

# Political Science BA/BS

## Improve Undergraduate Curriculum

### Goal Description:

The department will work to improve its undergraduate curriculum with an eye toward (1) improving student learning outcomes and (2) improving the resilience of the program by making it easier to recruit majors.

**Providing Department:** Political Science BA/BS

### RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

#### Review undergraduate curriculum

#### Performance Objective Description:

The department will conduct a review of its undergraduate curriculum (BA and BS).

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

#### Review undergraduate curriculum

#### KPI Description:

In Spring 2023, the department will conduct a review of the undergraduate curriculum (BA and BS) with an eye toward improving course sequencing and offerings.

#### Target Description:

This performance objective will be achieved if the department conducts the review and develops changes that are ready to incorporate into the next cycle of catalog changes.

#### Results Description:

This review began late in the Spring in 2023 by the department curriculum committee. We plan to continue the discussion in Fall 2023.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

#### Review undergraduate curriculum

#### Action Description:

This review began late in the Spring in 2023 by the department curriculum committee. We plan to continue the discussion in Fall 2023.

## Promote Positive Undergraduate Student Outcomes

### Goal Description:

The political science department aims to offer educational instruction that promotes strong critical thinking, clarity of thought, excellent communication capabilities, and sophisticated research skills.

**Providing Department:** Political Science BA/BS

### RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

#### Develop Students' Disciplinary Skills

#### Learning Objective Description:

Students in the major will develop their ability to analyze and present empirical data, explain key concepts of research design, and write coherent reports and research papers.

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

#### Student Paper Outcomes in 3379

#### Indicator Description:

POLS 3379 Research and Writing is a required course. Faculty members who teach the course will receive and review 5 randomly selected papers POLS 3379 courses. Faculty members will review the papers using a rubric. Papers will be scored on a scale of 1 - 5 with 5 being the highest.

**Criterion Description:**

We expect that 75% of the written assignments selected for committee review will receive a score of three or better.

**Findings Description:**

This data was not collected in AY22-23. We are currently thinking about revising this indicator and criteria in AY23-24.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3**

**Student Paper Outcomes in 3379**

**Action Description:**

We are currently thinking about revising this indicator and criteria in AY23-24.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1**

**Develop Students' Knowledge of Civic Engagement**

**Learning Objective Description:**

Students will learn the skills and knowledge necessary to participate and engage in civic and political life at the local, state, and national levels of government.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2**

**Pre/Post Testing of POLS 2305 and POLS 2306 Students**

**Indicator Description:**

Students enrolled in 2305 American Government and 2306 Texas Government will complete pre/post tests designed to capture information about students learning progress on matters relevant to civic and political engagement.

**Criterion Description:**

We expect to see significant differences between the pre and post tests scores.

**Findings Description:**

Beginning in fall 2022, a new locally developed pretest to posttest was administered within sections of POLS 2305: American Government. The instrument consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions and was administered at the beginning and at the end of the fall and spring semesters. The instrument was developed by the faculty of the Department of Political Science for use as part of their ongoing programmatic assessment as well as for Core Learning assessment. As the instrument was locally developed by faculty from the Department of Political Science, it is assumed that the instrument has content-related validity (Banta & Palomba, 2015). Additionally, as this test was embedded within the POLS 2305: American Government courses, the student scores represent authentic student work (Banta & Palomba, 2015; Kuh et al., 2015). However, as the instrument is not for a grade within the course, it represents a low-stakes assessment of student learning.

A total of 265 students took the pretest, and a total of 63 students took the posttest for all sections of POLS 2305: American Government for the 2022-2023 academic year; however, not all student test scores were used for analysis. To determine whether student performance increased from pretest to posttest, a dependent samples t-test was used for analysis. Student identification numbers were collected along with student scores to identify each student's score on both the pretest and posttest. A total of 46 students could be identified as taking both the pre- and posttests. All statistical analysis was therefore conducted on only those students for whom both pre- and posttest scores could be identified.

A parametric dependent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference at the  $p \leq .01$  level between students' pre- to posttest scores for students enrolled in face-to-face sections of POLS 2305: American Government for the 2022-2023 academic year,  $t(35) = -3.22$ ,  $p = .003$ . This difference represented a moderate effect size (Cohen's  $d$ ) of 0.57 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 50.56% to 61.39%, for an increase of 10.83%. This equated to an average increase of 1.08 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest. Readers are directed to Table 2 for the descriptive statistics for student pre- and posttest scores.

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Beginning in fall 2022, a new locally developed pretest to posttest was administered within sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government. The instrument consisted of 10 multiple-choice questions and was administered at the beginning and at the end of the fall and spring semesters. The instrument was developed by the faculty of the Department of Political Science for use as part of their ongoing programmatic assessment as well as for Core Learning assessment. As the instrument was locally developed by faculty from the Department of Political Science, it is assumed that the instrument has content-related validity (Banta & Palomba, 2015). Additionally, as this test was embedded within the POLS 2306: Texas Government courses, the student scores represent authentic student work (Banta & Palomba, 2015; Kuh et al., 2015). However, as the instrument is not for a grade within the course, it represents a low-stakes assessment of student learning.

A total of 184 students took the pretest, and a total of 86 students took the posttest for all sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the 2022-2023 academic year; however, not all student test scores were used for analysis. To determine whether student performance increased from pretest to posttest, a dependent samples t-test was used for analysis. Student identification numbers were collected along with student scores to identify each student's score on both the pretest and posttest. A total of 58 students could be identified as taking both the pre- and posttests. All statistical analysis was therefore conducted on only those students for whom both pre- and posttest scores could be identified.

A parametric dependent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference at the  $p \leq .01$  level between students' pre- to posttest scores for students enrolled in face-to-face sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the 2022-2023 academic year,  $t(22) = -3.09$ ,  $p = .005$ . This difference represented a large effect size (Cohen's  $d$ ) of 0.80 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 39.57% to 56.96%, for an increase of 17.39%. This equated to an average increase of 1.74 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest. A parametric dependent samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference at the  $p \leq .001$  level between students' pre- to posttest scores for students enrolled in online sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the 2022-2023 academic year,  $t(34) = -6.97$ ,  $p = < .001$ . The average student score increased from 35.43% to 60.57%, for an increase of 25.14%. This equated to an average increase of 2.52 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest.

Please see the attached reports.

Attached Files

 [POLS 2305 2022-2023 Report.pdf](#)

 [POLS 2306 2022-2023 Report.pdf](#)

#### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

#### **Pre/Post Testing of POLS 2305 and POLS 2306 Students**

##### **Action Description:**

In the coming AY, the department should continue to implement and assess its strategy for assessing SLOs in 2305 and 2306 based on plan developed and executed in AY22-23.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Review undergraduate curriculum**

**Performance Objective Description:**

The department will conduct a review of its undergraduate curriculum (BA and BS).

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Review undergraduate curriculum**

**KPI Description:**

In Spring 2023, the department will conduct a review of the undergraduate curriculum (BA and BS) with an eye toward improving course sequencing and offerings.

**Target Description:**

This performance objective will be achieved if the department conducts the review and develops changes that are ready to incorporate into the next cycle of catalog changes.

**Results Description:**

This review began late in the Spring in 2023 by the department curriculum committee. We plan to continue the discussion in Fall 2023.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Review undergraduate curriculum**

**Action Description:**

This review began late in the Spring in 2023 by the department curriculum committee. We plan to continue the discussion in Fall 2023.

**Recruit more undergraduate majors**

**Goal Description:**

The department will work to improve the number of undergraduate majors (BA or BS) in political science.

**Providing Department:** Political Science BA/BS

RELATED ITEMS/ELEMENTS -----

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Develop a marketing and recruiting strategy**

**Performance Objective Description:**

Department will work with Enrollment, Marketing and Communications to develop and begin to implement a comprehensive marketing strategy for recruiting students into BA and BS programs.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Meet with EMC, develop strategy**

**KPI Description:**

In early 2023, the department chair and recruitment committee will meet with the Enrollment Marketing and Communication office to develop a marketing strategy.

**Target Description:**

The target is a meeting with the Enrollment Marketing and Communication office to develop a marketing strategy.

**Results Description:**

This was not completed in AY22-23 due to leadership changes and direction within EMC and University Marketing more broadly. We will move forward with this in AY23-24.

### RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

#### **Meet with EMC, develop strategy**

##### **Action Description:**

This was not completed in AY22-23 due to leadership changes and direction within EMC and University Marketing more broadly. We will move forward with this in AY23-24.

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## **Update to Previous Cycle's Plan for Continuous Improvement Item**

### **Previous Cycle's Plan For Continuous Improvement (Do Not Modify):**

#### **Closing Summary**

For the 2022-2023 academic year, the department has a handful of tasks to accomplish with respect to its BA/BS programs. These build on the actions from the current assessment cycle.

1. Create new assessment metrics for POLS 3379
2. Work toward (1) developing an online recruiting campaign, (2) continue the "Help Me Make Sense of This" series and (3) developing small-group events where students are personally invited to participate.
3. implement and assess new strategy for assessing SLOs in 2305 and 2306 based on plan developed.
4. Continue to fine-tune undergraduate major (BA/BS) SLOs.
5. Meet with the Enrollment Marketing and Communication office to develop a marketing strategy.
6. Think about revising curriculum in the most straight-forward, efficient, and exciting (for students) ways possible. Given the time and challenges associated with creating new programs, the department should first focus on low-hanging fruit: course titles and descriptions, changes to curriculum, etc.

The department chair will take the lead on these working with undergraduate curriculum committee and undergraduate recruitment committee as appropriate.

### **Update of Progress to the Previous Cycle's PCI:**

The department made decent progress these goals in 2022-2023. For example, we were able to implement a new process for assessing SLOs in POLS 2305 and 2306. Initial data show better response rates and give us a better snapshot of learning outcomes.

In the coming year, we must continue to think about revising the curriculum in the most straight-forward, efficient, and exciting (for students) ways possible. Given the time and challenges associated with creating new programs, the department should first focus on low-hanging fruit: course titles and descriptions, changes to curriculum, etc.

## **New Plan for Continuous Improvement Item**

### **Closing Summary:**

For the 2023-2024 academic year, the department must continue to tackle the following:

1. Create new assessment metrics for POLS 3379
2. Work toward developing small-group events where students are personally invited to participate.
3. Meet with the Enrollment Marketing and Communication office to develop a marketing strategy.
4. Think about revising curriculum in the most straight-forward, efficient, and exciting (for students) ways possible. Given the time and challenges associated with creating new programs, the department should first focus on low-hanging fruit: course titles and descriptions, changes to curriculum, etc.

The department chair will take the lead on these working with undergraduate curriculum committee and undergraduate recruitment committee as appropriate.