

2016-17 Department Student Success Plan Assessment Report

Political Science

Please answer the following questions in two pages and submit to your Dean by October 2. Your Dean will offer you feedback by Oct. 16 and advance final version¹ to Academic Affairs by October 20. This report will inform your 2017-18 Student Success Plan update that will be due to your Dean by Nov. 3. Previous report and plans can be found at this website: <http://irt2.indstate.edu/cms7/sp16/index.cfm/departments-plans/>.

Person Primarily Responsible for Preparing this Report: Stan Buchanan

1. Specific accomplishments/achievements this past year:

- a. Reduced DFD_r rates in PSCI 340, our required methods course, by changing the course designation from 245 and requiring junior status for enrollment (27.5%-18.7%).
- b. Advisers worked with college graduation specialists and students, auditing transcripts, to insure that our seniors were not short of the number of course credits for graduation.
- c. Administered an advisement survey to our majors in Spring to identify strengths and weaknesses of our advisement process.
- d. Took steps to adjust Political Science learning community. We plan to enroll second and third year students, with some experience in political science and legal studies courses, in PSCI 107. The purpose of this is to help channel younger students' away from the kind of unfiltered comments expressed during Fall, 2106, especially during the election campaign.

2. Objective/Actions Not Achieved :

- a. Reduce DFD_r rates in 400 level courses. Course changes still on the table.
- b. In conjunction with CGPS, begin to develop a five-year BA/MPA program.
- c. Work on developing a mentoring / tutoring system, involving new and upper division students.
- d. Apply the results of our annual advisement survey to our advisement process.

3. Attention areas going forward as informed by 2016-17 retention, completion, course completion ratio, credit hour productivity, and D/F/drop rate data provided as well as other Blue Report or departmental data.

I. Retention and graduation rates:

- a. **Retention rates:** The average department four-year retention rate of first year freshman is about 71%. However, the rate has dropped from a high of 81% for the 2013 to below 70% the last three years recorded—2014 through 2016. Transfer retention rates are much higher, averaging around 87%, and 100% the last two years recorded. But the transfer cohort is much smaller than the first-time freshman group.
- b. **Graduation rates:** The tale here is similar to that of retention rates. While 4-year (33%) and 6-year (49%) freshman graduation rates are both below 50%, transfer rates (64% and 68%, respectively) of students who have transferred in are much higher.
- c. **Conclusion:** Students transferring in to the university may be more strongly motivated, or they are more likely to be possessed of the wherewithal, than first-time freshmen, to complete their majors and finish their degrees. Continue to identify at-risk, lower division political science students through advisement and in-class evaluation. Continue to adjust advisement and curriculum accordingly.
- d. **Proposals:** To help keep graduation and retention rates constant, or to help them rise, we plan to continue with inventories of those students in the final phases of their programs; and to make any changes in curriculum and in advisement procedures suggested by our survey of graduating seniors. In regard to curriculum changes, we are in the preliminary stages of proposing a pre-law

¹ Dean will request a refinement to the report if it is not suitably addressing the questions. Report will be shared with Trustees.

minor, which we think will link students currently in the pre-law program more closely to our department through courses offered by, and advisement by the faculty of, our Legal Studies major.

II. Course completion:

- a. **Findings:** We compared course completion rates of the department over the last biennium (2015-16 and 2016-17) with those of CAS over the same two academic years. The only significant difference was between divisions. Upper division students were on average (89%) more likely to complete their courses than lower division students (84% for CAS and 85% for the department). The department's rate's difference from 2015-16 to 2016-17 was slightly higher for lower division courses than that of the college; and slightly lower for upper division courses. But in sum, we found no statistically significant differences either between the academic years by unit (CAS or department); or in comparing the units. The only significant difference was between divisions.
- b. **Conclusion:** Again, lower division students appear to be more at risk than those who have made it to junior status. Advisement and curriculum should be adjusted accordingly.

III. Student average credit hours earned:

- a. **Findings:** We find that average credit hours earned per student per Fall semester over the last two Fall semesters recorded (2015 and 2016) rose for the department from 12.69 credit hours per semester to 13.1 credit hours. By comparison, there was also a slight rise in CAS credit hours per student from 12.42 to 12.43 per semester. But political science students, on average, earned more credits per semester than the average student in CAS.
- b. **Conclusion:** Students earning 13 credits per semester over four years won't qualify to graduate in that time, falling about 16 credits short after four years of study. But while this is an area of concern, it appears that the department is somewhat ahead, on average, of other departments in the college in striving to hit the four-year degree for our students.

IV. Student D, F and drop rates, 2015-16 to 2016-17:

- a. **Findings, DFDr rates:** We find that the department's student DFDr rates were lower in both semesters of 2016-17 than they were in the corresponding semesters of 2015-16. While more than 22% of our students were DFDr in Fall, 2015, that rate slipped to below 18% for both Spring semesters records. However, our rates across all four semesters were still higher than average DFDr rates over all courses for those semesters.
- b. **Findings, drop rates:** Comparing drop rates only, our numbers were also higher than the averages across campus, over the four semesters recorded.
- c. **Conclusion:** We need to continue working within our curriculum to find problem areas, and fix them. We've done this recently by elevating our methods course from a lower to an upper division course. We plan to review our curriculum, especially our 400-level courses, for other such—possible—fixes.