

**SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS
ACADEMIC AFFAIRS FORMS**



**Institutional Program Review
Report to the Board of Regents**

UNIVERSITY:	NSU
DEPARTMENT OR SCHOOL:	History and Social Sciences
PROGRAM REVIEWED:	Political Science
DATE OF REVIEW:	10/31/2019
TYPE OF REVIEW:	Institutional Program Review

University Approval

To the Board of Regents and the Executive Director: I certify that I have read this report, that I believe it to be accurate, and that it has been evaluated and approved as provided by university policy.

President of the University

2/26/2020

Date

1. Identify the program reviewers and any external accrediting body:

The Program Report was compiled and written by Dr. Kenneth Blanchard with the assistance of Dr. Schaff and Dr. Bengs, all at NSU. The external reviewer was Dr. Emily Wanless, Professor of Government and International Affairs at Augustana University.

2. Items A & B should address the following issues: mission centrality, program quality, cost, program productivity, plans for the future, and assessment of progress.

2(A). Describe the strengths and weaknesses identified by the reviewers

STRENGTHS. “A summary of my review maintains that the political science program at Northern State University is a well-functioning program whose faculty are passionate about their teaching and scholarly activities. The greatest asset of the program is its faculty members, particularly their reputation and rapport with students.”

“It is clear that great strides have been made to internationalize the curriculum and attract students to the program.”

“The mission and goals of the political science program align with the profession and University. Professionally, the program’s mission is particularly prudent and achieved through its curriculum and pedagogy.”

“In line with the University’s mission and goals, the program provides social and cultural experiences through their course content, encourages academic inquiry through their assignments and activities, and promotes civically-minded behavior in the classroom and through extracurricular endeavors.”

“The program’s goals emphasize career preparedness through internships. However, beyond internships at the South Dakota State Legislature, this does not appear to be an important aspect of the major. If the goal is to “promote success,” both with post graduate work (graduate and law school) and with careers in the business and public sector, the program could focus more on experiential learning (both in terms of internships and undergraduate research).”

“Standardizing course rotations might benefit the program in several ways. Standardization might assist with student’s expectations and enthusiasm for the major, thus making it more attractive.

2(B). Briefly summarize the review recommendations

The primary recommendations were as follows: 1) to focus more on experiential learning; 2) to standardize course rotations in order to facilitate student planning; 3) to include area studies and more traditional political science courses such as research methods, law, comparative politics, public policy.

2(C). Indicate the present and continuous actions to be taken by the college or department to address the issues raised by the review. What outcomes are anticipated as a result of these actions?

The review recommends that “the program could focus more on experiential learning (both in terms of internships and undergraduate research)” by continuing “to underscore the work of the University’s academic advisors.” This is sound advice. Our internship programs go far toward this goal; however, as the review suggests, we should do more to promote them as part of the academic experience and to encourage students to think of them as the beginning of their post-college professional careers. We should also better integrate our academic advising with information about possible career paths.

The review recommends “standardizing course rotations” and identifying “the most desired courses (substantively and practically) and get those routinely scheduled.” This is certainly something we should pay more attention to. It is more challenging to do, however, given unpredictable changes in our faculty and in policy changes coming from above. One possible option would be to survey our students (both political science majors and students in General Education courses) as to what offerings they would like to see.

The review mentions some subfields of political science that are not well represented in our curriculum such as area studies, “research methods, law, comparative politics, public policy, etc.” This is certainly something we would prefer to address; however, as the report acknowledges, we are “operating under the leanest of circumstances.” Interest in area studies might be difficult to generate among students (see above on popular course offerings). Our best route may be to offer more courses that combine broader topics (environmentalism, politics of minorities, etc.) with a special emphasis on a handful of areas (China, India, Ireland, etc.). At the request of the Department Chair, I will begin offering the Politics and Geography Course that has been neglected over the last few years.

Finally, the report recommends “creating a series of “tracts” based on particular content areas for students to seek out”. Further adjustments in the curriculum in the current atmosphere of constant reform might not be advised; however, this is

still a useful idea. We might create a number of program guides including course recommendations and possible career options. This could tie together several of the recommendations that we are responding to. A student interested in a career in American Government, political action, or international relations would be better informed on how she or he might pursue that interest professionally and how best to use the NSU political science program to prepare for such a profession.

- 3. Starting in Fall 2019 reporting year, campuses will identify the undergraduate cross-curricular skill requirements as part of programmatic student learning outcomes and identify assessment methods for cross-curricular skill requirements as outlined in Board Policy 2:11. Program review completed prior to Fall 2019 need not include cross curricular skills.**

Political Science

PLO1 - Inquiry and Analysis: A systematic process of exploring issues, objects or works through the collection and analysis of evidence that results in informed conclusions or judgments. Analysis is the process of breaking complex topics or issues into parts to gain a better understanding of them. Political science students demonstrate the ability to comprehend basic concepts, make connections, and showing original thinking.

Course	Embedded assessment	Expected Benchmark
POLS 100	Course Tests and Discussion Questions	Proficient/Exemplary
POLS 331 or 432	Course Tests	Proficient/Exemplary
POLS 361, 362, 461, or 462	Final Project	Proficient/Exemplary

Rubric:

Trait	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
Student can analyze and	Scoring below 75% on	Scoring over 75% on	Scoring over 90% on course exams

synthesize information.	course exams (POLS 100)	course exams. (POLS 100)	and showing original thoughts on discussion questions. (POLS 100)
	In ability to form a coherent argument or grasp basic principles. (POLS 331 or 432)	Grasps basic principles and can articulate them in a coherent manner. (POLS 331 or 432)	Mastery of material and articulation in an effecting manner. (POLS 331 or 432)
Connecting ideas and showing original thinking (POLS 361, 362, 461, or 462).	Failure to grasp basic course themes and substandard articulation of those themes.	Grasps basic principles and can articulate them in a coherent manner, making connection between various ideas.	Mastery of course themes and signs of original thinking.

PLO2 - Critical and Creative Thinking: A habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion. Both the capacity to combine or synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways and the experience of thinking, reacting, and working in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking. Political science students can demonstrate this by effectively communicating disciplinary principles orally and in writing.

Course	Embedded assessment	Expected Benchmark
PHIL 100 or 200	Course exams	Proficient/Exemplary

POLS 361, 362, 461, or 462	Final Project.	Exemplary
POLS 430	Final Project	Exemplary

Rubric:

Trait	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
Students understand basic philosophical principles and articulate them effectively (PHIL 100 or 200).	Students cannot demonstrate comprehension of basic philosophical principles and communicate ineffectively.	Students can identify and analyze philosophical principles and communicate those principles coherently.	Students can identify and critically analyze philosophical principles and communicate such analysis with high effectiveness.
Students can comprehend themes in political philosophy and can show original thoughts (POLS 361, 362, 461, or 462).	Student fails to grasp basic course themes and communicate in a substandard fashion.	Student understands fundamental course themes and can connect various themes into a coherent whole.	Student can fulfill all requirements of “Proficient” and also show signs of original thinking.
Students can articulate basic principles of constitutional law and apply them creatively to current	Student cannot demonstrate knowledge of basic principles of constitutional law and cannot communicate effectively.	Student demonstrates knowledge of constitutional law and can analyze cases effectively.	Student fulfills all conditions of “Proficient” and creatively applies constitutional law to contemporary issues.

circumstances (POLS 430).			
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PLO 3 - Civic Knowledge and Engagement: Developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation that make a difference in the civic life of communities and promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes. Engagement encompasses actions wherein individuals participate in activities of personal and public concern that are both individually life enriching and socially beneficial to the community. Political Science students show knowledge of the institutions and practices of American Government and can apply them to current affairs.

Course	Embedded assessment	Expected Benchmark
POLS 100	Course exams.	Proficient/Exemplary
POLS 331, 430, or 432	Course exams/Final project	Exemplary

Rubric:

Trait	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
Identify key concepts of American Government (POLS 100)	Scoring below 75% on course exams	Scoring over 75% on course exams.	Scoring over 90% on course exams and showing original thoughts on discussion questions.
Demonstrate advanced knowledge of specific institutions of American Government. (POLS 331, 430, or 432)	Student neither identified nor articulates principles of institutions.	Student demonstrate basic understanding of institutions and articulates such knowledge competently.	Student demonstrates sophisticated knowledge of at least one institution of American Government and

			effectively communicates such knowledge through course paper/project.
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PLO 4 – Ethical Reasoning: Reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Political Science students should show historical and moral imagination and communicate such reasoning in an effective manner.

Course	Embedded assessment	Expected Benchmark
POLS 250	Course papers/projects	Proficient/Exemplary
POLS 361, 362, 461, 462, or POLS 468	Course papers/projects	Exemplary

Rubric:

Trait	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
Understand issues involving international relations and conflict (POLS 250)	Failure to demonstrate basic knowledge of theories of international relations and conflict.	Student grasps basic theories of international relations and conflict and coherently articulates those theories.	Student shows sophisticated knowledge of international relations and conflict theory and articulates such knowledge in a highly competent manner.

Apply tools of political thought to ethical concerns. (POLS 361, 362, 461, 462, or POLS 468)	Student fails to demonstrate basic concepts ethical reasoning and communicates in a substandard fashion.	Student identifies and analyzes the concepts of ethical reason as presenting in political thought. Student articulates that analysis in a coherent manner.	Student identifies and analyzes concepts of ethical reasoning as presented in political thought while showing original thinking. Students articulates that analysis in an exemplary manner.
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PLO 5 – Problem Solving: The process of designing, evaluating and implementing a strategy to answer an open- ended question or achieve a desired goal. Political science students will demonstrate the ability to develop a thesis statement and addressing that thesis in an articulate manner.

Course	Embedded assessment	Expected Benchmark
POLS 250	Paper/Project	Proficient
POLS 430	Paper/Project	Exemplary

Rubric:

Trait	Below Proficient	Proficient	Exemplary
Student can identify a problem in the subject area and create and answer a question	Failure to develop or answer a sound thesis.	A thesis is designed and answered.	An original thesis is designed and developed in marks of original thinking.

regarding that problem.			
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