

**Political Science Faculty Response:
Five-Year Program Review**

Introductory Statement

The Political Science Program Faculty appreciates the efforts invested by the Program Review team. We welcome the judgment that finds us both "effectively meeting [POLS] goals and missions" (p. 1), and "overall.....very successful with a few areas in need of attention to better leverage its strengths" (p. 6).

Programs Strengths

The Reviewers found three strengths during the evaluation process: 1) quality of faculty (including adjuncts), commended for their accessibility, rigor, fairness, diversity, collegiality, and passion for WSU's teaching mission; 2) a broad based curriculum, covering the spectrum of areas found within the discipline of Political Science, and enhanced by the 2011 BA/BS revisions; and 3) the prevalence of High Impact pedagogy, typified by co-curricular activities such as Model UN, Mock Trial/Moot Court, Community-Based Learning, *CIVITAS*, and opportunities for undergraduate research such as the Richard Richards Institute's Student Ethics Committee.

Program Challenges and Recommendations

The Reviewers found nine areas in which Political Science faces challenges and offer their recommendations for improvements that would benefit the program and its students. Each will be commented on according to the designated framework (agree or disagree/rationale/timeframe), and in light of the Faculty's response to their specific suggestions.

1- Mission Statement - High Impact and the College/University Mission Statements

While the Political Science mission statement meshes with the mission statements of both the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and Weber State University, it lacks an explicit reference highlighting and connecting its High Impact pedagogy to them.

Agree/Rationale: It reinforces our strengths to clarify the connection. Timeline: Fall, 2012

2 - Filling the Constitutional Law Position

The Reviewers recognize the importance of the pre-law component to the program, and the Political Science program is pleased to confirm the hiring of Richard Price (J.D., Roger Williams School of Law [2008] / Ph.D. [dissertation defense scheduled for June, 2012], Syracuse University) as of July 1, 2012.

Agree/Rationale: Contract signed, and courses scheduled for Fall, 2012. Timeline: NA

3 - Additional International/Comparative Position

Attention to the current International Politics offerings has been affected by the department Chair's half-time contract with negative consequences to this increasingly dynamic aspect of Political Science.

Agree/Rationale: We welcome the Program Reviewers support for an additional position.
Timeline: NA, as the funding decision lies at the college and university level.

4 - Reevaluating sub-fields, course offerings and promoting online and hybrid

The Reviewers suggest a more "holistic" approach to hiring rather than by sub-fields, and propose an enhancement of online and hybrid courses according to student preferences, especially those of non-traditional students.

Respectfully Disagree/Rationale: A strong consensus by the Faculty exists on two issues: 1) sustaining the recognized sub-fields as they exist in Political Science departments across academia (American Government and Public Administration / Comparative Politics / International Politics / Public and Constitutional Law / Political Theory); and, 2) confirming the Faculty's decision to limit online and hybrid courses to 1000 and 2000 level courses (5 total) as a result of the review of online classes mandated by the Dean's office in Fall, 2011.
Timeline: NA

5. Workload Fairness Issue

Dr. Murray, hired in part to teach the required Methods course, has offered it each Spring, and online in Summer (as overload, but with a small enrollment). The department Chair takes responsibility for promising Dr. Johnson that he would not have to teach Methods (now Quantitative Analysis) on alternate years until completing his 2012-13 tenure process. (It was previously agreed that Summer, 2012 would be the last online offering, and that he would teach the course in Spring, 2013 during her sabbatical.)

Agree/Rationale: This solution improves departmental flexibility and responds to this concern.
Timeline: Spring, 2013

6. Department's Value of High Impact Learning in Tenure/Promotion

The department engages in an extraordinary level of High Impact experiential learning which it regards as the program's distinctive profile. It should be valued accordingly in their Tenure/Promotion context.

Agree/Rationale: The Political Science program whole-heartedly agrees, but works within the guidelines established by the S&BS College Tenure document and the WSU Promotion document.
Timeline: NA

7. Advisement and Retention Concerns

The Faculty has a concern about the low number of graduates given the number of Majors. The Reviewers identified shortcomings with advising that impact this issue, and with the lack of advising Assessment as well. We will employ selected concrete ideas from the Faculty and Reviewers to this end.

Agree/Rationale: Faculty endorse the following steps: 1) strongly encouraging annual consultations for Majors/Minors; 2) having Dr. Kuehls keep a numerical count and record of all consultation sessions (office / email / phone) to satisfy Assessment, and to better identify any factors impacting graduation rates; 3) posting in multiple venues a 2 year list of future course offerings for Majors/Minors.

Respectfully Disagree/Rationale: Previous experience with multiple Faculty advisors led us to switch to one designated Faculty advisor which has been more effective and more satisfactory to students (although the sub-fields format means that Dr. Kuehls often directs students to the appropriate Faculty).

Timeline: Academic year, 2012-13

8. Assessment Overhaul

The Faculty acknowledge the need to engage in a fundamental overhaul of Assessment to meet the current standards put forward by Northwest Accreditation. As noted, a good faith but flawed effort was made in Fall, 2011 to redesign our Learning Outcomes (LOs), and to create appropriate and effective Assessment tools in Spring, 2012 based on those LOs. The feedback from the Reviewers has been invaluable in dissecting the shortcomings of the revised LOs, and providing guidelines for both LOs and Assessment. This remains as the top priority for the Political Science Faculty.

Agree/Rationale: The Faculty agree that the Learning Outcomes (LOs) need to be redesigned and based on action verbs, with at least one direct (numerical) measure of Assessment for every regular course, every Gen Ed course, and for the program in its entirety.

Timeline: Summer, 2012 (with the benefits of AAC&U resources and the gracious willingness of Dr. Farrar-Myers to give us feedback during the process).

9. Creating an Alumni Council and Strengthening Community Relationships

The Reviewers encourage Political Science to create an Alumni Council, and strengthen its relationships with external communities.

Agree/Rationale: An Alumni Council (like the D.C. Alumni Council) would be a significant asset.

Disagree/Rationale: Our current robust community relationships (e.g., Boys State, Northern Utah Model UN, CIVITAS, American Democracy Project, Constitution Day, Poll Workers Training, Community-Based Learning, and multiple local, state, and national Internships) are recognized as a major asset to our students, department, college, and the university. Efforts to create a Walker Institute matching the embedded Richard Richards Institute illustrate our ongoing efforts at community engagement.

Timeline: Academic year, 2012-13

