Political Science Program
Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Assessment Report
2008-2009

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A. Departmental Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Social Sciences is to provide liberal arts baccalaureate degree major and minor programs of study in History and the Social Sciences, provide the Social Studies curriculum for baccalaureate and masters degree programs of study in Secondary Social Studies Education, and provide required and elective Social Studies curriculum in support of General Education and other degree programs that achieve high standards of, and continuous improvement in, student learning.

B. Departmental Vision Statement

The Department of Social Sciences will become a leader within the University and among its peers in the improvement of teaching/learning, use of appropriate technologies, and provision of services to majors.

C. Statement for Assessment and Student Learning

The Department of Social Sciences at Southeastern Oklahoma State University believes that assessment fundamentally contributes to student learning and that it is useful in all academic disciplines and extracurricular activities. The Department of Social Sciences will make appropriate changes to the Political Science Program as needed to ensure optimal student learning based on assessment results. In addition to curricular matters, assessment will also be used for program review and budgeting and planning, and it will provide useful information to guide continuous program improvement.

D. Program Goals

The goals of the Political Science Program are to achieve high, and improving, standards of student learning by providing Political Science majors with a broad and eclectic knowledge of United States national, state, and local government and politics, global politics, comparative politics, political theory, and public administration and policymaking, and to prepare them for law school, graduate study, or relevant professional employment.

E. Major Program Objectives and Outcomes

A student completing a Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science shall:

1. Comprehend United States governmental and nongovernmental institutions, structures and processes of government.
2. Understand the contemporary nature of global politics and compare the political systems and cultures of Europe, Asia, and Latin America.
3. Demonstrate knowledge of public administration and public policymaking.
4. Analyze pre-modern and modern political philosophy, theory, and ideology.
5. Demonstrate skill in research and written communication.

**F. New to this Year's Assessment Report**

The following changes have been made to this year's report as a result of the Institutional Assessment Committee on last year's report:

1. We eliminated the detailed appendices and cumulative narrative statistical assessment of program objectives and outcomes.
2. We provided comparative data with results from the previous five years.
3. We analyzed each program objective and assessment outcome through the usage of charts and tables individually within the body text.
4. We added a new section entitled, "Constituents and Stakeholders."
5. We added a new section entitled, "Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program."
6. We added a new section entitled, "How Modifications are to be Made."
7. We added a new section entitled, "Effectiveness of Previous Modifications."
8. We added a new section entitled, "Modifications to be Made to the Program or the Assessment Plan."

**G. Assessment of Each Objective and Outcome**

*NOTE:* The primary assessment of Program Objectives 1., 2., 3., and 4. is through a nationally normed examination for Political Science, the Area Concentration Achievement Test. This examination is administered when undergraduate students declare a major in Political Science and have completed fewer than twelve credit hours in the discipline. The Area Concentration Achievement Test is also administered to all Political Science majors as they complete their Political Science coursework. Thus the Area Concentration Achievement Test is utilized as both a pretest and an exit examination in order to measure value added as well as to compare our results with national norms.
Area Concentration Achievement Test
Mean Percentile Rankings Pretest Composite

![Graph showing pretest composite rankings for 2003-2009 and 2008-2009]

Figure 1: Area Concentration Achievement Test Pretest Mean Percentile Rankings

Fifty-five students took the Area Concentration Achievement Test pretest for Political Science from Fall, 2003 through Spring, 2009. The mean composite rank for these students is thirty-four percent. Thus students who declare a major in Political Science at Southeastern Oklahoma State University consistently rank at approximately the thirtieth percentile.

Eight students took the Area Concentration Achievement Test pretest for Political Science during the 2008-2009 academic year. The mean composite rank for these students is twenty-one percent. This is somewhat lower than the overall six year mean, but still within the general range.

Area Concentration Achievement Test
Mean Percentile Rankings Pretest and Exit Exam Composites

![Graph showing pretest and exit exam composite rankings for 2003-2008 and 2008-2009]

Figure 2: Area Concentration Achievement Test Mean Percentile Rankings

Thirty-three students who graduated with a degree in Political Science from Southeastern Oklahoma State University from academic year 2003-2004 through academic year 2007-2008 took the Area Concentration Achievement Test exit examination. The mean composite rank for these graduates on the Area
Concentration Achievement Test exit examination is forty-six percent. An additional six students graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University during the 2008-2009 academic year. The mean composite rank for these current graduates on the Area Concentration Achievement Test exit examination is fifty-one percent.

Political Science majors at Southeastern Oklahoma State University achieved a mean on their exit examination composite rank that is more than ten percentage points higher than the mean for declared majors on their composite pretest rank. Moreover, the difference is more than fifteen percentage points for the most recent academic year graduates. The fact that program graduates are ranking higher on the nationally normed Area Concentration Achievement Test than are entering program majors is evidence that the Southeastern Oklahoma State University Political Science program is providing significant value to its majors. Furthermore, the fact that program graduates are ranking close to the fiftieth percentile on the nationally normed Area Concentration Achievement Test is evidence that the Southeastern Oklahoma State University Political Science program is highly competitive with universities and colleges throughout the United States.

The Area Concentration Achievement Test for Political Science is divided into four areas that directly address the first four objectives of Southeastern Oklahoma State University’s Political Science Program:
1. Comprehend United States Governmental and Political Institutions, Structures, and Processes

Area Concentration Achievement Test Mean Percentile Rankings in American Studies

![Bar chart showing mean percentile rankings for American Studies pretests and exits for academic years 2003-2008 and 2008-2009.]

Figure 3: Area Concentration Achievement Test Mean Percentile Rankings
This objective is addressed by a section of the Area Concentration Achievement Test entitled "American Studies." The mean ranking on this section for declared majors taking the pretest (academic years 2003-2009) is thirty-two percent. The mean ranking on this section for graduates taking the exit examination (academic year 2003-2008) is forty-five percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2008-2009), it is seventy-two percent. So those graduating in the most recent academic year have done especially well on the "American Studies" section.

The rankings for graduates indicate significant improvement over the rankings for entering majors. The graduate rankings also indicate that Southeastern Oklahoma State University is very competitive by nationally normed standards.
2. Understand the Contemporary Nature of Global Politics and Compare Political Systems.

**Area Concentration Achievement Test**
**Mean Percentile Rankings in International Politics/Comparative Government**

![Bar Chart](image)

**Figure 4: Area Concentration Achievement Test Mean Percentile Rankings**

This objective is addressed by a section of the Area Concentration Achievement Test entitled "International Politics/Comparative Government." The mean ranking on this section for declared majors taking the pretest (academic year 2003-2009) is thirty-six percent. The mean ranking on this section for graduates taking the exit exam (academic year 2003-2008) is forty-nine percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2008-2009), it is forty-two percent.

The rankings for graduates reflect notable improvement over the ranking for entering majors. The graduate rankings also indicate Southeastern Oklahoma State University is very competitive by nationally normed standards.
3. Possess an Understanding of Pre-modern and Modern Political Philosophy, Theory and Ideology.

**Area Concentration Achievement Test**

**Mean Percentile Rankings in Normative and Empirical Theory**

![Chart](chart.png)

**Figure 5: Area Concentration Achievement Test Mean Percentile Rankings**

This objective is addressed by a section of the Area Concentration Achievement Test entitled "Normative and Empirical Theory." The mean ranking on this section for declared majors taking the pretest (academic year 2003-2009) is thirty-seven percent. The mean ranking on this section for graduates taking the exit exam (academic year 2003-2008) is forty-four percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2008-2009), it is forty-one percent.

The difference in rankings between declared majors and graduates is somewhat less on this section. The probable explanation is that the section contains an empirical component that is not emphasized in the Southeastern Oklahoma State University Political Science program due to a lack of faculty members specializing in this subfield. Even so, Southeastern Oklahoma State University remains competitive by nationally normed standards.
4. Recognize the Structures and Processes of Public Administration and Public Policymaking.

Area Concentration Achievement Test
Mean Percentile Rankings in Public Administration

![Graph showing mean percentile rankings in Public Administration]

Figure 6: Area Concentration Achievement Test Mean Percentile Rankings

This objective is addressed by a section of the Area Concentration Achievement Test entitled, "Public Administration." The mean ranking on this section for declared majors taking the pretest (academic years 2003-2009) is thirty-eight percent. The mean ranking on this section for graduates taking the exit exam (academic years 2003-2008) is forty-five percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2008-2009), it is fifty-five percent.

The rankings for graduates indicate notable improvement over the ranking for entering majors. The graduate rankings also indicate that Southeastern Oklahoma State University is very competitive by nationally normed standards.

5. Demonstrate Skill in Research and Written Communication.

The Program continues to use the portfolio as a tool to ensure that our majors meet this objective. This required Political Science major portfolio consists of two research papers graded "B" or above, and approved by a faculty member, which have been completed for Political Science 3000 or 4000 level courses.

Political Science faculty members continue to make efforts to draw students' attention to the requirement that each graduate have two papers in his/her respective portfolio. Moreover, this requirement is stated on the checklist for Political Science majors. Our majors either
take courses that require research papers or write a paper for a course in which doing so is an option. Political Science 2513, Introduction to Political Science, introduces students to research skills in Political Science.

Since the 2007-2008 academic year, the Program faculty has implemented a Program portfolio (as opposed to an advisory portfolio) whenever a student declared Political Science as his/her major. It is the responsibility of each advisor to establish the portfolio. For graduating majors, papers are placed in the portfolio prior to graduation. The advisor then checks the student's portfolio when he/she signs that student's graduation clearance letter. The portfolios are then maintained in the department.

H. Faculty Level of Involvement in Assessment Process

Dr. Chunmei Yoe researched and prepared a draft on Assessment Objective and Outcome 5. Mr. Bruce A. Johnson prepared a draft of Assessment Objectives and Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4. Dr. Richard M. Pearlstein researched, coordinated, and organized the remainder of the report and wrote the final draft of the document.

I. Constituents and Stakeholders

The constituents and stakeholders relevant to the Political Science Program are our present and former students and our faculty. All Political Science Program faculty members are heavily involved in writing the assessment report as the above section demonstrates. One indication of the success of our Program lies in the consistently positive comments of our graduating majors during their exit interviews. Another such indication is the overall placement rate of our graduates in law or graduate school or in relevant professional employment positions.

J. Assessing IETV and/or Web-Based Instruction

Political Science 1513, United States Federal Government, which is offered online each spring and each summer, is assessed in the Political Science General Education Report. Only two upper-level Political Science courses, Political Science 4973, Introduction to Terrorism, and Political Science 4973, Pakistan: Nightmare Nation? were offered as web-based courses. Although data for the previous five years are not available, grades for our majors in upper-level web-based courses during the 2008-2009 academic year do appear to be consistent with grades which those majors received in nonweb-based courses.

K. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Program

There are numerous strengths in the Political Science Program at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. As demonstrated above, our majors tend to perform
competitively to very competitively on the Area Concentration Achievement Test, a nationally normed exam.

The Political Science Program also has certain weaknesses. The addition of a faculty member specializing in empirical theory would almost certainly increase Area Concentration Achievement Test scores for the Normative and Empirical Theory section.

The Political Science faculty has also ensured that every Political Science major will be required to take at least one Political Theory and at least one Public Administration course during his/her undergraduate career. This should be reflected in even higher Area Concentration Achievement Test scores in these subfields.

**L. How Modifications are to be Made**

When assessment results suggest a need for modifications to the Political Science Program, the Political Science faculty as a whole will meet and discuss what changes are needed. Relevant changes will be made and forwarded to the appropriate bodies for final approval (e.g., the Curriculum Committee, the Board of Regents, etc.). These changes will allow the Department to improve the Political Science Program, plan for the future, and request budget changes as necessary. For example, an individual faculty member may make changes in his/her course based upon his/her own experience. Also, modifications in the assessment plan will occur as assessment reports are reviewed by faculty and the Institutional Assessment Committee. Modifications in the assessment plan will be the direct result of assessment reports from previous years or by suggestions from the Institutional Assessment Committee or the Director of Assessment.

**M. Effectiveness of Previous Modifications**

Over the last five years, and in response to students' recommendations during the exit interview process, major modifications to the program have been the regular scheduling of Political Science courses in general, and of the Political Science 4743 Politics in Western Europe course in particular. This has enabled students to more knowledgeably prepare their schedules, as well as to help to improve their scores on the Area Concentration Achievement Tests in general, and the International Politics/Comparative Government exam, respectively.

Again in response to students' recommendations during the exit interviews, a judicial component has been more rigorously stressed in the Political Science 3513 United States Constitutional Law course. This has had a similar effect on students' scores on the Area Concentration Tests.

Lastly, and again in response to students' exit interview recommendations, the addition of a research methodology component to the Political Science 2513 course.
Introduction to Political Science course has better familiarized our majors with the mechanics of preparing a research paper.

**N. Modifications to be Made to the Program or the Assessment Plan**

Based upon assessment results and an analysis of the Political Science Program, modifications are underway in the Political Science Program at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Although the number of course hours in Political Science will remain at thirty-six, other requirements for a degree in the discipline will commence beginning with the 2009-2010 academic year:

1. Political Science 3513, United States Constitutional Law, will be required of all Political Science majors.
2. All majors will be required to take an additional six, rather than nine, hours in the “United States Politics” subfield.
3. All majors will be required to take at least three hours in a newly reconstituted “Political Theory” subfield (i.e., Political Science 3543, Political Science 4553, and Political Science 4783).
4. All majors will be required to take at least three hours in a newly reconstituted “Public Administration” subfield (i.e., Political Science 3563 and Political Science 4563).
5. Political Science 3503, United States Judicial Process, will be listed under the “United States Politics” subfield.

These changes are being made to ensure that all majors are required to take the crucially important United States Constitutional Law course as well as at least three hours in both Political Theory and Public Administration. As a result, the previously designated, rather vaguely defined “Constitutional Law, Political Thought, and Public Administration” subfield will be eliminated.
0. Signatures

Chair of Social Sciences: Kenneth L. Chinn 9/21/09

Dean of Arts and Sciences: [Signature] 9/25/09