

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

The Department of Politics and Government houses three degree programs: a B.A., B.S. in Legal Studies, a B.A., B.S. in Political Science, and an M.A., M.S. in Political Science. In addition, the department offers minors in Legal Studies and Political Science and coordinates the Middle Eastern and South Asian Studies Interdisciplinary minor. The Academic Planning Committee recognizes that many of the efforts and activities that led to the development of the self-study report were accomplished during the time-period coinciding with the COVID-19 pandemic. The committee thanks program faculty for their critical reflections about the current state of their program.

The self-study reports that enrollment has been steadily increasing for the B.A., B.S. in Legal Studies program from 13 at its inception in 2014 to 74 (including second majors) in 2021. Furthermore, the program has a strong record of attracting diverse students. At the program outset in 2014, 31 percent of students were from underrepresented groups and 31 percent were women. Both of these percentages have increased over the period of review, with 45 percent of students from underrepresented groups and 76 percent women in 2021. The committee commends the program faculty for their support of students that have resulted in strong graduation rates and times to degree. Of particular note is the development of the Expungement Clinic which provides students with hands-on practical experience and opportunities for civic and community engagement. We note that the program faculty have responded to job market needs through additions to and revisions of the program curriculum. Furthermore, the committee commends the program faculty for their efforts that have resulted in the approval of the program from the American Bar Association (ABA).

While recognizing the B.A., B.S. in Legal Studies program has many strengths, the committee is concerned about many aspects regarding the current state of the program and several of these issues that were highlighted in the self-study. The self-study report is candid in its recognition of the need to further evaluate the program in light of these challenges as well as changes in national and disciplinary trends. Therefore, the Academic Planning Committee flags the B.S. in Legal Studies program for further review. The committee requests that the Department of Politics and Government take the following actions and submit the following reports based on those actions.

Report Due September 1, 2024

Submit to the Academic Planning Committee via the Office of the Provost

Revise the Academic Unit Overview. The committee determined that the Academic Unit overview section of the self-study report was underdeveloped with respect to key pieces of information. We ask that the program faculty revisit this section and provide more details and clarity in the following areas:

- (a) **TT: Total FTE ratio:** The program review guidelines ask programs to identify the ideal Tenure Track to Total Faculty ratio. The self-study report indicated that the department has no ideal ratio, but that it considers the existing ratios during the period of review to be within the “good range of percentages.” The committee asks the program to develop a more objective process to identify this ideal ratio with respect to factors such as the structure of the curriculum, enrollments, and class size (and number of sections offered).
- (b) **Graduate Assistants:** The committee recommends that the program faculty work with the Graduate School on a procedure for assigning graduate assistant duties to students that allow for the appropriate classification of their assistantship. The committee also asks for a more detailed description of the training and mentoring of graduate students, especially with regards to how they support the program.
- (c) **Academic Advising:** The committee asks the program to clarify the advising role of the graduate assistant assigned to assist the Director of Enrollment Management and Undergraduate Studies. We further ask the program faculty to describe not only the process used to evaluate advising during the period of review, but also describe the findings of these evaluations (e.g., do the results suggest that students find the advising practices effective).

Articulate the plan for recruitment and enrollment growth. While the committee notes that enrollments in the program have been successful, the committee asks the program faculty to provide more details regarding the plan for student recruitment, including strategies for increasing enrollment by students from racial and ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in the program and discipline.

Work to revise the assessment plan. The Academic Planning Committee recognizes faculty efforts in developing the assessment plan and alignment map. However, review of the self-study report suggests that further development of the assessment plan is needed. In particular, the plan should include more concrete details with respect to how data are compiled and analyzed. The committee asks that the program collaborate with University Assessment Services on revisions to the program's assessment plan.

Revisit the changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand section. The committee recognizes that the instructions include the phrase "describe any changes since the last program review..." and that this is the first review of the program. However, the committee strongly believes the program would benefit from an inspection of how the changes over the period of review would be beneficial to the program faculty. As such, we ask that the program revisit this section of the review, reflect upon changes that have occurred within the discipline during the period of review, report how the program has responded to these changes, and indicate how changes in the discipline have informed initiatives moving forward. As part of this reflection, we recommend that the program faculty incorporate findings from their comparator and aspirational analyses.

Revise the initiatives and plans for the next program review cycle section. The committee asks that the program faculty expand the scope of this section of the self-study report beyond the findings of the aspirational analysis. We ask the program faculty to develop initiatives that incorporate other findings from the self-study and strongly suggest that the initiatives are also aligned with the strategic plan.