

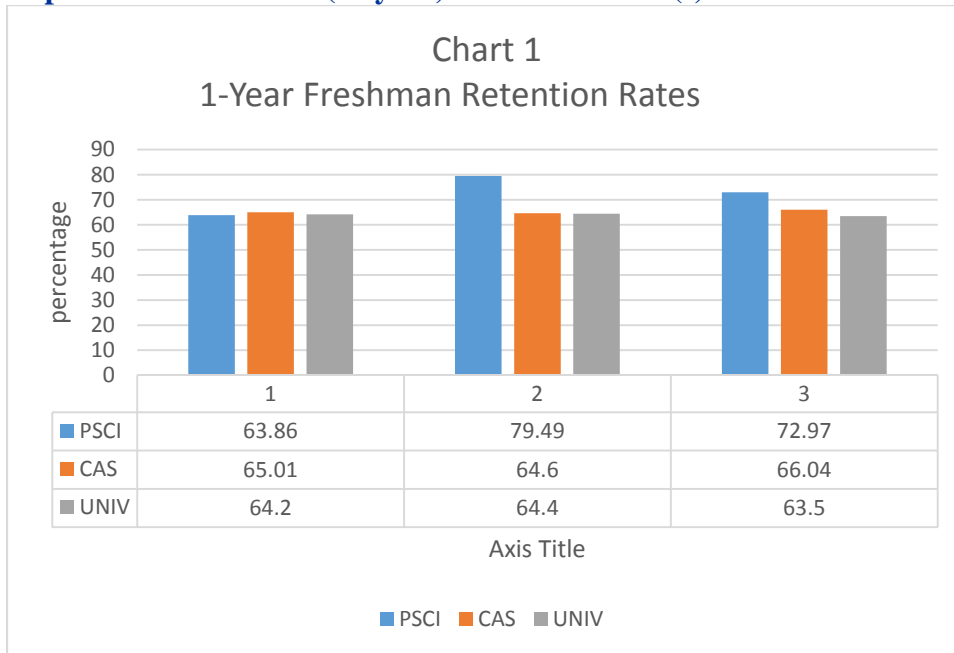
# Academic Department Student Success Plan Update 2015-2018

**Department:** Political Science

**Department Chair:** Gaston Fernandez (interim)

**Department Mission:** The Department of Political Science is committed to providing a high-quality academic experience both in and out of the classroom for its undergraduate and graduate students. Our curriculum integrates exposure to theory, method and practice – particularly through experiential learning – with critical thinking, effective communication, and a global perspective. In this way, we prepare our students for productive careers in public service or in the private sector, and for lives of active citizenship.

## Department Freshmen (1<sup>st</sup> year) Retention<sup>1</sup> Goal(s):



As Chart 1 shows, the department 1-year retention rates closely mirrored the College’s and the University’s in 2014-15. During the 2012-14 period, the department rates exceeded those of the College and University. Taken as a whole, over the past three years, the department’s 1-year retention record is one of solid accomplishment.

The department proposes to build on this positive record of accomplishments. The department’s 1-year retention “benchmarks targets” (listed below) for 2016- 18 takes as a baseline the combined retention rate averages of the College and University for the period from Fall 2013-15. The department target exceed the university rates by an average of 5% during each year, The initiatives below, we believe, can positively contribute to meeting the goals set forth in this report.

\*The data in Chart 1 is taken from the excel charts provided by Michael Snyder in his memorandum to department chairs on October 22, 2015

1. The principal initiative will be to utilize supplemental instructors and peer assistants concentrating on the Learning Communities offerings in 100 and 200 –level courses making available peer training opportunities’ to support effectiveness in tutoring at-risk students. The Living Learning Community model will be deepened in partnership with Residential Life through department faculty participation in programming. The initiatives listed will be done in cooperation with the Center for Student Success and Residential Life.  
Persons Responsible: Instructor (adjunct), Learning Communities instructors, and Department Chair
  
2. A second initiative will be to connect with freshmen students as they transition to sophomore year with 2-4 senior-level students to develop a mentoring relationship. This program will be assessed yearly to evaluate the effects on freshmen retention In addition, transitioning students will receive a yearly advising orientation session developed for Political Science and Legal Studies students in order to support the transition to the department, as well as follow-up contacts during the AY to identify problem areas.  
Persons Responsible: Instructor (adjunct), advisors, and Department Chair

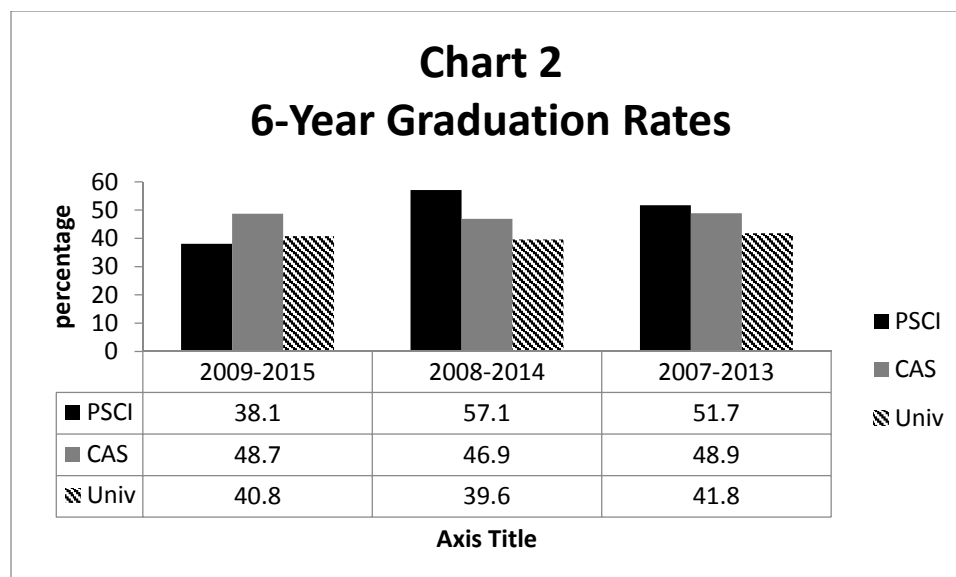
**Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):**

<i>Retention Benchmarks<sup>2</sup></i>	<b>Fall 2012 cohort:</b>	<b>Fall 2013 cohort:</b>	<b>Fall 2014 cohort:</b>
(by latest department)	73%	79%	63%
	<b>Fall 2015 target:</b>	<b>Fall 2016 target:</b>	<b>Fall 2017 target:</b>
	69%	72%	75%

*Other Freshmen Retention related benchmarks of focal interest to department<sup>3</sup>*

**Department Persistence to Completion Goal(s):**

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The department 6-Year Graduation Rates in 2015 were slightly below the university's while the College's rates exceeded both the department's and the university's. For the period from 2008-14 and 2007-13, the department's 6-Year Graduation rates exceeded both the College and University rates. The 2015 rates are probably an anomaly, related to the size of the population being surveyed. The assumption is that the more "normal" 6-year graduation rate is that for 2013 and 2014 when department rates surpassed those of the College and the University.

The projected departmental "benchmark targets" 6-Year Graduation rates (for students classified as "latest department") are based on the assumption that the department will exceed the average of the college and university rates by an average of 5% each year (even assuming that the university rates overall will also improve). The proposed initiatives listed below are ones the department faculty have prioritized in meeting the projected targets for 2016-18.

#### **Action Steps (with dates & person(s) responsible):**

The principal initiative for the coming year will be for the Department to implement changes to the student course mapping in the Political Science major to ensure greater academic preparedness for the undergraduate research methods course. Based on data analysis of DWF rates for PSCI 245 (see Appendix) the department will implement the following changes; (1) adjust the Political Science 4-year plan so that PSCI 245 is taken during the first semester of a student's junior year; (2) adjust the course level from 245 to 345 and add a prerequisite to the course requiring 12 credits in Political Science coursework before enrollment in PSCI 245; and (3) replace PSCI 245 with an alternate course for the minor. It is expected that this will reduce the high DWF rates in PSCI 245 and contribute to the overall retention rates. The Department will establish a protocol for yearly assessment of student success in the methods course in order to develop an on-going fine tuning going forward.

Persons responsible: Department Chair and Faculty Instructors PSCI 245

(1) A second supporting initiative is to review and revise the system in place for advising students who have completed 90 credit hours. A revised protocol for conducting a degree audit of majors upon completion of 90 credit hours will be developed to identify challenges every semester and design appropriate interventions.

Persons responsible: Department academic advisors and Instructor (adjunct)

(2) A third supporting initiative for retention and graduation is for faculty in political science and public administration to engage students in curricular and co-curricular professionalization opportunities--through PSCI 315 Working in Politics, PSCI 421 Legal Profession PSCI 400 Public Policy--by organizing a lecture series featuring government officials from Indiana and Illinois to introduce student to people who made careers in politics.

Persons responsible: Instructor (adjunct), graduate student, and Department Chair

**6 year**

*Completion  
Benchmarks*

	<b>Fall 2007 cohort:</b>	<b>Fall 2008 cohort:</b>	<b>Fall 2009 cohort:</b>
(by latest department)	52%	57%	38%
	<b>Fall 2010 target:</b>	<b>Fall 2011 target:</b>	<b>Fall 2012 target:</b>
	50%	53%	56%

*Other Persistence to Completion related benchmarks of focal interest to department*

**Other Goal(s), Action Steps, and Benchmarks of focal interest to department<sup>4</sup>:**

(1) The principal initiative will be to implement an advisor evaluation system based on a survey instrument to identify any challenges with student advising possibly impacting on student retention and completion rates.

Persons responsible: Instructor (adjunct) and department advisors, Department Chair

(2) A second supporting initiative to assist with retention and completion will be to develop an “Internship Central” portal on the Department web site including new and on-going internships and procedures for selecting student interns

Person responsible: Instructor (adjunct), graduate student and Department Chair

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- (3) A third supporting initiative is to activate the Alumni Board and involve them in providing feedback to the Department on general program development and present to student on post-graduation opportunities and challenges  
Person Responsible: Instructor (adjunct), graduate student and Department Chair
- (4) A fourth supporting initiative is to develop a communication protocol to encourage students to register with the Career Center beginning the spring of their junior year with follow-up in the fall of their senior year.  
Person Responsible: Instructor (adjunct) and department advisors
- (5) A fifth supporting initiative is to further develop approaches to connecting students with the program through the experiential learning opportunities for students provided by the American Democracy Project.  
Person Responsible: Faculty Coordinator of the American Democracy Project.