PROGRAM REVIEW COMMITTEE REPORT

Spring, 2014

Political Science

Goals, Objectives, and Activities

The overall goal of the political science program at the University of Arkansas at Monticello is to develop and disseminate knowledge of politics and the political process to permit its students then opportunity to improve society and their own personal development. The political science program accomplishes this goal through preparing students for careers utilizing political knowledge, providing supportive requirements for other programs at UAM, preparing students for graduate study (most notably, law school), and through faculty research that develops political knowledge.

Political science may be considered a service program at UAM, providing courses that fulfill general education requirements. Political science courses also fulfill supportive requirements for programs in history, criminal justice, social work, SIS (Spatial Information Systems), GIS (Geographic Information Systems), and several degree programs in the School of Education. A political science degree will prepare students for a number of careers in business, law, education, government and the non-profit sector. Since all of these sectors are predicted to have steady or increased employment through 2020, political science is responding to market demand by preparing students for such careers. Political science also helps to prepare students for military leadership careers, which a number of UAM students have undertaken.

Student demand for the political science program has remained more or less unchanged over the past decade, with about 30 students enrolled in the political science program of study. Recruitment of students to the political science program has been difficult as many students in

UAM's enrollment region view the political science degree as suitable only for aspiring politicians; nevertheless, the political science program does indeed recruit students who are preparing for law school and graduate school, as well as several students in the Military Science (ROTC) program. A number of students who take PSCI 2213 American National Government also become majors out of increased interest and knowledge about the field of political science.

Curriculum

The curriculum of the political science program is designed to promote the development of critical thinking and communications skills in addition to the specific content of each course. The University of Arkansas political science program uses a number of current educational practices in order to develop critical thinking and communication skills. For example, political science courses use the Socratic method of guided questions and answers not only to avoid rote lecturing but to prompt the students to more deeply understand and analyze the course material. Political science courses also focus on developing leadership and public speaking skills by having students participate in extracurricular activities such as Student Congress and by having students present research papers at regional, national, and international conferences. Upper-division courses are frequently student-directed: after a series of intensive readings and discussions, the students participate in a round table or simulation designed to model real world policy discussions and debates. Role playing exercises and oral final exams also encourage active student participation. The political science program has also been active in increasing distance learning within its curriculum including a number of upper-division seminars. Most recently, some political science courses have begun to include experiential learning in the course material by requiring students to conceive and then complete projects that promote civic engagement with the local community. Other types of experiential learning within the political

science curriculum include internships with governmental bodies and a field study program that takes students out of southeastern Arkansas (many of whom have never left the region) in order to study contemporary topics in national and international locations.

The political science program has developed an eight-semester sequence of courses that students can follow in order to ensure graduation in four years. The Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science requires 120 hours of coursework which incorporates a 35-hour general education requirement set by the State of Arkansas and the University of Arkansas at Monticello. The degree also requires 33 hours of political science coursework and a 12- hour B.A. Identity Requirement. The B.A. Identity Requirement applies to any Bachelor of Arts degree and includes at least six hours of one foreign language and six hours from a prescribed list of courses (found in the University catalog) that expose students to a diversity of thought and communication. Minors in political science are required to complete 18 hours of coursework. Course syllabi clearly outline the specific academic learning objectives for each course; detail prerequisites and required texts; provide the grading policy and other course-specific policies regarding examinations, absences, and the like; give an overview of the academic content and basic schedule for each course; and provide information required by the university (such as plagiarism policies and the statement providing instructions for students with disabilities).

The course requirements for the political science major program of study are:

PSCI 2213 American National Government
PSCI 2233 Comparative Politics
PSCI 2283 Research Methods in the Social Sciences
PSCI 3313 Statistics for the Social Sciences
PSCI 4683 Western Political Theory
18 hours of electives in political science, 15 of which must be hours at the
    3000-4000 level.

The course requirements for the political science minor program of study are:

PSCI 2213 American National Government
PSCI 2233 Comparative Politics
12 hours of electives in political science, 19 of which must be hours at the
3000-4000 level.

When political science faculty need to introduce new courses or make catalogue adjustments to current courses, the standard University protocol is followed. After discussion and the formation of specific proposals by the faculty, all program changes are reviewed by the Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences. Approved proposals are distributed to the Academic Council, allowing other program deans to be made aware of proposed changes. After Academic Council approval, proposals are passed to the university Curriculum and Standards Committee. Following approval, the proposed changes are voted on by the faculty Assembly and approved by the Chancellor of the University. Proposals that involve major changes, such as a 12-hour change in the major, would need approval by the University of Arkansas System Board of Trustees and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. Final approved changes are incorporated into the official UAM catalog.

Currently three sections of PSCI 2213 American National Government are offered online each semester. In Spring 2014, PSCI 4613 Principles of Public Administration will be offered online for the first time.

Past courses offered online include:

PSCI 3313   Statistics for the Social Sciences
PSCI 3413   Constitutional Criminal Procedure
PSCI 462V   Controversial Issues of the US Supreme Court
PSCI 462V   Law and Morality
PSCI 462V   Law and Sex
PSCI 462V   Sexual Harassment Law

The "V" indicates variable credit and is reserved for any course that is offered as an Independent

Study or Special Topics course.

In distance courses, instructors interact with engaged students through e-mail, telephone, and office hours. Students can also discuss course material with other students through on-line discussion boards. Exams are conducted off-line at the UAM Testing Center. Such courses also have a civic engagement component which requires students to attend and report on a local government meeting.

Program Faculty

The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences' political science program has two full-time faculty members:

Carol Strong, Ph.D.   Associate Professor/Assistant Dean
Christopher J. Wright, Ph.D.   Assistant Professor

Other professionals in the field may be used as adjunct faculty. These faculty members work under the direction of the dean. Because political science is an area encompassed by the School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, other faculty members provide their expertise as it relates to political science. All tenure-track faculties have terminal degrees. All faculty members have significant experience outside academia relating to their teaching fields, and all faculty members regularly undertake professional development and scholarly activities in order to maintain currency. Each of the faculty members has also engaged in significant university and community service.

All new faculties in political science undergo the official university orientation process offered during the Professional Development Week preceding the fall semester. New faculty also may take advantage of follow-up workshops focused on topics such as academic advising. Faculty undergoes an annual evaluation process that consists of an evaluation report reviewed by

colleagues and student course evaluations. Classroom evaluations, by the dean and at least one peer are also a part of this process. These various evaluations are reviewed by the dean to complete an annual performance review which is then discussed with the faculty member and forwarded to the Provost.

Faculty, in political science, teaches approximately 12-15 hours per semester. Credit hours per instructor varies by semester and year based on the needs of students. Opportunities for faculty to teach overloads and summer courses are also available.

Program Resources

The political science program has excellent faculty members who play a major role in the success of the program. Both faculty members have earned their Ph.D. from prestigious programs, and each has numerous books and articles published. The faculty has engaged in several professional development activities that have been funded by institutional support to attended professional meetings in state and out-of-state and attended various workshops/seminars. This is in addition to the workshops that the university provides each year during Professional Development Week.

The political science program is located in the Memorial Classroom Building (MCB) on the University of Arkansas at Monticello campus. The MCB has ten smart rooms, each equipped with a computer connected to the internet, a digital projector, a document reader and an audio system. The political science faculty members use these smart rooms regularly for instruction.

The Fred J. Taylor Library and Technology Center's collections comprise over 500,000 books, bound periodicals, microforms, government documents, and serial subscriptions. Many

items are now available through on-line full text database resources (e.g., ScienceDirect, SpringerLink). The total budget for the entire School of Social and Behavioral Sciences is $18,700 and is spent on books, e-books, journals, e-journals, and databases.

The MCB houses a computer lab dedicated to use with students who need tutoring or training in the process of writing reports and papers. This Writing Center is staffed by a professional full-time director who, in turn, supervises tutors for students needing help. The lab currently has nine student-use computers. The MCB does have wireless access for students who wish to bring their own electronic devices.

Equipment purchases for past three years are shown in the table below:

Item Description
Dell Optiplex 960 Desktop Computers (2 purchased for faculty offices)
Dell 1250c Laser Printer
Dell Laptop Computer (2 for faculty use at conference presentations)
Fujitsu Scan Snap document scanner (Ix 500 for test scoring)
Dell 21" flat Panel Monitor for faculty member
Dell Optiplex 960 Desktop Computer (for classroom)
Remark Office OMR software for Survey scoring and analysis
BACK-UPS 550VA Backup Power Up Supply (for faculty office)
SPSS statistical software
Dell 1210S Projector (2 for classroom)
Projector mount

Instruction Via Distance Technology

The political science program offers distance learning for its students and potential students. Of the 38 semester credit hours offered last year by the combined faculty, 9 credit hours, or approximately 25 percent, of the courses were offered via distance learning using Blackboard as the learning management system.

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distance courses, instructors interact with engaged students through e-mail, telephone, and office

hours. Students can also discuss course material with other students through on-line discussion

boards. Exams are conducted off-line at the UAM Testing Center. Such courses also have a

civic engagement component which requires students to attend and report on a local government

meeting

Majors/Declared Students

The political science program is an exemplary program that prepares students for the

complexities that can be found in various areas of work. Through the use of current teaching

strategies, students are able to participate in hands-on activities that encourage them to think

critically to solve real-world problems. In an effort to ensure that students are aware of the

opportunities available in political science and that the demand for graduates are satisfied, the

School of Social and Behavioral Sciences has implemented various strategies to recruit, retain,

and graduate students.

From 2010 to 2012, the political science program has seen a steady increase in

enrollment. There is also a decrease in business when accounting for all classifications includes

pre-law. However, as a whole, numbers have remained steady with an increase for years 2010 to

2012. The table below shows data for 2010-2012:

Declared Majors			
	2010	2011	2012
Political Science	16	17	20
Pre-Law	12	14	12
Total	28	31	32

In an effort to recruit new students, political science has targeted high school students

during high school recruitment days (Weevil Welcome) hosted at UAM. Interested students are

sent letters describing the political science program at UAM. In addition, literature is given to

students during freshman orientation and during Weevil Welcome days. The primary source of new students comes from those that take PSCI 2213 American National Government.

Other efforts to recruit students involve participation at university-sponsored events such as Scholar's Day, Parent/Family Appreciation Day and the Major's fair. In addition, indirect recruitment comes from news releases of the activities of current political science majors. Activities include Student Congress, Model United Nations and national and international academic conferences.

Political science faculty members are also involved in retention efforts by offering various opportunities to generate excitement. These include topics revolving around Congressional sessions, mock United Nations sessions, and mock trials. The political science faculty believes that such efforts will help students feel confident and prepared as they begin the process of searching for their first job.

To ensure that students are prepared to serve the needs of today's world, political science faculty work to maintain up-to-date resources that mimic that used in the field. Students are taught in "Smart Classrooms" that allow faculty to bring the curriculum to life.

Other efforts used to recruit, retain, and graduate students includes maintaining an active student organization, Pi Sigma Alpha. Political science faculties serve as sponsors and hold regular meetings during the fall and spring semesters. This provides students the opportunity to learn about current trends in the profession and additional opportunities to raise financial support for important organization programs.

The ultimate goal for the political science program is to graduate students that have the ability to be contributing members of society and the profession. In an effort to ensure positive graduation rates, the student/advisor relationship is important to the faculty. This relationship allows faculty members to see where students may be struggling and prompts efforts to help students in their understanding of political science concepts. Developing this strong relationship encourages students to succeed and helps faculty understanding of them as individuals.

Political Science Graduates Per Year				
Year	2010	2011	2012	Total
# Graduates	7	8	4	19
3-year Mean				6.6

Program Assessment

The political science program has attempted several methods of assessing the program, and there is evidence that attempts to improve the assessment process have been undertaken. The Major Fields Achievement Tests were utilized as an assessment tool but it was determined to be an ineffective method for program assessment due to the small number of political science majors. An incremental, course-by-course process appears to be the primary tool used for critique of the Student Learning Outcomes and assessment of the political science program. Writing, research, presentation, and creative thinking skill development are evaluated by political science faculty to assess the overall curriculum and the effectiveness of the program, although there did not appear to be any criteria established to critique overall student success in these attributes as they progress through the curriculum to graduation. The summary of student course evaluations, however, suggests that the program is succeeding in meeting its stated program goals.

Another measure of assessment used by the political science program is the number of political science majors enrolling in the independent study courses PSCI 479V and the students' success in writing and presenting research papers at professional conferences although no percentages of declared majors/minors participating in these activities was presented. The PSCI 479V course has rigid prerequisites that may exclude some majors from enrolling; however, there are other courses in the curriculum such as the PSCI 374V (Field Study in Political Science) and PSCI 462V (Seminar in Political Science) that students could be encouraged to enroll in that could form a database for program assessment.

PSCI 2283 Research Methods in the Social Sciences is used as a *de facto* capstone course for political science majors. In this course, students are specifically provided the opportunity to learn the skills and cognitive approach necessary for critical thinking and problem solving. These skills are then assessed using topic specific exams. In order to complete the course satisfactorily, students are required to demonstrate these skills by producing research projects similar to those found in capstone courses. The intention is that students will use the skills they acquire to write better papers for presentation and publication.

Student evaluations of teaching have been administered through CoursEval (an online third party evaluation tool) for the past two years at UAM. Students answer seven questions, and the faculty members have the ability to add up to three questions per specific course. Students

may add comments to some of the questions. Faculty members are able to view the student totals and comments after the semester has ended.

Incoming transfer students are easily assimilated into the program if the student is transferring from another university in Arkansas, due partly to A.C.T.S. (Arkansas Common Course Transfer System) established by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education and the Arkansas legislature. It is also partly an artifact of the nature of the political science curricula at almost all institutions. The core courses are similar enough from one institution to another so that the transfer is simplified. And, all political science curricula allow for a block of electives so that courses specific to one institution (e.g. special topics and seminars) can be accepted as electives at another.

A significant number of political science graduates further their education through graduate and law schools. The School of Social and Behavioral Sciences holds informational meetings to help students prepare for the GRE, LSAT, and graduate school culture.

The political science program is making efforts to refine and further gather information from student and alumni surveys. This should also lead to better data from employers.

Program Effectiveness

Strengths of the Program

The political science faculty members are clearly one of the strengths of this program. Faculty is highly qualified to teach in this area and is published authors of books and articles. The faculty is able to share their expertise with students, the university and members of the political science professional community through instruction, research and travel to foreign countries to observe other geopolitical systems. Political science faculty members are also affiliated with numerous professional organizations, including the American Political Science Association (APSA), Arkansas Political Science Association, Council for Undergraduate Research, Georgia Political Science Association (GPSA), Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA), and the Southern Political Science Association (SPSA). Political science faculty members also serve as advisors for student organizations, including the Student Veterans of America and the Pi Sigma Alpha National Political Science Honor Society.

UAM is an open admissions university and the political science students are a

representative cross-section of the larger student body, there is a lack of a large cohort of students with high admission test scores. The political science faculty, however, teaches and encourages many of these students to present undergraduate student research papers, some of whom have been accepted for presentation at three international conferences in the past three years. During this time, these students have also presented papers (some of which won awards) at more than ten conferences at the state, regional and national levels. These students have been invited to participate in graduate seminars (as undergraduates) at very prestigious graduate programs in political science, i.e. George Washington University.

The political science program is vital to the functioning of UAM's curriculum, as it serves to fulfill both general education requirements and supportive requirements for several other programs in a variety of fields. The political science program prepares students for a variety of careers and has demonstrated stability in the number of students who enroll in political science courses.

The pedagogical approaches in the political science curriculum focus on engaging students with the course material and developing broader skill sets in critical thinking and communication. These approaches not only require students to engage deeply with course readings and actively participate in class, but facilitate rapid educational progress: the program has been able prepare students for success in graduate school who were only minimally prepared to attend college. This is due in large part to the close interaction between the political science faculty and their students, which is perhaps the strongest aspect of the program.

Areas of the Program Most in Need of Improvement

One area that needs improvement is the use of instructional technology. Political science is not very technology-dependent beyond the need for access to electronic journals and databases. The ability to integrate digital video (either archived or streaming live) into lectures needs to be expanded. The ability to record/capture lectures on-site would be very useful to allow publishing on YouTube or incorporation into online course offerings.

Recruiting and retention of students is also an needing improvement for political science. The faculty's reputation for being concerned about and helpful to students should maintain both

recruitment and retention at an adequate level; however, some suggestions for improvement are:

1. Expand recruitment efforts by sending mailers to other public institutions. These could be letters; however, a quality poster for classrooms and hallways would be better.
2. Continue relationships with local high schools and provide information to all prospective students.
3. Consider forming closer relationships with agencies that hire political science graduates, as improved job prospects are very important to those struggling with career decisions.
4. Consider offering continuing education credit to spark additional interest in other political science offerings.

Additional full-time faculty would be a positive addition to the current political science program, eliminating the need for overloads and allowing current faculty to focus on research projects.

Program Achievement over the Past Two Years

Approximately four years ago, the political science program began to mentor students, to stimulate those students to conduct original research and to write papers in the discipline. This research activity has increased each year. The students (via their mentors) have become so prolific that a healthy academic competition has evolved. This has caused an increase in demands on the faculty but the faculty has responded with increased commitment on their part to sustain scholarly work from undergraduates.

The political science program has been expanding the number and variety of courses being offered on-line including upper-division seminars. The program increasingly mentors students in conducting original research and presenting that research at conferences. The continuation of scholarly activities (nationally and internationally) and grant funding stand out as respectable accomplishments over the past two years. In addition, the program faculty routinely participate in professional development activities which have allowed them to be more effective

in the classroom.

Planned Program Improvements

One objective of the political science program is to acquire additional tools for recording lectures to be incorporated in online and hybrid courses. This will enhance the distance learning component by integrating interactivity at an estimated cost of $4,500 for hardware and software.

Another planned improvement is to create a stable and predictable budget for supporting undergraduate student travel for presentation of scholarly research at conferences. A stable budget would allow students to prepare and submit papers to reviewers knowing that their scholarship would be supported.

Institutional Program Review Committee

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Victoria Fox	School of Mathematics and Natural Sciences
Lynn Harris	School of Computer Information Systems
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