



Actions Taken As a Result of Assessment

Department / Program / Unit / Activity: Department of Political Science

Date submitted: September 9, 2011

1. Outcome/objective/goal reviewed:

Outcome #6: Critical evaluation of our times

Through multidisciplinary study, all undergraduates will develop and demonstrate habits of inquiry and reflection informed by familiarity with Catholic Social Teaching, that equip them to evaluate critically and imaginatively the ethical, historical, social, political, technological, economic, and ecological challenges of their times.

Goal #1: During the course of their studies, Political Science graduates will evaluate critically the history, institutions, processes, issues, and questions that give rise to and broadly comprise the contemporary socio-political order.

Goal #2: Political Science graduate will be capable of discussing, evaluating, and thinking creatively about the history, institutions, processes, issues, and/or questions that comprise the contemporary political order.

Goal #3: Political Science graduates will follow, discuss, engage with, and participate in politics and the political world.

2. Changes made since the last time this goal was reviewed: (If this was the first time this goal was reviewed skip to question 4.)

The Political Science Department has long relied exclusively on indirect measures for assessing student learning, notably senior exit surveys and syllabi mapping. This year the department paired these indirect measuring techniques with a new direct measure: employing a tiered learning outcome rubric to review a sample of final exams from a sample of classes.

3. What prompted those changes? (previous assessment results, discussions with colleagues, etc) Were the changes effective?

The Political Science Department wanted to move from an assessment plan that utilizes indirect measures to a plan that employs indirect and direct measures.

4. After reviewing the assessment results the department/program/unit has decided to:

- Stay the course and continue to monitor; we're satisfied that this goal is being met
- Monitor the results and investigate causes; we may need to make changes in the future; we don't have enough information to make an informed decision yet
- Make changes (list below)
- Other: _____

Comments:

The department achieved the desired results with Goal #2 and #3 but not Goal #1. We believe Goal #1's results will improve if faculty are more intentional about including learning outcomes on syllabi.

5. Changes to goal itself –

After working with this particular goal the department/program/unit has decided to:

- Keep the wording of this goal as is and keep the same measures
- Keep the wording of this goal but use different measures next time (list below)
- Keep these same measures but change the wording of the goal (list below)
- Change the wording of the goal *and* change the measures used (list below)
- Drop this goal entirely (list reason below)

Comments:

In its 2009-10 assessment report, the Political Science Department indicated that it would alternate assessing Learning Outcome #1 Scholarship and Learning Outcome #6 Critical Evaluation of Our Times. This year the department is slated to assess Learning Outcome #1.

There is a further development to note. For the last several years, seniors have been asked, as part of the senior exit survey, the extent to which their studies have prepared them to employ "statistical and data-driven methods of social scientific analysis of political issues, questions, and phenomena." The results in recent years have not been as strong as we would like. The department surmises there are two reasons for this. First, we think there are ways to improve the statistics course, POL 207. Second, enrollment data confirm that students often delay taking the statistics course until their junior or senior year.

As a result, the department is exploring ways to transform the current statistics course (POL 207) into a mixed-methods course that will be more useful to students in their undergraduate studies and future careers. The department is also creating a new course for POL majors that introduces students to political science as a discipline and better prepares them for the revamped POL207.

Given these curricular reforms under consideration, the department plans to focus its 2011-12 assessment efforts on gathering relevant assessment data from POL207 and from a revamped POL207 that is running in pilot form this year. These assessment

efforts will help the department address a critical curriculum issue in the major and will map back to Learning Outcome #1.