Department of Political Science
Academic Program Review Action Plan - Fall 2017

Status of Action Items from the Prior Review

Our Action Plan from the previous cycle, completed in December of 2007, had six goals:

1. **To grow the Department to a faculty size commensurate with its research and instructional missions.** *(Incomplete)* We had 24 permanent faculty at the time of the last review and taught 11,900 credit hours in Fall 2006: the Action Plan found that the department “remains undersized relative to many of its peer and aspirational institutions.” This is still true: in Fall 2016 we taught 14,600 credit hours with 26 permanent non-administrative faculty.

2. **To achieve and maintain a national reputation as a program of distinction by refining its strategic focus.** *(Partially completed)* The department moved up from 83 to 72 in the most recent US News and World Report rankings, making it among the highest ranked departments in the college. We also did well in the 2011 National Resource Council rankings.

3. **To achieve and maintain a national reputation as a program of distinction by strengthening the PhD program.** *(Incomplete)* The Ph.D. program has grown substantially since the last review. The main problem identified in the last review – uncompetitive stipends – has not been addressed. The stipends were $12,000 then, and are $14,000 now.

4. **To more effectively serve the growing undergraduate demand for Political Science courses in the general education core curriculum and in the major.** *(Incomplete)* The department has met existing high demand for enrollments in its core courses and in requirements for the major. We have done this, however, with fewer permanent faculty members per credit hour. We are innovators in online courses and taught more students in online courses last academic year than any other department in the college.

5. **To more effectively meet the demands for academic and administrative support.** *(Incomplete)* In the previous action plan the department sought a fourth staff member to assist with undergraduate advising. This fourth staff position was not added, though in the meantime the college and university have devoted substantial additional resources to advising outside of academic units. Nonetheless, the outside reviewers found a serious lack of staff support for our signature experiences, especially study abroad.

6. **To more effectively facilitate the meeting of basic research and instructional needs by securing additional, contiguous space.** *(Partially completed)* Since the last cycle the department has been able to make use of a number of offices on the 8th and 9th floors of Langdale, relieving the lack of office space, especially for the graduate program. We are hopeful that serious inadequacies in the common space available to the department (such as the lack of a reception area accessible to those with disabilities, and the lack of a real break room) will be addressed soon.

Major Findings in Current Review

1. **Research.** The external reviewers found that the political science department “is a high
achieving unit with an impressive research profile among its faculty.... The department makes significant contributions to the discipline, has a strong research culture, and national and international visibility.” The reviewers recommended that the department continue to develop Next Gen proposals and that the department seek additional faculty in the areas of urban politics, migration, and race and ethnicity. The reviewers also noted the small size of travel budgets and encouraged the development of a mentorship program.

2. **Graduate programs.** The external reviewers praised the department’s “innovative graduate programs” and the placement record of the Ph.D. program. The external reviewers, and the department in its self-study, found graduate student stipends to be too low and thought that students would be better served by maintaining and expanding the separation between the the masters and Ph.D. programs.

3. **Undergraduate programs.** The external reviewers noted that the department’s graduation rates are typically above university and college averages. They were “uniformly impressed with the program, its students, and its faculty.” They noted in particular the department’s strong suite of signature experiences. The department, in its self-study, mapped out a plan to further develop these signature experiences. The external reviewers noted, however, the need for additional staff support and teaching resources to carry out the department’s plans for undergraduate education.

**Action Steps for the Coming Cycle**

1. **Maintain and expand strengths in research:**

   a) The department, following the recommendation of the outside reviewers’ report, will continue to pursue Next Gen and other opportunities to add additional tenure track lines to the faculty. We will seek to participate in at least one Next Gen proposal each cycle. We will seek to make three specific hires. First, we can better exploit our location in the heart of Atlanta by hiring a tenure-track faculty member who specializes in state and local politics or the politics of the South. Second, we will seek to build on our existing strengths in judicial politics with a hire on the politics of access to justice (we already are participating this year – in the 2017 cycle – in a Next Gen proposal on access to justice). Finally, we will seek a hire in migration and citizenship, building on current strengths of the department and the university, and further leveraging our location in Atlanta. We will seek to build research foci in the areas above by proposing new lines from the college when those opportunities exist or, when appropriate, through the replacement of existing lines following faculty departures. Timeline: immediate and continuing.

   b) The department, led by the chair and other senior faculty, will establish a formal mentoring program that will include assistant and associate professors as well as lecturers and senior lecturers. Timeline: we will develop the program in 2017–2018 and have it fully in place by the Fall of 2018.

   c) The department chair will explore options for supplementing travel funds through efficiencies in the use of existing department funds (e.g., cancelling underutilized phone lines). Timeline: FY2018.

2. **Further develop the graduate program:**

   a) The department, led by the graduate director, will work to ensure the success of the online
master’s program. Depending on (1) enrollments in the online M.A. and (2) the nature of the students who enroll in the online courses, we will consider broadening the scope of the program to include a hybrid master’s degree in professional politics. Timeline: immediate and continuing.

b) The department will explore developing a 3+3 program (BA/JD) with the College of Law. Timeline: we will approach the College of Law and the A&S Dean’s Office about this issue in the upcoming academic year (and, in the process, we will determine a focus for the program). If the colleges support the program, we will work to put it in place within the next three years.

c) The department, led by the graduate committee, will eliminate the Major Area Paper requirement for the Ph.D. This will decrease the time it takes for students to finish their degrees without affecting the quality of the Ph.D. program. Timeline: the Fall 2018 catalog change cycle.

d) The department, led by the graduate committee, will reduce the number of courses required to complete the Ph.D. program. This will bring the Ph.D. program in line with the requirements of peer and aspirations programs and will allow students to reduce their time to degree. Timeline: the Fall 2018 or 2019 catalog change cycle.

3. Expand Undergraduate opportunities:

a) The department, led by the chair, will seek expanded administrative support from the Office of International Initiatives and other university offices to support our existing study abroad offerings. The administrative requirements of these study abroad programs place a major burden on the department. Timeline: immediate and continuing.

b) The department will seek to develop one or two additional signature experiences that leverage our location in the heart of Atlanta. Some of these experiences will contribute to our increased emphasis on urban politics and the politics of the justice system. Timeline: immediate and continuing.

c) The department, led by the undergraduate committee, will work with college and university advisement offices to increase communication with undergraduate students about academic programs and other learning opportunities in the department. The purpose of this initiative will be to increase the number of majors and to ensure that our existing majors take advantage of existing opportunities and make progress toward finishing their degrees. Timeline: the undergraduate committee will work with the advisement offices in the 2018-19 academic year.
SIGNATURE PAGE:

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Date: 10/26/17

Risa Palm, Provost and Senior Vice President, Georgia State University  
Date: 11/9/17