



Academic Department Student Success Plan Annual Update: 2016-2019¹



Department: Political science

Department Chair: Stan Buchanan

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 (1st year) Retention Goal(s):

Maintain the first-year retention for our undergraduate majors at 70% across the next four-year period.

After reviewing our retention percentages in the 2013, 2014 and 2015 freshmen cohorts, we note that we exceeded our retention target by one percent with the freshman cohort entering in 2013. But retention percentages for the next two cohorts fell to below our targets. We hope to bring those back, however, over the next several years.

Noting that college and university first-year retention averages range around 70%, we believe that we can meet and keep an average of 70% of our first year students annually over the next several years. This target is well within our ability to attain, and 70% was, in fact, near our four-year average from 2012 to 2015.

However, given the statistically small number of students in our cohort samples, we do expect the numbers to fluctuate—as they have proven to do in the past. Over the last four years, our high was 81% for the 2012 cohort and our low was 63.64% for the 2015 cohort.

We have provided a comparison, by cohort year, between our department's retention rates and those of all major colleges. (See Attachment 1.) For the colleges, we note a fluctuation from a low about 65% to a high of about 75%. Our own department's averages move from the high end to the low end of that range. But we feel that we have been, and will remain, well within the 65%-75% retention range for our six-year cohorts over the next three years.

Department Freshmen, First-year Retention Action Steps² (with dates & person(s) responsible):

Continue to offer political science courses within the sphere of the “learning community” that address advising points, including political science/legal studies curriculum, student tactics for better grades, and political science/legal studies career options. Annual. All faculty teaching first-year courses, including Dr. Maule.

Implement the curriculum changes begun last year to remove potential stumbling blocks that may obscure the paths to success of our first-year students. Annual. Faculty.

Change the four-year graduation plan concomitant with the curriculum changes. By end of AY 2016-17. Chair and faculty.

<i>Retention Benchmarks</i> (by latest department)	Fall 2013 Cohort: 81% (76% target)	Fall 2014 Cohort: 64.1% (76% target)	Fall 2015 target & actual: 77% target and 63.64% actual
	Fall 2016 target: 70%	Fall 2017 target: 70%	Fall 2018 target: 70%

Other Freshmen Retention related benchmarks of focal interest to department

Department Persistence to Completion Goal(s):

Our original completion goals were based on a six-year, and not on a four-year, completion cycle. Starting with our 2013 cohort, the completion of our six-year graduation goals can only begin to be assessed in 2019. Below, under Completion Benchmarks, actual graduation rates are provided, for both our four-year cohorts and our six-year cohorts, from 2010 to 2015. Note that, in regard to six-year rates, only the Fall 2010 Cohort has graduated. The last four-year cohort to graduate was that of 2012, which finished in Spring, 2016.

We note that our six-year percentages are consistently better, as one would expect, than our four-year percentages. And so our completion goals over the next few academic years is to maintain an average of 50% graduation for each cohort, beginning with the 2013 cohort, through 2019.

We present the data in Attachment 2 in support of those goals

Table 1: Provides a somewhat more lucid, tabular representation of the department's four-year and six-year graduation data. Table 1 also includes our six-year graduation targets each year's cohort, from 2013 through 2017.

Figures 1 through 3: These are graphic comparisons of the department's six-year graduation percentages between 2007 and 2010 with all colleges (Figure 1); between the department's annual and the CAS' annual averages (Figure 2); and between other social science departments within CAS (Figure 3).

Figures 4 through 6: These are comparisons of the department's actual four-year actual graduation percentages between 2009 and 2012 with all colleges (Figure 4); the department's annual and the CAS annual averages (Figure 5); and the averages of other social science departments within CAS (Figure 6).

So given past performance, and comparisons with other departments and with ISU's colleges, we plan to graduate at least 50% of each cohort over the next several years.

Department Completion, Action Steps² to Six-year Completion (with dates & person(s) responsible):

Continue to refine our advisement survey and administer it to a representative sample of our juniors and seniors each Spring semester. (Dr. Bergbower, Dr. Chambers, Dr. Van Sickel and others)

Implement curriculum changes (discussed above) to remove potential roadblocks to graduation. (Chair and faculty)

Revise the department's Web site and update it with current information concerning the curricula of our two undergraduate, and one graduate, program. (Chair)

Create and maintain a Blackboard site, populated with faculty and all majors and minors, to simplify and streamline communication with all students. (Chair and faculty)

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

Benchmarks
(by latest department)

Fall 2010 Cohort:
32.14% (4 year); 50%
(6 year)

Fall 2011 Cohort:
43.59% (4 year); not
yet recorded, target
50% (6 year)

Fall 2012 target & actual: 24.32% (4 year); not yet recorded, target 50% (6 year)
--

Fall 2013 target:
Actual not yet
recorded; target 50%
(6 year)

Fall 2014 target:
Actual not yet
recorded; target 50% (6
year)

Fall 2015 target:
Actual not yet recorded;
target 50% (6 year)

Other Persistence to Completion related benchmarks of focal interest to department

We also intend to take the results of our annual Spring survey into consideration as a guide for future actions.

Other Goal(s), Action Steps, and Benchmarks of focal interest to department:

Discuss the possibility of proposing a five-year degree plan, BA/BS with MPA.

Poll students—is there an interest in reviving student clubs associated with our academic discipline?

Discuss closer pedagogical cooperation with Crim.

¹ Plan updates are due to your Dean by Nov. 4 as informed by your 2015-16 End-of-Year Report that is due to your Dean by Oct. 3.

¹ **Action Steps Defined:** The specific activities/actions taken to realize progress toward the goal. Such action steps should include not only student support type activities/actions but also student learning enhancement focused activities/actions.