**Political Science Major Assessment Report, AY 2017-2018**

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| 1. **What learning outcome(s) did you assess this year?** List all program outcomes you assessed (if you assessed an outcome not listed on your department SOAP please indicate explain). Do not describe the measures or benchmarks in this section Also please only describe major assessment activities in this report.   We used three of our assessment methods this year. First, we conducted our annual pre-test / post-test measuring student knowledge relevant to the discipline of political science, a direct measure assessing learning outcomes 1, 3, and 4 in our SOAP. We also used the policy analysis rubric for PLSI 150, which assesses outcomes 2 and 5. Finally, we conducted an evaluation of student writing with the approved rubric, which assesses outcomes 2 and 3. |
| 1. **What assignment or survey did you use to assess the outcomes and what method (criteria or rubric) did you use to evaluate the assignment?** If the assignment (activity, survey, etc.) does not correspond to the activities indicated in the timeline on the SOAP, please indicate why. Please clearly indicate how the assignment/survey is able to measure a specific outcome. If after evaluating the assessment you concluded that the measure was not clearly aligned or did not adequately measure the outcome please discuss this in your report. Please include the benchmark or standard for student performance in your assessment report (if it is stated in your SOAP then this information can just be copied into the report). An example of an expectation or standard would be “On outcome 2.3 we expected at least 80% of students to achieve a score of 3 or above on the rubric.”   The knowledge of political science outcome measure is assessed with our pre-test / post-test. This is a quiz that asks six fundamental questions regarding knowledge that should be acquired as part of a political science degree. The quiz was developed by the political science department faculty in 2007, with a revision done in 2010. (We do not use benchmarks of student performance).  The rubrics used to assess student writing and analytical thinking (in PLSI 150) were created and approved by the faculty a few years ago. |
| 1. **What did you discover from the data?** Discuss the student performance in relation to your standards or expectations. Be sure to clearly indicate how many students did (or did not) meet the standard for each outcome measured. Where possible, indicate the relative strengths and weaknesses in student performance on the outcome(s).   Pre-test / post-test knowledge assessment  As laid out in our SOAP, the knowledge measure is assessed with pre-test and post-test quizzes. The pre-test is always given in our introductory course, PLSI 1. We then administer the exact same quiz to all graduating seniors. The results presented here are the results of the post-test administered this year compared with pre-test from four years ago, which is more or less the time when these same students likely took PLSI 1. In 2011-12 the average pre-test grade was 3.78 on a scale of 1 to 6 (the highest possible average score is 6). This is the base-line against which we assess student knowledge when they graduate. The 2017-18 post-test average was 5.4, which is only 0.1 below last year’s score. We still feel that students are acquiring knowledge relevant to the major. It is also worth noting that few students got the wrong answer on any of the post-test questions, indicating that there is no particular piece of knowledge that was systematically lacking.  Writing rubric  Copies of writing assignments by students in required upper level courses (except PLSI 150) are provided to the assessment coordinator. A sample of these papers are then assessed with the appropriate rubric to see how well students are fulfilling the writing requirement. There are six questions on the rubric, all scaled 1 to 5. The average score was 3.6, which is more or less what it has been the last several years.  Policy memo analysis  Students usually struggle with this writing assignment because they are not used to the format of a formal policy memo. They typically approach it like a thesis paper. The intent of the writing assignment is to have them identify a policy problem and its causes, develop criteria for developing solutions, and evaluate solutions against this objective criteria. This is a standard approach in the public policy field. After reviewing the Fall 2017 memos, students have the most difficulty with the proper identification of a problem and separating the causes from the consequences. Many used data to illustrate the problem, but do not always use the most valid data to demonstrate a particular problem. Students also struggled with the evaluation of solutions. This requires a higher level of analytical thinking, which some students are able to do, but perhaps a majority of the class cannot. Many have a difficult time using research to evaluate their solutions against a set of criteria. In terms of students’ writing ability, sentence structure and word usage are problems. This detracts from the clarity of their points and logical flow of their arguments. |
| 1. **What changes did you make as a result of the data?** Describe how the information from the assessment activity was reviewed and what action was taken based on the analysis of the assessment data.   Here are some of the modifications the Department is making in response to this data and data from previous assessments:   * Two years ago the department launched a full scale review of its curriculum, both required and electives. That work is ongoing. * We have now transferred all of our lower division advising to the college’s advising center, but some major advising will remain with the faculty * The knowledge assessment from the pre-test / post-test showed strength in student learning, so no changes are necessary there * The writing assessment showed only minor improvement, so we will continue to emphasize a variety of writing assignments in our courses * To help students better focus their efforts based on their interests, we have reorganized our courses into four unofficial “tracks”: American politics, public administration, public law, and international relations * One of our faculty members is now co-director of the college’s Institute for Public Leadership, which offers even more internship opportunities to students * Most importantly, we have decided to create a capstone for the major. Students will choose one of three options: take a course on writing a significant research paper, complete a political or government internship (and write a paper), or go on a study abroad experience (and write a paper).   Overall, the faculty in the Political Science department will continue improving the program student learning outcome assessment activities and initiate assessment of core competencies in areas of oral and written communication, critical thinking, information literary and quantitative reasoning. This core competency assessment of core competencies can be infused with the existing SOAP as it evolves and develops, or as part of a university-wide evaluation process. |
| 1. **What assessment activities will you be conducting in the 2018-2019 AY?** List the outcomes and measures or assessment activities you will use to evaluate them. These activities should be the same as those indicated on your current SOAP timeline; if they are not please explain.   The same three. |
| 1. **What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?** Please provide a brief description of progress made on each item listed in the action plan. If no progress has been made on an action item, simply state “no progress.”   Our last program review found our department to be very strong. There were only a few weak areas. One was in advising, we simply did not do enough of it for the undergraduate students. We are continuing to re-evaluate and change the way we do advising with much of it being now transferred to the college advising center.  The lack of diversity was also noted in our review. Since that time we have completed four searches for tenure-track faculty. Two of our new hires are female, and the other two are of non-Caucasian ethnic backgrounds.  Most importantly, as noted above, we are developing a new capstone course for the political science major. This emphasizes writing, as well the opportunity to have meaningful experiences with which to end their time at Fresno State. |