

I. Executive Summary

The focus of assessment in Political Science for 2014-2015 has been a preliminary examination of the structure of the major and individual course offerings within our major and the adequacy of our assessment itself. Given historical enrollment data and trends within the discipline, we determined that our course offerings need to be updated to reflect student interest and student needs and we have begun the process of offering tutorials in subjects such as race, gender, international conflict and media. Revision of the major structure will be considered over the coming year.

In the course of performing a curricular review at the request of EPC, we determined that our current assessment plan is inadequate and does not reflect our goals or the character of our major as it currently exists (or as we hope it will evolve – see above). We adopted goals modified from the Political Science major at Goucher College as a model for our curriculum map but agree that much more in-depth work needs to be done. We are currently reviewing resources from the American Political Science Association as well as examining practices of comparable departments as we revise our assessment plan (originally adopted to serve the now defunct Public Affairs major).

Our intent was to continue our previous focus on the senior project but our two anticipated seniors did not materialize for various reasons (both will graduate 2016).

Summary of Annual Assessment Review and Planning Discussion

While we had originally anticipated being able to continue our focus of the senior experience, our two seniors did not progress toward graduation as expected and did not go through the thesis process. This left us with the opportunity for the primary focus of assessment for 2014-15 to be the nature of our assessment process itself. We have determined that our current plan, which we expected to modify, is not relevant and is really in need of complete revision. Our attempt to apply goals in our curricular review revealed that our basic and overarching goals need to be updated and modernized and that appropriate objectives can only be conceptualized once that task has been completed. We expect that this revision of our assessment plan will be completed in tandem with the task of updating the major itself. Previous years assessment of our senior thesis model will be included there.

One alteration of our major that we did complete in 2014-15 was to update catalog copy to reflect our vision of the major. This was done through revision of section III of our major in terms of identifying related disciplines and courses that students can use to fulfill the “related

disciplines” requirement of the major. Substantively, this included the expansion of relevant courses, a more intentional selection of courses available, and a review of what is actually offered across campus. We will maintain the flexibility that other courses can be considered with permission.

Finally, one goal arising out of assessment from 2013-14 was to increase our focus on our off-campus learning opportunities such as our Public Leadership Educational Network (PLEN), Model United Nations (MUN) and Marist College Albany Internship Programs (AIP). Cultivating student interest in these programs is a priority for the major and we are pleased to report progress across all three programs: we sent our first student to AIP in Spring 2015 and she reports an excellent experience; we are working with other PLEN members at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in terms of modeling our promotional materials upon their successful platform and making connections for students interested in PLEN; and we have begun the process of revising the model for our very successful MUN program to ensure continued student interest and institutional support.

II. Plans for Coming Year

Due to faculty leave, progress on a new assessment plan and new major structure will be limited during 2015-16. That said, ongoing discussions and experimentation with tutorials will continue. Renewed assessment of the senior experience will be possible with an anticipated number of 6 graduating seniors and this information will be incorporated into the new major and assessment plans.

III. Updated Assessment Plan

An updated assessment plan is the major focus for the coming year.

IV. Summary of Data Used

Data used for this report are anecdotal recollections and experiences of faculty 2014-2015.