

# 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 Fall 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:**

The department conducted a complete review of the BA and BS curricula early in the Fall 2023 semester. We decided to overall both degree plans, pulling more POLS courses into the major foundation for both degree plans. The new curricula were entered into the 2024 catalog.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Review undergraduate curriculum**

**Action Description:**

The department met this objective in AY23-24. In Fall 2024, we met, discussed, and agreed upon substantive changes in our BA and BS curricula -- specifically a new "Major Foundation" that applies to each. We were able to move quickly enough to incorporate the changes into the AY24-25 catalog.

## 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 AY23-24. We are currently thinking about revising this indicator and criteria in AY24-25.

## RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

### **Student Paper Outcomes in 3379**

#### **Action Description:**

We need to revise this measurement in AY24-25. In previous years, we used 3379 because it was one of the only courses that all BA/BS students were required to take. In AY24-25, we revised the curricula with a new "Major Foundation" that applies to both the BA and BS program. Going forward, we need to think differently about how we might assess the "interdisciplinary skills" learning objective beyond collecting papers in the 3379 course.

## 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. Students in POLS 2305 will be assessed in Fall 2023. Students in POLS 2306 will be assessed in Spring 2024.

#### **Criterion Description:**

We expect to see positive 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 111 students took the pretest, and a total of 103 students took the posttest for all sections of POLS 2305: American Government for the fall 2023 semester; 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 28 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 did not reveal a statistically significant difference between students' pre- to posttest scores for students enrolled in face-to-face sections of POLS 2305: American Government for the fall 2023 semester,  $t(19) = -0.68$ ,  $p = .504$ . The average student score increased from 60.00% to 63.50%, for an increase of 3.50%. This equated to an average increase of 0.35 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest.

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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 88 students took the pretest, and a total of 31 students took the posttest for all sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the spring 2024 semester; 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 31 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  $p \leq .05$  level between students' pre- to posttest scores for students enrolled in face-to-face sections of POLS 2306: Texas Government for the spring 2024 semester,  $t(13) = -2.53$ ,  $p = .025$ . This difference represented a large effect size (Cohen's  $d$ ) of 0.84 (Cohen, 1988). The average student score increased from 46.43% to 64.29%, for an increase of 17.86%. This equated to an average increase of 1.79 questions answered correctly from pre- to posttest.

Please see the attached reports.

Attached Files

 [POLS 2305 Fall 2023 Report.pdf](#)

 [POLS 2306 Spring 2024 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 the previous two cycles.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1

**Review undergraduate curriculum**

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RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2

**Review undergraduate curriculum**

**KPI Description:**

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**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:**

The department conducted a complete review of the BA and BS curricula early in the Fall 2023 semester. We decided to overall both degree plans, pulling more POLS courses into the major foundation for both degree plans. The new curricula were entered into the 2024 catalog.

RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3

**Review undergraduate curriculum**

**Action Description:**

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**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 2024, 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:**

The department was offered no opportunity to meet with Enrollment, Marketing, and Communication during AY 2023-2024. This appeared to be the result of major changes EMC implemented in workflow and the emphasis they were placing on a university re-branding effort. Along with the rest of the departments in CHSS, we plan to continue to press these efforts in the coming AY.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 3****Meet with IMC, develop strategy****Action Description:**

This was not completed in AY2023-2024, largely due to IMC putting these sorts of actions on hold throughout the university. However, during the year a new marketing coordinator for CHSS was hired. In the next AY, we will be working the new college coordinator to try to develop a marketing strategy for our undergraduate programs.

**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 1****Review undergraduate curriculum****Performance Objective Description:**

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**RELATED ITEM LEVEL 2****Review undergraduate curriculum****KPI Description:**

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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 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.

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

During 2023-2024, our biggest progress was on the curriculum revision. Not only were we able to revisit and rethink the curriculum, we were able to get it done in a time period that allowed us to incorporate the changes (both BA and BS) in the AY24-25 catalog.

Due to IMC's hold on department and program marketing, we were not able to make progress on #3.

We decided to hold off on #1 given the move toward new curriculum which will ultimately offer us a broader set of options for assessing student learning objectives in our BA and BS programs.

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

##### **Closing Summary:**

For the 2024-2025 academic year, the department must continue to tackle the following:

1. Create new assessment metrics for learning objectives, particularly in light of the move toward a more cohesive (and required) major foundation.
2. Work toward developing small-group events where students are personally invited to participate.
3. Develop a marketing strategy in conjunction with the new CHSS marketing coordinator.

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