

Undergraduate Academic Program Review

Name of Program: Political Science

Name and contact information for person completing the review:

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Indicate whether the program is

on campus
 online
 both

NCA Criterion 1—Mission and Integrity

NCA Criterion 2—Preparing for the Future

NCA Criterion 3—Student Learning and Effective Teaching

NCA Criterion 4—Acquisition, Discovery, and Application of Knowledge

NCA Criterion 5—Engagement and Service

I. Program Mission (NCA Criterion 1 and Criterion 5)

? **program mission statement (should identify constituency served) (1A, 1B)**

The Department of Political Science is a part of the social sciences constituency of the College of Liberal Arts of Wright State University. Our primary mission is to promote an understanding of governments and how people behave in their relationship to government. To fulfill this mission, the Department supports research and instruction (baccalaureate and graduate level), as mutually reinforcing activities. In its study of how cultural, historical and economic forces affect the evolution of governments and mass political behavior, the Department of Political Science endeavors to promote greater understanding of ourselves and others. It promotes scholarship and learning while serving the community at the local, state, national, and international levels by preparing an informed constituency.

? **consistency with university mission (1C, 1E)**

As Wright State University is a catalyst for educational excellence in the Miami Valley, promoting life-long learning and service, so is the Department of Political Science. Not only does it provide access to scholarship and learning in the field of Political Science, it promotes leadership in human services and international and cultural understanding while fostering collegial involvement and responsibility for continuous improvement of education and research.

? **consistency with college mission (1C, 1E)**

The College of Liberal Arts seeks to provide a quality general education, undergraduate and graduate experience, and the Department of Political Science contributes to all of these goals. Not only do Political Science faculty teach PLS 200, CST 251, and a number of other general education Regional Studies courses, the Political Science Department supports both a BA in Political Science and several interdisciplinary programs, the MA in International and Comparative Politics, as well as the MA in

Humanities. Moreover, Political Science faculty engage in creative, innovative, and applied scholarship and professional service in the region and beyond, thus reflecting the missions of the University and College.

? **consistency of goals, learning objectives with program mission (1C)**

The goals of the Department of Political Science are reflected in the program mission: to help students secure employment in their chosen field or in graduate or law school; for graduates to be prepared to assume their roles as effective and informed citizens. This is also the case with the Department's learning objectives: for students to have strong critical thinking skills and be effective writers, able to produce policy analyses.

? **extent to which program prepares students to "live and work in a global, diverse, and technological society" (4C)**

The Department of Political Science supports the internationalizing of the university's curriculum by offering numerous courses in comparative politics, international relations, international theory, and women in politics. In addition, Political Science faculty members have conducted fieldwork and taught abroad, in countries such as Sweden, Argentina, Brazil, Spain, China, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Iraq. They have also led the WSU Student Ambassador program in Japan and Brazil.

? **extent to which program, through its curriculum and co-curriculum, fosters civic engagement and social responsibility (5A, 5C)**

Through its curriculum the Department of Political Science fosters civic engagement and social responsibility. A variety of courses in American politics, international politics, and political theory, as well as experiential learning opportunities (internships at the Ohio legislature and various county prosecutors' offices as well as participation in the Model United Nations and Moot Court) support these goals. The following figure illustrates how PLS professors (Schlagheck, Kantha, and Luehrmann) have led the Wright State Model United Nations team to success over the last seven years.

Figure 1: Model United Nations (2000-2007)

| Year – Country | Other Represented | Delegation Award | Position Paper Award |
|--|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| 2000 – Germany | Inter-Parliamentary Union | Outstanding (Germany), Distinguished (IPU) | Outstanding (All) |
| 2001 – Bosnia and Herzegovina, United States of America | None | Outstanding (Bosnia), Distinguished (US) | Outstanding (All) |
| 2002 – People's Rep. of China | None | Honorable Mention | Outstanding |
| 2003 – Norway | International Save the Children | Distinguished (Norway), Honorable Mention (ISC) | Outstanding (All) |
| 2004 – Italy | Doctors Without Borders (MSF) | Outstanding (Italy), Distinguished (MSF) | Outstanding (All) |
| 2005 – France | None | Outstanding | Outstanding |

| | | | |
|---------------------|------|-------------------|-------------|
| 2006 – India | None | Honorable Mention | Outstanding |
| 2007 – Japan | None | Outstanding | Outstanding |

? **extent to which program fosters life-long learning (4A)**

The Department of Political Science fosters life-long learning by providing students with the tools of critical thinking and analysis. It prepares students to assume their roles as effective and informed citizens, while laying the groundwork for promoting international understanding.

Exit interviews and alumni surveys demonstrate a high level of satisfaction with the preparation PLS students receive here as they enter the workforce. Political Science grads from Wright State have found careers in the US Congress, the US Foreign Service, the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the National Air and Space Intelligence Center, the City of Dayton, the City of Beavercreek, and the Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce, as well as with a variety of employers in the private sector. Students and alumni indicate satisfaction with how their Political Science major has prepared them to adapt to a changing world.

? **interrelationship with general education (1C, 4B)**

The Department of Political Science continues to play an important role in the general education program. Sections of our Area III general education course (PLS 200) usually fill at 100 students. While it is not a writing intensive course, PLS 200, with its interest in dissecting political power relationships in contemporary society, helps students develop the critical thinking and other analytical skills necessary for understanding the complexity of human behavior and institutions. Political Science faculty also regularly teach other general education courses that are writing intensive, such as RST 262, 271, 281 (Area II or VI) and CST 251 (Area II or VI). These courses directly support the goals of general education. For example, RST 262 (Regional Studies: China) meets the requirements of Area II as a cultural-social foundations course in that it is designed to introduce students to the historical, cultural, economic and political reality of the world's most populous country. It highlights the cultural contributions of China's rich history, not only in the creation of modern Chinese culture, but its impact on other Asian cultures as well. RST 262 serves the goals of Area VI (as a college component course) by providing foundational information and concepts that students can apply in other fields (especially Political Science and Sociology, but possibly History and Economics as well). There are many conceptual lessons from this course that provide fruitful ground for comparative analysis in other coursework.

Beyond offering these courses, several PLS faculty further support the goals of general education as they work in collaboration with learning communities (both those run by University College and the College of Liberal Arts) for first year students. Examples include the University College (UVC 101) courses "Gender and Relationships around the Globe Learning Community," linked to CST 251, and "Global Issues and Current Events Learning Community," linked to CST 251 and PLS 200.

? **interrelationship with other WSU programs (1C)**

The Department of Political Science offers courses supporting eight graduate and undergraduate interdisciplinary majors: Criminal Justice, International Studies, African and African-American Studies, Social Science Education, Liberal Studies, Women's Studies, the MA in Humanities, and the MA in International and Comparative Politics. PLS also offers courses that are cross-listed with other departments (such as Religion, English, Philosophy, and Urban Affairs). Some of our International and Comparative Politics MA students have jointly pursued MPA or MBA degrees.

Five PLS faculty members currently serve (or have recently served) as the directors of the following interdisciplinary majors: Liberal Studies, International Studies, the MA in International and Comparative Politics, Social Science Education, and Criminal Justice. Such service is a benefit to the Department, College and University, but it does involve some costs. The Political Science Department is below Ohio Board of Regents' recommended staffing levels because each director of an interdisciplinary major receives as part of their compensation a two course teaching load reduction. With three PLS faculty currently serving in this capacity, this equals a six course reduction each academic year, nearly the equivalent of one full-time teaching position.

? **community engagement (5C, 5D)**

Members of the Department of Political Science are actively involved in community engagement. Most PLS faculty members share their expertise with local, national, or international media, most notably CNN and the BBC. Three PLS faculty members teach and serve as consultants on a regular basis at the Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, and another teaches continuing education seminars for attorneys. In addition, PLS faculty members serve as volunteers and participants in a variety of clubs and organizations in the community such as the Dayton Council on World Affairs and the Life-long Learning Institute at the University of Dayton. Political Science faculty work closely with faculty from Sinclair to promote and run the Dayton Model United Nations program. Political Science students have won internships in an assortment of offices and organizations, including a variety of Congressional District Offices as well as the Ohio General Assembly, the Prosecutor's Office of Clark County, the Montgomery County Public Defender's Office, and the Greene County Public Defender's Office. In Washington, DC PLS students have interned at the League of Women Voters, and Polaris (an international non-governmental human rights organization).

II. Program Description (NCA Criterion 2)

? **brief history of program, emphasizing past seven years (e.g., changes in administration, change in program direction, new degrees, minors, or certificates, de- or re-activation of program), including recommendations of any previous internal and/or external program reviews**

In the last seven years there has been no change in administration or significant alteration in program direction. However, seven years ago Political Science offered fewer (but significantly larger) sections of PLS 200 (often 400+ student sections). Today all of our PLS 200 sections are considerably smaller (with no more than 100 students), and we

routinely offer ten or more sections of the course each quarter. This course is now offered on-line as well.

Our course offerings in the area of criminal justice and international politics have expanded over the last several years. A new MA in International and Comparative Politics moved from the Applied Behavioral Sciences program (where it was housed since its inception, in 2001) to Political Science in Fall 2006. Nearly all PLS faculty offer courses that serve these students, as well as seminars open only to the MA students. This new MA program has enjoyed tremendous popularity. As of early 2007, there were 62 continuing students in this program (each of whom will write a thesis or project). In fact, the program has had to turn away applicants because at current staffing levels the Political Science department could not both maintain the high level of quality expected of us and effectively meet this demand. As a result, in 2006 the MA program accepted 15 of 35 applicants.

In addition, the undergraduate interdisciplinary programs led (or recently led) by PLS faculty have enjoyed enormous growth since 1999. For example, the number of International Studies majors has more than doubled in this period. Criminal Justice (led for several years by PLS Professor Funderburk) is the fastest growing major in the College of Liberal Arts. Since its inception in 2002, the Liberal Studies program has grown from 0 to more than 140 majors.

As Figure 2 (p.6) illustrates, PLS faculty also offer a large number and variety of courses that serve as a foundation for these interdisciplinary majors.

? **number of students served:**

As mentioned previously, the Political Science Department serves not only its own students, but also students across the University. From Winter through Fall 2006, we taught approximately 2800 students through our general education courses alone. In 1999 we taught approximately 3040 students in general education courses such as PLS 200, RST 262, RST 270, RST 280, and CST 250. This slight decline may be explained by any number of factors, including the reform of the general education curriculum.

? **number of majors:**

In 2006, the Department of Political Science had 160 majors (with 47 intending); in 2000, we had 157 (with 60 intending). The total number of majors since 1995 has hovered at around 200. It is likely that we lost a number of majors with the creation of the BA program in Criminal Justice since before the establishment of this program, most students who planned to work in this field sought Political Science degrees.

Although we attempted to count the number of upper-level credit hours PLS earned when including the students from interdisciplinary programs, such data was not readily obtainable (not even from the Academic Data Series). However, the following figure offers some indication as to how central Political Science is to the curriculum of these other majors.

Figure 2 –Number of PLS Courses Listed on Approved Course Lists of Other Majors

| IS | LS | SSE | CJ | MA-ICP | WMS | AFS |
|----|----|-----|----|--------|-----|-----|
| 37 | * | 8 | 21 | 5 | 10 | 7 |

IS: International Studies; LS: Liberal Studies; SSE: Social Science Education; CJ: Criminal Justice; MA-ICP: MA in International and Comparative Politics; WMS: Women's Studies; AFS: African and African-American Studies.

*Although Liberal Studies does not list the courses approved for the major, every PLS course offered could be used toward this major.

? **number of minors:**

62 (2006); (not reported for 2000). Most PLS minors have the following majors: History, International Studies, Criminal Justice, Social Science Education, and Liberal Studies.

? **number enrolled in certificate program (if applicable):** N/A.

? **number of faculty:**

2006: 20.

1999: 16.

? **student/faculty ratio, average class size:**

2006: PLS 200: 100:1; RST/CST: 40:1; upper-level courses: 35:1.

1999: PLS 200: 400:1; RST/CST: 90:1; upper-level courses: 35:1.

? **balance in rank of program faculty:**

8 Adjuncts, 3 Assistant Professors, 4 Associate Professors, 5 Full Professors (2006).

3 Adjuncts, 2 Assistant Professors, 4 Associate Professors, 3 Full Professors, 4 Faculty from Other Departments (1999).

31 sections of PLS courses were taught by adjuncts in 2006.

8 sections of PLS courses were taught by adjuncts in 1999.

Clearly, the Political Science Department is relying much more heavily on adjuncts than it has in the past. This is primarily (but not exclusively) due to the reduction in class size for PLS 200, and the resulting need for many more sections of that course.

? **number of staff:**

2006: 1.75 Senior Administrative Specialists.

1999: 1.75 Senior Administrative Specialists.

? **diversity (gender, race, ethnicity) of majors, faculty, and staff:**

Majors (by race):

2006: 2 Asian; 24 African-American; 1 Foreign; 1 Hispanic; 1 Native American; 12 unknown; 119 Caucasian.

2000: 1 Asian; 30 African-American; 1 Foreign; 0 Hispanic; 1 Native American; 3 unknown; 133 Caucasian.¹

Majors (by gender):

2006: 93 male; 67 female.

2000: 86 male; 83 female.

Faculty (by race):

2006: 2 Asian; 1 African-American; 17 Caucasian.

1999: 0 Asian; 1 African-American; 15 Caucasian.

Faculty (by gender):

2006: 13 male; 7 female.

1999: 12 male; 4 female.

Staff (by race and gender)

2006: 2 Caucasian 2 female.

2000: 2 Caucasian; 2 female.

? **Budget**

The operating budget for the department has remained largely unchanged for the last seven years. However, the number of faculty and programs served through the Department of Political Science has grown (as we hire adjuncts and instructors to handle more, smaller sections of PLS 200), as have pressures on equipment and support staff. The budget available for faculty travel has fallen over the years. In some cases the lack of funding has discouraged faculty from attending professional conferences.

? **facilities and equipment/instrumentation**

Most classrooms now have the electronic equipment our faculty need. However, the shortage of classrooms is often a problem. Disruptions due to renovation are a recurring problem for faculty in some buildings.

? **technology and information resources and services**

Most PLS faculty members use multimedia technologies such as PowerPoint, as well as electronic course reserve and Course Studio to enhance their teaching effectiveness. Over the last five years the department has begun offering some courses (PLS 200, 212, and CST 251) on-line.

? **program cost**

The ratio of cost to revenue generated in the Department of Political Science is among the best in the College.

III. Program Effectiveness (NCA Criterion 3 and Criterion 4)

¹ 1999 figures for majors not available.

? **achievement of student learning outcomes (Please summarize program assessment findings for past five years and subsequent improvements to program) (3A)**

The Department of Political Science prioritizes the following learning outcomes: students will be effective writers, students will be able to produce policy analyses, and students will have strong critical thinking skills. The vast majority of Political Science courses are offered as writing intensive sections. Therefore, our majors get many opportunities to refine their research, critical thinking, and writing skills. Starting in 2007, the Department plans to collect and analyze student writing samples through the collection of portfolios for each major. Although portfolios will be analyzed later this year, employers of PLS graduates are increasingly reporting that our graduates demonstrate these strong writing and critical thinking skills. Wright State's National Model United Nations' papers are externally assessed and compared to those submitted by 225 universities. Wright State's papers have won distinguished or outstanding honors every year.

Another source of information about the program's effectiveness is the annual assessment report. An analysis of the assessment reports for the period 1999-2006 suggests that students are meeting the following objectives:

- As is detailed elsewhere in this report, students are securing employment in their chosen fields.
- Students are gaining admission to law or graduate school: we are sending a small but growing number of students to competitive graduate programs such as George Washington University School of Law, University of Dayton School of Law, University of Cincinnati Law School, Miami University and Ohio State University.
- Graduates are prepared to assume their roles as effective and informed citizens: graduates report unanimously that they vote and are likely take part in other forms of political participation. More than one PLS graduate has sought (and won) elected office.

? **student retention rate (3A)**

The Department has not tracked the retention rate of its majors.

? **number of graduates annually (3A):**

Summer 2005-Spring 2006: 50

Summer 1999-Spring 2000: 42

? **placement of graduates (e.g., employment, graduate study) (3A)**

Recent PLS graduates have found employment in the public and private sectors, including the US House of Representatives (Rep. Mike Turner's office), the US Senate (Sen. Mike DeWine's office, Sen. Tony Hall's office), the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Lexis-Nexis, the City of Dayton, the National Air and Space Intelligence Center, the US Foreign Service, and the Kettering Foundation. In addition, many of our graduates have been successful in obtaining admission to law schools and graduate schools, such as the University of Virginia, Ohio State, and Miami University.

? **teaching effectiveness (3B, 3D)**

The Department is known for its teaching effectiveness. In student evaluation of instruction, most Political Science faculty members receive scores above 4.5 (on a scale of 1 to 5). Several Political Science faculty have won awards such as the Robert J. Kegerreis Distinguished Professor of Teaching, the Presidential Award for Faculty Excellence in Teaching, the Presidential Award for Early Career Achievement, and similar honors.

No matter the level of teaching excellence, class size matters. Although it was widely expected that moving to smaller (from 400 person to 100 person) sections of PLS 200 would improve student learning outcomes, faculty report that there has not been much change in this area. PLS faculty members who teach these courses agree that more significant reductions in class size (to 40 person sections) would be necessary before we would see the desired improvement. In addition, attaching graduate teaching assistants to these classes (to run small group review sessions) is suggested.

? **faculty productivity (e.g., publications, grants) (4A)**

The department enjoys high levels of scholarly productivity. All faculty members are currently writing or revising book manuscripts or scholarly articles. Since 1999, PLS faculty members have authored 16 books and over 48 scholarly articles, book chapters, and the like.

? **interrelations of program's teaching, research, service activities (3A-D, 4A-C, 5 A-C)**

Our faculty members pride themselves on being scholar-instructors. All are engaged in research related to the courses they offer, either directly or indirectly. Five current Political Science faculty members have written textbooks used in general education courses, and others have written monographs or articles that complement upper-level courses. Political Science faculty members have also generously given their time, presenting their research not only at conferences, but working as instructors and consultants at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base and for various local organizations such as the Lifelong Learning Institute at the University of Dayton

? **integration of technology into curriculum and instruction (3C)**

Three Political Science courses (PLS 200, 212 and CST 251) are currently offered as web-based, distance learning and more (i.e.: PLS 420) are being developed. Most Political Science faculty members use multimedia technologies such as PowerPoint and electronic course reserve. An increasing number are using web-based materials and Course Studio to enhance their teaching effectiveness.

? **description of how program ensures that it is always current (4C)**

Faculty members are encouraged to do fieldwork, to attend national and international conferences, and to work collaboratively.

? **“comparative advantage” (e.g., distinctiveness in terms of students served, differentiation from programs offered at other regional institutions, strengths attributable to collaborative/interdisciplinary nature of program, etc.)**

WSU's Department of Political Science is distinguished by the breadth of its program (offering coursework in American Politics, International and Comparative Politics, and

Political Theory). In addition, nearly all Political Science classes are taught by full-time faculty or adjuncts with JDs or PhDs. Our students benefit greatly from the accessibility of our faculty, who are actively engaged in research related to their teaching. Moreover, undergraduates in many of our upper-level seminars benefit from a hybrid setting in which they mix with graduate students.

If the program is online, respond to the following questions (**drawn from NCA Best Practices**): N/A

- ? Is the online program taught by the same faculty as the on-campus program?
- ? How do the retention and graduation rates of the online and on-campus programs compare?
- ? How does the achievement of learning outcomes by online students compare with those by on-campus students?
- ? How does student evaluation of instruction for online classes compare to that for on-campus courses?
- ? How does the online program provide for appropriate interaction (synchronous or asynchronous) between students and instructor and among students?
- ? How does access to academic and technical support programs compare for online and on-campus students and for online and on-campus faculty?
- ? How does the program provide a coherent plan for student access to all courses necessary to complete the program (or provide clear notification of requirements not included in electronic offerings)?
- ? How have issues of workload, compensation, and ownership of intellectual property been addressed by the program?
- ? How have issues of security of personal information been addressed?

IV. Program Needs/Areas in Need of Improvement

- ? **Summarize the program needs (e.g., personnel, facilities, equipment) identified in this program review and the areas in need of improvement.**

Based upon the Ohio Board of Regents staffing models, the Department of Political Science remains at least two full-time faculty short of recommended staffing levels. Our administrative specialists are also stretched thin, given the current 1.75 staffing levels administering Political Science and three other programs. They also need updated computers to handle the volume and variety of work that they do. The addition of four to six graduate assistantships would markedly enhance the quality of undergraduate instruction and scholarly productivity. Graduate assistants could help with the heavy advising load that many PLS faculty bear. Offering more graduate assistantships would help to draw better students and improve the competitiveness of our graduate program.

V. Proposed Improvement Action Plan

- ? **Summarize the actions that will be taken in response to the findings of this program assessment. Provide a timeline that indicates how these changes will be implemented and assessed over the next seven years.**

This committee will advise the chair of the Department of Political Science to pursue at least two additional tenure-track positions, as well as the addition of one half-time senior

administrative specialist. The committee will advise the chair to immediately seek these resources from the dean of the College of Liberal Arts.