

**BIENNIAL PROGRAM STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT REPORT FORM –
ASSESSMENT COMPLETED IN AY2023-2024 (Due to the dean on November 15)**

Submission date: 11/15/2024

Assessment Plan covered in this report: Political Science BA

College: College of Arts and Sciences

Campuses where the program(s) is delivered: ☒ Anchorage ☐ KOD ☐ KPC ☐ MSC ☐ PWSC

Submitted by: Forrest Nabors, Associate Professor & Chair, Dept. of Political Science,
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1. Please list and number the Program Student Learning Outcomes your program assessed in the past academic year. For each outcome, indicate one of the following: Exceeded faculty expectations, Met faculty expectations, or Did not meet faculty expectations.

1. Demonstrate the ability to write clear and precise English prose. - Met faculty expectations
2. Demonstrate the ability to understand basic principles of American Government. - Met faculty expectations.
3. Demonstrate the ability to understand the relationship between the United States and the larger world. - Met faculty expectations
4. Demonstrate the ability to identify and criticize competing political science arguments. - Met faculty expectations.
5. Demonstrate the ability to identify and interpret important political texts. - Met faculty expectations
6. Demonstrate the ability to write a satisfactory senior-level research paper. - Met faculty expectations
7. Demonstrate a knowledge of each recognized field within political science. - Met faculty expectations.

2. Describe what your assessment process was last year for these Program Student Learning Outcomes, including the collection of data, analysis of data, and faculty (and other, e.g., advisory board) conversations around the findings. (1000 words or less)

The source of our data is the capstone course to the major program, PS A492 Senior Seminar. By the time students take the senior seminar, they will have successfully completed a required course for each subfield of political science. During the term when PS A492 is offered, each faculty expert in a subfield of political science presents a review of that subfield to the class. By the end of the term, students will have completed a comprehensive exam, co-authored by all faculty, and a major research paper. Faculty jointly assess the exams and papers against

our program's seven outcomes. These scores are then compiled and analyzed. Due to the small size of our department, faculty can confer on an ad hoc basis, in addition to our weekly meetings when the progress of our program for students is discussed. Student learning is the central theme of these weekly discussions throughout the year. Our data collection always takes place at the end of the semester when PS A492 is offered, and analysis begins immediately and is ongoing until the grades for the course are due. Faculty collaboration in analyzing student outcomes is incident to the completion of the course.

3. What are the findings and what do they tell the faculty about student learning in your program? (1000 words or less)

Our outcomes remain the same as they were in the last program review in 2022. At that time we reported that student learning had declined and flattened over ten years due to the unreplaced loss of faculty. Since COVID ended, student majors and registrants in our courses have gradually increased. Qualified new scholars have joined the department. Faculty subjectively agree that student learning and student motivation to learn are improving, although the data do not yet support these convictions. We believe that our outcomes are on track to exceed expectations as new cohorts of students join our program and are administered our assessments by their junior and senior years.

4. Based on the findings, did the faculty make any recommendations for changes to improve student achievement of the Program Student Learning Outcomes? Yes

- i. **Please describe the recommended action(s), what improvements in student learning the program hopes to see, the proposed timeline, and how the program will know if the change(s) has worked. If no recommendations for changes were made, please explain that decision. (1000 words or less)**

We have again reviewed our curriculum to improve the distribution and content of courses to faculty with expertise in the given subfields of our discipline. We are now expanding our course rotation from one-year to one-and-a half years, so that an adequate number of courses fulfilling the major requirements are offered, while at the same time, faculty are now teaching courses in which they have scholarly expertise. Previously faculty were teaching everything that that our program required, regardless of expertise. Now, our courses are more ably instructed. These modest reforms will, we hope, improve student learning as a result, which will show up in student outcomes.

5. In the past academic year, how did your program use the results of previous assessment cycles to make changes intended to improve student achievement of the Program Student Learning Outcomes? Please check all that apply.

- ☒ Course curriculum changes
☐ Course prerequisite changes

- ☐ Changes in teaching methods
- ☐ Changes in advising
- ☒ Degree requirement changes
- ☐ Degree course sequencing
- ☐ Course enrollment changes (e.g., course capacity, grading structure [pass/fail, A-F])
- ☒ Changes in program policies/procedures
- ☐ Changes to Program Student Learning Outcomes (PSLOs)
- ☐ College-wide initiatives (e.g., High-Impact Practices)
- ☐ Faculty, staff, student development
- ☐ Other
- ☐ No changes were implemented last year. *(If no options above were selected)*

If you checked “Other” above, please describe. (100 words or less)

- 6. Do you have any information about how well these or other past improvements are working? Are they achieving their intended goals? Please include any data or assessment results that help you demonstrate this. (1000 words or less)**

Currently, these reforms are too new and it is too early to tell whether they have affected student learning. However, the changes in faculty composition have had a positive impact on student learning, we believe, though on a subjective basis, and though this is not yet confirmed by the outcomes data. Since the last assessment report the department lost a long-serving, very experienced full professor, but we have gained one tenure-track assistant professor and a strong adjunct professor who both recently acquired their PhDs from Berkeley. In a faculty as small as ours, this is significant turnover and has infused our department and our department's instruction with new energy. Anecdotal data in support of general student success include the known success of recent graduates of our program in moving directly to graduate programs, law school, business, NGOs and one recent winner of a Truman Scholarship. Also, two recent graduates of our program were candidates to the Alaska legislature in the 2024 elections.

DEAN SECTION (Due to the program on January 15)

- 1. Based on the program's responses above, what guidance and support do you have for the program moving forward? (200 words or less)**

The program should consider collecting formative data from selected courses to complement the summative data of the assessment report. As the faculty consider changes to the curriculum, they are also encouraged to consider consolidating the seven PSLOs.

2. Discuss what the program is doing particularly well in terms of its processes for the assessment and improvement of student learning, for example, the use of a common rubric or prompt, a signature assignment, etc. *(200 words or less)*

The changes the department have put forward for the major and for the schedule are well thought-out and promise to provide students with more opportunities and a clearer path to graduation. The work by the faculty on these revisions is appreciated.

Dean's signature:

Jenny McNulty

Date: 1/13/2025