

# Political Science

## B.A./B.S.

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### *Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose*

#### **Institutional Mission Reference**

The Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in Political Science offer the student a comprehensive program of study that develops the critical thinking and analytical skills of students. Political Science faculty encourage students to develop their intellectual and pre-professional skills through course work and instructor-student interaction. The faculty offer a wide range of courses and specialize in American politics, comparative politics, and international politics. The program supports the University mission of internationalizing its undergraduate curriculum through its comparative and international politics courses and comparative elements in its American politics courses. The faculty are committed to teaching an ethnically diverse student body and fostering a better understanding between different cultures.

#### **Institutional Goal(s) Supported**

The Political Science program supports the following University goals: a) high quality undergraduate academic programs, b) high quality teaching, c) promoting the discovery of new knowledge and high quality scholarship, d) supporting international education, e) contributing to the enrichment of the University community, f) providing practical experience for students outside the classroom, g) improving computer and data analysis skills. The program also supports Strategic Initiatives: a) high quality, distinctive undergraduate programs, b) providing distance learning for the IDS program, c) enhancing international education by preparing undergraduates for graduate education, d) ensuring new levels of knowledge and skills through technology-assisted learning.

### *Intended Educational (Student) Outcomes, Methods for Assessment, Criteria for Success, Assessment Results, and Use of Results*

#### **Intended Outcome 1**

Students will gain a fundamental understanding of the central themes, concepts, and political institutions in political science.

**Method for Assessing Outcome 1 and Criterion for Success:** A senior capstone paper is required for graduation and will be reviewed annually for satisfactory quality by a panel of three faculty members. The criteria include: 1) conceptual understanding of the subject, 2) analytical and critical thinking, 3) writing style and effectiveness, 4) presentation, and 5) use of source materials.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 1:** A three-member faculty committee evaluated capstone papers required for graduation. All papers submitted for December 2002 and May 2003 were reviewed. The papers were individually scored and then were pooled for statistical means for each criteria.

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 1 to Improve Academic Program:** As a result of the last assessment report, students were more informed about capstone requirements. Seniors were more attentive to timely submission of capstone papers. 93% of seniors in the 2002 Senior Assessment were satisfied/very satisfied about the attitude of the faculty toward students. This leads to a better learning environment.

**Intended Outcome 2**

Students will develop analytical and critical thinking skills.

**Method for Assessing Outcome 2 and Criterion for Success:** A senior capstone paper is required for graduation and will be reviewed annually for satisfactory quality by a panel of three faculty members. The syllabi of all courses in the program will be reviewed each year by a department Portfolio Committee of three faculty members.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 2:** A three faculty member committee evaluated the capstone papers to ensure satisfactory quality in analytical and critical thinking skills. A Portfolio Committee comprised of three faculty members reviewed course syllabi.

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 2 to Improve Academic Program:** 93% of students in the 2002 Senior Assessment were satisfied/very satisfied with their faculty. Capstone papers show that most students have succeeded in demonstrating analytical and critical thinking skills. Some research papers still tend to be descriptive rather than analytical. This problem that will be addressed at a department meeting this fall.

**Intended Outcome 3**

Students will develop effective writing communication skills.

**Method for Assessing Outcome 3 and Criterion for Success:** All students will earn scores of satisfactory or higher on their capstone papers which are judged by a panel of three departmental faculty members. Students will pass the Exit Writing Exam of Writing Proficiency and 80% will pass on their first attempt. All students will successfully complete a writing intensive political science course.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 3:** Three faculty members evaluated the capstone papers. The average score for senior's capstone papers was 3.53 on a five-point scale (1=low, 5=high) indicating satisfactory or higher performance. 79% of seniors passed the Exit Writing Exam on their first attempt. All students completed a writing intensive course.

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 3 to Improve Academic Program:** Senior scores on the capstone papers were above average while eight out of ten students succeeded on the exit writing exam on their first try suggesting overall high quality in written communication. Moreover, 80% of students in the 2002 Senior Assessment were satisfied/very satisfied about faculty feedback to written work.

**Intended Outcome 4**

Students will develop effective oral communication skills

**Method for Assessing Outcome 4 and Criterion for Success:** All students will successfully complete a lower level oral communication course and oral communication requirement in a 400-level political science course.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 4:** All seniors completed requirements in oral communication courses.

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 4 to Improve Academic Program:** Oral communication projects are linked to critical thinking as students interact with other students in their presentations and in a question-answer format. This format also enhances student learning and helps build a foundation for employment prospects.

**Intended Outcome 5**

Students will learn research and methodological skills

**Method for Assessing Outcome 5 and Criterion for Success:** A senior capstone paper is required for graduation and will be reviewed annually for satisfactory quality by a panel of three faculty members. All students must satisfactorily complete Political Science 308 (Research Design).

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 5:** A three member faculty committee reviewed the capstone papers to ensure that students have gained research and methodological skills and know how to employ them. All students completed POLS 308.

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 5 to Improve Academic Program:** Seniors demonstrated their analytical and critical thinking skills through the employment of methodological skills.

**Intended Outcome 6**

Political Science is known as a multidisciplinary field of study and students will gain multidisciplinary knowledge.

**Method for Assessing Outcome 6 and Criterion for Success:** Students are required to complete lower level general education courses in communication, economics, foreign language, math, geography, philosophy among others. Upper level political science courses employ multidisciplinary approaches.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 6:** All seniors completed lower and upper level courses that provided multidisciplinary study and knowledge.

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 6 to Improve Academic Program:** 86% of students in the 2002 Senior Assessment were satisfied/very satisfied about the quality of instruction.

**Intended Outcome 7**

Students are encouraged to gain practical work experience.

**Method for Assessing Outcome 7 and Criterion for Success:** Political Science has a longstanding internship program. Fifty percent of students will participate in at least one internship experience during their undergraduate careers.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 7:** During this academic year, only 19% of seniors participated in the internship program to gain practical field experience. It may be necessary to lower expectations about the proportion of students who will participate as interns. In this case, we will consider revising our expectations and then build a basis upon which we can improve the numbers.

**Intended Outcome 8**

Students will develop effective computer skills and gain familiarity with the Internet

**Method for Assessing Outcome 8 and Criterion for Success:** All students are required to pass a lower level computer science course and POLS 308 (Research Design) and use a word processing program to prepare their research papers in upper level political science courses. Research paper references will reflect proper use of Internet sites.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 8:** All seniors completed a lower level computer science course and POLS 308

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 8 to Improve Academic Program:** Students completing these two courses are better prepared to write high quality research papers in upper level courses. This also prepared them for advanced study (graduate school, law school, etc.).

**Intended Outcome 9**

Students will gain a multicultural perspective

**Method for Assessing Outcome 9 and Criterion for Success:** The content of political science courses includes coverage of the role and contributions of women and minorities.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 9:** Seniors are exposed to the contributions of women and minorities in political science courses. Moreover, students have the opportunity to take specific courses including Women and Politics, African-American Politics, Race, Culture and Public Policy, Latino Politics, etc.

**Intended Outcome 10**

Students will improve their leadership and team orientation

**Method for Assessing Outcome 10 and Criterion for Success:** Political Science courses include a variety of activities (e.g., small group exercises, simulations) that help students develop their leadership skills and social interaction. At least 70% of students participating in internships will be rated as Good or Excellent on Collaboration skills.

**Summary of Assessment Data Collected for Outcome 10:** Seniors in upper level courses learn teamwork and leadership skills in political science courses. All student interns were rated above average to excellent on collaboration skills by their supervisors.

**Use of Assessment Results from Intended Outcome 10 to Improve Academic Program:** 93% of students in the 2002 Senior Assessment were satisfied/very satisfied with their faculty.