



2015-16 End-of-Year Report Academic Department Success Plan

Department: Political science

Department Chair: Stan Buchanan 2016-17 / Gaston Fernandez 2015-16

Person Primarily Responsible for Preparing this Report:
Stan Buchanan

Please answer the following questions in two or three pages and submit to your Dean by October 3. Your Dean will review and advance to Academic Affairs by October 10¹ and will offer you feedback by Oct. 17. This report will help inform your 2016-2019 Student Success Plan update that will be due to your Dean by Nov. 4.

- 1. Specific accomplishments/achievements this past year (briefly explain using bullet points, noting any changed/adapted):**
 - a. The department implemented course “mapping” changes in both political science and legal studies, based on DFW rates generated last year. Changes included the following steps:
 - i. Adjusted timing and added pre-requisites for the required course in political inquiry. We believe these changes will help lower DFW rates in that important, required course.
 1. Adjusted the political science major’s four-year plan so that Political Inquiry (PSI 245) may not be taken before the first semester of the junior year.
 2. Changed the course number of PSCI 245 to PSCI 340.
 3. Replaced PSCI 245 with an alternate course for political science minors.
 - ii. Began the process of changing both political science and legal studies curricula to better prepare majors in these two programs to take and succeed in upper division offerings in each major. These changes would also help, in addition, to lower D/F/W rates among our undergraduates. The effects will be reviewed for possible future changes in the plan.
 1. PSCI 201, Introduction to American Politics, is now to be a pre-requisite for all 400-level courses in American politics. Students will not, however, be asked to take PSCI 201 as a pre-requisite for PSCI 330, Introduction to Public Administration. We don’t wish to discourage students in the Nonprofit Alliance Certificate Program from taking that course, which is one of the requirements of that program.
 2. We have had trouble in the past with unprepared students registering (without having spoken to their advisors) for required senior seminars. Consequently, the department has decided that political science and legal studies majors must now take all required courses in either major before they may register for the senior seminar in their program. Those seminars are PSCI 499 (political science) and PSCI 419 (legal studies).
 - b. The department began the development of an academic advising inventory to better guide the faculty advisors in their interactions with students.
 - i. Developed a survey, with questions based on content taken from the literature of academic advising. Questions fell into four groups:
 1. The nature of academic advising
 2. The frequency of advisement activities

¹ Note that the Dean will request a refinement to the report if it is not suitably addressing the questions.

3. Students' satisfaction with their advisement
 4. Demographic information
 - ii. Administered the survey to political science student--all volunteers--during Spring, 2016. Findings:
 1. Eighty percent of the students surveyed thought they could graduate on time.
 2. Responding students indicated that personal finances were the most significant impediment to on-time graduation.
 3. Students also indicated that two other problems that might hinder on-time graduation included personal time-management and the need to remain employed and earning an income, while also pursuing their studies.
 - c. Initiatives in respect to transitioning freshman from University College
 - i. During Spring, 2016, Dr. Bergbower and Dr. Maule offered political science courses within the sphere of the "learning community" in which they addressed advising points, including political science/legal studies curriculum, student tactics for better grades, and political science/legal studies career options.
 - ii. We made the changes in the four-year graduation plan addressed above.
- 2. Objective/Actions Not Achieved (*briefly explain using bullet points*):**
- a. The Department should establish a protocol for yearly assessment of student success in the methods course during the Fall semester 2016 in order to develop an on-going fine tuning going forward.
 - b. The curriculum changes underwritten by the faculty last year have been entered into Curriculog as proposals, but have not yet been officially adopted. We anticipate, though, that the changes will be made by the end of AY 2016-17
 - c. The department should discuss, as per the 2014-17 plan, the development of a 5-year dual degree BA-BS/MPA pathway for students.
 - d. Although the American Democracy Project is very successful, we do need to emphasize students clubs specific to our discipline
 - e. We need to begin work on developing a tutoring system
 - f. Our department's website is in need of updating.
 - g. Leadership in graduation/retention still needs to be developed, but given recent (and anticipated) changes in faculty, this is going to be a long-term process.
 - h. We have considered tutoring for 200 level students, but curriculum changes—especially in respect to the conversion of 245 to 340, may obviate this point.
 - i. We need to identify upper-level students to mentor freshmen and sophomores
 - j. We should resume the production of a departmental newsletter mentioned in the current plan.
- 3. Looking ahead, briefly describe changes, additions, or subtractions that need to be made to your goals and/or action steps, including with respect to their linkage to student learning outcomes.**
- a. The department will start a discussion about whether PSCI 201 (introduction to American politics) should be a prerequisite for upper-level courses or even required in the major. The reason for this is the growth of College Challenge versions of PSCI 201 taught in high schools: not all of these CC courses adequately reflect the level and quality of PSCI 201 courses taught to actual college students.
 - b. We will continue to refine our advisement survey, and to administer it annually, probably during Spring semesters. This will help us, in turn, to shape and refine our advisement practices.
 - c. Given the changes in curriculum noted above, we should expect fewer DFW rates, especially in PSCI 340; and concomitant rises in percentage of students who graduate and graduate on time.

- d. We will discuss the survey results in further detail and will also continue to polish the survey itself. We will use annual the results to help our advisors focus on issues students raise through their responses.
 - i. In light of results of the 2016 advisement survey, the department should discuss the allocation of scholarship funds in terms of students who face financial barriers to graduation
 - ii. The department's undergraduate advisors shall take note of assisting students with helping students schedule and use their time more efficiently
 - iii. We should continue to encourage our students to seek help from their academic advisors. This might seem a moot point, since it's a constant process, but according to the 2016 student survey, about 20% of our majors do not speak with their advisors during an academic year. This percentage should be reduced, although we've not yet set a target.

4. Do you see opportunity for this project to work more closely with another department, college, or unit such that greater impact might be possible (*briefly explain*)? The current plan does not call for, nor imply, cooperation with other departments in any specific way. We do cooperate with University College in helping freshmen transition into our learning community as they move on. The MPA program does cooperate with other departments, though, in offering elective concentrations. Our plan does note that the department should look into a kind of two-for-one degree, which would combine undergraduate with graduate study, and produce both a BA/BS *and* an MPA in a five-year span. This could be notion could be extended to entail undergraduates of other departments, especially those without graduate degrees.

Although ADP is not a departmental project in itself, our leadership of ADP does help us advance our departmental mission across departmental and college lines;

We do cooperate with the Nonprofit Certificate Program in offering PSCI 330, an undergraduate survey of public administration.

We are certainly open to cooperating with other departments, on either their or our own initiative.

5. Is there anything else about your initiative you feel important to detail? This is my first full semester as permanent department chair. As director of our graduate program, I have not been as closely associated with our undergraduate student success initiative as most of my colleagues. But from my current position, and referring to our 2014-17 plan, I—tentatively--note the following.

- a. We need to emphasize enrollment activities. In my view, enrollment is not necessarily something that can be controlled by faculty, but full engagement of the steps in our plan should help.
- b. We've done a fair job in regard to student retention, although some steps (see above) still need to be taken
- c. We've worked hard on student completion, especially over the last year, and I hope to see this continue.
- d. Our programs—political science and legal studies—may both lead to highly rewarding jobs, in both the public and the private sectors. Both programs contain strong elements of experiential learning that enhance our graduates' job prospects.