

# **Assessment Plan for Department of Political Science Spring 2006**

## **Undergraduate Program**

### **Goals**

Political Science is a core liberal arts major that especially appeals to students who are interested in pursuing careers in government service, nonprofit organizations dealing with political and/or policy interests (e.g., the environment, social welfare, business interests), teaching, and law. The curriculum's purpose is to develop basic analytical skills relevant to governmental affairs, international relations, and public policy. The goals of the major are:

- 1) Students will develop a broad range of knowledge and skills for political analysis. To achieve that goal, the curriculum divides the field into four subfields; students are required to take at least one course in each subfield. The subfields are: political theory and methodology; American government and politics; comparative government and politics; and international relations.
- 2) Students will also develop skills in critical and analytic thinking to enable them to understand the complexity of the issues raised in political life. To enable them to do this, the curriculum requires that they develop the following abilities: be able to frame questions of government and politics; be able to identify and utilize information sources relevant to formulating answers to these questions; be able to critically evaluate the information in support of and in opposition to these answers; and to be able to understand the inherent uncertainty of the answers to most issues related to government and political life.

### **Method of Assessment**

The nature of the goals above make it difficult to assess them using traditional tests. Even the use of a capstone course (something that would be difficult to implement given the large number of majors) would not be entirely satisfactory. Performance in such courses would be a partial snapshot of student skills; we think that a full appreciation of the skills gained from an undergraduate must include information from our graduates some time after graduation. In addition, the Department decided to conduct an annual survey of graduating seniors, to provide a snapshot of undergraduate assessment at the time of graduation.

The web-based survey was designed by the undergraduate advisor and will be revised every year in consultation with the Undergraduate Committee. The IT administrator in the department has found a survey tool on the web. This free tool controls access to the survey so that students can only take it once; it also automatically compiles closed-ended responses and also records open ended comments. The survey instrument used last year is appended to this plan.

In addition, the Undergraduate Committee in the department analyzed enrollment data available through the Query Library to get an idea of the number of majors served by the department. The department will be using more queries to assess class sizes, course access, and faculty teaching loads. This will provide a way to assess these dimensions of the undergraduate curriculum.

### **Feedback Mechanism**

The Undergraduate Program Committee (UPC) will serve as the key feedback mechanism. Based on the analysis of survey results and query data, the UPC will determine what, if any, adjustments the department might want to make to the undergraduate program for majors in political science. In addition, the UPC will provide a short narrative report describing the results of the survey(s) and data analysis.

## **Graduate Program**

### **Goals**

The goals of the Graduate Program can be simply described as training first-rate scholars and teachers of political science. This involves immersing our students in the core literatures of the discipline, training them in the methods of research used by political scientists, mentoring them in the initial research experience, and, to the degree possible within the constraints imposed by university employment policies, providing them with opportunities to teach in a supervised setting.

### **Method of Assessment**

Political science is one of the disciplines which is the subject of periodic rankings of departments and graduate programs. These rankings are primarily reputational (i.e., based on the department's reputation among scholars in the discipline). For many years, the graduate program has stood among the top ten departments in terms of effectiveness based on these rankings. In recent years, however, the department rankings have slipped out of the top ten. This development has raised some concerns among the faculty with respect to the graduate program.

In order to identify causes for this slippage and also to define courses of action to improve the department's standing, the department decided to undertake an external review this past fall (fall 2005). This review was conducted by a committee headed by Prof. Gary Jacobson of the University of California, San Diego and addressed, among other items, the issue of the graduate program.

### **Feedback Mechanism**

The chair of the department, in consultation with the faculty, will identify an appropriate response to the findings of the External Review.

## **Assessment Report for the Political Science Department May 2006**

The Political Science department has recently completed two assessments. An assessment of the undergraduate program was conducted during the 2004-2005 Academic Year by the Undergraduate Committee in the department. In addition, an external review was conducted this past fall (fall 2005). The goal of both assessments was to examine the quality of the undergraduate and graduate programs. We will discuss the reasons for the assessments, the results, and then identify some future directions for assessment.

### **Motivations for Assessment:**

The undergraduate program in political science has seen an explosive growth over the past decade and, especially, over the past five years. Currently at around 1000 majors, the political science undergraduate major is one of the largest in the college. Given the size of the major, the Undergraduate Committee was interested in the quality of the undergraduate experience for our majors. The assessment done by the Undergraduate Committee looked at enrollment data and also drew from a web survey of graduating seniors (spring 2005) to assess the quality of the undergraduate experience.

The quality of the graduate program has also been of concern, especially the nature of graduate students currently being attracted to the program. This was one of the areas addressed by the External Review.

Both reports are attached. The major findings of both reports are noted below.

### *Undergraduate Program:*

- Despite serving a large number of undergraduates with a relatively small number of faculty, the quality of teaching in the department is quite good. Undergraduates report that good teaching is one of the major features attracting them to the major.
- More resources need to be devoted to offering small enrollment courses (20-25 students) in order to allow more majors (not just honors students) to have the advantages of a small course. We would increase the number of topics seminars and undergraduate proseminars (Poli Sci 401 and Poli Sci 695, respectively) to achieve this goal. The lack of a small course experience was the most common complaint of graduating seniors.
- The department would have to gain more faculty in order to offer more courses to service the large number of majors. Course access was a major complaint from graduating seniors; some reported being unable to register for their first choice of courses even in their final year.
- We will examine requirements for entrance to the major. The Undergraduate Committee considered this proposal, but deferred a decision until further consideration by the entire department; the External Review recommended that the size of the undergraduate major

be reduced. The review suggested that both entrance requirements as well as requirements for the major be examined with this goal in mind.

### *Graduate Program*

- Recruitment of graduate students is a problem due to funding packages that are not competitive with other programs of Wisconsin's stature. More resources are required to help in this area.
- Increased communication about the ongoing research areas of faculty and how that research is integrated into the graduate program more generally is needed.
- The department needs to increase opportunities for graduate students to develop their own research.
- The External Review suggested adding two positions along with the Associate Chair, to include a Director of Graduate Studies and a placement director. This would allow the Associate Chair to focus on organizing and developing opportunities for graduate students to develop their intellectual interests, the Director of Graduate Studies to focus on graduate student professional development (e.g., conferences, grant opportunities), and the placement director to focus on helping our graduate students focus on being aware of, and preparing for, placement on the job market.

### **Response to the assessments:**

In response to these assessments, the Department has moved to:

- Increase the number of faculty; there has been a heavy recruiting effort this year.
- Enhance the undergraduate program by creating a Director of Undergraduate Program position; this position would absorb some of the administrative tasks of the Associate Chair (specifically, teaching assistant and lecturer recruitment, placement, and evaluation) to ease some of the load on that position. This will free up more of the Associate Chair's time and enable that person to devote more time to developing opportunities for graduate students and for placement activities.
- Reduce the size of sections handled by graduate teaching assistants, as well as increasing their appointments for teaching, to improve the funding situation.
- Revised the department web site to provide more information about faculty research and ongoing intellectual/academic activities, e.g., research groups, events, course information.

In addition, the Department has moved to incorporate some assessment activities in the near future. Planned actions include:

- Plan to review the undergraduate major requirements in the next year.
- Institute an ongoing survey of graduating seniors to provide a regular feedback mechanism. In addition, conducting "exit surveys" of graduating seniors is being considered to obtain a more detailed view of the undergraduate experience.
- Continue to review and revise the graduate curriculum in light of the External Review. The Department has already established a committee to examine and possibly implement changes in light of the review. The committee members are: Professors Richard Boyd, John Coleman, Kathy Cramer Walsh, and Melanie Manion.

**Assessment Tools Used (Spring 2006)**

**Direct Indicators:**

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

**Indirect Indicators:**

	<b>Undergraduate Major</b>	<b>Graduate Program</b>
Student Surveys	__X__	_____
Exit Interviews/Surveys	__X__	__X__
Alumni Surveys	__X__	__X__
Employer Surveys	_____	_____
External Reviews	__X__	__X__

In addition, the department plans to make use of queries available through the Query Library as an ongoing assessment tool.

December 14, 2005

TO: Dean Charles Halaby, Social Sciences, University of Wisconsin, Madison  
FROM: Gary Jacobson, Valerie Bunce, and Ronald Rogowski  
CC: Graham Wilson, Chair, Political Science

SUBJECT: Report on the University of Wisconsin's Political Science Department

The principal charge of our committee was to advise you and the University of Wisconsin's Political Science Department and about how it might regain its ranking among the top 10 departments in the country. We thus focus on issues that we believe directly affect departmental rankings rather than offering, as outside review committees often do, a comprehensive review of the department; we do not dwell on some of the clear virtues of the department—for example, its outstanding undergraduate teaching, collegiality, and intellectual diversity—except as they affect, directly or indirectly, its external reputation.

#### Departmental Strengths and Identity Politics

The departmental self-study did an excellent job of identifying departmental deficits—for example, the loss of some of the most visible members of the department, the focus of the department on scholars who produce books, rather than articles in major political science journals. Both deficiencies were emphasized in a similar evaluation eight years ago (in 1997), along with the danger that the discipline of political science had in important respects “passed the Department by,” giving primacy to fields and techniques underrepresented at Madison; and all of those deficits have continued to contribute in significant ways to a decline in the department's national ranking.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, the self-study celebrates the department's methodological diversity and collegiality—claims that are highlighted as well on its webpage with reference to pluralism as both a strength and the core of its intellectual identity. However, what was strikingly absent from both departmental documents and our two-day discussion with departmental members was a willingness and capacity of departmental members to identify *the* issues that define their research, teaching and discussions with one another and that identify, as a result, the core areas of departmental *excellence*. Put simply: we found few answers to the questions of what distinguishes this department from others;

---

<sup>1</sup> We suspect that the two phenomena – few publications in major political science journals and the field's having “passed the Department by” – are related, in the sense that the kind of research questions many comparativists at Wisconsin address, or the policy analysis and advocacy that most joint appointees with LaFollette do so well, tends no longer to appear in mainstream political science journals.

why graduate students should select Madison over alternatives; and why ABDs and scholars further along in their careers at other institutions should welcome an opportunity to join the Political Science Department at the University of Wisconsin. Moreover, this failure to define issues of creativity and excellence also translated into notable silences, when we asked what specific subfields would do with expanded opportunities to hire.

“Pluralism” is a welcome commitment, of course, but it is too amorphous to function as a foundation for a department’s identity; as the basis for identifying clusters of issues that produce exciting courses, discussions and research; or as the aspect of departmental life that distinguishes it from departments elsewhere in the country. Moreover, pluralism speaks to process, not to intellectual agendas, aside from an implied tolerance for diverse topics, places, and methods of research. A reputation for methodological pluralism will by itself have no effect one way or the other on national rankings; what matters is the quality and impact of the research that the methods produce. Finally, the pluralist character of the department is perhaps not as distinctive as many members of the department assume, and it may be a costly value around which to build departmental identity. Pluralism can function as a vague, “catch-all” commitment that helps the department avoid tough discussions about what it does and does not do well and the kinds of issues that the department needs to define and confront.

When scanning the CVs of the department and when talking with its members, we did identify some possible areas that the department could define as its distinctive strengths—for example, citizenship, decentralization/federalism, culture and politics, law and politics, gender and politics, humanitarianism, the blurred boundary between comparative and international politics, and democracy and its promotion and challenges. However, a two-day visit cannot substitute for what is needed: a prolonged and often difficult discussion (especially in the short term) that seeks to identify dynamic areas of research and training in the department. This is a discussion that must ignore existing definitions of “what has been taught and, therefore, must be taught;” that needs to take place across subfields, as well as within them; that should confront whether historic strengths can and should continue (and in the forms of the past); and that needs to focus on locating not just the common sets of questions that define the department’s research agenda, but also the *exciting* areas of potential convergence for the future. For this discussion to work well, the department will have to take some chances. We do not argue for being exclusionary or nasty, but we do question the current preoccupation with being nice to the point of avoiding all topics that might ruffle some feathers. We also argue for an emphasis on creative thinking and areas of intellectual energy, rather than a discussion that has the overriding purpose of generating a wide consensus—with the latter too easily producing generalities.

This process of identifying areas of strength will lead, necessarily, to discussions about how to augment these strengths—through research, teaching portfolios, hiring, speakers’ series, workshops and conferences. While some of these areas of activity will depend upon new resources or different use of existing resources, some can occur simply by breaking with the assumptions that: 1) intellectual activity should be contained within subfields; 2) graduate-level courses should be taught by single individuals, and; 3) there

are certain core courses that must be taught in a graduate program. To provide one example: if several members of the department are excited by a topic, but their teaching responsibilities do not allow new courses, then change the responsibilities!

### Recruitment and Retention of Faculty

Departmental rankings are largely determined by two related qualities: the professional achievements and status of the faculty, and the professional achievements and status of the graduate students it trains (though how these are measured is, of course, subject to debate). The first is by far the more important and strongly affects the second. The professional reputation of the faculty depends on the extent to which its individual members publish research that other political scientists recognize as significant, original, exciting, innovative, agenda-setting, and so forth, either on enduring questions that have been central to the discipline or on “hot” new questions that have come to the fore. Put another way, the greater the number of faculty who publish research that has clearly influences how other political scientists do their own research and think about scholarly issues (whether accepting or challenging their analyses), the stronger the department’s reputation. The keys to building a highly-ranked department, then, lie in recruiting and retaining researchers who already have or are able to develop strong national reputations as influential scholars and to maintain conditions that allow them to flourish.

In this regard, the Wisconsin department faces several problems, all of them ones of which its faculty are well aware. The first, and most important, is the Department’s signal weakness in areas of increasing importance to the discipline, notably formal theory and international relations. The second, already mentioned, is the loss of prominent faculty through retirements and departures. Retirements are, of course, not so much a problem as a condition and can only be anticipated, not prevented; in some cases they pose the challenge of replacing stellar scholars, but they also give a department the opportunity to reinvigorate itself and to move in promising new directions.

### New Hiring Priorities

The department’s self-study lists several priorities for future hiring, and it is currently in the process of filling 3-4 positions. The obvious need in the International Relations subfield, currently with only about 3 FTE, has appropriately received top priority. This field has evidently been understaffed for some time. We underline the importance of hiring faculty with the kind of advanced formal and quantitative skills that have become essential to participating in the development of much of the literature in this area. The best young scholars of this sort are in high demand, and the administration and department have to be prepared to assemble competitive (that is, expensive) packages to attract them to Wisconsin.

What priorities should the Department adopt when hiring new faculty beyond this year’s searches? The review committee, of course, cannot and should not answer this question. That recognized, however, we can suggest certain principles that might be



helpful. First, building on strengths is usually preferable to expanding into new, especially substantive areas—if only because an emphasis on strengths invests in existing or new networks, works against the appeal of outside offers by investing in local intellectual community, and encourages intellectual dynamism. This strategy is particularly advisable, when “gap-filling” reflects either teaching needs or “nostalgia” for past strengths (“we have always had someone doing this...”). In the committee’s view, there are a few courses that must be taught and far more courses, easily put off for the future, that are considered new and exciting. However, by emphasizing strength, we imply not redundancy, but, rather, partial and multiple overlaps (in a Venn diagram sense).

Second, if the Department is to build strength in absent or seriously depleted areas -- formal theory, political theory, international relations – it must accept the need to build community via *multiple hires* in these fields, and often at salaries that will compensate for the current dearth of “intellectual playmates” in these subfields at Wisconsin.

Third, we think that the department should hire primarily at the junior level—not just because of resource constraints, but also because junior people are recently trained and often have creative avenues of research.

Fourth, looking ahead is critical. Thus, we encourage the department to think seriously about the coming turnover in the American politics field, with a sustained discussion aimed at determining what lines of research are producing the most exciting work in that field.

Finally, recognizing that issue, we would encourage some creative thinking that, as with the case of international relations, is committed to building connections to other subfields. If the department is serious about the principle of interdisciplinarity, then it should apply the same idea across the subfields that define political science and make this aspect of “pluralism” a priority in hiring. It should not emerge as so noteworthy that, as many commented during our visit, a comparativist was hired in a political behavior/methods position—as though such a position was somehow “owned” by American politics. We think the definition of that position was a good one and should serve as a model for future hires.

In some respects the department has not kept up with developments in the discipline that have made formal, quantitative, and thematic comparative approaches increasingly prominent (a problem noted in the 1997 report as well as the recent self-evaluation). It has been trying to catch up, but some departures have represented setbacks. We stress the urgent need of the department to redouble its efforts in this direction, as they are essential to strengthening its national reputation.

#### Retentions

The department has lost a dozen faculty to other institutions over the last 10 years. No one suggested to us that any of those the department sincerely wanted to retain were

lost for want of competitive counter-offers, but if this were the case, it would be a serious problem. Staving off raids is essential to building an outstanding faculty. Insofar as the department has hired well, outside offers are to be expected. Indeed, they validate its choices, and it would be far more worrisome if none were forthcoming. It is easy to identify key younger faculty in the department who are sure to attract outside offers; the university will have to come up with the resources needed to compete for them if it is to have any prospect of improving the department's national rank.

An important part of retention is, however, keeping faculty sufficiently content that they are not responsive to invitations to apply elsewhere. We recognized that it is not easy to establish the market value of faculty when they are not actually on the market and that leveraging outside offers into raises and resource is a normal part of academic life. But the university and department would be better able to retain faculty if there were some substantial reward for continuing scholarly productivity, visibility, and excellence that does not have to be wrung out of the institution by the threat of departure. Absent such rewards, even faculty who have had their outside offers matched will anticipate problems in keeping up with their peers in the future (unless they go on the market yet again); given identical current offers, the one from the institution offering the better prospect for future raises and research support will be the more attractive. We thus recommend that the administration institute a system that evaluates and, when appropriate, rewards recent scholarly contributions on a regular basis, taking at least modest steps to anticipate the market. Such a process may even save money in the long run if it preempts expensive retention efforts. As it is now, with so little money for merit increases available, annual evaluations and similar exercises in review of tenured faculty lose their point and their capacity to signal what the department and university value.

Every department loses some retention battles. The only response that will improve the department's standing is to hire replacements as good or better than the people departing. As in all hiring, we think it essential to be patient and to refuse to "satisfice"; although searches are costly of time and energy, if the goal is improving the faculty, it is better to leave a position open for years (perhaps using the funds to hire visitors to cover whatever is considered essential) than to fill it with anyone less than excellent. This requires perseverance on the department's part and a commitment from the administration that unfilled positions will not be taken away.

### Keeping Faculty Productive

In addition to hiring and retaining the kind of faculty who are demonstrably capable of producing distinguished scholarship, a department in pursuit of higher national standing needs to make sure they are given every opportunity and encouragement to produce it. Diverse circumstances at Wisconsin tend to pull in the opposite direction. The dilemma is that many of the activities that pull faculty away from research and publication are in themselves valuable to the department and university.

1. A substantial number of faculty perform administrative duties of one sort or another. Obviously, time and energy put into administration cannot go into research and publication. However valuable these contributions are to the institution—and by what we have been told, they are highly valued—they are virtually invisible to the outside world and add nothing to the department’s external reputation.

2. The department teaches too many undergraduate students with too few faculty, especially in American politics. Faculty are rightfully proud of their excellent teaching at all levels, especially the large introductory courses, but the workload involved (including managing a large number of TAs) is bound to distract from research. The major is too easy and evidently attracts many students as a default option. The department review of the undergraduate program considered and rejected, on egalitarian grounds, the idea of requiring a minimum level of performance in introductory courses to be admitted to the major. But a reduction in the number majors mainly interested in an easy path to the BA could be accomplished by raising the course requirements—the number or rigor of courses, introducing a statistics requirement (that could be met not only by a department course, but by introductory courses offered by other departments) without excluding anyone who wants to meet them.

A department that serves the university so extensively in teaching students and graduating majors should be given far more autonomy than it now exercises to allocate its instructional efforts. Handling so many students should entitle it to offer small graduate seminars if it so desires; it should be able to allow faculty allocate their teaching efforts 3/1 or 1/3 instead of 2/2 (assuming it maintains an equal balance overall between semesters in the number of courses offered), freeing up one semester for more concentrated research activity; it should allow courses to be team-taught, often a fruitful way to encourage faculty collaboration and to stimulate fresh thinking about old questions. None of these things would require additional funds, and giving the department greater freedom to decide how it organizes its teaching is one inexpensive way to make it a more attractive and productive place to work.

3. Many department faculty are productively engaged in multidisciplinary work outside the department, and opportunities to expand intellectual horizons in this way are one important reason current faculty want to be at UW. There is no question that, for example, connections with various regional study centers are valuable to individual faculty and to the university as a whole, but they may exact a cost in visibility within the U.S. and the discipline of political science. To the extent that outside activities pull faculty away from mainstream disciplinary research, their contributions risk falling outside the discipline’s radar screen. Unfortunately, the department’s self-review did not include any discussion or analysis of citations, a crude but available measure of impact. If the emphasis on publishing books rather than articles in leading journals really has reduced the department’s professional visibility, as noted in both of the departmental reviews we were given, it should result in relatively low citation frequencies. If books and articles in specialized journals are widely cited, however, then impact is independent of venue and the dearth of articles in leading journals may not be the problem.

Obligations to units outside the department pose another potential problem: the need to staff particular fields in order to fulfill commitments constrains the department's hiring choices, reducing the pool of talent from which the department might draw.

### The Graduate Program

A department's national ranking depends to an important degree on the success of graduate programs. Top-rated departments produce political scientists whose work is highly regarded by scholars in their fields and who therefore wind up employed by top-rated departments. Wisconsin's department recognizes that it has fallen short in this regard in recent years, with few, and sharply declining, placements in the best research-oriented departments. The source of the problem must be in the quality and ambitions of the students enrolled, the kind of training and professional socialization they receive, or both.

Students decide where to go for graduate study on the basis of several considerations: financial support, the desire to work with specific individuals, and the appeals of the program's strengths (which can be topical, or involve provision of the kind of intellectual community, methodological approach or approaches that students want). We were told that a significant portion of the current students intend to pursue a liberal arts teaching career and presumably chose Wisconsin as a suitable place to prepare for one. This is a worthy ambition, but the department's reputation depends on producing research scholars, not teachers, and it needs to emphasize to potential applicants that a Wisconsin PhD is a research degree. We were also told, by the students themselves, that many come to Wisconsin precisely to avoid quantitative or formal work (now required by most major Departments). That does not strike us as a good reason for choosing a graduate school, nor as one likely to serve the Department's placement efforts well. Indeed, closing oneself off from major streams of work within the discipline seems at odds with the "pluralism" that the Wisconsin Department espouses.

With regard to financial support, the department is at an almost impossible disadvantage in recruiting outstanding graduate students, because the packages it can offer are risible compared to those routinely extended by competing departments. It has relatively few fellowships to offer (and the number has declined in recent years) and a limited number of project assistant positions. Most students must finance their graduate educations by working as teaching assistants. TA's are given .39 appointments which require them to teach four discussion sections of 22 students each during each semester. One result is that they receive less money for more work than they would at other institutions, making Wisconsin comparatively less attractive. Elsewhere it is more common for TAs to receive a .5 appointment for teaching two sections of approximately 30 students. The current system is also pedagogically ineffective, for – as we learned from the undergraduates we interviewed – TAs so overburdened can offer only the sketchiest comments on papers and examinations.

The high TA workload also slows progress toward the degree and detracts from professional development in other ways. The department report notes that poor attendance by graduate students at job talks and speaker seminars and the lack of interest shown by some in going beyond required coursework in their fields. Assuming they are performing their TA duties conscientiously, they may lack the time or intellectual energy to go beyond what is required.

In addition to improving the financial package, the department can do some things to attract more and better graduate applications. It should provide clearer information about exciting areas of research going on in the department, and how these areas are reflected in coursework, research assistance opportunities, study groups, speakers' series, workshops and conferences. We would also recommend that the department provide more opportunities for students to develop their research—aside from the excellent idea, now being implemented, of a new third-year course devoted to research, writing and publication.

We would also suggest that the department consider creating two new positions: a Director of Graduate Studies, and a Placement Director. At present, the Associate Chair is wearing too many hats. It would make more sense for the Associate Chair to become heavily involved in helping organize a variety of opportunities for students and faculty to develop their intellectual interests. This would leave the Director of Graduate Studies to focus on the professional development of the graduate students and to be sure that graduate students have full access to helpful information (for example, grant and conference opportunities), and the Placement Director to focus on available jobs, the quality of each file, and practice job presentations.

Finally, an important component of graduate professional development is encouraging graduate students to participate in all aspects of departmental life. Thus, we would suggest that the department provide graduate students with regularized opportunities to participate in searches and in decisions about the graduate program. In addition, we think that one key way to learn about the discipline and to develop research interests is to go to job talks. Our impression is that many graduate students do not do this. One way to facilitate this is to schedule talks when graduate students are available, as well as seeking their assessments when the department faces decisions about hiring.

## Review of the Undergraduate Program

Charles Franklin (Co-chair)  
Liane Kosaki (Co-chair)  
Richard Boyd  
David Leheney  
Ben Pasquale (Student Representative)  
Howard Schweber  
Kathy Cramer Walsh

Spring 2005

### **Introduction**

In this report we review the “big picture” of the undergraduate program in political science. Our focus here is on the statistical portrait of the program, our offerings and ratio of students per faculty member. We have discussed at great length possible improvements in small ways to the undergraduate program, and have implemented some of these already with departmental approval. However, for many more, we see difficulties that have to do with the role of the department with regard to our majors, to students who take our courses, and to other units that rely on us for courses. These issues turn out, on examination, to be much harder to solve. We conclude that many issues facing the department rest on philosophical dilemmas that we are unable to resolve. We see genuine considerations on both sides but no clear path of resolution.

### **A Statistical Overview<sup>1</sup>**

The Department of Political Science is the largest major in the College of Letters and Sciences and one of the two departments with the greatest undergraduate teaching load. The department's 1155 majors in AY 2004-05 is far larger than English with 698, History with 655 and Communications Arts also with 655. Figure 1 shows the history of the number of majors across departments from 1996 through 2004. Prior to 2000, Political Science was only slightly larger than English, in terms of majors. That lead has expanded rapidly since 2000, so that now we are 76% larger than English. While other departments have maintained a steady number of majors over these 9 years, and Economics has grown some, none of the larger departments have experienced the rapid growth of political science. The new, and much smaller, majors, Legal Studies and International Studies have seen substantial growth, but from a much smaller base.

---

<sup>1</sup> In this section, the data available for departments varies substantially depending on the subject. We have gathered what was available for various departments, but because of missing information cannot include every department in every comparison. For example, we lack students enrolled for the Department of English, though we have other data for that department which we include in comparisons when available.

## Majors by Department

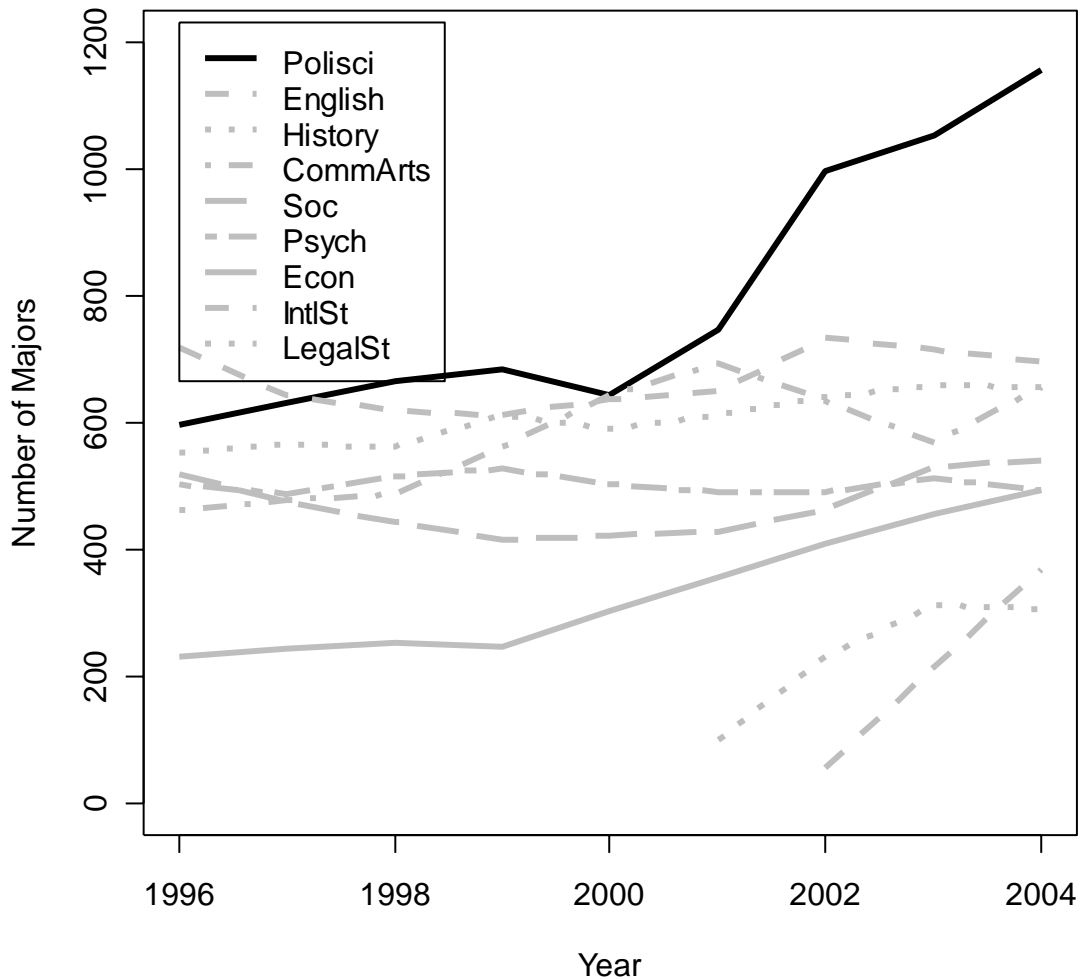


Figure 1. Majors by department from AY 1996-2004.

In terms of total students taking our classes, we vie with History for the largest enrollments. Figure 2 shows the total student FTE per semester from fall of 1999 through spring of 2005. In the latest semester, History had 7040 to our 6603, a lead that has been relatively stable for the past three semesters. Both departments have trended up in recent semesters, though Political Science at a somewhat faster rate. (Enrollment figures for English were not available.) Our department stands out as having *both* high enrollments *and* a high number of majors.

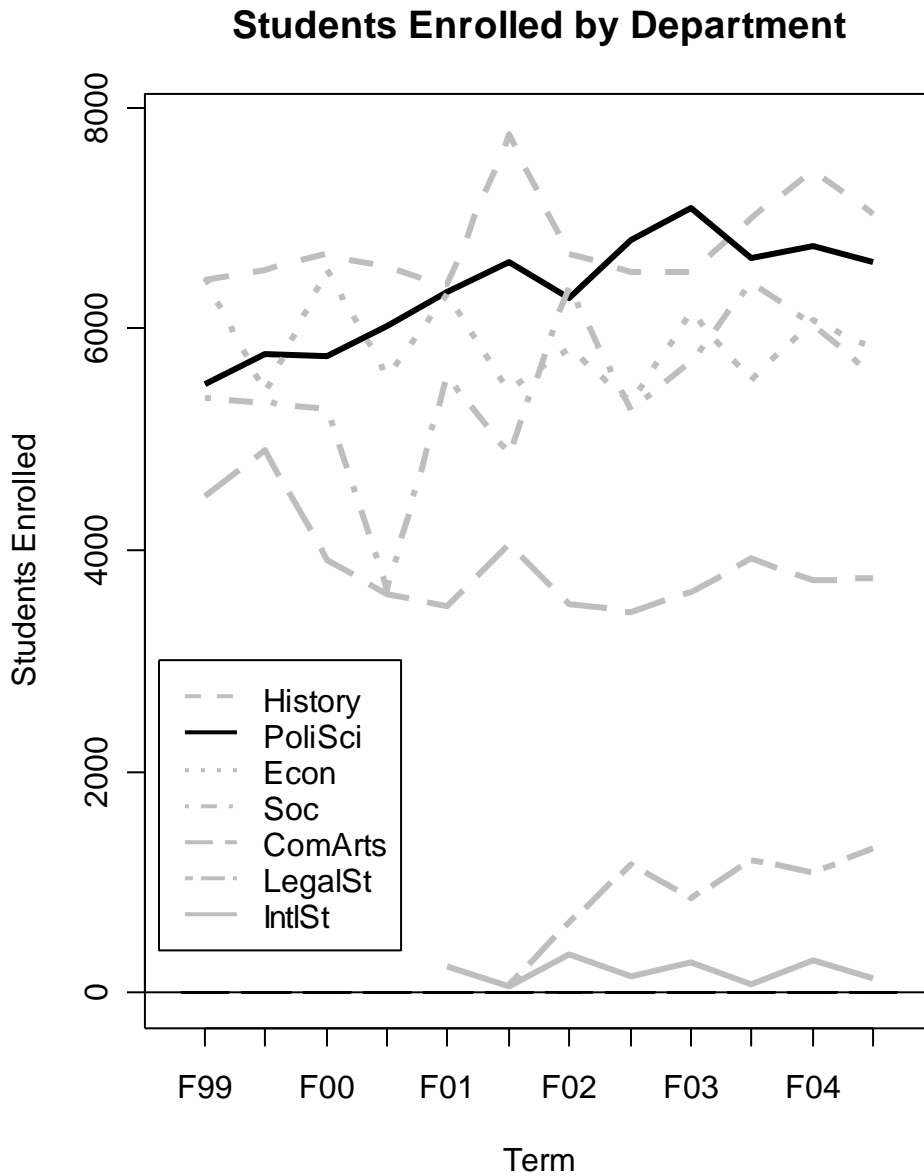


Figure 2: Enrollments by semester, Fall 1999 through Spring 2005.

The Department of Political Science sustains this high number of majors with relatively fewer faculty than other departments. Figure 3 shows the number of majors per faculty full time equivalent (FTE) for AY 2004-05. Communications Arts, with only 655 majors is close to Political Science’s 32.1 majors per faculty FTE, at 29.8. All other departments have far fewer. Economics at 18.4 majors per FTE is the only department other than Communications Arts with as many as half the majors per FTE as political science.



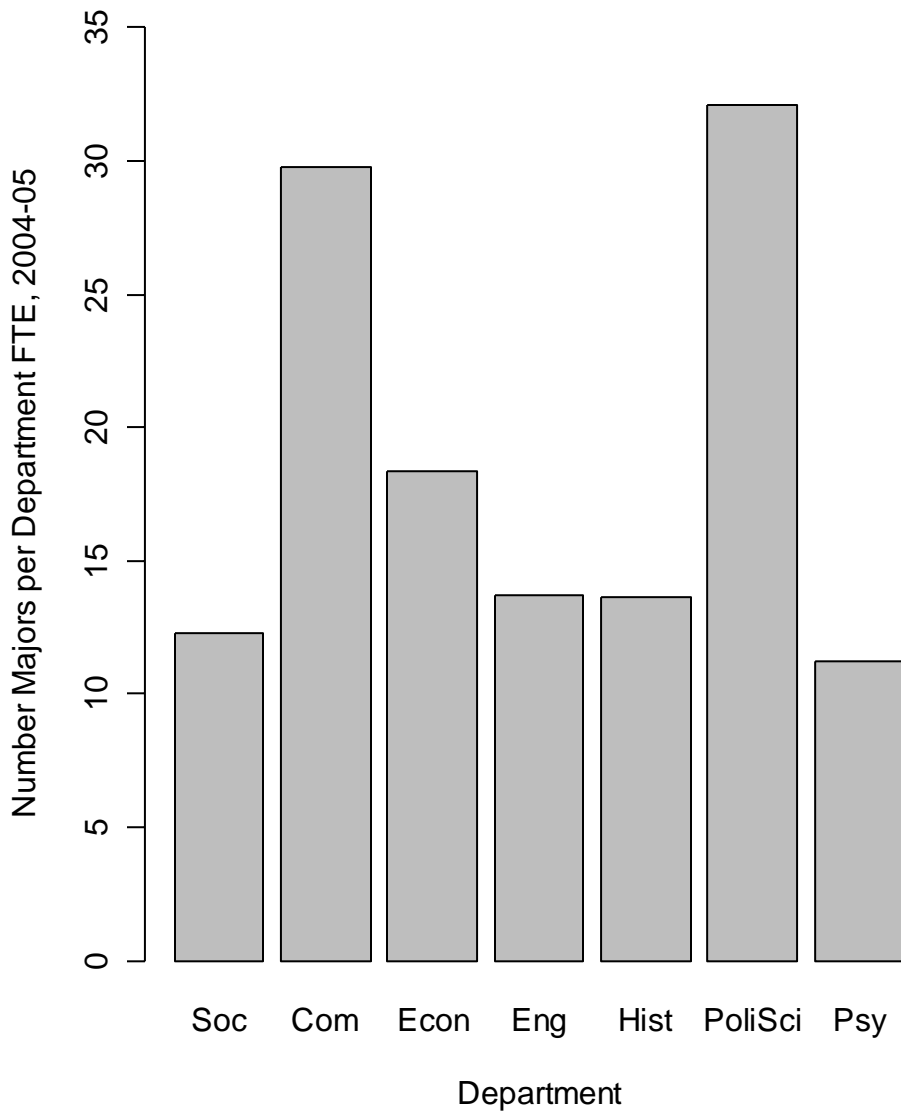


Figure 3: Majors per Faculty FTE by department, AY 2004-05.

These disparities in majors per FTE are only partially due to the large number of majors in Political Science. While we are not a small department in absolute numbers, we are substantially smaller than other departments with far fewer majors. Figure 4 shows the number of “tenure track” faculty FTEs in several departments. Political Science is considerably smaller than English, History and Sociology, and a little smaller than Psychology.

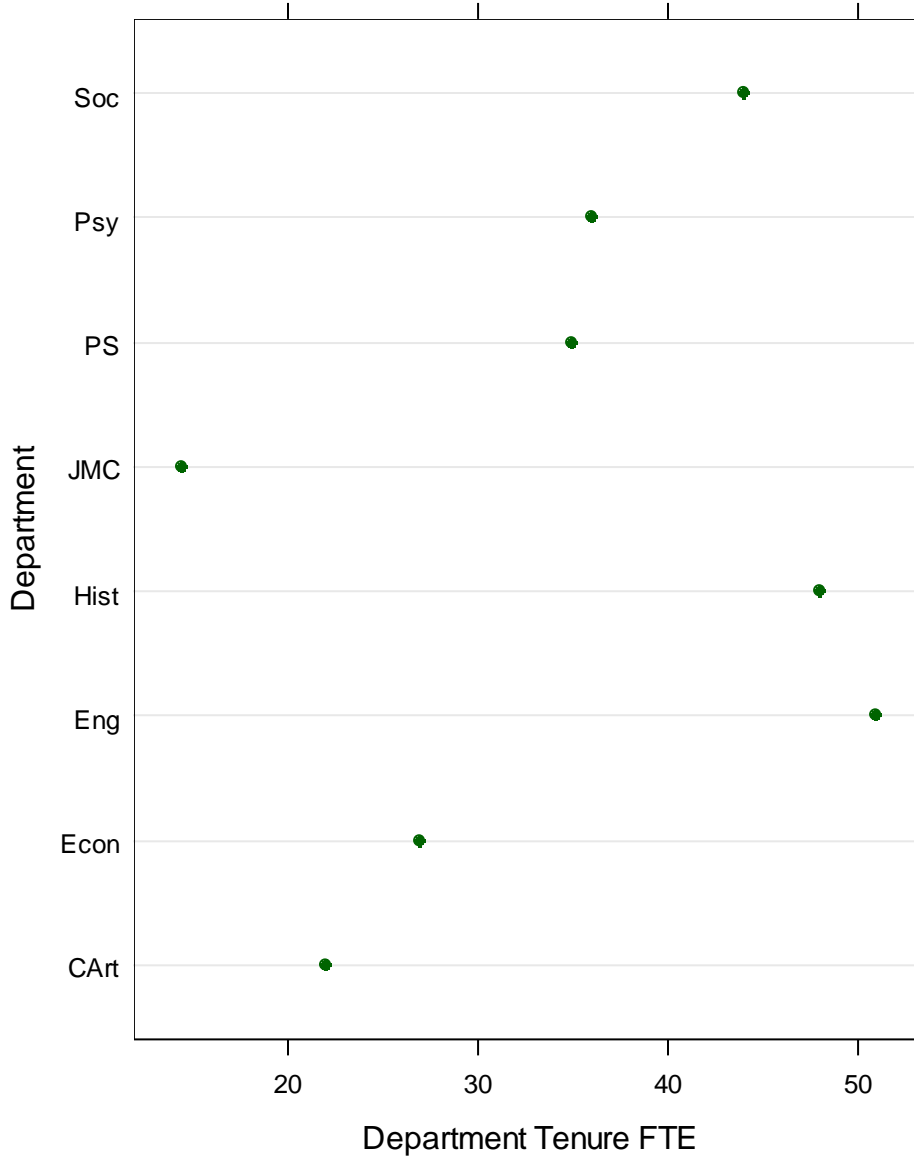


Figure 4: Faculty “tenure track” FTE positions per department, AY 2004-05.

From the perspective of undergraduate teaching, these results *overstate* the actual effective strength of the Department of Political Science due to cross-department appointments, administrative appointments and frequent research leaves, the department is considerably smaller than the number of names listed in the department directory or the official FTE count. Figure 5 shows the number of “bodies”, FTEs and “effective FTE” for the past three academic years. The “effective FTE” is the number of faculty-taught courses divided by four (the full time teaching load) which accounts for leaves and course

reductions of all kinds. Here we see that rather than a department of around 36-38, we are effectively a faculty of less than 25.<sup>2</sup>

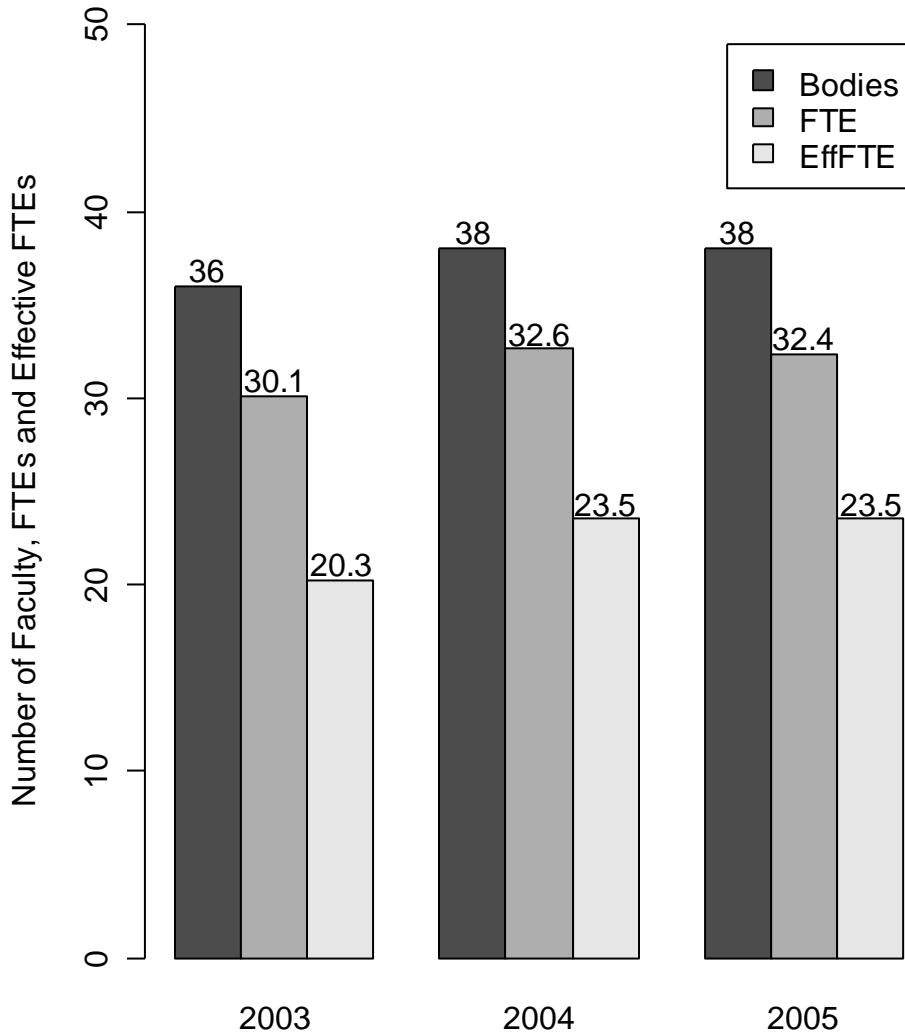


Figure 5: Number of faculty, FTEs and “Effective FTEs”, 2003-2005.

When we shift to total enrolled students per faculty FTE, the Department of Political Science does not dominate other departments to the extent it does with majors. Figure 6

---

<sup>2</sup> The discrepancy in FTE between Figures 4 and 5 appears to be due to the University count of FTEs which includes some faculty members who have been hired but have not arrived at the University due to an initial research leave for a post-doctoral appointment. These appear to be counted in the University’s total, but not in our Departmental budget, since such people have a zero-percent appointment prior to their arrival. The difference is only 2 FTEs, and does not affect the effective FTE count at all.

shows the number of students taught in AY 2004-05 per faculty FTE. Economics, a relatively small department, actually teaches more undergraduate students per FTE than does political science, with 441.5 to 378.6. Nonetheless, the departmental teaching per FTE remains quite substantial compared to other departments for which we have data.

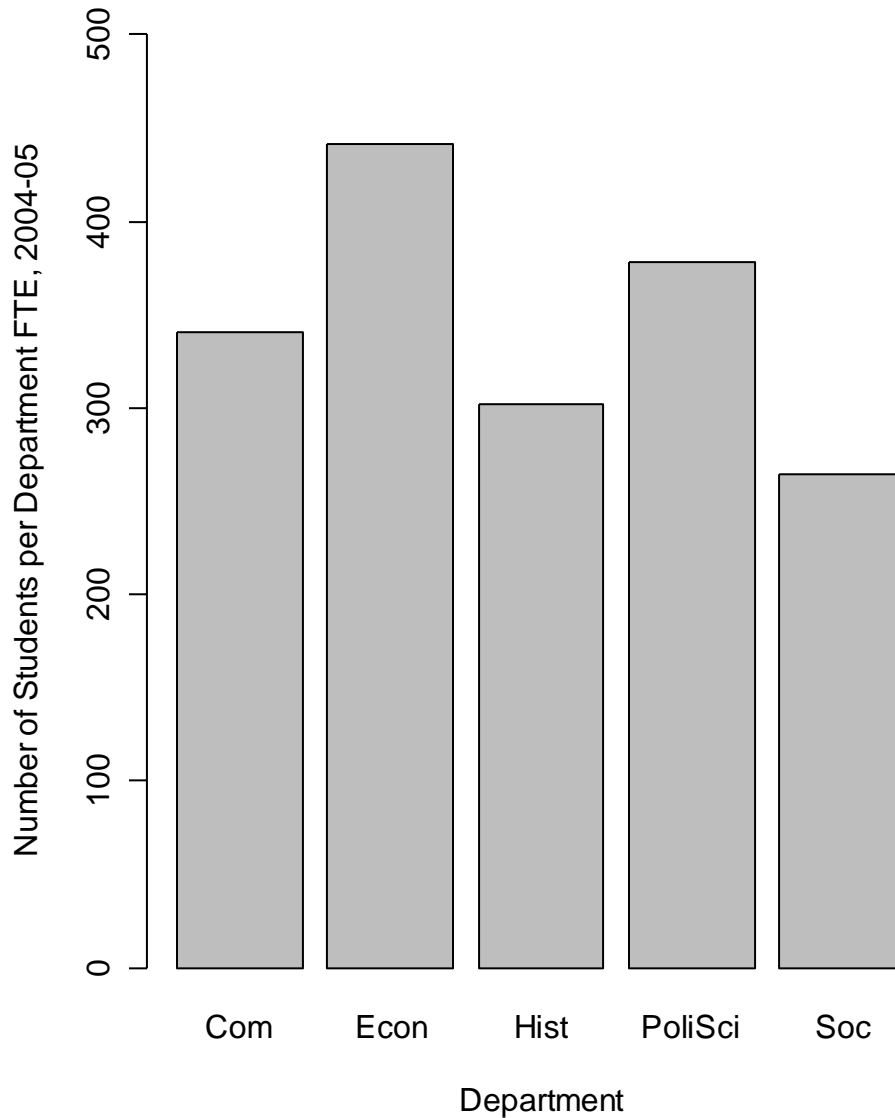


Figure 6: Students per faculty FTE, 2004-05.

Our enrollments vary considerably by course level (introductory, intermediate or advanced) and by subfield. Figure 7 shows enrollment in each of the six course divisions for Fall 1999-Spring 2005. Courses at the 100 level are introductory, and may be in any subfield. Courses at the 200 level are a mix of introductory and intermediate, and may also be in any subfield. Courses at the 300 level and above are generally advanced

courses, with IR occupying the 300 level, American Politics the 400 level, Political Theory (and Methodology) at the 500 level and comparative politics at the 600 level.

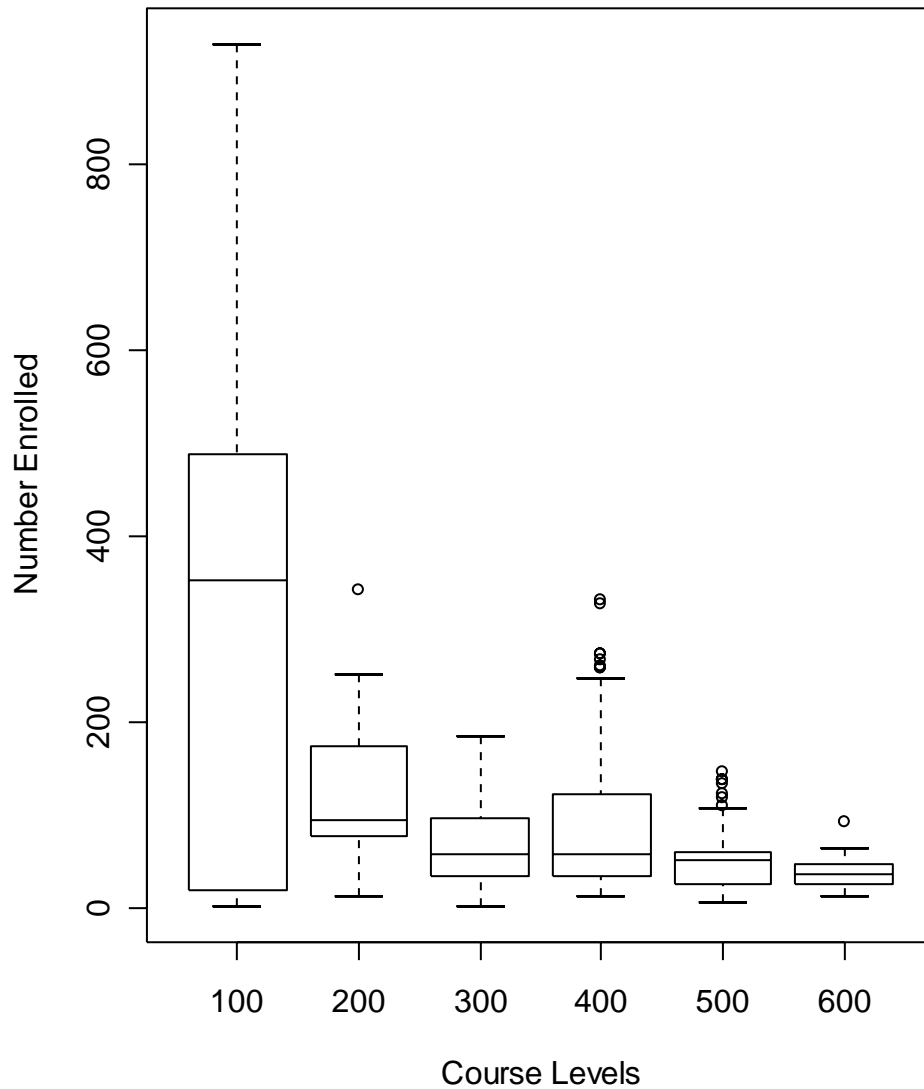


Figure 7: Enrollment by course level, Fall 1999-Spring 2005.

In the boxplot, the horizontal line inside the rectangular box is the median. For example, in 100 level courses, the median enrollment is 353. The ends of the box are the first and third quartiles, in the case of the 100 level courses, these are 19 and 484. The dashed line extending from the box delineates “outliers”, which are represented as circles. These are more than 1.5 times the interquartile range, and represent unusually large classes, given the rest of the distribution. Because the interquartile range is so large for 100 level classes, there are no outliers plotted, even though the largest class is over 800 students.

This is in fact incorrect. The data on enrollments combine enrollment in different lectures of the same course number. So Introduction to American Politics (PS104) may have two lectures of 400 students each, but appear in this graph as an enrollment of 800. We were not able to obtain data that did not combine courses in this way. This primarily affects large introductory courses where it is not unusual to offer two lectures in the same semester. This has been done for Introduction to Comparative Politics (PS106) but is more common for PS104. The effect is to exaggerate the size of our largest introductory lectures, but not to affect other classes which rarely offer multiple lectures.

The large enrollment classes at the 400 level include PS404, and “upper level” introduction to American politics, which often has relatively high enrollment (median is 159 and maximum is 181). However the outliers at the 400 level are all upper level public law classes. The outliers in the 500 level classes are all political philosophy courses, including the two history of political thought courses (PS501 and PS502), The Challenge of Democratization, (PS505) and Topics in Political Philosophy (PS506), each of which had over 100 students. The outlier at the 600 level is PS643 Women and Politics in a Global Context, which drew 93 students in one semester.

Figure 7 makes clear that our introductory and intermediate level classes are much larger than are our advanced courses, which are substantially populated by majors. At the introductory level, students are very likely to enroll in classes of at least 200 students, and often double that number. Once beyond the introductory courses, however, class sizes on average are not that large. Even at the 200 level, the median falls to 95. For the advanced IR courses (300 level) the median is 57, the same as for American politics. Theory and methods courses have a median of 51, while Comparative has a median enrollment of 37 students in advanced courses.

Another way to look at these data is by the total of students taught over the 1999-2005 time frame included in our data. Some fields might teach smaller classes on average, but more of them, and so actually teach the same number of students in the long run. Figure 8 addresses this issue, using only “advanced” courses, that is at the 300 level and above. The figure also excludes PS404, which is more of an introductory than an advanced course. We have combined 14 semesters of data here to avoid idiosyncratic effects of leaves in any particular semester which might affect the comparison if we used a single year. American politics courses have drawn 9180 students in 400 level courses during this time (including 404 would push this to 10,854). IR and Theory have taught similar numbers, 3911 and 3703 respectively while Comparative has taught 2021.

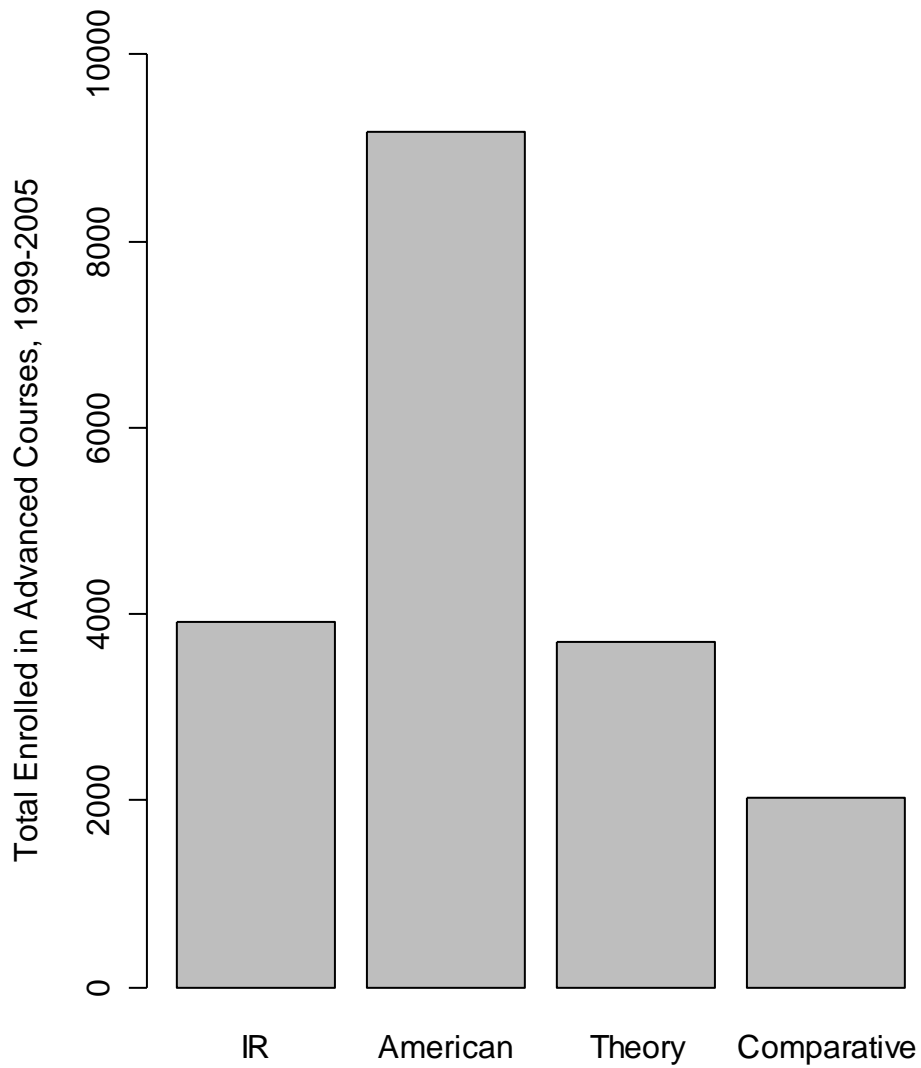


Figure 8: Total enrolled in advanced courses by field, 1999-2005.

We close this section with “the bottom line”. Including introductory courses, during the period from Fall 1999 to Spring 2005, the Department of Political Science taught 51,026 students.

## **Size and Quality of Undergraduate Classes**

Our committee spent considerable time discussing issues of quality of our undergraduate offerings. We focused initially on the Honors Program in political science, then widened our focus to the broader undergraduate experience.

By most measures, our undergraduate offerings are quite successful. Our departmental teaching evaluations are generally quite good, and often exceptional. Students are very complimentary of the instruction in end-of-semester course evaluations but also in a survey of graduating seniors conducted on a random sample of seniors by Liane Kosaki acting as the undergraduate advisor. The strength of teaching in the department as a whole is often cited as one of the things students most like about the department.

By a different measure, we are doing less well. The Honors Program in Political Science draws surprisingly few students, given our number of majors, and very few students choose to write honors theses (generally less than 15 per year, and often less than 10.) The committee discussed ways to improve the Honors Program, and the Department adopted our major recommendation that courses with sections be required to offer an honors section, rather than mix honors students among all sections as has been the practice. This solution, however, is not without problems (honors students may not be able to fit the section into their schedules, there may be too few honors students in the class to fill the section), and we wait to see how successful it is.

But even if we add Honors Sections to what are generally introductory level classes, we still face a problem of how to improve the experience of Honors students in upper level classes. The committee agreed that far too often doing honors means simply doing more work, for example writing an extra paper. There is often little increased contact with professors and no added individualized instruction. Faculty have no incentive to devote extra time outside of class to honors students, and the students themselves have no clear expectations about what an “honors experience” should be like in political science classes. The result is a very idiosyncratic pattern in which a few faculty devote extra time to honors students, but the general rule is that not much of added value is provided to honors students in most upper level classes.

In part, this reflects the status of the Honors Program in the college as a whole. There is no regular funding for offering “Honors Only” classes at the advanced level. Rather the limited funding that is available must be applied for each year, and is quite limited. The department has not chosen to create such courses out of its own resources (which would reduce our offerings to non-honors students) and so our upper-level honors program has limped along.

The committee discussed at length what could be done to create a more serious Honors Program within the department. We concluded that such a program would require someone with responsibility for energizing the program, by recruiting in classes, monitoring course offerings, and working with students. This is not a small commitment given the teaching commitments illustrated in the previous section of this report. We lack



both the human and the financial resources to create the kind of program we would like to see. Therefore, we have proposed only the modest improvements, already adopted, for large lecture courses, and leave the problem of upper level courses for another day.

This decision became more clear when we considered the needs of our larger number of majors. The committee considered our commitment to all majors as compared to the small number in the Honors Program. The most common negative comment we heard from students, and saw in the survey of graduating seniors, was the problem of class size. Students frequently mentioned that they were routinely in classes of 60 or more, and felt they never had classes in which they could have small group discussion and interaction with faculty. The data in the previous section demonstrate that while we do offer many very large classes, there are in fact quite a lot with small (under 30) enrollments. Of 480 courses offered from 1999-2005, 106 (22%) were 30 students or less. Thus the department is in fact offering a substantial number of opportunities to take small classes. However, these same 106 classes enrolled only 3.8% of our total students over this period. Thus the department devotes a considerable amount of faculty resources to offering small classes, but we are able to reach less than 4% of our students by this effort.

The committee concluded that we should attempt to increase the opportunities for students to take smaller classes, even though we recognize that there is a trade off—a few more smaller classes implies an increase in the average class size of the larger classes. Nevertheless, we believe that the quality of a class of 60 is not substantially affected by increasing it to 65, while the ability to offer students an opportunity to take a class with less than 30 students is especially important. We also concluded that it was important that these opportunities be as widely available as possible, and hence that such effort (and expense) should be devoted to all students and not concentrated in the Honors Program. Our specific recommendation is that the department take particular care that there be a significant number of offerings taught as 401 or 695 seminar classes each semester. Because these topics can vary, this does not restrict the fields than can offer such classes, and these are course numbers that are well known to students as “seminars”. We also encourage the department to advertise these classes more aggressively so that they reach their full enrollments (of 20-30).

### **Requirements for the major**

This choice between improving the Honors Program and providing more opportunities to all students reflected a dilemma that we frequently faced in our deliberations. We want, as all faculty do, to teach good, motivated students. But we also value to departments tradition of openness and willingness to engage students more broadly. One example of this is our discussion of requirements for the major. Many departments have adopted minimum requirements to declare a major. Some of these are GPA requirements, others include several courses in the department before a major can be declared. Political Science currently has no requirement or prerequisite for declaring a major. A student can literally declare as a major on their first day on campus. We debated if this was a good or a bad thing, and what the consequences might be of changing this policy.

A practical question we asked was whether a prerequisite for declaring the major would significantly improve the quality of our students. In the end we concluded that such an effect would likely be very slight. Many poor students are not majors, and so such a requirement would not prevent them from taking our courses, especially at the introductory and intermediate levels. Further, any disincentive would seem to be rather small, removing very few from the pool of majors while erecting an unnecessary barrier to the major. Thus we concluded that reasonable prerequisites would probably make little difference and not be worth the trouble.

But we also considered a more “philosophical” question. As more departments adopt prerequisites for the major, the University moves towards a situation in which it is possible to be admitted to the University yet not be allowed to major in anything. While this is not currently the case, it is where we are headed. As departments seek to control their majors, perhaps to limit size, perhaps to improve quality, we think we fail in our fundamental task as educators at a public university. In this view, our responsibility is to teach any student who is admitted to the university, and to do our best to improve their understanding of politics and government, whatever the student’s abilities may be. For this reason we do not recommend that any changes be made in the current policy regarding the declaration of a major in political science.

This openness is, we think, one of the virtues of the department, but is not without consequences. One area we discussed was the enforcement of prerequisites in registering for classes. At present, our advanced courses often list prerequisites, such as an introductory level course in political science. However, we do not program the registration system to enforce these prerequisites and routinely waive them. At first blush, we thought this was silly and were prepared to enforce all prerequisites. But further reflection made us reconsider. Many students in our upper level courses are in allied programs, such as International Studies, one of the many Areas Studies fields, Legal Studies, Women’s Studies, or in sister disciplines such as Philosophy or Sociology. Enforcing an introductory political science course, for example, would exclude these students from upper level courses, or would require a considerable administrative burden to process overrides for a substantial number of students. Moreover, our department is closely integrated with a large number of the programs, sharing faculty and cross-listing courses. It was the strong sentiment of the committee that the department would not want to erect barriers to these close relationships. While we agree that having prerequisites and not enforcing them is still silly, we concluded that there are in fact good reasons for openness in entry to our classes, even at the upper level.

These examples stress the department’s commitment to service within the University—both to students as individuals and to other units as colleagues. We do not recommend changes to these policies, but we do want to highlight the costs we bear when we provide these services.

## **Resistant dilemmas**

As our discussions drew to a close, and after long consideration, we were frankly surprised at how difficult it was to resolve many of the choices we faced. Our committee was constantly divided by differing perspectives. These were not disagreements that could easily be settled by majority vote, for we recognized that many of our disagreements hinged on questions of values rather than simple matters of facts or interests. As we recognized these values debates, we were unwilling to claim (or impose) dominance for any one perspective. We think there are strong cases on all sides, and that a department that committed wholeheartedly to one perspective would damage itself by neglect of other perspectives.

This is not a wholly satisfactory conclusion because it limits our recommendations for change. We can imagine a number of small rules changes that may matter at the margin, and which the department can easily adopt. But none of these amounts to a major restructuring of the undergraduate program. While we are all unhappy with one aspect or another, we have come to see what exists and a compromise among these competing values—a compromise that has been worked out by our collective practice more than by rule making but one which we are hard pressed to see ways to unambiguous improvements.

We close this report with a discussion of these dilemmas as we see them. We hope that this report, and this discussion in particular, will encourage us all to think about these issues in the undergraduate program, and continue to evolve solutions that produce workable compromises, and at times, incremental improvements.

There are three large, unresolved questions of departmental philosophy that need to be addressed before policy proposals can be discussed in any meaningful way. First, do we have or want to have a collective “philosophy” at all? That is, do we want to arrive at a collective conception of our undergraduate program, either at the level of the department or the sub-fields, rather than leaving that question up to each individual faculty member to consider for themselves? Second, do we want to make the political science major more structured around a particular vision of an educational experience? Third, assuming the answers to the first two questions are “yes,” do we want admission to the undergraduate political science major, and/or political science classes, to become more restrictive than it is at present?

### **I. Should the department have “a philosophy” at all? The Shopping Mall versus the Academy**

The first question, whether it is appropriate for our department or each sub-field to discuss an institutional philosophy at all, can be thought of in terms of two very popular metaphors in educational philosophy: the “shopping mall” versus the Academy. The shopping mall model is market/consumer-driven, decentralized, and to some degree ad hoc, in the sense that market preferences in one shopping season influence decisions

concerning what “stores” to have in the mall for the next season. The “consumers” are, of course, the students, and the “storekeepers” are the faculty members, each offering wares according to their own unfettered judgment, subject to the limitation of an institutional interest in successful sales. Professors in this model are entrepreneurs, a description which accurately captures many aspects of current practice both within the department (instructors have great liberty to choose and design their courses) and in the larger institution (the processes for securing funding). Measured by student response, this model has been highly successful; as the attached data show, the number of political science majors has risen dramatically in the past decade. Elements of this approach appear in the lack of centralized control over course offerings, leave, and the great degree of autonomy granted to faculty. The model of faculty members as entrepreneurs fits well with the large number of faculty holding dual (or treble) appointments, a departmental tradition of easygoing collegiality, faculty members’ natural preference for independence, and the catholic nature of political science as a discipline. Possible drawbacks associated with this approach are the unavailability of faculty to teach essential courses, a perceived lack of coherent structure in the undergraduate program – both for majors (requirements for graduation) and for non-majors (pre-requisites for specific courses) – and the lack of an articulable (and hence either defeasible or defensible) statement of departmental mission.

The alternative “Academy” model can be variously described as more communitarian, more authoritarian, or more collective. The idea of this model would be that the department should attempt to operate itself as an exercise in collective action, so that the department would take on an identity, purposes, and interests of its own. Specifically, the ideal that this model pursues is one in which the undergraduate major is designed around a vision of what it means to be educated in political science, with a likely increase in emphasis on depth rather than breadth, and course offerings, design, and availability would be more tightly organized by collective, department-wide decisions by which individual faculty members would agree to be bound.

The distinction between these approaches in practice may be made more clear by an example. If it were to be decided that the requirements for the undergraduate political science major should be redesigned in order to increase the depth of exposure within a sub-field, the department would have to be willing to take on the commitment to ensure that the necessary courses would be available. Otherwise, there would be a serious and real danger that majors would find themselves unable to complete their program in the time available to them due to circumstances that were neither foreseeable nor in any way under their control. To ensure the availability of courses, in turn, requires a reconsideration of the degree of collective decision-making and planning that are employed in deciding upon course offerings and curricular designs.

## II. Should we guide the educational experience of majors? Shaping the River versus Navigating the Ocean

This question applies the “shopping mall” versus “academy” metaphors to a consideration of the educational experience of our students, which may only indirectly

reflect the organizing principles of our department. Political science courses, for a variety of reasons, teach an exceptionally large number of non-majors in addition to teaching majors in the field. A comparison with the course offerings of the English Department is instructive. By imposing (and enforcing) strict pre-requisite requirements, the English Department has designed its program to serve the needs of majors, largely to the exclusion of non-majors. For reasons both practical and philosophical, the members of the committee were in unanimous agreement that such an approach would not work for Political Science. The number of our courses that are required for other programs is just one example of a factor militating against the adoption of such a narrow approach.

The question then becomes whether we want to consider steps to increase the degree to which our own majors' educational experiences are guided by a program than is presently the case. At present, the sole requirement for graduating with a political science major are four introductory courses and approximately four or five advanced courses, with no necessary connection between any of these courses. This is a set of requirements that permits either great breadth or considerable depth of training, but *requires* neither. In addition, several committee members reported students who expressed frustration at the sense that there was no particular reason to choose one course rather than another, so the curriculum becomes merely a set of course offerings presented without any clear pattern or recommendations.

Some advantages that are claimed for a more structured program are: a clearer and more publicly definable sense of what it means to say that someone has graduated with a major in political science; the possibility of teaching upper-level classes at a higher level, based on an assurance that majors, at least, bring a significant level of background knowledge and exposure to the subject area; enhancing the goals of liberal arts education by treating political science as a study worthy of serious exploration rather than a way to fill in the gaps in a weekly schedules on the way to an unrelated professional career. Some drawbacks that are associated with a more structured program are: increasing the transaction costs for students who suddenly develop a strong interest in an unexpected area; decreasing the freedom of faculty to teach courses that fall outside any recognized "path"; increasing the pressure for majors to get into certain courses at certain times, particularly in the absence of an increase in the exercise of collective control over course availability; moving undergraduate education more toward the pattern of graduate/professional school and away from the model of secondary education; and reducing the likelihood of that occasional very gifted student with no background in an upper-level course who nonetheless contributes a perspective that benefits the whole class.

Several possible approaches to increasing the degree to which the political science major has an identifiable structure were discussed. Among these were: recommended (but not required) course "sequences"; required course sequences, or requirements that some number of courses fall within an identifiable area; reconsideration of the two-level classification of courses ("introductory" and "advanced") by a three-level classification, with requirements for some number of courses at each level (this would require reconsideration of course numbers in some instances); requiring participation in seminars in the manner of the History Department (this would require either increasing the number of faculty or redistributing students among existing courses by raising enrollment caps in some classes and lowering them in others). None of these proposals received anything

approaching unanimous support, in large part because the members of the committee quickly came to realize that taking any position on any proposal of this kind first requires answering a philosophical question. Even assuming that the department decides that the undergraduate major needs a more structured program, which of two basic approaches should be adopted in pursuing that goal?

The two basic approaches to increasing the structure in the undergraduate major that the committee identified are captured in two metaphors: “shaping the river” and “navigating the ocean.” “Shaping the river” refers to actions that affect the courses offered and their relation to one another (e.g., by imposing prerequisites) but do not directly restrict the freedom of majors to choose whatever courses they want. “Navigating the ocean” is an approach that would require majors to more clearly define a direction to their studies, but would leave the system of course offerings in its present state. Examples of “navigating the ocean” would be: requiring participation in a seminar, without any specifications as to how that seminar might relate to other courses; requiring that advanced courses fall within no more than two different sub-fields (keeping in mind that this is a description of minimum requirements for the major, so that students are always free to take more courses so long as university-wide distribution requirements have been met). Examples of “Shaping the River” would be: changing the requirements to involve three introductory courses, three intermediate courses, and two advanced courses, with the concomitant redesign and redistribution of courses into categories that this would entail; or tailoring pre-requisites or “pathways” to require depth as well as breadth of exposure.

Shaping the River and Navigating the Ocean are not incommensurate approaches, and elements of both could be incorporated into a reformulation of requirements for the major. But before that discussion is worth the time and effort that it would entail, the department needs to arrive at an answer to the philosophical question of whether we want to increase the structure of the majors’ educational experience in the first place? This is a question that needs to be addressed by the department as a whole.

III. Should admission to the major, and to political science classes, be made more restrictive? The Open Society versus the Race to the Bottom.

A number of departments impose requirements that have to be satisfied in order for students to declare their major in that department. We do not – which may or may not be related to the upsurge in the number of political science majors in recent years. The committee had discussions about the possibility of imposing requirements for the major, such as a minimum GPA, a minimum GPA in courses in the major, or completion of some set of courses. In discussing various policy issues associated with these proposals, however, it quickly became clear that there was a deeper philosophical issue that needed to be addressed.

The argument for creating requirements for declaring a political science major primarily centers around the idea that doing so might improve the quality of students in our department’s courses. It is possible that imposing a requirement such as a 2.75 GPA would cause a significant reduction in the number of majors, and a concomitant reduction

in class sizes. The latter outcome, in particular, cannot be guaranteed (since many students are not majors), but it is likely that the imposition of such a requirement would drive some of the weakest students out of the major and hence out of at least some political science classes. The argument gains force from the fact that other departments do have entrance requirements. The fear is that as it increasingly becomes the case that entrance requirements are the norm rather than the exception, political science will become a “sink” for students who were not able to declare any other major. The question, then, is not only whether we want to have entrance requirements or not, but whether we want to have entrance requirements given that other majors do so.

The arguments against imposing requirements to qualify for the major are twofold. First, it is arguably part of the philosophy of political science that what we teach is appropriate for everyone, either as an element of training for effective citizenship or in the sense that the study of politics, writ large, encompasses the issues that directly affect the course of peoples’ lives. In addition, within the university it can be argued that political science stands as an unusually democratic department, and that this is a role that we should be proud of. Finally, it is not difficult to envision a situation in which a student who has been qualified to enter the UW nonetheless finds it extremely difficult to find a major in which to get their degree because departments have ratcheted up their major entrance requirements in a competition for the best students.

The place of the political science department in Letters and Science, and our resulting attitude toward the examples presented by other departments, are questions to be determined by the department as a whole before a committee can consider the benefits or risks of various policies.