



2009-2010 Assessment Plan Report

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT AY 2009-2010

Report Date: September 2, 2010

School/College: Arts and Sciences

Department/Program: Politics

Person completing the Report: Patrick Murphy

1. **Overview Statement:** Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken this academic year:

Program Learning Outcomes Assessed SY2009-10:

- Graduates will demonstrate critical thinking skills and formulate and defend a thesis.
- Graduates will exhibit skill and competency in applying qualitative and or quantitative methodologies necessary for writing papers in the field of politics.
- Graduates will conceptualize political problems and apply analytical skills to propose solutions to them.
- Graduates will demonstrate willingness and ability to justify political opinions and judgments.
- Graduates will examine the relationship between theories of politics and the practice of it through structured service learning opportunities. Students' knowledge of politics will be expanded by engaging in a governmental or non-governmental internship opportunity.

All members of the department participated in the assessment of the learning outcomes noted above.

The primary assessment activities undertaken by the Politics department during academic year 2009-10 were the following:

- a. The department continued those assessment activities began in Year One
- b. The department introduced student self-report surveys in each of the courses during the spring semester.



2009-2010 Assessment Plan Report

2. Please Answer the Following Questions for Each of the Student Outcomes Assessed:

a. What did you do?

Describe clearly and concisely how you assessed the learning outcomes that were evaluated this year (e.g., measures, research methods, etc.). [please use bullet points to answer this question]

- Majors continue to be assessed by their instructors in the four introductory courses and must attain a final grade of C or better *in each course*. Of the seven faculty members who taught introductory courses last year, all but one were full-time tenure track faculty.
- Students in the Senior Honors Thesis class completed original pieces of research and then presented their findings in a conference like setting. Department faculty were invited to participate in the “conference” as discussants or members of the audience. All faculty were invited to provide feedback on the presentations and complete assessment evaluations on the students.
- A focus group lunch of graduating seniors was hosted by the Chair to discuss their experience with the program. Faculty were asked to recommend students to be invited. Seven graduates took part (out of 11 invitees).
- The department developed assessment questions to be added to the Summa evaluation forms administered in each course. These questions asked students to reflect on the course relative to the department’s learning outcomes. (See Appendix A)
- The department has developed a standardized form to solicit evaluations from internship supervisors. (See Appendix B)

b. What did the faculty in the department or program learn this year?

Summarize your findings and conclusions as a result of the assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses in student learning demonstrated by this assessment.

- The thesis course continues to provide a challenging, yet satisfying experience for all concerned. Students who complete the course clearly have demonstrated competency with regard to the formulation of a thesis, the application of appropriate research methods, the ability to think critically, and communicate their findings clearly.
- Graduating students who participated in the focus group were reasonably satisfied with the content of their Politics curriculum but expressed some frustration with “the experience” of being a Politics major. There was great praise for the freshman (now “firstyear”) seminar and for the quality of



2009-2010 Assessment Plan Report

interaction with faculty. Missing was a sense of connection to their fellow students. While this type of connection was not explicitly part of our goals, the department has decided to consider the issue during the 2010-11 school year.

- Internship supervisors in the POLS 396 and POLS 375 classes were overwhelmingly positive in their assessment of USF students during their engagement with the *practice* of politics in a real world setting.
- The department is awaiting data from the SUMMA questions.

c. What will be done differently as a result of what was learned this year?

Discuss how courses and/or curricula will be changed to improve student learning as a result of the assessment. Include a discussion of how the faculty will help students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

Although students in the incoming introductory courses have managed to meet the standard of a final grade of a “C” or better, faculty still express a concern over their preparation and basic foundation skills. As a consequence, the department is planning on discussing with the Departments of Rhetoric and Math whether it will be possible to establish sections dedicated to POLS majors. While the department is not going to require incoming students to enroll in these sections, the hope is that by having a common, and more focused, experience students may be better prepared by the time they complete their sophomore year.

d. What actions were taken this academic year “to close the loop” relative to what was discovered from last years assessment activities?

Discuss how courses and/or curricula changed to improve student learning as a result of last year’s assessment. Include a discussion of how the faculty helped students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

Two “products” of last year’s assessment activities have led to changes in courses and curricula. First, in response to the success of the senior seminar (Learning Outcomes 1-3), we will be offering two sections (fall and spring) of the course to expand its reach and scope. This change will double the number of students taking part in this activity. Second, in response to comments by graduating students, we will continue to examine our curricula and core offerings. That topic will be the main focus of our department discussions this year. The goal will be to have principles of the curricula outline and an implementation plan developed the following year. At that time, the department’s assessment plan will be evaluated in light of the anticipated changes.



2009-2010 Assessment Plan Report

- 3. Attach a copy of the components of the department/program assessment plan that have been modified since its initial submission:**

We have not modified any components of the assessment plan at this time and are unlikely to do so until after the completion of year 3. We have not seen any reason to alter the plan and doing so, would strike us as akin to trying to hit a moving target.

Please return to: Provost Office by June 1, 2010

You can send your replies as either a Word attachment (to: marin@usfca.edu) or as a hard copy to: Provost Office, Lone Mountain Rossi Wing 4th floor.

If you have any questions, please contact: William Murry, Director of Institutional Assessment (wmurry@usfca.edu or x5486).

Appendix to 2009-10 Assessment Plan Report, Department of Politics



2009-2010 Assessment Plan Report

APPENDIX A

USF Department of Politics Additional Questions for the SUMMA Course Evaluation

Note to the student: The Department of Politics would like you to respond to the following questions with regard to the course you are taking this semester. To the degree possible, please respond to the following questions as they apply *to this specific course*. If you do not feel the question applies to this course, please feel free to use the “n/a” response.

We value student input with regard to assessing our courses and thank you for taking the time to participate in this effort.

Questions 40-49: (answer bubbles can be found on the back side of the Summa form):

- 40: This course helped me to be more willing to justify my political opinions and judgments.
- 41. This course helped me to be more able to justify my political opinions and judgments.
- 42. This course helped develop skill and competency in applying qualitative methods.
- 43. This course helped develop skill and competency in applying quantitative methods.
- 44. This course helped develop skills in collective deliberation and collaboration. and.
- 45. This course helped engage diverse viewpoints.
- 46. This course helped me to develop an informed perspective on global, national and/or local political issues.
- 47. This course helped me to develop critical perspective on global, national and/or local political issues.
- 48. This course challenged me to demonstrate critical thinking skills.
- 49. This course challenged me to formulate and defend my ideas in written and oral form.
- 50. Are you a politics major? Yes – 5 ; No – 0.

Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	NA
0	1	2	3	4	5		—



2009-2010 Assessment Plan Report

APPENDIX B

Attached PDF file: Supervisor's Evaluation Form