Analysis Questions and Analysis Answers

For Academic Programs

Informed by your assessment activities related to student learning, what changes have you made in your degree program in the last three to five years? Describe the changes (e.g., curriculum revision, new courses, faculty development), the general results that prompted the changes (e.g., student performance on an assessment measure), and any impact on student learning that you might attribute to these changes.

Primary assessment of MA Political Science occurs during comprehensive exams and research methods courses. MA students are expected to describe the literature and synthesize the literature in comprehensive exams. These assessment measures were put into place due to inadequate description and synthesis of the literature in MA comprehensive exams. Subsequent assessment suggests that some students continue to struggle in these areas. The determination was made, based on assessment measures, that we were requiring the MA students to test in too many subfields. We reduced the number of subfield comprehensive exams from three to two, which is more common in MA Political Science programs across the country. Generating research questions, hypotheses, and mastery of statistical concepts are other areas of assessment of MA students. The ability to generate research questions and hypotheses is assessed in PSC 521 (Research Design). Assessment data will be gathered and reported in the next assessment reporting cycle. Mastery of statistical concepts is measured in PSC 522 (Quantitative Analysis 1). Assessment data suggest that most students fall into the 'adequate' category, though there have been assessments of a couple of students as 'inadequate'. Since we added this assessment two years ago, no MA student has achieved 'exemplary' status. However, the sample size is quite small at this point. We will continue to monitor MA student progress on this important assessment measure.

Mission / Purpose

The Department of Political Science at the University of Alabama seeks to meet the highest standards of research, teaching, and service. In research, it examines important questions of political institutions, behavior, and thought. It strives for publication in outlets of the highest quality and visibility to achieve maximum exposure for its ideas and to have the greatest impact on peers in the academy and on policy makers. In teaching, the Department provides undergraduate students with timely information about the political world and instruction that enhances their skills as citizens and future leaders. At the graduate level, the Department is the only full-service program in political science in the state of Alabama, preparing students for successful careers in teaching, research, and government service. At all levels, the Department strives to enhance appreciation for the science of politics and to inspire the quest for truth and excellence in the study and practice of politics. The Department commits itself to serve the profession by contributing to its growth and improvement; to serve the institution through participation in its governing structures; and to serve the community by sharing ideas and helping to provide perspective on political issues for decision makers and citizens.

Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Mastery of Political Science Literature
Students should demonstrate the ability to understand, evaluate, and synthesize the literature in their fields of study within Political Science.

Connected Documents
Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

Related Measures
M 1: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature
We will assess this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students correctly describe the relevant literature in the Masters of Political Science Comprehensive Exams.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:
No target established.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

Revise Comprehensive Exam Process
We plan to reduce the number of political science sub-fields in which the MA students are required to take comprehensive exams from three to two. This changes stems from disappointing results in the quality of the students' answers to comprehensive exam questions and from our perception that fewer political science departments are requiring their graduate students to take comprehensive exams in three fields. We hope that by allowing our graduate students to focus their preparation for these exams on a smaller amount of material that they will produce better answers on their comprehensive exams.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature | Outcome/Objective: Mastery of Political Science Literature

Implementation Description: We will begin the process of implementing this change during the 2012-2013 academic year. However, the change may require approval from the Graduate School, and so may not be fully implemented this academic year.

Projected Completion Date: 05/2014

Responsible Person/Group: Richard Fording, Department Chair

M 2: Synthesize Political Science Literature
We will assess this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students adequately synthesize the relevant literature into a coherent essay for the Masters of Political Science Comprehensive Exams.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No target established.

SLO 2: Statistical Analysis
Students should demonstrate basic mastery of methodological skills that will serve them in their future careers, in or out of the academy.

Connected Documents
- Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
- Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

Related Measures

M 3: Mastery of Basic Probability and Statistics Concepts
We will assess this outcome through a course-embedded assessment in PSC 522 (Quantitative Analysis I) covering probability and basic statistical concepts. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No Target Established

M 4: Correctly Interpret Complex Statistical Analyses
We will assess this outcome through a course-embedded assessment in PSC 522 (Quantitative Analysis I) covering the interpretation of the results of more complex statistical analyses. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No Target Established

SLO 3: Research Design
Students should demonstrate a basic ability to conduct original research in Political Science.

Connected Documents
- Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
- Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

Related Measures

M 5: Ability to Generate Research Hypotheses
We will assess this outcome in PSC 521 (Research Design) by evaluating the students’ abilities to generate valid and testable hypotheses. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No Target Established

M 6: Ability to Generate Research Questions
We will assess this outcome in PSC 521 (Research Design) by evaluating the students’ abilities to derive research questions from previous research in the subject area. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No Target Established

Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

OthOtcm 4: Program Outcome: High Level of Recognized Quality
The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality.

Related Measures

M 7: Strengths from Program Review
A list of the strengths of the department from the most recent program review (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

M 8: Opportunities for Improvement from Program Review
A list of the opportunities for improvement from the most recent program review (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

M 9: List of recommendations
A list of recommendations (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 10: List of actions in response to the recommendation**
A list of actions in response to the recommendation (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 11: Summary of impacts**
A summary of the impacts of the actions (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 12: Survey of graduate students**
We will assess this outcome using a survey of current graduate students aimed at eliciting their evaluations of the quality of the program. The percent of students choosing each response to the question will be reported.
Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

  **Target:**
  No target established.

**OthOtcm 5: Program Outcome: Sustain Optimal Level of Enrollment**
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completion.

**Related Measures**

**M 13: Number of Students in Master Program**
We will assess this outcome using the number of students in the graduate program for the last three fall semesters.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

  **Target:**
  No target established.

**M 14: Comparison of the number of degree awarded to ACHE**
We will assess this outcome by comparing the number of degrees awarded in the last three years with the ACHE viability standards.
Source of Evidence: Benchmarking of learning outcomes against peers

  **Target:**
  We will aim to meet or exceed the ACHE standard of 3.75 degrees per year.

**OthOtcm 6: Program Outcome: Highly Valued by Program Graduates**
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

**Related Measures**

**M 15: Success of Graduate Students in Employment**
We will assess this outcome using data on the extent to which graduates of the program are able to find employment related to the discipline.
Source of Evidence: Job placement data, esp. for career/tech areas

  **Target:**
  No Target Established.

**M 16: Evaluation of the value of the program**
We will assess this outcome using a survey of current graduate students aimed at eliciting their evaluations of the value of the program in terms of helping them reach their career goals. Results of the survey will be reported.
Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

  **Target:**
  No target established.

**OthOtcm 7: Department Outcome: Faculty Contribution**
The Department expects its faculty to contribute to the discipline through the publication of significant and visible research.

**Related Measures**

**M 17: Faculty Publication Rates**
The Department Chair monitors each faculty member's publications through the annual Faculty Activity Report and will report the total number of refereed publications and average number per faculty for the past 3 years. Our general expectation is that total refereed publications, forthcoming and in print (including books, articles, and book chapters), will meet or exceed 1.5 contributions per faculty member per year. This is an increase from last year's expectation of 1.0 contribution per faculty member.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

  **Target:**
  Our general expectation is that total refereed publications, forthcoming and in print (including books, articles, and book chapters), will meet or exceed 1.5 contributions per faculty member per year. This is an increase from last year's expectation of 1.0 contribution per faculty member.

**M 18: Faculty Research Presentations**
The Department Chair monitors faculty research presentations at national and regional academic conferences through the annual Faculty Activity Report and will report the total number of presentations and average number per faculty. The expectation is that total research presentations will meet or exceed one presentation per year per faculty.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other
Target:
The expectation is that total research presentations will meet or exceed one presentation per year per faculty.

OthOtcn 8: Department Outcome: Faculty Service
The Department expects its faculty, where appropriate, to serve the discipline of political science and the Alabama community.

Related Measures

M 19: Faculty Service to the Community
The Department Chair monitors each faculty member's service to the Alabama community, including interviews to members of the press and presentations to community groups, through the annual faculty activity reports. The number and types of service to the community will be reported.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other
Target: No target set.

M 20: Faculty Service to the discipline
The Department Chair monitors service to the discipline, including reviewing journal articles and service to disciplinary organizations, through the annual faculty activity report. The number and types of service to the discipline will be reported.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other
Target: No target established.

OthOtcn 9: Department Outcome: Provide adequate course availability
The department will provide adequate course availability to allow students to finish the Political Science and International Studies majors within 5 years.

Related Measures

M 21: Time-to-degree data
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other
Target: No target established.

M 22: Students’ perceptions of the availability of required courses
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other
Target: No target established.

OthOtcn 10: Department Outcome: Competitiveness in Graduate Acceptance and Placement
The department expects its undergraduate majors and graduate students to be competitive with other students throughout the United States in terms of admission to graduate study or obtaining employment related to political science.

Related Measures

M 23: Exit Survey Results
We will assess this outcome by using an exit survey to gather information on the proportion of MPA, MA, and PhD program graduates who have secured employment or job interviews in public administration, political science, or a related field.
Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program
Target: No target established.

M 24: Student Perceptions of Preparation for Employment
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.
Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Revise Comprehensive Exam Process
We plan to reduce the number of political science sub-fields in which the MA students are required to take comprehensive exams from three to two. This changes stems from disappointing results in the quality of the students’ answers to comprehensive exam questions and from our perception that fewer political science departments are requiring their graduate students to take comprehensive exams in three fields. We hope that by allowing our graduate students to focus their preparation for these exams on a smaller amount of material that they will produce better answers on their comprehensive exams.
Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High
Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature | Outcome/Objective: Mastery of Political Science Literature
Implementation Description: We will begin the process of implementing this change during the 2012-2013 academic year. However, the change may require approval from the Graduate School, and so may not be fully implemented this academic year.
Projected Completion Date: 05/2014
Responsible Person/Group: Richard Fording, Department Chair
Mission / Purpose

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Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Mastery of Political Science Literature
Students should demonstrate the ability to understand, evaluate, and synthesize the literature in their fields of study within Political Science.

Connected Documents
Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

Related Measures

M 1: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature
We will assess this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students correctly describe the relevant literature in the Masters of Political Science Comprehensive Exams.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Results Summary: We assessed this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students correctly described the relevant literature in each of their subject exams in the Masters-level Comprehensive Exams. Results: 2 inadequate. Interpretations and Conclusions: We did not establish a target for this measure, but we were disappointed with this outcome. Since only two students took exams during this period, we will wait to gather a larger sample size before we create a new action plan to address this.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

Revise Comprehensive Exam Process
We plan to reduce the number of political science sub-fields in which the MA students are required to take comprehensive exams from three to two. This change stems from disappointing results in the quality of the students' answers to comprehensive exam questions and from our perception that fewer political science departments are requiring their graduate students to take comprehensive exams in three fields. We hope that by allowing our graduate students to focus their preparation for these exams on a smaller amount of material that they will produce better answers on their comprehensive exams.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature | Outcome/Objective: Mastery of Political Science Literature

Implementation Description: We will begin the process of implementing this change during the 2012-2013 academic year. However, the change may require approval from the Graduate School, and so may not be fully implemented this academic year.

Projected Completion Date: 05/2014
Responsible Person/Group: Richard Fording, Department Chair

M 2: Synthesize Political Science Literature
We will assess this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students adequately synthesize the relevant literature into a coherent essay for the Masters of Political Science Comprehensive Exams.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Results Summary: We assessed this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students adequately synthesized the relevant literature into a coherent essay in each of their subject exams in the Masters-level Comprehensive Exams. Results: 2 inadequate. Interpretations and Conclusions: We did not establish a target
for this measure, but we were disappointed with this outcome. Since only two students took exams during this period, we will wait to gather a larger sample size before we create a new action plan to address this.

**SLO 2: Statistical Analysis**
Students should demonstrate basic mastery of methodological skills that will serve them in their future careers, in or out of the academy.

**Related Documents**
- Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
- Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

**Related Measures**

- **M 3: Mastery of Basic Probability and Statistics Concepts**
  We will assess this outcome through a course-embedded assessment in PSC 522 (Quantitative Analysis I) covering probability and basic statistical concepts. Results from this assessment will be reported.
  
  **Source of Evidence:** Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam
  
  **Target:**
  - No Target Established

  **Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**
  Results Summary: Instructor in PSC 522 used course-embedded assessments to evaluate students’ abilities in basic probability and statistics. Results from the 1 MA student in the course: 0 exemplary, 1 adequate, 0 inadequate. Interpretations and Conclusions: Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the student performed adequately. No changes are planned.

- **M 4: Correctly Interpret Complex Statistical Analyses**
  We will assess this outcome through a course-embedded assessment in PSC 522 (Quantitative Analysis I) covering the interpretation of the results of more complex statistical analyses. Results from this assessment will be reported.
  
  **Source of Evidence:** Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam
  
  **Target:**
  - No Target Established

  **Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**
  Results Summary: Instructor in PSC 522 used course-embedded assessments to evaluate students’ abilities to estimate and interpret the results of an ordinary least squares regression. Results from the 1 MA student in the course: 1 exemplary, 0 adequate, 0 inadequate. Interpretations and Conclusions: We did not establish a target for this assessment: The student performed exemplary and we are pleased. No changes are planned.

**SLO 3: Research Design**
Students should demonstrate a basic ability to conduct original research in Political Science.

**Related Documents**
- Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
- Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

**Related Measures**

- **M 5: Ability to Generate Research Hypotheses**
  We will assess this outcome in PSC 521 (Research Design) by evaluating the students’ abilities to generate valid and testable hypotheses. Results from this assessment will be reported.
  
  **Source of Evidence:** Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam
  
  **Target:**
  - No Target Established

  **Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**
  Results Summary: Instructor in PSC 521 used course-embedded assessments to evaluate students’ ability to produce valid and testable hypotheses. Results from the 3 MA students in the course: 1 exemplary, 0 adequate, 2 inadequate. Interpretations and Conclusions: Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the fact that only one of the three students was able to meet this skill at an adequate or exemplary level is less than we would have hoped for.

- **M 6: Ability to Generate Research Questions**
  We will assess this outcome in PSC 521 (Research Design) by evaluating the students’ abilities to derive research questions from previous research in the subject area. Results from this assessment will be reported.
  
  **Source of Evidence:** Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam
  
  **Target:**
  - No Target Established

**Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans**

**OthOtcn 4: Program Outcome: High Level of Recognized Quality**
The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality.

**Related Measures**

- **M 7: Strengths from Program Review**
  A list of the strengths of the department from the most recent program review (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.
  
  **Source of Evidence:** Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

- **M 8: Opportunities for Improvement from Program Review**
  A list of the opportunities for improvement from the most recent program review (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.
M 9: List of recommendations
A list of recommendations (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

M 10: List of actions in response to the recommendation
A list of actions in response to the recommendation (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

M 11: Summary of impacts
A summary of the impacts of the actions (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

M 12: Survey of graduate students
We will assess this outcome using a survey of current graduate students aimed at eliciting their evaluations of the quality of the program. The percent of students choosing each response to the question will be reported.

M 13: Number of Students in Master Program
We will assess this outcome using the number of students in the graduate program for the last three fall semesters.

M 14: Comparison of the number of degree awarded to ACHE
We will assess this outcome by comparing the number of degrees awarded in the last three years with the ACHE viability standards.

M 15: Success of Graduate Students in Employment
We will assess this outcome using data on the extent to which graduates of the program are able to find employment related to the discipline.

M 16: Evaluation of the value of the program
We will assess this outcome using a survey of current graduate students aimed at eliciting their evaluations of the value of the program in terms of helping them reach their career goals. Results of the survey will be reported.

OthOtcm 5: Program Outcome: Sustain Optimal Level of Enrollment
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completion.

OthOtcm 6: Program Outcome: Highly Valued by Program Graduates
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

OthOtcm 7: Department Outcome: Faculty Contribution
The Department expects its faculty to contribute to the discipline through the publication of significant and visible research.

**Related Measures**

**M 17: Faculty Publication Rates**
The Department Chair monitors each faculty member’s publications through the annual Faculty Activity Report and will report the total number of refereed publications and average number per faculty for the past 3 years. Our general expectation is that total refereed publications, forthcoming and in print (including books, articles, and book chapters), will meet or exceed 1.5 contributions per faculty member per year. This is an increase from last year’s expectation of 1.0 contribution per faculty member.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
Our general expectation is that total refereed publications, forthcoming and in print (including books, articles, and book chapters), will meet or exceed 1.5 contributions per faculty member per year. This is an increase from last year’s expectation of 1.0 contribution per faculty member.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
Results Summary: We assessed faculty publication rates by counting the number of publications (forthcoming and in print) listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. The 19 faculty had a total of 41 forthcoming and in print publications. Interpretations and Conclusions: The number of publications for the department exceeds the target for this assessment. No changes are planned.

**M 18: Faculty Research Presentations**
The Department Chair monitors faculty research presentations at national and regional academic conferences through the annual Faculty Activity Report and will report the total number of presentations and average number per faculty. The expectation is that total research presentations will meet or exceed one presentation per year per faculty.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
The expectation is that total research presentations will meet or exceed one presentation per year per faculty.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Met**
Results Summary: We assessed faculty presentation rates by counting the number of research presentations listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. The faculty made 45 such research presentations. This is an average of 2.4 presentations per faculty member. Interpretations and Conclusions: The 2.4 presentations per faculty member exceeds the target for this assessment. No changes are planned.

**OthOtcm 8: Department Outcome: Faculty Service**
The Department expects its faculty, where appropriate, to serve the discipline of political science and the Alabama community.

**Related Measures**

**M 19: Faculty Service to the Community**
The Department Chair monitors each faculty member’s service to the Alabama community, including interviews to members of the press and presentations to community groups, through the annual faculty activity reports. The number and types of service to the community will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
No target set.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**
Results Summary: We assessed faculty service to the community by counting the numbers of press contacts and presentations to community groups listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. Although press contacts were not systematically reported, department faculty members appeared in various media as experts at least 20 times. The largest number of such appearances were by Department Chair Dr. Richard Fording. Interpretations and Conclusions: Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the results show that the Political Science Faculty is an valued resource for the local, state, and national media, and that appearances in the media promote the University's scholarly image. No changes are planned.

**M 20: Faculty Service to the discipline**
The Department Chair monitors service to the discipline, including reviewing journal articles and service to disciplinary organizations, through the annual faculty activity report. The number and types of service to the discipline will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
No target established.

**Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**
Results Summary: We assessed faculty service to the discipline by counting the numbers of scholarly reviews listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013. Our faculty reviewed 98 manuscripts during the period. Interpretations and Conclusions: Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the results show that the Political Science Faculty is active in service to the discipline. No changes are planned.

**OthOtcm 9: Department Outcome: Provide adequate course availability**
The department will provide adequate course availability to allow students to finish the Political Science and International Studies majors within 5 years.
Related Measures

M 21: Time-to-degree data
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Data are not available at this time.

M 22: Students’ perceptions of the availability of required courses
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.
Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Data are not available at this time.

OthOtcm 10: Department Outcome: Competitiveness in Graduate Acceptance and Placement
The department expects its undergraduate majors and graduate students to be competitive with other students throughout the United States in terms of admission to graduate study or obtaining employment related to political science.

Related Measures

M 23: Exit Survey Results
We will assess this outcome by using an exit survey to gather information on the proportion of MPA, MA, and PhD program graduates who have secured employment or job interviews in public administration, political science, or a related field.
Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2012-2013) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
These data will be collected and reported in the 2013-14 academic year assessment report.

M 24: Student Perceptions of Preparation for Employment
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.
Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

Details of Action Plans for This Cycle (by Established cycle, then alpha)

Revise Comprehensive Exam Process
We plan to reduce the number of political science sub-fields in which the MA students are required to take comprehensive exams from three to two. This change stems from disappointing results in the quality of the students’ answers to comprehensive exam questions and from our perception that fewer political science departments are requiring their graduate students to take comprehensive exams in three fields. We hope that by allowing our graduate students to focus their preparation for these exams on a smaller amount of material that they will produce better answers on their comprehensive exams.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):

Measure: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature | Outcome/Objective: Mastery of Political Science Literature

Implementation Description: We will begin the process of implementing this change during the 2012-2013 academic year. However, the change may require approval from the Graduate School, and so may not be fully implemented this academic year.

Projected Completion Date: 05/2014
Responsible Person/Group: Richard Fording, Department Chair
Mission / Purpose

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Student Learning Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans

SLO 1: Mastery of Political Science Literature
Students should demonstrate the ability to understand, evaluate, and synthesize the literature in their fields of study within Political Science.

Related Measures

M 1: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature
We will assess this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students correctly describe the relevant literature in the Masters of Political Science Comprehensive Exams.

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle

Results Summary
We assessed this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students correctly described the relevant literature in each of their subject exams in the Masters-level Comprehensive Exams. Results: 1 exemplary, 3 adequate, and 8 inadequate.

Interpretations and Conclusions
Thirty-three percent of the students performed at an adequate or exemplary level. This is a lower proportion than we would hope for. One problem may be that the breadth and variety of material tested on the exams as they are currently configured may be unrealistic for students to master. We plan to change the nature of the political science MA comprehensive exams to allow students to focus on the core literature in public administration. These changes are outlined in the action plan for this degree program.

Related Action Plans (by Established cycle, then alpha):

Revise Comprehensive Exam Process
We plan to reduce the number of political science sub-fields in which the MA students are required to take comprehensive exams from three to two. This changes stems from disappointing results in the quality of the students’ answers to comprehensive exam questions and from our perception that fewer political science departments are requiring their graduate students to take comprehensive exams in three fields. We hope that by allowing our graduate students to focus their preparation for these exams on a smaller amount of material that they will produce better answers on their comprehensive exams.

Established in Cycle: 2011-2012
Implementation Status: Planned
Priority: High

Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):
Measure: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature | Outcome/Objective: Mastery of Political Science Literature

M 2: Synthesize Political Science Literature
We will assess this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students adequately synthesize the relevant literature into a coherent essay for the Masters of Political Science Comprehensive Exams.

Target:
Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle

Results Summary
We assessed this outcome by evaluating the extent to which students adequately synthesized the relevant literature into a coherent essay in each of their subject exams in the Masters-level Comprehensive Exams. Results: 1 exemplary, 4 adequate, 7 inadequate.

Interpretations and Conclusions
Five out of the twelve students performed at an adequate or exemplary level in synthesizing the political science research literature into a coherent essay. This is a lower proportion than we would hope for. One problem may be that the breadth and variety of material tested on the exams as they are currently configured may be unrealistic for students to master. We plan to change the nature of the political science MA comprehensive exams to allow students to focus on the core literature in public administration. These changes are outlined in the action plan for this degree program.

SLO 2: Statistical Analysis
Students should demonstrate basic mastery of methodological skills that will serve them in their future careers, in or out of the academy.

Connected Documents
- Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
- Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

Related Measures

M 3: Mastery of Basic Probability and Statistics Concepts
We will assess this outcome through a course-embedded assessment in PSC 522 (Quantitative Analysis I) covering probability and basic statistical concepts. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No Target Established

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle

Results Summary
Instructor in PSC 522 used course-embedded assessments to evaluate students' abilities in basic probability and statistics. Results from the 2 MA students in the course: 0 exemplary, 2 adequate, 0 inadequate.

Interpretations and Conclusions
Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, both students performed adequately. No changes are planned.

M 4: Correctly Interpret Complex Statistical Analyses
We will assess this outcome through a course-embedded assessment in PSC 522 (Quantitative Analysis I) covering the interpretation of the results of more complex statistical analyses. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No Target Established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle

Results Summary
Instructor in PSC 522 used course-embedded assessments to evaluate students' abilities to estimate and interpret the results of an ordinary least squares regression. Results from the 2 MA students in the course: 0 exemplary, 0 adequate, 2 inadequate.

Interpretations and Conclusions
although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the results show that neither of the students performed at an adequate or exemplary level. This is certainly not what we hope to see, but the sample size is too small to be the basis for any broad conclusions.

SLO 3: Research Design
Students should demonstrate a basic ability to conduct original research in Political Science.

Connected Documents
- Curriculum Maps II-Political Science M.A
- Curriculum Maps I-Political Science M.A

Related Measures

M 5: Ability to Generate Research Hypotheses
We will assess this outcome in PSC 521 (Research Design) by evaluating the students' abilities to generate valid and testable hypotheses. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

Target: No Target Established

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle

Results Summary
Instructor in PSC 521 used course-embedded assessments to evaluate students' ability to produce valid and testable hypotheses. Results from the 3 MA students in the course: 1 exemplary, 0 adequate, 2 inadequate.

Interpretations and Conclusions
Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the fact that only one of the three students was able to meet this skill at an adequate or exemplary level is less than we would have hoped for.

M 6: Ability to Generate Research Questions
We will assess this outcome in PSC 521 (Research Design) by evaluating the students' abilities to derive research questions from previous research in the subject area. Results from this assessment will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Comprehensive/end-of-program subject matter exam

**Target:**
No Target Established

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**

**Results Summary**
Instructor in PSC 521 used course-embedded assessments to evaluate students' ability to derive research questions from existing research in the subject area. Results from the 3 MA students in the course: 1 exemplary, 0 adequate, 2 inadequate.

**Interpretations and Conclusions**
Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the fact that only one of the three students was able to meet this skill at an adequate or exemplary level is less than we would have hoped for.

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**Other Outcomes, with Any Associations and Related Measures, Targets, Findings, and Action Plans**

**OthOtcm 4: Program Outcome: High Level of Recognized Quality**
The program will improve and sustain a high level of recognized quality.

**Related Measures**

**M 7: Strengths from Program Review**
A list of the strengths of the department from the most recent program review (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 8: Opportunities for Improvement from Program Review**
A list of the opportunities for improvement from the most recent program review (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 9: List of recommendations**
A list of recommendations (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 10: List of actions in response to the recommendation**
A list of actions in response to the recommendation (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 11: Summary of impacts**
A summary of the impacts of the actions (specific to the MA in Political Science) will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**M 12: Survey of graduate students**
We will assess this outcome using a survey of current graduate students aimed at eliciting their evaluations of the quality of the program. The percent of students choosing each response to the question will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

**Target:**
No target established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**
This outcome relates to one of the three common program outcomes for which Dr. Smallwood told us we need not provide supporting documentation.

**OthOtcm 5: Program Outcome: Sustain Optimal Level of Enrollment**
The program will build and sustain an optimal level of annual program enrollments and degree completion.

**Related Measures**

**M 13: Number of Students in Master Program**
We will assess this outcome using the number of students in the graduate program for the last three fall semesters.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

**Target:**
No target established.

**Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle**
Results Summary We assess this outcome using data on students enrolled from the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. In fall semester 2011 there were 23 students enrolled in the Masters Program in Political Science, compared with 30 in fall 2010 and 29 in fall 2009.

Interpretations and Conclusions
Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, these numbers indicate a sustainable population of students in the program. No changes are planned.

**M 14: Comparison of the number of degree awarded to ACHE**
We will assess this outcome by comparing the number of degrees awarded in the last three years with the ACHE viability standards.

Source of Evidence: Benchmarking of learning outcomes against peers

**Target:**
We will aim to meet or exceed the ACHE standard of 3.75 degrees per year.

OthOtcm 6: Program Outcome: Highly Valued by Program Graduates
The program will be highly valued by its program graduates and other key constituencies it serves.

Related Measures

M 15: Success of Graduate Students in Employment
We will assess this outcome using data on the extent to which graduates of the program are able to find employment related to the discipline.

Source of Evidence: Job placement data, esp. for career/tech areas

Target:
No Target Established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Results Summary
The number of degrees awarded by the Masters of Political Science program was 4 in degree year 2010, 5 in 2011 and 3 in 2012. The average of these three years is 4.0 degrees per year.

Interpretations and Conclusions
This number is above the ACHE standard for a Master's program. No change are planned.

M 16: Evaluation of the value of the program
We will assess this outcome using a survey of current graduate students aimed at eliciting their evaluations of the value of the program in terms of helping them reach their career goals. Results of the survey will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
This outcome relates to one of the three common program outcomes for which Dr. Smallwood told us we need not provide supporting documentation.

OthOtcm 7: Department Outcome: Faculty Contribution
The Department expects its faculty to contribute to the discipline through the publication of significant and visible research.

Related Measures

M 17: Faculty Publication Rates
The Department Chair monitors each faculty member’s publications through the annual Faculty Activity Report and will report the total number of refereed publications and average number per faculty for the past 3 years. Our general expectation is that total refereed publications, forthcoming and in print (including books, articles, and book chapters), will meet or exceed 1.5 contributions per faculty member per year. This is an increase from last year's expectation of 1.0 contribution per faculty member.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
Our general expectation is that total refereed publications, forthcoming and in print (including books, articles, and book chapters), will meet or exceed 1.5 contributions per faculty member per year. This is an increase from last year's expectation of 1.0 contribution per faculty member.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
Results Summary We assessed faculty publication rates by counting the number of publications listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012. The faculty produced 18 journal articles, four books and seven book chapters during that period, for a total of 29 published contributions. This is an average of 1.61 contributions per faculty member. Interpretations and Conclusions The 1.61 contributions per faculty member exceeds the target for this assessment. No changes are planned.

M 18: Faculty Research Presentations
The Department Chair monitors faculty research presentations at national and regional academic conferences through the annual Faculty Activity Report and will report the total number of presentations and average number per faculty. The expectation is that total research presentations will meet or exceed one presentation per year per faculty

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
The expectation is that total research presentations will meet or exceed one presentation per year per faculty.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Met
Results Summary We assessed faculty presentation rates by counting the number of research presentations listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012. The faculty presented 25 such research presentations. This is an average of 1.4 presentations per faculty member. Interpretations and Conclusions The 1.4 presentations per faculty member exceeds the target for this assessment. No changes are planned.

OthOtcm 8: Department Outcome: Faculty Service
The Department expects its faculty, where appropriate, to serve the discipline of political science and the Alabama community.

Related Measures

M 19: Faculty Service to the Community
The Department Chair monitors each faculty member’s service to the Alabama community, including interviews to members of the press and presentations to community groups, through the annual faculty activity reports. The number and types of service to the community will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other
Target:
No target set.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Results Summary We assessed faculty service to the community by counting the numbers of press contacts and presentations to community groups listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012. Although press contacts were not systematically reported, department faculty members appeared in various media as experts at least 25 times. The largest number of such appearances were by Department Chair Dr. Richard Fording. In addition one of our faculty members, Dr. Norman Baldwin, supervised more than 150 students working in disaster relief after the tornado of April 27, 2011. Interpretations and Conclusions Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the results show that the Political Science Faculty is an valued resource for the local, state, and national media, and that appearances in the media promote the University's scholarly image. No changes are planned.

M 20: Faculty Service to the discipline
The Department Chair monitors service to the discipline, including reviewing journal articles and service to disciplinary organizations, through the annual faculty activity report. The number and types of service to the discipline will be reported.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Results Summary We assessed faculty service to the discipline by counting the numbers of scholarly reviews listed in Faculty Activity Reports for the period from April 1, 2011 to March 31, 2012. Our faculty reviewed 102 manuscripts during the period. Interpretations and Conclusions Although we did not establish a target for this assessment, the results show that the Political Science Faculty is active in service to the discipline. No changes are planned.

OthOtcm 9: Department Outcome: Provide adequate course availability
The department will provide adequate course availability to allow students to finish the Political Science and International Studies majors within 5 years.

Related Measures

M 21: Time-to-degree data
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Data are not available at this time.

M 22: Students’ perceptions of the availability of required courses
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.

Source of Evidence: Academic indirect indicator of learning - other

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Data are not available at this time.

OthOtcm 10: Department Outcome: Competitiveness in Graduate Acceptance and Placement
The department expects its undergraduate majors and graduate students to be competitive with other students throughout the United States in terms of admission to graduate study or obtaining employment related to political science.

Related Measures

M 23: Exit Survey Results
We will assess this outcome by using an exit survey to gather information on the proportion of MPA, MA, and PhD program graduates who have secured employment or job interviews in public administration, political science, or a related field.

Source of Evidence: Student satisfaction survey at end of the program

Target:
No target established.

Finding (2011-2012) - Target: Not Reported This Cycle
Results Summary We assessed our achievement of this outcome through a survey students graduating from the Masters of Public Administration program during the 2011-2012 academic year. Of the eight students surveyed, two had been invited to interview for jobs in public administration, three had not, and three were not seeking jobs in public administration. Of the eight students surveyed, one had been offered a job in public administration, four had not been offered jobs in public administration, and three were not seeking jobs in public administration. Interpretations and Conclusions These data are inconclusive. We would like to see higher numbers of our MPA graduates being offered interviews and jobs. However, the survey was conducted in April. It is possible that more of the students have now been offered jobs and interviews. Also, our placement of students is heavily dependent on economic conditions, which are difficult right now.

M 24: Student Perceptions of Preparation for Employment
This outcome was not intended to be assessed with regard to this degree program. No data was collected.

Source of Evidence: Student course evaluations on learning gains made
**Revise Comprehensive Exam Process**

We plan to reduce the number of political science sub-fields in which the MA students are required to take comprehensive exams from three to two. This change stems from disappointing results in the quality of the students’ answers to comprehensive exam questions and from our perception that fewer political science departments are requiring their graduate students to take comprehensive exams in three fields. We hope that by allowing our graduate students to focus their preparation for these exams on a smaller amount of material that they will produce better answers on their comprehensive exams.

**Established in Cycle:** 2011-2012  
**Implementation Status:** Planned  
**Priority:** High  

**Relationships (Measure | Outcome/Objective):**  
Measure: Accurately Describe Political Science Literature | Outcome/Objective: Mastery of Political Science Literature

**Implementation Description:** We will begin the process of implementing this change during the 2012-2013 academic year. However, the change may require approval from the Graduate School, and so may not be fully implemented this academic year.  
**Projected Completion Date:** 05/2014  
**Responsible Person/Group:** Richard Fording, Department Chair
## Curriculum Maps #1 (In which courses or in what activities or assignments are Student Learning Outcomes Addressed)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Required Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PSC 521</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comprehensive Exams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PSC 522</td>
<td>x</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>x</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Curriculum Map II  (What assessment measures will be employed in which courses/activities/assignments for each Student learning Outcome)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course 1</th>
<th>Course 2</th>
<th>Required Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSC 521</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Comprehensive Exams</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Course 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Rubric to evaluate comprehensive exams answers for accuracy and synthesis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PSC 522</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Course embedded questions and assignments on generation and evaluation of hypotheses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Learning Outcome 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe, evaluate and synthesize literature.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of research process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Learning Outcome 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate methodological skills</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student Learning Outcome 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of research process</td>
<td></td>
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