

October 30, 2019

PROFESSOR THAD KOUSSER, Chair
Department of Political Science

PROFESSOR MAUREEN FEELEY, Director of Undergraduate Studies
Department of Political Science

SUBJECT: Undergraduate Program Review for Political Science

Dear Professors Kousser and Feeley,

At its October 11, 2019 meeting, the Undergraduate Council (UGC) discussed the Department of Political Science's 2019 Undergraduate Program Review. The Council supports the findings and recommendations of the review subcommittee and appreciates the thoughtful and proactive response from the Department. The Council was pleased to review an overall positive report, noting a few areas of concern that center around engaging department faculty in oversight and instruction. The Council had the following comments:

- Student Learning: The Department's efforts to map the undergraduate curriculum and document program learning outcomes are impressive. To further integrate the curriculum, the Council encourages the Department to follow the review subcommittee's recommendation to regularize coordination among faculty in particular subfields, ensuring the curriculum is progressive and minimizing overlap between courses.
- Undergraduate Seminars and Colloquia: The Council agrees with the review subcommittee that exposure to Senate faculty in smaller seminars and colloquia may help majors develop some of the articulated core competencies in oral and written communication. The Council recognizes that enrollment pressures, limited financial support for TAs, and finding equity in assigned workloads present challenges to staffing more small courses with Senate faculty. However, we encourage the Department to explore possible solutions given the emphasis placed on smaller seminar-style courses in the undergraduate curriculum.
- Law and Policy Concentration: It is important to the long-term health of the Law and Policy concentration that the Department find a solution to its current staffing challenges. The Council supports efforts to find a permanent director, which will promote institutional memory, and strongly recommends further Senate faculty engagement with oversight of the program.

The Council will conduct its follow-up review of the Department in Fall Quarter 2020. At that time, our goal is to learn about the Department's progress in implementing the recommendations of the program review subcommittee and the Undergraduate Council. The Council extends its thanks to the Department for their engagement in this process and we look forward to the continued discussion.

Sincerely,

Anthony Burr, Chair
Undergraduate Council

Attachment

(1) Undergraduate Program Review Report and Response for Political Science

cc: S. Constable
M. Corr
J. Moore
R. Rodriguez
M. Sidney
J. Teranes



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

May 13, 2019

To: Office of the Dean of Undergraduate Education

From:

Professor and Program

Review Chair Edward Watts, UC San Diego

Professor Stephen Haggard, UC San Diego

Professor Cheryl Boudreau, UC Davis

Subject: Review of the Department of Political Science Undergraduate Program

Introduction and Background

A faculty committee consisting of Professor Edward Watts (History, UCSD), Stephan Haggard (GPS, UCSD), and Cheryl Boudreau (Political Science, UC Davis) convened on May 8 and 9, 2019 to review the undergraduate program offered by the Department of Political Science. The committee reviewed the previous departmental program review report (written in 2012), the departmental response to that report, a substantial self-study document prepared by the department in 2019, and a series of supplemental data analyses. The committee also met with groups of departmental leadership, ladder rank faculty, instructors, TAs, undergraduates, and departmental staff.

After bottoming out at 770 majors in 2016, the department has seen a sharp upturn in its number of majors, with 940 in 2018 and another 118 minors. The committee was struck, however, by the diversity of the department's student population. In a recent survey, only a quarter identified themselves as white non-Hispanics, while 53 percent have received a Pell grant, 48 percent are first generation college students, and 44 percent self-identify as poor, low-income or working class. These findings shaped the

U.S. Postal Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104

Courier Overnight Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING
ROOM #5016
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

committee's report. Political Science is clearly playing a significant role at UCSD in teaching and advising students who may face challenges at a major research university. It does so in a discipline that is becoming more quantitative and technical. Moreover, this responsibility is taking place against the backdrop of robust enrollment growth (18 percent since 2014), a slight contraction in the number of faculty due to high-profile retirements and—most importantly—a 20 percent decline in PhD students, who play a crucial role in both lower and upper division teaching.

Executive Summary

The committee recognizes and applauds the department's national and international reputation for excellence in scholarship, as well as undergraduate and graduate education. Having reviewed the department's undergraduate curriculum and its innovations in undergraduate education, the committee believes that its high national ranking is well deserved and reflects the quality experience it provides to its students. In particular, the department has implemented a rigorous and coherent undergraduate curriculum centered around well-defined program learning outcomes (PLOs). It has also taken steps to ensure that those PLOs are assessed and achieved. The committee also commends the department for creating a variety of unique opportunities for its undergraduates. These opportunities include hands-on research experiences for undergraduates (working either with faculty or graduate students), a new track within the major that allows students to earn a B.S. in Data Analytics, an alumni mentorship program, a robust Law and Politics track within the major, and a local internship program. Together, these opportunities create a vibrant and enriching undergraduate culture in the department.

The committee's recommendations focus on how the department can build on these successes, particularly in expanding access for historically-underrepresented students. Our recommendations focus on bottlenecks associated with TA load, expansion of existing programs, advising and coordination within concentrations, including those taught largely by adjuncts.

Commendations

U.S. Postal Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104

Courier Overnight Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING
ROOM #5016
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

The review committee finds that the department has done a great deal to maintain its leadership position as a center of cutting-edge research, graduate training, and undergraduate education; by a variety of metrics, the department is ranked in the top ten in the country. While the department is highly ranked in all three areas, most relevant to this report is its reputation as a provider of undergraduate training in political science. Indeed, the most recent *U.S. News and World Report* (2019) ranked the department's undergraduate program in the top ten political science departments among public national universities.

The previous review, conducted in 2012, offered a number of recommendations about how the department could address perceived deficiencies in creating an undergraduate culture and articulating a fresh and integrative undergraduate curriculum. The department was also asked to create a set of research opportunities in which undergraduates could participate and to strengthen advising.

The committee believes the department has succeeded admirably in addressing all of the areas of concern raised in the prior report. Its undergraduate program is now, in many ways, a model for how to use assessment mechanisms, well-defined program learning outcomes (PLOs), and curricular mapping to combine research excellence and high-level undergraduate training. That map identified five core competencies—writing, quantitative analysis, oral skills, informational literacy and critical thinking—and has used them to organize the undergraduate curriculum. Not only does the department do this as well as any UCSD entity any of us have encountered, but it is even seeking to use expected learning outcomes to see when student progression stalls. This is truly a cutting edge and most effective way to use these tools.

The climate for undergraduates has improved considerably since 2012. Undergraduates clearly now have a sense of belonging to a student cohort, a sense that is developed through orientation programs, outreach events, and initiatives that connect undergraduates to each other and with members of the community. Students follow the department on Facebook and express an awareness of and interest in department events.

U.S. Postal Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104

Courier Overnight Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING
ROOM #5016
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

Political Science has also taken important steps to organize and rationalize its curriculum both within and across subfields. Some of this grows out of the hiring of Maureen Feeley as a Teaching Professor, serving also as the Director of Undergraduate Education. She serves both as the figure around whom the organization of the curriculum has begun to center and as a resource for faculty interested in getting feedback about their teaching methods and materials. The creation of a curriculum committee that works alongside Professor Feeley lends an effective infrastructure to course planning.

Political Science is to be further commended for the initiatives it has recently undertaken to create new concentrations within the major and expand existing ones. These include a host of new classes added to the concentration in Public Law and the development of the Krinsk-Houston Law and Politics Initiative, which now accounts for about 20 percent of all majors. The department has created a BS degree in Data Analytics (launched last fall), and has submitted a proposal to create a 5-year BA/MIA program jointly with GPS. These curricular innovations are particularly important given the enrollment growth in the department and probably help account for it in part.

The department has also done a great deal to provide research and internship opportunities to its top performing students. These opportunities include the Research Apprenticeship Program, which enables undergraduates to participate in research under the direction of a graduate student, a similar program that allows undergraduates to assist faculty research as part of a POLI 199 course, the Local Internship Program that offers academic credit for work at a local internship, and a strong involvement in the UCDC and UC Center Sacramento internship programs. Students also take frequent advantage of study abroad opportunities. The alumni mentoring program pairs undergraduate students who have a minimum 3.5 GPA with two alumni mentors to help them with career and other opportunities.

Finally, Political Science has invested substantially in TA training by creating 5 Senior TA positions (one for each subfield). These Senior TAs receive additional training and support other TAs in areas

U.S. Postal Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104

Courier Overnight Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING
ROOM #5016
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

such as assignment development and the creation of equitable grading standards. This infrastructure will become increasingly important as the department relies more heavily on TAs to assist students meet some elements of its core learning competencies.

Issues

In the eyes of the department, the central challenge it now faces is the combination of rapid enrollment growth and declining Ph.D. population, resulting in pressure on the TA pool and high student-to-TA ratios. Enrollment growth has put a strain on TAs who are being asked to instruct and grade increasingly large numbers of students (by our understanding, 32 per section in lower division courses and over 64 in upper division courses as graders). This is an issue for undergraduate education not only because of the direct pressure it places on TA-student contact but also because of the downstream effect on the number and types of assignments professors can use in their courses. For example, professors cannot assign large quantities of writing, data-intensive methods or include structured simulations or debate without adequate TA support.

The committee understands that this is a complicated issue that cuts across resource allocation at the campus level and the graduate program as well as the undergraduate curriculum. But the demonstrated link between the TA question and the department's well-articulated program learning outcomes convinced us that their concerns had merit and required consideration.

The excellent new programs and opportunities initiated since the last program review have also yielded a number of important challenges. A central one concerns access and inclusion in the unique opportunities that the department has now created. As noted, the department serves a diverse student body that includes a sizable number of first generation college students, veterans, transfer students, and underrepresented minorities. It is not clear what percentage of these students participate in the programs the department has created (e.g., the internship program, the Research Apprenticeship program). But it is

U.S. Postal Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104

Courier Overnight Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING
ROOM #5016
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

worth examining whether the department's minimum 3.5 GPA requirement or self-selection is excluding talented but challenged students who might benefit from these programs. While there certainly should be some criteria to participate in these programs, developing more nuanced approaches and looking for ways to reach ambitious underrepresented students would build on the department's successes with these efforts.

Another issue that goes to the question of reaching students is the lack of resources for advising. The current undergraduate advisor is impressive and advises an exceedingly large number of students about many different issues that arise. In our meeting with her, we learned that she handled over 3,000 questions in the last year. However, students underscored that the strain on the undergraduate advisor adversely affects their experience in the department, and may also affect the objectives of inclusion.

An additional challenge pertains to issues that have arisen from the development of new tracks within the political science major. The Law and Politics track within the major is clearly a great success and serves a large number of majors. However, the courses for this important track are taught entirely by adjunct faculty members and lecturers with no permanent coordinator or oversight.

The new Data Analytics track within the major is also valuable and quite popular with students. It is not surprising given that the major was newly added that the number of courses that students can take to fulfill their major requirements is quite limited. Students worried about not being able to complete their major requirements in a timely fashion. But the major also raised the question of TA resources, since classes are intensive in skills such as computer programming that are more like a lab in the natural sciences or engineering.

While Maureen Feeley has done an outstanding job rationalizing the curriculum across the department and aligning it with identified program learning outcomes (PLOs), the department also faces

U.S. Postal Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
9500 GILMAN DRIVE
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104

Courier Overnight Service:
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, 0104
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING
ROOM #5016
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0104



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

coordination challenges within each of its subfields and tracks and in pushing the PLOs down to the course level. Students noted duplication in the readings assigned for courses within a particular subfield. Better coordination of syllabi both within and across subfields would increase the range of content to which students are exposed and permit cumulation from course to course.

Recommendations

The committee asks that the division and the department consider the following recommendations:

1. We find credible the department's claim that the current TA to student ratio is compromising its efforts to develop fundamental core student competencies in its lower division and upper division classes. This problem directly compromises undergraduate training in the following ways:
 - a. Faculty reported that writing assignments were routinely curtailed because of lack of adequate TA support.
 - b. Quantitative skills and informational literacy were hampered by constraints associated with a lab-like environment in such courses and the need for more TA support to monitor student progress;
 - c. Abilities to engage in oral argument and debate require additional class time and preparation by TA's.

Political Science has built its curriculum around defined learning outcomes more than perhaps any other on campus. Its request for resources to lower the TA:student ratio grows out of an analysis of curricular needs and a desire to improve student outcomes. If learning outcomes genuinely matter to the campus, resources must be provided to units who can explain how those additional resources will help students meet those particular benchmarks. Political Science has made such a case.



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
 FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

Because the department trains such a large percentage of historically underserved populations of students, the following steps are recommended so that it might better serve the needs of these populations while improving their access to the department's most exciting undergraduate opportunities.

2. Undergraduate advising seems to have reached its capacity. Additional staffing—even if at the margin—is needed not only given the number of majors. The number of students taking courses in the department has also risen sharply, and the amount of student contacts per year the Student Affairs Advisor handles has increased, and in the context of the characteristics of the student population noted above.
3. The internship, research apprenticeship, and alumni mentoring programs are quite impressive. We do, however, encourage the department to find more nuanced ways to determine student eligibility for these programs beyond a simple GPA cutoff. Reaching out to underrepresented populations would also enhance the payoff from these programs. We would also recommend that the department consider pairing URM students and first generation college students, regardless of GPA, with alumni mentors who might be good matches.
4. The department may want to consider creating a peer mentorship program in which an advanced concentrator in the department offers guidance to a newly enrolled freshman or transfer student interested in Political Science. This could further enhance the undergraduate culture in the department. This will also allow faculty to identify and build relationships with students who might otherwise not be reached.
5. Rapid enrollment growth and departmental norms seem to strongly disincentivize ladder rank faculty from teaching small undergraduate seminars or colloquia. We understand the tradeoffs between exposure to leading professors in the field through large classes and the intensive—but exclusive—learning environment of a small seminar. But these small classes could, we believe, help majors develop some of the core competencies in oral and written communication that the department sees as essential while also exposing faculty more closely to the department's



DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
<http://history.ucsd.edu/>

MAIN OFFICE: (858) 534-1996
FAX: (858) 534-7283
history@ucsd.edu

undergraduate constituents. The department should consider allowing faculty who teach an above average number of students across an academic year to offer one dedicated undergraduate seminar or colloquium as part of their regular teaching load.

6. The Law and Policy concentration is one of the largest and most dynamic in the department. The faculty participating in it are accomplished, dynamic, and impressive. And yet Matt Bergman, the faculty member who apparently coordinates many of the events and provides much of the assistance to new faculty teaching in the concentration, is employed on a quarter-by-quarter basis and now appears to be moving on to take up other opportunities. The continued health of the concentration depends on the presence of a director appointed for the long term and closer coordination with ladder rank faculty. For this reason, we recommend that a permanent coordinator position be created.

7. Finally, the committee was impressed by the coordination among faculty in particular subfields, most notably in international relations and comparative politics. The committee believes that this type of coordination could be more regularized within each subfield to ensure consistency and minimize overlap in the undergraduate as well as graduate curriculum. By sharing and coordinating syllabi, the department can ensure the integration and fulfillment of departmental program learning outcomes.