

**Political Science Department
Program Review Progress Report
September 23, 2005**

In the memo from the Program Review Committee (March 4, 2004), the Political Science department was “commended for the broad range of thinking presented in its proposal.” We were encouraged to “narrow the scope and direction” of our assessment plan and to pick one learning outcome standard to focus our assessment and development efforts.

The following report is a summary of the progress accomplished by the Political Science department during the 2004-2005 academic year. As our report will note, we actually were able to implement more than just one or two departmental objectives. We are encouraged by the progress that we have made in the last year and look forward to continuing our ongoing department review and assessment program.

Goals Accomplished in 2004-2005

In the last year, the Political Science department has achieved the following goals (as identified in our January 16, 2004 assessment plan):

1. The most significant goal that has been reached is that the department curriculum revision was completed and entered into force in August, 2004.
2. For 2004 and 2005, we revised the course objectives section of course syllabi to improve clarity and specificity about the relationship of the course to learning outcomes.
3. As part of our intention to improve critical interdisciplinary thinking (Standard Two), we have guest lectured in each other’s classes (Penksa and McKeown) and Penksa has increased the number of guest lectures from outside the department. California Experience continues to be team-taught and interdisciplinary (by Lawrence, POL and Pointer, History).
4. We administered the Senior Survey again in 2004 and conducted six senior exit interviews. We used the data to revise course syllabi and to shape our future assessment plan.
5. In seeking to encourage active student engagement outside the classroom (Standard 4), we began a *Political Science Honors Society* and supported a new Westmont chapter of *Amnesty International*. McKeown and Penksa led a session of “Tuesday With Morals” to provoke campus discussion about the relationship between politics and constitutions (e.g. the U.S. Constitution and the Supreme Court nomination process as well as the US role in shaping the new Iraqi Constitution) and Penksa participated in a session about Hurricane Katrina.

Academic Year 2005-2006: The Next Set of Goals

1. In our departmental report of 2000 and in the assessment plan of 2004, we identified a need to hire an additional full-time faculty member with expertise in non-American, non-Western regional politics (e.g. African, Latin American, etc.) This year, we will formally submit a proposal to request a fourth tenure-track position. A fourth person in non-Western politics will enable us to “close the loop” in department course offerings, increase cross-cultural diversity and contribute to improved student knowledge about global politics (Standard 3).
2. While we administered the departmental Senior Survey in 2003 and 2004, for 2005 we intend to modify the questions of the 2006 survey to provide better assessment of department learning outcomes. We also want to improve the response rate by students to the survey and are in discussion about the best means to do so.
3. We will include new questions on our course evaluations for 2005-2006, questions that will help us learn if our newly stated course objectives are being clearly understood by students.
4. The American Political Science Association (APSA) style manual will be required for POL 40, Research Methods, and listed on the PS web page as the preferred style manual. This will improve the quality of student written communication (Standard 5).
5. We will offer career counseling (as we did in 2003) jointly sponsored by the PS department and Dana Alexander.
6. We will begin to draft a new alumni survey to be administered in 2006 (our last survey was in 2000), one that will include questions better able to assess long-term departmental success in achieving its learning outcomes.
7. The department will encourage student/faculty participation in the new Westmont chapter of the *Beatitudes Society* and will continue to work with students interested in reestablishing a “Progressive Politics/Democratic” club, given that we already have an active campus Republican club (Standard 4)
8. We will discuss more systematic ways of documenting departmental progress.

While this is certainly a long list of objectives to meet in an academic year, we believe that all of the goals are both significant and realistic for us to achieve. Central to our departmental vision is the belief that assessment and evaluation is a dynamic process. Each time we learn new information, we will seek improvement in data collection, interpretation and curricular review. We have a clear vision for the areas in which we need to make progress, as based on our 2000 self-assessment. While we cannot achieve all of our goals in a single

academic year, we believe that we have a coherent vision to guide us well-beyond this current review cycle.