

Department of Political Science
Political Science Undergraduate Program
 Prepared by Vincent Burke, Undergraduate Coordinator

Degree Program(s) Assessed	Assessment Methods	Number of Individuals Assessed
Bachelor Arts and Sciences	Exit Survey	40
	Student Interviews	25
	Law School Admission Test	20
	Graduate Record Exam	7
	Internship Evaluations	12

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 2003, Spring and Summer of 2004 we had a total of 80 graduates, 40 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. As reported in a previous report, our greatest continuing weakness remains in the development of skills in the quantitative area. While only twenty percent (20%) of the respondents felt that understanding and applying quantitative methods and principles would be important in their future, they also reported that the department had only a small impact on their knowledge in this area. They also reported their satisfaction level with this area somewhat satisfactory. 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 60% indicated that they felt as though "they were a part of the Political Science Department"; 72% identified their OSU Political Science experience to be positive; and 73% 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	91%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Speaking Effectively	85%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Critically analyzing written information	55%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Defining and solving problems	70%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Working and/or learning independently	45%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Working in a group	57%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Understanding and applying scientific methods and principles	20%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>

Ability / Skill	Importance In Future	Department Impact	Satisfaction with impact
Understanding and applying quantitative methods and principles	20%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Working effectively with technology, especially computers	33%	<i>Small</i>	<i>Little</i>
Locating information needed to help make decisions or solve problems	28%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Somewhat</i>
Using the knowledge, ideas, or perspectives gained from your major field	59%	<i>Strong</i>	<i>Mostly</i>
Using management /leadership capabilities	59%	<i>Moderate</i>	<i>Mostly</i>

Student Interviews

Student interviews were completed during Fall 2003. Students continue to be mostly pleased with the upper-division political science courses that they were taking. The most common positive from students was that they found the subject matter of the courses highly relevant to their future aspirations. Students also commented that all the professors were all very knowledgeable and very interesting. Once again, one of the more surprising results of the evaluations was the number of students indicating a preference for more opportunities for sustained writing. By sustained writing, they mean they would like to have been assigned a number of shorter more focused 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, which most students found to be moderate. In addition, a number of students (40%) would like to see more class presentations. This also is consistent with our exit survey results concerning the development of oral communication skills. The number of students who thought the workload excessive for a three-credit course fell (from 20% to 16%).

Applied Politics continues to be a very well received option in our degree program. Students have been consistent in voicing their enthusiasm for this area. The Applied Politics Area is a more hands-on experience for our students who are interested in either someday running for political office, 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 20 Political Science majors who were verified as having taken the Law School Admission Test (LSAT), the average score was 147. The national average is 151. The scores ranged from a low of 130 to a high of 170. The majority of these students indicated that they would be attending law school in the state of Oklahoma.

Graduate Record Exam

A total of seven students took the Graduate record exam with a low score of 935 and a high of 1300, with most students achieving their highest scores on the verbal component and their low scores on the quantitative area. Several of these students are now enrolled in our graduate program.

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 and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. While the tenor of most of these evaluations are highly complimentary towards the intern, half (6) discussed the need of the student to work on their writing ability and skills and one-third indicated a need for the student to 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. With our continued growth both at the department and university level, limiting enrollment in upper division courses will be difficult without additional resources, namely faculty.

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 trend. We have hired two new faculty this past year and one of them has taken the lead in not only offering this course, but redesigning the course to not only address the need of more quantitative coursework, but also allowing for more frequent writing assignments to help develop their written communication skills and in-class presentations to strengthen their oral communication skills. The Political Analysis course will be part of the course rollout for this new faculty member, along with POLS 5013 Quantitative Analysis. This will assure that the course is offered a more consistent basis. 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 continued growth in majors, which has remained consistent, has also created the problems of upper-division course sections that are too large. 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 the deficiencies we have identified. In addition, two-thirds of our faculty members will teach at least one section of American Government each semester. Our Graduate Teaching Mentor program has allowed us to relieve a substantial number of our faculty from having to teach American Government each semester. In this program we work with graduate students who are interested in teaching for an entire semester, after which we make a determination about which students we feel are appropriately prepared to teach. We hope that the impact of freeing faculty from teaching American Government each semester will allow us to offer multiple sections of upper-division classes with a larger demand, or to offer additional upper-division courses, thereby lowering the number of students in all upper-division classes.

One area of discussion that was brought about from last years assessment was the idea of revamping our current degree sheet to require certain courses that would be beneficial in addressing both the quantitative and communication skills that students have identified. Several of the courses we have discussed, 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. An effort to return these courses, by placing them back as requirements on the degree sheet would reintroduce additional rigor into those areas. We are also waiting on approval from our faculty to use the Major Area Testing developed by Educational Testing Services. The tests from the Political Science area would give us the opportunity to use these exams as part of our assessment and evaluation of our students and programs on a comparative basis with other universities across the country.

At present we are making a greater effort to coordinate internship opportunities for our students. One of our stated objectives in our Department Strategic Plan is to increase the number of our undergraduates who participate in an internship experience. We are working with the Arts & Sciences Career Placement, Live, Learn, and Intern and several other organizations to secure slots for our student to participate in internships. This is a radical departure from our past internship format which placed all the responsibility on the student to secure internship. One of our tenure track faculty members will be assuming the responsibility for securing, coordinating and evaluating all undergraduate interns.

At the request of a number of students, we have also begun to consider applying to make Applied Politics a certificate program. 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.