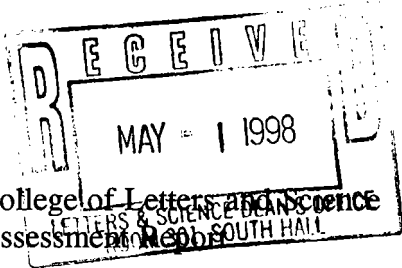


College of Letters and Science
 Assessment Reports
 LETTERS & SCIENCE DEPARTMENT
 SOUTH HALL



(Due back to your Academic Associate Dean by May 1, 1998)

Department of Political Science

Abstract

The primary focus of our assessment efforts has been surveys of graduating seniors (done by e-mail), undergraduate alumni of the Class of 1994, and Ph.D. alumni of the last 20 years. The problems of obtaining appropriate mailing lists and the like have delayed the completion of these efforts (all are still in the field, and analysis is just now beginning). In order to assure appropriate feedback, primary responsibility for the assessment activities have been assigned to our Undergraduate Program and Graduate Program committees. One of the primary tasks of these two committees next year will be to determine what, if any, changes should be made in light of the survey results.

Assessment Tools Used

Direct Indicators

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
National Exams	_____	_____
Local Exams	_____	_____
Capstone Course(s)	_____	_____
Embedded Testing	_____	_____
Student Portfolios	_____	_____
Review theses & dissertations	_____	_____
Performance Evaluations	_____	_____
Pre and Post Testing	_____	_____

Indirect Indicators

	Undergraduate Major	Graduate Program
Student Surveys	_____	_____
Exit Interviews/Surveys	X	_____
Alumni Surveys	X	X ^a
Employer Surveys	_____	_____
External Reviews	_____	_____

^aWe have also requested Ph.D. alumni to provide us with copies of their current curriculum vitas.

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

Assessment Activities

Narrative Report

As part of assessment activities during the 1997-98 academic year, the Department of Political Science has drafted and sent out surveys to three different student populations. The surveys are presently in the field. Generally, all three surveys are designed so that the respondents will be able to fill them out rather quickly (approximately 10 minutes or so) with the hope that that will increase the response rate. What follows is a description of the three target groups and a quick summary of the survey instrument for each.

1. Graduate Students -- Drawing from the list of active names with US addresses on the database of the Alumni Records Department, we have contacted former graduate students who earned a Ph.D. in political science between the years of 1978 and 1998. A total of 161 names were identified. In our mailing we sent each respondent three items: a letter introducing the evaluation process, a 5-item open-ended questionnaire, and a postage paid reply envelope. The questionnaire asked for feedback on how well the respondent thought our program prepared them in their substantive area(s) of specialization, research methodology, and teaching. We also asked about how people felt about the mentoring and advising provided by the Department, as well as concluding with a question asking for any additional comments. We requested that the respondents complete the questionnaire and return it along with a current copy of their CV or resume.

2. Past Undergraduates - Again, drawing on the database at Alumni Records for graduates with active US addresses, we have also sent surveys to former students who were political science majors in the Class of 1994. In this group, surveys have gone out to 375 people. (This includes students who may have double-majored, one of their majors being in political science.) We sent each person three items: a letter introducing the evaluation process, a survey with 20 closed-ended and 5 open-ended questions, and a postage paid reply envelope. The closed-ended questions asked for feedback in four areas: majoring in

political science; knowledge of political science topics, thinking skills, and political activity; job preparation; graduate or professional school preparation. In the open-ended questions we asked the respondents about what presently they are doing (rather than having them send in a CV or resume), the training from their major that they find useful, training from the Department that they wish they would have had, and general recommendations for improving the undergraduate program.

3. Current Undergraduates – With the assistance of DoIT's Production Services Department we have also sent out an e-mail survey to current undergraduate political science majors who expect to graduate in 1998. This survey went out to 144 students and paralleled the format of the survey to the members of the Class of 1994. However, rather than inquiring about job and graduate/professional school preparation, in our list of 18 closed-ended questions we included a battery that asked what students thought about the advising they received from faculty, staff, and graduate student TA's in the department. The 5 open-ended questions asked students about whether or not they would major in political science if they had it to do all over again, what they would recommend to improve the program for future majors, additional resources they wished the department had available, and suggestions about the department's major requirements, as well as a general question at the end for any additional comments. In order to encourage the students to respond freely without fear of reprisal, the survey went out with an explanation that before presenting any results to the Department's faculty, the graduate student who is the project assistant on the assessment would be compiling the responses into one report which would make it impossible to identify the student respondents. In fact, the short explanation that introduced the survey came directly from the project assistant without mentioning any faculty names in the Department. Students were asked to reply directly to the graduate student assistant either by e-mail or campus mail.

To date, we have begun receiving replies from the e-mail survey of the current undergraduates. Those results have not been analyzed in a systematic way, but do appear to reflect well on the department in addition to providing some concrete suggestions for improvement. Because the surveys to the former graduate students and the members of the Class of 1994 have recently gone out, we have yet to receive any replies from either of those groups..