Dear Student,

As you prepare for college, you are certainly considering what subject area might be your major. I hope that you will consider Sociology. Here is some information that might answer questions you have about Sociology. Majors in sociology are prepared to follow a variety of career paths after graduation because Sociology as a major provides the skills, concepts, and knowledge that undergraduate students need to enter the job market successfully or go on to graduate school.

What is Sociology?
Sociology is the study of the interplay of individual behavior and social institutions such as the family, politics, religion, work, leisure, crime, law and law enforcement, education, and health care. Sociologists study a broad range of topics. A sociology major might study something small-scale, such as how people manage the impressions they make on others, or something of a much larger scale, such as the causes and consequences of immigration or changes in family patterns. Students who major in sociology find concepts such as culture, emotions, inequality, social problems, deviant behavior, political movements, religion, health disparities and urbanization to be fascinating topics. Approaches sociologists use to study these and other topics include surveys, experiments, focus groups, people watching, and in-depth interviews. Sociology has the highest percentage of undergraduates who are the first in their families to attend college and from under-represented minority groups in the United States.

Why do students major in Sociology?
Students major in sociology for many reasons. Some students choose Sociology because they have strong inclinations to improve the society around them by better understanding the relationships between individuals and social issues. Other students are focused on employment, graduate or professional school and see Sociology as a Major that will prepare them for the job they want or to continue their education. Most students are also attracted to Sociology because they find the concepts that they learn in their sociology courses personally and intellectually exciting. The scientific tools that students learn in Sociology help people answer puzzling questions about their lives. Sociology teaches students skills and concepts that are useful in finding jobs and attending graduate and professional school. It is not surprising that most Sociology majors report satisfaction with their choice of the Major after graduation.

What will I be able to do with a degree in Sociology?
Although you may not yet have considered post-college careers and or the possibility of graduate school, a degree in Sociology presents you with many future opportunities. Over half of undergraduate Sociology majors go directly into the workforce after graduation. These former Sociology majors report finding jobs in many different occupations such as caseworkers, managers, paralegals, crime scene technicians, human rights advocates, computer consultants, marketing researchers, teachers, and editors. Sociology majors find their careers very satisfying, especially when these careers relate to what they learned as sociology majors. In addition, they experience job flexibility and growth. By four years after graduation, 80 percent have changed jobs, although many stay in the same field. These job changes frequently include promotions, salary increases, more responsibility and increasingly interesting work. Many Sociology majors (about half) pursue advanced degrees, directly after undergraduate school or after working for two or three years. The degrees are in sociology, social work,
education, psychology, law, business, criminology, health care, public policy, and communications, and many of these degrees lead to job and career advancement. The Sociology major leads to these advanced degrees for all types of students who do well as undergraduates, regardless of the institution they attended or the level of education achieved by their parents. You are on the road to success and your choices in the near future will have a great impact on your future. We hope you will choose a major that excites you, enhances your opportunity to contribute to society, and leads you to have a satisfying career. For many undergraduates, the choice to major in Sociology provides all of these outcomes. Perhaps it will for you. In considering your choice of a major in college, consider whether the Sociology major will contribute to your college experience and your preparation for the future.

Additional information about sociology can be found at the American Sociological Association’s web site. We have a special section designed for students. Just go to: http://www.asanet.org/students/resources_majors.cfm

Good luck.

Cordially,

Dr. Timothy E. Nissen, Chair
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