

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Department of Politics and Government houses three degree programs: a B.A., B.S. in Legal Studies, a B.A., B.S. in Political Science, and an M.A., M.S. in Political Science. In addition, the department offers minors in Legal Studies and Political Science and coordinates the Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies Interdisciplinary minor. The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-study report were accomplished during the time-period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks program faculty for their critical reflections about the current state of their program.

The self-study reports that enrollment for the B.A., B.S. in Political Science program as fluctuated over the period of review (252 students in 2014 and 258 in 2021, with a peak of 292 in 2017). The program has a strong record of attracting diverse students; students from underrepresented groups increased (from 28 percent in 2014 to 37 percent in 2021), as did the number of women in the program (from 42 percent in 2014 to 51 percent in 2021).

The committee commends the program faculty for their support of a wide variety of co-curricular opportunities for students and an increase in participation in the honors program during the period of review. Of particular note is the development of the Expungement Clinic which provides students with hands-on practical experience and opportunities for civic and community engagement. We also commend the program faculty for their support of institutional programs such as General Education, AMALI, and of the new IDEAS.

While recognizing the B.A., B.S. in Political Science program has many strengths, the committee is concerned about many aspects regarding the current state of the program and several of these issues that were highlighted in the self-study. The self-study report is candid in its recognition of the need to further evaluate the program in light of these challenges as well as changes in national and disciplinary trends. Therefore, the Academic Planning Committee flags the B.A., B.S. in Political Science program for further review. The committee requests that the Department of Politics and Government take the following actions and submit the following reports based on those actions.

Report: Due September 1, 2024

Submit to the Academic Planning Committee via the Office of the Provost

Revise the Academic Unit Overview. The committee determined that the Academic Unit overview section of the self-study report was underdeveloped with respect to key pieces of information. We ask that the program faculty revisit this section and provide more details and clarity in the following areas:

- (a) TT: Total FTE ratio: The program review guidelines ask programs to identify the ideal Tenure Track to Total Faculty ratio. The self-study report indicated that the department has no ideal ratio, but that it considers the existing ratios during the period of review to be within the “good range of percentages.” The committee asks the program to develop a more objective process to identify this ideal ratio with respect to factors such as the structure of the curriculum, enrollments, and class size (and number of sections offered).
- (b) Graduate Assistants: The committee recommends that the program faculty work with the Graduate School on a procedure for assigning graduate assistant duties to students that allow for the appropriate classification of their assistantship. The committee also asks for a more detailed description of the training and mentoring of graduate students, especially with regards to how they support the program.
- (c) Academic Advising: The committee asks the program to clarify the advising role of the graduate assistant assigned to assist the Director of Enrollment Management and Undergraduate Studies. We further ask the program faculty to describe not only the process used to evaluate advising during the period of review, but also describe the findings of these evaluations (e.g., do the results suggest that students find the advising practices effective).

Complete a review and evaluation of the curriculum. The self-study report identifies a number of potential initiatives related to the program curriculum, however there is no discussion of the impact of these changes nor plans for any future changes. The committee asks that the program faculty consider these factors as part of a comprehensive review and evaluation of the curricula across all sequences, and to develop a plan for necessary revisions. This should include a review of the course catalog to clearly identify potential hidden pre-requisites and

bottleneck courses. We ask that these discussions involve both internal and external stakeholders as well as comparisons with the curricula of programs at comparator institutions. Accordingly, the committee asks the faculty to engage in discussions of this plan and to summarize the findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost.

Develop a plan for student success and retention. The committee asks the program faculty to develop a plan for student success. The plan should be used to increase transparency and communication around “student success” by defining the program’s goals for, assessment of, and actions towards supporting students enrolled in the program. The plan may provide an overarching structure for other plans (e.g., retention, curriculum, alumni engagement). The committee recommends continued periodic review of the program structure and content to remain current with changes in the field and to maintain program retention and graduation rates (including the percentage of graduates completing the program within four years and trying to reduce the numbers of curricular exceptions needed). The committee recommends that the program continue monitoring student retention, particularly of students from traditionally underrepresented groups. Accordingly, the committee asks the faculty to engage in discussions of this plan and to summarize the findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost.

Comparator and aspirational program analyses. The self-study report provides a brief quantitative analysis of comparator institutions, however, no conclusions or actions are made regarding these comparisons. The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational programs in the self-study report guidelines to provide faculty with opportunities to consider the niche their program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The committee asks that the program to revisit these sections of the self-study and address this section through expanded analyses of comparator and aspirational programs, including aspirational programs nationwide, that could help to develop strategies for addressing priority initiatives for the programs.

Revise the initiatives and plans for the next program review cycle section. The committee asks that the program faculty expand the discussion of each of the initiatives listed in this section of the self-study report. We ask the program faculty to describe plans to implement these initiatives.