



# The Society for the Study of Social Problems

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901 McClung Tower University of Tennessee Knoxville, TN 37996-0490  
Phone: 865-689-1531 Fax: 865-689-1534 E-mail: [sssp@utk.edu](mailto:sssp@utk.edu)  
[www.sssp1.org](http://www.sssp1.org)

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January 8, 2016

Dr. Carolyn J. Stefanco, President  
Ms. Judy Calogero, Chair of the Board of Trustees  
The College of Saint Rose  
President's Office  
432 Western Avenue  
Albany, NY 12203

Dear Dr. Stefanco and Ms. Calogero:

I am writing on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP), one of the oldest and most respected sociological organizations in the United States. We are writing principally to express grave concern with the decision made by the Board of Trustees of the College of Saint Rose to eliminate 27 academic programs, including Sociology, and to terminate the Sociology Department's newest tenure-track professor. Furthermore, the decision to end these programs was made with little input from the faculty, the group in the best position to make the most pedagogically sound decisions about the institution's academic programs. In fact, it is our understanding that the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) is considering censure. We are perplexed by this and urge the Board to reconsider its decision.

In the first instance, sociology appears to be thriving, with 28 majors and 25 minors, despite the low number of faculty in the department. Clearly there is an interest in the field and if you wish, we can provide you with a long list of occupations and graduate and professional programs which individuals with sociology degrees enter upon graduation. Sociology historically has attracted disproportionately students from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups and women, which we understand the college is targeting and must target given the demographic changes we are seeing in the country. Coupled with the decision to eliminate the Spanish program in light of the institution's interest in attracting these students and becoming more international, the decision does not make sense to us.

Second, the Board's decision to invest in a criminal justice program while at the same time eliminating the sociology program is especially perplexing and ill advised, since the sociology department is the ideal department to house a program in criminology and criminal justice. Recent shootings of unarmed black men by police officers has focused the nation's attention on policing in the United States and in particular the relationship between police officers and poor minority communities. Clearly the training of police officers in the future will require providing new recruits and veterans with a much broader and deeper understanding of these communities and society, which sociology can provide in

an unparalleled manner. The demographic changes to which we alluded above make this an even more pressing concern. Why not explore this possibility first, instead of cutting the sociology department and terminating a new tenure-track faculty member? The College of Saint Rose's reputation as a respected *academic* institution is much more likely to be enhanced with a criminal justice program that is combined with sociology.

Finally, these cuts appear to ignore the fact that sociology has helped spawn new programs in allied fields, such as social work, public health, and criminal justice, and could call into question the college's commitment to a liberal arts education. Measuring the worth of a program solely on the basis of the number of majors misses the point of a strong liberal arts education. If, for example, anthropology, political science, or history had very few majors, the value that students and society derive from undergraduates taking courses in these disciplines more than outweighs the low number of majors in these disciplines. By eliminating sociology, students are denied the opportunity to take courses in gender inequality, race and ethnicity, social change, social problems, social class and inequality, the family, and many other courses from which even students majoring in business administration will benefit and need to be successful in their careers, and from which society will benefit.

We hope that you will reconsider your decision to eliminate sociology and to terminate the newest member of the department. If you wish to discuss any of the reasons that we have given you to reconsider these cuts, please feel free to let us know.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hector L. Delgado', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Héctor L. Delgado, Ph.D.  
Executive Officer, SSSP