Political Science Program
Southeastern Oklahoma State University
Assessment Report
2009-2010

Date Submitted: September 2010
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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 Political Science, provide the Social Studies curriculum for baccalaureate and masters degree programs of study in Secondary Social Studies Education, and provide required and elective Social Sciences 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:

1. Due to the fact that too few of the same students were in practice taking both the pretest and the exit exam, we decided to discontinue the pretest as an assessment tool.
2. Due to the more straightforward nature of our statistical results, we discontinued the usage of bar graph

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 to all Political Science majors as they complete their Political Science coursework. Thus the Area Concentration Achievement Test is utilized in order to compare our results with national norms.

Another important means of assessing the overall effectiveness of the Political Science Program is through a series of exit interviews required of all Political Science majors just prior to graduation from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. One indication of the success of our Program lies in the consistently positive comments about the Political Science faculty's dedication, diversity, and subject knowledge by our graduating majors during their exit interviews.

A final means of assessing the overall effectiveness of the Political Science Program is through an analysis of the overall placement rate of our graduates in law or graduate school or in relevant professional employment positions. The vast majority of our graduates do in fact go on to law or graduate school or to highly demanding and specialized careers.

Thirty-three students who graduated with a degree in Political Science from Southeastern Oklahoma State University from academic year 2004-2005 through academic year 2008-2009 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-five percent. An additional six students graduated from Southeastern Oklahoma State University during the 2009-2010 academic year. The mean composite rank for these current
graduates on the Area Concentration Achievement Test exit examination is forty-nine percent.

The fact that Political Science majors at Southeastern Oklahoma State University 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 quite 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

This objective is addressed by a section of the Area Concentration Achievement Test entitled "American Studies." The mean ranking on this section for graduates taking the exit examination (academic year 2004-2008) is fifty-three percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2009-2010), it is seventy-four percent. These graduate rankings indicate that Southeastern Oklahoma State University is quite competitive by nationally normed standards.

2. Understand the Contemporary Nature of Global Politics and Compare Political Systems.

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 graduates taking the exit exam (academic year 2004-2009) is fifty-three percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2009-2010), it is fifty-six percent. These graduate rankings also indicate Southeastern Oklahoma State University is quite competitive by nationally normed standards.

3. Possess an Understanding of Pre-modern and Modern Political Philosophy, Theory and Ideology.

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 graduates taking the exit exam (academic year 2004-2009) is forty-nine percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2009-2010), it is forty-two percent.

The ranking for Political Science graduates is somewhat lower on this section. The probable explanation is that this 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 reasonably competitive by nationally normed standards.

4. Recognize the Structures and Processes of Public Administration and Public Policymaking.

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 fifty-four percent, and for the most recent graduates (academic year 2008-2009), it is twenty-seven percent. These graduate rankings indicate that Southeastern Oklahoma State University is somewhat less 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

Mr. Bruce A. Johnson prepared a draft of Assessment Objectives and Outcomes 1, 2, 3, and 4. Dr. Chunmei Yoe researched and prepared a draft of Assessment Objective and Outcome 5. 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 former, present, and future students, our faculty, and those law and graduate schools and employers who admit or hire our graduates.

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 reasonably competitively to very competitively on the Area Concentration Achievement Test, a nationally normed exam. Exit interviews demonstrate consistently positive comments about the dedication, diversity, and subject knowledge of Political Science faculty members.

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.

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 process 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.

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

Lastly, and in response to overall ACAT scores, the Political Science Program faculty
reconsidered last year's suggested modifications to and restructuring of program
subfields. Other, earlier changes in the program will continue to be implemented.

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

Based upon assessment results and an analysis of the Political Science Program, one
modification to the Political Science Assessment Plan will continue. For reasons
outlined above, a pretest is no longer being administered.

O. Signatures

Chair of Social Sciences: [(Signature) 9/7/10]
Dean of Arts and Sciences: [(Signature) 9/8/10]