Sociology Strategic Plan

The Department of Sociology has begun to develop our contribution to the Strategic Plan. We are thinking simultaneously about narrow, within-the-department goals as well as about projects that we hope will involve a range of programs and departments. We find that these two realms mostly overlap, since our research and educational ambitions are largely interdisciplinary in both conception and implementation.

Our planning focus thus far is organized around three main themes: enriching and extending the global emphasis of both the research and the teaching within the department while playing a key role in institutionalizing SBU's global presence; building an intra-departmental focus on environmental issues in conjunction with focused University initiatives in this area; and building on some pioneering efforts in computational social science to make Stony Brook (and the sociology department at Stony Brook) a national center for innovative research (and training) in this area.

Since the mid-1990s, the Stony Brook sociology department first pioneered and since then assumed leadership in introducing globalization as a dynamic feature of social structure and change. We now have key figures in most of the important areas of global research, including Culture (Barthel, Levy), Development (Moran, Shandra, Oyewumi), Economic Structures (Gootenberg, Schwartz) Environment (Shandra), Gender (Kimmel, Barthel, Oyewumi), Human Rights (Levy), Immigration (van de Rijt), Inequality (Moran), Political structure (Arjomand, Schwartz), Warfare (Roxborough, Schwartz). These scholars have attracted and trained graduate students who are now beginning to have an independent impact on scholarly trajectories.

There is, however, much to be done to fully realize the scholarly and educational potential of this broad departmental focus. This will require collective effort by the department, but also much more collaborative work with other departments.

INTERDEPARTMENTAL GLOBAL RESEARCH

While SBU is a highly visible center for global research in sociology, this is merely one discipline within Global Studies We aspire to impact on the much broader area, and this requires consolidating the work of scholars in the many cognate disciplines where global studies are a relevant and growing emphasis.

One important step in this direction has been the Graduate Student Ethnography Conference, which just had its seventh successful meeting, and which has established SBU as a center for global ethnography. Another will be Stony Brook's hosting of the ASA sponsored conference in 2011, "National Borders in the 21st Century," which is being planned by a group of scholars from several departments at SBU. By bringing the most important scholars from a range of discplines together at SBU to discuss this central issue in Global Studies, it will give impetus to our goal of consolidating Stony Brook as an international focal point on this topic. To build on this foundation, we are considering the following specific plans:

- **Cross-Disciplinary Collaborative Research.** Global research is inherently interdisciplinary we have not fully exploited the important expertise in other departments and programs at SBU. The Humanities Institute has long worked create this cross-fertilization. We expect to work closely with the Humanities Institute as well as with faculty in other departments to develop the institutional support for interdisciplinary collaborative research. Among these are:
  - **Institute for Global Studies.** The newly established Institute for Global Studies can motivate and house collaborative research, including important initiatives emerging from the "National Borders" conference. We expect to work with the Institute on a variety of initiatives that will give the work of disparate scholars at SBU have a collective impact on scholarly and research trajectories (outlined below).
  - **Building from Area Studies to Global Studies.** Stony Brook has a broad array of area studies Centers (including, among many others, Latin American and Caribbean Studies, Center for Labor Studies, Confucius Institute) and focused programs (including, among others, Women's studies, Africana Studies, Comparative Studies), all of which address global issues. We would seek, with the help of interested faculty, to create cross-fertilization of interests and ideas, leading to coherent research programs around broad themes. This scholarship can either work as separate scholars contributing specialized research as part of a larger body of work, or active collaboration among cross disciplinary scholars. . The Institute for Global Studies may be a promising venue for these collaborations to be established.
- **International collaboration.** Many programs at SBU have established durable collaborations with overseas research institutions, which enhance the quality of the local work while establishing useful connections with important overseas scholars and institutions. The social sciences have lagged behind biological and physical sciences in these areas, and have much to learn (and gain) from the collaborative work in these disciplines. A concerted effort must be made to enhance international connections, and to infuse scholarship at SBU with the most sophisticated and important new developments among overseas scholars. This effort can build on collaborative work already undertaken by individual scholars, but this foundation work must be embedded in the SBU structure.
  - **Conferences attracting international Scholars.** The "National Boundaries" conference can provide impetus for this, and the Humanities and Global Studies institutes can play a key role in exploiting the momentum provided by this and other conferences designed to initiate international collaboration.
  - **Visiting Professorships in Global Studies.** We are considering proposing that SBU establish one- or two-year visiting professorships targeted to foreign scholars, who could contribute to collaborative research with SBU faculty, provide expertise for graduate training, and/or help develop undergraduate curricula. The visiting positions could be funded through

grants from the Rockefeller, Fulbright, or German Academic Exchange, or by allocating new faculty lines to these positions.

- ✧ **Institutionalized Grant Applications.** Researchers who work on Global studies often lack knowledge and expertise needed to identify sources of funding and successfully compete for grants. We hope to work with the Research Foundation in developing the professional expertise needed to guide scholars with important research ideas into crafting fundable proposal, connecting them to interested funding sources, and guiding them through the application process.
- ✧ **Targeted Recruitment.**
  - **Sociology Department Recruitment.** The sociology department will focus its replacement searches in the next two years (as many as four lines) on global scholars, whose areas of interest match with these emphases, and who are committed to developing interdisciplinary research collaborations.
  - **Cluster Hiring in the Area of Globalization.** We would argue for the university to provide incentives and resources that will enable targeted recruitment of scholars with global interests in the various cognate departments. A program of cluster hires, with a recruitment committee using the Cider model might work well in this context.

GLOBALIZATION OF THE SBU CURRICULUM

Globalization is now infused into every aspect of university life. There is much to be done, however, for the education offered at SBU to match up with the promise and challenge of these developments. We are thinking about the following programs that would better meet the needs and interests of students.

- ✧ **International Relations Major.** Currently, the University offers a number of courses and a minor in international relations which are regularly oversubscribed. The shortage of courses and the shortage of classroom space for those given has turned away students from this important area of study and the related globalization specialties. Some of our best students have transferred to other universities that offer this program.
  - **Interdepartmental coordination.** One key element in developing this major will be creating the necessary coordination among the cooperating departments. Each department will need to contribute key resources and feeder courses to the programs, as well as significant advising and other services.
  - **Study Abroad.** This major should have rigorous study abroad requirements, including at least one semester at a foreign university. This will require coordination with International Programs to provide students' with overseas programs that fit into their degree requirements.
  - **Foreign Language requirement.** Careful consideration must be given to a rigorous foreign language requirement, perhaps coordinated with study abroad.

- **Research Requirement.** In keeping with SBU's commitment to undergraduate research experience, there is good reason to encourage or even require that International Relations students fulfill a research requirement, perhaps as part of their study abroad.
- **Multiple Tracks in International Studies.** The broad subject matter of this major will require creation of specialty tracks that qualify students in a specific area. There are many candidates for such specialties that build on SBU strengths, including area studies such as Latin America (in collaboration with with LACS center) or East Asia (in collaboration with the Confucius Center), or professional studies such a journalism.

✧ **Undergraduate Research in Global Studies.** The Undergraduate College of Global Studies has, for the past several years, had a project to connect their students to researchers working on global topics in a variety of fields, providing them with the sort of student research experience most commonly associated with lab sciences.

The humanities and the lettered social sciences have not provided the opportunities for this sort of undergraduate research experience, mainly because faculty scholarship in these fields is not typically carried out in large groups with appropriate forms of division of labor. We expect that the development of collaborative research will in part remedy this bottleneck, but we also hope to develop programs (hopefully with other departments) that will encourage and facilitate re-orientation of the research process to create the sorts of work groups that will facilitate undergraduate participation.

- **Designing Research that can include undergraduates.** The sociology department's grant workshop, a successful initiative to increase funded research in the department, can be broadened to include orientation toward data collection and analysis strategies that are more conducive to undergraduate participation. This work can reconceptualize the research process to include work teams containing both graduate and undergraduate students, and grant budgets that reflect this restructuring.
- **University Seed Grants.** The FAHSS seed grant program can be adapted or expanded to include support for innovative efforts to include undergraduates in research and scholarship in the lettered social sciences and humanities. Innovative ideas can be tested with these seed grants and then diffused to other scholars as proven strategies.
- **Outside Funding.** The Boyer Commission established SBU as a national center for undergraduate participation in scholarly research. We can exploit this visibility to attract funding for ambitious programs to extend the very successful involvement of undergraduates in laboratory sciences to field and library disciplines.
  - ✓ **Collaboration with the Research Foundation.** We will assemble an interdisciplinary team of scholars to develop innovative ways to include undergraduates in this scholarship (perhaps based on FAHSS seed grants perhapsunder the rubric of the Global and Humanities institutes), and search for funding for an ambitious roll-out of these

strategies, aimed at making research participation a part of most majors at SBU.

- **Undergraduate Colleges.** We expect to utilize established links with the Undergraduate College of Global Studies to recruit students interested in research with sociology department scholars. The same sorts of connections can be established between other departments and programs and cognate Undergraduate Colleges.
  - ✓ These connections will deepen the already successful program in the Colleges of creating connections between freshmen and senior faculty, while maintaining the college ties to their students as move into upper division status.

✧ **Interdisciplinary Advanced Degrees.** The Graduate students in sociology and other departments with strong globalization components, should have access to interdisciplinary training that will fully qualify them to address the globalizagtion issues that will confront them in the scholarly and teaching careers.

- **Certificates in Global Studies.** One possibility is for various cognate departments to offer courses for non-specialists that would provide outside graduate students with needed expertise. Students taking a set of these courses outside their discipline could be granted a certificate that codified their broader training.
- **IGERT Training Grants.** Scholars drawn from a variety of disciplines could design an interdisciplinary degree program that combines physical, biological, and social scientific issues. Students would be admitted to s specific department, but would also take specially designed courses taught by interdisciplinary teams, and emerge with skills that combined expertise across disciplines.
  - ✓ This program would encourage and support interdisciplinary collaboration among the physical, biological, and social sciences. .

INTERDEPARTMENTAL, MULTIDISCIPLINARY ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

The issues around the environment that are now central to so many of the large controversies facing the world all involve scientific research and scholarly expertise. Each of these is inherently global and inherently interdisciplinary, but the process of integrating the currently balkanized research and scholarship has only begun. Without this sort of scholarly integration, many of the most important scientific insights and findings remain isolated away from social and political policy, a result of structural, political and attitudinal barriers to their adoption. A more rigorous emphasis on multidisciplinary environmental research that will integrate scientific findings with social structural analysis, and thus bridge the all-too frequent abyss between scientific findings and corporate practice, between scientific findings and government policy, and between scientific findings and popular belief.

Stony Brook has a number of important initiatives aimed at consolidating this integration and a very large number of scholars who can and will participate in developing the sort of integrated research needed to address these very large issues. But these are only a

beginning. We will need a much more systematic effort to construct the sort of interdisciplinary collaborations needed to resolve these problems. Among those that will be considered as we work together to conceptualize and implement this vision are the following programs:

- ✧ **Fully realized environment research.** There are currently a number of research proposals containing a social science based implementation component for ongoing biological and physical science projects. These are important building blocks for the larger endeavor needed.
  - **Research that simultaneously addresses the social, physical, and biological aspects of environmental problems.** We will need a more systematic effort to initiate and find funding for projects that are interdisciplinary in their conception, and that involve conceptualizing environmental issues in terms of their biological, physical, and social origins as well as their biological, physical, and social solutions.
- ✧ **Interdisciplinary Graduate student training.** We will need to train a generation of graduate students with the full range of skills needed to address these multiplex problems. While we do not envision students who are qualified scholars in all or even several of the involved disciplines, we must develop a graduate curriculum that gives them the background and skills needed to function in fully interdisciplinary research groups. In the short term, they will become the glue that makes these interdisciplinary collaborations at SBU work, underpinning the faculty collaborations that animate the research. In the long run, they will establish and lead such groups as independent researchers at other institutions.
  - **Training Grants.** This sort of innovative graduate program should be fundable with training grants such as the NSF IGERT program. Obtaining this funding will aid the development of these graduate programs while facilitating the creation of the research groups in which they will participate.
  - **Postdoctoral Training.** The participating departments should work individually and collectively to attract post-doctoral scholars who are already trained—or are interested in training—in working within these types of research collaborations.
- ✧ **Undergraduate Major(s) in Environmental Studies.** With the consolidation of the undergraduate programs and students from Stony Brook Southampton into SBU careful planning is needed to seize this opportunity to formalize the so-far ad hoc focus on undergraduate studies in the various areas normally grouped under Environmental Studies.
  - **Planning Environmental Studies curricula.** A planning group consisting of faculty from the full range of disciplines with research and teaching interests in the area should be created to insure that this work is systematically undertaken, while taking full advantage of the range of expertise already on the campus.
  - **Faculty Recruitment.** SBU is already well past the critical mass in expertise in the various areas needed for a full curriculum, there are nevertheless key

gaps (e.g. Environmental Economics) that should be filled in a systematic ways, with emphasis on new hires who would help build the collaborative research emphasis.

- **Undergraduate Research.** Due diligence should be paid to integrating undergraduate research experience into the curriculum, not only in laboratory sciences, but also in the full range of disciplines involved in this area.

COMPUTATIONAL SOCIAL SCIENCE

Faculty in Sociology and Computer Science have been working together to build a foundation for a proposed Center in Computational Social Science aimed at establishing SBU as a national center for this powerful new methodology for tackling previously intractable social science issues. (I am attaching a preliminary proposal for this center that contains a useful summary of the research agenda it will follow.)

Computational social science applies new groundbreaking data collection methods that have recently become available to the study of interacting social agents. Data collection methods range from smart phone enhancements, such as GPS tracking and smoke detectors, to experiments in natural online settings. The electronic traces of these activities can be converted into usable research evidence using newly developed computational methods. For example, cell phone connections among youth can be used trace and understand the social influence on risky health behavior such as smoking or overeating, time series electronic records of national newspapers can be scanned to track the changing role of women in public life over a century of social change, and the myriad (recorded) online collaborations of millions of Wikipedia contributors can yield important insights into how the production of knowledge works.

- ✧ **Center for Computational Social Science.** This is projected as the institutional centerpiece for work in this area. A core group of researchers from computer science and other engineering departments, sociology and social sciences, and and programs within the health science center will work to establish the parameters and methods that will facilitate the translation of these massive bodies of electronic traces into usable systematic social science data. There are ample funding sources for this work.
- ✧ **A Methodological Service center.** Once the methodology and the scientific fertility of this new approach is established by the core researchers, we would seek provide design and implementation expertise to other scholars.
    - **Implementation in cognate fields.** The Center of CSS would offer methodological services to researchers interested in accessing new sources of data and utilizing the new analytic techniques. By working with researchers on both research design and funding, the center will provide needed services to diffuse this new departure in research to the broadest range of disciplines and areas of investigation.
    - **A National Center.** With timely development, we can position SBU as a source and center of this new methodology, and as a national archive for newly codified data sources. With appropriate institutional support, which we believe will be available from funding agencies, we will be able to

serve the broader academic community while establishing SBU as an ongoing center of expertise and innovation.

- **Graduate Training.** There are already doctoral students interested in or actively working on the problems and promise of this new methodology. The CCSS will provide an institutional framework within which these students can access funding, training, and support for their own research and/or work on faculty projects.
  - **A Specialty in Computational Social Science.** We would explore the possibility of establishing this as a specialty both in computer science and in the social sciences, so that graduate students could gain and claim expertise in what should become a major new area of research methodology.
  - **Training grants.** We would explore the possibility of training grants to produce fully credentialed PhDs with a specialty that combines the substance of their primary department with the needed expertise in one or more cognate fields. As this new methodology diffuses into various areas, this specialized expertise will be both marketable in the academic marketplace and central to cutting edge research.