

**Assessment Trends Report
Student Learning Outcomes in Political Science**

October 27, 2009

The goal of this report is to evaluate the assessment of student learning outcomes in Political Science. The report address four key questions to evaluate the quality of your assessment processes.

(1) How have we sustained the assessment effort over a multi-year period of time?

How many years have you completed an annual assessment report?

_____ 2006 _____ 2007 YES 2008 YES 2009

The Political Science department has had significant turnover of full-time faculty over the last four years, including two chairs and five faculty members who are no longer at Millikin University. This year there is only 1 full-time faculty member, Dr. David Jervis, who joined the department in Fall 2008. In the Fall of 2007 the current 3 faculty members established seven learning outcome goals (4 content areas and 3 research methods goals) and a curriculum map where each goal is emphasized within required courses. They established data collection points within both introductory courses as well as in the senior capstone course, which emphasizes an original research project. They have completed two annual assessment reports following this original plan. Dr. Jervis and adjunct faculty member, Richard Dunn are continuing the data collection necessary to continue the assessment process.

(2) How do we systematically and comprehensively collect and analyze data about student learning?

Content understanding data is collected in all three introductory political science courses through a pre-test and post-test given at the beginning and ending of each 100-level course.

The senior capstone research projects are completed in the spring semester of the senior year. The faculty review all senior student projects and evaluate them using the rubrics for assessing each key learning goal related to research in political science.

While the plan for data gathering and analysis is systematic and comprehensive, the two annual reports fail to include results of this data collection with the exception of the pre/post test scores for learning goal one. Therefore, the department has failed to actually complete the collection and analysis of needed data on student performance in Political Science.

(3) How do we use the analysis to improve curriculum and pedagogy and to inform decisions about budgets and strategic priorities?

Although resulting data have not been reported in the annual assessment reports, Dr. Jervis explained that all three of the full-time faculty did review the senior research projects and rated them with the rubrics. They discussed the overall results fully, noting problems and strengths in the students' projects. The weakest area was evident in the literature review and framing the context for the student's research question. They discussed possible ways to improve instruction or emphasis on that aspect of the research projects in the future. When asked if he had a chart of the data from the assessment of senior projects, Dr. Jervis was able to send me tables with the student scores. So the faculty are using the assessment process to examine student performance, but the annual reports are not yet being completed in an adequate level.

The process of establishing clear learning goals and mapping those goals to the course requirements in the major resulted in several adjustments to course descriptions and changes in requirements. Several course changes and program requirement changes were submitted for approval by the Council on Curriculum in 2007 and 2008. There has not been sufficient data collected or analyzed yet to make additional changes based on student performance data.

(4) How do we evaluate, modify, and continue to improve the student learning assessment process in this program?

The assessment plan is currently in its third year, but with inadequate data collection in the first two years, the department is still at the beginning point of establishing baseline performance on student learning outcome goals. The department has not yet begun refining their assessment processes.

Rating: Yellow

Academic Programs	Goal 1 (multiyear process) 1-3 pts	Goal 2 (data collection & analysis) 1-3 pts	Goal 3 (use analysis to improve) 1-3 pts	Goal 4 (improve assessment) 1-3 pts	TOTAL 4-12 points
Political Science	2	2	2	1	7

The Political Science department will complete its third annual assessment report this year. They have developed a systematic way of collecting data for each learning goal, but they have failed to report complete results in their annual reports. The faculty review senior research projects together and discuss the performance on learning goals, but they have failed to include that discussion as formal analysis in their reports. They have made several curriculum adjustments and pedagogical approaches in response to the development of their assessment plan. They are now ready to engage in a more thorough review and improvement of their assessment process. Faculty turnover has made it challenging to maintain a thorough assessment process, so the department looks forward to stabilizing the faculty positions.