

## Five-Year Program Review

### Political Science Faculty Response

The Political Science program faculty truly appreciates the thorough and insightful review provided by Dr. Anne Hildreth and Dr. Adam Johnston. We believe that the review team quite accurately captured the essence of the political science program in the opening line of their report when they described the Political Science program as a “dynamic, student-centered enterprise.”

#### **Program Strengths**

The review team identified four basic strengths of the Political Science program: 1) student engagement; 2) department leadership; 3) recent changes to the curriculum; and 4) the connection to and with the Walker Institute of Politics and Public Service. The Political Science faculty agrees with this assessment of the program’s strengths. Student engagement deserves to be listed first on a list of program strengths. The Political Science faculty takes great pride in the accomplishments of their students and seeks to do what it can to facilitate student success.

#### **Program Challenges and Opportunities**

The review team identified six “challenges and opportunities.”

1. The future of the Walker Institute with the departure of its director, Dr. Carol McNamara in June of 2017.

This is a definite challenge, but one that extends beyond the grasp of the Political Science program itself. While two members of the Political Science faculty will serve on the search committee to hire a new director, technically, the position of Director of the Walker Institute is not housed within the Political Science program.

2. Advising

The previous Five-year Program Review report identified advising a particular challenge and recommended a change to the division of labor. The 2017 Program Review team agrees with the Political Science faculty that such a division of labor is not needed. The Review team applauds efforts within the program to encourage students to seek advisement early and often.

3. Assisting students to graduate in a “timely fashion”

The Review team identified this item as “not a major concern,” but “worthy of some consideration,” and the Political Science faculty agrees. We will continue to explore avenues to assist students to be able to take the classes they need in order to graduate, including developing long range planning tools (such as a Graduation map) and continuing to offer students the opportunity to take some classes on an independent study basis (when absolutely necessary). See also item 6 in this section.

#### 4. Working to identify and lift students who are struggling

The Review team applauded the success of many Political Science students, but noted that they “did not hear much about work to identify and lift students who were struggling.” The faculty agrees that this is an area where more could be done and liked the Review Team’s suggestion of trying to get current, successful students to serve as “peer tutors or advisors.” This is something we will discuss more in the coming year.

#### 5. More financial support for research/scholarship

The faculty agrees that this is an ongoing challenge. The Review Team’s recommendation of creating an “Advisory Board” that might be able to help raise some funds to assist with research/scholarship is a recommendation worth considering. The Review Team identifies the creation of an advisory board as “a priority in the coming years” and the faculty agrees.

#### 6. Expanding the range of class offerings into the afternoon hours

This recommendation ties somewhat in with recommendation 3 above and may assist or possibly hinder efforts there. Nonetheless the faculty is committed to offering classes in the afternoon and evening hours. The move into the old Science building, with less classroom space, will necessitate this for the next year and a half. We will monitor enrollments to see if this is something we should continue.

### **Program Recommendations**

The Review team made three specific recommendations

1. “(T)hat the (upcoming) vacancy ... in Comparative Politics should be promptly filled with a new faculty who shares that focus in Comparative Politics.”

The faculty wholeheartedly agrees with this recommendation, both in terms of the position being filled “promptly” and that it is filled with a Comparativist. As the Review team notes, Comparative Politics is a core area of the discipline and so, in order to prepare students appropriately, hiring another Comparativist is essential to the continued success of the program.

2. Fill the Walker Institute’s Director’s position with a political scientist who complements the current faculty.

Again, the faculty wholeheartedly agrees. We believe that the creation and success of the Walker Institute over the past four years has benefitted our program immensely. In order to continue the momentum created by Dr. Carol McNamara (the outgoing Director) someone with a strong academic background in Political Science is needed. The faculty hopes that just such a person will be found.

3. “Designing and implementing authentic assessments to inform the (program) of the success of (recent) curricular changes.” To that end, the Political Science program is encouraged to “seek support from institutional colleagues and work as a full faculty team to plan the next phase of their assessments.”

The word assessment is obviously, not the favorite word among faculty. However, the Political Science faculty agrees with this recommendation and will begin work in the fall to design and implement a more informative and beneficial assessment plan. Work being done across the University with the guidance of one of the new Associate Provost’s can be of help here.

### **Conclusion**

Once again, the Political Science faculty would like to thank the Program Review team for their work. We believe that they have accurately identified program strengths and challenges. We thank them for their recommendations.