

Program Political Science

Date: May 16, 2017

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Assessment contributors (other faculty involved in this program’s assessment): All members of the political science program reviewed the report.

PART I. Program student learning outcomes (SLOs) assessed in this cycle, processes, results, and recommendations for improved student learning.

| A. Which of the program SLOs were assessed during this cycle? Please include the outcome(s) verbatim from the assessment plan. | B. When was this SLO last assessed? Please indicate the semester and year. | C. What method was used for assessing the SLO? Please include a copy of any rubrics used in the assessment process. | D. Who was assessed? Please fully describe the student group(s) and the number of students or artifacts involved. | E. What is the expected achievement level and how many or what proportion of students should be at that level? | F. What were the results of the assessment? | G. What were the department’s conclusions about student performance? | H. What changes/improvements to the <u>program</u> are planned based on this assessment? |
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| Knowledge and Critical Thinking Knowledge: Student should have factual knowledge about the various subfields in political science. This includes knowledge about the major theories, | Spring 2014 | The objective of the 2017 assessment is to evaluate graduating majors on assessment dimensions of critical thinking and knowledge of the discipline. As a tool of assessing student performance | 8 Senior seminar students were assessed. The seminar is required for all political science majors and is offered during the spring semester. | It is the expectation of the program that 80% of students will score on each assessment rubric at least at the competent (proficient level). | 3 students were at the exemplary level. 3 students were at the proficient level. 2 students were at the emerging level. | The assessment shows the following: 1. That 75% of the students assessed were at the exemplary or proficient levels. 2. That 25 % of the students were at the emerging level. One of these students was | Because the debate format has been successful in the senior seminar it will continue to be utilized in more political science classes. This will be coupled with either short or long research papers. This began after the 2014 assessment but the program is still evaluating which classes are a best fit for mini-debates. Change/Improvements In regards to the knowledge component, it became apparent |

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| <p>issues and methods of inquiry for each subfield. Critical Thinking: Students should be able to define problems, examine evidence and analyze the assumptions leading to conclusions; Question arguments, casual theories, evidence, broad generalizations and simple correlations; Are open to both sides of an argument; and are prepared to examine and expose deficits in all arguments.</p> | | <p>the senior seminar was reformatted to include debates, papers and discussions.</p> <p>A rubric created by the Political Science faculty was utilized. It is attached.</p> | | | | <p>ranked as being between proficient and emerging levels.</p> <p>3. 3 of the students, ranked as exemplary, were evaluated as at first year graduate level.</p> <p>4. There were a number of positive outcomes of the debate-short paper format of the senior seminar. First, students responded very well to a mix of debates and writing papers. The papers provided students the opportunity to research their debate topic. This</p> | <p>that not all students had been exposed through course work to all the areas of the discipline covered by department courses. This will be remedied by a new requirement (starting fall 2017) that all majors must take courses in four political science subfields. This will provide students the academic background to place at the exemplary or proficient levels.</p> |
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| | | | | | | better prepared students for the debate as did the discussion period in each class. | |
| | | | | | | Second, it allowed an evaluation of the value of mini-debates occurring in other political science classes. Third, the implementation of mini-debates helped to refresh students' knowledge about some of the areas of the discipline that may have been taken in the freshman or sophomore years. | |

Comments on part I:

PART II. Follow-up (closing the loop) on results and activities from previous assessment cycles. In this section, please describe actions taken during this 2016-2017 cycle that were based on, or implemented to address, the results of assessment from previous cycles.

| A. What SLO(s) did you address? Please include the outcome(s) verbatim from the assessment plan. | B. When was this SLO last assessed? Please indicate the semester and year. | C. What were the recommendations for change from the previous assessment? | D. Were the recommendations for change acted upon? If not, why? | E. What were the results of the changes? If the changes were not effective, what are the next steps or the new recommendations? |
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| Knowledge Critical Thinking | 2014 | Consider mini-debates and short papers rather than 2 major debates. | Yes, we adopted the mini-debate format and short papers. | The mini-debates were successful as the assessment showed that students were better able to connect knowledge from earlier classes to a variety of debate topics. Their knowledge and critical thinking skills were better utilized through the mini-debates and short papers. |

Comments on part II:

The majority of seniors completing the political science program do so with a better than 3.0 GPA, pointing to the rigor of the program courses, each of which is designed to meet all of the SLO(s). However, in assessing subject knowledge and applying critical thinking to the subject matter of the discipline, not all seniors are exhibiting the same level of proficiency. The reason for this is that not all students in the program take upper-division courses on all of the major subject areas of the discipline. The result is that some students' critical thinking skills are less than proficient when required to synthesize knowledge from different knowledge areas of the discipline in address a specific issue. This is beginning to be addressed by the noted changes in the curricula that go into effect in the fall. Also, the changes to the format of the senior seminar, more smaller debates, and numerous essays on different aspects of the debate topics, allow students to research subfields of the discipline that they may not have had a course on. As a result, students in this year's senior seminar demonstrated an increasing skill level of critical thinking about diverse aspects of politics over the course of the semester. This was demonstrated in the final two debates.

| Political Science Critical Thinking and Knowledge Rubric Critical Thinking | Exemplary | Proficient: | Emerging: | Not Present: (No Evidence, etc.) |
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| A. Evidence | <i>Accurately</i> interprets evidence, statements, graphics, questions | <i>Usually accurate</i> interpretation of evidence, statements, graphics, questions | <i>Misinterprets</i> evidence, statements, graphics, questions | |
| B. Points of View | Thoughtfully analyzes and evaluates <i>major</i> alternative points of view | Offers analyses and evaluations of <i>obvious</i> alternative points of view | <i>Superficially</i> evaluates obvious alternative points of view | |
| C. Justifications | Justifies <i>key</i> results, explains assumptions and reasons | Justifies <i>some</i> results, explains reasons | Justifies <i>few</i> results, seldom explains reasons | |
| Knowledge of discipline | <i>Accurately</i> understands and clearly displays a knowledge of the discipline including theories, ideas and concepts | <i>Usually accurate</i> evidence of knowledge of theories, ideas, and concepts of the discipline | <i>Misinterprets</i> the key theories, ideas and concepts of the discipline | |

Political Science Rubric: Knowledge and Critical Thinking Skills