The Department of Political Science prepared a self study following program review guidelines. A two-person external review team (Steven Poe, University of North Texas and Stephanie Witt, Boise State University) visited the campus; reviewed the self-study documents; interviewed unit personnel, university administrators, undergraduate students, and graduate students; and submitted an external review report. The Program Review Committee (PRC) studied all written materials. The PRC liaison for the Department discussed the self-study materials with the department chair and faculty. The PRC discussed the Department with the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. This document reflects the PRC’s findings and recommendations.

SUMMARY OF THE SELF STUDY

Introduction

Mission. The mission of the Department of Political Science includes a strong commitment to undergraduate education and applied graduate education in government and politics. It emphasizes four areas of scholarship derived from the work of Ernest Boyer: discovery, teaching, integration, and application. Its students receive a liberal education that prepares them for careers in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, and in law, education, and politics.

In its Vision Statement, the Department follows Boyer’s model, stressing that undergraduate education be both practical and liberal, that scholarship and teaching be closely related, and that experiential learning is essential. The major and minor cover a majority of the fields within the discipline. Further aspects of the mission are to enable students to meet University general education requirements and College group requirements, to meet pre-professional program needs, and to use introductory courses to interest students in the study of political science.

At the graduate level, the Department offers the Master of Public Administration (MPA) with emphasis on rural and small local governments, which links the program to the surrounding community. The dual Masters in Political Science and German offers students studying International Politics and German Studies theoretical grounding, analytical skills, and research skills.

History. The Department grew from three faculty at its founding in 1946 to sixteen faculty during the 1980s. The MPA program was developed in the 1980s and approved in the early 1990s. A combination of factors caused the faculty to shrink to seven by 1998. Since 1998, the Department has hired seven tenure-track assistant
professors, augmenting them with one-year instructors. This period of rebuilding has resulted in expanded course offerings and faculty collaboration.

In 1998 the Department underwent its first program review, and the account of actions taken by the Department in response was supplied to the PRC in a copy of a memorandum to the College of Arts & Sciences, which will be reflected in the summary of the self study below.

**Description of the Unit**

*Program identification.* The Department offers an undergraduate major and minor in political science. It also trains numerous middle childhood and secondary education majors. At the graduate level it offers a Master in Public Administration and a dual Master of Arts in Political Science and German.

*Programmatic and curricular offerings.* The major was reorganized on the basis of the previous program review. It requires 33 hours, including 24 hours of political science courses at the 300-400 level in at least three areas, and a concentration (at least nine hours) in one area. The areas offered are: American government, comparative government, international relations, political theory, public administration, and public law. Honors in Political Science requires an honors seminar and a senior thesis. The minor requires 21 hours with at least 15 at the 300-400 level.

Four courses have been approved for web delivery, and the Department tries to offer one per semester. Demand is high without cutting into face-to-face sections. In response to the previous review, contributions to general education have increased almost 28% since 1999 in terms of SCH. The Department contributes to BG eXperience and small course and value initiatives (e.g., five courses in fall 2004), and offers at least two honors sections per year. Department faculty contribute to International Studies and Canadian Studies.

The MPA requires 42 hours, with 39 hours of course work and either a thesis or an internship plus paper and comprehensive exams. Core courses (21 hours) cover five of the following seven areas: law, ethics, administration, personnel administration, budgeting and fiscal policy, local government management, and international relations. Students specialize (12 hours) in one of ten areas.

The dual Master of Arts degree requires 27 of 54 total hours to be in political science. Completion requires a thesis involving both areas or an internship and comprehensive exams. The core curriculum for the MA requires courses in comparative government, international relations, and research methods.

*Faculty resources.* As of fall 2004, there were eleven tenured and tenure-track faculty members, up from seven in fall 1998. By subfield there are two in American politics (up from one in 1998), one in law (one), three in public administration (three), one in theory (zero), two in comparative politics (zero), and two in international relations.
(two). An average of 2.5 instructors have been hired each year. The proportion of untenured assistant professors has risen from 27% in 1997 to 64% in 2004. At any given time during the past seven years there have been only one non-white member and two women (tenured/tenure-track), in spite of successful hiring of women and attempts at minority hiring. Salary inversion is an issue.

The Department norm is five courses per year for tenured and tenure-track faculty active in research. Others (e.g. non-graduate-faculty members) teach 3/3. New tenure-track faculty teach 2/2 during their first year. Full-time instructors teach 4/4. The chair normally teaches 1/1; chair workloads are negotiated with the dean.

The Department has one main advisor for majors and minor, but all faculty members aid in advising; there is a graduate coordinator for the MPA. Undergraduate and graduate advisors each receive a one-course reduction.

**Graduate assistant resources.** Graduate stipend allotment for 2004-05 covers 8.5 full-time (0.50) TAs for the MPA program and 2.5 for the political science-German dual degree. Grants for internships have increased GA funding. Since 2003, some MPA students have been half-funded (0.25). The self study does not indicate the contributions of the graduate assistants to the department’s missions.

**Staff resources.** The department secretary has served throughout the period of the review. The graduate secretary/office manager was not replaced after disability retirement in 2003. A part-time graduate coordinator for the MPA program recruited students and secured internships and grants from 1999 to 2002 and was not replaced. Thus the staffing has gone from a high of 2.25 (1999) to 1 (2003-2004).

**Student credit hour production.** Following recommendations from the 1998 program review, the Department has increased its student credit hour production by 58% (61% undergraduate, 24% graduate). As a ratio to faculty FTE (full time equivalent), the number has gone from 264 to 404 (+53%). The number of class sections offered has risen from 45 ('97-'98) to 63 (average '00-'03).

The Department has met the goal from the 1998 program review of increasing major numbers, from 123 in fall 1999 to 175 in fall 2003 (=42%; A & S figures). The higher numbers have been maintained over the past three years. The number of political science majors interested in pre-law rose to 50 in 2003, from a low of three the previous year, and far beyond the previous average of about 13. The number of minors also increased and then held steady.

The enrollment of students in the middle childhood and secondary education majors has grown by 125% since 1997; they make up 26% of students in political science classes. Program requirements prevent these students from minoring in political science.
Recruitment and retention efforts. The Department’s web page, flyers for all programs, a letter to incoming students, high-school preview days, and “Major Mania” are among recruitment tools used.

Good teaching faculty in introductory courses is a chief recruitment strategy for majors and minors. Public speaking events, panel discussions, and student organizations promote visibility on campus, as do special events (ElectionFest) and guest speakers. The High School Model UN has brought 40 local high school students to campus the last two years.

Graduate recruitment includes graduate fairs, letters to our own seniors, and mailings to area colleges and universities. Alumni, especially in Ohio governments, aid recruitment. International students are specially targeted. Department picnics and dinners, as well as social events and outings for graduate students, aid retention.

Facilities and equipment. Facilities and equipment are adequate for the Department’s mission. Future growth will require more office space. Larger computer classrooms and more seminar rooms and medium-sized classrooms are noted as needs.

Information resources and services. Information services are adequate. There is some difficulty retrieving current issues of journals not held by the University.

Financial resources. The operating budget has remained at the level established by 2001-02 cuts. The Department gained from the “Student Success” incentives, but this program was cut. In 2003, about 14% of the operating budget was returned to the University. Savings and budgeting have permitted an increase in faculty travel monies. Increased goals for grant funding have been set.

The Charles A. Barrell Scholarship provides about $4000 a year to up to three juniors seeking public-service careers. The Curtis Peet memorial fund has achieved endowment status and will be used to support the Model UN.

Self-evaluation

Faculty quality and productivity. The faculty has exceeded its stated goal of one publication and one conference presentation per faculty member per year. According to figures supplied by the Department for all current members during their time at the University, the rate for publications has been about 1.5 per year per member, and the rate for conference papers has been about one per year. Faculty have published in the top journals in their subfields, and one published a book with the University of Notre Dame Press. Applied research in Public Administration is very important even though the appropriate publication outlets may not carry national status.

The Department intends to increase applications for research funding, partly by collaboration within the Department and across the University (e.g., Education and Human Development).
Student entry attributes. The Department attracts undergraduates with high school GPAs slightly under the College of Arts & Sciences average and ACT scores slightly over the College average.

Assessment of student learning outcomes. Assessment methods for the major include an exit survey of graduating seniors and an analysis of the final research project of students in the capstone seminar. In the constitutional law course, the capstone for pre-law students, a panel of legal experts evaluates a mock trial.

The limited assessment program has identified a need for improved oral communication. The Department has introduced more oral work into upper-level courses and interactive pedagogies into introductory courses.

Curriculum, instruction, and support services. The undergraduate curriculum covers the major areas in the field; there are, however, too few upper-level courses in American government and too few courses on minority and gender politics. Offerings in public law are insufficient for current numbers of pre-law students. The Department is unable to offer senior-level political theory courses and comparative politics in such crucial areas as the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. Research methods (POLS 290) has been effective and a capstone seminar has been added to build on research skills.

The Department is restricted in offering one core MPA course as graduate/undergraduate. Graduate international relations and comparative politics are offered rarely if at all. New faculty make it possible to offer courses in environmental policy and management.

Large class sizes in introductory and major courses mean high SCH numbers but also make it difficult to introduce interactive pedagogies. Participation in BGX and small-class initiatives help, as does breaking out POLS 110 into five discussion sections. Large class sizes have influenced the general education committee to grant conditional certification to some of the many (and increased numbers of) general education courses the Department teaches. The Department intends to work more closely with colleagues in Education and Human Development to respond to the growing number of education majors in its courses.

The Department reports significant improvements in teaching effectiveness as measured by student evaluations of teaching and curriculum, as well as several teaching awards and nominations.

The Department views the advising model of a single advisor with one course release for nearly 250 majors and minors as adequate but not optimal. This is offset somewhat by faculty advising of student organizations and the good availability of faculty outside the classroom.

Lack of continuity in the faculty has weakened graduate advising, which has fallen to part-time or temporary help and to the Chair. The MPA program attracts recent graduates, international, and in-service students. A strength of the MPA program is its
applied learning opportunities. The dual masters in political science and German draws U.S. graduates and international students. Placement data indicate a variety of governmental and educational careers.

Service. Department faculty contribute actively to academic service and are particularly strong in community service (including public lectures and media interviews). The low proportion of senior faculty places a burden on untenured faculty in performing service while maintaining productivity.

Comparative advantage and program distinctiveness. The undergraduate program’s mission of providing broad coverage of the field is similar to the missions of other Ohio state institutions. The new capstone course and the more-focused concentration place the program among a minority of state schools. There are ample opportunities for internships. Adding a political theory requirement would increase distinctiveness.

The MPA program’s focus on small local government distinguishes it from other Ohio universities’ programs, as does its international and comparative orientation. The dual master’s with German is one of very few such programs in the nation. The opportunity for yearlong study in Austria (with internship possibilities) is unique. This should be expanded to Romance Languages, which would increase enrollments.

The graduate programs have especially high numbers of African American and international students. The Department cooperates with many units across campus, which creates opportunities (including international ones) for students and faculty.

Demand. Total undergraduate SCH increased by 61% (3493) between 1997-98 and 2002-2003. This was caused in part by increased demand by education majors and by general education students. Numbers of majors have also increased.

Demand for the MPA program is typical of comparable institutions, and though there is room for growth, the Department would rather concentrate on improving applicant quality. Demand for the dual degree with German is low, although applicants are often very good.

Connection to the mission. The Department contributes significantly to three of the five themes in the Academic Plan: Leadership in Learning, Critical Thinking about Values, and Understanding Cultures and Nations. The Department mission statement shares the broad values of the Academic Plan’s vision statement. The curriculum especially emphasizes critical thinking about democracy and government.

With its student organizations, public lectures, media involvement, internships, and Model UN programs, the Department is a leader in “Engagement.” It has increased its contribution to “Leadership in Learning” by increasing its role in general education and teacher education. In its major contribution to BGX, and in its regular courses, the Department emphasizes “Critical Thinking about Values.” The Department would like to
build on its strengths in “Understanding Cultures and Nations” by diversifying its faculty and offering courses that address the political impact of diverse cultures.

Financial considerations and adequacy of resources. Per credit hour, the Department costs 40% less than the College average. The Department would like to return to its 1990 size of 14 to 15 faculty; in order to increase the proportion of tenure-track and tenured instructors and reduce class size. In the meantime, the Department cites increased salaries, increased travel budgets, increased numbers and quality of graduate assistants, and renewable instructor lines as less-ambitious routes to improvement.

Unit planning (next 7 years)

The planning process. The Department presents two plans, one that assumes growth in faculty to 14-15, and one that does not. The goals listed are revised from the five-year strategic plan of 2000.

Goals and strategies. The Department sets goals in ten areas:
1. increase majors and SCH by 20%, add three BGX courses, limit upper-level class size, maintain MPA enrollment, increase dual-degree enrollment;
2. add positions in American government and public law, hire an instructor in public administration, hire a Chair or add a tenure-track to offset chair, retain present faculty;
3. increase cooperation with University units and the University of Toledo, add cooperative relationships;
4. develop service-learning/engagement course, add theory and public law sections, revise graduate core to match faculty, add assessment portfolio, create dual degrees with French and Spanish;
5. continue and develop undergraduate internships, seek stable funding for graduate internships;
6. maintain quantity and improve quality of research publications; increase to six grant applications for at least $50,000 per year;
7. develop graduate assessment portfolio, revise undergraduate outcomes and develop assessment in capstone, add assessment to POLS 290;
8. add up to two undergraduate and one MPA course to distance learning, outreach to Firelands and remote locations;
9. endow one more scholarship or raise money for Department causes, continue community outreach;
10. continue student organizations and Model UN, build service/engagement-learning opportunities, develop relationships with learning communities.

If faculty size does not increase, the Department plans to
1. maintain current levels of SCH and BGX courses and increase 100-level class sizes to permit capping 300-400 level courses at 40;
2. replace faculty who retire or resign;
3. maintain current cooperative arrangements;
4. implement the 200-level service/engagement course;
5. maintain current levels of internships;
6. maintain goal for publication and presentation goal at one per member per year;
7. pursue planned improvements in assessment;
8. develop POLS 172 for summer distance offering;
9. maintain current outreach and fundraising efforts; and
10. eliminate advising of student organizations and Model UN.

Strategies include basing curriculum revisions on assessment results, supporting Department participation on related-program advisory boards, promoting cooperation in fundraising and co-authorship in scholarship, appointing an assessment committee, using community and alumni contacts for fundraising, and using organization activities as recruiting tools.

Timetable and implementation plan. Appendix V details year-by-year steps and timetable for each of the ten goals.

Relationship to the Academic Plan. Enrollment, recruiting, faculty retention, and curriculum revision plans are related to improvements in general education and teacher education, as well as to the values initiative. Internship, fundraising, outreach, and service/engagement learning plans fit the emphases on community engagement and civic participation. Plans to increase cooperation within and outside the Department reflect the central theme of collaboration. Although assessment and distance learning are not major emphases of the Plan, accreditation mandates the first and the call for new technologies and pedagogies is reflected in the second.

Questions for the external team.
1. Is seeking NAPSAA accreditation desirable?
2. How can we efficiently and meaningfully improve our assessment program?
3. Are faculty salaries sufficient for retention? How can we increase faculty diversity?
4. What incentives can we introduce for excellence in research?

RESULTS OF PREVIOUS REVIEWS

The numbered recommendations from the 1998 program review are shown, followed by a brief summary, in italics, of actions taken.

1. Develop a more focused program with one or two primary strengths. 
   In 1998, the Department established undergraduate foci (American politics and comparative and international politics) and a graduate focus (public administration).
2. Develop interdisciplinary electives and human resource and public budget and finance courses in MPA program.
   Approval of curriculum revisions (focus core, reduce specializations, revise courses) pending.
3. Increase contribution to general education, increase majors, increase SCH. Hire PhD student in cognate area for general education. 
   *Increases achieved and continuing. PhDs in cognate areas hired successfully in 2001-03; budget constraints have precluded this since.*
4. Implement flexible six-course teaching load, with one-course release for exceptional productivity. 
   *Only one faculty member teaches six courses. Research productivity is continuing to grow.*
5. Reduce subfields from six to five. Develop capstone, internships, and portfolio assessment. 
   *Current modification reduces subfields to four. Capstone developed and offered; College approval pending. Internships maintained; Statehouse internship initiative halted by hiring freeze. Portfolio rejected in favor of capstone. E-portfolios will be considered.*
6. Add assessment activities yearly throughout the review period. 
   *Exit interviews and surveys are still the main assessment tool. External assessment established in pre-law capstone. Assessment identifies need to improve oral communication. Courses have been modified accordingly. E-portfolios will be considered.*
7. The relationship of the Department and the Center for Policy Analysis and Public Service should be clarified. 
   *Completed the separation of the Center from the Department in 1998-99.*
8. The Department will specify in its promotion and tenure and merit documents how it will value theoretical research vis-à-vis applied research in connection with the Center. 
   *Completed in 1998-99. Separation of Center from the Department precluded necessity for amending merit documents on this point.*
9. The Department should decide in favor of reviewing whether the Chair shall have oversight of the Center. 
   *Completed with the separation of the Center from the Department in 1998-99.*
10. The Department should implement measures to promote trust and collegiality among faculty members. The Chair should promote collegiality, assert leadership, and improve communication. An annual survey should assess collegiality. 
    *Completed and ongoing. Collegiality continues to be strong. Departmental dinners and new faculty have improved social interactions. The Chair has encouraged collaborative research. Panel discussions and departmental events give opportunities for interaction outside of class.*
11. Given progress on the above recommendations, the Dean of Arts & Sciences should provide new hires in accordance with departmental priorities, possibly including a tenured senior position to strengthen faculty leadership. New faculty should support cognate and interdisciplinary programs. 
   *One replacement in international relations was hired in 2003-04, and a failed search in public administration should be renewed this year. Faculty size, including instructors, remains below the 12-13 envisioned.*
12. The Department and the Center should be relocated to renovated space in University Hall, in accordance with the current Capital Plan.
Plan seems to be inoperative.

13. The Department should strengthen its undergraduate interdisciplinary linkages. Ties to International Studies, Canadian Studies, and Africana Studies have been strengthened. The Department participated in hiring the new Environmental Studies director. New courses offered in Canadian politics and African politics (faculty exchange with UT). Grant received for developing International Studies. Joint grant with Journalism and GREAL brought two IREX scholars. Department wishes to obtain joint positions with International Studies.

14. The Department should implement recommendations for strengthening its research mission. Occasional brown-bag presentations and additional travel money for faculty active in grant applications have increased grant submissions and helped maintain a better-than-proposed pace of publication. Grant submissions have generally totaled over $100,000 per year.

15. Review curriculum change in MPA program and revise advising system. Because of limited number of public administration faculty, the new curriculum has not been implemented. Instructor hires have improved offerings and interaction with MPA students.

16. Explore NASPAA accreditation of the MPA program. Given the low number of public administration faculty, application for accreditation is unwise. Most MPA programs do not have accreditation.

17. Center should establish document repository, hold a symposium and publish proceedings. Not applicable since Department and Center are separated.

18. Given growth in MPA and dual MA programs, Department should consider reviving the MA in Political Science. Possible only with growth to 12-13 faculty. Expanding mode of dual MA to other interdisciplinary programs, including a possible MA in International Studies, is more realistic. The MPA focus on policy analysis might lead to cooperation with History.

19. Center should sponsor an annual speakers series and symposium. Not applicable since Department and Center are separated.

20. Assess careers of undergraduate and MPA alumni and alumnae. This is possible for MPA alumni, but only anecdotal evidence is available for undergraduate alumni.


23. By Spring semester, 2005, the Department should apply for the NASPAA accreditation. See #16.

**SUMMARY OF THE EXTERNAL REPORT**

The team of external evaluators note that the recent hiring of some very good junior
faculty makes the Department’s future promising. The program has the potential to be recognized for its intersection of faculty talents in international relations, comparative politics, and public administration, if faculty lines build on current strengths and if the graduate program is better focused.

**Strengths**

*Student-friendly environment.* Both graduate students and undergraduate students indicated that with only a few exceptions, the faculty is available and willing to help. This is an open-door department where students feel welcome.

*Collegiality.* Relations between faculty members seem quite collegial. Less senior members of the department find it to be a friendly working environment and see the troubled atmosphere noted seven years ago as long past.

*Research productivity.* Productive junior faculty members are publishing in respected outlets. Joint projects, now becoming the norm in the field, bode well for productivity.

*Diversity.* Efforts to increase diversity should be continued. Students cited lack of diversity, and this principle should count in recruitment. Women have recently been hired to fill two positions, and the women now in the Department find it a good place to work.

**Weaknesses (Challenges)**

*Lack of sufficient faculty numbers.* The faculty is not large enough to support two master’s programs, a major, minor, Education majors, and general education while aiming at high research quality and good service. “The department’s size, in our view, is perhaps its most serious weakness and the need for new lines is its most serious need.”

Faculty within and outside the Department stated the need for increased faculty numbers. At the last program review, there were only seven tenured or probationary faculty, down from 15-16. Two tenure-track lines have been added since then, and an additional tenure-track line is to be added this year. The teaching mission has been managed only with the assistance of instructors in two non-tenure-track lines.

The Department is small for the size of the University. Past disarray may be to blame for leaders’ wariness to invest in the Department. While many departments make such arguments, “in this case we believe these arguments are quite persuasive.” The external reviewers suggest adding data to a table comparing universities (p. 32 on the department’s self-evaluation) to make this clear. The missions of these departments are roughly similar to that of the Bowling Green’s department.
These data suggest that, compared to its peer institutions, the Department is rather small. The one new line that has been provided is a positive step.

Reliance on junior faculty. Having a majority of untenured faculty has posed difficulties with the conduct of business. “Partly as a result of their low numbers, there is an absence of leadership among those in Senior positions.” The Chair has also tried to protect assistant professors from service, meaning that the Chair has probably taken on too much. Merit evaluations have been conducted by a majority of untenured faculty. Though there was no indication of bias, those who have served were uncomfortable evaluating their tenured colleagues.

Unclear tenure and promotion expectations. Junior faculty members were unable to state tenure expectations clearly. This may cause conflict if exceptional productivity is taken for the norm. Working with the Dean to clarify expectations could obviate conflict and improve mentoring.

Faculty compensation. The self study reports that department faculty are paid about $5,000 below the University average (note: not corrected for rank), and there are also disparities with peer institutions. Because the Department’s strength and promise lies with the junior faculty, this could become a serious problem.

Organization of the Department

Leadership of graduate program. The growth and continuity of the graduate program depends on appointing a graduate director and clarifying the responsibilities of this position relative to the Chair. The graduate director should handle admissions, selection and supervision of GAs, scheduling, and calling regular meetings of the graduate faculty (apparently not a current practice).

As junior faculty achieve tenure, they will be able to provide leadership from a position of strength, and take a greater role in building a strong department with a more democratic leadership structure.
Focus of the MPA degree

The MPA program has lost its focus. The Department and the College should re-examine the type of graduate program that best fits the Department. A traditional MPA degree may no longer fit the needs of the University and the Department. An MA in Political Science that allows an emphasis on public administration may be a better fit. It would build on the teaching and research interests in comparative government and international relations of strong junior faculty. Combining administration in international settings and non-governmental organizations might fill a niche among MA programs.

Stated focus may not fit practice. Recruitment and admission practices seem to have resulted in a mismatch between the focus on local government in Ohio and the current students in the program, half of whom are from abroad. With only three part-time students, the program is no longer reaching the mid-career practitioner that is the typical MPA student nationwide. Some faculty noted that the preparation and quality of the TAs made it difficult to make optimal use of them in classroom support. Recent placements in international and non-profit settings also indicate a mismatch between the focus on Ohio governments and the current students.

Multiple names for the degree. Various brochures with different names and requirements also indicate lack of focus. This confusion centers on whether the degree has an international component or not.

Areas of emphasis. A further lack of focus results from the large number of areas of emphasis available to students [ten]. While twelve non-political science hours allows flexibility, this must generate lack of commonality in exams. It also argues against NASPAA accreditation.

Relationship with center. The future of the MPA program is tied to the Center. If the MPA is to have the focus on small Ohio local government that it had in the past, then a close working relationship between the MPA and the Center is critical. The center can model the utility of the study of public administration at Bowling Green to local governments in northwest Ohio, which fits the University goal of engagement. The current search for a center director should address this relationship, though no one from the Department is on the search committee. If the new director is from a different discipline, the Department will have trouble meeting its teaching obligations.

NASPAA. The external evaluators recommend against pursuing NASPAA accreditation. NASPAA standards require a core of five FTE faculty dedicated to teaching in the MPA program. Accreditation would require taking faculty out of undergraduate teaching and adding more lines dedicated to the MPA. NASPAA administrative standards would also require reorganizing the Department.
Master’s program with German

The master’s program with German is an excellent idea, but remains very small. The degree could be expanded to include other languages, especially if the Department “resurrects” the MA degree. Still, reliance on joint graduate/undergraduate courses for graduate needs is a weakness or a danger.

The success of the graduate program will depend on rebuilding the number of faculty to previous levels, more graduate-only core courses, and sufficient faculty members to supervise theses and exams.

Assessment

Positive steps have improved assessment, including a capstone course for the major. The Department is encouraged to consider student portfolio assessment in that course. An ACT/GRE subject area test would also allow comparison to a national sample and give a sense of coverage of subfields. The line currently being hired will help meet the implied workload increase.

Undergraduate curriculum

The undergraduate curriculum structure is appropriate, covering various subfields. Subfields could still be covered if areas are reduced to four by conflation. Rarely taught courses should be eliminated from the catalog. Reducing the number of upper-division courses may reduce teaching burden.

Summary

The Department has successfully rebounded from a difficult period in the 1990s. The additional faculty position this year is positive, but may not entirely relieve shortage of faculty. The reviewers were impressed by collegiality, the strength of research records, and the positive responses of students. The Department should decide on the future shape and direction of the graduate program. A well-defined plan for the direction of the graduate program will allow the Department to make the best hiring decisions possible, continuing to build on strengths.

Program Review Committee
Findings and Recommendations

The external reviewers and the PRC were pleased to find that the Department of Political Science has recovered from past difficulties and can point to many strengths and improvements in its programs. The Department and its chair can be proud of having built up the Department in numerous ways. Faculty collegiality and student satisfaction are strong. The Department is a campus leader in collaboration with other units and in communication with the community through public lectures, the high-school Model UN,
and other outreach programs. The availability of internships is also a strength. The emphasis on cooperative research within the Department is laudable.

The Department is to be commended for having increased significantly its undergraduate enrollment numbers, student-credit-hour statistics, numbers of majors and minors, and the breadth of its audience, including a large number of education majors. Thanks in part to the addition of promising junior faculty, research productivity and quality are meeting departmental goals.

Both the Department self study and the report of the external reviewers indicate that a fundamental problem is the relatively small size of the faculty. While the Committee cannot mandate an increase in faculty lines, the findings and recommendations to follow are made with the goal of creating optimal conditions in the Department’s programs, such that the case can be made for such an increase, including the possible hiring of a chair from outside.

The related problem of reliance on junior faculty for many administrative roles will be solved in part by the passage of time (two probationary faculty earned tenure and promotion while this report was being prepared), but the recommendations for planning and clarification may contribute to the retention and fairness necessary for a smooth transition to a more balanced distribution among faculty ranks. Likewise, acting on the recommendations below will put the Department in a stronger position to request salary adjustments, where they are appropriate.

Reasonable deadlines for carrying out each recommendation should be worked out between the Chair and the Dean of Arts & Sciences and the Graduate Dean as appropriate.

1. Tenure and Promotion Expectations

   Findings. The external reviewers reported that probationary faculty are unsure of the criteria by which their applications for tenure and promotion will be judged. They are measuring their achievement by the examples of very productive colleagues rather than by objective guidelines established by the Department. This could lead to problems with morale, productivity, and retention, and to undue competition between colleagues, as well as interfere with the development of leadership within the Department. There are three statements of expectations, one in the tenure, promotion, and merit policy (self study, Appendix N), one in the “Merit Instrument” (Appendix AA), and one in the proposed workload policy (Appendix E). While these refer to each other, each gives a slightly different angle on the issue.

   The Department asked for suggestions for improving research productivity. The Committee notes that in spite of some unevenness, the Department has established a culture of high-quality research and teaching.
Recommendation. The tenured faculty of the Department with the chair should create a policy determining what defines research-active faculty, to whom a 3/2 or 2/3 workload is given. This policy should be reviewed with the College to assure that this standard is met and aligned with the merit documents.

Faculty should be assured that research activity, progress toward tenure, and tenure and promotion are not a matter of counting items, but are defined by establishing a record of quality and impact of work. The chair should counsel faculty during reappointment reviews on whether this standard is being met.

2. Appointment of Graduate Coordinator

Findings. While the Committee commends the Chair for his excellent work supervising or performing the job of Graduate Coordinator in difficult times, not having a faculty member dedicated to that position has had far-reaching effects on the Department. Not only have coordinator duties distracted the Chair from other business and placed undue burdens on him, but several of the challenges within the graduate programs can be met effectively only with undivided leadership in this position. There is a chain of cause and effect leading from this circumstance to several of the other issues identified by this review: leadership in the graduate programs will help focus their goals and curricula, which have implications for staffing, which in turn has implications for hiring and retention, research, collaboration, and engagement.

Recommendation. The Department should appoint a tenured or tenure-track faculty member as Graduate Coordinator and clarify the duties of this position relative to those of the Chair. Ideally, the Graduate Coordinator would serve for several years in order to stabilize the program and provide consistent leadership, including calling regular meetings of the graduate faculty.

3. Evaluation of Focus of Master’s of Public Administration Program

Findings. The Ohio local-government focus of the MPA program seems to be at odds with actual practice in the program, especially considering the significant number of international graduate students enrolled in the program. In response to a recommendation of the previous program review to revise the MPA program, the Department reported that the program has been revised, but the revisions have not been implemented because of the insufficient number of public administration faculty for supervising research projects. Even with the hiring this year of a new faculty line in public administration, the contradiction between the program as described and the actual body of students served remains. The MPA program thus remains unfocussed, and not a good fit with the students and faculty in the Department. The question of pursuing NASPAA accreditation is therefore moot, in part because of the lack of public administration faculty, and in part because the graduate program’s focus should be decided on first.

Recommendation. In consultation with the Graduate Dean and the Dean of Arts & Sciences, the Department should discontinue the MPA program and replace it with a
Master of Arts, possibly with some work in public administration, combining “administration in international settings and non-governmental organizations,” as the external reviewers suggest. This “might fill a unique niche among Masters degrees in Political Science” (External Review). The MA could also be developed by expanding the idea of the dual master’s degree to programs beyond the graduate program in German. Both approaches would “build upon the teaching and research interests in comparative government and international relations of strong junior faculty” (External Review). This could lead to the recruitment of higher-quality graduate students. The success of the MA in recruiting and retaining students should be a point of special concern in the next round of program review.

The self study does not give a clear idea of what instructional role the graduate assistants play, but the external reviewers note that the “heavy reliance on international students also makes the use of TAs in the undergraduate program more challenging.” Part of the review of the graduate program should entail a decision about what role graduate assistants can and should play in the Department’s instructional missions. This decision will also impinge on the issues of faculty workload, credit-hour production, and learning outcomes (e.g., increased use of breakout sessions in larger courses).

As the graduate program is redesigned and developed, the Department should make it a priority to create conditions for offering stand-alone graduate courses, since the external review team warns that graduate programs should not rely on joint graduate/undergraduate courses to fill graduate needs.

4. Assessment

Findings. The establishment of a capstone course for majors, as well as the outside experts’ evaluation in the pre-law capstone course, are good steps in the right direction, as is the application of findings from exit interviews regarding the need for more training in oral expression. Beyond the latter, there is no indication that assessment is being used as a basis for curricular and course design.

The lack of assessment in the graduate programs is a further symptom of the challenges these programs face.

Recommendations. The Department needs to build on the steps already taken to develop regular assessment of student learning that will give information useful for developing the curriculum. The use of portfolios in connection with the already-established capstone course was suggested by the self study and the external reviewers. The two outcomes listed in the catalog and the self study, having to do with communication and critical thinking, are necessary, but the Committee recommends that the Department develop more discipline-specific learning outcomes. Fundamental understandings about politics, the field of political science, and its applications should be established as the basis for the portfolio and capstone assessments.
A similar program of assessment should be developed for the graduate programs as they are reviewed. The expected learning outcomes described in the self study under “Quality of Graduate Programs” (D.1.d.) could provide a basis for such assessment. The analysis of and decisions about the master’s programs recommended above should be informed by knowledge of their objectives and their effectiveness in reaching those goals.

5. Undergraduate Curriculum

Findings. While recent revisions of the undergraduate curriculum have put it in good shape, there are a number of undergraduate courses listed in the catalog, especially upper-division courses, that are not taught or rarely taught. The external evaluators suggested that the number of subfields could be reduced from six, perhaps by combining fields, without affecting coverage negatively.

Recommendation. The Department should consider reducing the number of subfields covered in the undergraduate curriculum, and review the courses listed in the catalog with an eye to deciding whether to eliminate or combine some of them. The recommended decisions about program learning outcomes and assessment results should inform these decisions.

The Department of Political Science should report annually to the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, with a copy to the Provost, on the implementation of these recommendations.