

Department of Political Science

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Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number Assessed
<i>Bachelor Arts and Sciences</i>	Exit Survey	35
	Student Interviews	20
	Law School Admission Test	15
	Graduate Record Exam	9
	Internship Evaluations	6

Analysis and Findings:

Exit Interview

Each year we make an effort to allow each of our graduating students to express their opinions, observations and experiences as undergraduates in the Political Science Department. During the Fall of 2002, Spring and Summer of 2003 we had a total of 72 graduates, 35 of whom responded to our exit survey.

The portion of the survey most relevant to our assessment objectives were a series of questions regarding abilities and skills that would be important in students plans after graduation, the impact that the Department of Political Science played in the development of those skills, and the level of satisfaction the student had with the contribution of the Department in the development of those skills. The table below is a summation of their responses. Clearly our greatest weakness at present lies in the development of skills in the quantitative area; in terms of ensuring that students understand the relevance of these skills and in our course offerings. Our students recognize the importance of their communication skills in their future, but feel we are only offering moderate impact to the development of their writing skills, and only a small impact to their oral abilities.

In response to other questions a majority of students 51% indicated that they felt as though they were a part of the Political Science Department; 67% identified their OSU Political Science experience to be positive; and 70% indicated that if they had their choice to make over, they would still choose Political Science as their major.

Table 1. How important is this skill to your future plans; how much impact did the Political Science Department have on the development of that skill; and how satisfied were you with the departments impact on your development of that skill.

Ability / Skill	Importance In Future	Department Impact	Satisfaction with impact
Writing Effectively	90%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Speaking Effectively	86%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Critically analyzing written information	53%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Defining and solving problems	72%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Working and/or learning independently	43%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Working in a group	53%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Understanding and applying scientific methods and principles	16%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Understanding and applying quantitative methods and principles	16%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Working effectively with technology, especially computers	30%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Little</i>
Locating information needed to help make decisions or solve problems	23%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Using the knowledge, ideas, or perspectives gained from your major field	50%	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Using management /leadership capabilities	60%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>

Student Interviews

Student interviews were completed during Fall 2002. They indicated that students were mostly pleased with the upper-division courses that they were taking. The most common positive from students was that they found the subject matter of the course highly relevant and the instructors very interesting. One of the more surprising results of the evaluations was the number of students indicating a preference for more opportunities for sustained writing. In other words, they would like to have seen more writing projects with continuing critiques instead of one long term paper. This coincides with our exit survey responses regarding the departmental impact on the development of their writing skills. In addition, 35% would like to see more class presentations. This also is consistent with our exit survey results concerning the development of oral communication skills. Twenty percent indicated that they thought the workload excessive for a three-credit course. One of the continuing trends in our assessment was the enthusiasm for the Applied Politics Program. The Applied Politics Area is a more hands-on experience for our students who are interested in either running for political office someday, or looking for employment in the political arena as campaign managers or staff. Students were also very pleased with the Public Law component of our program. This is consistent with previous findings and also consistent with our last Alumni Survey, which indicated that students thought that their experiences in Public Law were a large part of their success in law school.

Law School Admission Test (LSAT)

Of the 15 Political Science majors who were verified as having taken the LSAT test, their average score was 148. The national average is 151. The scores ranged from a low of 130 to a high of 170. While most of our students are attending law school in the state of Oklahoma, one student will be attending Howard University Law School and another will be attending University of North Carolina.

Graduate Record Exam

A total of nine students took the Graduate record exam with a low score of 980 and a high of 1325, with most students achieving their highest scores on the verbal component and their low scores on the quantitative area.

Internship Evaluations:

All students who seek academic credit for an internship, must gain departmental approval prior to their enrolling in POLS 3100: Political Science Internship. After completing their internship, their on-site internship supervisor, files an evaluation of the student with the department. These internships range from the County District Attorney's Office to national and state legislators. While the tenor of most of these evaluations are highly complimentary towards the intern, four of the six returned discussed the need of the student to work on their writing ability and skills and three of six indicated a need for student gain a basic understanding of statistics.

Uses of Assessment Results:

Our findings this academic year are consistent with findings from previous years in respect to our impact on the development of student's communication skills both oral and written. In response, several of our faculty members have worked to limit their enrollment in upper-division courses in order to offer a more intense writing criteria and the ability to allow more in class presentations.

In regards to our further need to help students develop their analytical and quantitative skills, the department has put into our regular course offerings POLS 4003, Political Analysis. This course has in the past been offered on an infrequent and ad hoc schedule. This course is designed to teach students "logic and techniques of modern political analysis, including the logic of political analysis, the collection and analysis of political information, and data processing and computer applications to the study of politics." While this course has not yet had a large enrollment, we have seen the numbers move in a positive fashion. In addition one of our faculty members also teaches STAT 2053: Elementary Statistics for the Social Sciences, a course we currently encourage our students to take in order to meet either College of Arts and Sciences or University General Education requirements.

Our current growth in majors makes this a delicate problem to resolve, in that we must offer a full opportunity for students to complete their academic program, while acknowledging the need for smaller sections to answer these deficiencies. In addition, two-thirds of our faculty members will teach at least one section of American Government each semester. The average American Government section is 90 students. At present we are trying to reduce that number by preparing graduate students to teach. Our Graduate Teaching Mentor program would allow us relieve a substantial number of our faculty from having to teach American Government each semester, thereby allowing us to offer multiple sections of classes with a larger demand, or to offer additional upper-division courses.

These finding have also lead to the idea of revamping our current degree sheet to require these courses. Ironically, STAT 2013 or STAT 2023, POLS 4003 (or another methods course) and ENGL 3323 or SPCH 3733 were all at one time requirements on the degree sheet. By placing these courses back as requirements we would reintroduce rigor into those areas which students themselves have identified as being deficient, standardized test scores, LSAT and GRE area scores, also show needed improvement, and professionals in the field, internship supervisors, have identified in over half of our participating students as needing further development. These and other considerations are at present under discussion. Any additional program changes implemented will be identified on the next Assessment Plan. These results will be made available to all faculty members at the earliest fall departmental meeting.