do. We are nice colleagues. We don’t fight with each other.”

The Department seems to have a good working relationship with other departments in the Faculty of Arts, including Justice Studies (Criminology) and Politics and International Studies, and there is interest in ongoing and, in some cases, increased collaboration and scholarly community-building. For example, there is some potential for team teaching with Geography in the environmental area. There is also potential for relationship-building and collaboration with Politics and International Studies to offer students more interdisciplinary opportunities in terms of courses and research.

Contributions and Integration of Sessional Faculty

Sessional faculty are consistently recognized by both students and faculty for their significant contributions to the department, including in-person, online, and continuing education contexts.

The sessional instructors we spoke with report a strong sense of inclusion and collegiality within the department. They emphasized their active role in governance and academic life, including voting rights in departmental meetings and collaborative relationships with tenure-track and tenured faculty. They describe feeling welcomed and valued, noting regular invitations to departmental meetings and positive communication with the Department Head. “I received invitations for department meetings and communication with the Department Head is great,” remarked one. Another sessional instructor told us that they are “always reminded by the regular academic staff that they (i.e., sessionals) are important,” adding, “we have a vote in department meetings and close relationships with tenure-track and tenured faculty.”

Public Sociologies

Social responsibility and a social conscience are integrated directly into teaching, research, and the institutional values of the department. The outcome is a keen sense of community responsibility among students, and the emergence of potential Public Sociologists among those

with whom we spoke. This comes as no surprise given that faculty commonly and actively collaborate with community organizations, employers, and government stakeholders. This guarantees that not only will their research translate into actual social development and expert advice, but that students have real-world opportunities to see Public Sociologists in action and to be mentored by them. A striking example, but one among many, is the Department of Sociology and Social Studies support of students fleeing conflict, including those from Iran and Afghanistan. The department offers specialized faculty, student-led groups, and institutional financial aid tailored to at-risk international students. We commend the department's faculty, whose expertise traverses global migration, political sociology, and human rights (among other subjects), and who generously act as academic advisors to help displaced students navigate the Canadian university system. As one faculty member told us: "With events happening in Iran, we met with Iranian students and gave them emergency grants. And we look to see if they have tuition holds, and we try to help them with that." We also learned in interviews with faculty about the university's support for students in Gaza, for which the faculty in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies have much praise.

Experiential Learning

The University of Regina established one of the first co-op programs in Canada. Currently, the co-op & internship program consists of paid work placements. Recent placements included the Saskatchewan Ministry of Central Services (i.e., providing a wide array of internal government services), SaskEnergy (i.e., Crown corporation of the Saskatchewan government, responsible for delivering and selling natural gas to residential, commercial, and industrial customers in the province), UR Pride for Sexuality and Gender Diversity (i.e., offers community programs, workshops, and support services for LGBTQ+ individuals), and SOFIA House (i.e., a domestic violence service near Regina, which provides help for people dealing with domestic abuse).

There are also undergraduate research assistantships that provide undergraduates with paid opportunities to assist faculty members.

Research Ethics Board

During our conversations with faculty and students, concerns were frequently raised about the timeliness and consistency of the university's Research Ethics Board (REB) review procedures. The central friction points seem to revolve around inflexibility in qualitative and community-based research (e.g., the Board's criteria are often perceived as misaligned with minimal-risk qualitative work and community-engaged research); academic freedom versus strict ethical compliance due to the institutional context and governance conflicts; REB delays and other red tape; and superfluous and inconsistent reviews. Resulting delays in receiving research ethics approval are particularly difficult for international students who pay higher tuition and face barriers to extending their study visas.

Library Services and Budget

The library does its best with a limited budget. Faculty librarians have a good relationship with instructors and graduate teaching assistants and students in the department, and they will provide tailored course instruction to students in and outside of the classroom. They also work to build relationships with students and provide flexible opportunities for students to access their resources.

The library is managing heightened financial constraints driven by inflation, university-wide 2% baseline reductions, and foreign exchange fluctuations (as many databases are billed in USD). As one faculty member put it: “The library budget has been flattened. We need university support for the library budget. We’ve been quite flat on the budget and if that continues, it will impact all units, not just ours. It’s important that collections are adequately financed. Otherwise, it could be a risk.”

B. Together, We Innovate: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Challenges

The university’s new strategic priority, “Together, We Innovate,” launched in April 2026, includes a commitment to advancing digital and AI literacy. The Department of Sociology and Social Studies is beginning to build digital confidence and capacity across its programs, integrating emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.⁴ There is a healthy and robust discussion happening at the University of Regina about the appropriate role of AI in the academy, generally, including courses.⁵

Many challenges come with AI. These often intersect with fiscal challenges in terms of student support. While several faculty members we spoke with have created “secure assessments” – such as in-class assignments – instructors report that they “still feel [the students] are using AI inappropriately.” Another member of the department explained: “We have to stop [students] from using AI in the wild. ... The students have to make progress in front of [our] eyes.” The same member also told us that Teaching Assistants (TAs) cannot help because faculty “cannot make them come to lectures or they won’t get paid for marking.” There is simply not enough money to pay them for both.

In conversation with us, administration, faculty, sessional instructors, and students continually reflected on the challenges associated with AI. Faculty and sessional instructors, for example, identified ways in which they are attempting to learn about and navigate AI within post-secondary education and educate their students about appropriate ways in which AI can be used to support learning and academic integrity. They also provided examples of some of the changes they have made to their courses to use secure assessments. This includes in-class written exams, demonstrating progress on assignments during class, assigning small activities at the end of each week, oral assessments, etc.

Although the Turnitin program (an academic integrity and assessment platform) is used to reduce plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, we were informed that the current version of Turnitin, available at the University of Regina, provides students with a plagiarism percentage score. However, it does not provide students with an AI score and therefore does not provide students with information that they need before submitting an assignment. Relatedly, when we asked about their experiences as graduate student TAs dealing with AI, the TAs explained they “have trouble with detecting AI use via AI detectors.” We would caution that AI detection

⁴ University of Regina. (2025, May 30). Responsible use of generative artificial intelligence (Policy No. OPS-080-050). <https://www.uregina.ca/policy/browse-policy/policy-ops-080-050.html>

⁵ <https://www.uregina.ca/events/2026/04/humane-futures-colloquium-the-high-environmental-cost-of-ai-use.html>
<https://openletter.earth/manifesto-for-a-humane-future-4f09dd24>

software is far from foolproof. Indeed, research shows it has high error rates and can lead instructors to falsely accuse students of misconduct.

Notably, students expressed frustration with the use of AI by some professors and peers. Transparency of use by both populations was identified as important, as well as being able to clearly demonstrate to students “what the university is offering that AI is not.”

The university’s strategic plan states: “We are building digital confidence and capacity across the institution, integrating emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, in ways that are ethical, responsible, and aligned with our values.” We encourage the Department and the University to communicate and collaborate with the Centre for Teaching and Learning for guidance, information and resources and to continue to engage with students to understand the reasons that students are using generative AI and work together to find appropriate solutions.

C. Together, We Discover: Scope, Significance & Research Contributions

As described in the Department’s Self-Study Report, and based on what we learned during our review, there is a significant amount of relevant and impactful research being conducted in the Department (Figure 8). This is impressive given the size of the Department.

Figure 8: Self-Study Summary of Research Highlights (2015-2025)

- **Dr. Henry Chow** has published 9 refereed journal articles and 11 research reports, presented 24 refereed conference papers, delivered 60 lectures at graduate seminars and local community organizations, and participated in 5 media interviews.
- **Dr. Kristin Ciupa** has published 2 books, 2 refereed journal articles, and 4 book chapters. She has also produced 2 online articles and 1 podcast.
- **Dr. Amber Fletcher** has published 49 refereed journal articles, presented 54 refereed conference papers, and authored 17 technical reports, 17 book chapters, and two books. In addition, she has contributed one documentary film series, one encyclopedia entry, four major international or government reports, and delivered 22 international invited presentations and nine national invited presentations.
- **Dr. Rozzet Jurdi-Hage** has published 7 refereed journal articles, 3 refereed conference proceedings, 2 technical reports, 1 non-peer-reviewed report, 2 public-use survey instruments, 1 public pamphlet, and contributed to 2 public education programs. She has also delivered 16 peer-reviewed conference presentations, 4 specialized presentations, and 4 invited talks. Research activity was delayed due to the demanding administrative responsibilities of her Headship of the Department of Sociology and Social Studies (2019–2024) and overlapping service as Academic Director and Data Access Liaison for the Statistics Canada Regina Research Data Centre (2023–2025).
- **Dr. André Magnan** has published 9 refereed journal articles, 2 book chapters, and 2 books. He has also produced 3 reports and presented 12 papers at conferences.
- **Dr. Cassandra Ozog** has published 1 co-edited book, 1 refereed journal article, 1 technical report, and 3 book chapters (most recent forthcoming in 2026). She has also contributed 1 professional creative activity, delivered 7 conference presentations, 12 invited talks or guest lectures, and made 5 media appearances related to her research.
- **Dr. Claire Polster** has co-authored 1 book, published 7 book chapters, 3 refereed journal articles, 2 articles in non-refereed journals, and 2 periodical publications.
- **Dr. Jorge Daniel Vásquez** has published 11 refereed journal articles, 6 book chapters, and 4 books (1 single-author, 2 co-authored, 1 edited volume). He has also created 1 digital teaching tool, contributed to 1 podcast episode, edited 2 special journal issues, written 8 book reviews, and published 2 interviews in academic journals.

Sociologists in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies at the University of Regina focus on socially engaged scholarship addressing pressing societal challenges. “Research with Purpose. Impact Beyond Campus” - one of the five pillars of the new strategic plan - is epitomized by

these scholars. Their research directly informs public policy and community well-being in Saskatchewan and beyond. However, as we note elsewhere in this report, additional university-level resources could be used to put a spotlight on these impressive strengths (i.e., help to promote and advertise new research). To paraphrase the new strategic plan, research in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies at the University of Regina is rooted in prairie priorities and contributes knowledge that shapes Canada and the world. This is a research-intensive, comprehensive department, distinguished by teaching excellence and recognized nationally and internationally for engaged scholarship.

D. Together, We Build: Internal & External Service Responsibilities

Staff/Administration

We received incredibly positive accounts of the administrative staff support available to the Department. However, there is also a frustration that the Administrative Assistant is split between two departments. The fact that they serve as an Administrative Assistant for the Department of Politics and International Studies (PAIS), also, with its Bachelor of Arts (BA), BA Honours, and minor programs spanning Political Science, International Studies, and Philosophy, Politics, and Economics (PPE), is a problem: Too many departments, too little time.

We learned that a Graduate Student Specialist was recently hired in the Faculty of Arts. This position is meant to provide more specialized assistance to both students and graduate coordinators who will liaise with the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research.

Financial Sustainability

The Provost provided the Review Team with an overview of the university's financial situation. The university forecasts that it will be in a budget deficit for the next three years. The revenue loss from a drop in international student enrolment by approximately 26% and a modest increase in provincial funding are central contributing factors. The budget situation has required accessing the University's reserves, as well as reducing the operating budget by 5% in the current year. This has resulted in a one-million-dollar budget reduction for the Faculty of Arts, which means that all units will experience further fiscal pressures and stress.

Since international students at the University of Regina pay up to 3.5 times more than domestic students, losing even one international student necessitates recruiting three to four domestic students to maintain the same level of tuition dollars. Even if this were possible, it would simply mean the university breaks even on tuition revenue. In a province with a slowing population growth, increasing domestic numbers by three or four seems unrealistic.

It was shared with us that Sociology and Social Studies have a “healthy” budget relative to other departments in the Faculty of Arts. However, we also heard that the department continually must make do with less each year.

As we understand the situation from our meetings with administration officials, this financial forecast is why the university's new ten-year strategic plan shifts its focus from brisk volume expansion to institutional restructuring and realignment. The University envisions consolidating academic programs, boosting digital infrastructure and international partnerships, and leveraging targeted provincial funding to stabilize the university.

6. Recommendations

The Department of Sociology and Social Studies has many strengths including rigorous training in theory, a strong core of methodology and philosophy of science as well as strengths in critical and environmental sociology. Collectively, the Department has attracted significant research grant funding and has very good overall research output. We believe these strengths can be leveraged to further stabilize and grow the department. Based on the information and perspectives shared with us, we propose these recommendations.

We recommend that the department try to stay ahead of the changes occurring at the university by exercising agency in decision-making. Where possible, we suggest faculty formulate strategies, generate or offer ideas, and deliver workable solutions. As one department member put it: "I would like to see more of this coming from us and not hoisted on us from [senior administration]."

Together, We Put Things Right: Reconciliation

We recommend a focus in keeping with the new strategic priority "Together, We Put Things Right," including continued commitment and action that supports Indigenous-led learning and research; strengthening Indigenous student access, retention, and success; aligning service with reconciliation commitments; and making Indigenous presence, language, ceremony, and leadership even more visible within the department.

We also recommend exploring a formal partnership with the First Nations University to continue to create, develop and deepen relationships that would benefit both institutions and help to fulfill Truth and Reconciliation commitments.

Increase Departmental Resources

Strategic Hiring

We encourage the Department and the Faculty of Arts to look for opportunities for strategic renewal. For example, a forward-looking approach that treats retirements as opportunities to strengthen and reposition the department for long-term success, while also planning for the loss of institutional knowledge, research capacity, and specialized expertise that may accompany multiple retirements. Aligning future hiring with departmental priorities, emerging disciplinary trends, student demand, and institutional goals could also bring fresh expertise, innovative teaching practices, and leadership in areas such as equity, diversity, inclusion, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Strategic hiring can also help address curriculum needs, support research growth, strengthen student recruitment and retention, and sustain program quality.

The department would benefit from additional full-time faculty. Given the small number of full-time faculty in the department, we are concerned with workload creep. This is the often silent, gradual accumulation of responsibilities, tasks, and administrative duties not originally outlined in an employee's job description. In a small department like the Department of Sociology and Social Studies, the administrative burdens of sitting on committees fall on an exceedingly small pool of individuals. Because each committee usually sounds reasonable, the aggregate expansion of work can go unnoticed until it leads to burnout, exhaustion, and diminished efficiency. Significantly, too, the students with whom we spoke listed "more faculty members" and "more variety of courses" on their wish list of what they would like to see change in the department. "Ableism courses" and "Decolonial Feminisms" were named as examples of dream-list new courses.

Reduction and Equitable Service Commitments

In interviews with faculty, we learned that the number of department committees was scaled down from 16 to seven in recent years. We were also told that "what makes it more manageable is people who have good working relationships. Collegiality is key." But few, if any, members voiced a preference to serve on additional committees.

Still, we recommend a further rethinking of committee load. Reduced and equitable service commitments are fundamental to the health of the department because they have the potential to protect the time required for scholars' important research, teaching, grant competitiveness, and public sociologies. For example, reducing committee and administrative tasks has the potential to allow faculty more time for pedagogical development, curriculum updates, and student engagement. As another example, there is the issue of grant competitiveness, including being able to provide the mandatory \$8,000 a year for four years for PhD graduate students (discussed earlier in this report). Also, there are no dedicated funds for international graduate students, while, as we understand it, at least 40% of graduate students are international students.

As administrative, committee, and clandestine labour expands, service reductions would also prevent burnout and help correct systemic inequities where women and equity-seeking groups disproportionately shoulder uncompensated workloads. Mentorship, pastoral care, and diversity-focused committee work often fall heavily on underrepresented faculty. Formal service reductions help mitigate this inequity, commonly referred to in academic literature as the "minority tax." However, as we note elsewhere in this report, the collective feeling among faculty and staff is that there is a genuine commitment to equity among department members. Equally true is a desire "for more equitable workloads," as one faculty member put it.

Curriculum Review/Curriculum Mapping

In conversations with faculty and administrative officials, we were told that "for many years the [undergraduate] major was restructured in an ad hoc way." In keeping with the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) principle of continual improvement, curriculum renewal is recommended.

We recommend that the Department engage in a formal collegial curriculum review/mapping process for its undergraduate and graduate programs that is facilitated by the University of Regina Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL). We see this as important work that will help the department address interconnected issues that were raised during our review.

The CTL assists in collaborative, evidence-based curriculum mapping and the associated review process. The procedure would help the Department of Sociology and Social Studies align course outcomes with program-level learning outcomes.

As we understand it, the process characteristically unfolds as follows:

- **Phase 1 — Consultation and Planning:** The Department of Sociology and Social Studies initiates first contact with the CTL, seeking modified, discipline-level support.
- **Phase 2 — Mapping Matrix Creation:** Faculty and staff map out how courses relate to one another, while they search for oversights, redundancies, and advancements.
- **Phase 3 — Outcome Alignment:** Course-level learning outcomes (CLOs) are next aligned to program-level learning outcomes (PLOs).
- **Phase 4 — Integration Strategies:** The CTL staff next assists the faculty and staff in merging core university concerns to the mapped curriculum, including Indigenization, accessibility, and experiential learning.

Aligned with a curriculum mapping process, developing program learning outcomes for all undergraduate and graduate programs is the first step of a curriculum mapping process. The steps outlined in the previous section assume that program-level learning outcomes exist. Since they have not yet been developed, this would be the first step in the process. This is important for making intentional and coherent decisions about which current courses to offer, what new courses are required, or if revisions to current courses are needed to satisfy program-level learning outcomes. For example, currently there are a wide range of courses on the books. However, although the degrees are comprehensive, staffing shortages mean that a full range of courses are not always offered, leading to discontent among students about choice and concerns about prolonging their degrees.

As a part of this curriculum review process, we recommend that department members (potentially undergraduate and graduate curriculum committees or working groups) implement a transparent process for allocating department service workloads and carry out a consistent and regular process for collegially reviewing curriculum and developing recommendations for enhancing the program (e.g., making a claim for future resources directly related to curriculum).

Course Modality/Format/Term/Time

A curriculum review process can also help to make intentional decisions about the number and nature of in-person courses versus other modalities, including online, remote, hybrid/hyflex, blended, live-streamed, as well as terms and time limits (early morning, evening, Saturdays, summer, fall, winter).

The department receives 15% of the revenue generated from enrolments in Sociology and Social Studies offered through CCE. Offering a greater number of CCE courses online or in the evening to increase revenue may come at a cost of diminishing the student learning and social experience of university. In essence, the department may be working at cross purposes. Ultimately, it is up to the department's faculty members to decide what the approximate mix of course formats is for their students. Achievable targets should be based on quantitative data (e.g., existing enrolment numbers and feedback from course evaluations about student accessibility), while still allowing room for human intuition, creativity, and qualitative context (e.g., feedback from students and other stakeholders).

Cross-Listing Options

We acknowledge that the University of Regina is navigating a changing enrolment environment and program adjustments in response to the recent reduction in international student enrolments and financial pressures. We thus recommend that the department consider additional cross-listing options at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, primarily with the needs of students in mind, to help satisfy students' course completion and degree attainment, while developing clear and consistent policies for when and how the practice can be used.

Micro-credentials, Certificates, Diplomas: Increasing Students' Awareness of Transferable Skills

In conversation with us, students expressed an interest in knowing more about what they are gaining from a degree in Sociology, and what opportunities this prepares them for beyond academia. As part of the curriculum review, we recommend considering embedding micro-credentials, which would allow students to earn targeted, skill-focused credentials, represented by digital badges that are awarded upon their successful completion. These act as verifiable, portable, and shareable digital representations of specific competencies. In addition to embedding micro-credentials, the department could consider stacking micro-credentials to offer students a larger award, such as new certificates. These approaches can help create clearer pathways for students between formal degree programs and opportunities outside of academia. Two examples of certificates, both from the Department of History, to illustrate our recommendation, are listed next.

The **Certificate in Museum and Heritage Studies** is designed for students interested in curatorial work, public history, and cultural preservation.

The **Certificate in Canadian Studies** is intended for students seeking a deeper understanding of Canadian history, identity, and institutions. It is soon to be launched.

Being explicit about the potential to develop transferable skills may help to respond to student interest. More than one student described the department as “very academic focused” and “that’s not for everyone. I didn’t have any intention of pursuing sociology beyond my degree. I don’t see a pathway other than ‘stay in school.’” The student’s sentiments are reflected in this comment from a faculty member: “We need to recognize who our students are, not who we want them to be, and when and what are we as an institution? ... We find the unique student who will be the full professor at the University of Toronto someday.”

Transformative Learning: Real-World Impact & Experiential Learning Opportunities

Some Sociology and Social Studies courses carry official “Experiential Learning” designations. Students complete concrete experiences such as writing research proposals, designing sampling techniques, and executing data collection to solve actual social problems. We recommend, however, that the department consider providing students with more experiential learning and applied research opportunities, as well as with more information about what experiential opportunities are available within the Sociology program.

This recommendation is in keeping with the new University of Regina strategic plan in that it requires augmenting a learning environment that is even more flexible, accessible, and connected to the real world and beyond campus. We recommend that Sociology and Social Studies students

be offered even more opportunities to participate in applied, experiential, and research-connected learning that brings ideas to life and connects theory with practice. From the students with whom we spoke, great insights were gained about what is already available to them. As one student put it, capturing the collective sentiment: “Co-op is better for course-based learning.” The students also favoured opportunities to engage in community-based research and to work within their communities beyond what is currently offered by the university.

Faculty and staff might consider the “Together, We Learn” core strategic priority in the new strategic plan, which includes a commitment to work-integrated and partner-enabled learning, and flexible, interdisciplinary, and technology-enhanced learning. We note, however, that the Department of Sociology and Social Studies faculty and staff already epitomize the vision of the “Together, We Learn” priority given their pedagogical innovations, dedicated instructor mentorship, and first-rate advising — to name but only a few of the initiatives they have taken on to build a highly flexible, accessible, and deeply connected educational framework that shapes transformative experiences for Sociology and Social Studies students.

Graduate Programs & Resources: Interdisciplinary Masters

We recommend that the Department of Sociology and Social Studies seriously consider the development of a new interdisciplinary master’s thesis program, in collaboration with other departments in the Faculty of Arts such as Political Science and International Studies, and/or Justice Studies/Criminology. Given the modest number of graduate students in most of the existing graduate programs in the Faculty of Arts, and the fact that graduate programs have previously been discontinued (e.g., Justice Studies), an interdisciplinary master’s program is arguably worth considering. Such a program would create a larger cohort of graduate students with potentially stronger scholarly and social connections. As an example of modest numbers, we note that programs like the Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS) Master’s degree have preserved enrolments shifting between nine and 16 students annually, merging resources across the wider Faculty of Media, Art, and Performance (MAP) and associated disciplines.

We recommend the department take a leadership role within the Faculty of Arts in this endeavour and, in doing so, consider roadmaps to collegial discussions of this issue. At the very least, this would require a strategic, transparent, and data-driven approach. We recommend that talk of graduate program mergers be firmly planted on academic program prioritization and quality rather than solely financial margins. This would mean the departments and institution’s missions, student demand, and faculty strengths and challenges are sufficiently evaluated.

An ad hoc committee consisting of faculty, staff, and graduate student representatives that has sufficient resourcing from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research has the potential to safeguard shared governance and alleviate morale loss. At the core of these collegial discussions should be many candid conversations and honesty within the Department and with other departments that are open to the idea of partnering. As mentioned above, we recommend the roadmap to these discussions be data-driven. Of course, multi-year metrics (e.g., enrolment trends, graduation rates, faculty-to-student ratios, and the cost per credit hour) are indispensable to the conversation. We also recommend that a roadmap for collegial discussions only consider phased enactment. We believe instant and disruptive changes must be avoided. We surmise that

at least two years are needed for reviewing curricula, aligning degree requirements, and unifying faculty in a myriad of ways.

Enhancing the Graduate Student Experience and Community

We recommend that steps be taken to enhance the graduate student experience by helping to build a larger cohort of graduate students and foster a stronger community and culture. In part, this could be fostered by a new interdisciplinary master's program.

Bridging the Thesis and Course-Based Divide

Students currently report feeling isolated from emerging scholars who share their theoretical perspectives (e.g., "There is no other student I can talk to about [---] theory"). Because MA and PhD students already share seminars, faculty should leverage this amalgamated setting to lessen isolation, despite the differing pressures students face (i.e., the intense, weekly deadlines of course-based tracks versus the long-term, unstructured milestones of thesis tracks).

To bridge this divide, we suggest the following strategies:

- **"Drop-In" Study Hall:** Book a weekly room with a single rule: "Bring whatever you are working on." This allows thesis students writing dissertations to work alongside course-based students studying for exams, creating low-stakes solidarity.
- **Technical & Theoretical Matching:** Pair students across tracks based on shared research methodologies, technical skills, or theoretical interests rather than academic streams.
- **Co-Chaired Graduate Student Governance:** While external campus organizations exist (such as the University of Regina Graduate Students' Association, URGSA), the department lacks an active internal student government. Revitalizing the Sociology and Social Studies Society with a co-chair leadership model—one from each track—would ensure balanced representation.

Cultivating an Inclusive Departmental Culture

To build a resilient graduate culture, the department should focus on consistency, shared spaces, and low-stakes, inclusive interactions that value students as whole individuals.

- **Casual Social Spaces:** Implement weekly coffee hours or brown-bag lunches to provide consistent, predictable social outlets that fit into busy research and teaching schedules.
- **"Job Talk"-Free Zones & Digital Watercoolers:** Plan social activities where academic "job talk" is prohibited to reduce burnout. Similarly, co-create a digital space (e.g., Slack or Discord) with non-academic channels (#pets, #hobbies, #movies) to maintain regular, informal connections.
- **Skill-Swap Workshops:** Organize monthly, student-led sessions on non-academic hobbies (e.g., bike repair, baking) to foster community outside of academic merit.

To help prevent isolation, department practices could actively enable broader participation, particularly for students with parental and other family responsibilities (at both the graduate and undergraduate levels):

- **Hybrid Accessibility:** Offer consistent Zoom/hybrid options for departmental seminars, guest lectures, and committee meetings to accommodate childcare disruptions.

- **Reimagined Social Scheduling:** Shift social programming to daytime, family-friendly formats (e.g., park gatherings) scheduled within standard childcare hours rather than evenings.
- **Targeted Peer Mentorship:** Expand the traditional peer-mentorship ("buddy") system by intentionally pairing incoming student parents with senior peers who can provide guidance on work-life balance and institutional navigation.

Timely Reviews of Research Ethics Applications by the University Research Ethics Board

We were concerned to hear that it takes graduate students enrolled in a two-year thesis-based program several months (sometimes up to a semester) to receive approval for their field research. This length of time is especially burdensome for international students who pay higher tuition and face significant financial barriers when they apply to extend their study visas. We recommend that the department, together with other departments and faculties, advocate for a streamlined, timely review process for graduate student research. For example, students could be guaranteed a response to their application within two weeks after submission and provided with several “approved” standardized consent forms that are appropriate for different research methodologies (interviews, focus groups, etc.).

Physical Infrastructure and Space

We concur with the Self-Study’s assessment that individual study carrels limit informal interaction, reduce community development, and strain administrative resources due to staffing constraints.

We strongly recommend that the university prioritize creating a dedicated lounge space for all sociology graduate students and those enrolled in an interdisciplinary MA. Even modest amenities—a whiteboard, coffee maker, small refrigerator, and shared computer workstation—will significantly facilitate informal collaboration, peer support, and intellectual exchange.

Contextualizing Constraints on Student Engagement

Finally, efforts to strengthen student culture need to be grounded in the economic realities and time constraints facing today's students. Many face severe challenges balancing academic requirements with external employment and career preparation.

As one student noted:

“One challenge of making a dream cohort is the education system itself. People are finding it hard with the job market. ... We are just surviving. We have to take a night shift. There is less time to engage in intellectual endeavours.”

Because a growing number of students are operating in "survival mode" to meet immediate financial and academic demands—particularly those in professional, course-based tracks—community initiatives must remain low-pressure, highly accessible, and strictly optional. Culture-building should support students, not add to their burdens.

Additionally, to foster a graduate student community in the small program, we suggest that the department focus on consistency, shared spaces, and low-stakes interactions. As illustrations, we suggest ideas such as:

Casual Low-Pressure Events: Weekly coffee hours or brown-bag lunches have the potential to foster a type of consistency that helps students fit social time into their busy research or teaching assistant schedules.

Peer Mentorship (Buddy) Program. For example, the department could match incoming graduate students with advanced students. This buddy system would potentially help new students navigate local logistics, department culture, and program milestones.

“Job Talk”-Free Events. Plan social activities where “job talk” is forbidden. Such events have the potential to decrease burnout and nurture friendships based on personalities rather than academic interests.

The “No-Work” Discord/Slack: Faculty and students might co-create a digital watercooler for students with non-academic channels like #movies, #hobbies, #pets, #food, #kids, and #meme-therapy to keep students linked more regularly.

Skill-Swap Workshops: Faculty and students might co-organize monthly student-led sessions on non-academic hobbies (e.g., sourdough baking, bike repair, or riding). This shifts the program's culture to value students as wholly human.

Financial Resources for PhD Students

We recommend more university resourcing for PhD graduate students. As one of the faculty members with whom we spoke explained, “the department prioritizes support for graduate students. But most are international and we’d like to see more funding from the university because we don’t have a consistent X amount to offer students.”

Graduate Teaching Assistantships (GTA)

We recommend that graduate students continue to take the GTA training that the Department currently offers instead of the required GTA training run by the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research. It is positively received by graduate students and helps to increase solidarity among SOC/SOST graduate students. At the very least, students should not have to take the ten-hour GTA training every year. One student, capturing the overall sentiment of their peers, remarked, “We must take a ten-hour course to get the GTA, and it is an awful course. It was all AI Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research run. ... I’ve taken the training three times and been TA’ing for so long.”

Departmental and Program Identity and Visibility

There is an interest in developing a clearer and stronger identity and greater visibility that would benefit everyone in the department and the university more generally. As one faculty member explained — capturing an overall sentiment: “We do not have clarity on where we want to go in the next five to ten years or what we are strong in, so that we can become a place students want to come to.” Another member told us, “We [i.e., the department] need an intellectual identity.”

While we anticipate that identity clarity will come from a curriculum mapping process, to begin, we recommend that increased visibility be supported with an updated department website and related recruitment materials. The website is, after all, the department’s most critical digital asset. Making necessary changes after the curriculum review is also necessary. The website update evokes the words of an administrative official, who told us: “Everyone is committed to the

success of the department. But it would be useful for the department to revamp the undergraduate program. ... and define an identity and find a shared purpose and shared identity."

The website is key in other respects too. Like the faculty member we quote next, several other members opined, "when the Faculty of Arts bring scholars [i.e., Visiting Lecturers to the University of Regina], the university doesn't publicize it much or effectively. There is not much visibility." Again, here, the website's 24/7 recruitment potential and its centralized hub for current students, as well as being a public showcase for the department's strengths and successes, is clear. The department might even consider launching a monthly or quarterly digital newsletter, featuring faculty research, student achievements, and upcoming events, using tools like Mailchimp.

The department might also regularly publish text and/or video profiles and interviews with faculty, staff, alumni, and students. As another illustration, the department could launch a blog, podcast, or video series featuring their expert commentary on trending topics, sociological news, and the like. Something akin to the University of Calgary's Sociological Imagination podcast — here, [Sociological Imagination Podcast | DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY | Faculty of Arts | University of Calgary](#) — could be a suitable model.

The website could also include a Student Ambassador spotlight given that current students are often the most relatable and effective emissaries and representatives for recruitment. An "Alumni in the Field" segment would also be an effective recruitment tool. We note, however, that the university members to whom we spoke described "alumni information" as "guarded." As one interviewee told us: "Alumni tracking is guarded jealously and when I asked questions, I got no answers." We strongly encourage the department to review and update its website.

As we recommend above, the department's website can be updated to act as a 24/7 recruitment tool. We recommend student-centred and personalized communications (i.e., tailoring communications from potential students' initial inquiry to graduation); transparency (i.e., plainly stating admission requirements, post-graduation work opportunities, and evaluation standards to establish longstanding trust); and data integration (i.e., consolidating recruitment technology to eliminate uneven communications and streamline the applicant experience). High school and community outreach could involve more engagement with counsellors and students through on-campus tours led by current students, faculty, and staff; interactive advising sessions also led by current students, faculty, and staff; and program-specific flyers. The Department of Sociology and Social Studies might stress the diversity of the student population, opportunities for interdisciplinary study and programs, and prospects to work with impressive faculty.

7. Commendations

Together, We Innovate

Teaching, research, and service in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies are clearly grounded in reciprocal relationships with Indigenous Peoples and communities, governments, industry, non-profit organizations, and cultural institutions, which is in keeping with the newly adopted official strategic policy, "Stronger University. Stronger Communities." Through collaboration, dialogue, and accessible knowledge sharing, scholars in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies connect ideas to action and contribute to social, cultural, and economic well-being.

Despite fiscal challenges, there are clear indications that the Department of Sociology and Social Studies is a very collegial department with a good working atmosphere, where senior faculty and established scholars are genuinely committed to ensuring junior faculty and emerging scholars are supported and mentored.

We hope the university community recognizes the Department of Sociology and Social Studies' commitments and successes and appreciates that these are achieved under financial and politicized scrutiny that affects the whole university mission.

These constraints mean that our recommendations are mostly related to future planning. Nevertheless, we hope this is an opportunity to reset, rethink, and build on the evident strengths of an already impressive department, and its equally impressive faculty, staff, and students, for the not-too-distant future.

As we reflect on the University of Regina's newly launched ten-year strategic plan, titled "Together, We Serve," which will guide the institution's evolution and priorities through 2035, we reflect on the Department of Sociology and Social Studies' existing priorities and potential. We believe their teaching and learning, research, and service fit well within the five core strategic pillars identified in the new strategic plan. As we document throughout this report, department members strive to deliver a highly distinctive, rigorous, relational, and community-connected learning experience for students. Their impressive publications and research grants help to elevate the university as a research-intensive, comprehensive university. Department members are committed to open community engagement. Department members' genuine commitment to Truth and Reconciliation is seen in their centering of Indigenous leadership, knowledges, cultures, ways of knowing, and shared accountability. They are attempting to put things right. Department members are establishing a values-driven and digital department, where technological advancements enhance human connections.

8. Concluding Thoughts: Looking Backward, Looking Forward

On April 8, 2026 — 12 days after our site visit — the University of Regina launched its latest [strategic plan](#). Like the Department of Sociology and Social Studies, its focus is learning, discovery, community partnership, reconciliation, and innovation. Indeed, we are struck by how closely the priorities align with the commitments that faculty and staff in the Department of Sociology and Social Studies make to students, the university, the discipline, and one another.

- Together, They Learn.
- Together, They Discover.
- Together, They Build.
- Together, They Put Things Right.
- Together, They Innovate.

We believe the Department of Sociology and Social Studies embodies the University of Regina's motto well: "As One Who Serves" - "Ut Qui Ministrat."

Together, They Serve.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Kimberley Ducey, Professor, Department of Sociology, University of Winnipeg

Dr. Mavis Morton, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Sociology and Anthropology,
University of Guelph

Dr. Sean Tucker, Professor (Human Resource Management), Faculty of Business Administration,
University of Regina