

PROGRAM REVIEW 2008-2011

Division: Social Sciences and Humanities

Department or Program: Political Science

Name and Title of Preparer(s): Professors Scott Heffner, Bob Stockwell, and Nicky González Yuen

I. Description and Mission of the Program

Which area(s) does this program considerably address (check all that apply):

Basic Skills Transfer Career/Technical Other
(describe)

A. The Political Science department prepares students with the tools to become more fully engaged, empowered, and educated citizens in the American political system of the 21st century. Academically, the four primary courses the department teaches fulfill requirements for lower division A.A./A.S. degree students and for Political Science majors through its GE approved and general transfer curricula.

The Political Science department assists in meeting the College's mission (to challenge students of every background to develop their intellect, character, and abilities, to achieve their educational goals, and to serve their community in a diverse and changing world) by engaging in:

- promoting the College's institutional core competencies (communication and expression; information literacy; physical/mental wellness and personal responsibility; global, cultural, social and environmental awareness; and critical thinking) through our course offerings
- individual and group tutoring
- working closely with De Anza's Institute of Community and Civic Engagement (ICCE) to provide service learning/civic engagement classes
- developing curriculum and performing 5-year reviews
- providing a challenge exam for California government to qualified students
- maintaining individual and department websites
- providing leadership (and resources) in public discourse for campus and community events
- participating in shared governance and other committee work
- maintaining collateral contacts with other programs campus wide and the general, college community and District

- B. A dedicated, highly educated, and diverse full-time and adjunct faculty endeavor to challenge students' critical thinking through dynamic pedagogies. Varied and progressive curricula are offered, embracing different subject matter with a concentration in four, primary areas of study:
- *American Government and Politics* (Poli 01)
 - *Comparative Politics* (Poli 02)
 - *International Relations* (Poli 03)
 - *Political Thought and Theory* (Poli 05)

Additional creative, critically important, and diverse courses (some cross-listed) are also regularly part of the department's curriculum offerings, including:

- *Grassroots Democracy: Race, Politics and the American Promise* (Poli 15)
- *Grassroots Democracy: Social Movements Since the 1960s* (Poli 16)

(POLI 15 and POLI 16 are both articulated with UC Berkeley and meet its "American Cultures" graduation requirement. These are the only classes that De Anza students transferring to Cal can take to fulfill this requirement.)

- *Grassroots Democracy: Leadership and Power* (Poli 17)

(This class is also the capstone class for De Anza's certificate program in Leadership and Social Change offered through the Institute for Civic and Community Engagement.)

The department also offers a fully online delivery of *American Government and Politics* through the College's Learning Management System (LMS), Catalyst.

Overall, the department's faculty members are both efficient and effective in their productivity. More than 3000 students have enrolled in the department's offerings during Fiscal Year's (FY) 2005-06, 2006-07 and 2007-08; the department has offered (on average) 75 sections of classes each period.

- C. While the department has consistently increased its section offerings, the total number of students served has declined somewhat, along with the number of students from targeted groups. The department has done better in terms of retention, increasing its retention rates for all students and for students from targeted groups. With regard to success rates, while the department saw an increase in the combined targeted group success rates, rates varied among targeted groups, with two groups showing decreases and a third showing improvement. Moreover, the performance gap between targeted and not targeted groups persists. Thus, the department needs to continue to work to provide increased access to students from targeted groups, build on its record of retention success, and take steps to close the performance gap. The addition of one full-time faculty member would assist the department in addressing these goals. Moreover, increased interaction amongst department faculty (full-time and adjunct) in either scheduled meetings and/or other appropriate assembly might facilitate an even stronger sense of collegiality and promote cross-fertilization of creative approaches to addressing these objectives and others related to teaching and professional growth.

D. *Learning outcomes*

- Students will become knowledgeable about government and politics
- Students will exhibit the capacity to critically think about, write about, and analyze political phenomena
- Students will recognize the importance of civic engagement and political participation

Transfer/certificate and degrees

- Students will be able to transfer to the UCs, CSUs, and other institutions with articulated courses from the department (Poli 1, 2, 3, 5, 15, 16, 17)
- Students will be able to use department courses toward A.A. / A.S. degrees
- Students will be offered coursework towards partial fulfillment of the College's Civic Engagement and American Cultures credit program

Career goals

- Students will be provided access to internship opportunities and made aware of vocational possibilities in the field of Political Science
- Students will be provided guidance regarding career goals in Political Science and in other areas of study
- Students will be afforded student-requested, instructor recommendations for both job and academic opportunities

II. **Retention and Growth**

A.

Table 1. Access, Growth, and Retention; % change in brackets

Year	Number of Sections	Number of Students	Retention rate
2005-06	69	3181	89%
2006-07	72	3089	86% [-3%]
2007-08	84	3146	91% [+5%]
2005-08	[+21.7%]	[-1.1%]	[+2%]

In response to the institutional goal of increased *access*, the department has increased its number of section offerings (+21.7%). As to *growth*, the department saw a decline in enrollment during the interim year, an increase the following year, and a small decline overall (-1.1%). It should be noted that starting in 2006, the department offered an increasing number of sections of Poli 2, 3, and 5, which have enrollment caps of 40, 10 less than the standard 50-student cap for Poli 1 sections. With regard to *retention*, the department witnessed a decline during the interim year (-3%), an increase the following year (+5%), and an overall increase in retention for the program review period (+2%).

B.

Table 2. Targeted Group Students/Percentages and Retention; % change in brackets

Year	Targeted group students	Percentage of total	Retention rates
2005-06	758	24	86%
2006-07	723	23 [-1%]	84% [-2%]
2007-08	738	23 [0%]	89% [+5%]
2005-08	[-2.6%]	[-1%]	[+3%]

In terms of *growth*, the department experienced a decline in the number of Black, Filipino, and Hispanic students enrolled in sections in the interim year, an increase in the third year, and a decline over the review period (-2.6%). In terms of percentages, the department witnessed a decline in the number of Black, Filipino, and Hispanic students enrolled in sections in the interim year, and a decline over the review period (-1%). As to *retention* of Black, Filipino, and Hispanic students, retention percentages dropped in the interim year (-2%), increased in the third year (+5%), and increased over the review period (+3%).

C. Although the department is primarily geared toward offering courses that fulfill general education and Political Science major transfer requirements, it does address the basic skills needs of students in the program. Students who lack basic skills are less likely to succeed in our program, any other program at De Anza, and in other programs they might transfer to, therefore, we actively promote and engage students in critical reading, writing, and thinking skills. We do this by working through:

- class discussions, student groups and general, moderated discourse
- instructor-student conferences during office hours
- assignments that further develop basic skills, including research papers and by providing ongoing support to help students meet the objectives of these assignments
- written and verbal feedback on assignments and exams geared toward promoting more effective reading, writing and critical thinking
- encouraging students to take part in organizations and programs aimed at promoting basic skills, such as the Reading and Writing Center, the Tutorial and Academic Skills Center, the Student Success and Retention Services Center, among others
- integration of adjunct skills classes into our course offerings
- participation in online communication forums and chats
- utilization of the upload/comment/edit tools available in Catalyst for reviewing and evaluating written papers
- use of teaching strategies that tap into the diversity of student intelligences

- offering community service learning opportunities that enrich student learning

III. Student Equity

A.

Table 3. Student success rates (in percentages); % change in brackets

Year	Black	Filipino	Hispanic	Targeted	Not Targeted	Difference*	Total
2005-06	65	65	64	64	76	12	74
2006-07	74 [+9]	59 [-6]	62 [-2]	63 [-1]	74 [-2]	11 [-1]	72 [-2]
2007-08	60 [-14]	63 [+4]	67 [+5]	65 [+2]	77 [+3]	12 [+1]	74 [+2]
2005-08	[-5]	[-2]	[+3]	[+1]	[+1]	[0]	[0]

* Difference = Difference between “Not Targeted” and “Targeted groups.”

Black student success rates improved in the interim year (+9%), but declined significantly in the most recent year (-14%), marking an overall decline for the review period (-5%). Filipino student success rates declined in the interim year (-6%), improved in the most recent year (+4%), and showed an overall decline for the review period (-2%). Hispanic student success rates, on the other hand, declined in the interim year (-2%), improved in the most recent year (+5%), and showed an overall increase for the review period (+3%). Targeted group (Blacks, Filipinos, and Hispanics) success rates declined in the interim year (-1%), improved in the most recent year (+2%), and improved overall for the review period (+1%). Not Targeted group (Asians, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, Whites, Others, Unrecorded) success rates declined in the interim year (-2%), improved in the most recent year (+3%), and improved overall for the review period (+1%).

The difference between Not Targeted and Targeted group success rates declined in the interim year (-1%), increased in the most recent year (+1%), and showed no change over the review period. This indicates a persistent gap in performance between Not Targeted and Targeted groups, and points to the need for continued efforts on the part of the department to address it.

- B. As a department, we are seeking to better understand the factors responsible for the differences in success rates outlined in part A. We continue to ask ourselves:

- What are the factors that impact student success?

- How might these factors impact Targeted and Not Targeted groups differently?
- How can we explain the differences in performance?
- What can we do to improve equity, student success, and close the performance gap?

Students who are not succeeding fall into several different categories (not limited to the below), each presenting its own challenge.

(1) Class/socioeconomic constraints: Students often face insurmountable obstacles when it comes to the affordability of required course materials, ancillary supplies, and expectations for online access. Rising costs in textbooks, full access to broadband internet connection, and computers loaded with appropriate software applications, disproportionately impact students from lower, socio-economic backgrounds.

(2) Skills/preparation: Students have insufficient academic preparation in basic skills to successfully complete their classes.

(3) Work/family/obligations: Many students attempt, but often fail, to successfully balance school commitments with work responsibilities outside of the college. It is not uncommon to find students working 40+ hours a week while carrying 15 units. If added to these 15 hours of in-class learning is the 30-40 hours of outside, recommended additional study, it becomes apparent such student expectations are unrealistic. Moreover, even for the most disciplined of these students, work or family obligations often present emergency demands on their time and given the lack of flexibility in their schedules, failure or withdrawal is often the end result.

(4) Studenthood: There are students who are not committed to prioritizing their own learning and do not complete their class work successfully. These are students who have not internalized an ethos of “studenthood”— i.e., discipline, time management, prioritization of their studies, etc. Such students often do not have strong peer group support for their success.

(5) Variety of talents/perspectives/intelligences: Students often come to our classes with a variety of talents and perspectives that have not been recognized or valued within the norms of “traditional” academic methods. If our pedagogies and learning assessments do not tap into, nurture, and/or value the range of learning styles and “intelligences,” such students may not as readily succeed.

(6) Alienation from politics/civic engagement: Notwithstanding the recent national election in which large numbers of disaffected voters took part in the political process with unusual vigor, in a society that has deemphasized civic participation, there are lowered expectations that “politics” will be a rewarding and an enriching experience. Students often arrive in our classes cynical, alienated, timid, and passive. While as a department we make concerted efforts to counter this lack of enthusiasm and interest through a

more active and engaged model of politics, this strategy presents its own difficulties as students run into emotional barriers to hands-on participatory learning (e.g., embarrassment, fear, affected boredom, etc.).

- C. The department is committed to addressing each of the issues identified above.

With regard to *class/socioeconomic constraint*, the department: seeks to identify and deploy course materials that are reasonably priced; informs students of the various avenues for purchase of required materials; makes reading materials available through the reserve desk at the library and online; utilizes the Division's textbook voucher program; uses the textbook rental program through the bookstore; makes students aware of computer resources available to them on campus; and provides online, virtual non-paper submission of assignments.

When it comes to students lacking sufficient academic preparation in *basic skills* of reading, writing, and critical thinking, the department makes a concerted effort to promote these skills. It also encourages students to take advantage of the full range of student support services on campus by providing relevant information in class and/or during office hours. In some cases, links are provided on instructor/department websites and/or handouts. Some sections offer adjunct skills opportunities (group tutoring) and/or extra credit; others provide individual tutorial assistance. The department will begin a series of internal educational sessions to insure that each instructor is aware of the range of support programs designed to support students from groups that have traditionally been disadvantaged (e.g., Student Success and Retention Services, PUENTE, EDC, Financial Aid, etc.) and can then make appropriate student referrals.

With regard to the *demanding lives of our students*, many of whom have to balance school commitments with work and family obligations, the department is vigilant in its efforts to accommodate extenuating circumstances that might inhibit student success. In addition, the department actively disseminates information about the range of student support resources on campus that may help to mitigate some of these external pressures.

As to students who have not internalized an ethos of "*studenthood*," the department actively promotes discipline, time management, and prioritization of academic study, while at the same time promoting attitudes of responsibility beyond the classroom, including civic responsibility.

With regard to the *variety of talents/perspectives/intelligences* among students, and the biases built into the discipline in terms of intelligences (the dominant modes being linguistic and logical-mathematical, which informs our training and teaching practices), members of the Political Science department are engaging in a variety of strategies to advance the College's and department's mission of student equity. To begin with, it is engaged in dialogue about

student learning outcomes (SLO's), which we expect will provide greater clarity and shared understandings, and will make measuring actual student success more manageable, efficient, and effective. The department, through its ongoing C.A.R. work, is examining different student learning styles and intelligences, which is assisting in better understanding and deploying common strategies to build on the strengths of the full range of students enrolled in the department's course offerings. These discussions are also moving the department to examine the relative amounts of work being assigned to students and the nature of such assignments, while at the same time respecting the unique styles and perspectives of each instructor. The department will continue to offer classes with a range of teaching styles and formats so that students can self-select classes that are most appropriate for their learning styles and interests (i.e., traditional and web enhanced, hybrid or fully online, and/or traditional combined with other unique formats, such as a civic engagement component, etc.).

Finally, when it comes to *alienation from politics*, the department makes a concerted effort to counter this lack of enthusiasm and interest through an active and engaged model of politics. It encourages students to get involved in the classroom and in the community through the promotion of student organizations, community service learning, political activism, institutional internships, and civic engagement.

IV. **Budget Limitations**

- A. As our department works to incorporate a range of methods for student equity and success, it is clear that it would be very helpful to have more resources with which to ensure students are connected to the range of student support services. The department's efforts would be enhanced by the hiring of an additional full-time faculty member. Moreover, our efforts would be assisted by an integrated and functional "early alert" system where referrals could be made via an online network and progress across the referral system could be tracked.
- B. If the department were eliminated or significantly reduced, this would have a negative impact on the large number of students who need general education requirements offered by the department for terminal A.A/A.S. degrees and for transfer to other programs. Moreover, one of the central thrusts of De Anza's Core Competencies goals and the newly established Institute for Civic and Community Engagement has been an attempt to insure that students attending De Anza become competent in the tools of citizenship. A well functioning and fully staffed and funded Political Science department must be seen as central to these institutional goals. We constitute one of De Anza's core institutional apparatuses for this aspect of the mission both through the basic classroom education we provide as well as through the many ways our students are encouraged to engage in De Anza's civic and political life.

V. **Additional Comments (optional):**

- **Strategic Planning Initiatives (Community Collaborations, Cultural Competency, Outreach, and Individualized Attention for Retention):**

The department has been actively involved in civic engagement work, promotion of the ICCE, the C.A.R. project, parent-student outreach events, individualized tutorials (office hours), brochure/pamphlet production, and website maintenance.

- **Relationships with Other Programs:**

The department has been partnering and collaborating with the full range of student support services on campus (tutorial center, adjunct skills, etc.) and online classes (distance learning).