The New Department Survey: Providing Up-to-Date Information for Chairs and Faculty

Faculty workloads! Assessment! Distance learning! Graduate stipends! New course sequences! These are all issues that Department Chairs said they wanted to know more about. ASA is conducting its first department survey since Academic Year 2005-06. We have received many requests from chairs to update the information, add new items, and delete old items from this survey of the universe of baccalaureate and graduate programs in sociology.

The AY 2011-12 department survey responds to these requests, with a shorter questionnaire than in previous years. We have kept much of the survey consistent with the previous department surveys so that trend analysis is possible, but have added new questions that chairs wanted, and subtracted questions that received few responses last time. The questionnaire consists of 3 sections: changes in resources, curriculum and technology; assessment of student learning; department structure (including baccalaureate and graduate programs); and characteristics and changes in faculty. Complying with chairs’ request that the survey be fielded after the end of the spring semester, it should reach chairs by mid-June 2012 at the latest. We have decided to use a paper and pencil survey so that Chairs can pass the survey around easily to members of the department who can fill out appropriate sections. However, if chairs desire an online survey, this will also be available.

Data will not be made available in disaggregated form to any other department or institution of higher education, in addition to the responding department. As in the past we provide findings by type of school (using Carnegie codes). We will allow respondents of completed surveys to select 10 “peer” departments (provided that we have information on these departments) as well, which we will aggregate so that chairs can compare their own departments with aggregated peer departments and provide these data to their Deans and other administrators for purposes of planning and evaluation. The survey will benefit the entire discipline, and comparing like departments will help yours as well. If you have any questions about the survey, contact Roberta Spalter-Roth, Director of the Research and Development Department, at spalter-roth@asanet.org or (202) 383-9005, ext. 317. We look forward to your participation.