Sociology is a core social science that provides students with a broad range of conceptual and technical skills. You may have questions about the specific skills and knowledge this major will provide. Here is some information that will help answer these questions based on the four-year research project conducted by the American Sociological Association, *What Can I Do with a Bachelor’s Degree in Sociology?*

**Reasons for Majoring in Sociology**

Students pick sociology as an undergraduate major because they are excited about learning evidence-based answers to crucial questions about how society works. As the figure below shows, about 9 out of 10 students strongly agree that they majored because sociological concepts are of great interest to them. Students are intellectually engaged by the analysis of issues such as educational inequality, crime waves, natural disasters, race relations, social networks, urban communities, and political movements. Almost three quarters of students strongly agree that they majored in sociology because they enjoyed their first course; almost two thirds major to better understand the relationship between individuals and society. African Americans and Latinos are more likely to major for this reason than are whites. Almost 4 out of 10 want to change society and more than one third major because they want to understand how their lives were shaped by social institutions such as family, school, legal systems, politics, and religion, and how individuals, in turn, shape these institutions. Another one third strongly agrees that sociology would prepare them for the job they wanted or for graduate and professional schools. The top reasons for majoring did not vary significantly by type of school students attended (doctoral, master’s, or baccalaureate).

**Gaining Conceptual and Skills**

By their senior year, most sociology majors are confident that they understand important sociological concepts, theories, and social relationships. Almost 90 percent strongly agree that they understand the meanings of basic sociological concepts, such as status, inequality, gender, institutions, emotions, interaction, and collective behavior. About 70 percent strongly agree that they understand relationships between factors such as family income and educational quality; prison and drug abuse; gender and immigration. An equal percentage agrees strongly that they have become conversant in sociological perspectives on social issues and problems, and the differences between the theoretical approaches taught in sociology.

Understanding concepts, theories, social problems, and social relationships is only one component of the sociology major. Sociology students also learn the research and writing skills that help them to collect and sift through evidence and to explain what they find. In order...
to understand and analyze concepts, issues, and relationships, sociology majors are taught a variety of evidence-gathering approaches. By their senior year, between one half and three quarters of them strongly agree that they can develop evidence-based arguments, evaluate research methods, write reports, and form causal hypotheses. The highest percentage of respondents strongly agrees that they can identify ethical issues in research. Fewer majors strongly agree that they learn to use statistical packages in the social sciences, yet, this is the skill that they graduating seniors are the most likely to list on their résumés.

The sociology curriculum also teaches students a variety of interpersonal skills, such as working in small groups, using leadership skills, and working with people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The conceptual and research skills learned through the sociology curriculum prepare students for the careers they will pursue after graduation.

Figure 1. Top Five Reasons for Majoring in Sociology by Type of School: 2005
(Percent Responding Very Important; Weighted Data)

Source: ASA Research and Development Department, What Can I do With a Bachelor’s in Sociology? A National Survey of Seniors Majoring in Sociology, Spring 2005