



**SELF-STUDY**

Undergraduate Program

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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**SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY**

SUBMITTED 2<sup>ND</sup> NOVEMBER, 2015

*Drafted by Cynthia Boaz on behalf of POLS Department Faculty*

## Table of Contents

<u>Category</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction.....	3
Charge and Overview.....	3
Itinerary for External Reviewer Visit.....	5
II. The Department.....	6
Departmental Mission.....	6
Vision and Goals of the Department.....	6
Faculty Profiles.....	8
III. Undergraduate Program	
Overview of Undergraduate Program.....	12
Student Learning Outcomes.....	12
American Politics.....	13
International Relations.....	14
Political Theory.....	14
Comparative Politics.....	15
Student Clientele.....	16
Diversity of Undergraduate Clientele.....	16
Special Opportunities for Undergraduates.....	21
Performance of Undergraduate Program.....	23
Skill Indicators and Outcomes.....	23
Assessment Instruments.....	25
Strengths and Weaknesses of Undergraduate Program.....	29
Outcome-Specific Data on Program Performance.....	30
Critical Thinking, Writing Skills, and Civic Literacy.....	34
Faculty Contributions to University and Community.....	36
POLS 302 and Academic Advising.....	38
Specific Suggestions for Improvement.....	42
IV. Action Plan.....	43
V. Conclusions and Prospects for the Future.....	45
Appendix I. BA in Political Science Major Requirements	
Appendix II. Members of the SSU Political Science Department 1960 – 2015	
Appendix III. Political Science Student Focus Group Exit Survey and Data	
Appendix IV. Copy of External Reviewer Report	

## **I. Introduction**

### ***Charge and Overview***

Per Sonoma State University’s Long-Range Academic Plan, CSU system policies, WASC standards, and the standards of external accrediting bodies, all academic units at Sonoma State are required to develop assessment programs and to measure progress of established learning outcomes. Assessment plans result in a “document that outlines what empirical data will be collected, by whom, for the assessment each of the learning outcomes (typically in a multi-year cycle); the process for reviewing the data, policies and procedures to guide discussion and feedback of the results; and the process for modifying the course, program or curriculum to improve student learning.”<sup>1</sup>

As discussed in our previous departmental report, assessment programs are composed of an articulation of department learning goals and objectives; a check on the existing degree of alignment between the objectives and curriculum; the implementation of teaching strategies by faculty in order to accomplish these goals; the development of direct measures to ascertain the effectiveness of these strategies, and the use of this information to evaluate and revise curricula appropriately in order to insure program effectiveness.

It is the primary goal of the Sonoma State University Department of Political Science (POLS) to prepare students to assume the duties and obligations of democratic citizenship. This includes developing knowledge and skills useful in public service and an understanding of human behavior as it relates to politics. Students are also taught how to analyze and understand global issues and current events, and are trained in appropriate research techniques for the study of political processes.

In order to achieve these goals, the Political Science Department seeks to create a curriculum and a department culture that enhances student knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of political concepts and theories. This report assesses and discusses the degree to which we believe we are successfully achieving these objectives, and considers how we can continue to develop our considerable strengths as a program.

In many ways, this is a strange, but especially critical time to engage in program review and assessment. The past seven years have been characterized by a protracted state-level budget crisis in the CSU system that has put considerable strain on our faculty members and our ability as a department to continue meeting and exceeding our program goals, as we deal with a net loss in faculty members, significantly increased workloads, and a demoralized campus environment in which students struggle to meet degree and graduation requirements in a timely manner. Over this period, our department has face a number of externally-imposed constraints, which have impacted the breadth and number of courses offered and our capacities as academic advisors, all of which will be discussed in more depth later.

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<sup>1</sup>*Assessing Academic Programs in Higher Education* by Mary J. Allen

We are a department that prides itself on being realistic. We recognize that there are some areas in our program that need improvement, and we discuss those at length later in this document. But we are also a department of considerable strengths, namely in the form of our faculty themselves. We believe that program weaknesses are due primarily to the chronic deprivation of resources necessary to keep the program running to the standards we have set for ourselves and our students over the years. It is true, as this document will detail, that in recent years we have managed to do a lot with a little. But the asymmetry between demands and resource capacities is untenable over the long term, and we hope that this document will make the case that given a bit more support, and perhaps collaboration, on the part of the University, we can not only successfully address gaps between our goals and outcomes, but can continue to evolve in a way that fully supports our vision for the department. At its core, political science is about the relationship between citizens and government. As citizens of the University, the faculty in the POLS department appreciate our responsibilities to contribute to the larger mission of Sonoma State. At the same time, when citizens are deprived of basic needs that are necessary to the task of fulfilling their obligations, it becomes incumbent upon government to address those demands in the interest of the larger community. We hope this document will be read in that spirit- as a recognition of the collaborative nature of the academic endeavor- and will respond accordingly.

As discussed in our previous self-study and as also applies here, the Program Review and Assessment Plan contained in this report is formulated on the basis of several assumptions about the assessment process in general and its use in this department in particular. We believe assessment can be a valuable resource, as long as it is carefully conceived and driven by faculty; is used diagnostically and formatively; is not used as a justification for comparison between individual faculty or courses; and is ultimately supported by resources necessary to achieve departmental learning objectives.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Special thank you to my colleague Dr. David McCuan for his guidance on this project, and for drafting the previous review, submitted in 2008, which provided a helpful basis from which to work.

### *Itinerary for External Reviewer Visit: Dr. Kimberly Nalder*

Per the Program Review Policy on the Sonoma State University Affairs website, “the purpose of the external review is to provide an independent and broader perspective on the program. Consultants should hold faculty rank in the same or similar programs, and be a[n] individual of significant professional reputation in the field.”<sup>3</sup> Given these considerations, we have invited Dr. Kimberly Nalder, Professor in the Department of Government at California State University at Sacramento and Director of Project for an Informed Electorate, to conduct our external review. Dr. Nalder’s schedule for April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015 is as follows.\*

9:30 - 10:00am: Arrive on campus, coffee with Cynthia Boaz to discuss process  
10:00 - 10:30am: Meet with Keith Gouveia, POLS lecturer  
10:30 - 11:00am: Meet with John Wingard, Interim Dean of Social Sciences  
11:00 - 11:30am: Meet with David McCuan, Professor POLS  
11:30am - 12:15pm: Meet and classroom tour with Cynthia Boaz, Associate Professor POLS  
12:15 - 1:15pm: Lunch with focus group of current POLS juniors and seniors  
1:15 - 2:00pm: Observe POLS 200 course (Keith Gouveia, instructor)  
2:00 - 2:30pm: Meet with Barry Preisler, POLS lecturer  
2:30 - 3:00pm: Meet with Catherine Nelson, Professor and Chair POLS  
3:00 - 3:30pm: Break (open time)  
3:30 - 4pm: Meet with Andrew Rogerson, Provost and VP for Academic Affairs  
4:00 - 4:30pm: Meet with David Hartranft in Elaine Sundberg’s office in Academic Programs  
5:00 - 6:00pm: Dinner with Cynthia, David, and other colleagues

\* Subject to additional meetings as time and faculty schedules allow.

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<sup>3</sup> SSU University Affairs/Policy/Program Review- <http://www.sonoma.edu/uaffairs/policies/programreview.htm>

## **II. The Department**

### ***Departmental Mission***

The mission of the B.A. degree program in Political Science is to promote knowledge and understanding of politics and society through instruction and scholarship in the areas of American government, comparative government, political theory, public policy and analysis, and international relations. The Department seeks to develop in our students the skills of reading, research, analysis, writing, speaking, and political participation, and to promote the values of democratic citizenship. The Department serves students, the discipline, the university, and the broader community through teaching, research, and community service.

### ***Vision and Goals of the Department***

There is a long-standing consensus in the Department of Political Science that our students should receive a broad liberal arts education. We do not see our role simply to train students for a particular profession or vocation. Rather, we see our goal as creating an intellectual environment where students can develop their academic skills, think more critically about the world, and prepare to become more thoughtful citizens.

Unlike some Social Science disciplines, Political Science has never been dominated by one epistemology or set of theories. In fact, by its very nature, Political Science deals with recurring and current debates and controversies. This allows our discipline to draw on many approaches and fields, and allows for a degree of theoretical and pedagogical pluralism unavailable to faculty in some disciplines. The department's curriculum reflects these values, and in our classrooms, there is both facilitation and encouragement of informed critical debate on theory, processes, and current issues related to the field. The success of this approach is reflected in our graduates' own testimony, as noted later in the report.

The Department also believes that pluralism and diversity are not possible without respect for the values of pedagogical autonomy and academic freedom. We agree that all faculty members should have freedom to design their own courses and syllabi. Although we require some courses for our majors, we would not expect everyone who may teach these core courses to approach them in exactly the same. Each member of our faculty has his or her own perspectives and areas of expertise, and we should allow even required courses to reflect these faculty strengths. This also means that our curriculum should not be so rigid that we cannot incorporate new faculty members and areas of expertise, and perspectives into it.

The political science program at Sonoma State University offers excellent opportunities for the study of government and politics. More than 40 courses cover all the major aspects of the discipline. Students develop an understanding of human behavior as it relates to politics. They learn to discuss and analyze critically the many current public policy issues facing the United States and the world. They are taught how to analyze and understand world affairs

and comparative politics. They are trained in appropriate research techniques for the study of political processes.

By the time a student has completed the degree, our hope is that they have become a more informed global citizen.

The faculty has identified the following as the primary program goals of the department:

- To provide students with foundational knowledge of the major fields in Political Science including American Government, Comparative Politics, Political Theory, and International Relations.
- To provide students with the skills needed for lifelong learning in the area of politics and government.
- To promote the values associated with political literacy necessary for citizens in a democracy.
- To help prepare students for careers in public service, the law, public administration, teaching, politics, government, and business.
- To teach students to think critically about politics and political life and behavior.
- To teach students how to evaluate the legitimacy and functioning of political institutions, the development of public policy, and relations between nations.

## **Political Science Department Faculty Profiles**

The political science faculty is made up of a diverse group of scholars. Most faculty members are active in their own research projects and some regularly offer the opportunity for students to participate in these projects, sometimes in paid positions. Most of the faculty have also traveled extensively abroad.

As of Fall 2015, the department faculty consists of six permanent, full-time members. In addition to the permanent faculty, the department also relies on several long term lecturers and one semi-retired professor. They too contribute in the classroom, in service and in scholarly activity, as well as having substantial professional experience that help enrich student learning. What follows is a brief synopsis of each faculty member's research and teaching interests as well as current scholarly activity.

**Cynthia Boaz (University of California at Davis):** Professor Boaz joined the SSU faculty in 2008. Her scholarship focuses on global nonviolent struggles, civil resistance, quality of democracy, and political communication and media. Boaz contributes to several news and commentary-based media, including *Truthout*, the *Huffington Post*, *Common Dreams*, *Waging Nonviolence*, and *Open Democracy*. She is the Faculty Advisor for the award-winning Model United Nations delegation, which participates annually in the prestigious NMUN conference in New York City. Boaz is also an affiliated scholar with the UNESCO Program in Peace, Conflict and Development Studies at Universitat Jaume I in Castellon, Spain and for ten years has been an academic advisor to D.C.-based human rights educational foundation, the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict. She is also a consultant on nonviolent action and has worked with activists from many countries including Burma, Egypt, Iran, Serbia, and Palestine. She is engaged in an extensive research project on media, metaphors, and narratives of nonviolent struggle in several countries.

**Emily Ray (Virginia Tech):** Professor Ray joined the faculty in Fall 2015. Her research is at the intersection of environmental political theory and environmental politics and policy. She recently completed a book chapter on radical environmentalism for the *Oxford Handbook of Environmental Political Theory*, and co-authored an article presented at the Western Political Science Association conference (2015) analyzing the impacts of tar sands production through feminist and bio-political frameworks. Over the next year, she will be continuing this research on the environmental, political, and social impacts of tar sands production, refinement, and transport with particular interest in the experiences of First Nations communities and women and their legal entanglements with the Canadian government. She is also continuing work on deforestation in the Pacific Northwest and contestations over public policies that enable salvage logging.

**David McCuan (University of California at Riverside):** Professor McCuan joined the faculty in 2003. Dr. McCuan's research focuses on political campaigns and the general impact of ballot measures in the state of California and across the U.S. Professor McCuan



also focuses on terrorism and political violence. He holds a position as a joint faculty member with the U.C. Davis-Sonoma State Joint Doctorate Capital Area North Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Ed.D Program. He has extensive overseas experience that includes teaching and research in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East. He was a Fulbright Teaching Scholar from 2009 to 2010 working in the Czech Republic and also has taught at Jeju National University, Jeju, South Korea. Dr. McCuan was most recently awarded a Schusterman Fellowship for the 2014-2015 Academic Year from Brandeis University. He has an ongoing project for the *California Initiative Project* that examines data and creates case studies on the state's direct democracy experience. He also continues to provide extensive analysis of politics to international, national, regional, and local media outlets.

**Robert McNamara (University of Geneva):** Professor McNamara joined the faculty in 1996. His scholarly interests include the role of civil society in the developing world, with a particular focus on Latin America. Within Latin America, this theme is of importance when considering the history of authoritarianism, and the more recent rise and fall of populists/leftist governments, and the evolving role of civil society and social movements. More specifically, he is interested in the role of gay rights movements within this context. Additionally, his travels and research throughout the developing world are meant to inform his teaching in the areas of international relations and comparative politics of the developing world. Recent travels include Vietnam, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Turkey, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil.

**Catherine Nelson (University of California at Davis):** Professor Nelson joined the faculty in 1996. Catherine Nelson is currently serving as Chair of the Political Science Department. She teaches political theory and American government courses and the department's signature capstone Senior Research Seminar. Professor Nelson specializes in contemporary political theory and race, gender and politics. Her current research investigates the presence of neoliberal ideology in political campaign commercials. Her faculty development activities involve the integration of appropriate technology into the classroom and migration to an accessible syllabus format.

**Diane Parness (Georgetown University):** Professor Parness joined the faculty in 1991. She specializes in the politics of the left in Europe. Recent research projects include the fracturing and decline of the Left in Germany, and the consequent transformation of the German party system. This ongoing project involved travel to Berlin and interviews with party leaders of the SPD and Die Linke. She's also working on a project on the rise of the Right in Hungary, and particularly the influence of *Jobbik*, a key nationalist, xenophobic, and antisemitic party. Professor Parness' directorship of SSU's *Holocaust & Genocide Lecture Series* has also opened up a broad and compelling area of interest and study. She went to *Yad Vashem* in Israel last summer for the International Conference on Holocaust Studies, which introduced her to multiple aspects of genocide research. Professor Parness' most recent focus is the evolution and character of antisemitism and xenophobia in Europe, particularly in France. In the coming year, she will travel there to interview academics, leaders of the Jewish community, and members of the right-wing party Front National.

**Andy Merrifield (University of California at Davis):** Professor Merrifield joined the faculty in 1987. His scholarly interests include executive leadership in politics and public budgeting politics, particularly at the local level. In the former he is interested in how personal behavior and personal relationships may impact on policy success. In the latter area he has looked at how localities may alter policy priorities to pursue revenue, and in other cases subsidize certain economic sectors even when these subsidies may not benefit the community. In the past Merrifield provided analysis on elections, policy making and public institutions, for local, regional, state and national media. He has traveled throughout the United States and in much of Europe. This travel has informed both his teaching and his scholarly interests. Merrifield teaches courses in American government, modern political ideas, quantitative research methods and public administration. He is currently enrolled in the Faculty Early Retirement Program.

**Barry Preisler (American University of Beirut, Lebanon):** Professor Preisler has been teaching in the Political Science Department at Sonoma State for over 15 years. Working on his experience in Lebanon, he attended graduate school at UC Berkeley, and wrote his dissertation on Lebanon's collapse into civil war entitled "Lebanon: The Rationality of National Suicide." He received his Ph.D. degree from Berkeley in 1987. Dr. Preisler has taught many different courses for the department over the years but his primary area of expertise is the Middle East. He has taught over twenty different courses on the politics, history, anthropology and literature of the Middle East. He has published papers on Muslim/Christian relations in Lebanon, as well as the role of Hizbullah in the political life of Lebanon. He has represented Sonoma State University twice at the Oxford Roundtable conferences held at Oxford in the UK. Other than courses on the Middle East, Dr. Preisler often teaches International Political Economy, Modern Political Ideologies, Ideas and Institutions, and American Political Institutions.

**Richard Hertz (Sonoma State University):** Professor Hertz is a longtime Lecturer in Political Science. His teaching specialties are the American Political System and California State Politics and Government. In addition to teaching, he operates Hertz Research, a public opinion polling, market research, and software development consultancy. He has extensive experience developing websites that make it easy for voters to learn about their ballot choices, including their largest financial contributors. These platforms used by *ABC-TV Network-Owned* stations and others also provide those on the ballot with a way of reaching a large audience, at no cost. Hertz Research has also done pioneering work for the *Sacramento Bee* that makes it easier for journalists to report on money in California politics by deciphering the state's antiquated campaign finance database. He has also developed advanced statistical analysis routines and software applications in other fields including professional baseball.

**Keith Gouveia (Gonzaga University School of Law):** Professor Gouveia teaches four to five sections of Pols 200 each semester. He has also taught Pols 421 (Federal and Intergovernmental Relations) and 494/560 (Courts and Judicial Behavior.) Additionally he

worked as a special consultant on the Student Learning Outcome development committee for Political Science 200 during the Fall of 2007. Professor Gouveia practiced law briefly as a personal injury attorney in Washington State and then worked in Washington, DC for U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye from 1993-2000 as a legislative assistant. His areas of expertise are foreign affairs/policy, justice/judiciary and energy and water issues.

**Bob Switky (Claremont Graduate University):** Professor Switky holds a Master's degree in International Studies and a Ph.D. in Political Science from the Claremont Graduate University. Prior to his recent stint at Sonoma State (starting in 2007), Dr. Switky was an Associate Professor at the University of Nebraska in Kearney. He has recently taught the American Political System, Ideas and Institutions, Modern Political Ideologies, War and Politics, and Business Statistics. In addition, this year he has joined the Freshman Year Experience program. His most recent book, *Wealth of an Empire*, explores how Britain secretly financed the first year of its involvement in World War II. He has also co-authored a textbook in international relations and a book on regional trading blocs. He has also published several pedagogical pieces in peer-reviewed journals on such topics as coalition governments and humanitarian intervention. He is currently working on an article regarding attitudes about the use of torture on terrorist suspects.

### **III. Undergraduate Program**

#### ***Overview of Undergraduate Program in Political Science***

The political science major is a relatively open major, allowing students to choose from a wide range of courses and subjects within a general framework that seeks to address each subfield of the discipline.

There is a common core of courses required for majors, which contains a breadth of key topics relevant to the discipline, including the relationship between values, ideology, and politics (POLS 201); current issues and challenges in American politics (POLS 202); conducting research in political science (POLS 302); the comparative study of various countries' political systems and processes (POLS 303); analysis of international relations and global politics (POLS 304); and a senior seminar in which students design and carry out an original research project (POLS 498). Beyond this common core, as part of the additional 20 units required for the major, each student must complete at least one upper-division course in each of the four major subfields of political science: Political Theory, International Relations, Comparative Government, and American Government and Politics. In addition, the department strongly encourages international study abroad for political science students and will arrange for appropriate credits for courses of study at international universities.

A 20-unit minor in political science also is available. Although the minor most often is used in conjunction with such majors as communications, history, economics, criminal justice, and sociology, it can be paired with almost any major offered at the University.

#### ***Student Learning Outcomes for BA in Political Science***

- Upon completion of the program, students will have developed critical thinking skills necessary for the evaluation of social scientific concepts, including the ability to distinguish between, and use, techniques of deductive and inductive reasoning.
- Upon completion of the program, students will develop persuasive analytical thinking and writing skills, e.g. the ability to articulate, support, and defend an argument.
- Upon completion of the program, students will understand the research process in the social sciences, e.g., differences between normative and empirical perspectives; the differences between probabilistic and deterministic reasoning; and the differences between the major analytical approaches used in applied research.
- Upon completion of the program, students will have a developed understanding of the concept of power and how it is manifested in various ways in political interactions, including through the processes of democracy itself.

- Upon completion of the program, students will develop the requisite skills for sophisticated information competency and civic literacy.
- Upon completion of the program, students will comprehend the obligations and expectations of citizenship at all levels.
- Upon completion of the program, students will understand the dynamics between citizens and political institutions for shaping political outcomes.
- Upon completion of the program, students will comprehend the multiple motivations and constraints underlying political behavior.
- Upon completion of the program, students will be able to identify the multi-causal nature that characterizes the political world.
- Upon completion of the program, students will be able to present a reasoned argument in support of a policy position of relevance to Social and Political Science topics.
- Upon completion of the program, students will have designed, implemented, written up, and presented to their capstone seminar an original primary source research project.

In addition to general political science knowledge and skills, each subfield of the discipline calls for and enhances knowledge and skills in specific areas. We describe these expectations below.

### **Specific Skills for American Politics:**

- Upon completion of the program, students will understand the major theoretical schools of thought in the field of Political Science and analytical tools used by scholars conducting research in American politics.
- Upon completion of the program, students will be able to evaluate and compare the constitutional basis of US government with historical and international alternatives.
- Upon completion of the program, students will better understand the role and functioning of the major institutions of American government, including Congress, the presidency, the courts, the bureaucracy, and the institutions of state and local government. Students will understand how these institutions interact with each other and civil society.
- Upon completion of the program, students will better understand the role of mass political behavior in the political process, including the nature and influence of public

opinion, elections, and other forms of political participation including the impact of organizations in the political process, such as political parties, interest groups, and the mass media.

### **Specific Skills for International Relations:**

- Upon completion of the program, students will understand the major theoretical schools and developments and analytical tools used by scholars conducting research in international relations.
- Upon completion of the program, students will have acquired the tools necessary to analyze sophisticated political and social processes across and within nation-states
- Upon completion of the program students will understand the confluence of structural, social, economic, and political factors for shaping international interactions.
- Upon completion of the program students will have a general understanding of relations among nation-states, international organizations, non-state actors and international public policy.
- Upon completion of the program students will understand common concepts such as power, sovereignty, rule of law, human rights, and global governance, as they apply to global politics.

### **Specific Skills for Political Theory:**

- Upon completion of the program, students optimally will have knowledge of the differences between ancient, modern, and contemporary political thought and be familiar with a range of theorists within and outside the traditional canon.
- Upon completion of the program, students will be familiar with the schools of thought advanced by major political philosophers such as Aristotle, Machievelli, Madison, Marx, and Rawls.
- Upon completion of the program, students will understand how theories arise out of and have influence beyond a particular historical context.
- Upon completion of the program students will be able to evaluate differing views of principles central to the study of political theory and the practice of public life, which include justice, freedom, the social contract, democracy, diversity, deconstruction, and power.

### **Specific Skills for Comparative Politics:**

- Upon completion of the program, students will understand the elements of comparative research design including theoretical constructs (such as the state, regime type, civil society, and sub-state actors) central to analysis of comparative politics.
- Upon completion of the program, students will develop an understanding of the causes and consequences of different institutional arrangements.
- Upon completion of the program, students will be able to discuss and analytically compare the interplay of political, economic and social/cultural variables that shape the political systems around the world.
- Upon completion of the program, students will understand how different political systems produce different outputs in terms of, for example, the level of effectiveness of legal and administrative systems, the types of social and economic policy, and the degree of legitimacy of the government among its various regions and ethnic groups.
- Upon completion of the program, students will develop an understanding of the major theoretical schools and developments and analytical tools used by scholars conducting research in comparative politics.
- Upon completion of the program, students will be competent in current events as they relate to issues of stability, legitimacy, and quality of governance in states around the world.

## *Student Clientele and Demographics*

Below are several tables and graphs detailing the demographic data of our students for thirteen semesters from Fall 2008 through Fall 2014. The data for the POLS Department comes from SSU's Office of Institutional Research, and the data for the SSU campus comes from the University web page.<sup>4</sup> Please note for Tables 2 and 3 that the ethnicity breakout categories sum to less than the total number of majors for each semester. This is due to non-responses to this question, and is also why percentages are not included in those tables, as they would not reflect all majors but only the ones who answered the question. See Footnote #6 for explanation of total numbers.

**Table 1:  
POLS Student Sex by Semester, Fall 2008- Fall 2014<sup>5</sup>**

	F08	S09	F09	S10	F10	S11	F11	S12	F12	S13	F13	S14	F14
<b>Female</b>	62 (46%)	62 (46%)	63 (47%)	63 (46%)	63 (46%)	63 (44%)	58 (40%)	58 (40%)	58 (40%)	60 (44%)	62 (41%)	61 (45%)	55 (38%)
<b>Male</b>	73 (54%)	72 (54%)	72 (53%)	74 (54%)	73 (54%)	78 (56%)	89 (60%)	89 (60%)	87 (60%)	74 (56%)	91 (59%)	74 (55%)	89 (62%)
Total Majors	135	134	135	137	136	141	147	147	145	134	153	135	144

**Table 2:  
POLS Student Ethnicity by Semester, Fall 2008- Fall 2014**

	F08	S09	F09	S10	F10	S11	F11	S12	F12	S13	F13	S14	F14
<b>White</b>	75	77	75	75	75	84	95	95	92	84	95	86	84
<b>Non-White</b>	29	32	29	29	29	38	43	44	47	50	50	45	57
Total	104	109	104	104	104	122	138	147	139	134	145	131	141

**Table 3:  
POLS Student Ethnicity (Non-White) by Semester, Fall 2008- Fall 2014**

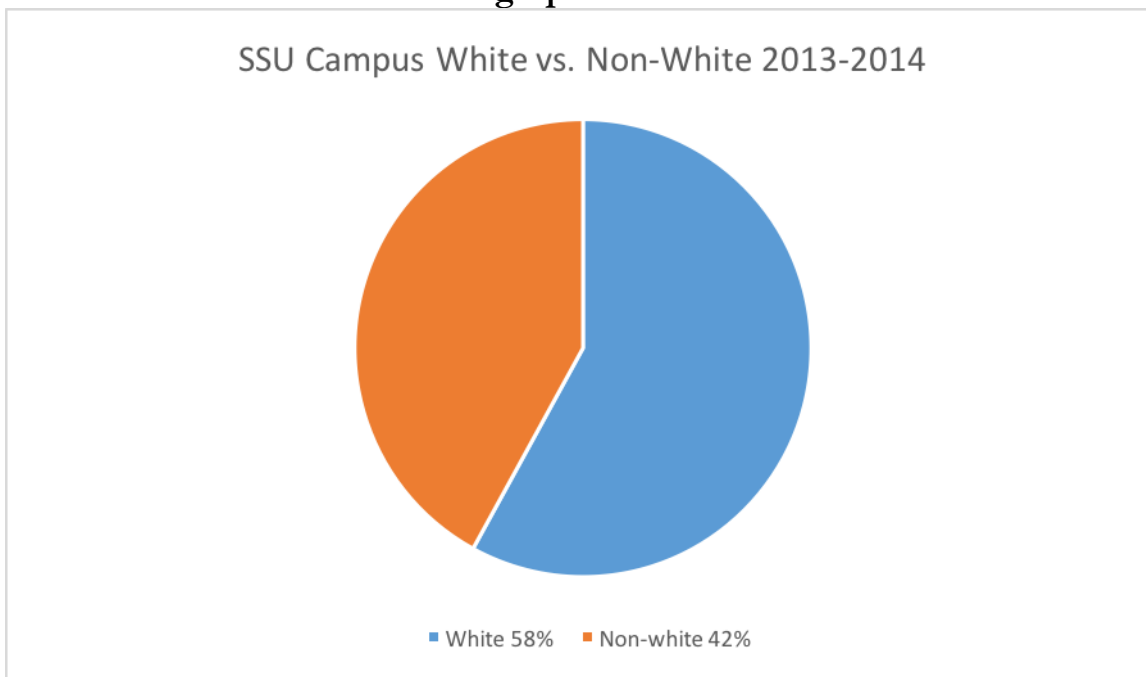
	F08	S09	F09	S10	F10	S11	F11	S12	F12	S13	F13	S14	F14
<b>Black</b>	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	2
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	17	19	17	17	17	21	21	20	29	26	25	19	30
<b>Asian/Pacific Islander</b>	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	3	3	1	2	3	5
<b>American Indian</b>	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	2	3	3	2
<b>Biracial or Multiracial</b>	7	8	7	7	7	10	14	14	10	10	15	15	18
Total	29	32	29	29	29	38	43	44	47	44	50	45	57

<sup>4</sup> URL for campus data: <http://www.sonoma.edu/about/facts/#students>

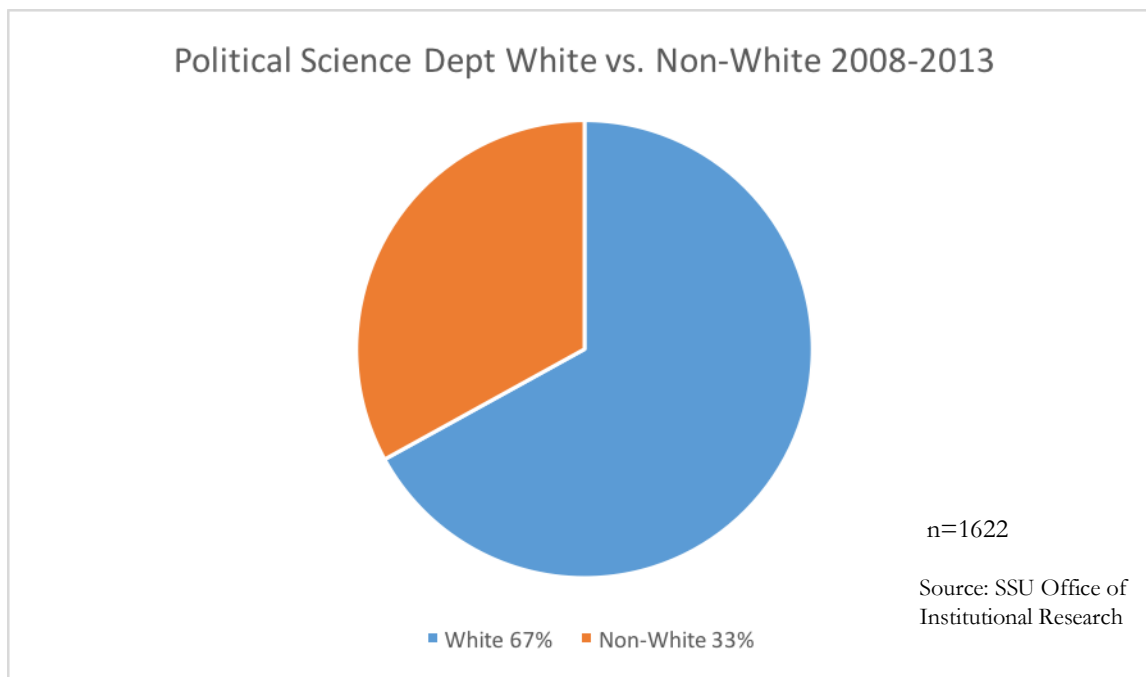
<sup>5</sup> Percentages are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent.



**Figure 1:**  
**SSU Race Demographics- General 2013-2014**

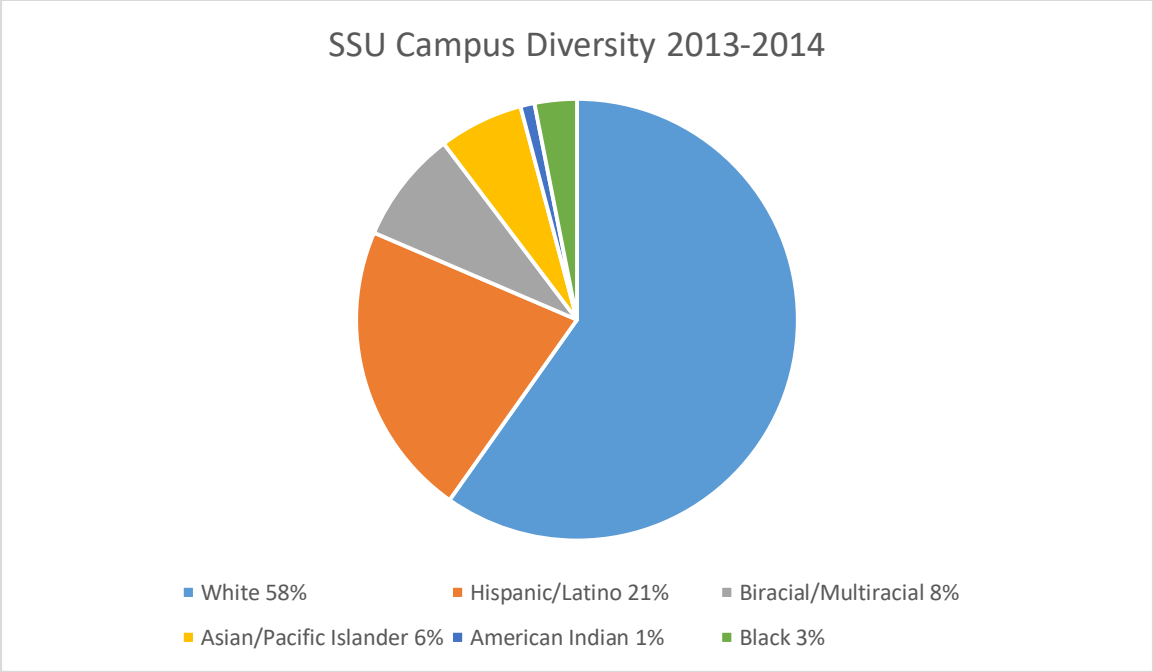


**Figure 2:**  
**POLS Department Average of Race Demographics- General<sup>6</sup>**

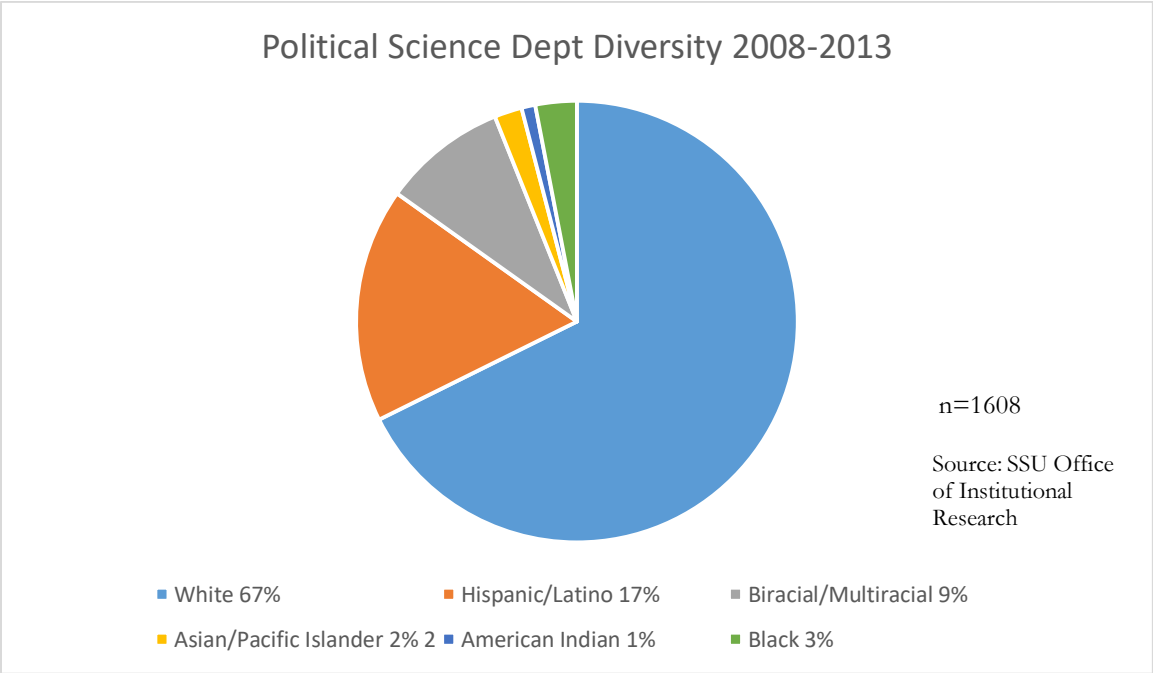


<sup>6</sup> To get these percentages, I summed the number of white/non-white students and male/female students over the thirteen-semester period, and computed the percentage. Total n= 1823 majors by sex, n= 1622 majors by ethnicity general, and n= 1608 by ethnicity specific.

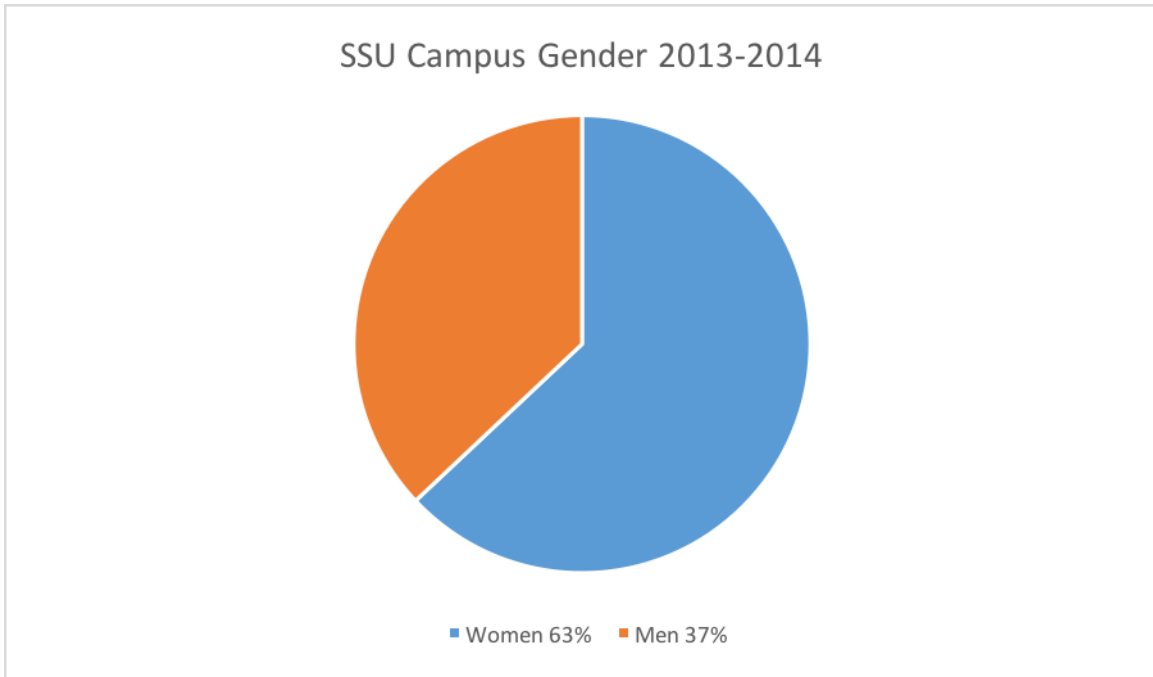
**Figure 3:  
SSU Race Demographics- Specific 2013-2014**



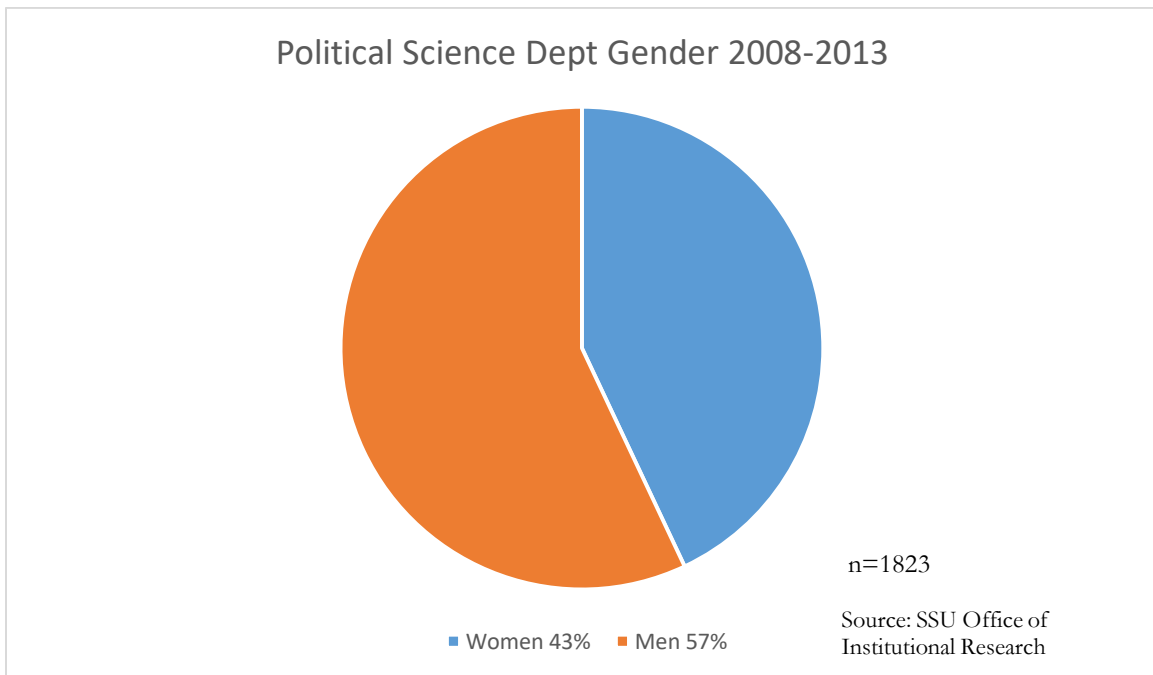
**Figure 4:  
POLS Department Average of Race Demographics- Specific**



**Figure 5:**  
**SSU Campus Gender 2013-2014**



**Figure 6:**  
**POLS Department Average of Gender 2008-2013**



## Discussion of Data

The aggregate data for the POLS department varies in size from  $n=1608$  for specific ethnicity to  $n=1823$  for student gender. These numbers provide some comparability to university data (for which  $n$  is not provided, but presumably represents the entire student body), however the POLS data is compiled over thirteen semesters, while the campus data is just for one year, 2013-2014. So the comparisons should be considered illustrative, but not strict, given the variance in size and scope.

As data from Fall 2008 (the time of the previous program review and assessment) through Fall 2014 suggests, achieving diversity amongst our student clientele has been a long-term challenge for the department. Although Sonoma State University itself is not especially ethnically diverse, the Political Science Department is even more likely than the campus at large to be both white and male. In fact, the department has a smaller percentage of both Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic/Latino students than the campus overall (see Table 3 and Figures 1 and 2), and only slightly more Biracial or Multiracial students (9% vs. 8%). As Figure 6 illustrates, the POLS department also has a majority male students (averaging 57%, and with the percentage of women bottoming out in Fall 2014 at 38%), which is particularly interesting given that women comprise 63% of of SSU students overall.

The university's most recent strategic plan identifies Diversity and Inclusiveness as a key objective, with the first and proximate goal being to "Ensure that all student, faculty, staff, and administration constituencies are representative of the diverse population of California." The reasons for this are obvious: it is difficult to create a welcoming environment in the absence of genuine multiculturalism. On this first goal, the Political Science Department (and the university generally) clearly need to do a better job of attracting more students from a broader range of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

However, as Dr. Nalder discusses in her report (see appendix), this issue seems to be endemic to Political Science departments generally, and she suggests that it may speak a larger issue related to the perceived lack of accessibility of traditional political science course offerings. She proposes, and this author agrees, that one possible fix is to seek to actively promote more diversity amongst our faculty, in the courses offered, and in co-curricular activities and events the department sponsors. Four of our six permanent faculty are women, which is a positive step towards modeling more gender balance amongst our student clientele. The department shall continue to press for additional tenure track hires, continue to reach out to all qualified applicants with all the special attention allowed by law, and continue to push for a reasonable base salary so that we can effectively compete with similar institutions in the CSU and elsewhere. Additionally, while the number of white POLS majors has stayed relatively flat over the thirteen semesters, the number of non-white majors has nearly doubled during that same time. So the trend is in the right direction, it's just moving very slowly.

## ***Special Opportunities for Undergraduates***

Although we do not see our role as a training ground for particular vocations, we do seek to create opportunities for students to pursue these interests. The Department provides these opportunities through advising, internships, co-curricular events, and club activities. As a result, our undergraduates have a number of opportunities to supplement their classroom education through co-curricular or cross-disciplinary programs coordinated or directed by our faculty members. All of these opportunities are in the service of departmental goals, including the promotion of responsible citizenship and civic-mindedness. These opportunities include some of the following.

### **Political Science Internships**

The department offers several programs through which students may gain practical experience while earning academic credit. Internships in the POLS department are divided into two categories. Currently, Professor McCuan coordinates internships with political campaigns and elected representatives and Professor Boaz coordinates internships with non-profits and other non-governmental organizations. In recent years, students have been placed in a diverse range of internships including Rep. Mike Thompson's office, Rep. Jared Huffman's campaign, Meulrath Public Affairs (political consultants), the North Bay Organizing Project, the North Bay Labor Council, Sonoma County Conservation Alliance, the Metta Center for Nonviolence Education, and many more. Internship opportunities are available in both Fall and Spring semesters, are flexible in terms of units and schedules, and can be designed to work around the student's coursework. In addition to the regular internships, the department also sends selected students to the state Capitol to participate in the Sacramento Semester Program under which they work with members of the Legislature, officers of the executive branch, or lobbyists to gain a fuller understanding of the political process firsthand.

### **Model United Nations (POLS 345)**

For many years, Sonoma State has participated in the world's largest and most prestigious simulation of the United Nations, the National Model United Nations (NMUN). The MUN program is coordinated out of the Political Science department and corresponds to an upper-division elective course, POLS 345: Model United Nations. With the assistance of IRA funds, the program takes 20-25 students per year to New York City for NMUN. For the past five years, the Sonoma State delegation has received awards for excellence at this highly competitive conference. This experiential learning opportunity has provided hundreds of undergraduates over the years with enhanced skills in public speaking, research, writing, collaboration, communication, and diplomacy. It is an invaluable component of our department's offerings.

## **Holocaust and Genocide Lecture Series (POLS 307)**

This lecture series recently celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> year on the SSU campus. It is an exceptionally popular program, offered for GE credit, and coordinated out of the POLS department. In recent years, Political Science undergraduates have worked as teaching assistants in the series. The program gives undergraduates the opportunity to learn first-hand from witnesses or victims of the mass atrocities they study in other courses. Perhaps the most powerful aspect of this series is the personal eyewitness accounts of Holocaust survivors and more recently survivors of the Rwandan, Cambodian, and Bosnian genocides. Students are encouraged to consider issues of individual accountability, reconciliation, and to formulate ideas about how genocide might be prevented. The course supplements many of our existing course offerings in International Relations and Comparative Politics.

## **Panetta Fellowship**

Each year, one upper-division Political Science student has the opportunity to be nominated by the department faculty for the Panetta Institute Congressional Internship Program. The institute selects one student from each California State University to participate in a 13-week, all-expenses paid program working in a Washington D.C. congressional office. The program was founded by Leon and Sylvia Panetta, and is run through a non-profit devoted entirely to the support of this program. Many of the department's past Panetta Fellows have gone on to permanent positions on the Hill or elsewhere in D.C. as a result of their placement in this program.

## **Political Science Student Club**

As of the Fall of 2014, a group of POLS students have re-chartered the Political Science Student Club after several years of quiet. There are currently about a dozen active members. The club supports POLS majors in several ways: career advising, sponsoring debates and panels on topics of interest to majors, networking with organizations and people in vocations of interest to students, resume and curriculum vitae guidance, and graduate school information. The club is supported by all members of the departmental faculty, who serve as resources and offer guidance to the student members.

## **Research Assistantships and Collaborations with Faculty**

In recent years, members of our department have engaged in research collaborations with undergraduate students and/or have hired students as research assistants on major projects. These collaborations have resulted in attendance and presentations at professional academic conferences, including the National Conference on Undergraduate Research. These experiences offer especially valuable tools for our students who hope to do graduate study or to work in a research capacity with an organization. We hope to continue and expand these collaborations and research opportunities for our students into the future.

## ***Performance of Undergraduate Program***

The process of periodic review is essential to the ongoing evolution of programs for two reasons. When an entity reflects on its own performance, as we do in this self-study, its assessment, and when others assess our performance, its accountability. Assessment should not be considered an end in itself, but a vehicle for the improvement of education and student development, as better programs tend to ensure better student outcomes.<sup>7</sup>

Here we discuss what we as a department have identified as the major skills, skill indicators and assessment instruments, and outcomes for the degree in Political Science.

### **Skill Indicators for POLS Degree**

#### ***A. Information Processing and Competency Skills***

*Outcome 1:* SSU Political Science graduates will acquire the techniques for skillfully reading and interpreting different types of writing, such as textbooks, scholarly books and journal articles, case law, newspaper articles, government documents (including those that employ statistics), and original philosophical texts.

##### *Outcome 1 Indicators:*

Summaries in writing of material from textbooks not reviewed in class, description of the contents of scholarly books and journals and government documents in research papers, analysis of decisions in court cases in either examinations or papers, analysis of original philosophical texts in either examinations or papers, and summaries and analyses of newspaper articles either orally or in writing.

*Outcome 2:* Graduates will be able to assess information, including demonstrating the ability to distinguish between the central and peripheral aspects of a piece of writing, and between well-substantiated arguments and unsupported assertions.

*Outcome 2 Indicator:* Critical review of a piece of writing, stating the central points and assessing the quality of the arguments, including identifying any unsound premises or logical fallacies.

*Outcome 3:* Graduates will be able to find scholarly Political Science information using books, peer-reviewed journals, and available electronic databases and demonstrate knowledge of and ability to use social science methods of analysis.

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<sup>7</sup> “Assessment, Accountability, and Student Learning Outcomes” by Richard Frye.

*Outcome 3 Indicators:* Write a 20-30 page paper, as well as shorter research analyses, demonstrating the ability to do research from a number of sources. Avoid plagiarism and cite sources in all research papers.

***B. Written Communication Skills:***

*Outcome 4:* Graduates will be able to write knowledgeably, correctly, clearly and logically.

*Outcome 4 Indicators:* In written work (exams and papers, for example), students will discuss and develop arguments of the relationships among concepts; provide and evaluate evidence for assertions; develop general ideas from a mass of particulars; compare and contrast both ideas and institutions; and defend values, ideas and systems of ideas from criticism.

***C. Listening and Speaking Skills:***

*Outcome 5:* Graduates will be adept at listening, taking notes, and commenting on material presented in class.

*Outcome 5 Indicators:* Retention of material based solely on lecture material, as measured by exams, short quizzes and feedback sheets. The goal here is to perform at a level consistent with passing a minimum standard of performance at the grade of “C” (75%) or better. Consistent with this performance would be regular class participation of multiple-sentence comments during by each student each semester demonstrating knowledge of or insight into course material.

*Outcome 6:* Graduates will be able to participate effectively in classroom dialogue on controversial political subjects, challenging the facts and ideas presented by others and defending their own.

*Outcome 6 Indicator:* Effective participation in classroom debates and panel presentations.

*Outcome 7:* Graduates will be skilled at oral presentations and argument.

*Outcome 7 Indicators:* Requirement in at least one course to make a presentation and/or defend a position that develops an argument. In Senior Seminar, for example, students are required to present high-quality oral presentation of 30 to 60 minutes based on personal research. They will demonstrate verbal reasoning by an oral defense of their work with students and faculty.

***D. Additional Skills:***

*Outcome 8:* Students will take responsibility for their own learning.



*Outcome 8 Indicators:* Timely and regular mentoring and meetings with assigned POLS Advisor. Graduation and academic progress checks by student working with their Advisor at the beginning, middle and end of students' time in the major. Requirement that students select their own paper or project topic in Senior Seminar and other courses. Can also include leadership in clubs or other voluntary, co-curricular, and/or extra-curricular activity.

*Outcome 9:* Students will have an understanding of the field of Political Science as a whole and be able to relate knowledge in the different sub-fields to each other.

*Outcome 9 Indicator:* Evidence of Social Science research developed within the Senior Seminar, where this subject is emphasized.

*Outcome 10:* Students will have the experience of making personal contributions to political knowledge and understanding, both individually and by working collaboratively with others. Students, for example, will see the relationship of Political Science to the real world of politics and feel empowered to use their political knowledge and sophistication as citizens of their communities, their nation and the world.

*Outcome 10 Indicator:* Participation in at least one joint project, panel presentation or internship that demonstrates use of the skills of active, informed citizenship.

## **Assessment Instruments**

At present, the department is using or plans to use multiple assessment instruments to measure knowledge and skills, including the following:

- Senior Seminar, required of all majors, involving a major research paper on a self-selected topic which goes through multiple drafts and must be presented orally. This course will also include a unit that gives an overview of the field of Political Science.
- Focus groups on the POLS major in sections of Senior Seminar (in the form of an exit survey prior to the time of graduation).
- Periodic review of all our courses to assure that each one is designed to achieve the skills outcomes for the major and the appropriate subject area outcomes.
- Periodic review of the major requirements to ensure that they are designed to achieve our goals and outcomes and that these requirements are linked with skills indicators.
- Improved student advising system, utilizing assigned Advisors for POLS majors.
- Required core courses where students are encouraged to use their political knowledge as citizens, with indicators so that faculty can assess attainment of outcomes.

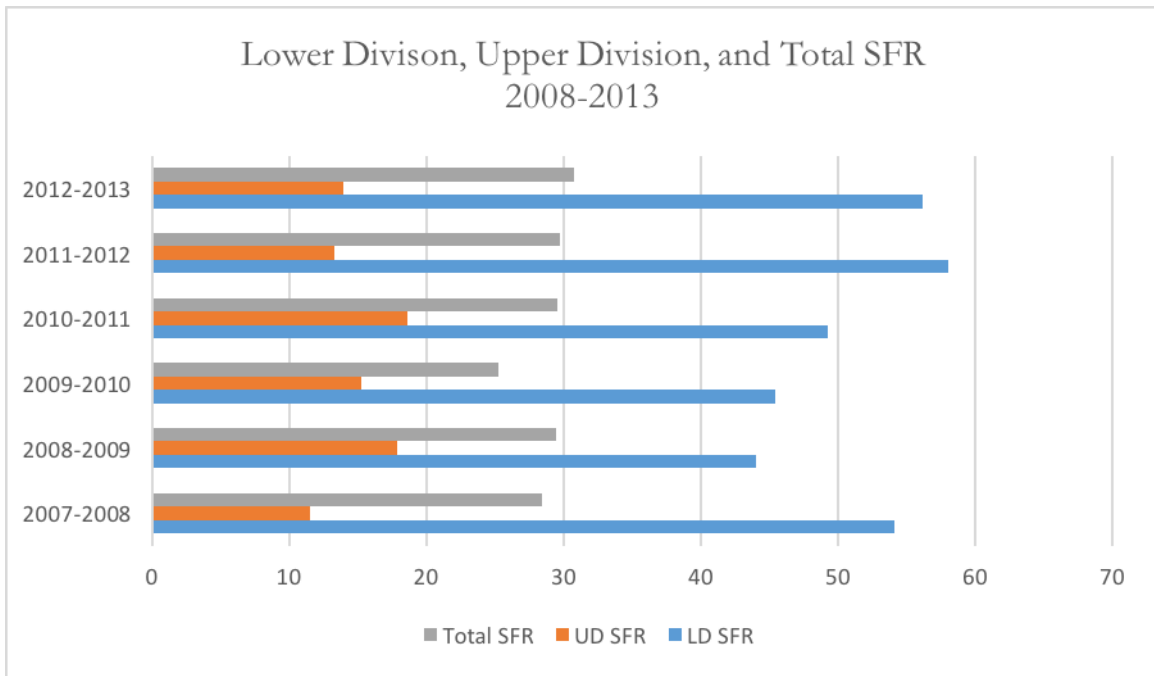
- In general, faculty use of in-course indicators that focus on subject-specific skills and knowledge outcomes.

***Discussion of Political Science Program Statistics and Assessment Data***

Data concerning graduation rates and summary statistics for the POLS Department were compiled from Admissions and Records (for graduation data) and from the SSU Office of Institutional Research, Analytical Studies and Planning for this program review.

We are unable to account for students with minors in POLS or those students with more than one major. Therefore, while the data below are broadly indicative of the POLS Department's workload, in some instances the data may understate or mask actual workload conditions.

**Figure 7:  
Student Faculty Ratio by Year**



**Table 4:  
POLS Department FTES Data, 2008 – 2013<sup>8</sup>**

	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
<b><i>Lower Division</i></b>						
FTES	200.4	146.7	120.1	112.1	173.0	177.2
FTEF	3.7	3.3	2.6	2.3	3.0	3.2
SFR	54.1	44.0	45.4	49.2	58.0	56.1
Majors	60	51	61	60	71	54
<b><i>Upper Division</i></b>						
FTES	64.1	76.6	76.8	73.5	67.3	65.4
FTEF	5.6	4.3	5.2	4.0	5.1	4.7
SFR	11.5	17.9	15.2	18.6	13.3	13.9
Majors	75	84	75	87	74	99
<b><i>Upper and Lower Division</i></b>						
FTES	264.5	223.3	196.9	185.6	240.3	242.6
FTEF	9.3	7.6	7.8	6.3	8.1	7.9
SFR	28.4	29.4	25.2	29.5	29.7	30.7
Majors	135	135	136	147	145	153

<sup>8</sup> Major numbers as of each fall semester. Data only available through AY 2013. It comes from the California State University website: [http://www.calstate.edu/as/stat\\_reports/index.shtml](http://www.calstate.edu/as/stat_reports/index.shtml)

## **Discussion of SFR and FTE Data**

Based on data provided by the CSU, there exists a clear divide in the POLS program statistics between lower division and upper division courses. This is consistent with the trend seen in the last program review and assessment. Figure 7 illustrates the Student Faculty Ratio (SFR) from AY 2007-2008 through AY 2012-2013. The data reflected in Figure 7 represent little change in SFR over the period covered. Examining lower division courses only, SFR increased slightly from 54.1 to 56.1. Examining upper division courses only, SFR also rose more than from 11.5 to 13.9. When lower division and upper division courses are combined, the total SFR rose slightly from 28.4 to 30.7. In summary, in the six-year period examined here, SFR for the POLS department increased across the board. This reflects, but does not fully represent, the extent of our increased workloads during this time.

As one can see from Table 4, the Full-Time Equivalent Student (FTES) ratios from AY 2007-2008 through AY 2012-2013, again reflect a dramatic divide between lower division and upper division courses. Examining lower division courses only, in the period under study, FTES peaked in 2007-2008, then dropped for three years, only to spike up again in the 2011-2012 academic year, peaking at 177.2 in 2012-2013, the last year for which data is available. Examining upper division courses only, in the period under study, FTES stayed relatively consistent, starting at 64.1 in 2007-2008, and concluding at 65.4 in 2012-2013. While FTES for POLS upper division courses remained largely flat over this period of time, looking just at them misses the fact that the brunt of FTES growth affected lower division courses, and as of 2011, quite significantly.

## ***Strengths and Weaknesses of Undergraduate Program***

Various indicators, including student feedback and the post-graduation success of our students, suggest that Political Science has considerable strengths as a department. Many recent grads write that our program is “intellectually stimulating” and that they feel they can “write about or discuss any issue related to current events or politics.” The exit surveys also suggest that a majority of POLS students believe their strongest training has been in the area of critical thinking, which is validating given that this objective is a pre-requisite for the achievement of all the others. The fact that we have suffered a net loss of faculty as well as financial resources and other support over the past several years makes these achievements all the more notable. However, there are still some areas in which we as a department could improve our outcomes. *Please note that n=41* for this data, as the survey response rate was rather low. This makes it very difficult to draw any inferences from the data. As a result, the data presented here should be considered illustrative, but not necessarily representative.

Here, we discuss the primary strengths and weaknesses of the program as determined by student focus group (exit) surveys given to POLS graduates over the past several years. This data comes from surveys administered from Fall 2012 through Fall 2014 (5 semesters).<sup>9</sup>

**Table 5:**  
**POLS Summary Program Performance Fall 2012- Fall 2014: Student Exit Survey<sup>10</sup>**  
Value Range 1 (Strongest Performance) to 7 (Weakest Performance)

	Overall Knowledge	Theoretical Fields	Intellectual Competence	Written & Oral Skills	Responsible Citizenship	Critical Thinking	Analytical Writing	Quantitative Analysis	Understand Society
Median	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	2.0	2.0	2.0
Mean	2.5	2.6	2.5	2.5	2.6	2.3	2.4	2.9	2.7
Mode	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0

Table 5 gives the central tendency data for nine questions selected from the POLS department exit survey. These questions were selected because they collectively represent what the department has identified as its most important and/or pressing learning objectives.

Perhaps the first thing to notice is that data for each of the questions reflects a relatively normal distribution. The range for the means is 2.3 (critical thinking) to 2.9 (quantitative analysis). The median in all questions is 2 (values ranged from 1 to 7), with the exception of the question on critical thinking, in which the median was 1. Based on this snapshot, our

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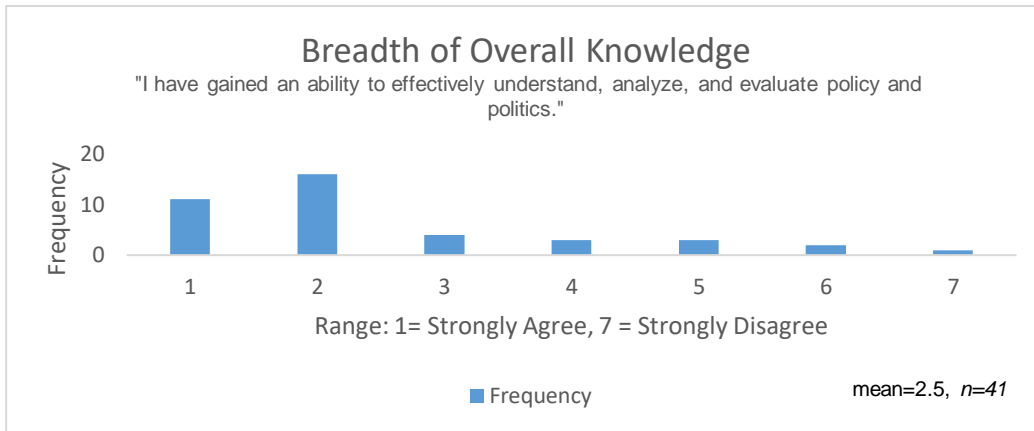
<sup>9</sup> These are the only semesters for which data is currently available.

<sup>10</sup> Data from student exit surveys for five semesters for which it was available. Total n= 41 for all questions. In response to the low n for this survey, the School Curriculum Committee has suggested using the survey as a pedagogical tool during senior seminar, rather than relying on students to voluntarily fill it out on their own time.

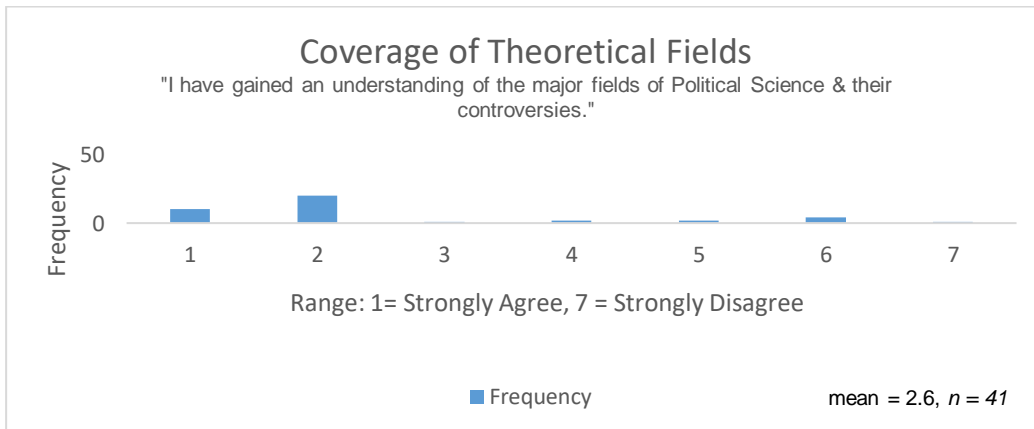
strongest areas are critical thinking, written and oral skills, and responsible citizenship, and our weakest area is quantitative analysis.<sup>11</sup>

### Outcome-Specific Data from Student Exit Survey Fall 2012- Fall 2014

**Figure 8:**

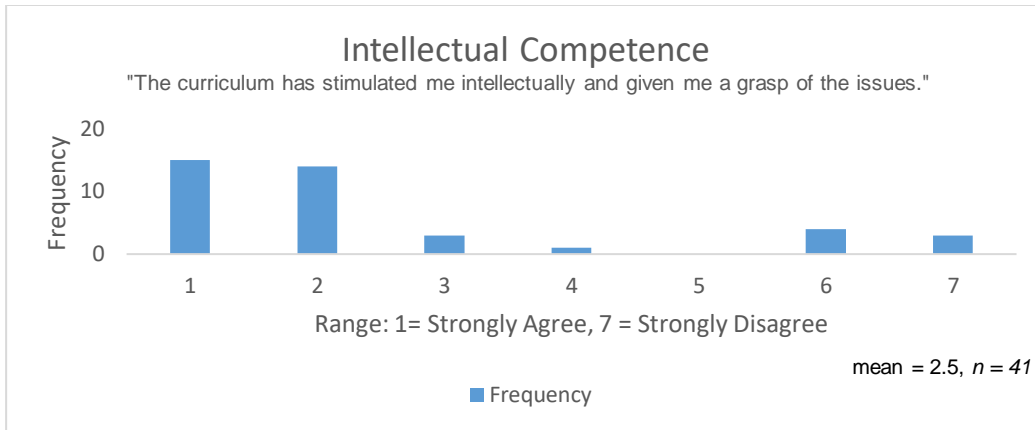


**Figure 9:**

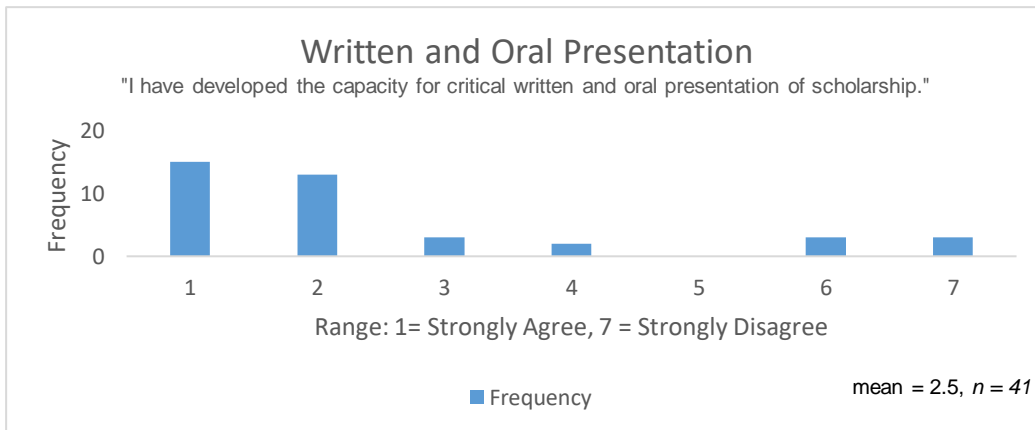


<sup>11</sup> See appendix for specific questions.

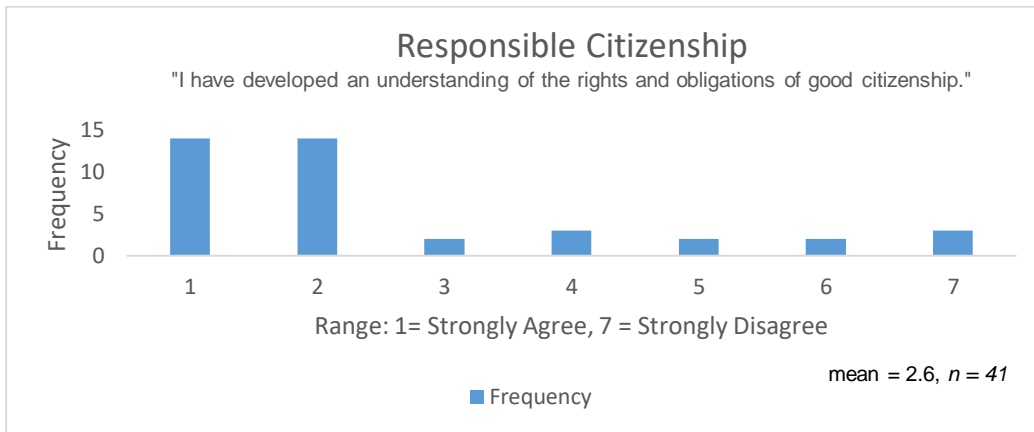
**Figure 10:**



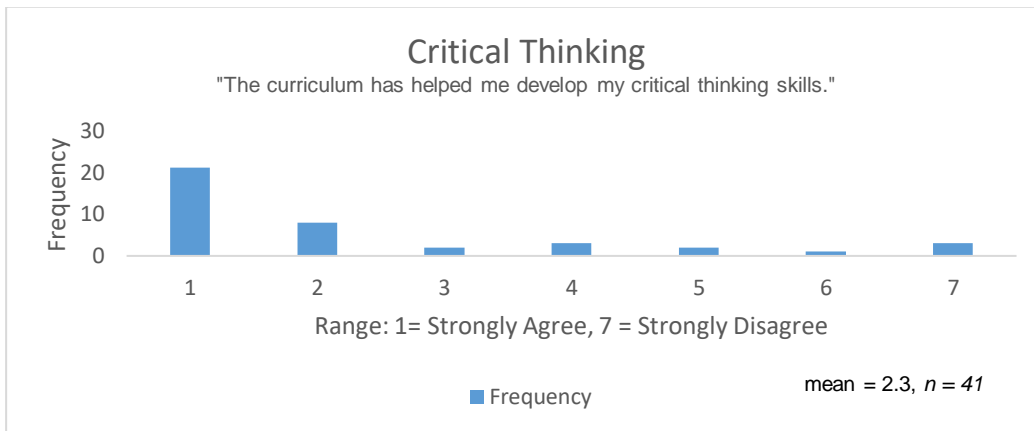
**Figure 11:**



**Figure 12:**

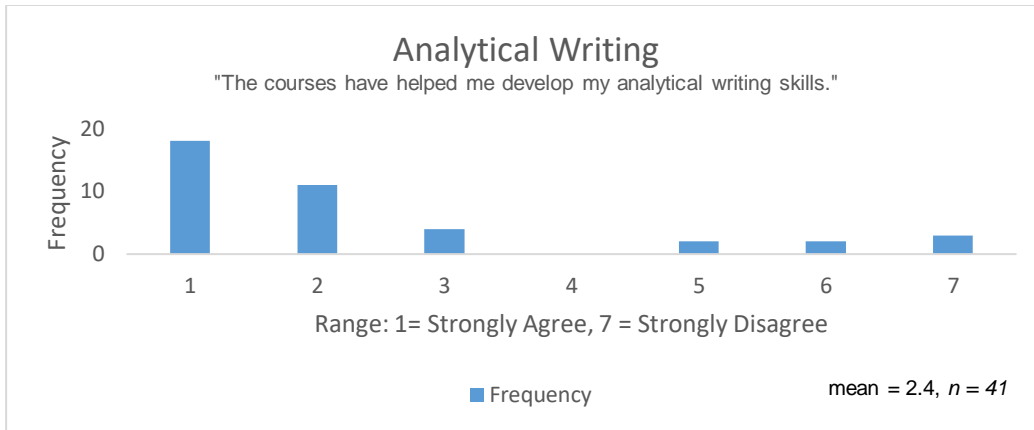


**Figure 13:**





**Figure 14:**



**Figure 15:**

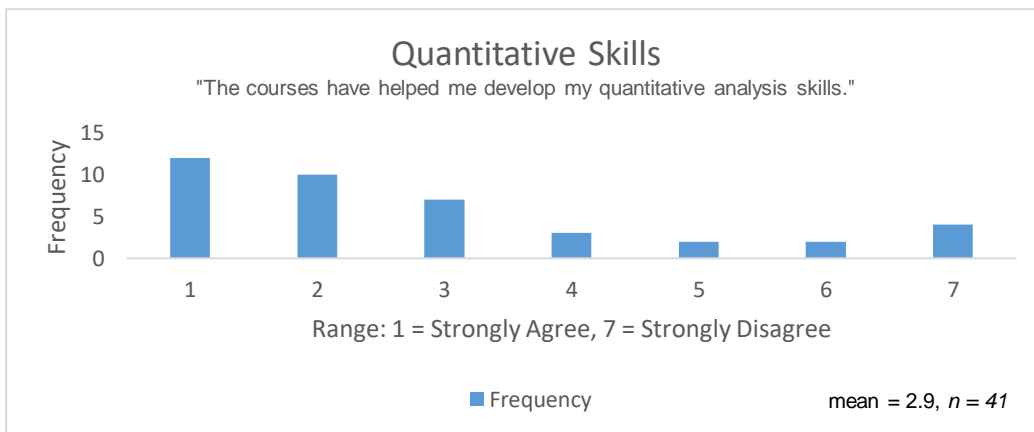
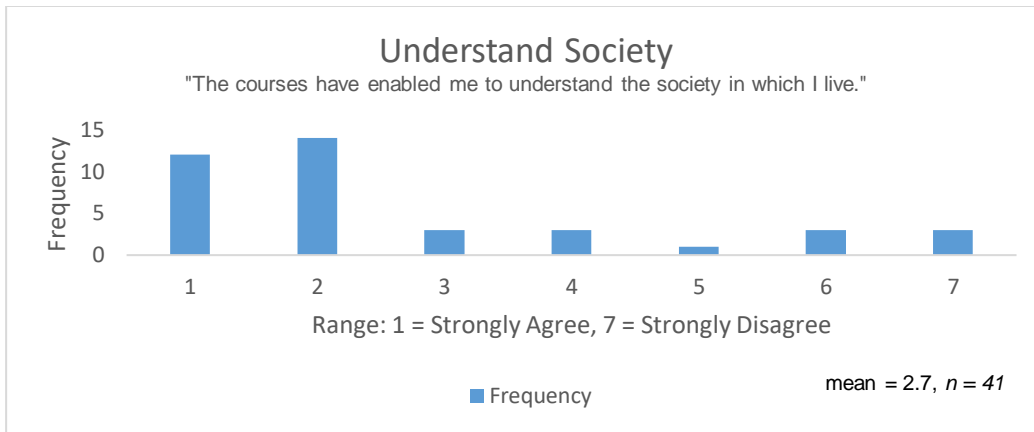


Figure 16:



### Discussion of Strengths: Critical Thinking, Writing Skills, and Civic Literacy

The first qualitative question on the student exit survey asks students to “Comment on strengths, weaknesses, or gaps in the way the major supported you [in the effort to get the degree].” This is where students have the opportunity to state up front what they consider to be the greatest strengths and weaknesses of the program. Because it’s the first open-ended question on the survey, it’s also statistically the most likely to be answered, and therefore should be weighed accordingly.

Both the quantitative data and the qualitative comments on students’ exit surveys suggest that by far the area in which we as a department have succeeded most profoundly is in the promotion of critical thinking skills.

A sample of student comments on this theme include:

*“I enjoyed that there was a lot of discussion...which helped the student grow as a constructive thinker.”*

*“I believe my training was strongest in developing critical thinking skills and in doing some of my best work.”*

*“My training was the strongest in critical thinking and in developing my academic research skills.”*

*“I believe my training was the strongest in improving my analytical skills, specifically my ability to research and prepare a comparative analysis.”*

This feedback is very encouraging, especially given our departmental mission and vision. None of the outcomes we seek in the education of our students is achievable without the development of strong critical thinking skills and capacities.

Students also wrote frequently about the improvement in their writing skills as a result of their experience in the POLS program. As with critical thinking skills, this is validating considering that 1) it is part of the University's mission to produce students who are adept at writing, and 2) virtually all of the careers available to POLS students (and most college graduates, for that matter) require solid writing skills. Therefore, we as a department can take comfort knowing that although we don't "train" students for specific careers, we are doing a respectable job preparing them for careers in almost any field. Some of the student comments on this theme included:

*"My reading and writing skills are much better because of my experience in the POLS department."*

*"I believe that my writing, critical thinking, and speaking skills received the strongest amount of training."*

*"I feel as though my analytic writing skills were the most improved by classes."*

*"My writing skills have improved after being a POLS major therefore I feel that is the area of strongest training for me."*

Our third-strongest area in terms of program outcomes seems to be in the area of civic literacy, which can be defined as "the knowledge and competency to participate in democratic societies in a pluralistic world, to think critically and to empathize with others."<sup>12</sup>

This is also encouraging to see for many reasons, but particularly because it aligns so closely with the University's stated mission to produce students who, amongst other things, "have a broad cultural perspective...will be active citizens and leaders in society, and...are concerned with contributing to the health and well-being of the world at large."<sup>13</sup> Of course it also aligns with the larger disciplinary goal of promoting values of citizenship, justice, civic responsibility, and good governance.

To return to the metaphor from the introductory section, the POLS department faculty can make the case, on the basis of student feedback, that we are upholding our civic (and moral) responsibilities to the University by producing graduates who, according to their own testimony, excel in several outcomes that are central to the University's own mission. In turning out graduates who are ready and able to assume the obligations of democratic citizenship, we are modeling University citizenship. Some of the student survey comments that mention this theme include the following:

*"I believe my strongest training was in reflecting on current events and issues, especially those in the Middle East...we learned a lot about real world issues and problem and the theory behind them."*

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<sup>12</sup> This is a slight refinement of the definition used by political theorist Benjamin Barber.

<sup>13</sup> From Sonoma State University website- <http://www.sonoma.edu/about/mission.html>, accessed March 29, 2015.

*“I have found that I am much more attentive to news outlets and online journals for my media intake, as opposed to less stimulating outlets such as MTV or MTV 2.”*

*“I have gained a sense of knowledge about the world we live in. It was good to learn about the world we live in through their governments and policies. If I was in another major, I would not have learned stuff that happens in everyday life through politics.”*

*“I understand how to be an ethical and active participant in the political arena.”*

There were two additional student comments that together went a long way in summing up the aggregate data and the typical experience of students in our program:

*“Professors in the POLS department were far more passionate than those of other departments.”*

*“The POLS department has higher standards than any other department that I've been in. I have three Associate Degrees and I'm double majoring, so I have had a lot of experience with different expectations of scholarship and the POLS department is the most challenging. That is a good thing.”*

With the caveat that two comments are not confirmation of a trend and that we should be careful to not over-generalize, after analyzing both the quantitative and qualitative feedback closely, we believe these perspective speak accurately to the overall strengths of our program and the degree of academic rigor and integrity we expect from our students, and we are pleased that it was students, rather than one of us, who made these observations.

### **Additional Department Strengths: Faculty Contributions to the University and Community**

During this process, both students and colleagues from other departments have noted that the POLS faculty are unique in the degree to which we contribute to the both the university and larger communities. Most of our faculty can be described as public intellectuals, in that our work as instructors intersects with the needs of the larger community. Henry Giroux has written that:

*“Within the last few decades, the emergence of public intellectuals as important cultural and social critics has raised fundamental questions not only about the social function of academics, but also about the connection between higher education and public life, between academic work and the major issues shaping the broader society.”*

Our collective work at the broader university level and within the public sphere is an example of this. POLS faculty employ research assistants and collaborate with undergraduate students on projects to a greater degree than many departments. We engage in a significant amount of applied research, and work to raise community awareness on campus. What follows are some highlights of the ongoing work our faculty members are doing in these spheres.

**Cynthia Boaz** is on the Global Studies steering committee, has worked in Freshman Year Experience for several years, and is the former chair (2009-2012) of the Senate Diversity Subcommittee. She has served or continues to serve on the board of directors for several local nonprofits, including the United Nations Association and the Metta Center for Nonviolence Education, and is an academic advisor to both the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (Washington DC) and Truthout. Since 2008, Professor Boaz has contributed dozens of articles to news and commentary outlets including *Truthout.org*, *OpenDemocracy.org*, *CommonDreams.org*, *Alternet.org*, *WagingNonviolence.org*, and *HuffingtonPost.com*. She also serves as an affiliated scholar with the UNESCO Program in Peace, Conflict, and Development Studies at Universitat Jaume I in Castellon, Spain, where she has taught on four occasions since 2001. She is a consultant on nonviolent action and strategy and has been interviewed by media ranging from the *Press Democrat* to the BBC numerous times on the subject, particularly on Burma's Saffron Revolution, Iran's Green Revolution, and Egypt's 2011 uprising. She has brought several notable speakers to the SSU campus in recent years, including Nada Alwadi, a Bahraini journalist and activist, two leaders of the January 25<sup>th</sup> Egyptian movement, and feminist media critic and author, Jennifer Pozner. She has also helped put a national spotlight on the SSU Model United Nations delegation since 2011. She was advisor to student Mercedes Mack on a research project last year that was accepted and presented at the National Conference on Undergraduate Research in Spokane. Boaz also supervises numerous POLS internships each semester. She also does a significant amount of community volunteer work, including leading a current events class at Brookdale at Paulin Creek Retirement Home from 2011-2015, organizing an annual Winter Coat Drive for the Sonoma County Task Force for the Homeless, and captaining an annual Relay for Life team.

**Emily Ray** (who joined us in Fall 2015) is already extremely active both on campus and beyond. She is serving on CDC, the Curriculum Committee, and the Graduate Studies Committee while also collaborating with MPA students on various projects. She has an active research agenda, including the recent publication of an article in *Environmental Political Theory* and an upcoming book chapter for Routledge.

**Catherine Nelson** has done media commentary for several decades and has long-term service both on our local academic Senate and on the statewide academic Senate. She has also served on the local Senate executive committee, and as chair at the local Senate Budget Committee. She has advised some of our MacNair scholars in recent years and is also currently serving as department chair.

**Robert McNamara** also has a long history of service to the University, including SSU Academic Senate, Statewide Senate, Chair of URSP, Scholarship Committee, Safe Zone project, URTP, School RTP, and Department RTP. He is also regular interviewer for the Study Abroad Program. He considers himself a longtime activist with CFA, and is a previous Executive Board member for many years. On the community level, following his years of work on the Sonoma County HIV/AIDS Prevention Planning Group (Chair) and member

of the Sonoma County Commission on AIDS, he has focused my efforts on San Francisco (e.g., Maitri Hospice), and internationally through Global Strategies.

**Diane Parness** is a leading expert on European Politics. Her current research is focused on the rise of right wing movements and political parties as a reaction to recent waves of immigration. Parness has severed for several years as Academic Coordinator of the Holocaust & Genocide Lecture Series, which is now housed in the POLS department. This lecture series brings internationally acclaimed scholars, witnesses and survivors to SSU. It has been one of SSU's most important programs for the past 33 years. Not only do we educate over 100 students every year about genocide and what can be done to prevent it, but we enjoy considerable support from our community and welcome dozens of its members to our audience every week.

**Keith Gouveia** has given lectures to the Osher Lifelong Learning on Campus to about 100 student/retirees, including recapping U.S. Supreme Court decisions. He has also filled in for Eric Williams' CCJS course, and was invited to propose a class to that department each semester.

**David McCuan** does extensive commentary and has had multiple media appearances providing analysis of campaign dynamics and election results to international, national, regional, and local media outlets. These outlets include: The New York Times, CNN, Time magazine, ABC News-New York, CNBC, MSNBC, Huffington Post LIVE!, National Public Radio (NPR), The Wall Street Journal, Associated Press, Christian Science Monitor, Boston Globe, Los Angeles Times, Seattle Times, Sacramento Bee, San Jose Mercury News, The Santa Rosa Press Democrat, The Marin Independent Journal, The Los Angeles Daily News, The Healdsburg Tribune, Stockton Record, Oakland Tribune, Contra Costa Times, The Bond Trader Daily, Sonoma Index Tribune, Pravda (The Truth, Republic of Slovakia), Al-Ahram Weekly (the largest English daily paper in the Arabic world), Al-Jazeera America-TV, Public CEO.com, KPIX-TV, KQED-FM, KCBS-AM, KSFO-AM/FM; KTLA-FM, KGO-AM, KCRW-NPR; KRCB- TV & radio/FM, KPFA-FM, KSRO-AM, and KFTY-TV50. McCuan was previously the Graduate Coordinator of the Master's in Public Administration (MPA) program. He also taught at the California Maritime Academy and was a Visiting Fellow (U.C. Berkeley) at both the Institute of Governmental Studies (IGS) and the Graduate School of Journalism. He previously was also a member of the Advisory Board of the Initiative and Referendum Institute (IRI), Washington, D.C. and has used his expertise as an elections observer in the Horn of Africa.

### **Discussion on Weaknesses: POLS 302 and Academic Advising**

As mentioned in the discussion above, we acknowledge that there are some areas in which we could stand to improve our outcomes. According to the student data, the most pressing of these areas is in the implementation of our Research Methods course, and by extension

and to a lesser degree, the Senior Seminar course. Additionally, we still have gaps in the area of academic advising.

### ***Political Science 302: Research Methods***

Both student feedback and faculty input suggest that our weakest area as a department is in the implementation of the POLS 302 (Research Methods) course. In response to the survey question “I believe my training was the weakest in the following areas”, a plurality of students wrote “Quantitative Methods”, “Qualitative Methods”, “Research Methods”, or some combination of all three. The course is a foundational course required for all POLS majors in how to understand and conduct research in political science. Course goals typically include:

- Developing an understanding the key stages in the process of research analysis.
- Developing familiarity with the major quantitative and qualitative approaches to research in political science.
- Learning the steps for engaging in an original research project of disciplinary significance.
- Being able to analyze and interpret basic statistical output and data, as well as developing basic skills in statistical analysis using a statistical program.

The results of student exit surveys from Fall 2012 through Fall 2014 suggest that many students believe they did not emerge from the course (or in some cases, its successor, POLS 498: Senior Seminar) with an adequate understanding of literature review, quantitative analysis, and/or other research skills. Many students also noted that they thought there was a disconnect between department faculty members (both those teaching 302 and those teaching 498) on the priorities of the course(s), and that this disconnect had consequences for their ability to meet the requirements of Senior Seminar, which include designing, implementing, and writing up an original research project. What follows is a sample of the substantive comments related to this theme:

*“Please, please, please take Social Science Research Methods (POLS 302) and split it up into a two-semester course. I received a B+ in this course so I am not complaining because I didn't like my grade. I think the students would learn more and remember the techniques taught in this course if they had more time to digest the information. This is an important course and it deserves more attention. It is really a lot to learn in one semester. It would be a benefit to everyone (including the professors) if this class was split into two sections. There should be a POLS 302A and POLS 302B course.”*

*“Consider making a introductory statistics class mandatory.”*

*“I'm not sure if the department was consistent in applying guidelines in regards to the structure of research papers.”*

*“Some students are more prepared for the senior seminar class than others. Sometimes, some professors do a better job teaching POLS 302 than others.”*

*“I think some expectations about the research methods course and senior seminar need to be more connected. More than likely students taking varying professors for research methods and then when we take senior seminar we have all been taught differing ways to properly write our final papers. Not only is this confusing from student to student, but it is a little discouraging when professors don't agree upon their expectations within those two courses. I feel there should be an accepted standard to follow, organize, and write papers in general so there is no confusion. I think this is important because it can save both the student and the teachers' time.”*

It is notable that some students put so much time and thought into answering this particular question, and I think it speaks to their level of concern about this subject. As a department, we have discussed the issue of Research Methods at length.

Although the skills associated with this kind of course are useful for any discipline, success in Political Science requires a depth of understanding of these concepts that is difficult, and some would argue impossible, to teach effectively in a one-semester four-unit course. This is because there is both a theoretical and practical component to the subject, and a developed understanding of one is necessary for a developed understanding of the other. However, Research Methods is unlike any other Political Science course in that it requires the students to learn an entirely new language and way of thinking about the subject. And just as we would not expect students (nor faculty) to force two semesters of, for example, a Spanish language course into one semester, it is problematic that we attempt to force the equivalent of two semesters' worth of knowledge into one semester in this particular course. Predictably, it forces the instructor to prioritize on part of the course, typically either the theoretical component or the quantitative component, and depending on who is teaching the course that semester, the student may emerge with a different (yet in both cases, somewhat incomplete) understanding of the key concepts of the course. This is obviously problematic in that it suggests we are handicapped in our ability to achieve the objectives of the course, but it becomes even trickier when students move on to Senior Seminar (POLS 498), for which the successful completion (with a C or better) of POLS 302 is a pre-requisite. They are expected to have gleaned the skills necessary for success in Senior Seminar in POLS 302, but both students and faculty agree that we have repeatedly fallen short in our capacity to meet this objective. This is unfortunate because while the course is generally not a student favorite, they do seem to recognize its importance. As one student put it: *“[We need] more classes similar to POLS 302. I hated that class, but it was...one that [taught me] skills that [will] be useful in the private sector.”*

The School of Social Science Curriculum Committee also made several suggestions for addressing this issue in their memo of February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016. These include incorporate some form of limited co-teaching, redesigning the basic concepts to be covered in the methods course as a whole department, and limiting the breadth of the course while deepening the



content covered. All of these will be taken up by the POLS faculty at a future department meeting.

## **Academic Advising**

As discussed in our previous self-study, academic advising is also a pressing issue for our department. As one student wrote in his/her exit survey: *“This department needs a major improvement when it comes to advising.”*

The Department of Political Science faculty members provide academic advising for our students which includes offering information on degree and graduation requirements, internships, specific courses, the minor, scholarships, and other topics that are intended to help the student successfully navigate through the program as well as the degree.

The concern by students about academic advising is not unique to our department. Faculty in all units across the campus have been severely hampered by increased workloads and other demands over the past seven years, and some of these constraints have inevitably had an impact on the capacity of faculty to advise all students thoroughly. Additionally, many students land in the major without any apparent understanding of the ARR or the advising process. We encourage more attention on the advising process, particularly the students’ need to take responsibility for their education, during freshman and transfer orientations.

We as a department believe that good campus citizenship obligates students to take ownership of their degrees, and as such, to seek out academic advising. Unfortunately many students do not take the initiative to make appointments and then come to advising sessions prepared with appropriate documents (ARR printout, course schedule, academic plan, etc.), and this presents a challenge to faculty who both resist “hand-holding” on principle and because it takes significant time and energy from other departmental, school, and university obligations.

At the same time, some of the advising strategies indicated in the action plan from the last self-study have not been implemented, namely the proposed “POLS Orientation Session”, probation workshops, and surveys of students in POLS 498 about advising experiences. Although the department has successfully followed through on most of the action plan items, students still seem to perceive that their needs are not entirely being met in this area.

### ***Specific Suggestions for Improvement***

Students also made a number of suggestions for improvement of the program, many of which have already been raised by faculty in previous discussions, and many of which are beyond the capacity of the department to implement on its own. Some of the most frequent suggestions included the following:

- Offer area concentrations within the major, such as a regional-specific emphasis (e.g. Latin America, Middle East, European Union) or a substantive emphasis within a subfield (e.g. Constitutional Law, Global Governance)
- Require internships
- Require study abroad
- Offer more classes each semester, and a greater variety of classes
- Make POLS 302 a two-semester course, dividing qualitative and quantitative methods
- Ensure that faculty show up for office hours
- Implement mandatory advising for students
- Offer a course on Environmental Politics
- Offer a course on African Politics
- Offer a leadership course for AS officers
- Engage in more cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Engage in more intra-departmental collaboration
- Encourage minors in complementary "practical" fields like Criminal Justice, Economics, Computer Science, or Statistics
- Push for better "smart" classrooms with updated technology that is reliable

#### **IV. Action Plan and Closing the Loop**

In order to create a plan of action going forward, it is instructive to consider where we were as a department at the time of the last program review, in Fall of 2008. The conclusion of the previous self-study stated that:

“[The] Department in recent years has relied extensively on part-time faculty to teach introductory courses as permanent faculty were devoted to University service. This has two effects. First, the rise of part-time faculty teaching introductory courses places a burden on administrative staffing which includes managing offices, training, and continuously orienting adjunct faculty to the many policies and procedures of how SSU works. This is an unwieldy burden when we consider that the administrative staff supports seven distinct programs. Second, the rise of adjuncts, particularly teaching core introductory courses, places a workload burden on permanent faculty to assure the quality of instruction through adequate peer review. As we have lost FTEF and our student population has continued to grow, introductory course offerings along with occasional coverage of upper division major courses, the goal to assure quality instruction by our part-time colleagues has remained just that – a worthy goal.

The broader combination of a heavy service load to the University along with generational change among the faculty through FERP taxes POLS Department course offerings to meet General Education targets of the School. This also places additional pressure on the Department to offer regular upper division courses to undergraduate POLS majors and graduate students in the MPA program. This balance is difficult as students experience frustration in the areas of advising, class scheduling, and normal time to degree. As the POLS Department looks to the future, it aims to build on previous successes and continue to bring new assessment tools to regular department meetings and retreats. However, much of the Department’s continued success depends on additional resources from the administration of Sonoma State University, especially to strengthen upper division major course offerings and to adequately staff the Department.”

What is remarkable about these two paragraphs is that they could have been written yesterday. As mentioned at the beginning of this document, the POLS department has managed for some time to achieve strong results with inadequate resources, however that situation is untenable, and the data provided here are evidence of that. The department faculty and staff are willing to continue doing our part as campus citizens to provide the best academic experience possible for our students, and in return, we expect that the University will provide the resources adequate to the tasks before us.

#### **Action Plan for POLS 302 and 498**

- As Dr. Nalder writes in her report: “An issue that came up with almost everyone I with was the disconnect between the POLS 302 methods course and the senior seminar (POLS 498). One [issue] is that the 302 course is taught differently

according to who the instructor is [that semester]. The chief problem with that approach is that once students get to senior seminar, they are mixed in with students who took the other version and the 498 professor expects them to be conversant in both versions.”

With the caveat that some of these issues may be generational rather than systematic (that is, they may reflect larger problems in reading comprehension and writing skills before the students get to us), it is nevertheless clear that the department can do a bit more to address the concerns, namely:

- Close the gap between 302 and 498 learning objectives with more transparency and discussion between faculty teaching the two courses.
- Take under serious consideration the suggestion to create a two-semester research methods course, with one semester focusing on theoretical and qualitative approaches, and the other on quantitative analysis.
- Attempt to either close the gap between when students take 302 and when they take 498, or discuss strategies for integrating content acquired in 302 in other upper division courses, in the lead-up to senior seminar.
- Make a concerted effort to articulate clear and consistent expectations for both courses, regardless of which faculty member is teaching the course.

### **Action Plan for Improving the Advising Experience for Our Students**

- Starting during the Spring 2016 term, the POLS Department will host a “Graduation Check Workshop” for seniors.
- Beginning Spring 2016, the POLS Department will re-introduce a “POLS Orientation Session” to be held once per semester, offering pizza and beverages, to introduce students to the major, explain special features, requirements, timelines, and with faculty available to answer advising questions.
- If the attempt to improve advising specifically for students on probation proves to be unsuccessful, beginning Fall 2016, “Probation Workshops” will be added to the “holds” procedure during the first weeks of classes and before registration.
- The goal of these changes is to require all majors to be advised *at least* once a year and *ideally* each semester. In order to assure this goal, the Department will consider placing “holds” on registration until the student has met with their Advisor.
- The POLS Department will post multiple fliers informing students to come in for early registration and check in with the Department to view the “Assigned Advisor List” in order to see their assigned advisor.
- The Department will consider developing for students a timeline of the sequence of courses to be offered in future semesters as a tentative guide per budget and staffing resources.
- The Department will more proactively encourage students to complete the exit surveys.

## **V. Conclusions and Prospects for the Future**

Sonoma State University was established in 1960 by the California Legislature, and first opened in June 1961 to 250 students who attended classes in leased buildings. The move to the permanent site of 215 acres took place in 1966, upon completion of Stevenson and Darwin Halls. One of the Founding Faculty of the University, Dr. Cheryl Petersen, helped create the Department of Political Science. The faculty of the Political Science Department take pride in this history and in our role in the establishment of the university.

Although the number of Political Science majors has increased more than 50% since 2000, the number of full-time faculty has actually decreased during this time, currently flatlining at six for the past several years. The FTES range during the past six years is also essentially flat, as faculty have increased their service commitments and pressure from administration to grow lower division GE courses has continued.

More concerning, however, the department's need over the last several years to rely extensively on lecturers to teach many of the introductory courses and several upper division courses as well, because of inadequate resources from the campus and substantial service to the university by permanent faculty, has increased the work of both administrative staff and the excellent, but too small, permanent faculty. The administrative staff must orient to policy and procedures and the permanent faculty must do adequate peer review. Despite the burden on faculty, the department has verified that the lecturers we have are qualified in what they do. Nonetheless, the problems continue and will undoubtedly get worse without more tenure track hires, and better compensation for our long term 'temporary' faculty. These concerns were raised in the previous program review and assessment document, but have not only not been alleviated, but have been exacerbated by the continued decimation of departmental resources over the past six years.

The combination of poor priorities by the campus and the school, including the lowest percentage of general funds that go to instruction of any campus in the CSU system and generational changes since 2008, which led to retirements and FERPs without replacement of permanent faculty, has seriously undermined POLS Department course offerings in exchange for meeting the General Education targets of the School. This places further pressure on the Department to offer regular upper division courses to undergraduate POLS majors, something which many students noted in their exit surveys. In the past few years, it is not unusual for a student to finish the degree without having had the opportunity to take a number of POLS catalog courses. The Department's continued success is dependent on adequate resources from the administration of Sonoma State University, especially to strengthen upper division major course offerings.

Departmental strengths, which include success in the promotion of critical thinking, writing and oral communication skills, and civic virtue, collaboration and collegiality on program

objectives, and active engagement in research, and community and university service continue since the arrival of a new POLS faculty member as of Fall 2015.

## APPENDIX I

### **Sonoma State BA in Political Science Major Requirements**

General Education	50
Major	40
Electives	<u>30</u>
Total Units	120

#### Core Requirements

POLS 201	Ideas and Institutions
POLS 202	Issues in Modern American Politics
POLS 302*	Social Science Research Methods
POLS 303	Introduction to Comparative Government
POLS 304	Introduction to International Relations
POLS 498*	Senior Seminar

An upper-division course in Political Theory

An upper-division course in International Relations

An upper-division course in Comparative Politics

An upper-division course in American Government and Politics

\*POLS 302 is a pre-requisite for POLS 498

### **Catalog Course Offerings in Subfields of Political Science**

#### ***Political Theory:***

POLS 310 Classical Political Thought (4)

POLS 311 Development of Modern Political Thought Since 1500 (4)

POLS 312 American Political Thought (4)

POLS 313 Critical Theory: Race and Gender (4)

POLS 315 Democracy, Capitalism, and Socialism (4)

POLS 415 Explorations in Political Theory (4)

***International Relations:***

- POLS 345 Model United Nations (4)
- POLS 444 United States Foreign Policy (4)
- POLS 447 Nonviolent Strategies in International Relations (4)
- POLS 486 Selected Issues in International Politics (4)

***Comparative Politics:***

- POLS 350 European Parliamentary Democracies (4)
- POLS 351 Politics of Russia (4)
- POLS 352 Politics of Eastern Europe (4)
- POLS 354 Comparative Political Parties (4)
- POLS 450 Politics of Asia (4)
- POLS 452 Third World Political Systems (4)
- POLS 453 Politics of Latin America (4)
- POLS 458 Comparative Social Policy (4)
- POLS 487 Selected Topics in Comparative Politics (4)

***American Government and Politics:***

- POLS 320 State, City, and County Government (4)
- POLS 330 Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (4)
- POLS 391 Gender and Politics (4)
- POLS 420 American Political Development (4)
- POLS 421 Federalism and Intergovernmental Relations (4)
- POLS 423 Intro to Constitutional Law (4)
- POLS 424 the Bill of Rights, Civil Liberties, and the Constitution (4)
- POLS 425 the American Party System (4)
- POLS 426 the Legislative Process (4)
- POLS 427 the American Presidency (4)
- POLS 428 Seminar in California Politics and Government (4)
- POLS 429 Interest Groups (4)
- POLS 430 Introduction to Public Administration (4)
- POLS 431 Politics and the Media (4)
- POLS 466 Political Psychology (4)



POLS 475 Urban Politics and Policy (4)  
POLS 481 Politics of Regulation and Land Use (4)  
POLS 483 Politics of Wealth and Poverty (4)  
POLS 484 Elections and Voter Behavior (4)  
POLS 485 Political Power and Social Isolation (4)

**MINOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE**

POLS 202 Issues in Modern American Politics	(4)
POLS 201 Ideas and Institutions	(4)
Upper-division courses in political science	(12)
<b>Total units in the minor</b>	<b>20</b>

**Code Requirements**

POLS 200 the American Political System or POLS 202 Issues in Modern American Politics fulfills state code requirements in U.S. Constitution and California state and local government. Upper-division courses may also be used to satisfy certain of these code requirements upon approval by the department chair.

## **APPENDIX II**

### **Members of the SSU POLS Department, 1960 - 2015**

Cheryl Petersen, Ph.D., 1960-1990

William Young, Ph.D., 1963-1988

Robert Smith, Ph.D., 1969-2003

John Kramer, Ph.D., 1970-2007

Don Dixon, Ph.D., 1972-2005

David Ziblatt, Ph.D., 1972-Current

Miguel Tirado, Ph.D., 1973-1995

Diane Parness, Ph.D., 1991-Current

Andy Merrifield, Ph.D., 1992-2014

Robert McNamara, Ph.D., 1996-Current

Catherine Nelson, Ph.D., 1996-Current

Dave McCuan, Ph.D., 2003-Current

Cynthia Boaz, Ph.D., 2008- Current

Emily Ray, Ph.D., 2015- Current

**APPENDIX III**

**SONOMA STATE UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE  
BACHELOR ARTS (B.A.) DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE  
ACADEMIC YEAR \_\_\_\_\_ STUDENT FOCUS GROUP SURVEY**

The purpose of this survey is to measure and evaluate student experiences upon completion of the POLS BA program. In completing this survey, you will provide us with information about whether we are meeting our learning objectives as well as areas where we might modify and improve our curriculum. Your careful reading and answering of all the questions will be much appreciated by faculty and will also help future students.

**Your responses will remain anonymous, unless you provide information that allows us to identify you or indicate otherwise.**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

Sex: Male Female Decline to state

Race/Ethnicity: \_\_\_\_\_ Decline to state

Do you have family obligations outside of school?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, approximately how many hours per week does this require?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date (expected) of Graduation:  
\_\_\_\_\_

How many years did you spend at SSU completing you BA?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Were you employed during your time as an undergraduate student?  
\_\_\_\_\_

If yes, approximately how many hours per week on average?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Which item below best describes you career plans following graduation from SSU?

Will search for/start/continue a new job  
Will seek graduate school (law, education, or other)  
Unsure / Don't Know

If you will be employed upon graduation, what will be your occupation?

---

What is the name of your employer?

---

Did you pursue a POLS BA degree specifically for this occupation? Yes No

How often did you seek advising for the major?

Regularly (1-2 times a semester)  
Sometimes (less than once a semester)  
Rarely (1-2 times throughout my time at SSU)  
Never

## **BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A.) DEGREE IN POLITICAL SCIENCE MAJOR GOALS**

Based upon your participation in the POLS BA program, please evaluate the following dimensions of the program, by registering on a scale of 1 to 7, your relative agreement with the following statements.

1. Breadth of Overall Knowledge: I have gained an understanding to effectively analyze, understand, and evaluate policy and politics across a range of governmental institutions.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

**Comment on strengths, weaknesses, or gaps in the way the major supported you in this effort:**

2. Coverage of Theoretical Fields: I have gained basic understanding of the major fields of Political Science and the controversies surrounding their development.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

**Comment(s) on strengths or weaknesses in coverage of the fields:**

3. Integration of Your Knowledge: I have gained insights into the major approaches to understanding the role of actors and preferences in political life and how both these factors influence the outcomes of political institutions and processes.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

**Comment(s) on the integration of your knowledge:**

4. Ethical Awareness: I have developed a sensitivity to and awareness of ethical constraints, responsibilities, and dilemmas relative to the practice of politics and the expectations and responsibilities of active citizenship.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

**Comment(s) related to your preparation in ethical awareness and active citizenship:**

## **POLS BA CURRICULUM GOALS**

To achieve our program goals, faculty assists students in developing appropriate skills and competencies. Please evaluate the following dimensions of the program, by registering on a scale of 1 to 7, your relative agreement with the following statements.

1. Intellectual Competence: The curriculum has stimulated me intellectually and given me a grasp of the issues in the field(s) of Political Science.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. Intellectual Relevance: The curriculum has given me the capacity to understand and analyze different perspectives on the issues and controversies of civic life.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

3. Critical Comprehension: I have gained the capacity for critical reading of scholarly and professional materials in the field(s).

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. Written and Oral Presentation: I have developed the capacity for critical written and oral presentation of scholarly and professional materials.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. Information Literacy: I have developed the capacity to identify and use productively a variety of traditional and not-traditional bibliographic and information resources.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

6. Computer & Statistical Technologies: I have developed the capacity to use computer and statistical tools applied and theoretical research.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

7. Professional Ethics: I have developed an understanding of the ethical issues involved in scholarly inquiry, publication, within the workplace, school, and within my profession.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

8. Responsible Citizenship: I have developed an understanding of the rights and obligations required for good professional and public citizenship as a graduate of this program.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

9. Individual and Collaborative Work: I have gained experience working individually and collaboratively with colleagues.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

10. Work with Faculty and Outside Employers: I have gained valuable experience working with POLS BA faculty and with outside supervisors.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

11. Work with Departmental Staff: I have gained valuable experience working with POLS Departmental staff.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

### **OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITHIN THE POLS BA PROGRAM**

Please evaluate the following dimensions of the program, by registering on a scale of 1 to 7, your relative agreement with the following statements.

1. The course content has been intellectually stimulating.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

2. The curriculum has improved the quality of my thinking.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

3. The curriculum has stimulated me to do some of my best work.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

4. The courses have helped me develop critical thinking skills.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

5. The courses have helped me develop my analytical writing skills.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

6. The courses have helped me develop my quantitative analysis skills.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

7. The courses have helped me develop my speaking skills.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

8. The curriculum has enabled me to more fully understand the society in which I live and work.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

9. The curriculum has improved my ability to critically evaluate the responsible role of individuals in formulation policy decisions.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

10. The curriculum has enhanced my understanding of the issues influenced by changing demographics within the local, regional, and global contexts.

Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Strongly Disagree

In reviewing and reflecting on items 1-10, I believe my training was the strongest in the following areas:

In reviewing and reflecting on items 1-10, I believe my training was the weakest in the following areas:

### **PROGRAM RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

1. How might the POLS BA program at SSU be improved?

2. Please discuss and compare your experiences in our POLS program with courses or experiences in other departments or at other universities/colleges.

3. What did you gain from completing the POLS major that you believe you could not have gained from another major?



## **APPENDIX IV**

### **Program Review, B.A. in Political Science Sonoma State University Spring 2015**

Kim Nalder, Ph.D.  
Professor and Director, Project for an Informed Electorate  
Department of Government  
California State University, Sacramento

#### **Overview**

I spent a very full and enlightening day at Sonoma State on April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2015. While there, I met with four of the six members of the tenure track faculty (Cynthia Boaz, David McCuan, Catherine Nelson, and Diane Parness), a long time lecturer (Barry Preisler), two separate groups of students (one group of ten students over lunch, and a POLS 302 class), Interim Dean John Wingard, and Provost Andrew Rogerson.

Prior to writing this report, I also reviewed a number of documents, including a draft of the Political Science Department's self-study from Spring of 2015, the previous external review by John Travis in 2008, the Department's Program Review and Assessment Plan from 2007-2008, data on POLS FTES from 2008-2013, student faculty ratio data from that same time frame, diversity data for the department and SSU overall, data from the Student Exit Survey from 2012-2014, the departmental website, the SSU Mission Statement and Diversity Vision Statement, and I reviewed the curriculum of similar sized CSU Political Science departments.

#### **Curricular mission**

The department's curricular mission is completely appropriate for a strong comprehensive undergraduate Political Science program at a university that emphasizes a solid liberal arts training for all students. The department does an excellent job of instilling a sense of political competence and civic engagement in its students. Students report feeling confident in their critical thinking, policy analysis, current events understanding, and many other very relevant skills for POLS majors. The department is doing an exceptional job of fulfilling the Universities' mission statement, particularly in terms of training students to "have a foundation for life-long learning" to "have a broad cultural perspective" particularly, of course to be "active citizens and leaders in society" who are "concerned with contributing to the health and well-being of the world at large".

The department appears to be doing a fantastic job of maximizing very limited resources and providing majors with perhaps even more than might be expected given the small number of tenure track faculty members and burdens on their time and energy. I came away from my

study of Sonoma State's Political Science Department feeling very impressed with the high quality education it is providing for its students.

### **Diversity**

One area, however, where the department could use some improvement is in diversity. The SSU Diversity Statement says that the University will be "supporting, retaining, and attracting students, faculty, and staff who reflect the diversity of our larger society." While this may not be particularly the fault of members of the department, the faculty, staff, and students of the department are strikingly lacking in diversity. Compared to the SSU student population, Political Science students are significantly more likely to be White, and less likely to be Asian, Latino, or Multiracial. Women are a rather large majority of students on campus (63%), but a minority in the major (43%). Drilling down a bit on the ethnicity and gender data spanning the Fall 2008 to Fall 2014 time frame, it appears that the trend for ethnic diversity is encouraging, getting progressively more diverse over those years. The trend for gender is less striking and is in the direction of slightly less gender parity over that time period. I should note that though these numbers are disturbing, it is a problem common to most Political Science departments. The field tends to attract fewer women and minority students than most other social science disciplines.

It's difficult to come up with recommendations for improving diversity in the department, given that it is a pervasive problem in the discipline. One consideration is in hiring. Diverse faculty can serve as role models and mentors for students who might otherwise not feel as welcome in the department. Outreach within the university may also be possible, working to recruit students from all sorts of backgrounds. The curriculum does reflect a global, inclusive outlook. Minority and female students who are not majors may just not be aware of the merits of the major and its ability to encourage broad and diverse means of exploring the world.

### **Curriculum**

The curriculum as it exists on paper is appropriate and in line with other Political Science Departments. The core courses cover the major fields in the discipline and prepare students well for additional study in the major. The pairing of a research methods course and an eventual capstone course in which students are expected to apply their recently acquired skills and knowledge is fantastic and well thought out.

The curriculum includes plenty of courses that encourage multicultural, multinational approaches to issues and problems. The curriculum reflects the contemporary state of the field of Political Science. It fosters creative thinking and problem solving. The faculty are well qualified, including some excellent long term lecturers who shoulder much of the teaching load.

However, in application, it appears that there are some issues. Specifically, there are issues with the frequency of course availability, subject areas with less faculty coverage than is ideal, a disconnect between the methods and senior seminar courses, a lack of innovative multi-

disciplinary approaches, and a potential need for new conceptions for the major. I'll address each in turn.

### **Course Availability**

Course availability is clearly a problem. This is largely a result of a lack of a sufficient number of full time tenure track faculty (more on this later), compounded by a propensity for faculty to be heavily involved in service and activities outside the department, which stretches teaching resources even further. The catalog lists a more than sufficient list of courses, many of which students report they have never seen offered. Multiple students mentioned a desire not just to see catalog courses offered, but to see a more timely rotation of courses. In particular, they point to the bottleneck courses (302 and 498), and popular courses that are rarely taught (middle east, terrorism, Africa courses). This is a significant frustration for students that obviously presents a challenge to timely graduation. The solutions to this are difficult. Clearly more hiring is called for, but also a re-prioritization of tenure track faculty assigned to upper division courses might alleviate this problem somewhat.

### **Undercoverage**

A related issue is that there is not as much faculty coverage of some areas within the discipline. Specifically, the department is lacking in American Politics institutionalists. Students seemed genuinely surprised to hear that most PS programs offer courses in Congress, the Presidency, the Courts, etc. Theory seems weak as well, but the new hire may alleviate that somewhat. Even in the relatively strong comparative politics section, the department is lacking in Africanists, courses on the EU, etc. Again, the department simply needs more hiring.

### **302/ 498**

An issue that came up with almost everyone I spoke with was the disconnect between the 302 methods course and the senior seminar (498). There seem to be two main problems. One is that the 302 course is taught differently according to who the instructor is. Sometimes it is a more theoretical research design course and other times it is a more applied econometrics type course. The chief problem with that approach is that once students get to senior seminar, they are mixed in with students who took the other version and the 498 instructor expects them to be conversant in both versions. This creates tremendous frustration. Communication of expectations seems to be inadequate.

I had the opportunity to talk to the students in Prof. McCuan's 302 course (while he stepped out so they could speak freely). I was frankly stunned by the overwhelmingly positive attitude they had towards the course. In many PS departments, methods is the most reviled course, since students think they are getting away from math by choosing the major. It was clear that the course was very challenging. I was impressed by how much advanced methodology gets covered in the semester. Students very clearly valued the skills based learning they were getting though, and even though they were struggling in some cases, they felt supported and engaged. Many of them expressed a desire for MORE methods coursework.

I have several suggestions for solving this 302/498 issue. As many people suggested, it would be so much more beneficial to students to offer 2 semesters of methods. One could be research design and perhaps some qualitative methods and the other could be hands-on stats. Perhaps tinkering with the number of units for each course (from 4 to 3?) would help with the problem of zero sum units in the major. This would reduce student and faculty frustration at not being able to get to everything in one course, be pedagogically more sound, and it would provide students with more marketable skills when they graduate.

Senior Seminar also clearly has some issues. Students were very frustrated with not knowing the expected pre-requisite content, with the fact that there's a time gap between when students tend to take methods and the seminar, and with the limited range of faculty teaching the course. Perhaps it could be more evenly rotated between all faculty in the department, and perhaps expectations could be more clearly communicated to students as they go through the program.

### **Innovations**

Overall, the curriculum design is solid and appropriate, but it is not especially innovative or creative. Given the limited resources of an under-staffed department, and the expectation by administrators that programs strive to be more interdisciplinary, it would make sense for the department to make more use of cross-listed courses and filling out the major with courses from other departments.

Another idea I heard from administrators, faculty and students (and something we are working on at my campus too) is creating concentrations or even skills certificates within the major. The idea is that it gives a sort of "credentialing" to the student which helps once they are on the job market. Some students complained that career placement was lacking (unsurprising given how full the plates of faculty already are), and a change such as this might at least give a nod towards valuing future careers (besides the already good work done on internships and study abroad). Perhaps, for example, a certificate in "political data analysis" could be created, maybe incorporating some statistics, psychology, computer science, etc. courses in addition to those you already offer in-house. Students could integrate things like working with Professor McCuan on his *California Initiative Project*, etc. as part of the curriculum. A related student project could be submitted for 498. I encourage the department to explore some new ideas such as these to make the program more future focused.

### **Program Effectiveness**

All evidence points to a very effective program. Exit surveys reveal exceptional ratings by students in every area, with especially strong scores in critical thinking, responsible citizenship, and analytical writing, but truly with no weak spots. I was incredibly impressed by the poise and sophistication of the students I spoke with and the clear sense they had that the program was demanding, challenging, and rewarding.

Students have great extracurricular opportunities, like a strong Model United Nations program, and very successful placements for any student who desires an internship either within a branch of government, with a campaign, or with an NGO or non-profit.

There are clearly some very passionate, committed, student-centered faculty members in the department. Students tend to develop real nurturing relationships with faculty. Coming from a much larger campus, I admit to being struck by the personal connections between faculty and students at SSU (heck, even the fact that faculty seem to know most student's names bowls me over). Everyone from administrators to faculty to students recognize that this is a fantastic program that enriches student's lives, contributes to the community, and sets students on a course to lead successful lives of contribution to society.

### **Advising**

One area which could use some tinkering to improve effectiveness is advising. Currently, students are assigned to an advisor based on last name. It is left up to the student to take the initiative to seek out any help. Both students and faculty expressed some concerns with how this is working out. One problem students mention is that some faculty are far more available to students than others, and some students have tried to contact advisors, but have found that they weren't in their offices during office hours. Aside from simple access, it seems that there is a communication breakdown. It sounds as if motivated, persistent students do manage to get good advising, but others fall through the cracks.

I have a couple of suggestions. One is to perhaps hold some sort of group orientation to advising each year. Many issues can be addressed in such a setting, and if the expectation is that every student attends, those who might have fallen through the cracks will not. Related to this, I understand that there is new course planner software that could perhaps be more effectively deployed. Another idea is to perhaps designate 2-3 advisors and give those faculty members relief from other service obligations (or perhaps even release time) in order to allow for them to see so many students. This sort of assignment generally works best if it is rotated regularly, so that it doesn't become an undue burden on the same few members of the faculty.

### **Resource Use**

The small number of tenure track faculty members in this department are doing a remarkably good job of providing a well-rounded and effective course selection, and a high quality education to the majors. However, the full time faculty are stretched quite thin. Because of the small numbers, each member needs to contribute in significant ways outside of the classroom, including serving as an internship coordinator, grad program director, advisor, chair (obviously), coordinator of the Holocaust lecture series, advisor to MUN, etc. This stretch is compounded by the propensity (mentioned by multiple sources) for members of this department to also involve themselves heavily in service outside the department (some of which brings release time), which further stretches the meager numbers of tenure-track faculty. In the 2008 external report, the dearth of tenure track faculty was highlighted

as an issue for the department. At the time, the department was expecting to have 8 FTEF in tenure line positions in the following year, and the report urged more hiring to meet all of the demands. Since then, the number of majors has increased 27%, yet the number of tenure line faculty has decreased. After a new hire who starts in fall of 2015, there will be 6 full time tenure line faculty (one of whom is serving as chair), and one tenured faculty member on FERP (teaching half time). Given the burden on these few faculty (which also, I might add, includes fielding an MPA program and contributing heavily to the GE program for the campus in addition to serving undergraduate majors), it is absolutely clear that this department desperately needs more hiring.

Another resource issue is the library. The campus has a state of the art library and an energetic new library director. It also contains a writing center and tutoring center. Some of the burden of teaching students basic research skills (such as the oft-mentioned literature review) could likely be off-loaded to staff located in the library. I encourage faculty to integrate library resources into their classes in order to maximize utility for the students and to potentially offset the overload on faculty time a bit.

### **Conclusions**

The Political Science Department at Sonoma State University is doing a fantastic job of delivering a high quality education to students enrolled in the program. This is true in spite of some serious challenges in terms of how far faculty are stretched and the ability of the department to consistently offer the full range of courses that students desire. I am confident, however, that the department is introspective and motivated enough to implement a few changes that will correct some of the issues mentioned in this report, and with the state budget improving, the department should be in line to get a few much needed new hires.