

2015-2016 Institutional Effectiveness Report

Name of Program/Department: Department of Political Science and Geography

Year: **2015-2016**

Name of Preparer: Dr. Natalie P. Johnson

Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Department of Political Science and Geography is to provide instruction that enables all students to complete, as part of their general education requirement, an introductory-level course in political science that includes material dealing with the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers. Students may earn a major, minor, or collateral in political science. The program offers its majors a broad understanding of political phenomena, including political institutions, political processes, political behavior, political thought patterns, and contemporary political issues. The course of study for the major prescribes a set of core courses in the discipline's traditional sub-fields of American government, comparative politics, international relations, political philosophy, and political methodology. Students elect the remainder of their primary work from a range of course offerings pertaining to foreign and /or domestic American government and politics. The flexibility of the curriculum permits students to pursue a program of courses tailored to their individual interests and career goals. Graduates with a major in political science receive the broad training and develop the general competence in the discipline required to equip them for successful careers in journalism, politics, the military, public service and quasi-public agencies, commerce and industry, teaching, and other occupations for which preparation in the field is desirable, or to undertake postgraduate professional study in political science, public administration, or related areas, such as law.

Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)

1. Political Science graduates will understand political phenomena and demonstrate proficiency in the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers.
2. Political Science students will be able to critically analyze written material and demonstrate a proficiency in oral communication.
3. The Political Science Department will provide opportunities for students to connect classroom instruction with real world experience through internships, study abroad programs, and guest speakers.
4. The Political Science Department will encourage students to create their own path of study by providing flexibility in the curriculum.

Executive Summary of Report

The Institutional Effectiveness report details the student learning outcomes and assessment measures used in the 2015 -2016 year. The report illustrates that the department did not meet the target on any of the student learning outcomes. Our outcomes include having students attain 60% or higher on the department's internal examination, which is a 50 question multiple choice examination development by program faculty. This examination covers the core classes in political science (POL 101, 103 295 and 395). Fifty-seven percent (57%) of students achieved 60% or higher on the examination. This, therefore, represents a main action item for the 2016-2017 academic year. The faculty will meet in the Fall of 2016 to devise a new internal examination or alternative assessment measure to more accurately assess what the students know, think and are able to do.

A second student learning outcome was that students should be able to interpret statistical analysis, as measured in the POL 295 final examination. The benchmark for this was also that students will achieve C or higher on the final examination. This benchmark was not achieved as only 58% of students attained this score. In 2016 and 2017 we will utilize different aspects of the graded material in POL 295 to better assess what students know, think and do.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

1. SLO 1.0: Political Science Students, in POL 101 and 103 on average, will perform at the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%] when DESCRIBING and EXPLAINING content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers.

2. SLO 2.0: Political Science Students in POL 295 will EVALUATE and INTERPRET statistical output and ANALYSIS on average, the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%]

Assessment Methods

SLO 1.0: Political Science Students, in POL 101 and 103 on average, will perform at the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%] when DESCRIBING and EXPLAINING content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers as measured by the FMU Political Science examination. This examination was developed by program faculty based on the core classes (POL 101, POL 103, POL 295 and POL 395). The examination consists of 50 multiple choice questions.

SLO 2.0: Seventy Percent (70%) of Political Science Students in POL 295 will EVALUATE and INTERPRET statistical output and ANALYSIS at the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%] by achieving the grade of C or higher on the POL 295 final examination, which explicitly tests the fundamental statistical analysis concepts of levels of measurement, using central tendency and association, as well as multivariate regression tests of causality.

Assessment Results

SLO 1.0: Political Science Students, in POL 101 and 103 on average, performed at the 57% level [benchmark = 60%] when DESCRIBING and EXPLAINING content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers as measured by the FMU Political Science examination. Since our goal was 70%, this target was not achieved.

SLO 2.0: Fifty-eight Percent (58%) of Political Science Students in POL 295 EVALUATED and INTERPRETED statistical output and ANALYSIS at the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%] by achieving the grade of C or higher on the POL 295 final examination. Since our goal was 70%, this target was not achieved.

Action Items

To address concerns identified in the evaluation of data from the 2015-2016 academic year, the Department developed the following action plan to be implemented during the 2016-2017 academic year.

SLO 1.0: Political Science Students will perform at the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%] when describing and explaining content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers.

Based on data collected during the 2015-2016 academic year using a FMU Political Science examination, FMU Political Science majors, on average, performed at the 57% level. Since our benchmark was 60%, this target was not achieved. Based on this finding, the department made changes in its curricula approach. First, the instructional approach will be modified to include direct treatment of the US Constitution and principles of federalism in all introductory political science courses (i.e., POL 101 and POL 103), and second, the creation of two questions asked on the first exam in all POL 101 and POL 103 sections to assess student understanding. In addition to these pedagogical changes, the Department of Political Science and Geography has created a new assessment method for assessing the extent to which students can describe and explain content areas in political science, specifically explaining and describing the United States Constitution and Federalist Papers. The department, through discussion and collaboration, reached the conclusion that relying on an examination to determine this competency was restrictive and did not provide an opportunity to fully understand what students knew, how they thought, or what they could do. The Department will pilot test this new approach during fall 2016 and deploy it fully in spring 2017.

2. SLO 2.0: Political Science Students will perform at the 70% level or above [benchmark = 60%] when evaluating and interpreting statistical output and analysis.

Based on data collected during the 2015-2016 academic year using a FMU Political Science examination, FMU Political Science majors, on average, performed at the 58% level. Since our benchmark was 60%, this target was not achieved. Based on this finding, the department made changes in its curricula approach. First, the instructional approach was modified by a complete re-drafting of the political science research methods (POL 295) syllabus to include 1. A new political analysis textbook for POL 295 that places a greater emphasis on statistical analysis, 2. The creation of four new problem sets as homework for the course that treat these concepts more directly, prior to the exam, and 3. The addition of days spent on statistical analysis training to the course syllabus. The department will continue to use the same benchmark exam question from the 2015-2016 year to determine whether the above curriculum changes improved student learning in this area.