Sharing lessons learned from the revision of our undergraduate student learning outcomes assessment plan.

improving by simplifying:

creating an effective assessment plan

political science

the old plan

01

Each year, two sections of introductory courses and two sections of the senior seminar course were selected. Students were provided a political Op-Ed and a prompt that they responded to in a one-page essay.

Faculty evaluated the responses using a rubric based on the program's student learning outcomes. Mean and median scores were calculated and compared.

Students failed to give full effort as the assignment was not tied to class performance.

Faculty resented the class time and evaluation time spent on the assessment instrument, and it became clear that it did not produce actionable information.

Assess what your program values, using authentic assignments in which students have a stake

Focus on the outcomes unique to your program

02

OLD SLOs

1. Recognize and discuss important texts, movements and contributors to the subfields of political science.

2. Understand the major methodological approaches to the study of political science and public policy and identify the use of these approaches within the scholarly literature of political science.

3. Use basic political science and public affairs terminology in their writing.

4. Demonstrate skill in critical interpretation and close reading of texts related to political science and public affairs.

5. Recognize references to debates, tensions and major developments in political science and public affairs as they arise in the scholarly literature and in discussion of political topics generally, and use political science and public affairs training to increase civic participation.

6. Write an essay/paper on a political science-related topic that presents a thesis and develops that thesis in a clear and well-organized format and utilizes analysis, synthesis, extrapolation, inferencing and decision making. Where possible and appropriate, students will utilize technology in research and in presentation of that research.

NEW SLOs

1. Become acquainted with at least three of the four major subfields within the discipline: American politics; comparative politics; political theory; international relations

2. Demonstrate advanced knowledge in, and understanding of, at least one of the subfields within the discipline

3. Understand and apply the methods that political scientists use to answer questions about politics

4. Conduct research in political science, using materials such as primary, secondary, and online sources or databases, in support of an original argument

Ask what your majors should know and what they should be able to do by the time they graduate

updating the SLO

03

connect course assignments to SLOs

You don't need to assess everything, everytime

04

The Political Science program has four subfields: American Politics, International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Political Theory.

Our assessment plan focuses on one subfield each year:
AY 2021-2022 focused on American Politics
AY 2022-2023 is focusing on Political Theory
AY 2023-2024 will focus on Comparative Politics
AY 2024-2025 will focus on International Relations.

We collect the grades of Political Science majors on four assignments drawn from four different classes. One assignment for each SLO.

Assignments/classes/professors used for assessment each year to ensure that everyone participates, and a diverse set of assignments are included in the analysis over time.

Faculty who teach in the subfield that is being assessed that year offer potential assignments that meet various SLOs,

benchmarking

Our department has set a benchmark of at least 75% of Political Science majors receiving a grade of 80 or higher on the selected assignment as an indicator of successful learning.

We also track and evaluate mean and median assignment scores.

The benchmark will need to be reevaluated and modified if necessary.

Define what success means for your majors

05

AY 2021-2022
B.A., Political Science
Assessment Report
Subfield: American Politics

Program Student Learning Outcome (SLO)	Assessment Measure(s) and Criteria	Data Results and Benchmark (Met/Not Met)
SLO1: Become acquainted with at least three of the four major subfields within the discipline: American politics; comparative politics; political theory; international relations	Fall 2021 POLS 1211 U.S. Politics Term paper	Of the 14 students, three students did not submit a paper and received a zero. Those students were dropped from our analysis. Mean score: 89.6, Median score: 90 Benchmark: 91% score an 80 or higher **(met)**
SLO2: Demonstrate advanced knowledge in, and understanding of, one of the subfields within the discipline	Spring 2022 POLS 2122 U.S. Congress Final Exam	Of the 25 students, one student did not take the exam and received a zero. That student was dropped from our analysis. Mean score: 81, Median score: 83 Benchmark: 58% score an 80 or higher (not met)
SLO3: Understand and apply the methods that political scientists use to answer questions about politics	Fall 2021 POLS 2910 Research Methods Exam covering Research Design, Conceptualization, and Operationalization	The grades of all 27 students were analyzed. Mean score: 86.3, Median score: 88 Benchmark: 78% score an 80 or higher **(met)**
SLO4: Conduct research in political science, using materials such as primary, secondary, and online sources or databases, in support of an original argument	Spring 2022 POLS 5012 Senior Seminar Final Paper	Of the 19 students, one student did not submit a final paper and received a zero. That student was dropped from our analysis. Mean score: 88.3, Median score: 88 Benchmark: 78% score an 80 or higher **(met)**

06

Put the assessment information into action

The Political Science faculty have a department meeting dedicated to a review of the assessment data collected each year.

The review is intended to identify strengths and weaknesses of our major curriculum.

We discuss options to strengthen curriculum when benchmarks are consistently missed.

We discuss whether assignments are comprehensive enough when benchmarks are consistently exceeded.

Faculty discuss options for strengthening .
key foundational skills if needed and identify potential problems in the assessment plan itself

1. Assess what your program values, using authentic assignments in which students have a stake.

2. Focus on the outcomes unique to your program.

3. Ask what your majors should know and what they should be able to do by the time they graduate.

4. You don't need to assess everything, everytime.

5. Define what success means for your majors.

6. Put the assessment information into action.