1. **Identifying Information**

Name of Program: Politics
Type of Program (Major, Minor, Graduate Program, Non-Degree Granting): Major, Minor
College of Arts and Sciences Division (Arts, Humanities, Sciences, or Social Sciences): Social Sciences
Name/Title/Email Address of Submitter: Professor Elisabeth Jay Friedman, Chair, ejfriedman@usfca.edu

2. **Mission Statement:**

The Department of Politics faculty fully supports the University Vision, Mission and Values. The Department is committed to teaching political theories and concepts, critical thinking, and modes of analysis and research methods that are fundamental for allowing students to engage with the world as life-long learners. The Department cultivates students' civic skills and competencies, and guides them in developing informed perspectives on, and commitments to, civic responsibility. We seek to help students develop competent means of self-expression, both oral and written, by exposing them to aspects of government institutions and actors, and political relations; that is, to formal institutions and processes and the dynamics of the power and politics that run our system both inside and outside of government structures. Students will be able to demonstrate competence in the primary texts, policy matters, political histories, and analytical frameworks that shape the study of politics in the U.S. and abroad. Our current pedagogical models include traditional lecture-based courses, seminars, academic internships, public forums, and other innovative, democratic, student-centered learning methods. We also provide Service Learning opportunities in the civil society, NGOs, and public service sectors in order to help students gain "real world" experience.

Has this statement been revised in the last few years? For our last APR in 2014

3. **(Optional) Program Goals:**

- Students will have theoretical and empirical knowledge of politics and government, both domestic and international.

- Students will develop skills in critical thinking, modes of analysis, deliberation, research and communication.

- Students will develop an active public spirit and sense of social justice.

- Students will experience first-hand the relationship between theory and practice in the political process.

Have these goals been revised in the last few years? For our last APR in 2014

4. **Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs)**

Students will:

master and critically analyze key political concepts, systems, and institutions in global, national and local contexts.

demonstrate critical thinking skills and formulate and defend a thesis in written and oral form.

design, implement and communicate original research.

develop skills in collective deliberation, through collaboration and engaging diverse viewpoints.

examine the relationship between the theories and practices of politics through structured service learning opportunities.

Have these PLOs been revised in the last few years? Summer 2016 in response to feedback from June Madsen Clausen and Suparna Chakraborty.

5. **Brief Summary of Most Recent Assessment Plan**

Please note that we are rolling out an integrated plan of assessment with our new curriculum, which will be phased in one year at a time. This plan will be further elaborated as we receive assessments and "close the gap" to determine areas for improvement and further exploration through other assessment foci and tools.

- Phase 1: Fall 2015-Spring 2016: **Assessment of Program Goal 2**: Students should develop skills in critical thinking, modes of analysis, deliberation, research and communication. We will accomplish this through assessing the capabilities of graduating seniors **according to PLOs:** demonstrate critical thinking skills and formulate and defend a thesis in written and oral form; design, implement and communicate original research.

- Phase 2: Fall 2016-Spring 2017: **Assessment of Program Goal 1:** Students should have theoretical and empirical knowledge of politics and government,

both domestic and international and **Program Goal 2** (at earlier level of majors' development): Students should develop skills in critical thinking, modes of analysis, deliberation, research and communication. This will be done through an integrated assessment of the new gateway courses in Politics, POLS 100 Introduction to Politics: Ideas and Institutions; POLS 110 Introduction to Politics: Conflict and Change. We will continue to assess seniors according to Phase 1.

- Phase 3: Fall 2017-Spring 2018: Assessment of Program Goals TBD. Develop and deploy an integrated assessment of the new 200-level courses in Politics; continue to assess seniors according to Phase 1; continue to assess first-year students according to Phase 2

- Phase 4: Fall 2018-Spring 2019: Assessment of Program Goals TBD. Develop and deploy an integrated assessment of the 300-level courses in Politics; continue to assess seniors according to Phase 1; continue to assess first-year students according to Phase 2; continue to assess 200-level according to Phase 3.

6. **Academic Program Review**
   Date of most recent Academic Program Review's External Reviewer Visit: February 2014
   Date of most recent Action Plan Meeting: February 2015
   Brief Summary of the most recent Action Plan: I regret to say that I don't know what this is, exactly. However, ours would surely focus on the major curriculum reform that was approved by the Curriculum Committee and is being rolled out beginning Fall 2016. Here is the summary:

A fundamental aspect of our curriculum reform is to structure the major to enable the students to develop as critical thinkers, excellent writers, and insightful researchers through three guided stages. Our 100 level is intended to set the foundations of building objective knowledge and political analysis. Each student will take the 100-110 sequence, one of which must be completed before going on to 200-level courses. Our 200 level is focused on increasing students' understanding of the complexity and subjectivity of political studies and practices. Each student will take two 200-level courses, one of which must be completed before going on to 300-level courses. Our 300 level will enable students to apply their independently-generated knowledge to real-world challenges. We will also offer a 400-level for students wishing to do advanced work in politics. The other key element of the major restructure that will provide the students with a more integrated, focused, and career-relevant experience is the addition of concentrations. To complete the major concentration, students must take four 300-level courses, one of which must have an "R" designation, in one of the three concentrations: The Politics of Law and Justice; The Politics of Transformation; and The Politics of Governance. Two further elements complete the new major. The first is the requirement to have an additional two elective courses to add breadth outside of the concentration or depth within the concentration, depending on the decision of the individual student. The

second is the requirement to have an internship or Service Learning course within the major to enable students to engage in some form of political practice.

7. **Methods**

What did you do with regard to assessment of your program/department in 2015-2016?

Assessment of Program Goal 2: Students will develop skills in critical thinking, modes of analysis, deliberation, research and communication. We will accomplish this through assessing the capabilities of graduating seniors **according to PLOs:**

demonstrate critical thinking skills and formulate and defend a thesis in written and oral form.

design, implement and communicate original research.

- **Methods:**

December 2015: Senior thesis oral presentations evaluated by faculty observers.

May 2016: we piloted a graduating senior survey and held two focus groups with graduating seniors to assess students' perceptions of their development through the major.

8. Results

Please see Appendix A, a comprehensive evaluation of the Senior Honors Thesis presentation by Kouslaa Kessler Mata, the instructor for that course. It includes the rubric for this year's evaluation. This rubric is distributed to Politics faculty attending the thesis presentations; each faculty fills one out for every presentation they observe (since not all four faculty saw every presentation, the numbers of observations vary slightly, but are around 16 for each category).

To summarize, students performed best on critical thinking/thesis formulation. With very few exceptions, faculty gave the thesis writers the highest mark, "very good achievement," on this element. Students performed worst on articulating a clear and appropriate methodology, with over half the observations recording "not applicable" in this category (however, this could have indicated a problem with presentation preparation in omitting to specify methodology). In terms of conceptual analysis, about 2/3 of the observations indicated "very good achievement." Finally, students performed very well on their ability to evaluate/justify judgments and opinions.

The clear implications of this data is that we are preparing our seniors well in conceptualizing and formulating a thesis, but we have a problem in their preparation in and/or articulation of their methodologies.

In terms of more general evaluation, please see Appendix B, our Spring graduating seniors survey. This was sent out multiple times to all graduating seniors, with a yield of 16/40 or 40 percent.

Seventy-five percent of the 16 students who answered indicated that they were very satisfied with experience as major, and inspired to learn more about politics. Although some questions seem to indicate that students desire more career preparation or preparation for future studies, this is a decidedly mixed result. Academic advising improves career preparation markedly, and a remarkable two thirds of the respondents indicated that their internships helped them to find a job after graduation or prepared them for graduate school.

In terms of academic achievement, our students felt well prepared in terms of critical thinking, writing, evaluating evidence, and assessing assumptions. Students were less positive about opportunities and preparation for research, although again two thirds felt those were excellent or good.

Although again, two thirds of the respondents felt the department did an excellent or good job in creating a sense of community, we would like to get

better marks here. The two focus groups also indicated that students tend to community build outside of the department; many of those who participated in the groups had done that through their double majors, minors, or related programs rather than the politics major itself.

The implications of this survey is that, as above, we have some further work to do in terms of assisting our students on research opportunities and development. We should also continue to deepen our academic advising contact, given how effective it is. And we should focus on developing community.

9. **Closing the Loop**

To address the issue of uneven methodological preparation, we will be taking on the issue raised in the full report – how to give particularly thesis writers better access to methods – at our retreat in September. Possible strategies to be discussed include revision of thesis course content and/or adding a methods section.

We are already putting into place a research requirement that will enable future majors to focus on developing their research skills.

We are also planning a significant increase in academic advising contact hours and opportunities for our students to develop a sense of cohort:
- **A dedicated first-year advisor**
- **A required year-long introductory course for all new majors**
- **Each major will take one of three concentrations, providing for smaller cohort development; advising will parallel these concentrations**
- **More integration of first-years and upper-division students in terms of advising, attending presentations of senior seminar, and the like.**
- **Integrated assessment of the curriculum roll-out so that changes can be made as needed in the first few years.**