

# The Department of Sociology

The Department of Sociology at Indiana University has long been committed to providing teacher training and professional development for graduate students. Students in their first and second years of the program have the opportunity to assist professors with undergraduate level courses and in their third year begin teaching their own, independent courses. In an effort to help students make this transition from student to instructor, for nearly four decades the department has offered a course to train and support graduate students entering their own classrooms for the first time. Building on this commitment to teacher training, in 1995 the department established a Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) program to ensure that all students in the graduate program receive training to make them excellent researchers and teachers and to provide advanced coursework, training, and experience in teaching and scholarship in a variety of settings, including liberal arts colleges. The establishment of a PFF program brought the department's dedication to training students in all the primary roles of faculty members—teaching, research, and service—to a new level. The architects of the PFF program were award winning scholar/teachers, Distinguished Professor and Chancellor's Professor Bernice Pescosolido, Rudy Professor Brian Powell, and Chancellor's Professor Rob Robinson. The program is based on the belief that graduate students should be prepared to enter faculty positions as competent professionals who have already begun a process of growth as teachers, scholars, and members of an academic community. Our Preparing Future Faculty program has several components.

## **THREE-COURSE SEQUENCE LEADING TO A CONCENTRATION IN COLLEGE PEDAGOGY**

The first course, The Teaching of Undergraduate Sociology, is a three-credit hour course that meets weekly with a typical enrollment of 10 to 15 students who are in their first semester of teaching. The course is taught by award-winning faculty and is required of all of our first-time teachers to help them develop their courses, deliver informative lectures, lead effective discussions, deal with student problems, etc. This course actually begins in the summer with a series of three, two-hour workshops to help students prepare their syllabi and develop lectures.

The second course, Issues in College Pedagogy, a three-credit course meeting weekly, allows students who have completed at least one semester of teaching independently, to take a more reflective and sociological look at their teaching, become conversant with issues and problems facing higher education today, and link their own experiences in teaching to these larger issues. In recent years enrollment for this course has been between six and ten students.

The third course, Research in Higher Education, is also a three-credit course that meets weekly with a typical enrollment of six to ten students. This course provides an opportunity for students to connect their teaching and research interests by engaging in active scholarship on teaching and learning. Their SOTL project can take the form of collaborative research undertaken by the entire class, an individual research project, or small group efforts. Often, the results of this research have been presented in the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning program at Indiana University, presented at regional and national conferences in sociology and the scholarship of teaching learning, and published in printed outlets such as *Teaching Sociology*, the leading pedagogy journal in sociology.

### **OPPORTUNITIES FOR “SHADOWING” AT LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES**

The shadowing experience results from a unique partnership that the department has developed with the sociology departments at several liberal arts schools to provide our students with a mentoring experience that we could not otherwise offer them at IU. In recent years students have served as faculty fellows at DePauw University, Hanover College, and Morehouse College. In their role as faculty fellows at these schools, students have the opportunity to discuss, among other topics, their goals for future employment, prior teaching experiences, and objectives in their current teaching. The liberal arts faculty mentors discuss and share their teaching strategies, how they balance teaching with service and research, how their teaching experiences contrast with the teaching styles and strategies the graduate student may be practicing

or observing at IU, and what the student can do to prepare for the academic job market and for a career at a liberal arts school. PFF mentees observe classes at their host institution, visit with undergraduates, attend faculty meetings (at both the departmental and college levels), and sit in on departmental hiring committees to get a sense of what makes a strong job candidate at such institutions. They also participate in the orientation workshops that these schools offer for new faculty on such topics as course development, creating classroom climates that are welcoming to all students, using technology in teaching and research, and handling difficult students. When students pursue teaching positions, their experience as faculty fellows has been viewed as an asset by schools that privilege teaching. And because it can also result in opportunities to teach courses at the host institution, shadowing is an invaluable experience that allows students to hit the ground running in their first jobs.

### **FUTURE FACULTY WORKSHOPS**

A full slate of Preparing Future Faculty Workshops for the entire department on the professorate broadly defined that bring in faculty from a range of institutions, editors of various sociology journals (e.g., Teaching Sociology, Sociology of Education), sociologists in government and the private sector, and other visitors. Recent topics have included Balancing Work and Family Life as an Academic, Teaching and Research Dossiers for the Job Market, and Life as a Faculty Member at Research, Comprehensive, and Liberal Arts Schools.

### **FUTURE FACULTY CONFERENCE**

At this conference, faculty from IU and other institutions present on issues related to teaching, research, and service, as well as addressing topics of interest to advanced graduate students such as navigating the job market and developing your curriculum vita. In recent years topics have included: Multiple Perspectives on the Job Market, Developing and Documenting Teaching Experiences, Balancing Teaching and Research, and Navigating Academia.

### **FUTURE FACULTY FELLOWSHIP**

A Preparing Future Faculty Fellowship that each year supports a graduate student interested in college pedagogy and other issues in higher education. The PFF Fellow assists in teaching The Teaching of Undergraduate Sociology, organizes the departmental PFF workshops, plans and serves in a leadership position for the annual Preparing Future Faculty Conference, and represents our department at regional and national conferences on higher education.

The success of the program is evident in the continued support it has received, as well as what the PFF program has been able to do for graduate students in the department. In recent years, several graduate students in sociology have been the recipient of the university Lieber award and some also have been recognized with national awards, such as the K. Patricia Cross Future Leaders award. In addition, students have had opportunities to present at the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning series at IU and to participate in regional and national conferences focusing on higher education. Sociology graduate students also have been successful in publishing not only in the top research journals in the discipline, but also in journals that focus on college pedagogy. Recent presentations and publications have covered a variety of topics, including grade inflation, consumerism, classroom assessment techniques, and service learning. The success of the PFF program in sociology has not gone unnoticed by search committees at other universities and colleges and has been a key factor in our students obtaining positions at a wide variety of institutions, from liberal arts institutions such as DePauw, DePaul, and Pacific Lutheran to research universities such as Harvard, Duke, and Northwestern. In 2001, in recognition of the department's commitment to teacher training, the program received the American Sociological Association's Distinguished Contributions to Teaching Award, the first time this award was given to a sociology department from a research university.

- *Shelley Nelson, Graduate Student and PFF Fellow; Bernice Pescosolido, Chancellor's Professor; Brian Powell, Rudy Professor, Department of Sociology*