

May 1, 2012

### **Dean's Response to the Program Review of the Political Science Program**

I appreciate the thought and effort that went into the Program Review Team's report, and into the Political Science faculty's self-study and response to the report.

The Review Team found that the Program is an excellent one, citing as particular strengths its high-quality faculty, a broad-based curriculum enhanced by a recent revision, and the prevalence of "high-impact" pedagogy, including ample opportunities for undergraduate research and co-curricular activities

The Team's report identified a number of areas representing challenges, and made corresponding recommendations.

- The report recommended that the Program revise its mission statement to explicitly mention its high-impact pedagogy (or to use my preferred term, experiential learning) and link it to the University's mission statement. The faculty response indicates that this will be done.
- The report recommended filling the position in Constitutional law; as the response notes, this has been accomplished, effective Fall 2012.
- Noting that the current chair's service decreases the number of courses she teaches, the report recommends, with the assent of the program faculty, that an additional position in the chair's specialty area of international/comparative politics be considered. However, the new hire referred to above restores the number of Political Science faculty members to its long-time level of six. The proposed hire would represent a new position, at a time when several departments in the College are still "short" a faculty member in the wake of recent budget cuts. In the past, the department, like others, has had to find ways to adapt to the loss of half the teaching capacity of whoever happened to be the chair.
- The report suggested that future hiring and course design take a more "holistic" approach than the traditional one of hiring by sub-fields. Like the faculty in their response, I am not quite clear how such an approach would work. Similar to my own discipline of anthropology, political science has well-recognized sub-fields, which typically organize both curricula and faculty hiring.
- The report references a workload assignment fairness issue in the program which the faculty response indicates has been settled equitably.
- The report suggests that experiential learning be definitely valued in the tenure and promotion process. The faculty response agrees, but notes that the process operates in the context of College and University policies. This is correct, though I note that departments are always free to adopt their own policies, which can be more restrictive than higher-level policies. Additionally, in the past year the College's Tenure Policy

Revision Committee has produced a draft policy (not yet adopted, and perhaps not in final form) which I believe duly recognizes forms of “high-impact pedagogy” as important faculty work.

- The report suggests several steps to improve communication with Political Science majors and minors, which the faculty response agrees to adopt, with one exception. They plan to retain the practice of having one designated faculty advisor, rather than assigning some students to each faculty member. Since their preference is based on their experience with having tried both advising models, this seems to be a sound decision.
- The faculty response adopts as the top priority the “fundamental overhaul” of their assessment plan suggested by the report. One of the outside members of the Review Team has agreed to consult with the faculty on this issue. I would suggest as well that the faculty consult with WSU’s Institutional Effectiveness officer as well. I appreciate the faculty’s making this issue their top priority.
- The faculty response concurs with the report that an alumni council would be a positive step, but disagrees that their community connections are in need of significant strengthening. I concur with the faculty that their current community outreach is strong and quite varied.

In sum, I believe that the Review Team report correctly identified and stressed the considerable strengths of the Political Science Program, and made a number of useful suggestions for its enhancement. I support the faculty in their responses to the Review Team’s report.

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