

Program Performance Review: Culmination Meeting Memo

Political Science BA & MA programs

The 2023-2024 Program Performance Review (PPR) process for the Political Science BA and MA programs in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) concluded with a culmination meeting on January 24, 2025.

The following people attended the meeting: Amir Dabirian (Provost), Sean Walker (Deputy Provost), Merri Lynn Casem (Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Studies and GE, AVPUSGE), Aimee Nelson (Director of Graduate Studies, DGS), Jessica Stern (Dean), Carl Wendt (Associate Dean), Phillip Kopp (Department Chair), Rob Robinson (Program Coordinator), and Su Swarat (Senior AVP for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, SAVPIEP).

The Provost congratulated the programs for completing the PPR process and commended the department's contribution to student success, particularly in terms of high-impact practices. The following specific accomplishments were highlighted during the PPR process:

- The department offers multiple high-impact opportunities (e.g. Moot Court, Town Hall Meeting, Cal State DC program, Internships) that positively impact students and strengthen the department, making it stand out from other political science departments. The Provost supported the department's stance to not make student participation in these opportunities mandatory.
- The department provides a significant amount of teaching to students in the undergraduate and graduate programs and through general education courses.
- The faculty are committed to student and program success and maintain strong relationships with alumni, which have led to financial support for scholarships and department programs such as Cal State DC and Moot Court.
- The department's undergraduate enrollment is stable, partly driven by the aforementioned high-impact signature programs.
- The department has made great progress on student success; Since its last review, the 4-year undergraduate graduation rate has more than doubled, and the equity gap has been reduced.
- The department has made significant improvement of the division culture, e.g. positively improved perception by female faculty.

Major recommendations and issues raised through the PPR process were discussed as follows:

1. Expansion of high-impact programs:
 - The external reviewers recommended the department to consider expanding high-impact opportunities in both quantity and topics covered, such as embedding more opportunities for international politics, guided by data (i.e., reviewing student and department needs, faculty workload).
 - The AVPUSGE suggested the department to consider adding more high impact programs that are accessible to its diverse student population.
 - The Program Coordinator estimated approximately 10% of the students participating in these opportunities and expressed the desire to expand into foreign affairs or international politics topics.
 - The Program Coordinator expressed that the biggest challenge is that these programs are often led by one person in the department. Cross-training is difficult and burn-out

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(particularly due to administrative tasks) is a major concern, which makes the need for more streamlined and faculty-friendly systems/processes critical.

- The Provost acknowledged the issue and shared that he is working with Admin/Finance to develop a “concierge” process; this process is intended to have dedicated staff to manage multiple administrative processes and thus reduce faculty workload.
- The department chair suggested that one way to resolve this issue is to hire lecturers who are willing to lead programs such as model UN or Moot Court.
 - The Dean recommended the department to work with her office and balance ROI in terms of the number of students served and the cost of the lecturers.

2. Non-credit certificates:

- The Program Coordinator stated that the program is working on developing non-credit certificates as one way to grow the program; This may require hiring of practitioners as their knowledge base differs from the faculty.
- The Dean suggested that the department could collaborate with other entities (e.g. OLLI, Fullerton Library) to broaden the reach to the community.
- The Chair suggested the possibility of cross-department certificates that bring together different HSS departments.
- The Program Coordinator expressed the need for administrative support for these programs, and stated that faculty would be happy to come and teach if the program is set up with administrative support.
 - The Provost recommended the department to work with Extensions for help with administrative support and possibly supplemental funding.
 - The Program Coordinator agreed to develop two certificate frameworks this semester to share with the Dean’s Office for review.

3. Graduate program growth:

- The external reviewers asked the MA program to assess if the program still meets student and department needs and if the program needs to be restructured given the impact of external requirements in K-12 and PhD programs.
- The Program Coordinator reported that faculty opinions are mixed, with 1-2 faculty being fine to let the program go because of its small size while the others prefer the program to continue.
- The DGS recommended the program to consider exploring a 4+1 program option and the possibility of fall-only admission to focus applicant momentum.
- The Provost suggested the department to work with alumni to increase awareness and interest.

4. Location of the department:

- The Chair stated that there is no more office space on the 5th floor of LH, which prevents the department from bringing more lecturers to the same floor; Additionally, the conference room can only hold 6 people, far from adequate.
- The Provost promised to review the space needs with the Dean’s Office.

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The Provost concluded the meeting by thanking the college and department leadership and faculty for their contribution to the university and the community, while emphasizing the importance of focusing on what is most important to the mission and sustainability of the department and the faculty.