Introduction. The assessment plan presented here is incomplete, primarily due to the department’s concentrated effort (fall semester, 2003) to revise the Political Science curriculum in order for it to be operational (and in the college catalog) beginning fall semester, 2004 (we are awaiting word from the Senate Review committee). Consequently, we have not had the time (nor the focused attention) to consider the assessment plan in much detail; at this point we have no matrices or charts to offer.  

A. Departmental Goals/”Content” Area

1. Curricular Revision: Teaching Political Science  
   a. Purpose: Curricular revision was identified as a goal in our Irvine grant self–study report (2000). The revision has been completed. Its purpose is to provide a more complete and balanced political science education for our majors.

   b. Assessment Strategies:
      1. General: To determine if the revision “makes a difference”
      2. Specific: (possibilities)
         - continuing the Senior Survey
         - Senior exit interviews
         - ETS Political Science exit exam
         - Senior Portfolios or the equivalent
         - Further consideration of the Alumni Survey (an outgrowth of the Irvine Grant Self–Study conducted by McKeown)

2. PO 190 Political Science Internships  
   a. Purpose: Internships are required of all our majors. We are dissatisfied with the assessment feedback we receive from internship directors in off–campus programs (e.g., American University). Our goal is to have majors who have interned in off–campus programs engage in self–assessment in a manner consistent to those who complete PO 190 on campus.

---

1 A more elaborate and complete assessment plan that addresses the issues identified by the Program Review Committee is yet to be written. What follows is an outline of the tasks that we will develop (this outline is a synthesis of the information provided in the Mullen document [“Demystifying Assessment”] and the Smith and Wright memo [September 19, 2003; “Two Phases of Program Review”). “Goals” and “Outcomes” are merged for the moment.
b. Assessment Strategies:
   1. Have all majors complete self-assessment in accord with the PO 190 syllabus.

3. Careers
   a. One “outcome” of the Alumni Survey was the clear opinion of many political science graduates that the department should be more intentional and pro-active in career counseling for political science majors.
   b. Fall semester, 2003, we conducted a career counseling session in with Dana Alexander. We intend to this again in the future along with specific sessions devoted to graduate school, law school, and the like.

   c. Assessment Strategies:
      1. Develop methods for ascertaining the “worthwhileness” of these endeavors.

4. Goals Derived from Irvine Grant Self-Study
   a. We concluded we need to develop greater clarity and specificity in the statement of course objectives in our syllabi
      • status: in–process and further development given our courses in the new GE program
   b. The curriculum should be explicit in its treatment of the interaction between politics and media. Although this topic is addressed currently in various courses and in various ways, given the central role of mass media in our lives, the issues involved deserve concerted attention. In this manner, the politics and media analyses also correlate with the goals of critical thinking and lifelong learning.
      • status: begin communication with COM STUDIES about possibilities for cross–disciplinary interaction
   c. The department should make greater use of inter and intradisciplinary team teaching and guest lecturing. Thus far, a few political science courses have been taught (Christianity and Politics [Lawrence and McKeown], American Foreign Policy [Bhatti and McKeown]) in addition to an interdisciplinary course (The California Experience [Lawrence and Pointer]), and we have guest lectured in each others’ classes.
      • status: (a) have done since 2000 (e.g., Penksa and Montgomery); (b) continued conversation about other possibilities
d. We believe we need an additional full-time faculty member with expertise in non-American, non-western regional politics (e.g., Asian, African, Latin and South American...).

- status: (a) budgetary constraints may limit this; (b) we believe the department would benefit occasional part-time faculty teaching courses occasionally

e. We should institute assessment methods that deal with students’ experiences in political science taken as a whole, i.e., in addition to but more comprehensive than assessing student learning in specific courses. For example: exit interviews with graduating seniors, senior exams (perhaps the GRE subject area examination), a senior level capstone course, the development of political science concepts and principles master list. At the beginning of Fall semester 2000 we administered a survey to our introductory courses (voting preference, party identification, political attitudes...); through time these will give us comparative data about the students we teach.

- status: (a) noted above (goal 1); (b) converse with other departments that have senior seminars/capstone courses in order to gain insight on logistics (faculty loads, frequency of offering, etc.) and benefits (outcomes)

f. We believe we (finally) are in position to engage in a comprehensive curricular review. In large part due to the revolving door in the comparative and international politics position (four different persons over 12 years), we have not been able to achieve this. Changes have been incremental. Now, however, we are able evaluate the entire curriculum (courses to be modified, deleted, added; reevaluation of major and minor requirements; core courses and electives requirements, etc). Although this task extends beyond the present assessment objectives, many of those objectives may be achieved by the curricular review and its implementation.

- status: curriculum review/revision completed; awaiting approval

B. Institution–Wide Goals: Based on Irvine Grant Self-Study (“Making Improvements”)

1. Standard 1: Christian Orientation

a. We could be more deliberate and methodical in our coverage of faith-based issues and our methods of assessment of student activities and assignments. For instance, we need to continually ask ourselves, if this is as important a component of a particular course as I say it is, am I devising specific assignments, readings, and exam materials accordingly?
b. This current assessment process [Irvine Grant] suggests that each of us could better cross-reference what the others are doing. In other words, with better knowledge of each other’s curricula and approaches, we could reinforce the subjects, perspectives, and approaches taken by colleagues in our own courses.

2. **Standard 2: Critical Interdisciplinary Thinking**
   a. The primary area for development is greater interaction with our colleagues in team teaching (within the department and working with other departments) and guest lecturing. Although we have done this to some extent, we should be more intentional in doing so. The value of participating with other colleagues can be a great benefit to the students. They observe the manner in which the disciplines (and professors) agree and disagree, how they borrow from and critically examine one another; students develop greater insight into their majors as well as the others.

3. **Standard 3: Diversity**
   a. While all departmental members address and critique issues related to diversity, some of our courses do not readily encompass issues related to cross-cultural understanding (such as those with a more narrow focus on American political processes such as Congress or the Presidency). Yet, even these courses address diversity issues: the role of women in governance, the absence of minority office holders of the Presidency, and the impact and implications of American cultural diversity on public policy formation.
   b. We are committed to evaluating our courses to see where we can be more intentional about addressing diversity topics. At a minimum, explicit attention needs to be given to diversity issues as part of course objectives and as represented by the specific assignments and readings that are selected. For example, although we address the role of the Christian church both nationally and internationally, we recognize that we can do a more thorough job in discussing how the Church differs from region to region and nation to nation as part of our study of the Church and political life and action.
   c. With regard to student foreign language competency, we encourage our students to take foreign languages. **Note:** The curricular revision includes 8 units of foreign language in the International Affairs track.

   a. Even with our relative success at meeting this standard, we believe that the department could be more effective. In particular, we should encourage student engagement outside the classroom. This was done to some extent with the Political Science/Westmont Foundation Lecture Series. In partnership with our majors, we could do more to establish local
chapters of, for example, the Center For Public Justice, Evangelicals for Social Action, the Political Science national honor society.

5. **Standard 5: Written and Oral Communication**
   a. There is very little student peer assessment of written work. Inasmuch as there can be great utility in having students read what other students write, we should consider ways and means for facilitating this. **Note:** Since the Irvine Self–Study, the United Nations class (Penksa) has done this (two papers).

   b. As Sociology/Anthropology has done, political science students would benefit from having a standardized style manual for written work. (Perhaps this is an issue that could be addressed college wide. There is no reason for each department to reinvent the wheel. One possibility is to develop a standard style manual for, say, the social and behavioral sciences and then have each department create an addendum for peculiarities specific to its discipline.) Another possibility is to create a comprehensive style manual that includes both written and oral communication guidelines. **Note:** Included in the curriculum revision is a new course in empirical research methods. A component of the course will be a Course Manual that outlines a standardized style that will extrapolate to all political science courses.

   c. We need to consider how we can make oral communication a central component in more of our courses and develop methods of assessment as comprehensive as those already in place for written work. **Note:** Oral communication is becoming more prevalent in our courses (e.g., discussion leadership of text material).

6. **Standard Six: Technology**
   a. The department believes it is performing reasonably well in this area. We are in the process of constructing a departmental web site which will contain links to other political sites. In the future, we would like to develop further the technological competency of our students by requiring them to do more class presentations and research using spreadsheets, graphs, charts as well as statistical analysis program software, and in becoming partners in updating the departmental web site. This will, in part, require continuing faculty education so that we might be able to improve our technological proficiencies. Lastly, our syllabi could call attention to this area of learning more systematically.