

Political Science - Bachelor of Arts

Current Compliance Year: 2024-2025

Mid-Cycle review

Recent Recommendations

Feedback will include recommendations from the last Expedited Review or from your most recent review by your school or college. You may not see any feedback or recommendations until you have completed your first full or mid-cycle review.

Increase enrollment, Increase graduates, Increase retention/persistence

The department's curriculum appears valuable to the university system and the State of Alaska. Students in Political Science learn practical academic skills, and they're encouraged to participate in applied learning through internships and community engagement. Importantly, the department offers the state system's only fully online degree program in Political Science. (While UAA offers an undergraduate program, it's not fully online.) Because the online program is fairly young, its impact on enrollment and graduation outcomes likely won't be evident until the next review cycle.

Additionally, the department operates very effectively within its budget. At the time of departmental reporting, three of the five faculty held joint appointments, which lowers the program's cost of operation while also enriching its offerings. (After meeting with a department representative, that has shifted to four faculty, two of whom hold joint appointments. Also, the department plans two new faculty hires for Fall 2023.) However, the department's budget analysis suggests that faculty are stretched beyond their workload requirements. According to the statement on cost effectiveness, "The workload units for our department should be closer to 75% teaching, but we are stretched too thin and still need to ensure our research and service commitments." That said, the department appears to be exceedingly functional and productive.

Response to Previous Recommendations (if any):

We thank the review committee for its evaluation of our program in AY 23. Since the AY 23 review, we have hired a new faculty member to lead the pre-law program of our Department, hired another member to teach primarily in the North Star College (NSC) program, and welcomed back a senior faculty member who returned to the Department from an administrative position. We are actively trying to increase our number of majors and minors primarily through developing the pre-law dimension of our program and through NSC. We continue to offer a number of GER courses as well as major/minor courses. We also continue to support both an in-person and an online B.A. program.

We are in the process of updating our student learning outcomes and improving the assessment criteria and implementation plans. We will have our new SLOA Plan by the end of AY 25. We are including a draft of the plan in this review.

Student Learning Outcomes

The previous Student Learning Outcomes Assessment has been submitted as its own report. Going forward you will use the following prompts to discuss the success of your most recent SLOA plan and address your assessment activities since your last SLOA report (typically the past two years or since your last program review).

Learning outcomes feedback from last review:

Strong alignment with SLOA plan, "Clear, concise presentation of findings"

The Political Science Department appears to engage strongly with their declared learning objectives. Based on the department's self-assessment, students learn the skills of research, citizenship, and written and oral communication. Of particular note is the focus on the study of ethics. Majors are required to complete a capstone project (thesis or internship), which provides an opportunity for faculty mentorship and close assessment of student success. Further, the department reaches students beyond the major with their GER courses—notably, PS F101X: Introduction to American Government and Politics and PS F201X: Comparative Politics. Additionally, they have adapted to modern student needs well by offering a major that can be completed fully online.

The Political Science faculty appear to have a good sense of inter-departmental communication. The SLOA and SLOA Discussion suggest that faculty do well to assess student success on a regular basis. However, the department has only five faculty members, three of whom have joint appointments. It will be difficult for faculty to meet the increasing demand for Middle College and First Generation course options (not to mention the additional requirements for offering a fully online degree program). In addition, the department shares its administrative support worker with six other departments. That situation will likely limit the department's growth and its ability to meet student needs. The committee has expressed concern regarding the pertinence and effectiveness of the CLA portal data in contributing to our assessment due to outlying factors and extreme circumstances from the covid pandemic.

Discuss your SLOA findings, changes you are making and what you hope to see as a result:

At the beginning of this review process, we realized we needed to update our student learning outcomes, the criteria with which we assess these outcomes, and the implementation plans. We are in the process of doing so, and will have this process completed by the end of AY 25.

We have tentatively decided on the following four outcomes, assessment criteria, and implementation plans:

- 1) Students should develop knowledge of core concepts, theories, institutions, and policy in U.S. politics. To assess this, students must take PS 101X Introduction to American

Government and Politics. Instructors of PS 101X will administer a questionnaire to the students at the beginning and end of the course to determine the extent to which students have learned the course's material. The questionnaire for this course has already been developed. While we do not have data yet, I'm including the questionnaire as an artifact.

- 2) Students should develop familiarity with political science research methods used to produce and analyze data for scholarship and the ability to produce an original research paper. To assess this, students must take PS 222 Political Science Research Methods. The instructor of PS 222 will use a standard rubric to assess students' final research papers. We are currently in the process of developing the rubric for this course.
- 3) Students should be able to identify and analyze ethical dilemmas and distinguish between ethical and unethical behavior. To assess this, students must take PS 300X Ethics and Society. Instructors of PS 300X will administer a questionnaire to the students at the beginning and end of the course to determine the extent to which students have learned the course's material. We are currently in the process of developing the rubric for this course.
- 4) Students should be able to develop a substantial paper using relevant literature and original research on their chosen field of study to communicate their understanding of their topic. To assess this, students must complete PS 499 Senior Thesis, the Senator Ted Stevens Legislative Internship Program, or PS 475 Internship in Public Affairs for their capstone experience. If students choose PS 499, they need to choose a Political Science instructor to oversee their writing of the thesis. All instructors use one standard rubric to evaluate theses. If students choose the Senator Ted Stevens Legislative Internship Program, the Director of that program submits an evaluation of the student's performance in the internship and accompanying class. The Department Chair oversees PS 475 and uses a standard rubric to assess students' final paper. We have the rubric for PS 499 but are in the process of developing the rubric for PS 475. We also need to coordinate with the Director of the Senator Ted Stevens Legislative Internship Program to see if he will be willing to offer evaluations on our students.

Discuss the curricular changes made based on assessing your SLO. If you haven't made any curricular changes, please explain why not and address what you did notice in the review, including strengths of your curriculum through the assessment of your outcomes:

As mentioned above, we are in the process of developing new student learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and implementation plans. For the next review cycle, we will have data to assess each of the four outcomes. These data will be collected through the use of a questionnaire in PS 101X and PS 300X; rubrics for PS 222, PS 499, and PS 475; and an evaluation from the Director of the Senator Ted Stevens Legislative Internship Program.

Supporting Documents

Please ensure that all relevant supporting documents, such as artifacts, rubrics, and student data, are uploaded to your designated Google folder in WorkZone or directly into Google Drive. *Note: Do not include any information that may identify students in your data.*

Updated SLOA?

If you are updating your SLOA document, please include it with your report and other supporting documents in your designated folder. It does not need to be filed separately in the "SLOA" folder.

Are communication outcomes embedded in the SLOA Plan?

As of 2017 all Baccalaureate programs were required to embed the communication outcomes within their SLOA Plans, this is optional for non-Baccalaureate programs. Please mark the appropriate box below.

Embedded:	YES
Not Embedded:	

Student Success

To access the Student Success Dashboard please sign into a UA computer with VPN connection (if not on campus). You will need your UA credentials and it is best accessed with the most updated version of Chrome, Edge, Firefox or Safari browsers; Internet Explorer is not supported. You will need to filter the data to see your programs. If you need assistance in finding the data for your programs, please contact your data liaison or [Julia Manfredini](#) in the PAIR office.

Data Liaisons

Each school or college has a team of Data Liaisons to help you analyze the data provided in the portal and may be able to help you see your data in multiple contexts. You can find a list of data liaisons on the resources page for Program Review.

The college or school level committee will also have access to this data with the goal that by providing these visualizations data availability will be increased.

Data supplied within the dashboard linked below is intended for Academic Program Review and not for any other purpose.

[Student Success Data Dashboard](#)

Previous Feedback

Over the past five years, the number of Political Science majors has decreased slightly, from 48 to 41. The annual number of degrees awarded has ranged from two to ten; however, due to the small size of the program, that variance seems inconclusive. The department's graduation persistence rate has ranged from 65% to 80% in the past five years. It's hard to know whether that data is significant, especially given the enrollment impacts of the

pandemic. (These statistics were accessed through UAF "Planning, Analysis, and Institutional Research" portal.)

In regard to equity and diversity, the department reports no significant gaps based on the UAF student population profile. There appears to be a good balance among gender, race, and age. Most Political Science majors are [REDACTED], while others are [REDACTED], [REDACTED], or [REDACTED]. As pertains to income diversity, the department serves [REDACTED] students and a high percentage of "First Gen" students.

Student Success Data Trends (from AY23 to AY24):

Trend	Increase	Decrease	No Change
Persistence		X	
Pass Rates	X		
Student Credit Hours		X	
Majors		X	
Degrees Awarded		X	
Other Trends (Explain in narrative below)			

The persistence rate dropped from 82.1% in FY 23 to 68.8% in AY 24. The pass rate rose from 78.1% to 80.0%. The student credit hours dropped from 21.8 to 19.8. The number of majors dropped from 42 to 35. The degrees awarded dropped from 9 to 4. It is important to note that during this time we were coming out of COVID-19 and the faculty were stretched thin with various administrative tasks (two faculty were split with other programs, and one went into a full-time administrative position). However, we have been able to hire two new faculty to help change these trends, and our senior colleague returned to the Department. Our external teaching service increased dramatically during this time, as well, in order to support other programs and the GER - from 497 to 725 credit hours.

Equity Gaps

Please discuss any equity gaps identified in your disaggregated student success data and explain how you plan to address them. Please contact your data liaison or make an appointment with [Julia Manfredini](#) to learn more about analyzing your data.

We are proud to serve a diverse range of students and do not find any equity gaps in the data. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are represented equally in AY 24. After [REDACTED] students, the largest group of our students is [REDACTED]. We serve more [REDACTED] students than not. Finally, we serve an equal number of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

Optional Data Explanation

Feel free to share more of your thoughts on the data provided.

While we see a slight drop in some quantitative indicators, we have hired two new faculty members and welcomed back another who left an administrative role, and thus we aim to increase these indicators in time. We also contribute heavily to service teaching and administrative roles, and these factors should be taken into consideration.

High Impact Practices

According to the AAC&U, High-Impact Educational Practices “have been widely tested and have been shown to be beneficial to college students from many backgrounds.” UAF is particularly interested in Undergraduate Research and/or Scholarly Activity because it is one of our mission fulfillment indicators, but all of these researched High-Impact Educational Practices should be reflected in your program’s student learning outcomes and curriculum.

Previous Feedback

The Department of Political Science appears to engage in satisfactory high-impact teaching practices. Most notably, they encourage students to participate in internships and community-based learning opportunities. For instance, students in the department have been selected for the Alaska Ted Stevens Legislative Internship. As another example, students have interned with the Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce and the Public Defender’s office. Although service learning is not a requirement for majoring in Political Science, the discipline naturally encourages it, and faculty urge their students in that direction. In fact, the low faculty-to-student ratio in Political Science seems to encourage mentorship.

The department also boasts a strong record of global engagement. Its courses address matters of geopolitical concern. Students often study abroad, and the department assists and encourages them in this process. Based on the department’s self-assessment, students in two upper-level courses (PS 435 & 436) engage in collaborative projects. Majors in the program also compete for URSA awards and participate in research opportunities across campus. Finally, the department offers the popular first-year course PS 101: Introduction to American Government and Politics, and, as a discipline in the Humanities, they facilitate courses and assignments that encourage strong written communication.

High-Impact Practices Used in this Program

Please select all high-impact practices your program is currently using from the list below. For any practices you select, provide details in the corresponding narrative section. In the narrative, discuss how your program is implementing these practices, including any successes, known issues, and solutions. If you are considering incorporating any of these practices in the future, share your plans. If your program is not using any of the listed high-impact practices, please use the 'Other or None of These' field to explain how your program supports student success.

Capstone Courses & Projects	X	Research (Graduate Level)	X
Collaborative Assignments & Projects	X	Writing-Intensive Courses	X
Diversity/Global Learning	X	Publications	
ePortfolios		Communications	X
First-Year Seminars & Experiences	X	Publications	
Internships	X	Scholarly Activities	X
Service or Community-based Learning		Other (Please describe in box below)	
Undergraduate Research	X		

Collaborative Assignments & Projects

While the Department does not have a coordinated strategy on collaborative assignments and projects, individual instructors assign collaborative work in their classrooms. For example, Prof. [REDACTED] encourages students to collaborate in preparation for leading discussion on scholarly articles with their classmates in his PS 221X International Politics course.

Undergraduate Research

Students routinely conduct research for their final papers in upper- (and often lower-) division courses. All majors must take PS 222 Political Science Research Methods, which requires a final research paper using frameworks and methods from the Political Science discipline. An option for the senior capstone experience is a thesis, which many students choose. This requires independent research under the supervision of a faculty member of the student's choosing. Finally, we encourage students to apply for URSA funding to support their research endeavors.

Diversity/Global Learning

Two subfields of Political Science especially encourage global learning - International Relations (the study of how states relate to each other on the world stage) and Comparative Politics (the study of domestic political processes and institutions in various regions around the world). All of our courses emphasize diversity - including in political beliefs, cultures, and identities. We also actively promote study abroad, and many of our students choose to spend a semester abroad.

ePortfolios

N/A

First Year-Seminars & Experiences

All students must take PS 101X Intro to American Government and Politics as the gateway course to the major/minor. In fall 2024 we began using a questionnaire that we administer to PS 101X students at the beginning and end of the course to assess knowledge of American government and politics over the duration of the semester.

Writing-Intensive Courses

Political Science as a discipline is writing-intensive, and our Department is no exception. Nearly all of our courses have a significant writing component. Students write responses and essays on a number of political topics.

Service-Learning and/or Community-based Learning

N/A

Internships

For their capstone requirement, students must choose to do an internship or write a senior thesis. Many of our students who choose to do an internship choose the Senator Ted Stevens Legislative Internship Program, which grants students the opportunity to intern with an Alaskan State legislator. Other students find their own internships. The internship option provides students with the ability to put political concepts learned in the program into practice.

Capstone Courses & Projects

As mentioned above, majors either pursue an internship or write a senior thesis to satisfy the program's capstone requirement.

Other or None of these (explain)

N/A

Program Profile and Financial Data

The following feedback was received during your last full program review. **You are not required to respond to this feedback, but we encourage you to review it as it may provide valuable insights.** This feedback will also be available when your program undergoes its next full review in two years.

Previous Financial Feedback

Operates at Low Cost, Productive Faculty

Previous Profile Feedback

Program is mission-centric to UAF or college/school, Collaborative with other UA programs, Program is unique in the state, Strong post-graduation success for students, "Strong service teaching component (GER, other disciplines, etc)"

Submission

Submitter & Collaborator Names

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UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA FAIRBANKS
Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Plan
Political Science B.A.
 College of Liberal Arts
 11 May 2018

Political Science Mission Statement: The Department of Political Science provides a rigorous quality education that prepares students for professional success meeting the diverse challenges of citizenship and public policy in a changing state, nation, and world.

Political Science Visionary Goal Statement: The Department of Political Science will have its students recognized as significant contributors to society through their service to community, professional skills in the workplace, participation in political processes and policy development, and knowledge of governance. The Department itself will be recognized as providing high quality programs, diverse participatory opportunities, and relevant coursework delivered by dedicated faculty who themselves are identified as accomplished experts in their fields.

Intended Objectives/Outcomes	Assessment Criteria and Procedures	Implementation (what, when, who)
Knowledge of the discipline 1. Knowledge of core concepts and theories of the main political science sub-fields of American Government and Politics, Public and Constitutional Law, Comparative Politics, Political Theory and International Relations. 2. Exposure to different ways of thinking about government and politics associated with diverse historical and cultural contexts, ideologies, economic systems and governing structures. 3. Awareness of theories and practices related to contemporary studies of political science. Familiarity with a range of qualitative and quantitative research methods used to produce, understand and analyze the data used in governance, policy-making and political science scholarship.	1. Students are required to take at least one course from four of the five subfields to graduate. 2. Students' breadth as noted in #1 is complimented by the PS GER options that are survey courses designed to expose students to diverse contexts. We are currently revising the GER requirements for our majors to reinforce this. 3. All students are required to take and pass PS222 Political Science Research Methods that teaches both theoretical and practical information related to these different aspects of politics and policy processes. 1-3 Are evaluated through three mechanisms in addition to the requirements of the major. (A) An exit survey provided to graduating seniors asks both about the student's experience with the depth of the discipline as well as their understandings of theory and practice; (B) The Internship option PS475 provides students with exposure to different ways organizations and individuals think about government and politics; (C) the Thesis option PS499 specifically requires students to use more than one subfield in their	1. This is implemented by a student's enrollment in the major. 2. Enrollment in the major secures breadth as noted in #1. As noted, we are currently working to reshape the major requirements to work with the new GERs as well as the Alaska Native requirement under development. 3. PS222 was only offered every other Autumn for many years but is now available to students each Autumn. We offer it both online and live. 1-3 (A) The exit survey has been designed by faculty but is administered by our administrative assistant to preserve anonymity. (B) PS475 is available for students Autumn, Spring, and Summer. It is the responsibility of the Chair to manage these internships (C) PS499 is available also Autumn, Spring, and Summer. Students select a faculty member to work with individually. Every two years all student thesis produced are reviewed by the Department Chair and faculty for consistency and quality.

Submitted by: Amy Lauren Lovcraft, Dept. Chair

	problem definition, research question and design.	
Problem solving 1. Students should be able to recognize assumptions, evaluate arguments and draw conclusions. This includes an awareness of how politics and policy shape problem definition and solution sets.	1. Students must pass classes. In addition, students complete either PS499 or PS475 as a capstone and both directly evaluate a student's capacity to recognize and evaluate social, political, and policy problems. As optional opportunities the Political Science Department hosts and encourages several clubs: Pi Sigma Alpha – the Political Science Honor Society; Model United Nations; Model Arctic Council; research opportunities with faculty on grants.	1. Each course taught focuses, in its subfield, on recognizing, defining, and evaluating problems. These are scaled of course to 100, 200, 300, 400 levels and tied to their content. For example, PS669 Arctic Politics and Governance deconstructs the Arctic as a space, place, and location of people in order to make students aware of how different people define and act in the North. Public Policy PS403/603 specifically addresses problem development and solutions for public programs. Both the PS499 and PS475 focus students in their capstone on problem solving. The former through extensive writing about a political subject, the latter through experiential learning that includes a final report.
Ethical knowledge 1. Students should be able to identify moral dilemmas and distinguish between legal, illegal, ethical, and unethical behavior.	1. Students are required to take and pass PS300X for their GER ethics requirement. In addition, students learn about ethics from their other PS courses, such as campaign finance from American Government 101 or democratic practices and conundrums related to equity from PS202 Democracy and Global Society.	1. PS300X Ethics and Society has been taught Autumn, Spring, and Summer as well as in Maymesters and Wintermesters both live and online in order to ensure all our students have an opportunity to take the course and succeed in it.
Communication 1. Written – Students should be able to develop a paper using cogent arguments and opinions supported by evidence on topics pertaining to their field of study. 2. Oral – Students should be able to deliver professional presentation and answer questions related to it with confidence.	1. PS still is teaching W, writing intensive classes, these classes are spread out through the subfields so students who take and pass them will be able to satisfy the communication goal for written work. PS314, PS401, PS411, PS412, PS435, PS436, PS460, PS464, PS467, PS468. The two capstone experiences also provide assessment of writing. PS499 Senior thesis option would be the stronger of the two, although students for PS475 Internship in Public Affairs still need to have good written communication. 2. PS is still teaching O courses, these	We review senior theses every two years for consistency. The Department Chair evaluates each internship completed. As noted above Exit surveys are managed by the Chair through the administrative assistant. For 1 and 2 these classes are offered by different faculty throughout the academic year. We recognize that now that the new GER process does not have W and O courses that we need to change our major requirements to ensure oral and written communication skills. We have started that process and are currently evaluating different options for our

	classes are spread out through the subfields so students who take and pass them will be able to satisfy the communication goal for oral communication. PS322, PS403, PS411, PS455, PS456 The two capstone experiences also provide assessment of oral communication. Successful completion of PS475 Internship in Public Affairs indicates strong professional oral communication skills. For 1 and 2 the Exit Survey asks about both the written and oral preparation the students received; so we receive direct student feedback upon completion of the major beyond our own in-class assessments.	students. As optional opportunities to develop communication skills the Political Science Department hosts and encourages several clubs annually: Pi Sigma Alpha – the Political Science Honor Society; Model United Nations; Model Arctic Council; research opportunities with faculty on grants or pursuant to students' interests via URSA. It should also be noted that since PS is a part of the Arctic and Northern Studies (ACNS) backbone we have many courses that are 400/600 level stacked. In each case faculty design two separate syllabi, but the experience for undergrads to witness the excitement and rigor of the graduate students also elevates their communication. These stacked classes are offered each semester but not generally during Summer.
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