

Strategic Plan for the TCNJ Department of Political Science

2011-2016

July 19, 2011

The Department of Political Science supports The College of New Jersey's mission of service to the people of the state and the key role that the School of Humanities and Social Sciences plays in that mission. The Department's own Vision Statement, Mission Statement, and Learning Goals, stated below, reflect these broader institutional commitments and guide our strategic planning efforts. Through strategic planning the Department seeks to better allocate and leverage its resources in order to realize the vision, fulfill the mission, and achieve the learning goals that our faculty value and that are important to the community of learners that we serve. Our Departmental Strategic Plan is intended to shape day-to-day decisions to ensure that those decisions are consistent with these guiding statements and with the shared values of the faculty. Adopted by consensus within the Department, the Plan seeks to identify both specific goals and strategies for achieving those goals for the period of the next five years. These goals are intended to build on the considerable strengths of the Department, identify areas needing improvement, and prepare the Department for new challenges and opportunities that will arise.

Political Science Department Vision Statement

The Department of Political Science aspires to be a national exemplar in research and undergraduate teaching in Political Science and related interdisciplinary work including International Studies, Public Policy, and Pre-Law. The Department seeks both to explore creative ideas and activities that will enhance high quality teaching, research opportunities, and academic support for our students and faculty and to expand the scope of instruction to keep pace with new directions pursued by the College and required by the changing world beyond TCNJ.

Political Science Department Mission statement

The most challenging issues facing society today are political in nature. Problems of representation, individual freedoms, economic development and security ultimately become actionable through political institutions. The Political Science Department seeks to produce scholarship that explains such processes and, at the same time, craft courses and transformative learning experiences wherein students develop the intellectual rigor to critically evaluate and improve social trends. The Department strives to offer challenging and fulfilling learning and scholarship opportunities for students so that they emerge analytically sharp, knowledgeable about the political environment, well-trained in empirical methods, capable of

evaluating evidence and ethical choices, and ready to contribute to their communities, country and the world. The skills that students develop will prepare them to be lifelong learners, responsible citizens, and thoughtful leaders.

Political Science Department Learning Goals

1. To develop each student's understanding of political science (and politics), key substantive knowledge in the discipline and its major fields, and the connections between political science and related fields, especially economics, history, international studies, law, and public policy.
2. To lead students to examine the workings of fundamental political processes and institutions at the local, national, and international level while offering them the opportunity to explore a sub-field of political science in more depth.
3. To have students appreciate the meaning and historical evolution of the core values in Western political thought such as justice, equality, freedom, human rights, and due process; understand competing theoretical perspectives; and develop their own belief systems.
4. To mentor students in developing advanced skills in critical thinking so that they may read analytically, understand complex relationships and concepts, identify underlying assumptions, and "dissect" a scholarly text.
5. To teach students to conduct original research, independently and in teams, using scholarly sources and the empirical research tools characteristic of the discipline.
6. To refine the communications skills of students so that they can present oral and written arguments that are cogent, compelling, and well-substantiated.
7. To develop in students the ability to locate themselves and see others within an historical, social, and cultural setting.
8. To engage students in first-hand experiences with practical politics and public policy and suggest to them connections between what they learn in the classroom and what goes on in the world.
9. To engage students actively in the learning process so as to stimulate their curiosity, interest them in public life, foster openness, and increase their self-confidence.
10. To prepare students for meaningful employment and further educational opportunities after graduation, in part through internship and independent research opportunities.

Shared Values

In every professional activity from long-term planning to rushed decisions, members of the Department share the following three values:

1. Intellectual freedom and mutual respect: members of the Department feel that the freedom to pursue without hindrance different lines of social inquiry is vital to the scholarship of faculty members and students, and is vital to the improvement of society at large. We value the free and responsible exchange of ideas.
2. High quality teaching in active classrooms: all Department members are dedicated to challenging students with seminal and the latest scholarship at every level of instruction.

The small size of many courses allows for improved instruction and more interaction between students and both their instructors and their peers.

3. Engaging experiences: to complement learning in courses, students need to apply their knowledge and skills in applied or simulated settings. These opportunities allow students to identify their strengths and interests, as well as dislikes and skills that still needing polishing.

The Department Context

While the Department has remained true to its Political Science roots, the nature of the Department and its course offerings has evolved considerably over time. Whereas in the 1980's the resources of the Department supported a Political Science major plus a large Public Administration major, the current Department supports a Political Science major plus a sizeable and still growing International Studies major. These programs enroll approximately 160 and 100 students respectively. As the Department went to seven members in 2007, the teaching and research specializations of the faculty became more international and comparative in focus. Approximately one-fourth of the courses taken by International Studies majors are taught by Political Science faculty, one of whom (first Marianna Sullivan and now Brian Potter) has directed the International Studies Program since its inception. Demand for pre-law related courses has shifted the teaching responsibilities of Daryl Fair away from other American politics oriented courses, including Gender and Politics. The Political Science major attracts a significant number of pre-law students; pre-law advisement at the College is coordinated in excellent fashion by Dr. Fair. For help in covering the American politics and political theory subfields the Department has relied on two particular adjunct professors, both state practitioners, for the last several years. The use of adjuncts in other sub-fields has proved problematic.

As noted by Professor William Hudson of Providence College in our last program review (2009), the relatively small size of the Department, compared to departments in our peer and aspirant institutions, brings with it a variety of tensions and needs. One particular challenge is to cover the four major subfields of the discipline; another is to balance needs for breadth vs. needs for depth in the curriculum; a third is to cover the various important geographic regions of the world; and a fourth is to cover advanced American politics courses with sufficient regularity. Any small Political Science Department must grapple with such issues, yet we have additional pressures like supporting the International Studies Program and the First Seminar Program. Hudson's report and the Departmental Self-Study that preceded it offer many insights into the Department's performance.

Most importantly, Hudson found that the teaching abilities of the Political Science faculty are highly regarded; the faculty displays an enthusiasm for teaching and utilizes innovative teaching approaches (for example Moot Court competitions). What we teach we teach very well. The Department has a strong commitment to developing the critical thinking and writing skills of students, using research-based junior-year tutorials and senior-year seminars effectively in that regard. The tutorials and seminars often incorporate the latest research of our faculty. In addition, Hudson also noted, "One has to be impressed with the overall level of scholarly

productivity in the department given the teaching load demanded of faculty members, their level engagement with their students, and their service commitments.” Evidence indicates that Political Science majors are “largely happy with their learning experience,” have a strong spirit of community, and view the faculty as committed to serving their interests. The Department serves the College and the community well, two of many possible examples of the former being the Politics Forum series organized by Miriam Lowi and yearly faculty participation in the First Seminar Program. Hudson also cited some concerns voiced by students about the need for more systematic academic and career advising, the difficulty in getting into certain courses, and the quality of some adjunct teaching. Certainly, the academic advisement load for faculty is heavy. In part for that reason, career advisement has been *ad hoc* and informal (one-to-one) at best; there has been little interaction with Career Services; and contacts with alumni have been limited to the extensive pre-law network that Daryl Fair has developed over the years. In general, Hudson itemizes about a dozen particular strengths of the Department, including those discussed above (like the quality of teaching and scholarly activity) and also including a strong international focus in the curriculum, ability to attract good students, collegiality among the faculty members, accessibility to faculty, and a commitment to community-based and experiential learning. Since Hudson’s report and the departure of the former Chair, the department has not offered its main community-oriented course, but has been able to hire a new colleague, Daniel Bowen, who has strengthened the research methods core of the curriculum. His teaching is divided about equally between methods and American politics; his teaching additional sections of POL 200/Political Analysis has allowed students to take this basic methods course earlier in their course of study.

In addition to the Department’s having a larger faculty, Hudson would also like to see the department: offer more breadth in its courses; be more systematic in advising students, in mentoring tenure-track faculty, and in offering career and graduate school advisement; connect more with alumni; and begin to systematically assess student learning. While we believe the academic advising offered by the department is very sound and that faculty members spend considerable time advising individuals about graduate programs, the Department noted like areas for improvement its Self-Study (2009) prior to Hudson’s visit. In particular, the Department spends little time on non-academic careers, while at the same time our majors underutilize the Office of Career Services. In addition, other items have come to our attention more recently. One is that with the virtual end of paid internships in state and local government and the hesitancy of students to accept unpaid positions, many students bypass such promising learning experiences. A second is the need to make the Department’s web presence more attractive and informative, especially to appeal to prospective students and inform current ones. Third, the Department needs to promote meaningful, transformative undergraduate research beyond tutorial and seminar and in the process increase faculty mentoring of such projects, the dissemination of student research, and departmental honors work. Fourth, the Department’s support of related of certain interdisciplinary efforts like the Public Policy Analysis and Management minor and the Environment Studies concentration has waned over time, largely due to competing demands on faculty time. Fifth, in conjunction with the transformation process and MOA #62, the Department has re-coded its courses and

increased class size, but has not taken advantage of options to create special student-research classes or re-designate certain classes as LDW-writing intensive.

In general, Hudson's insights and other insights generated within the Department from faculty and students give rise to the following strategic objectives.

Strategic Objectives for 2011-2016

Objective 1: Increase student enrollment in experiential learning opportunities.

We will encourage a greater number of students to take part in semester-long programs that involve a combination of academic and experiential learning, such as the TCNJ Washington Semester, the Department's internship program, and study abroad programs. This objective is intended to support Learning Objectives Nos. 8 and 10, respond to a recent decline in the number of enrolled interns, and develop an aspect of the International Studies program—internships—in which students are indicating interest.

Strategies: During the next Academic Year (AY) the Internship Coordinator will work with our secretary, student assistant, and web coordinator to convert available intern information to an electronic format that can be posted on the Political Science website. The Departmental website will be linked to The Washington Center (TWC). Also in AY2011-12, the Political Science Intern Coordinator will meet with Dr. Potter and the International Studies faculty to explore ideas for developing and managing INTS-related intern placements and coursework. The International Studies Director will work with Jon Stauff of the Center for Global Engagement and interested faculty to explore options for full-semester internship programs abroad. In AY2012-13, the Intern Coordinator, the International Studies Director, and other appropriate individuals will finalize and begin implementing plans for expanding INTS-related intern placements and student participation in intern programs abroad. Going forward, the Intern Coordinator, the International Studies Director, and Jon Stauff will work to better publicize The Washington Center program, including its domestic and international internships, and other internships abroad. Without released time or other support, the development of international internships will be a multi-year project extending through AY 2015-16. As resources become available on campus, hopefully in 2012-13, the Department will also review options for a CEL-2 course.

Objective 2: Develop and implement an interdisciplinary major in Law, Ethics and Politics.

Given its history of serving pre-law students, expertise in law-related topics, and Learning Goal Nos. 3 and 10, the Department will support the development of an interdisciplinary major in Law, Ethics and Politics. This major will allow students to explore law in a comprehensive and systematic way from the perspective of both the social sciences and the humanities—emphasizing its origins and justification and the shape we think law should take today. Political Science will be a major contributor to the this program through courses such as Constitutional Law, Civil Liberties, Law and Society, International Law, and Origins of the U.S. Constitution.

Strategies: After the start date, scheduled to be no earlier than September 2012, the Department will periodically revisit the ability of Dr. Fair's teaching load and work schedule to accommodate Political Science involvement in the program and adjust appropriately. In 2015-16, two to three years after the program's start, the Department will more formally assess impacts to-date on the Political Science major and other Political Science offerings.

Objective 3: Expand faculty lines in American politics and regional politics to cover more related sub-fields in Political Science and International Studies.

As noted above, the relatively small size of the Department poses challenges in offering appropriate classes, mentoring students and contributing to the College and broader community. Hudson's 2009 review suggested that a few additional faculty members would lead to greater economies of scale and more efficient use of faculty time. For example, almost half of the Department's members must be present at each Open House. Also when one faculty member gets released time for research, teaching and advising across the Department are compromised. Perhaps most importantly, a larger faculty would also aid the Department in pursuing Learning Goals Nos. 1, 2, 3, and 7 by significantly increasing its ability to cover key content areas. At present the Department's courses offerings fall short of our learning goals in two major areas: 1) offering courses covering major American institutions and processes on an annual basis and 2) covering major regions of the world, including East Asia and Africa, on more than a sporadic basis. The Department would also like to take better advantage of leading trends in the discipline that emphasize the fruitful exchange of knowledge between the subfields of American politics and comparative politics, as with comparative public policy. The data and advanced methods of the former can be applied to understand political processes in other countries and in international forums, and in-depth analyses of foreign cases provide comparisons to enlighten the study of American politics.

Strategies: During AY 2011-12, the Department will seek to define new positions in a manner that balances our needs in American politics and area studies and takes into account the fiscal realities of the College. In terms of American politics, the greatest needs are for a teacher scholar expert in the Presidency, public policy, political parties, interest groups, race and politics, public management, American political theory, and or state and local politics. Faculty members traditionally teaching in these areas have left the College or been presented with competing demands (Dr. Fair, Dr. Koch). These subjects are staples of comparably sized Political Science Departments, and it is important to have more faculty members producing and guiding student research in these areas. In terms of comparative politics, current global trends, student interest and development opportunities suggest hires in East Asian, South Asian and African politics. Depending on the qualifications of candidates, there may be opportunities to have one new faculty member, such as a policy specialist, address a need in American politics with a regional or comparative focus. The Department will continue to review faculty needs and make the case for additional hires to the Dean and the administration on an annual basis.

Objective 4: Continue the Department's support of the International Studies Program and address changing needs.

The International Studies Program has enjoyed considerable success in expanding its number of majors and participating faculty members, in part due to substantial support from the Political Science Department. International Studies majors take at least two upper-level Political Science courses and Department members have taught all sections of the introductory course (INT 200/ "International Studies: Processes, Themes and Issues") and the senior seminar (INT 498). A Department member has served as Director of the Program since its inception.

Strategies: The Department recognizes the Program's achievements and seeks to sustain them by maintaining its considerable level of resource support. As the International Studies Program matures and approaches its own program review in AY2012-2013, select faculty will participate in that review and subsequent activities, such as the drafting of a strategic plan in 2013-14. Overall, the Department will continue to explore new ways of best meeting the Program's needs, including by the possible expansion of coursework and program options to include additional geographic regions and more of a policy orientation. Specific course development plans for 2011-12 are discussed further below under Objective 6.

Objective 5: Improve career advisement and post-graduate placement for students.

In response to the perceived needs in this area discussed in the Hudson report and in keeping with Learning Goal No. 10, the Department seeks to offer greater support for the placement of political science graduates in relevant careers after graduation and increase the number of political science students entering graduate studies (especially MA and PhD programs).

Strategies: During the next AY the Department will offer at least one career planning panel meeting/workshop and consider additional ways to provide better mentorship through: 1) expanding the use of departmental programming, 2) a one-credit career planning course for majors, 3) referring students to the new school-wide course, 4) increasing cooperation with, and better utilizing programming by, the Career Center, and 5) developing a formal mentoring program with alumni. At least one of these other options would become operational in AY 12-13, with the expansion of a then-current activity or addition of one new activity in each year in the remaining timeframe.

Objective 6: Restructure, refine, and update the Political Science major program requirements and curriculum.

In pursuit of Learning Goals Nos. 1, 2, and 3, the Department needs to examine a number of curricular issues that center on, but are not limited to, the following: 1) current course numberings, 2) linkages between courses in the curriculum, including prerequisites, 3) additional courses to be approved, 4) the designation of certain courses as LDW courses, 5) methods training beyond POL 200/Political Analysis, 6) appropriate support for related concentrations and minors, 7) the status of particular courses that are no longer taught with regularity, and 8) the integration of public policy studies into major courses and course work. At times there seems to be little differentiation in workload between courses at different levels, and some 300-level courses must begin with introductions to key concepts and basic analytical

methods that might be more efficiently covered in a qualitative methods course, an introduction to political science course, or another appropriate prerequisite. The use of POL 110 or POL 230 as the first course in the major and the integration of quantitative methods into additional courses should also be considered, along with ideas for the better integration of CEL courses and student research courses into the curriculum, as referred to elsewhere.

Strategies: During AY2011-12, we will immediately move forward with submitting courses on the European Union and East Asian Politics for approval and re-designating select courses as LDW. Work on the other issues will largely begin in spring 2012 after the next faculty search is completed. Spring 2012 will be used to discuss and prioritize the concerns just mentioned. Curricular planning will proceed in AY 2012-13 and will include the exploration of options to best incorporate methods training throughout the major's course work, with a goal of increasing the use of quantitative research in upper division courses. 2013-14 will be used to design, formalize, and begin to implement any major curricular reforms agreed on in 2012-13. Such discussions will also include considerations of appropriate faculty and course support for the Public Policy Analysis and Management Minor and the Environmental Studies Concentration.

Objective 7: Increased Research Opportunities for Students.

In keeping with Learning Goals No. 4 and 5, the Department will increase the opportunities for our students to conduct and disseminate research of a transformative nature. In recent years, the College has embraced the teacher-scholar model, emphasizing faculty working more closely with students on meaningful research projects. Three years ago the Department reinstituted a Departmental Honors Program, that has seen one graduate per year complete a thesis. In addition, a small number of students do traditional independent study while registered in POL 391, either associated with honors work or not.

Strategies: During the next AY, an *ad hoc* departmental committee will explore 1) the need for an independent study or honors coordinator or a standing committee to promote and oversee student research efforts, 2) procedures for encouraging the involvement of good students in independent research, 3) the use of group research courses as per MOA #62 (like History does) or a similar mentored research structure (like Computer Science), 4) creating research internships on and/or off campus using POL 399/Internship in Public Affairs, 5) making greater use of the College's Mentored Undergraduate Summer Experience (MUSE), and 6) seeking funding to sponsor student research on our own. Implementation of a new structure (if needed) and at least one new approach would begin in 2012-13, with others to follow in subsequent years—one additional or re-defined effort each such year.

Objective 8: Enhancing the Department's Web Presence.

The above discussion suggests that to serve many of its goals, the Department needs to add additional information to the main web-pages for the department. Links to additional sites like The Washington Center and information about internship placements are two high priorities.

Strategies: During the late summer and fall of 2011 the Chair will begin working with the Departmental secretary, the IT web coordinator, and the student assistant to facilitate access for editing the website via Wordpress and to initiate improvements. These efforts will be ongoing.

Objective 9: Enhance Academic Advising in the Department.

While in general Academic Advisement is strength of the Department, improvements in the process can be made.

Strategies: The Department will further discuss and begin to implement changes specified in the new Advisement Plan for all components of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. The Department will also gather information in AY2011-12 on the experiences and needs of external transfer students coming into the College and the major, since more are being accepted into the College and their preparation is different from the typical majors who enter as first year students. Information learned will be factored into curricular and other reforms, as indicated. A schedule for integrating the new Advisement Plan into the Strategic Plan will developed in 2011-2, once faculty members have had a chance to study and discuss the document.

Objective 10: Create a Departmental Assessment Plan.

The College has designated Political Science the task of creating a Departmental Assessment Plan during the upcoming year; until its implementation in 2012-13, we will continue with the One Question/One Answer Assessment Process next year.

Strategies: Beginning in early 2011-12, the Department will define the one question to be researched and start the task of creating the much larger and more complex assessment plan. The One Question/One Answer Assessment Process will be completed by the end of the next academic year, as will the Departmental Assessment Plan.