

2017-18 Department Student Success Plan Update

Political Science

Please complete this plan update and submit to your Dean by November 3. Your Dean will offer you feedback by November 17 and advance final version¹ to Academic Affairs by November 21. 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. Department goals to facilitate persistence to degree (include action steps, dates, and person(s) responsible underneath each goal):

- a. Continue to monitor DF/W rates in our undergraduate methods course, PSCI 340. This course was moved from a lower to an upper division designation, because its predecessor, PSCI 245, had become a stumbling block for many of our students. Records from last year indicate that the change has already made a difference, and the the DF/W rates from PSCI 245 to PSCI 340 have fallen. Post grade submission, Dr. Bergbower, December, 2017).
- b. Continue our annual survey graduating seniors to identify any problems with curriculum or advisement that need to be discussed by the faculty, and possibly changed. (See our latest findings below, Table 4.) April, 2018, Dr. Bergbower, Dr. Buchanan.
- c. Work with college on completing degree audits to insure that students who are nearing the end of their programs complete them on time and within the bounds of our four-year plan. Spring semester, Drs. Bergbower, Chambers, and Van Sickel.
- d. Work with the college toward energizing the pre-law program by identifying the department as the “home” for students in the pre-law program. By the end of AY 2017-18, Dr. Van Sickel, Dr. Buchanan, Prof. Bolk.
- e. Resurrect the pre-law society for undergraduates. By the end of AY 2017-18. Dr. Van Sickel, Prof. Bolk, Dr. Buchanan

2. Department goals to enhance student performance and/or learning outcome achievement² (include action steps, dates, and person(s) responsible for each goal):

- a. The curriculum changes underwritten by the faculty in AY 2015-16 are, as of Fall, 2017, now in place. We believe the changes will provide students a more focused environment, with a major consequence of improving learning—along with improving grades. All undergraduate faculty, AY 2017-18, Fall and Spring.
- b. We plan to re-tool the minor public administration program by altering the curriculum of the PA minor; and by introducing a curriculum that will take students through a BA/BS, and into and finishing an MPA, in five years. This will be a multi-year process, but we believe it has the potential to boost undergraduate interest in the PA minor, and increase the number of resident students involved in our MPA program. Dr. Myers and Dr. Buchanan, proposals by the end of Spring, 2018.
- c. At least three of our faculty have, and will continue, to employ students as research assistants. Students are engaged in gathering and analysis of data, as well as some writing. This process will continue. Dr. Myers, Dr. Chambers, Dr. Bergbower, through AY 2017-18.
- d. Continue to promote internships via courses in both political science and our legal studies programs. Dr. Bergbower, Dr. Chambers and Prof. Bolk, AY 2017-18.

Table 1: Benchmark Metrics

Metric	2016-17 FTFT-BDS Cohort Actual	2017-18 Target	3 Year Target (2019-20)
Freshmen Retention ³ (by <i>latest department</i>)	72.92%	75%	76%
4-Year Grad Rate (by <i>latest department</i>)	38.1%	40%	42%
	Source data for 2016-17 actual	2017-18 Target	3 Year Target (2019-20)
Other Metric #1 ⁴			
Other Metric #2			

Discussion of metrics: Most measures of programmatic and departmental achievements indicate that the political science department is at or near the numbers adopted in our plan several years ago. In addition to those above. Please note that our plan addresses only six-year graduation rates, while the table, above, asks for four-year graduation rates.

We would also like to note that, other than retention and graduation rates, our course completion rates from AY 2015-16 to AY 2016-17, both for upper- and for lower-division students, rose, and compare favorably with those of other departments in the college. Tables 2 and 3 below compare completion rates for lower division students and upper division students, respectively, over the course of those two academic years. In each case, columns are sorted by the difference from 2015-16 to 2016-17.

Finally, we would like to present (Table 4) findings of our own, from our survey of junior and senior political science and legal studies students and administered in late Spring, 2017. The survey is primarily a tool for use to identify any problems students may have with our advisement process. But it also yielded important results in terms of the ability of students to navigate their academic careers.

In brief, in terms of advisement, most of the respondents meet with their advisers at least once, and prefer to consult their advisers before making any changes in their academic programs. And most respondents believe that they are on track to graduate, and do understand the requirements of their degree programs. These results are, I believe, very positive and speak well of our academic advisers.

Students were also asked to rank those obstacles that have the most and then the least effects on students' ability to finish on time. From our viewpoint, these results were also positive, since students seem to view variables outside the department as major roadblocks to on-time graduation. Three of the top four obstacles were connected, more or less, with financial resources (financial aid, personal finances, and jobs) and the fourth had to do with personal problems.

On the other hand, the respondents seemed to see few problems with the department's advisement system, and didn't view the curriculum as a major impediment to completing their degrees.

We do intend to continue this survey next year, and use its results to inform out student success activities.

Table 2: 2016 and 2017 CAS lower division course completion ratios, by department

Department	2015-2016	2016-2017	Difference
Languages, Literature, and Linguistics	85.78%	91.37%	5.59%
Communication	91.26%	95.64%	4.38%
Political Science	87.38%	89.64%	2.26%
Economics	81.47%	83.59%	2.12%
Biology	93.09%	93.37%	0.28%
Earth & Environmental Sys	87.65%	87.62%	-0.03%
English	86.16%	86.05%	-0.11%
Chemistry & Physics	89.37%	88.98%	-0.39%
Science Education	98.11%	97.46%	-0.65%
Music	92.55%	91.52%	-1.03%
Theatre	98.51%	97.39%	-1.12%
Criminology & Criminal Justice	89.73%	88.57%	-1.16%
History	82.77%	81.28%	-1.49%
Art & Design	96.79%	94.81%	-1.98%
Psychology	92.67%	90.09%	-2.58%
Math Computer Science	95.49%	92.32%	-3.17%
Average			0.06%
CAS	89.54%	89.42%	-0.12%

**Table 3: 2016 and 2017 CAS upper division
course completion ratios, by department**

Department	2015-2016	2016-2017	Difference
Languages, Literature and Linguistics	85.78%	91.37%	5.59%
Communication	91.26%	95.64%	4.38%
Political Science	87.38%	89.64%	2.26%
Economics	81.47%	83.59%	2.12%
Biology	93.09%	93.37%	0.28%
Earth & Environmental Sys	87.65%	87.62%	-0.03%
English	86.16%	86.05%	-0.11%
Chemistry & Physics	89.37%	88.98%	-0.39%
Science Education	98.11%	97.46%	-0.65%
Music	92.55%	91.52%	-1.03%
Theatre	98.51%	97.39%	-1.12%
Criminology & Criminal Justice	89.73%	88.57%	-1.16%
History	82.77%	81.28%	-1.49%
Art & Design	96.79%	94.81%	-1.98%
Psychology	92.67%	90.09%	-2.58%
Math Computer Science ¹	95.49%	92.32%	-3.17%
Average			0.06%
CAS	89.54%	89.42%	-0.12%

Table 4: Results of Spring, 2017, survey of junior and senior political science and legal studies students (N=43)

The survey was administered by faculty online and respondents answered anonymously. Of those answering, 58% were seniors; 60% were female; and 9% were international students.

Q: What obstacles most affected respondents most during their college careers? Respondents were presented with 13 categories, and then ranked items on a scale of one through four. According to the results, the most difficult obstacles to overcome were, in order:

1. Problems with personal finances (greatest effect)
2. Problems with financial aid
3. Personal issues
4. Time problems, complicated by having to work off campus

Q: The obstacles that had the least effect on the ability of our students to navigate their academic careers were, in order:

1. Difficulty in navigating their major curricula (least effect)
2. Poor academic advising
3. The difficulty of courses in students' academic minors
4. Changing majors at least once, which affected the students' ability to finish on time

Q: Respondents were asked whether they were, based on their expectations, on track to graduate on time.

Yes = 86%

No = 14%

Q: Percent of the respondents who agree or who strongly agree that they prefer to meet with their adviser before making course scheduling decisions: 79%

Q: Percent of the respondents who met with their advisers at least once during each semester: 74%

Percent of respondents who met with their advisers more than four times during each semester: 14%.

Q: Percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree that each step of their academic programs was made jointly with their advisers: 72%.

Q: Percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree that they understand the requirements of their degree programs: 97%.

Q: Percent of respondents who agree or strongly agree that academic advisement in the department was helpful overall: 89%.

Comments: Two of the comments left in text (most students did not leave comments) urged the department to develop more support for students planning to enter the legal field.

