

AURORA UNIVERSITY

ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW  
POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY

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Executive Summary

Long offered as an undergraduate major at Aurora University, the political science program began to stagnate in 2002 following the departure of its senior faculty member. High faculty turnover and a misalignment of the curriculum to program and university resources exacerbated this trend. Following its placement in the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy in Fall 2016, the university took several steps to revitalize the program. A concentrated, 40 semester hour political science and public policy degree was introduced during the 2017 – 2018 academic year, enabling students to major in both PSC and a cognate discipline and graduate within four years. The redesigned courses emphasize the development of marketable human capital. In addition, they complement the Master of Public Administration curriculum, providing a pathway into that graduate degree program. The program has also worked to increase its visibility within the campus community, occasionally hosting forums focused on contemporary political issues. Simultaneous with these changes, the pre-law program was moved within the purview of the political science department. A substantially restructured pre-law program was introduced during the 2019 – 2020 academic year to better meet the needs of students interested in attending law school. These changes are still in their infancy, and additional time is required before their impact can be fully assessed. Still, the initial results are promising. Opportunities for growth include expansion of co-curriculars and further leveraging of its position within the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy and wider Aurora University community.

Introduction

Aurora University periodically reviews its academic programs to confirm that they support its mission as “an inclusive community dedicated to the transformative power of learning…[that encourages] undergraduate and graduate students to discover what it takes to build meaningful and examined lives…[and that empowers them] to achieve lasting personal and professional success.” The University has established three goals of program review:

1. To evaluate program quality

2. To identify opportunities for program development

3. To reflect on a program’s growth and its place within the university community

It is within this context that this document reviews the state of the university’s undergraduate political science and public policy (hereafter PSC) program. Particular attention is paid to how curricular changes instituted during the 2017 – 2018 academic year affected the program’s historical structure and learning outcomes, its alignment with the university’s mission and objectives, and the quality of its course offerings. When appropriate, the information contained in this review is drawn verbatim from prior years’ assessment reports and plans. To further aid in the review process, the program is compared to similar programs offered at North Central College, Lewis University, and Elon University.

Procedures Performed

The following procedures were implemented to perform this evaluation:

1. Research into the evolution of the political science program over the past decade.
2. Informal appraisal of program resources and structure, course offerings, and instructional quality via conversations with key stakeholders, including students, faculty, library representatives, and the Dean of the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy.
3. Assessment of Smart Evals and other student feedback periodically gathered by faculty.
4. Review of three prior assessment plans and four prior assessment reports, as well as feedback provided by the university assessment committee.
5. Evaluation of enrollment trends provided by University Analytics.
6. Consideration of career outcome data compiled by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.
7. Comparison with similar programs offered at Elon University, Lewis University, and North Central College.

# Areas of Focus/Findings

1. Program Description

As described in the university catalog, the “political science and public policy program couples content area instruction in government, economics, and domestic and foreign policymaking with practical experience in electoral campaigns, public opinion polling, political communication, policy analysis, and advocacy to provide students with a versatile skillset that can be marketed to a diverse array of employers.” The PSC assessment plan for the 2018 – 2019 academic explains the program in relation to the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy:

Along with the [now-discontinued] Leadership Studies undergraduate degree program and the Master of Public Administration program, the PSC major is one of three programs administratively housed in the Department of Public Policy and Administration. The Department of Public Policy and Administration, in turn, is situated in the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy. Since May 2018, the program has awarded the B.A. degree in political science and public policy (rather than the traditional B.A. degree in political science).

That assessment report describes significant changes to the major over the past five years. These changes are reproduced with updates here:

1. A standalone department during the 1990s and early 2000s, Political Science and Sociology were merged following the departure of the political science department’s only tenured faculty member in 2002. These two departments were decoupled beginning with the 2016 – 2017 academic year. Political science was administratively moved into the newly formed Department of Public Policy and Administration. The expectation remains that the political science and public policy program will be a pipeline for students into the MPA program.
2. As part of its move into the Department of Public Policy and Administration for the 2016 – 2017 academic year, the political science program transferred to the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy from the College of Arts and Sciences. The political science program acts as the counterpoint to the business administration program.
3. There has been a complete turnover in political science faculty over the past five years. A search for a tenure track position in political science launched in the 2015 – 2016 academic year. This was expected to result in three full-time political science faculty members starting in Fall 2016: two tenure-track professors and one senior lecturer. Although the search was successful, both of the remaining political scientists had departed the university by the end of the 2016 – 2017 academic year. A search for a new assistant professor of public administration took place in summer 2017 to support the newly launched MPA program. This search was successful, resulting in a total of two tenure-track faculty members serving the department beginning with the 2017 – 2018 academic year.
4. There has been instability in the political science curriculum over the past five years. Although each academic year has brought changes to the curriculum, the Senate passed a major overhaul of the degree for launch in the 2016 – 2017 academic year. This revised program would have exposed students to each of the major subfields of political science: American Government, International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Political Theory.
5. Several problems with this new curricular structure emerged during the 2016 – 2017 academic year. First, the program did not have the faculty resources to offer a number of the courses that were included in the catalog. Second, too many courses were included in the catalog given the number of political science majors. This meant that even if faculty resources existed, some courses would not be offered except once every five or more years – if at all. Third, the requirements for the major exceeded 40 semester hours, which was a point of concern due to the then-ongoing curriculum consolidation. Fourth, the program was not properly structured to act as a viable pipeline of students into the MPA.
6. During the 2016 – 2017 academic year, the faculty committed to teaching applied political science and public policy. The purpose of doing so was to increase the program’s rigor and augment students’ marketable human capital. A substantially revised program launched in Fall 2017, replacing the existing curriculum. Ten entirely new courses form the core of the major. As described in the curriculum change form presented to the University Senate, “the restructured political science and public policy program is designed to teach undergraduates content area knowledge in public policy and government operations as well as a broad range of marketable skills, such as experience in public opinion polling, interest group advocacy, and political campaigns. Students who continue into the MPA program will augment this stock of human capital by completing courses in program evaluation, budgeting and financing, and public policy analysis, among others.” Majors are now required to complete a 4 semester hour internship that is designed to help them further develop their marketable capital.
7. As the department transitioned to the new political science and public policy program, it also “taught out” its previously existing political science program. A few of the courses existing in the old program continued to be offered as needed through AY 2019 – 2020.
8. Additional courses are expected to be added to the curriculum over the next academic year or two to support other university initiatives (e.g. the pre-law and environmental studies programs). An LSAT Prep course was piloted in Spring 2020, and based on student feedback and instructor impressions, this course will likely be added to the regular PSC course rotation. Environmental politics is scheduled to be piloted in Spring 2021.

Despite these programmatic revisions, there have been no changes to the admission requirements over the past five years, and the number of PSC majors has remained stable:

Table 1.

Number of PSC Majors at Beginning of Academic Year

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Academic Year | Number of Majors |
| Fall 2015 | 39  (11) |
| Fall 2016 | 35  (6) |
| Fall 2017 | 37  (7) |
| Fall 2018 | 35  (11) |
| Fall 2019 | 36  (6) |

Top number in each cell denotes combined first year and transfer enrollment. Numbers in parentheses indicate transfer enrollment.

Nearly all of these students were full time, with one part time student enrolling in Fall 2015 and two part time students enrolling in Fall 2017. Demographically, the PSC student profile reflects the diversity of the university student body. There are some evident trends. First, whereas males comprised the majority of program students in Fall 2015 (25 males compared to 14 females), females constituted the clear majority of students by Fall 2018. In Fall 2019, 21 females majored in PSC versus 15 males. Second, between Fall 2015 and Fall 2019, traditionally-aged college students comprised the majority of majors. Third, whereas approximately 59% of majors identified themselves as white in Fall 2015, only 30.5% did so in Fall 2019. Hispanics comprised about 18% of PSC majors in Fall 2015. In Fall 2019, 50% of the majors were Hispanic. These changes reflect the university’s ongoing demographic shifts.

1. Alignment with University Mission, Strategic Goals, and Objectives

As noted in the Introduction, the University commits itself to encouraging students to “discover what it takes to build meaningful and examined lives.” In addition, the University works to “empower our students to achieve lasting personal and professional success.” The PSC program aligns itself with these missions and goals in a number of ways. First, program courses expose students to a diverse array of policy problems and issues that may directly impact their lives and the lives of those around them. A small sampling of the topics covered in PSC courses include wealth and income inequality, human trafficking and modern slavery, checks and balances, the imperial presidency and the erosion of the separation of powers, collective action problems and the tragedy of the commons, terrorism and national security policy, and principal-agent problems. Especially in introductory courses, students often remark that they are hearing about these issues and problems for first time. Second, through instructor lectures, whole class and small group discussions, the viewing of films, and experiential learning activities, PSC courses encourage students to ruminate on the significance of these issues, both personally and for the world around them. Students often express that they become more thoughtful and politically engaged through these activities. Third, to augment the larger student body’s civic awareness, the program occasionally hosts forums on contemporary events. Discussions on immigration policy, the 2020 Census, media bias, and women in leadership are among the topics covered over the past five years. Fourth, course assignments augment students’ marketable capital. In addition to developing their critical thinking and communication skills, students learn precinct analysis, survey research methods, and data analytics, for example. In addition, they learn how to prepare press briefings and how to design political and advocacy campaigns. Through these assignments, students gain valuable experience that translates to a range of policy careers. Fifth, the program includes tutorials in resume and cover letter writing, interviewing, and LinkedIn. In addition, the program occasionally host guest speakers. In Fall 2019, for example, the PSC program partnered with the Department of Social Work on a legislative forum. The purpose of these activities and events is to increase students’ job market prospects. Sixth, with respect to the University’s enrollment goals, the PSC program offers a pathway for students interested in pursuing graduate work in law, public administration, public policy, and political science. Program faculty actively recruit PSC students to the MPA Plus One. Since its inception in Summer 2018, six PSC majors have enrolled in the MPA Plus One program.

1. Quality of Instruction

Table 2 compares average Smart Evaluation ratings earned in PSC courses between Fall 2013 and Fall 2019 to averages earned in all Arts and Sciences courses during this same period. As shown in this table, PSC courses rated more favorably than Arts and Sciences courses did generally – indeed, about a tenth of a point more favorably or more across almost all measures of student learning and engagement. Comparisons by year are not appreciably different from the aggregate scores reported here and are therefore not displayed separately.

Table 2.

Smart Evaluation Comparison, Fall 2013 – Fall 2019

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | PSC Courses | Arts and Sciences |
| On Time and Prepared | 4.68 | 4.55 |
| Uses a Variety of Teaching Techniques | 4.23 | 4.10 |
| Actively Engage My Learning | 4.25 | 4.11 |
| Aware of Instructor’s Performance Expectations | 4.56 | 4.39 |
| Instructor Appears Enthusiastic | 4.71 | 4.54 |
| Demonstrates Mastery | 4.75 | 4.54 |
| Recommend This Course | 0.87 | 0.82 |

To further assess the quality of instruction within a program, it would be instructive to compare Smart Evaluation ratings across the same course over time. Unfortunately, with one exception, this is neither practical nor informative with respect to PSC. One reason is that many of the courses taught across multiple years dating back to 2013 are no longer part of the curriculum (e.g. Political Theory). A second is that of the new public policy courses that have been introduced, few have been taught more than once. The one course that has been offered consistently dating back to 2013 is Introduction to U.S. Government, making it ripe for examination.

Table 3.

Smart Evaluation Comparison, Introduction to U.S. Government, 2013 - 2019

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2013 – 2014 AY | 2014 – 2015 AY | 2015 – 2016 AY |
| On Time and Prepared | 4.52 | 4.56 | 4.39 |
| Uses a Variety of Teaching Techniques | 3.82 | 3.84 | 4.10 |
| Actively Engage My Learning | 3.78 | 3.64 | 3.97 |
| Aware of Instructor’s Performance Expectations | 4.3 | 4.22 | 4.44 |
| Instructor Appears Enthusiastic | 4.38 | 4.54 | 4.61 |
| Demonstrates Mastery | 4.8 | 4.56 | 4.63 |
| Recommend This Course | 0.70 | 0.74 | 0.87 |

Table 3 Continued.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | 2016 – 2017 AY | 2017 – 2018 AY | 2018 – 2019 AY |
| On Time and Prepared | 4.49 | 4.73 | 4.6 |
| Uses a Variety of Teaching Techniques | 4.08 | 3.37 | 4.16 |
| Actively Engage My Learning | 4.08 | 3.57 | 4.13 |
| Aware of Instructor’s Performance Expectations | 4.41 | 4.53 | 4.44 |
| Instructor Appears Enthusiastic | 4.65 | 4.63 | 4.63 |
| Demonstrates Mastery | 4.65 | 4.73 | 4.66 |
| Recommend This Course | 0.85 | 0.80 | 0.83 |

As shown in Table 3, average ratings for Introduction to U.S. Government are stable in some categories (e.g. in the “Instructor Appears Enthusiastic” category), while there is some increase over time in other areas (e.g. in the “Uses a Variety of Teaching Techniques” category). Although scores were below the PSC and College of Arts and Sciences averages (for 2013 – 2019) in some years depicted in Table 3, by the 2018 – 2019 academic year, the ratings exceeded the College average in all categories.

Another way to gauge instructional quality is to ask majors to reflect on their academic experiences. Beginning in Spring 2019, students enrolled in the PSC Capstone course have been asked to comment on what they believed the program does well and what it could improve upon. The assessment reports for the 2018 – 2019 and 2019 – 2020 academic years summarize these data and are quoted at length here:

From the 2018 – 2019 Assessment Report

First, students overwhelmingly believed that they learned how to view contemporary events from a public policy perspective. Students commented on techniques they had learned relating to policy analysis, comparative analysis, and precinct analysis – all methods of approaching public policy problems. Second, students rated their instruction in quantitative methods positively; in fact, one student commented that he wished he had learned more of these methods (in particular, those relating to economics and public policy). As he wrote, “Looking more at the program itself, I appreciated how the classes has projects that were oriented for potential projects we might have to complete in our careers. The campaigns and elections class gave us an idea of what it would be like to work on a political campaign, and all the work that goes into it. The precinct analysis gave us a taste of the potential data analysis it takes, and how the field is becoming more and more oriented around big data… One thing I wish I had learned, and is being offered next semester is the economics of political science and public policy. I enjoy learning about theoretical nature of politics, as well as some real life examples, but I think economics, and numbers and math that go into everything is equally important to know and understand, and I wish I had an opportunity to be in that class.”

From the 2019 – 2020 Assessment Report

Each student mentioned that he or she developed a better understanding of public policy through their coursework, that they learned useful skills in data analytics, and that they learned to communicate effectively. One student wrote the following, for example, “The first skill that I can think of that will be helpful in my career is Research Methods. Not only is this a different way of thinking, but data analysis is useful in many different career paths. For example, I have considered pursuing a career in data analytics once I complete my MBA at AU. The Research Methods class equipped me with the right knowledge to pursue such a career. In addition, Policy Memo and Memo writing, in general, is a useful tool in any career. Being able to write in a succinct, educated manner to a large group of people is an important skill to possess. Forming campaign strategies may be useful in many different careers as well. Public image is becoming increasingly important.” A second student echoed some of these themes, commenting that “Comparative public policy was a great class because it allowed me to understand and examine polices that are enacted in another countries. It made me aware of the vast sociopolitical landscape of other countries. I was able to compare polices in other countries with our polices and evaluated how they worked and why such differences happen, especially when studying healthcare policy. Economics for public policy was also very useful in understanding what type of economic system our society operates under. It also showed me how economics and public policy are intertwined with one another and how certain aspects of the economy need to be considered when constructing public policy.” She continued, writing that “One important skill I acquired is constructing a professionally worded essay, taking into account logic and finding ways to succinctly back up my claims with different sources. As an aspiring writer, I appreciate these skills being taught to me through assignments since it helps legitimize my writing.” A third student observed that, “In Campaigns, Elections & Voting, I enjoyed that we imitated being a part of a campaign team. This project was divided up into various components which included: messaging, budgeting, SWOT, etc. The skills learned in this class directly applied to my campaign internship working with State Representative Karina Villa. In this internship, I was prepared and understood all overarching areas that are considered when running a successful campaign. Conducting a Precinct Analysis was also an applicable skill that I could be asked of in the future as well. Lastly, this class provided more than simply learning. By doing hands-on work, I noticed a development in my presentation skills, working with a team, and my capability of finding solutions to problems.”

Two opportunities for improvement stand out from these data. First, as hinted at above, the political science faculty need to consider whether Learning Outcome 3 merits retention as a learning outcome. Only one of the students mentioned anything related to Learning Outcome 3 (ethics) in her report. However, she did not mention ethical considerations within the context of the one class it has been emphasized in to date. Rather, she mentioned ethics within the context of a class on lobbying; in retrospect, she may be correct that ethics better merits discussion in this class rather than in other PSC classes. Regardless, it seems clear that ethics needs to be better integrated into the curriculum if it is to remain a learning outcome. Second, these reflections reveal that students are interested in learning about a wider range of public policy areas; for instance, two students expressed that they would have liked to learn more about lobbying and advocacy. Another student expressed that he would have liked to become even more proficient in data analytics. These suggestions provide the faculty with an opportunity to rethink certain aspects of the curriculum.

Viewed *in toto*, these data suggest that students, at least, are satisfied with the quality of instruction they receive in PSC courses. In comparison to all Arts and Sciences classes over the period studied, they rate PSC instructors as being more enthusiastic and engaged, more transparent with respect to course expectations, and more expert in the subject matter. Seniors articulate content area knowledge acquired in PSC courses, along with skills that they developed, and they are able to state why these skills are important to their career goals. They also state specific modes of instruction that worked well for them. Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement. Although students rate PSC courses favorably, program faculty should continue to work to vary their pedagogy, remain current in their fields, and write assignments and syllabi that are even more transparent. In addition, students have asked for additional instruction in data analytics, economics, and advocacy. There may be an opportunity to include additional instruction in these topics in the curriculum.

1. Quality of Curriculum

The Introduction to this program review mentions that the PSC major was redesigned during the 2016 – 2017 academic year. As noted, improvement in program quality and rigor, curriculum consolidation, alignment of courses to faculty expertise, and creation of a pathway to the MPA Plus One were among the reasons for the change.

Currently, PSC majors are required to complete ten courses totaling 40 semester hours. Course descriptions and sample syllabi have been posted to Moodle. Ideally, students complete courses as follows:

First Year

PSC1050 Introduction to Public Policy

PSC2160 Economics for Public Policy

PSC2700 Research Methods for Public Policy

Second and Third Years

PSC2550 Political Advocacy

PSC2600 Designing Political Campaigns

PSC3130 Gauging Public Opinion

PSC3410 Pressing the Agenda: Politics of the Media

PSC Issues-Based Policy Course (PSC 3300 Comparative Public Policy, PSC3340 U.S. Domestic Policy, or PSC3380 U.S. Foreign Policy)

Fourth Year

PSC4700 Capstone in Political Science and Public Policy

PSC4830 Political Science and Public Policy Internship

In practice, students often take these courses out of order depending on when they declare the major, whether they have transferred to the university, and when courses are offered. This means that first year students may be enrolled in 3000 level classes, and graduating seniors might be enrolled in a 1000 or 2000 level class.

Overall, political science and public policy courses are designed with these four programmatic learning outcomes in mind:

1. Political and Public Policy Perspective – Students will approach social, economic, and political problems through a political and public policy lens. Students will demonstrate an ability to define public policy problems, generate policy recommendations, specify the evaluative criteria on which those options may be assessed, and examine the effectiveness of a public policy.
2. Data Analytics – Students will use scientific reasoning and data analytics to make political and public policy recommendations.
3. Ethical Decision Making – Students will identify the ethical standards to which politicians, policy analysts, and political scientists are expected to adhere throughout their careers, and they will articulate strategies for identifying and responding to the ethical dilemmas that exist in the public sector.
4. Communication – Students will demonstrate written and oral communication skills appropriate to careers in politics, public policy, and political science. In addition, students will be able to communicate professionally to diverse audiences, recognizing that the method and style of the communication might change based on the intended recipient.

Table 4 summarizes the courses in which these learning outcomes are introduced, emphasized, and reinforced.

Table 4.

Political Science and Public Policy Program Curriculum Map

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **PSC1050** | **PSC2160** | **PSC2550** | **PSC2600** | **PSC2700** | **PSC3130** | **PSC3410** | **PSC Issues Electives** | **PSC4700** |
| **Outcome 1** | **I** |  |  |  |  |  |  | **E** | **R** |
| **Outcome 2** |  |  |  |  | **I** | **E** |  |  | **R** |
| **Outcome 3** |  | **I** |  | **E** |  |  |  |  | **R** |
| **Outcome 4** | **I** |  |  |  |  |  |  |  | **R** |

In addition, each course has been designed to impart practical skills relevant to policy careers (e.g. quantitative methods, campaign strategy and planning).

Learning outcomes in PSC courses closely align with two of the three university learning outcomes. In each class, instructors place considerable emphasis on the development of students’ critical thinking and written communication skills. Small group and class discussion, in-depth analysis of government and academic publications, simulations, problem sets, and linked assignments are among the ways faculty teach critical thinking. Exposure to different types of policy writing, instruction in writing, workshops, and written feedback on assignments are some of the ways faculty teach writing. In the past, students have expressed appreciation for the program’s emphasis on writing. For example, one student enrolled in U.S. Domestic Politics in Spring 2020 commented that though, “I was not expecting a lot of writing, I realize how important it is for my future career. At the time learning about the different writing techniques etc was not fun, but it did help me think about my style and how I can improve. It was also really cool to write in the style of an issue brief and decision memo.”

The development of students’ oral communication skills receives comparatively less attention within the political science major. To be sure, most courses require students to prepare both formal and informal presentations. In fact, students enrolled in PSC3410 have their press conferences filmed. Nevertheless, oral communication is not as heavily emphasized within the political science program as are the other two university learning outcomes. Accordingly, the faculty should consider how oral communication skills might be given equal attention. The content in PSC1050 could be restructured to include instruction in oral communication as part of an assignment on speech writing, for instance.

It is too early to tell how the changes the University has made to the PSC program have affected students’ graduation outcomes. No student to date has graduated from the university having completed *only* the revised political science and public policy curriculum. As the first students begin to do so, however, the faculty will begin to collect such data.

1. Quality of Co-curriculum

PSC faculty follow standard practice in defining co-curriculars as activities that complement programmatic offerings. Although the faculty have not taken a formal tally, they perceive that most PSC majors participate in one or more co-curriculars. These include AUSA, the pre-law club, LASO, HOPE, Dunham Scholars, and others. Some students are also politically active off campus, advocating for social justice issues or volunteering in legislative offices or political campaigns.

Readers should note that none of these co-curriculars are administratively housed within the department, with the exception of the pre-law program beginning in Fall 2018. Indeed, when the current program chair arrived at the university in Fall 2016, he observed that the major offered few co-curricular opportunities. Though a recognized student organization, the political science club was dormant with few active members. An attempt by one senior to reinvigorate the organization during the 2016 – 2017 academic year was minimally successful and interest waned once the student graduated. The department chair also noted that the program had apparently not participated in the Model Illinois Government simulation held annually in Springfield in several years. This had been a popular event among majors when he was an AU student in the early 2000s.

The absence of PSC-driven co-curriculars coupled with larger programmatic changes have given faculty the opportunity to be more intentional with its offerings. This is an ongoing process that, while still in its early stages, has helped raise the profile of the major. First, as mentioned elsewhere, the PSC program has hosted a number of campus forums pertaining to contemporary public policy. Second, the program has organized two field trips to the City Club of Chicago in order for students to network with political and economic leaders. Third, the department has reconstituted the pre-law program. Once organized as an academic minor, the program is now designed to help students (1) determine if law school is the right fit for them, (2) explore the types of law that they might wish to practice, and (3) prepare for the LSAT. During the 2019 – 2020 academic year – the first year of the new program – faculty offered an LSAT Prep course and mentored students in the preparation of their application materials. In future years, faculty expect to organize field trips to law schools and host law school forums. Fourth, conversations are ongoing about whether to renew the program’s relationship with Model Illinois Government and/or join the Pi Sigma Alpha Political Science Honors Society. In addition, faculty are thinking through ways of measuring the impact of these co-curriculars on students’ learning outcomes.

The University program evaluation template includes library and IT resources within its definition of co-curriculars. Kathy Clark and Matt Dabros met for 40 minutes during the afternoon of 1/28/20 to discuss the library’s resources relating to the political science and public policy program. They agreed that the current collections are sufficient for students’ needs. Nevertheless, they considered the feasibility of purchasing additional materials on public policy and public administration that better reflect the program’s shift in emphasis since 2016. With regard to IT, students enrolled in upper level courses analyze data using Excel and SPSS. Students have access to both of these programs through campus computer labs.

1. Quality of Student Learning

One way to measure the quality of student learning within the program is by examining the percentage distribution of grades by course. The data depicted in Table 5 show that a large percentage of students have achieved course learning outcomes, at least as measured by letter grades. For all classes, the vast majority of students earned an “A” or a “B”. In several classes, the majority of students earned an “A” grade.

Table 5.

Percentage Distribution of Grades by Course

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | A | B | C | D | F | W |
| Animals in Public Policy | 70 | 20 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Capstone in Political Science and Public Policy | 59 | 32 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Comparative Public Policy | 50 | 31 | 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 |
| Constitutional Law and the Judicial System | 37 | 43 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 8 |
| Contemporary Latin American Politics | 18 | 45 | 27 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| European Politics | 66 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Designing Political Campaigns | 59 | 18 | 0 | 12 | 0 | 12 |
| Introduction to Comparative Politics | 29 | 25 | 21 | 8 | 13 | 0 |
| Introduction to International Relations | 58 | 31 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 |
| Introduction to Political Theory | 32 | 42 | 12 | 3 | 2 | 10 |
| Introduction to Public Policy | 65 | 26 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| Introduction to U.S. Government | 48 | 29 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Political Advocacy | 63 | 25 | 13 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Politics of Global Health and Medicine | 23 | 38 | 15 | 0 | 0 | 23 |
| Pressing the Agenda: Politics of the Media | 80 | 10 | 0 | 10 | 0 | 0 |
| Theories and Methods of Social Scientific Analysis | 43 | 14 | 29 | 0 | 14 | 0 |

Percentages in cells are average grades for each course during the period examined. Special topics courses are not included in Table 5.

Measuring achievement of learning outcomes via final grades is deficient in several respects, however. First, the programmatic learning outcomes changed with the introduction of the political science and public policy major. Many of the courses shown in Table 5 were offered as part of the old curriculum. This includes Contemporary Latin American Politics, European Politics, Introduction to Comparative Politics, Introduction to International Relations, Introduction to Political Theory, Politics of Global Health and Medicine, and Theories and Methods of Social Scientific Analysis. Thus, the grade distributions in these courses have no bearing on the achievement of current program learning outcomes. Second, though final grades offer some insight into student learning, they cannot be used to differentiate achievement of specific learning outcomes.

The data the PSC faculty have gathered through the annual assessment process are designed to tease out student achievement of particular program outcomes. However, in some respects, it is too early in the new program to evaluate the extent to which learning outcomes have been met. A few years into the program, some courses have still not been delivered (e.g. U.S. Foreign Policy). Introduction to Public Policy excepted, the remaining courses have been offered only once or twice. Still, the initial results are promising.

The PSC assessment reports for the 2018 – 2019 and 2019 – 2020 academic years document achievement of the program’s four learning outcomes. These reports are excerpted here. Data for Learning Outcome 1 was gathered from writing assignments (i.e. op-ed and politician letter) produced in PSC 1050 in Fall 2018 and in Spring 2020. For Fall 2018, students completed an op-ed assignment. “Two questions included on an associated rubric were used to assess this outcome. First, students were assigned a score ranging from ‘excellent’ (4 points) to ‘poor’ (1 point) for their selection of an appropriate policy issue. Second, students were assigned a score ranging from ‘excellent’ (4 points) to ‘poor’ (1 point) based on their content (i.e. ability to define public policy problems and articulate policy alternatives). The class average for the first criterion was 3.53. The class average for the second criterion was 3.5.” For Spring 2020, “students were required to produce a letter to their House Representative. In this letter, students were required to (1) identify and describe a federal public policy problem that mattered to them and (2) propose action that they would like the legislator to take to resolve… [T]wo simple trichotomous measures were used to assess the extent to which the students met this learning outcome. The first measure rated students’ identification and description of a federal policy issue as ‘excellent,’ ‘fair,’ or ‘poor.’ The second measure rated students’ proposed action in terms of feasibility and effectiveness as ‘excellent,’ ‘fair,’ or ‘poor.’ Out of the 27 students who submitted the assignment, 3 students (11.11%) were rated ‘poor’ on the first measure, 8 students (29.63%) were rated ‘fair,’ and 16 (59.26%) were rated as ‘excellent.’ On the second measure, 5 students (18.52%) were rated as ‘poor,’ 7 (25.93%) were rated as ‘fair,’ and 15 (55.56%) were rated as ‘excellent.’

In Spring 2020, Learning Outcome 1 was also measured in U.S. Domestic Politics (offered for the first time in Spring 2020) and in the Capstone course. In U.S. Domestic Politics, “students were required to produce a decision memo in which they (1) described a public policy problem, (2) described potential solutions to that problem, (3) identified the evaluative criteria on which those solutions should be judged, and (4) made a recommendation based on the selected evaluative criteria…Thus, average grade was used to assess the extent to which this outcome was met. The average score on the memo was 85.17%.”

In Capstone, students produced a policy prospectus. “This assignment required students to (1) identify a public policy problem, (2) explain why previously proposed solutions to this problem have been unsuccessful, (3) devise their own solutions, and (4) develop a research design that would enable students to test to what extent their solution was successful, if it was implemented. For each of these four assignment elements, the six students enrolled in the class were rated as ‘exemplary,’ ‘satisfactory,’ ‘acceptable,’ or ‘unacceptable.’ With regard to the identification of the public policy problem, all six students were rated as exemplary. With regard to the explanation of the previous solutions, 2 students (33.33%) were rated exemplary, 3 students (50%) were rated satisfactory, and 1 (16.66%) was rated acceptable. With regard to students’ description of a novel policy solution, 0 students were rated as exemplary, 5 students (83.33%) were rated as satisfactory, and 1 (16.66%) was rated as acceptable. With regard to the research design, 0 students were rated as exemplary, 3 students were rated as satisfactory (50%), 2 students were rated as acceptable (33.33%), and 1 student (16.66%) was rated as unacceptable.”

Learning Outcome 2 was assessed for the first time in PSC 2700, offered in Fall 2019. “Students were required to produce an original research paper in which they quantitatively examined survey data in order to make policy recommendations to a candidate for U.S. president. Two measures were used to assess the extent to which students met this learning outcome. First, student papers were rated as ‘excellent,’ ‘fair,’ or ‘poor,’ based upon the accuracy of their quantitative analysis (e.g. description of their data, appropriateness of their statistical tests, correctness of their interpretation of their analysis). Second, students were rated as ‘excellent,’ ‘fair,’ or ‘poor’ based on their ability to make data-driven policy recommendations. Of the 18 students who submitted the assignment, 6 were rated as ‘excellent’ on the first measure, 9 were rated as ‘fair,’ and 3 were rated as ‘poor.’ For the second measure, 4 students were rated as ‘excellent,’ 10 were rated as ‘fair,’ and 4 were rated as ‘poor.’”

To date, Learning Outcome 3 has been assessed once in PSC2600 (Spring 2019). “Ethical issues related to political campaigns were a major element of the course…Students were placed into teams and instructed to develop a campaign plan to ensure passage or defeated of a hypothetical ballot measure. Requirements of the project included the development of a campaign theme and message, sample budget, SWOT analysis, and fundraising activities. The instructor rated each team project on a simple binary scale indicating whether teams proposed campaign strategies that violated ethical principles. No team proposed such a strategy.”

Data for Learning Outcome 4 was gathered from writing assignments (i.e. op-ed and politician letter) produced in PSC 1050 in Fall 2018 and in Spring 2020. For Fall 2018, “Two measures were used to assess this learning outcome [using an op-ed assignment]. First, as an overall measure of students’ ability to produce writing appropriate for policy settings, the class average on the assignment was used. Second, one item on the rubric was also used to assess this outcome. This measure is ‘voice’ (i.e. writing in a style appropriate for a public policy setting). The average score on the assignment was 181.58 points out of 200, with a standard deviation of 28.27 points and a range of 150. The average score on the ‘voice’ rubric item was 3.5.” For Spring 2020, the faculty considered students’ politician letter assignment. “First, as an overall measure of students’ ability to produce writing appropriate for policy settings, the class average on the assignment was used. Second, the instructor independently evaluated each student’s ‘voice’ – that is, his or her ability to write in a style appropriate for a public policy setting. Students’ voice was rated as ‘excellent,’ ‘fair,’ or ‘poor.’ The average score on the assignment was 91.62%. In terms of voice, 7 students were scored as ‘excellent,’ 14 were scored as ‘fair,’ and 6 were scored as ‘poor.’

Learning Outcome 4 was also assessed via the policy prospectus that students enrolled in PSC4700 completed in Spring 2020. “A single measure was used to assess students’ written communication. This measure rated students’ ‘professionalism’ in terms of their ability to produce well organized and coherent, cohesive documents of the kind expected in policy settings as ‘exemplary,’ ‘satisfactory,’ ‘acceptable,’ or ‘unacceptable.’ Of the 6 students enrolled in the class, 1 was rated as exemplary, 3 were rated as satisfactory, and 2 were rated as acceptable.”

Taken *in toto*, these assessment results suggest that large percentages of students are meeting the PSC learning outcomes. Students are able to identify and analyze public policy problems, make ethical decisions dealing with campaign plans, interpret statistical data and make policy recommendations, and communicate professionally. Certainly, there’s room for improvement. For instance, it is concerning that nearly a quarter of the students enrolled in PSC 1050 in Spring 2020 performed poorly on written communication – nearly the same percentage as those who performed poorly on their quantitative research paper in PSC 2700. On the whole, however, the program appears to be achieving its learning objectives.

Readers should view these results cautiously. First, to reiterate, the sample size is small in all cases – one or two sections of a single class at most. Second, for PSC 1050, assessment artifacts have changed as the class has evolved. The same will likely be true as other courses in the curricular are taught more than once. These changes can introduce measurement error into the analysis. Second, students enrolled in PSC4700 have not completed the full PSC curriculum. Thus, it is probably inaccurate to conclude that this course is at the point at which it will *reinforce* learning outcomes introduced and emphasized in prior courses. Given these considerations, it makes sense to gather additional data before drawing firm conclusions.

1. Quality of Program Assessment

With the exception of Introduction to U.S. Government and Constitutional Law and the Judicial System (a cross-listed course taught by a faculty member in Criminal Justice), all of the courses in the then-curriculum were replaced with the advent of the political science and public policy program. This necessitated the creation of new learning outcomes and a novel assessment plan.

There are some strengths to the current plan, which has been in place since the 2017 – 2018 academic year. First, the plan succinctly states the program’s role within the Dunham School of Business and Public Policy. Second, the four learning outcomes – public policy perspectives, data analytics, ethical decision-making, and communication – emphasize four seminal concepts within the field. A public policy professional is indeed expected to be able to differentiate public policy problems from problems best left to the private sector, behave ethically, make data-driven decisions, and communicate professionally. Thus, the four learning outcomes embodied in the assessment plan capture the essence of the discipline. Third, the plan explains the scaffolding of the curriculum. Students are introduced to each of the learning outcomes in the program’s foundational core, receive more in-depth instruction in the methods and issues-based classes, and reinforce their learning in the Capstone class. Fourth, the plan specifies how the university learning outcomes are measured. Viewed all together, these four elements offer outside readers a window into the major and help faculty keep program and university learning goals in mind.

Generous feedback from the Assessment Committee (see written reports on Moodle) coupled with the faculty’s own reflections over the past two academic years have suggested important ways of improving the quality of the assessment. Several modifications to the plan have been implemented because of this feedback. First, the 2019 – 2020 plan stated that data on University learning outcomes would be collected from all students enrolled in an introductory course. Through conversation with the assessment committee, the faculty realized that these data should be collected only from seniors. This feedback permitted the faculty to alter their assessment plans and collect data from the appropriate group of students. Consequently, the data gathered during the 2019 – 2020 school year aligned with university expectations. Second, initially, the faculty used test percentages and final grades on written assignments to measure achievement of learning outcomes. The Assessment Committee encouraged faculty to devise alternative measures that better capture achievement on specific outcomes. Although this is a work in progress and assignment scores remain in use on occasions, the faculty have taken this recommendation to heart and revised how the assessment artifacts are measured. Third, until Spring 2019, the political science program had not collected data measuring indirect evidence of student learning. The Assessment Committee provided suggestions for gathering data that have been implemented in the Capstone course.

Still, there is room to grow. Changes to course content owing to the COVID-19 crisis, as well as rethinking of the framing of Economics for Public Policy prior to its first delivery, has meant that Learning Outcome 3 has been measured only once (PSC2600, Spring 2019). The instrument employed in that one instance was simplistic: The instructor’s impression of whether groups’ campaign plan violated ethical principles. This measure was not designed for nuance, and thus the inferences that could be drawn from it were limited. In addition, whereas Capstone students mentioned data analytics, the development of communication skills, and the ability to identify policy problems and recommend solutions as human capital that they acquired during the PSC program, only a small minority mentioned ethical decision-making. The takeaway is that the curriculum has not yet emphasized this learning outcome. Especially since content on ethics was cut in favor of other material in Spring 2020, this affords faculty the opportunity to reexamine the role of this learning outcome in the curriculum. In Summer 2020, faculty are considering whether to eliminate ethical decision-making as a learning outcome. If the decision is to keep this learning outcome, then it would be beneficial to more clearly articulate in the assessment plan how this outcome will be measured. The Assessment Committee offered some guidance on this question in its feedback to the 2018 – 2019 report: “If you measured several elements (such as identification of potential ethical conflicts; identification of an appropriate set of ethical standards; delineation of a set of possible responses; selection, execution, and evaluation of a response), you might get enough variability to point you toward an aspect of the process that could be improved.” The faculty will keep this suggestion in mind as they think through this issue. In addition, the faculty will keep in mind guidance the Assessment Committee has provided in terms of using the assessment data to identify curricular changes even in this early stage of the political science and public policy program.

1. Comparison to Peer and Aspirant Institutions

For comparison purposes, Lewis University and North Central College were selected as peer institutions. Elon University was chosen as an aspirant institution. The Institutional Proposal Form articulates the rationale for this decision:

Lewis University is similar to Aurora University in many respects (type, location, size, demographics). In addition, its political science offerings are comparable. Lewis offers degrees in political science and public policy, and its department also includes a pre-law program – very similar to offerings at AU.

Although North Central is different from AU in some respects (e.g. size, percentage of minorities enrolled, etc.), it is also similar to AU as well. For example, the gender distribution of students is comparable, as is its geographic location in a Chicago suburb. In addition, though North Central’s political science program is larger in terms of the number of course offerings, it is similar in terms of its number of full time faculty and type of courses offered.

Differences in location and endowment notwithstanding, Elon is comparable to AU in terms of its overall enrollment. Like AU, its political science offerings include emphasis on both political science and public policy. Unlike AU, however, the political science and policy studies programs at Elon are among the largest in the college. During the 2018 – 2019 school year, political science ranked the 7th largest major in the university, with 221 majors. In addition, the college employs 16 full time political science professors. The program is well known for the Elon Poll, which has provided public opinion data on a wide variety of issues. We are interested in determining the factors contributing to its enrollment success.

Tables 6 and 7 compare the PSC program to these three university’s programs on a number of relevant factors. As shown in the table, each of these institution’s programs are broader in focus, employ more faculty, offer a larger number of degree options, and provide students opportunities to participate in mock trial and/or mock government.

Table 6

Peer Program Comparison

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Aurora | Lewis | North Central |
| Program Policies | Follow institutional policies | Follow institutional policies | Follow institutional policies |
| Program Marketing | Marketing materials linked to university website. Materials define major and highlight curriculum | Marketing materials linked to university website. Homepage highlights internship, study abroad, and service learning opportunities; courses and co-curriculars; job outcomes | Marketing materials linked to university website. Homepage highlights course learning outcomes, skills acquired in courses, and job outcomes. |
| Program Mission | Follows institution | Follows institution | Follows institution |
| Faculty Qualifications | Two Ph.D. trained tenure-track faculty | Three Ph.D. trained tenured or tenure-track faculty | Three Ph.D. trained tenured faculty members, including current Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. Two Ph.D. trained professors emeriti. |
| Delivery Mode | In person | In person | In person |
| Core Courses Required | 40 semester hours.  9 courses focusing on advocacy, economics, media, political campaigns, public opinion, and research methods | Political Science requires 39 semester hours. 7 courses focusing on American government, comparative politics, international relations, research methods, and theory. Capstone also required.  Public Policy requires 39 semester hours. 7 courses focusing on American government, public policy, and statistics. | 32 semester hours  4 courses focusing on U.S. government, international relations, political science as a discipline, a seminar in political science.  Demonstration of proficiency in foreign language also required |
| Elective Courses Required | 1 issues-based course (U.S. Domestic, U.S. Foreign, or Comparative Public Policy) | For political science, any six non-core department courses.  For public policy, two courses in economics or American institutions and four courses in environmental policy, foreign policy, social policy, or the legal system. | 4 elective courses drawn from each of the following areas: American politics, law, and world politics. |
| Areas of Concentration | Public Policy | Computer science, international relations, political science, and public policy | American government, law and courts, world politics |
| Majors, Minors | Political science and Public Policy (B.A.) | Computer Science and Political Science (B.A.)  International Relations (B.A.)  Political Science (B.A., Minor)  Political Science for Business (Minor)  Public Policy (B.S.) | Political science (B.A., Minor) |
| Experiential Learning | Required internship, opportunities to participate in field trips, campus forums, discipline-related co-curriculars | Required internship for public policy degree, elective for political science. Opportunities to participate in field trips, campus forums, discipline-related co-curriculars. Experiential learning opportunities built into courses (e.g. Model U.N. and Mock Trial) | Internship suggested. Opportunities to participate in field trips, campus forums, independent research, study abroad, and discipline-related co-curriculars (e.g. Model U.N. and Mock Trial) |
| Mentoring Opportunities | Small class sizes permit individual mentoring at all levels. Required mentoring in junior year. | Small class sizes permit individual mentoring at all levels | Small class sizes permit individual mentoring at all levels |
| Student Research | No student participation in research to date | No participation highlighted on website | No participation highlighted on website |

Table 7.

Aspirant Program Comparison

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | Elon |
| Program Policies | Follow institutional policies |
| Program Marketing | Marketing materials linked to university website. Homepage highlights program objectives and structure. Emphasis also placed on department news (e.g. faculty publications, alumni achievements, student awards). |
| Program Mission | Follows institution |
| Faculty Qualifications | 16 Ph.D. trained tenured or tenure-track faculty members |
| Delivery Mode | In person |
| Core Courses Required | Political science requires 44 semester hours. 5 courses focusing on American government, comparative politics, research methods, and theory. Senior seminar also required.  Policy studies requires 44 semester hours. 6 courses focusing on American government, economics, public policy, policy analysis, and research methods. Senior seminar also required.  Students must also demonstrate foreign language proficiency |
| Elective Courses Required | For political science, any 8 additional program courses.    For policy studies, students select three courses from one concentration and one course from the remaining concentrations. Concentrations include understanding public policy in a global context, leading in policy change, and policy analysis. |
| Areas of Concentration | Political Science  Policy Studies |
| Majors, Minors | Political Science (A.B., Minor)  Policy Studies (A.B., Minor) |
| Experiential Learning | Internships and study abroad strongly suggested. Opportunities to participate in field trips, campus forums, discipline-related co-curriculars (e.g. Model United Nations, N.C. Student Legislature). Students also have opportunity collaborate with faculty on research or work with the Elon Poll. |
| Mentoring Opportunities | Smaller class sizes permit individual mentoring at all levels. However, research expectations may limit time faculty devote to student mentoring. |
| Student Research | Policy studies program emphasizes student research, both individually and in collaboration with faculty. Students encouraged to contribute to the Elon Poll and present research at the undergraduate research symposium. |

1. Program Demand, Development, and Change

Political science graduates have a diverse array of career options depending on their individual interests. Career pathways include positions in government, law, education, public service, journalism, public relations and advocacy, and elsewhere. The career outlook for each of these positions varies. Broadly, however, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the median salary for political scientists was $122,220 in 2019. The number of political science jobs was 6,200 in 2018, with 5% growth expected over the next decade. This growth rate is on par with all other jobs.

It would be instructive to compare these data with data from AU alumni. To the best of this author’s knowledge, however, the University has not collected these data in the past. Nor has the program gathered this information on its own.

Although the number of positions available to political scientists is expected to remain steady over the next decade, the program should continue to work toward differentiating graduates from their peers. The curricular changes that faculty have made over the past few years are intended to achieve this objective. Much of the content has been vertically scaffolded, and the assignments are purposefully designed to impart vocational skills. In addition, to further augment their marketability, students are required to complete a 16 week internship and are strongly encouraged to double major.

Nevertheless, there is always room for improvement. One internship site supervisor – a state representative’s chief of staff – recently volunteered that she had expected her intern to begin the internship competent in navigating the State of Illinois government website and familiar with the jurisdictions of the Illinois House standing committees. These topics are not covered in the depth that this individual expected in any of the existing courses. Accordingly, the faculty need to consider the nature and specificity of the course topics. Furthermore, few PSC students double major. Nor do many consider the possible career benefits of pairing PSC with a degree in marketing, business, or accounting, for example. Although potential career pathways are covered variously within the existing curriculum, a designated one credit “careers” course taken early in the major might be useful in encouraging students to think through their employment options. Another option might be to develop specializations within the major or unique degree programs. Examples include political marketing or healthcare policy and administration.

Analysis

Table 8.

PSC SOAR Analysis

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Strengths   * Concentrated public policy curriculum   + Classes instruct students in core areas of public policy   + Enable students to focus on a core political science subfield * Curriculum is skills- and vocationally-driven   + Course content and assignments prompt students to develop marketable capital * Dedicated faculty   + Faculty genuinely care about teaching and student mentoring   + Small size of program means most classes taught by full time faculty     - Part time faculty bring industry experience      * Experiential Learning   + Required internship means students gain practical experience that enables them to augment their skills and connect theory to practice   + Small program size means students are able to network with guest presenters at frequently-offered campus forums * Pipeline to the MPA Plus One   + Majoring in PSC at the undergraduate level is a natural pipeline to the MPA | Opportunities   * Placement in Dunham School of Business and Public Policy suggests opportunities for further innovation   + Careful alignment of coursework could produce unique degree offerings (e.g. with Accounting, Computer Science, or Marketing) * Introduction of Public Policy degree offers opportunity for further expansion of co-curriculars   + Reestablishment of prior relationship with Model Illinois Government, opportunities for domestic and international travel * Geographic proximity to downtown Aurora and Chicago offer additional experiential learning opportunities   + Opportunity to expand internship offerings, develop partnerships with government/nonprofit agencies, partner with area law schools to offer guaranteed admission to AU graduates * Changes to the profile of the typical university student offer an opportunity to increase enrollment by further aligning program to student interests   + Opportunity to host forums, deliver special topics courses, attend events that further appeal to the diversity of the student body |
| Aspirations   * Pillar of Campus Innovation   + Aspire to offer innovative coursework, degree options, and co-curriculars that attract campus and regional attention * Program Expansion   + Aspire to increase enrollment to better match enrollment at peer and aspirant institutions   + Aspire to expand the curriculum to include related disciplines or other disciplinary subfields, as well as increase number of faculty, driven by market demand   + Aspire to expand co-curricular offerings, driven by market demand | Results   * Pillar of Campus Innovation   + Interdisciplinary degree pairings and new degree options   + Offer a model for coursework that other departments replicate * Program Expansion   + Measurable increase in first year and transfer enrollment   + Introduction of new degree pathways that reflect additional disciplines or disciplinary subfields   + Hiring of 3rd tenure track faculty member, driven by market demand   + Introduction of market-driven co-curriculars, including conference attendance and domestic/international travel |

Recommendations and Strategy

The PSC faculty recommend the following two programmatic goals and tactical objectives:

1. Short Term Goal: Continue to Strengthen Existing Program
   1. Continue to assess program offerings using direct and indirect evidence of student learning and satisfaction. Modify curriculum and pedagogy as necessary.
   2. Partner with enrollment and university communications to better highlight program strengths and opportunities
   3. Collaborate with colleagues across campus to highlight linkages between PSC and other disciplines, collaborate on innovative course offerings
   4. Develop partnerships with local government agencies and private organizations to improve quality and quantity of internship and experiential learning opportunities
2. Long Term Goal: Program Expansion
   1. Examine trends in higher education, the job market for political scientists, and the Aurora community to identify programmatic growth opportunities 🡪 Develop expanded curriculum based on analysis
   2. Partner with university enrollment and communications to develop and implement recruitment strategy
   3. Develop and offer expanded menu of co-curricular opportunities, based on student interest and market demand
   4. Develop partnerships with high quality law schools in order to increase strength of pre-law program