

# Department of Political Science 2018 – 2023 Strategic Plan

Adopted by consensus on March 15, 2018

This strategic plan is the product of six months of faculty discussion and reflection, informed by the Department's 2015 self-study and the 2016 external review completed by Dr. John Entelis (Fordham University). The plan is, we believe, ambitious and hopeful. Even in a challenging fiscal environment, the Department affirms its core vision – “to be a national exemplar in research and undergraduate teaching in Political Science” – and its essential role in TCNJ's mission “to develop critical thinkers, responsible citizens, and lifelong learners and leaders.” The strategic plan outlines the Department's priorities and objectives, which have been shaped by the strategic plans of TCNJ and the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, over the next five years. The plan builds on the considerable strengths of the Department and attempts to honestly address its weaknesses. The goal of the plan is to leave the Department and its programs healthier, better tailored for a rapidly changing political, social, and economic environment (both inside higher education and outside it), more enriching to our students, and better able to advance the mission of The College.

## *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 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.

## *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 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.

## *Learning Outcomes*

1. Breadth of Knowledge: Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the general boundaries of the discipline, key substantive knowledge in and the linkages between the four major subfields of political science, and the connections between political science and related fields, especially economics, history, international studies, law, and public policy.
2. Depth of Knowledge: Students will be able to demonstrate a deep understanding of a) central concepts, distinctions, questions, and theories related to the discipline, b) the in-depth workings of fundamental political processes and institutions at the national and international level, and 3) selected topics important to a particular subfield.
3. Core Values: Students will be able to integrate into their work the meaning and historical evolution of the core, if contested, values in Western political thought (such as justice, equality, freedom, human rights, and due process); competing theoretical perspectives; and their own belief systems.

4. **Critical Thinking:** Students will be able to read analytically, understand complex relationships and concepts, identify underlying assumptions, “dissect” scholarly texts, and synthesize their own politically-related interpretations, arguments, or positions.
5. **Original Research:** Students will be able to conduct original research using appropriate primary and secondary sources and the empirical research tools characteristic of the discipline.
6. **Communication Skills:** Students will be able to communicate effectively in a variety of formats and settings, presenting oral and written arguments that are cogent, compelling, and well-substantiated.
7. **Historical, Social and Cultural Sense of Place:** Students will be able to recognize and understand the impact of diverse settings on political phenomenon—to locate themselves within an historical, social, and cultural setting; to grasp politics in a conceptual manner; and to transfer that conceptual understanding to other situations.
8. **Application of Knowledge:** Students will be able to apply their political science knowledge in first-hand experiences with practical politics, public policymaking or implementation, and public affairs and be aware of connections between what they learn in the classroom and the workings of the outside world.
9. **Active Learning/Public Service:** Students will be actively engaged in the learning process both in the classroom and in extracurricular activities so as to stimulate their curiosity, interest them in public life, foster openness, and increase their self-confidence.
10. **Career Preparation:** Students will have developed realistic ideas for applying their knowledge and skills in meaningful employment and/or further educational opportunities after graduation, in part through internships, independent research, and special programming

#### *Shared Values*

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 as well as 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 the classroom, students need to apply their knowledge and skills in applied or simulated settings. These opportunities allow students to identify their strengths and interests along with their dislikes and skills that still need polishing.

#### *Department Context and Response to External Review*

The Department of Political Science has seven full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty members (Bowen, Chartock, Dumas, Garlick, Lowi, Potter, and Toloudis). The Department has experienced a generational turnover of sorts with three senior members (Fair, Koch, and Sullivan) retiring and a fourth (Ball) moving to another institution since 2007. The Department has thus spent much of the past decade operating with five or six members. Even when the Department was at its full complement, staffing was low compared to peer institutions. Data presented in the Department’s 2015 Self-Study show that among TCNJ’s peer and aspirant institutions, the Department was ranked 15 out of 17 programs for the number of tenure-track faculty relative to the size of the undergraduate student population at the institution. Further, the Department Chair receives fewer course releases than chairs in other HSS programs, placing the Department at a comparative disadvantage and limiting the Department’s ability to advance strategic initiatives. A search for a new faculty member specializing in international relations and East Asian politics (joint position with the interdisciplinary International Studies Program) was recently approved, and the Department is very

pleased to begin searching for this position during AY 2018-2019. The search for a one-year visiting assistant professor is taking place at this time.

Despite its small size, the Department of Political Science supports a wide range of important programs on campus. The political science major has grown from 90 students at the time of academic transformation to approximately 155 today. The Department also supports the International Studies Program, which has grown from 20 majors to 140 today during the same time period. The Department offers minors in political science and public policy analysis & management and contributes to interdisciplinary minors in pre-law and international studies (among others).

Since the completion of its last strategic plan in 2011, the Department has made progress in many areas including expansion of internship opportunities, enhanced web presence, more intentional and formalized academic and career advising, and the provision of additional undergraduate research experiences. Still, long-standing issues, some raised in the 2015 Self-Study, remain including how pre-requisites should be used in the Department, whether the Department should adopt tracks or specializations, and how the Department can maintain teaching excellence and service obligations (which have grown with the degree programs) while also providing time and resources for faculty scholarship.

Dr. John Entelis reviewed the Department in March 2016. Entelis organized his review around four areas – recognized strengths, Departmental distinctives, areas of opportunity, and recommendations. Entelis' review makes clear that he believes the Department is strong and is seen as “a first rate academic unit” by faculty, students, and administrators. The strengths of the Department are many: the curriculum is “cohesive and comprehensive” despite a small number of full-time faculty and includes an advanced core sequence offering training in methodology, research design, and writing. Students are “highly motivated, serious minded, and academically engaged” and the Department's faculty are recognized for teaching excellence, accessibility to students, and robust scholarship.

The external review identified distinctive qualities of the Department. The first distinctive trait is the Department's focus on methodology, writing, and research. In his review of 18 peer and large political science programs, Entelis found only two (American University and Emory University) which, like the TCNJ program, required both a statistics course and a quantitative methods course. Further, few programs require training in micro and macro-economics, as is required in the political science major. These skills are integrated into independent research courses at the junior (POL 390) and senior levels (POL 498) and reflect a unique and laudatory dedication to equipping students to produce - and be careful consumers of - social science research. Entelis also noted the Department's dedication to the International Studies Program and the Department's active involvement in The College's Signature Experiences through local internships, study abroad opportunities, enrollment at The Washington Center, extensive involvement in the Pre-Law program, the Politics Forum colloquium series, support for and leadership of the Celebration of Student Achievement, and Model United Nations conferences. Entelis concludes: “The breadth of activities that Department members participate in is testimony to their seriousness of purpose and institutional commitment.”

Still, these strengths and distinctive qualities are set against a backdrop of limited resources. Throughout his review, Entelis noted the difficulties faculty face maintaining the quality of the political science program. Faculty report feeling “stretched” by the demands of the comprehensive curriculum. Large sections of the curriculum are covered through reliance on adjunct instruction – mainly American Politics and Political Theory - and the quality of instruction in adjunct-taught courses is uneven. According to Entelis, “Whether or not this comprehensive curriculum can continue to function effectively and be maintained at the same high level of academic excellence, given the small faculty size and the over dependence on adjunct faculty, is an open question...” Against this backdrop, Entelis recommended hiring more full-time faculty in American Politics, expanding interdisciplinary interactions by integrating public

policy course offerings for policy-focused degrees in Business, Engineering, and Public Health, and to cross disciplinary subfield boundaries by developing courses which can serve multiple subfields at the same time.

The Department agrees with the major points raised in the external review. The following section outlines the Department's strategic objectives and initiatives. The objectives are largely a response to issues raised in either the 2015 Self-Study, Entelis' external review, or areas identified for development by the strategic plans of The College and/or School of Humanities and Social Sciences.

## *Strategic Objectives*

*Objective 1: Review, update, and modernize political science degree programs and curriculum to support a robust community of students and faculty and to equip students for careers and citizenship in a rapidly-changing political, economic, and social environment.*

As an academic discipline organized around studying the exercise of power and decision-making at the local, national, and global levels, the Department is uniquely charged with contributing to all five Signature Experiences through the political science curriculum. By reviewing and updating our degree programs and curriculum, the Department will enhance the Signature Experiences (TCNJ Priority II, HSS Goal B).

*Initiative 1.1:* Study the establishment of tracks or specializations in the political science BA program. As the major is currently structured, students must take a single “foundations” course - typically POL 110 American Government or POL 230 Introduction to International Relations. After this initial introductory course, students are free to take courses throughout the political science curriculum, regardless of subfield. Students also take a research design sequence and must take a class in each of the discipline’s main subfields. But which classes, when they should be taken, and how many courses in each subfield are left to the student. This structure has benefits; namely, it is flexible for both students and the Department. Since the Department has been understaffed for decades, such a structure has been beneficial. However, the structure is pedagogically problematic. 200 and 300-level courses do not naturally build on introduction courses since a majority of students have not taken the introduction course in the subfield. Further, students typically gravitate toward courses in their preferred areas of interest, but the Department offers no way for students to capitalize on these areas of expertise by listing specializations on transcripts or resumes. Beginning in AY 2018-2019, the Department will study the creation of major specializations with a focus on answering the following questions:

1. How would the creation of tracks influence student outcomes and Department learning goals?
2. Is the creation of tracks or specializations feasible from a staffing perspective? What consequences would such a system have for faculty course preparations, adjunct hiring and training, and the ability to achieve other curricular initiatives?
3. How would such a system be structured and which specializations could the Department offer?
4. How might specializations impact student requirements, degree attainment, and timely graduation?

*Initiative 1.2:* Reconsider course numberings. How is a 200-level course different than a 300-level one? When should students take courses in each level, and how should pre-requisite courses be utilized to best foster student growth? How should methodology courses be identified in the curriculum? Currently, the senior seminars are the only courses identified as senior-level courses; however, other courses might be appropriately labeled as such. Should the Department designate additional courses at the 400-level? Should 100-level courses be reserved for non-major requirements, like FSPs or mini-courses? Ideally, any course numbering policy change would occur along with adoption of tracks or specializations. The Department will review course numbers and prerequisites policies during AY 2018-2019 as part of the larger review of the political science BA degree program.

*Initiative 1.3:* Consider the adoption of an Introduction to Political Science course and/or a qualitative methodology course to the political science major. As stated above, political science students do not take a common course but instead are introduced to the major through a

subfield-specific “foundations” course. Some other political science departments have opted to offer a “Introduction to Political Science” course to provide a common experience and to cover essential conceptual issues likely to be encountered across the discipline’s subfields. Examples of common concepts include collective action and coordination problems, political institutions and political parties, policy-making, and case selection and comparison. Additionally, the Department has for several years considered the creation of a qualitative methodology course to complement the quantitatively-focused POL 200 Political Analysis. The Department will study the adoption of both courses and corresponding details in AY 2018-2019.

*Initiative 1.4:* Revise, rename, restructure, and promote the Public Policy Analysis and Management minor to attract students from across campus. The minor should be a natural area of interest for students in a number of academic fields including, but not limited to, economics, public health, engineering, education, sociology and criminology. The Department will revise the minor in AY 2019-2020.

*Initiative 1.5:* Investigate the use of mini-courses to supplement current skills-based training in the Department. Some TCNJ departments, notably in the School of Arts & Communication, offer mini-courses on specialized topics. The Department will review the potential of mini-courses to deliver a range of specialized skill content which is too narrow to deliver through a typical 1-unit course (or that we do not have the faculty resources to deliver on regular basis as 1-unit courses) but would help prepare students for careers in public affairs. Further, given the popularity of transfer courses, study abroad, and AP classes, a large number of students have room in their schedules for partial-credit courses. Possible topics for mini-courses are: Mapping and GIS, Advanced Data Analysis Using Stata, Specialized Writing in Public Affairs, Cost-Benefit Analysis, Text-as-Data and Content Analysis, Career Preparation, and Leadership. The Department will offer at least one mini-course as a pilot during AY 2019-2020 and will work in AY 2020-2021 to develop a policy on whether to expand the use of mini-courses.

*Initiative 1.6:* Utilize course offerings to serve the broader campus community. Expand the range and availability of 100 and 200-level political science courses to attract students from outside political science and HSS. Offer and develop courses fulfilling Liberal Learning Civic Responsibilities requirements and Breadth requirements beyond Behavior, Social, or Cultural Perspectives. Some POL classes need to be submitted for approval to the Liberal Learning Planning Council while other courses need to be developed, altered, or offered on a regular basis. In AY 2020-2021, the Department will review the curriculum to identify courses already offered which may fill Breadth or Civic Responsibilities requirements and to identify areas of potential course development.

*Initiative 1.7:* Create a training program for adjunct instructors. Both the Department’s self-study and the external review noted the uneven instruction of by the Department’s adjunct instructors. Many of the Department’s adjunct instructors are civil servants, politicians, lobbyists, and other career professionals working in public affairs. In AY 2022-2023 develop and institute a training program for adjunct professors that will help instructors navigate TCNJ course materials and processes, establish the Department’s expectations for all courses, and provide mentorship by a TCNJ full-time faculty member. This initiative also supports the HSS plan (Goal A, Strategy 6) to support adjunct faculty through improved training and resources.

*Objective 2: Attract new students from underserved populations to The College and become more competitive for students in the Mid-Atlantic region and beyond.*

In support of The College and School's goals of creating an inclusive and diverse campus (TCNJ Priority I, HSS Goal A) and achieving a sustainable financial model (TCNJ Priority V, Goal 2), the Department will study the creation of new degree programs and other strategies to attract students currently under-served by the Department and College. Initiatives 2.1 and 2.3 below are aimed at attracting STEM-oriented students to the social sciences. Initiative 2.2 addresses a potential lack in Department offerings for education students.

*Initiative 2.1:* Study the creation of a Bachelor of Science in Political Science degree program. A review of other public institutions in New Jersey shows that no program offers a Bachelor of Science in Political Science. Doing so might help The College attract additional students to The College and the Department. The external review noted how unique the Department's political science curriculum is with its focus on statistics, research design, and independent, writing-intensive projects - common elements of most political science Bachelor of Science degree programs. In AY 2020-2021, the Department will study the feasibility (and potential benefits and detriments) of a BS degree program, with the goal of deciding in AY 2021-2022 whether to develop and propose the new degree program.

*Initiative 2.2:* Study the creation of dual degree program with Education. Some HSS Departments offer dual degrees with the School of Education including History, Sociology, and Psychology. The Department, however, does not. Some demand might exist for dual degree program particularly among social studies secondary education students who will teach civics and American government courses during their careers. While reviewing the potential for a BS in Political Science degree program in AY 2020-2021, the Department will also review the potential for dual degree programs in terms of program demand and feasibility of implementation.

*Initiative 2.3:* Study the creation of certificate programs, particularly a Certificate in Data Science (Interdisciplinary). With advances in the public availability of quantitative data, many students interested in careers in government, non-profits, criminal justice, journalism, and politics would benefit from training in statistics, data management, and coding. While the Department does not currently offer enough courses in these areas to create a certificate program, one could be created from courses across campus and integrated into the political science major. Data science programs are relatively rare and could help The College attract students. The Department will investigate the certificate program in AY 2021-2022.

*Initiative 2.4:* Attract and retain students from underrepresented groups to political science degree programs and ensure that students from all backgrounds are welcomed, supported, and challenged by Department faculty, curriculum, and programming. The Department will begin asking questions during our senior survey to better understand student perceptions of the Department's inclusiveness. We will also meet with staff from Admissions to discuss how the Department can be more attractive to students from underrepresented populations.

*Objective 3: Attract, retain, and develop a world-class, diverse faculty to enable the Department to serve a more diverse student body and position the Department to prepare future generations of students to act efficaciously in public and private spheres.*

Both the TCNJ (Priority I) and HSS (Goal A) stress the importance of attracting and retaining a diverse student body, faculty, and staff. The Department hopes to advance these goals with the following initiatives.

*Initiative 3.1:* Advocate for at least three more tenure track faculty lines. Even with the addition of an eighth faculty member in the Department (with the search approved to take place in AY 2018-2019), the Department will remain understaffed in comparison to other HSS and TCNJ departments as well as political science departments across the region and the country. The lack of tenure-track positions threatens the Department's ability to maintain a high-profile program that mentors students, and it limits potential economies of scale in instruction and contribution to Signature Experiences. The Department sees several areas of need, including Race & Ethnic Politics, Gender & Politics, Public Policy, African Politics, South Asian Politics, Political Theory, Conflict/Security Studies, Political Psychology and Political Communication. The Department will continue to advocate for increased faculty lines to address these areas of need and to facilitate the program developments in Objectives 1 and 2. If efforts to increase enrollment and attract students from underserved populations are successful, the Department will have further need for additional faculty. The Department will also look for possibilities of jointly-appointed positions (as suggested by the external reviewer).

*Initiative 3.2:* Effectively utilize scarce faculty resources by focusing on strategic goals only. When possible, the Department will limit exposing faculty to multiple, highly-demanding seminar courses during the academic year and strategically distribute Department advising and service obligations among faculty to ensure all faculty share in the work of the Department while recognizing the need to protect junior faculty from overly-onerous service obligations.

*Objective 4: Strengthen connection with alumni and institutionalize communication processes.*

Communication with alumni facilitate many of strategic priorities of TCNJ and HSS (including TCNJ Priority V, HSS Goal E), and alumni involvement can enhance courses, create internship and mentorship opportunities for current students, serve as a vehicle for assessment and feedback, and provide financial support for Department, School, and College programming.

*Initiative 4.1:* Survey political science alumni. For several years, the Department has conducted a survey of graduating seniors. However, we lose contact with our graduates after they leave campus. In AY 2021-2022, the Department will work with the Alumni Office to get contact information for as many alumni as possible. The survey will be used to: identify alumni interested in Department events and interactions with students, assess learning outcomes and career preparedness, and generate a Department-operated list of alumni with updated contact information.

*Initiative 4.2:* Communicate with alumni using a yearly alumni newsletter and alumni events. The Department has not held an on-campus event for alumni since Dr. Fair's retirement in 2014. Given the number of former students who work in the Philadelphia/NYC regions or in Trenton, there is likely enough demand to plan an alumni-focused event every other year or so. Further, the Chair will work with the Department's program assistant and student workers to develop a yearly alumni newsletter to inform alumni of changes in the Department and highlight student and faculty success, with the goal of hosting an alumni event in AY 2019-2020 and producing a yearly newsletter by AY 2020-2021.

*Initiative 4.3:* Further develop the Department's social media presence. Currently, the Department has a Twitter account and a Facebook page. Neither are updated on a regular basis, and therefore do not serve as a platform to engage students and alumni. During AY 2018-2019, the Chair will work with the Department's student worker and program assistant to regularly update the Department's social media accounts.

*Objective 5: Expand undergraduate research opportunities.*

The Department has successfully increased the number of students who are engaged in research opportunities since the last strategic plan in 2011. Dr. Dumas and Dr. Toloudis have each participated in TCNJ's MUSE program, and the Department has also offered two sections of POL 395 Group Research in Political Science in recent years. However, undergraduate research is one of The College's Signature Experiences, and TCNJ and HSS strategic plans address the need to enhance them. The following initiatives are the Department's efforts to institutionalize and support undergraduate research (TCNJ Priority II, Goal 2).

*Initiative 5.1:* Hire 1-2 students a year as Research Assistants using available student worker money. The Department Chair will work with the program assistant in AY 2018-2019 to create and fill the RA position.

*Initiative 5.2:* The Department will offer POL 395 Group Research in Political Science across the range of political science subfields on a regular basis beginning in AY 2018-2019. Our goal is to offer POL 395 once a year, although that may not always be possible given staffing constraints.

*Initiative 5.3:* Focus effort on student co-authorship and expand participation in MUSE program. The Department, beginning in AY 2019-2020, will develop a plan to encourage and facilitate MUSE applications. One possibility is to connect MUSE applications with Fall POL 390 and POL 395 courses.

*Objective 6: Increase visibility of the Department and its degree programs across The College and beyond.*

The following initiatives facilitate TCNJ Priority III and HSS Goal B (Strategy 5) and C (Strategies 1-5).

*Initiative 6.1:* Improve the Department's web presence. We have made strides since the Department's last strategic plan, and The College's effort to standardize websites has been beneficial. However, several improvements are possible. For example, we could have a searchable database of internship placements, update the now-dated information on degree programs and courses, and more attractively share information about the Department and program events and alumni. The Chair will work incrementally throughout the implementation period to accomplish this initiative.

*Initiative 6.2:* Disseminate student success stories to highlight how the political science program prepares students for various careers. In particular, the Department has produced many of The College's most prestigious law school placements and offers most of The College's law-related courses. Department materials should highlight these successes. A similar focus on public policy may be warranted. The Chair will work incrementally throughout the implementation period to accomplish this initiative.

*Initiative 6.3:* Generate new promotional documents highlighting the Department's strengths and distinctive characteristics which can be disseminate to prospective students at admission events. The Department's promotional documents lag far behind programs in the School of Business and the School of Arts & Communication. The Department will work in AY 2022-2023 to update all promotional documents and will seek support from the HSS Dean and the Office of Communications, Marketing, and Brand Management.

*Initiative 6.4:* Leverage departmental areas of strength by hosting events that would increase the Department's visibility. For example, the Department could host the State Politics and Policy Conference given that three faculty members have expertise in the state politics subfield and The College has upgraded conference facilities. Likewise, the Department has similar areas of strength in Latin American politics and social movements (among others) which have proved fruitful in the past and provide natural areas for further development. As a goal, the Department aims to produce at least one high-profile, visibility-generating event each academic year, starting in AY 2019-2020.

*Objective 7: Review core Departmental documents and update as needed.*

*Initiative 7.1:* Review the Department's Disciplinary Standards and consider changes. The College has undergone major change since our last review of Disciplinary Standards - most notably the transition to 6 year tenure clock and the unification of the reappointment and promotion processes. The Department will review and consider changes to the document in AY 2021-2022.

*Initiative 7.2:* Review the Department's Assessment Plan and updated as needed. Ideally, changes to the Assessment Plan will consider changes to degree program offerings outline in Objectives 1 and 2. Review of the plan will take place in AY 2022-2023.

### Timeline for Strategic Objectives and Initiatives

