

## **UCC Program Review Committee - Summary of Review**

### **Program – Department of Political Science**

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

- Political Science (B.A.) - BA4201
- Political Science Prelaw (B.A.) - BA4203
- Political Science Minor - OR4201
- Political Science – MA

### **Recommendation**

This program is found to be viable. See report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

### **Date of this review – AY 2019**

This review has been sent to school director and the dean, their joint response is attached.

Graduate council has considered this review. Their comments are attached.

**Ohio University Department of Political Science  
Seven-Year Review Report  
Submitted November 16, 2018**

**Committee Members**

Ellen Riggle, Professor, Department of Political Science and Department of Gender and Women's Studies, University of Kentucky  
Herta Rodina, Associate Professor of French, Ohio University  
Scott Sparks, Professor of Teacher Education, Ohio University

**Introduction**

The committee visited the Department of Political Science on November 5 and 6, 2018. After examining the department's self-study and interviewing faculty, students, and support staff, we deem all department programs viable. The following report follows the structure suggested in the document "Questions for reviewers".

**1. The Program as a Whole**

**a. Is the current number and distribution of faculty sufficient to carry out the broad overall mission of the Department (Teaching; Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity; Service)?**

The size of the department on the face of it is overall good for its mission; however, the department seems stretched thin given the amount of intensive teaching, program administration and service performed by many members. Under these service and teaching (both in and outside load) demands, there may be a shortage of faculty to fairly and adequately distribute the demands for teaching and service while maintaining adequate time for research.

A plan for recruitment and retention of diverse faculty, especially African-American and Latino/a faculty is important, particularly for serving undergraduate education. Having under-represented faculty as role models for under-represented groups is an important message to students. Because of the low number of faculty in under-represented groups available to hire in any given year, this plan would be most effective if it was on-going with an open opportunity to hire.

**b. Is the level of the Department's RSCA appropriate for the program given the size of the faculty and the resources available to the Department? Is the Department's level of external funding at an appropriate level?**

It seems that the financial incentives offered by the college and university prioritize teaching and service not research (e.g. summer money for teaching a course but no money available for research travel). The department also seems to have a culture that prioritizes teaching and service

which further de-prioritizes research. Very few faculty engage in grant writing to secure external funds.

Some faculty are concerned by the notion of co-authorship. It is felt by a few faculty that co-authorship is not as valued as single author publication. This confusion leads to uncertainty in developing promotion and tenure documents. Collaboration is the norm now in political science publication and a clear message about the value of these efforts may help to clear up any confusion. Additionally, a message that any publication with a student would be very highly valued, given the teaching focus in the department, would seem appropriate.

According to the outside reviewer, the external funding of political science departments is typically low, in part due to availability for research given choices about funding made by NSF and other funding agencies (which have funded many large-scale survey research projects for shared data as opposed to individual level projects). Foundation resources may be more accessible to faculty, but the competition is high and faculty need mentoring to seek these sources. This type of money also relies more on personal contacts and networking, which necessitates travel support.

**c. Is the level of service, outside of teaching, appropriate for the program given its size and the role that it plays in the University and broader communities it interacts with? Is the Department able to fulfill its service mission?**

The level of service by faculty seems very high and consistently high. Faculty are especially involved in interdisciplinary programs. This is important service to the department, college and university. It is unclear how the college and university compensate the department for this high level of service, but it is necessary that they adequately compensate the program. Lack of compensation may translate into reduced course offerings or faculty burn-out.

**d. Does the Department have an appropriate level of financial resources, staff, physical facilities, library resources, and technology to fulfill its mission?**

The financial resources available to the faculty in the department to support professional development/research and travel seems inadequate. Faculty, in order to enhance the reputation of the department, should be able to attend at least two to three conferences per year. It emerged from the conversations that the funds available to support this are extremely limited and inadequate – and have decreased this year.

This applies also to funds for research. It can take very little money to make a huge difference in a research program. Research money, which could be awarded competitively, would be exceptionally helpful to faculty and would increase research productivity, which would help faculty at all levels, but especially the faculty at Assistant and Associate level seeking promotion. Even a modest \$10,000 pool per year, awarded to faculty on a competitive basis, would substantially benefit them.

## **2. Undergraduate Program**

### **a. Is the Department fulfilling its service role, adequately preparing non-majors for future coursework and/or satisfying the needs for general education?**

The Department of Political Science is fulfilling its service role to the university and is meeting the needs for general education. Political Science regularly offers several Tier II courses that satisfy the Social Sciences requirement. These courses include: POLS 1010 (Politics in the United States), POLS 1500 (Themes in Global Politics), POLS 1600 (Engaging Politics), POLS 2000 (American Politics, Policy, and Administration), POLS 2200 (The Politics of Law), POLS 2300 (Democracies and Dictatorships Around the World), POLS 2500 (International Relations), POLS 2700 (Introduction to Political Theory). A new general education course – POLS 2800 (Analyzing Politics) – fulfills the Tier I Quantitative Skills requirement. Group I faculty regularly teach these courses, thereby ensuring consistent high-quality instruction, which in turn helps to recruit new majors and minors.

At upper levels, the department offers POLS 3050J (Writing on Political Science Topics) to fulfill the junior composition requirement and three Tier III options – POLS 4070 (Strategic Decision-Making), POLS 4280 (Politics and Science in the United States), and T3 4850 (Sustainability Citizenship).

In addition, several faculty members have strong interdisciplinary interests that enhance the department's general education contributions. Affiliations with the Center for International Studies, the Center for Law, Justice and Culture, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and the Wealth and Poverty theme, among others, prepare a diverse group of non-majors for future coursework.

### **b. Is the program attracting majors likely to succeed in the program? Is the number of majors appropriate for the program? Is the program attracting a diverse group of students?**

The number of Political Science majors has increased steadily over the past several years and is currently back to the pre-semester peak reached in 2010. The number of minors has followed the same trend, declining in the first two years on semesters, then exceeding in 2018 its previous seven-year high. Of the two undergraduate majors, Political Science and Political Science Pre-Law, the latter has shown the most dramatic increase. Pre-Law majors now represent one third of the department's total majors, up from one quarter in 2012. The two recent tenure-track hires in law and politics are a direct response to this shift in majors and underscore the department's commitment to the field.

The number of students applying to Political Science, the number admitted, and the number enrolled have all risen over the past seven years. This may be explained in part by the department's increased social media presence and by enlisting current students to contact admitted students. Participation in the Majors Fair has also helped recruit new majors.

Nevertheless, the reviewers felt that the department could better define its recruitment strategy to maximize both its majors and minors.

Trends in retention and graduation suggest that Political Science majors are very likely to succeed. According to data from the Office of Institutional Research, the department's first-year retention rates and four-year graduation rates have been consistently higher than the College's over the past several years. A relatively flexible major, a long tradition of excellent teaching, and regular, in-depth advising are three factors responsible for this success. The undergraduates we met were attracted to the diversity of the department's course offerings. They also cited the faculty's passion for their area of specialization and willingness to inform students of various opportunities in their field. Students were highly satisfied with all types of advising, from formal pre-registration meetings with their assigned advisor to informal discussion with faculty whose courses they are taking. Without exception they felt very comfortable interacting with faculty members and repeatedly noted the caring, supportive nature of the department as a whole.

Although data from the previous seven-year review report was not available, Political Science currently has a significantly higher percentage of racial diversity among its majors than the College – 10.8 compared to 6.8 for students identifying as Black or African American and 7.7 compared to 4.3 for Hispanic students. The department has an almost equal percentage of male and female majors, whereas the College has a 37% - 63% split.

**c. Does the undergraduate curriculum provide majors with an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers or graduate work following graduation?**

The undergraduate curriculum provides graduating majors with the necessary background to pursue discipline-related careers or graduate work. The two majors serve a broad range of student interests and underscore the variety inherent in the discipline. Over the past several years, faculty have added new courses to the curriculum, a new certificate (French and Francophone Studies), and a new summer study-away option in Paris. Overall, the students we spoke with were pleased with their majors and had a fairly solid sense of what they would do after graduating. Several cited the learning advantages of being with graduate students in the dual-listed upper-level courses. They did, however, have some suggestions for improving the undergraduate curriculum:

- 1) Offer funding for internships, the costs of which are often very high, and incentivize internships by better connecting them to classroom experience. Funding would equalize participation opportunities for students of all backgrounds. Targeted alumni giving may help to support internships for these students. Approximately 25-30% of undergraduates participate in internships.
- 2) Offer training opportunities in software needed for internships or employment. Students cited Excel as an example.
- 3) Offer more courses on security studies related topics.

In addition, the external reviewer suggests that creating research labs or policy-oriented tracks might give further support to students preparing for advanced programs or jobs.

**d. Are the resources and the number of and distribution of faculty sufficient to support the undergraduate program?**

With 22 Group I faculty evenly spread across five main research areas and only one Group II, Political Science has adequate instructional resources to cover all key aspects of their undergraduate degrees. Faculty compensate for any gaps by offering a large number of independent studies in addition to their regular teaching load. Proposing some of these topics as 4000-level seminars might be an efficient way to free up time and effort without compromising quality. The department honors program also enables students to define and pursue interests not always available through coursework.

**e. Are pedagogical practices appropriate? Is teaching adequately assessed?**

Discussions with faculty indicated that they are committed to high-quality, challenging teaching; discussions with students confirmed enthusiastic engagement in their studies and strong admiration for their professors. Since the last seven-year review, Political Science faculty have received 20 teaching- or advising-related honors and awards. These include the prestigious University Professor Award, the Dean's Outstanding Teacher Award, and the Jeannette G. Grasselli Brown Teaching Award. Faculty have participated in the Bruning Teaching Academy, an intensive, year-long program that pairs junior faculty with senior faculty known for their excellence. Others have joined college-wide learning communities focusing on pedagogy.

The department has established clearly-defined learning outcomes for their majors and is making changes to aspects of the curriculum based on assessment results. For instance, when data indicated that a significant percentage of students could not meet two learning objectives (summarizing and applying theories, comparing and evaluating theories), the department responded in three ways: 1) individual faculty modified their courses to highlight applying theories to real-life political situations; 2) the department created POLS 2800: Analyzing Politics, an applied statistics course; and 3) the department is reviving an infrequently-taught course, POLS 4830: Introduction to Research Design.

**f. Are students able to move into to discipline-related careers and/or pursue further academic work?**

Tracking graduating Political Science majors occurs on an ad hoc basis. Faculty estimate that 15-20% of graduates obtain employment in state government, 15-20% in the nonprofit sector, 15-20% in education or private industry, while 15-20% enroll in law school or PhD programs. The reviewers suggest that the department develop a system for tracking graduates. This would help to identify opportunities for future interactions and development. Given the high quality of teaching and mentoring, successful alumni seem to be an underutilized resource for support in the department.

### **3. Graduate Program**

#### **a. Is the program attracting students likely to succeed in the program? Is the number of students appropriate for the program? Is the program attracting a diverse group of students?**

The graduate program seems to lack an identity. It was explained as a training program for students who may wish to move on to other advanced PhD or training programs, or wish to enter jobs with a master's. The program seems broad ranging and may wish to develop an identity for purposes of recruitment and focus.

Much of the recruitment seems local. There are also a good number of international students, which is healthy for an MA program and brings different perspectives. Developing an identity for the program may help to recruit more students. A good recruitment strategy would be helpful in growing the program if that is what the department wishes to do, although the current size of the classes seems adequate to a sustained, viable program. It may be helpful for the department to make a commitment to having a presence at state-level conferences, such as the Ohio Political Science Conference, for the purpose of recruitment, visibility, and as good practice in professional presentations for grad students (and undergrads).

The program underwent a change when the MPA was broken off. This has happened in many other political science departments around the country. MPA programs see this as a way to increase independent visibility and isolate and keep revenue streams while still utilizing the labor of political scientists. The department and especially the college needs to be clear on the accounting for the resources utilized by the MPA and ensure compensation to the Political Science department.

#### **b. Does the graduate curriculum provide an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers following graduation?**

It is unclear how well the graduate program provides tracks for training in different areas. This may be an area for the development of an identity and to serve students. Also, students seemed to be interested in more advanced methods training, which would help them be competitive on the job market or when applying to PhD programs. They were concerned about not being able to take the one quantitative methods course required for the MA every year instead of the current rotation of every other year. We concur that this is important for students entering the program to make the transition and acquire the skills to read and interpret quantitative work in political science that they are reading in their courses. This may require additional faculty or reallocation of faculty. As noted in the recommendations, this may be an area where Visiting Professors could help (as methods courses are beyond the capacity of most adjunct professors).

#### **c. Does the program provide adequate mentoring and advising to students to prepare them for discipline-related careers?**

Mentoring and advising seems extensive and appreciated by the graduate students. The students we spoke with had good relationships with their mentors. Adding opportunities for research

collaboration may help students prepare by giving them experience in the stages of research. This could be applied or theoretical work.

**d. Are the resources and the number of and distribution of faculty sufficient to support the graduate program?**

There seems to be adequate faculty to support the MA program.

**e. Does the program offer appropriate financial support to graduate students?**

Support and stipends for GAs needs to be evaluated to make sure it is comparable to other universities. GAs are an important link between faculty and undergraduates. These lines are integral to the undergraduate mission and should be supported. GAs are often excellent recruiters of majors during their interactions with undergraduates.

There seemed to be divergent experiences when acting as a GA in terms of how much and what type of work they performed. Some of this is typical of the types of classes they GA for, but some discussion among faculty may help to even out the experience and expectations.

**f. Is teaching adequately assessed?**

Assessment of the graduate program is in progress.

**g. Are students able to move into discipline-related careers?**

Faculty have listed academic programs where MA students have been accepted as well as professional placement, but the reviewers recommend a more systematic tracking of MA program graduates.

**4. Areas of Concern**

a. Funding for research and travel should be improved.

b. Service overload. Faculty are expected to take on service activities that are not adequately compensated.

c. Taking advantage of and creating publishing opportunities with students, especially graduate students who write MA theses. This may require a change in policy to support thesis directors and other faculty working with students to revise and publish theses as articles. Alternatively, creating a thesis option that has as its product a publishable paper (with appropriate appendices) may be a way to accomplish this.

d. Co-authorship accepted as equal to sole authorship.

e. Faculty and students voiced concerns about changing policies, especially those changed by upper administration, which impacted their jobs or progress. For Assistant Professors, the rules and policies when they were hired should be in effect until their tenure unless there is written confirmation that they assent to any new rules or policies. The same applies to students. For Associate Professors, the rules and policies that were in effect governing their progress toward promotion when they achieve Associate status should remain in effect until they become Full professors. This requires written documentation of the rules and policies and is standard to contracts. Reluctance to provide written policies and standards should be rectified.

## **5. Recommendations**

a. Provide increased placement assistance following graduation.

b. Develop a more robust recruitment plan. Having an on-going department strategy for recruitment of diverse faculty to take advantage of and even create opportunities for hiring needs to be developed. This is important for serving, retaining, and ensuring the success of under-represented groups in the undergraduate and graduate programs.

c. Offer small grants for undergraduate and graduate students for travel, research, and service.

d. Give early and consistent notice to undergraduate and graduate students about conference opportunities.

e. Remove untenured faculty from the merit evaluation committee. This can put them in an awkward position as they move through the tenure and promotion process.

f. Create research labs with graduate and undergraduate students to provide opportunities for research exposure for both groups. Research labs may also be a strategy for dealing with excess numbers of independent study courses and as a complement to honors coursework. This would give professors a mechanism for bringing students together to enhance their learning communities while delivering concrete skills. Some research lab activity could be negotiated as in-load depending on the size and activities of the lab.

g. Offer course releases for individuals in major administrative roles (both inside and outside of the department) to balance demands on time for service (and teaching) with the need to maintain active research. As more demands for service within administrative roles are made on faculty, compensation and balance needs to be prioritized.

## **6. Commendations**

a. Excellent teaching quality.

b. Outstanding service to other units and to the university.

c. Strong mentoring opportunities for faculty and students.

d. Integration of group II faculty as equal faculty members. The department has only one Group II faculty member.

e. Strong, quality scholarship record by faculty.

## **7. Overall Judgment**

The program is **viable**.

**Ohio University Department of Political Science  
Department Response to Reviewer Report**

**Submitted December 21, 2018**

On behalf of the Department of Political Science, we thank the review committee for its time and attention. We appreciate the recognition of the excellent teaching and mentoring we provide to students, the quality of faculty scholarship in the department, and our outstanding service across the university. We also appreciate the thoughtful suggestions made by the review committee. We look forward to working with the College of Arts & Sciences and Ohio University more broadly to make progress on the committee's recommendations.

The committee made several recommendations related to opportunities for students including increased placement assistance following graduation, the creation of research labs to provide opportunities for both undergraduate and graduate students, information for students about upcoming conference opportunities, and the provision of small grants to undergraduate and graduate students for travel and research. In some cases, the department engages in these activities but students still may not be aware of them. For example, the department has routinely informed graduate and undergraduate students of upcoming conference opportunities and does provide limited resources for participation. We have also assisted graduate and undergraduate students in applying for university funds to support research as well. We offer guidance for students who present their work at the Ohio University Student Expo and pay for the cost of printing student posters. We will work to find ways, in addition to current email and social media publicity, to apprise students of such opportunities. While our departmental resources have diminished due to budget cuts, we continue to prioritize funds for graduate and undergraduate research opportunities. However, our budget for such activities is limited. We would welcome working with college and development personnel to investigate working with our alumni to provide more resources for student research, the development of research labs, professional development, and internship experiences. Another option for enhanced resources would be to allow the department to keep the funds generated from course buyouts that units outside the college pay to Arts & Sciences for our department faculty members' service and teaching. These funds could support research funding for faculty, another issue mentioned in the report.

Regarding placement assistance, departmental faculty do provide mentoring and assistance to students after graduation; however, this is an individual rather than an institutional response. We will consider ways to collaborate with the Career and Leadership Development Center to provide greater assistance to students during their programs as well as after program completion and to call more attention to the resources that current students and alumni have at the CLDC.

The remaining recommendation deal with departmental issues related to faculty and faculty recruitment. The committee recommends developing a strategy to recruit faculty from under-represented groups, offering course-load reductions for faculty with substantial service roles in

and outside of the department, and removing pre-tenure faculty from the department committee that conducts merit evaluations. The department echoes the university's commitment to attracting and retaining a diverse student body, faculty, and staff. Our programs do in fact attract and retain diverse students; however, we recognize that a more diverse faculty would be beneficial in these efforts and would provide more varied perspectives and experiences for all our students. However, we recognize that to be effective such a plan requires resources at the college and university level to take advantage of and even create opportunities for hiring faculty from under-represented groups. We welcome the opportunity to work with the college and university on developing a more robust, longer-term recruitment plan.

The department currently provides course-load reductions for three substantial service positions in the department (department chair, undergraduate director, and graduate director). All faculty who direct programs outside the department receive at least one course reduction per year through negotiation with the college or through course buyouts from units outside the college. While we are committed to these teaching load adjustments to help faculty in major service roles balance the demands of service with their other faculty responsibilities, particularly research, we recognize that our ability to maintain these arrangements is somewhat limited. We would be hard-pressed to adjust to another faculty member engaging in a service role that required a course load reduction without reconsidering our current commitments or adding faculty resources. We look forward to working with the college and university to facilitate our faculty leadership of endeavors in the college and broader university.

The department will carefully consider the last recommendation of removing untenured faculty from the merit evaluation committee. We are reluctant to eliminate the representation of pre-tenure faculty from the department's Executive Committee (the committee charged with merit evaluation). However, given the concerns expressed on the review, we will discuss as costs and benefits of such a decision and reach out to the college and other departments for information on other departmental practices and their relative costs and benefits.

Interoffice Communication

TO: John Cotton, Chair, UCC Program Review Committee  
FROM: Joe Shields, Interim Dean, College of Arts & Sciences  
DATE: February 12, 2019  
RE: Department of Political Science Seven-Year Review

I appreciate the thoughtful report provided by the review committee. The report illuminates many strengths of the department and its programs while identifying areas for attention and improvement. The department's response provides clarifications relevant to some of the recommendations, and identifies reasonable steps that respond to the committee's suggestions.

The committee notes areas of concern related to financial resources available for research, professional development, and travel. The College of Arts & Sciences is committed to providing support for these activities, and increasing financial resources for these purposes is a long-term goal.

Faculty in the department have access to internal funding made available on a competitive basis through the Research Division, along the lines of the program suggested in the report. The College is making ongoing efforts to increase faculty awareness of, and participation in, internal and external grant programs to support scholarly endeavors.

Recruiting a diverse faculty is similarly a priority for the College and the University. Hiring at the current time remains very limited and advancing our diversity agenda for the faculty is also a long-term goal. The College is continuing efforts to ensure that search processes implement best practice for optimizing diverse candidate pools and recruitment.

The Graduate Council met on April 12, 2019 and considered the program review:

Department of Political Science

The department has a MA program, on which Graduate Council concentrated in considering the review. Graduate Council noted comments in the review, that the graduate program seems to lack identity, and that it seems unclear how well the graduate program provides tracks for training in different areas. Those concerns were not addressed in the response of the Department or the Dean of A&S. According to the review the graduate program has adequate faculty support. Graduate Council agrees with the overall assessment that the program is viable, but also sides with the concerns given in the review.