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KNOXVILLE

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## **Report to the Budget, Finance, and Audit Committee of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, 2022**

Stephanie Bohon  
Professor and Head  
Department of Sociology

The Department of Sociology at the University of Tennessee-Knoxville and the Society for the Study of Social Problems has enjoyed a long and productive relationship. We are pleased that we have been the home of the Executive Office since 1990 and remain the home of the Administrative Office. Most of our faculty and graduate students are members of SSSP, and several of our faculty have served on a variety of SSSP committee positions over the years. We attend the society's yearly conference, and several of us have published in *Social Problems*. (Indeed, I am submitting a paper there next week.) I support the relationship between UTK Sociology and SSSP without reservation.

Last year I had the opportunity to work with Michele Koontz and Héctor Delgado to negotiate a new contract between the University of Tennessee and SSSP. I cannot tell you how delighted I am to continue this relationship. In the contract negotiations, we were able to simplify some processes to our mutual benefit. For example, SSSP can now pay their graduate student's tuition directly to the University instead of filtering the cost through the Department. Additionally, a larger share of the SSSP staff salaries can be handled through the contract rather than having to be paid directly by SSSP.

The transition to a new contract was not entirely smooth. In last year's report I noted that our department hired a new Business Manager (Jill Baker) and "we have made some mistakes and will probably make some more, but we hope not to make any of the same mistakes twice." During the transition to the new contract, we discovered that one SSSP staff member's paperwork had not been properly processed. The consequence was that her pay was delayed by five working days. This is unacceptable, and will not happen again, and Jill worked closely with Michele to make sure that the problem was resolved as quickly as possible. We are currently in the process of hiring another administrative assistant, which will hopefully improve our front office functioning, overall.

Another major change in the relationship between UT Sociology and SSSP was the result of UT's transition to a new budget model. Under the new model, Colleges get "charged" for their use of space, so SSSP relinquished their office on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of McClung Tower in favor of a telecommuting model. The transition had already effectively happened during the March 2020 COVID-19 quarantine, so this transition was seamless. It goes without saying that we will make meeting and other temporary space available to SSSP whenever needed.

Two more radical changes on campus have impacted SSSP. First, the university's new budget model resulted in a substantial and needed salary boost for graduate students on assistantships. Starting in Fall, Sociology will now pay their 20 hour/week graduate assistants about \$18,700 annually for 9 months of

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service. SSSP has decided to match that amount to be able to hire the best graduate students; however, this required restructuring the GRA position to 9 months/year. Another radical change is that—as the result of heavy pressure by the United College Workers union—the university will now no longer charge annual fees to graduate students starting Fall 2022. This means that SSSP’s graduate student will no longer have to pay more than \$2000 a year in fees out of pocket so their salary will go further. We can all applaud this labor victory.

Overall, the Department of Sociology is grateful to SSSP for providing support for a graduate student by funding a SSSP graduate research assistant. Zaina Shams progressed on track, successfully defended her MA thesis, and entered in our PhD program where she has made great progress. She decided, however, that she wanted to transition to a Graduate Teaching Associate position beginning Fall 2022. As a result, after a successful search, SSSP has hired Jeremy Booth, another of our bright and promising graduate students. We think you will be pleased with this hire.

I appreciate this opportunity to work with SSSP and to continue a relationship that has been mutually supportive.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephanie A. Bohon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Stephanie A. Bohon  
Department Head