

Assessment Plan Undergraduate Program

Goals:

The Department of Politics and Government at Illinois State University offers a BA in Political Science in order to promote human knowledge about and skills in the political dimensions of social life.

Student Learning Outcomes:

1. The student possesses the ability to understand and evaluate political institutions and processes;
2. The student possesses the ability to conduct research on politics and government;
3. The student possesses skills at effective oral and written communication about politics or government;
4. The student possesses skills of effective civic and political engagement.

Measures	Outcomes				Use of Information
	1	2	3	4	
Political Science Learning Outcomes test	x	x		x	This test will be designed as follows: In the main entry course, 140, students will be given a pre-test of 125 multiple choice questions that measure learning outcomes. Their names and identification numbers will be recorded. Right before graduation, the students will be given the exam again. The results will be merged, and the courses the student took (but not the instructor's name) will also be included in the database. The data will then be used to determine where the department is adequately teaching basic areas of politics and where improvement is possible.
Focus group with political science majors and minors	x	x	x	x	Seniors are led in a discussion by the Director of Assessment, and extensive notes (almost a transcript) are compiled of what each participants says. A summary of findings is written, and then both the summary and the notes are shared with the faculty and retained each year for program review. The focus group is used to gain input from undergraduates, who are key stakeholders, as well as to ask them how well the program is reaching the four goals.

Senior Survey	x	x	x	x	All seniors are strongly encouraged to fill out a survey. The purpose of the survey is to receive feedback from undergraduates on the program as well as to get feedback on how well the department is reaching its student learning outcome goals.
Alumni Survey			x	x	The department will examine the responses of the alumni survey to determine how much the program helped them achieve their career goals.

Examples of Changes Based on Assessment:

The senior survey, the undergraduate survey, and informal discussions with students all indicated that while the quality of undergraduate advisement was strong, the single advisor was overextended with the large number of political science majors. The department added an extra person for undergraduate advisement.

Steps for Improving Assessment:

A number of steps will be taken beginning the Spring of 2008 to improve the annual assessment of undergraduates:

1. A learning outcomes pre-test and post-test design, outlined briefly above, will be added;
2. Questions about learning outcomes will be added to the senior survey;
3. The department will take more steps to attract undergraduates to the focus group, such as by advertising better and offering food;
4. The focus group will include more questions that directly relate to learning outcomes;
5. The department will take steps to increase the response rates of the alumni survey, so as to make the analysis of this data more valuable.

Review of the B.A., B.S. in Political Science 45.1001

Introduction. The undergraduate degree program in the Department of Politics and Government is committed to providing a premier learning experience for students. The program fulfills this commitment by: having faculty, rather than graduate students, instruct introductory as well as advanced courses both for majors and the general student population; fostering an atmosphere conducive to high levels of scholarship and service by faculty; supporting an array of co-curricular and out-of-classroom educational opportunities for students; and, pursuing a course of action, such as actively supporting the instruction of Middle and Outer Core classes in the General Education program.

Overview of Academic Unit. The overall mission of the undergraduate program is to provide an affordable, high quality liberal arts educational experience for students. In so doing, the program strives to prepare students to be engaged citizens able to achieve positions of leadership in the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. The program clearly has pursued actions and achieved results that reflect its strong commitment to the University's Mission Statement and to the Goals of *Educating Illinois*.

Overview of Degree Program. For the review period the program experienced sizable increases in the number of majors and the number of degrees conferred. Program majors enter the University with slightly higher average ACT scores when compared to all entering first-year students. The diversity represented among program majors is quite similar to the general student population except in regard to gender. Faculty and students have consistently been among the leaders at the University in regard to participation in the University Honors Program.

Curriculum of the Politics and Government Undergraduate Program. The program is designed so that majors will comprehend the complexities of methodologies and subject matter that are inherent to the political science discipline. The required credit hours to graduate as a major have been intentionally kept at a level so that students have ample flexibility to involve themselves in other academic pursuits at the University. Students not only are encouraged to take advantage of these pursuits but to also become involved in numerous out-of-classroom educational opportunities, such as Mock Trial, Model U.N. and Study Abroad, available through the Department.

Faculty of the degree program. Faculty members have achieved national and international reputations for scholarship, teaching, and service activities. Faculty members have been invited to give lectures at many universities both in and outside the country and have been recognized for their teaching excellence by the College, University, and external academic organizations. Faculty have also enthusiastically accepted calls to serve by the College, the University, and many community groups. The faculty reflects the diversity of the University, and the Department will strive to enhance this diversity in future hiring decisions.

Program goals and quality measures. The primary goal of the program is to provide a premier undergraduate experience in political science. Related to the pursuit of this goal is the desire of the program to: provide a comprehensive, rigorous, and diverse curriculum; foster an environment for faculty to produce quality scholarship and incorporate students into their research; encourage faculty and staff to actively participate in a wide assortment of service activities; and ensure the recruitment and retention of a highly qualified, diverse faculty.

Changes in level of student demand. The number of majors and degrees conferred has increased since the last review period. The increase in student demand may be due to improved attractiveness to legal careers, a perception of greater availability of governmental jobs, increased attention to the forces of globalization, and resurgence in interest in civic engagement. The Illinois State program awards the second highest number of degrees in Illinois Public Institutions.

Major changes in the program's discipline, student demand, societal need, institutional context. The Illinois State program in Political Science has added new sequences to the major that respond to increasing globalization of the discipline. Each of the sequences requires courses that provide opportunities for increased awareness and participation in global studies, leadership and social justice and public service. A renewed interest in civic engagement and service has led to the program's strong participation in the American Democracy Project and Political Engagement Project since their inception at the University.

Summary of department student learning assessment plan. During the program review period, the Department employed two specific assessment strategies in regard to measuring student learning outcomes. One strategy was based on a quasi "pre- and post-test" model that used two surveys administered to first-year and fourth-year majors in select courses. The second assessment strategy was a web-based survey that was completed by majors during the semester immediately prior to graduation. The Department is further refining its assessment procedures to more clearly tie student learning outcomes to assessment measures.

Accreditation from affiliated agency. There is no accrediting body for the discipline of political science.

Description of actions taken since the last review including instructional resources and practices and curricular changes. The amount of emphasis given to particular foci of teaching and research efforts in the political science discipline has changed to some degree since the last review. More attention is being devoted to: multi-culturalism, globalism, methodological diversity, and resurgence in the commitment to civic education. To reflect disciplinary changes, the Department has made a variety of curricular changes such as creating several sequences, adding nine courses, deleting eight courses, and smoothing the process of students taking courses to fulfill major and General Education requirements. Further, the Department altered the prerequisites of several courses to make them more consistent with curricular goals. The Department has clearly acclimated itself to playing an integral role in the University's successful achievement of the Goals of *Educating Illinois*.

The Department has generated a higher level of scholarly productivity while instructing more majors with more sophisticated instructional technologies and granting more degrees. The Department continues to work on improving its efforts at student vocational preparation, alumni networking, and learning assessment.

Major findings and recommendations and actions taken as a result of this review. To continue and enhance the Department's record of accomplishment, success has to be found in: hiring highly-qualified faculty representing diversity for several tenure-track positions; seeking accreditation by the ABA for the Legal Studies minor; hiring highly-qualified A/P staff to handle the demands of an increased number of majors and other Departmental responsibilities such as enhanced vocational training, assessment efforts, and alumni networking; and, seeking new opportunities to enable faculty scholarship and enrich student educational opportunities.

Review outcome. The review process finds the B.A., B.S. in Political Science to be in Good Standing. Members of the Academic Planning Committee appreciated the well-written report which responded to the last review and showed evidence of a thoughtful program analysis. Of particular note are the numerous curriculum updates since the last self-study including the addition of three sequences. The Committee commends the faculty and students' participation in many international activities including several interdisciplinary minors and an active study abroad program. The faculty is also commended for leadership in university-level governance and service activities.

The Academic Planning Committee requests that the program work with the University Assessment Office to refine the program's assessment plan so that it is clearly tied to student learning outcomes and illustrates a process for program improvement based upon evidence gathered for the defined outcomes for the program. A full revision of the assessment plan should be completed by the start of the fall semester with a follow-up report due to the Academic Planning Committee on September 1, 2007.

The Committee also asks the department to conduct an analysis of factors affecting faculty recruitment and retention. The analysis should provide a plan to enhance faculty longevity and be submitted to the Academic Planning Committee by September 1, 2008.

Recommendations. The Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled program review cycle.

- Work with the Office of Enrollment Management and Academic Services to determine optimum enrollment for the degree program.
- Provide evidence that the Department's strategic plan drives priority setting and decision-making. Utilize this planning process to conduct a thorough self-analysis of the program's strengths and weaknesses.
- Identify qualities that are indicators of the program's uniqueness and identify ways to continually improve. This may include analysis of other aspiration programs at the national and/or international level.
- Continue plans to enhance advisement staff and career counseling and develop a model to assess these efforts.
- Identify external funding sources and support grantsmanship and scholarly productivity opportunities to maintain a national reputation.