

Report of the External Review Committee  
for the Department of Political Science  
UMBC

Submitted by

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## **Introduction**

After careful review of the Program Review Committee's charge and the Department's self-study, the review team conducted a campus visit October 11-13, 2015. We are grateful to Susan Mocko for her assistance in organizing our site visit and to Dr. Antonio Moreira, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Dr. Scott Casper, Dean of the College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences, and Dr. Thomas Schaller and the members of the Political Science Department for their warm welcome. It was a pleasure to learn about the innovative work of these dedicated teacher-scholars and to meet such an intellectually vibrant community of faculty and students.

During the site visit, we conducted interviews with the faculty and department staff, as well as seven undergraduate majors, including one student from the Shady Grove Campus. On the basis of written materials and oral reports, it is clear that the department has a history of impressive accomplishment. Department faculty excel in research, teaching, and service. Multiple faculty are known nationally and internationally for their innovative scholarship, having won prizes for their scholarship and prestigious research grants and fellowships. Three faculty have won the American Political Science Association's Pi Sigma Alpha Award for Excellence in Teaching and several others have won multiple UMBC awards for outstanding teaching. All faculty members are actively involved in university service, holding important positions in the Dean's Office, chairing Africana Studies, directing the new Global Studies Program and the Sondheim Scholars Program, and serving on numerous University and College Committees. The range and depth of the faculty's community service is extraordinary.

Political Science has cultivated a vibrant intellectual community by building strong relationships with multiple academic units across campus and by contributing substantially to graduate programs (MPP and Ph.D.) in the School of Public Policy. Department faculty offer courses required for majors in Emergency Health Services, and Health Administration and Policy. They also provide curricular support to Global Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, Media and Communication Studies, and Interdisciplinary Studies, and they cross-list courses with Africana Studies, Asian Studies, History, and Judaic Studies.

With its strong reputation for innovative research and pedagogical excellence, Political Science is well positioned to continue its significant contributions to the University's core missions. To maximize that potential, however, the Department would benefit from the university's strategic investment to support research and teaching initiatives, particularly because faculty in this discipline—like many others in the Humanities and Social Sciences—do not

typically receive major external funding. Yet their work is vital to the University's priorities concerning civic engagement, student success, and local and global research.

In the following sections, we consider departmental strengths, identify challenges, and note resources needed for the department to continue to excel in its multifaceted mission. We conclude with specific recommendations to improve the department in the years ahead.

## **Strengths**

### ***Teaching***

The Department of Political Science at UMBC College comprises 14 full-time faculty, who are deeply committed to providing their students with a first rate undergraduate education. Conceiving an understanding of the political world as central to a well-rounded liberal arts education, the faculty make substantial contributions to general education requirements, regularly teaching a range of 200 level courses that fulfill general education requirements in the social sciences. Over the past five years, the department has generated an average of 7080 student credit hours each year.

The Department has developed a major that includes introductory and advanced courses in American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Politics, Public Administration and Public Policy, and Political Theory. In addition, to its vibrant undergraduate major, the Department offers six minors (Political Science, American Politics, International Politics, Legal Policy, Political Thought; and Public Administration and Policy), a certificate program (Public Administration and Policy) and an Honors Program. Supplementing their work on the main campus, Political Science also offers a degree program on the UMBC satellite campus in Shady Grove, which has doubled in size since 2009.

Political Science faculty make substantial contributions to the course offerings in Africana Studies, Global Studies, Gender and Women's studies, Media and Communication Studies. They have designed international studies courses that have offered students opportunities to investigate politics and policy in Ghana, and they are planning overseas study programs in Italy and Poland. They have given generously of their time to university and professional service, providing the bulk of Pre-Law Advising on campus, directing the Sondheim Public Affairs Scholars Program and the Global Studies Program, and supporting the Shriver Center and the McNair Scholars Program.

The Department's accomplishments reflect intensive investments of time and intellectual energy. As the field of political science has grown dramatically and paradigms have shifted with the end of the Cold War, the literature across the subfields of the discipline has grown exponentially. For fourteen faculty to keep up with these seismic changes is an enormous challenge; one that the UMBC faculty have met with remarkable ingenuity. The courses within each of the subfields are innovative, exploring major contemporary issues, while also covering the fundamental concepts and approaches.

At a time when the discipline of political science has moved toward narrower specializations, the UMBC faculty have found creative ways to design courses that are

intellectually stimulating and wide ranging in their scope. Although none of the faculty complained about the demands of covering such large literatures in their teaching portfolios, it should be noted that they are carrying heavier loads than most faculty at research universities or colleges with comparable student enrollment. As they struggle to cover the complexity of local, state, national, regional, transnational, international and global politics—in the absence of a larger complement of faculty—UMBC’s faculty carry heavy teaching loads with large numbers of course preparations. In their efforts to provide a wide range of course offerings at the introductory and advanced levels, UMBC Political Science faculty typically teach 4-5 different course preparations each year. In addition to their teaching, the faculty also devote considerable time to advising, meeting regularly with their advisees to discuss academic development and personal growth. The number of advisees currently assigned to Political Science faculty runs from 29 to 50. Such extensive commitments to teaching and advising necessarily curtail time available for research. Despite this, the members of the Department have an impressive record of scholarly publications and presentations.

While many political science departments have shifted to large introductory courses with little teacher-student interaction and multiple-choice tests, the UMBC faculty hold fast to the ideals of a liberal arts education. They require students to write analytical and research papers, to revise initial drafts following faculty assessment, and to complete essay examinations. Despite the grading burden it imposes, the faculty continue to assign papers and essay exams because they are convinced that these are essential to their students’ intellectual development. Indeed, the department offers ten writing intensive courses each year. That students benefit from the faculty’s dedication is unquestionable. UMBC students who met with the External Review Committee were markedly enthusiastic about the quality of teaching in Political Science, the scope of their professors’ knowledge, the systemic efforts of all department faculty to challenge them to think deeply, develop research skills, comprehend the grounds for their beliefs, and to argue forcefully to defend their positions.

The intensity and consistency of student assessments of the faculty provided incontrovertible evidence of the teaching excellence in Political Science. Students characterized the faculty as approachable and friendly, deeply knowledgeable and “thoroughly committed to student success.” They described course offerings as up-to-date and relevant to contemporary events. They emphasized that faculty were readily available, always willing to meet with students “one on one.” In characterizing the faculty as completely dedicated to student success, they emphasized that their advisors were concerned with their well-being and “all round intellectual development.” They were thrilled with their internship placements, which enabled them to experience the Maryland Assembly and Governor’s office first hand, to conduct research related to judicial decisions in the office of a federal circuit court judge, to investigate state regulatory practices pertaining to prescription drug abuse at NIH, to provide staff assistance to the National Hispanic Conference of State Legislators, and to develop their lobbying skills directed toward the Health Care Commission of Maryland. These important professional development opportunities were supplemented by co-curricular programs such as Model UN, Mock Trial, and Moot Court, which honed their understandings of complex world events. The students were unanimous in their praise for the advising system in the Department, which enabled them to develop intensive relationships with particular faculty outside of class. The

students had only the highest praise for all members of the political science faculty, including those who were not full-time members of the Department.

Our review of course syllabi confirms student perceptions that political science courses at UMBC are innovative and challenging. The faculty have devised creative means to engage students with complex political events, concepts, and ongoing transformations, using simulations, hands-on decision making, co-curricular programs such as the Model United Nations and Mock Trial Competitions. From the study of diminishing budgets in cities across the United States and the challenges of state and federal budgetary processes in an increasingly polarized partisan environment to the complex social, economic, and political processes in postsocialist states and the demands of transitional justice in nations rebuilding following civil war and military dictatorships, and from the economic and political crises associated with structural adjustment programs and “austerity” regimes to the exponential increases in inequality in the era of neoliberal globalization, UMBC faculty are engaging students with the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

An additional feature of the Department’s teaching is the involvement of undergraduates in research projects. For example, one faculty member organized detailed research on press coverage of the Maryland gubernatorial election, examining questions of racial bias in media coverage. Multiple undergraduates learned how to engage in content analysis of major media outlets over the course of the election and to analyze data and develop innovative accounts for presentation both at the university’s annual celebration of research and at professional conferences.

It is clear from the majors’ overwhelming excitement about these courses that the faculty have devised markedly effective courses that span the subfields of political science.

### ***Research***

The Political Science faculty’s dedication to excellence in teaching is matched by their sustained commitment to scholarship. They are publishing books with major university presses (Cambridge, Minnesota, Notre Dame, Oxford, Stanford, Yale), and with the most highly respected academic publishers (Brookings, Lexington, Palgrave Macmillan), which typically have an acceptance rate under 8%. Their articles are appearing in leading journals across the subfields of political science and public administration. They have won highly prestigious and enormously competitive fellowships including the APSA Congressional Fellowship, the Fulbright Fellowship, the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship, as well as research fellowships at Johns Hopkins and Princeton. In addition, individual faculty have high visibility in the profession as is evidenced by election to serve as the President of the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS) and election to the National Academy of Public Administration. And all faculty present their work regularly at national and regional conferences. In addition to these traditional forms of professional activity, several faculty are serving the critical role of public intellectuals, writing columns for newspapers (*Baltimore Sun*), online media such as Salon.com and noted periodicals such as *New Republic*. Some are serving as expert witnesses and as consultants to think tanks and to political organizations both in North America (the United States and Canada) and in Europe (e.g., the Congressional Black Caucus, the Center for Strategic Tax

Reform, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Lisbon Workshop on Parliamentary Opposition in Europe, the Maryland Legacy Leadership Institute on Public Policy, Urban Institute and the US State Department). To be recruited for such important public intellectual roles is both a credit to the expertise of the individual scholars and a boon to UMBC.

Perhaps most notable, the scholarship of the Political Science faculty engages pressing issues of public concern locally, nationally, and globally. Whether the focus is bioprospecting and biopiracy, climate change, human rights under military dictatorships, democratization, economic and political transformations in postsocialist states, the evisceration of the Voting Rights Act, military modernization in India, the continuing India-Pakistan conflict, the prospects for peace in Afghanistan, abortion politics, welfare reform, polarization of American political parties, crisis management in the Congressional budget process, international negotiation, or women's labor, the department faculty are investigating issues of great import. That they persevere in this critical scholarly work despite the manifold demands on their time from teaching, advising, mentoring, and service is a testament to their dedication to the ideal of the teacher-scholar.

### *Service*

As noted above, the faculty in Political Science play a vital role in the administration of the university, providing leadership university wide and within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (e.g., provost, associate dean, directors of Africana Studies, Global Studies, the Sondheim Program, President of Phi Beta Kappa). In addition, department faculty chair key committees ranging from Academic Planning and Budget, Undergraduate Council, the Strategic Planning Initiative Committee on the Student Experience, and the Black Faculty Committee to Search Committees (Dean of the Erickson School, Associate Director of the Sondheim Center) and the Executive Committee on Under-Represented Minority Faculty. Scarcely a dimension of university life is left untouched when the department's full committee service is enumerated (Academic Standards, Athletic Policy, CAHSS Dean Search, Designated Research Initiatives, Environmental Literacy Standards, Gender and Women's Studies, Honors College Advisory Board and Director Search, Innovation, Interdisciplinary Studies, Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, Middle States Accreditation Review Team, President's Commission on Women, Residential Life Mentors, Shriver Center Board, Sponsored Programs Search Committee, Undergraduate Research and Creative Activity Day Committee, and University Faculty Review Committee).

The Department faculty's service to the profession is equally ubiquitous. They hold offices in national and regional associations (APSA, MWPSA, NCOBPS, SPSA). They edit and serve on editorial boards of leading journals. They serve as manuscript reviewers for major journals across all subfields of the discipline and for the most highly respected academic presses. In addition, they have reviewed grant proposals for the NSF, the Ford Foundation, and Nuffield Foundation.

This impressive level of university and professional service is matched by an unparalleled commitment to public service. Far more than most political science departments, UMBC faculty are deeply enmeshed in community service projects locally, nationally, transnationally. The

sheer diversity of their service is remarkable. From the hands-on demands of volunteer EMT squads and firefighting units to the Boards of Directors of the National Coalition for Black Civic Participation and *Pueblo a Pueblo*, from work with the National Right to Life Committee to the Mercatus Institute, from sharing their policy expertise with local and national media outlets to serving as a political columnist for the *Baltimore Sun*, the department faculty are contributing their time and talent. Devoting their energies to local and state politics, national political institutions, media, issue advocacy, political economy, environmental crisis, and a host of transnational issues, the Political Science faculty provide a model of civic engagement.

## **Challenges**

Individually and collectively, the Political Science Department faculty have an impressive record in teaching, research, and service. Yet they face a number of challenges as they seek to meet all the pressing demands on their time.

### ***Doing so much with so few faculty***

Political science faculty teach large numbers of students each semester. With the average political science class attracting 35-40 students, faculty regularly teach 100-120 students per term. Yet this general estimate does not tell the whole story. According to the Indicators of Academic Program Cost and Productivity, Political Science faculty have taught an average of 7080 student credit hours over the past five years. If divided by the full complement of 14 faculty, that suggests 168 students taught by each faculty member each year. But the Department's assumption of heavy administrative responsibilities for other units has contributed to 13 course releases per year (2.5 FTE). When these administrative course releases are taken into account, political science faculty are teaching 205 students per year. Major advising also places heavy demands on faculty. Department records indicate that current faculty are advising between 29 and 50 majors each year. Whether one focuses on majors or on total student credit hours, the burden borne by political science is exceptionally high, especially given that the university student faculty ratio is on the order of 22:1 (the FTES per FT Instructional Faculty was 22.86 for fall 2014).

The most direct way to alleviate these heavy burdens and to ensure equitable workloads across all UMBC departments would be to increase the number of faculty in the department. If fiscal constraints preclude that direct approach, the university might consider taking advantage of unique opportunities of its proximity to the nation's capital to mitigate the teaching burden on the faculty. It might create a Visiting Scholars Program that would enable short-term visits by scholars/political leaders/activists who could teach courses—either semester-long or in compressed time-frames. Modeled on programs like Fulbright Lectureships, Diplomat/Activist-in-Residence, or recruiting faculty on leave from their home institutions, relatively modest sums could provide a means to expand the course offerings of the Department while affording permanent faculty a respite from the demands of trying to cover the full panoply of political science courses. Such an initiative would enable the Department and College to capitalize on its distinctive location, as well as faculty expertise and connections in Washington, D.C., while also offering invaluable educational opportunities for the students.

### ***Promotion and tenure documents***

Promotion and tenure documents specify publication in discipline-specific journals, which contradicts college and university commitments to interdisciplinarity and imposes undue burdens on scholars to publish in particular journals that may not be best suited to their work or the long-term strategic goals of the university. The gulf between existing documents and the university's strategic plan requires urgent attention. Recent hires have been made in conjunction with the emphasis on interdisciplinarity, but the documents put the scholarship of these new faculty in jeopardy.

### ***Global Studies***

The creation of the Global Studies major might be considered both an opportunity and a threat—an opportunity to demonstrate the department's expansive knowledge in this critical field and to provide an opportunity to teach students who might not enroll directly in a political science course, and a threat to the number of majors in political science. Although political science faculty perform the key administrative, teaching and advising roles in the global studies program, the new major will most likely have a negative effect on the numbers of political science majors if students perceive “global studies” as having more caché than political science. But beyond the issue of majors, the global studies program positions the Department as a “service” unit rather than foregrounding the crucial role of politics in the global arena and the important methodologies that political science offers for the understanding of global issues. The university should think carefully about how best to give political science full recognition for its vital role in this program and for the centrality of the discipline to the content of the curriculum. Special efforts should be made to ensure the visibility of the Department and to accord it full credit for its expertise.

### ***Space***

The Department has currently occupied all the offices allocated to it in the Public Policy Building. Indeed, shortage of office space has required that adjunct faculty share one office creating a situation where three faculty are using the same room simultaneously. This raises important issues pertaining the protection of student privacy. State and federal privacy laws require that faculty student communication be kept in confidence at all times. If multiple adjunct faculty are sharing one office for meetings with students to discuss academic performance and improvement strategies, they cannot meet the minimal requirement of the privacy laws. Additional office space should be allocated to remedy this situation.

### ***Computer Lab***

Whether engaged in quantitative or qualitative research, contemporary political scientists require access to a computer lab equipped with software including SPSS, SAS, R, STATA, Atlas TI, and NVIVO. A lab is essential both for faculty research and for student instruction. Given budgetary constraints, a shared facility (with Economics, Public Policy, or the Library) might be the most viable option at the current time. But at a minimum, the Department should have access to a computer lab for 20 hours/week.

### *Additional Staff*

For the past 20 years, the department has benefitted from the dedication and talent of an extraordinary department administrator, whose work load has grown substantially with changing faculty needs, administrative program demands, information technology, and proliferation of department research initiatives, events and activities. During these many years of service, this hard-working administrator has earned both BA and MA, yet has not had a position reclassification to indicate either the increased workload or the enhanced professional capabilities. The university reaps huge benefits from the sustained commitment of such a dedicated professional staff person, but the HR policies seem to stymie rather than reward this excellent performance. Some mechanism for career development, recognition and enhancement for staff would greatly improve morale and retention. Although one part-time staff assistant has been allocated to try to assist with this heavy administrative workload, the position carries no benefits and results in frequent turnover, which creates additional demands on the department administrator to train and supervise a new employee. And in periods of hiring freeze, it may be impossible to fill the position.

### *Shady Grove*

The political science course offerings at Shady Grove are an important component of this innovative multi-institutional higher education initiative. The Shady Grove program reaches out to an important student demographic (first generation, majority minority), who could benefit mightily from the Myerhoff principles. The program also brings in revenue that is vital to the Department in this period of budgetary constraint. Yet the program has not been fully integrated into the main campus. With only one full-time faculty member, the program must rely heavily on adjuncts to cover the 8-10 courses offered each semester. The sole full-time faculty member carries full advising responsibility for the 50 majors matriculating on the Shady Grove Campus. The disproportionate advising responsibility is only one aspect of the inequity associated with the satellite campus. The program is administered by a productive teacher-scholar who holds the faculty rank of "senior lecturer," a non-tenure-track position. Because senior lecturer is defined as a teaching position, neither the administrative responsibilities nor the research undertaken by the program director is counted as part of his professional performance. The program director reports to two units (political science and division of professional studies), which creates additional levels of complexity to program development. The Shady Grove program director has an impressive vision for the growth of this program and a strong track record, having doubled enrollment in the past five years. But, as a senior lecturer, he lacks voting rights in the political science department, which creates a troubling form of marginalization and makes it difficult to build voting coalitions in support of his program proposals. Moreover, articulation agreements with Montgomery Community College preclude the offering of any UMBC 100 and 200 level courses at the Shady Grove Campus, but some students matriculating there require these courses to complete the major. At present, the program director has devised a clever strategy to address this problem, developing an online course. He has recruited stellar adjuncts, drawing from the extraordinary resources of the Washington area, but the program needs more permanent faculty involvement to ensure that these majors receive an educational experience comparable to their main campus counterparts. Departmental and college commitment to this project will also be essential to support the growth of the program in the long term.



The Department would benefit from sustained discussion of the role of the Shady Grove program and strategies to integrate the Shady Grove students and faculty into the UMBC community. The unique physical location of the Shady Grove campus might also help the Department think creatively about possible graduate courses that foreground comparative, international and global politics.

### ***Organization of Departmental Curriculum and Assessment***

The Department organizes its curriculum in a thoroughly conventional manner, offering introductory and advanced courses in American Politics, Comparative Politics, International Politics, Political Theory, and Public Administration and Public Policy. Within each subfield, the faculty member specializing in this area has impressive autonomy to shape course offerings as he or she sees fit. It is clear that each faculty member has been working very hard to develop a sequence of courses within the subfield that address pressing contemporary issues.

While the subfield organization has contributed to broad coverage of the discipline, it has also fostered unintended consequences with which the department is now grappling. Subfield organization is characteristic of large political science departments with doctoral degree programs. Division of labor by subfields helps make decision-making manageable especially with respect to graduate admissions, curriculum planning, routine administration of comprehensive examinations, and appointment of dissertation committees. But in a Department that specializes in undergraduate teaching, subfield organization also has some draw-backs. The proliferation of undergraduate minors is one example. Rather than focusing on points of convergence across subfields, or on the impressive interdisciplinary content of many courses, the subfield focus creates something of a silo effect. It also poses significant challenges for assessment, as it deflects attention from core knowledge students are acquiring across subfields. And it locks the department into strenuous demands to teach a very wide array of courses regularly to enable students to complete major and minor requirements in timely fashion. It imposes a particular advising burden, as some faculty are pressed to serve as coordinator of each minor. And it raises difficult issues about which courses should be used as the basis for departmental assessment.

At this preliminary stage in thinking about assessment, the Department is considering a focus on the two required courses, Intro to American Politics and a 300 level Methods course. This focus may not serve the department well, as it misses much of the richness of the political science offerings that cut across subfields.

The Department faces a two pronged assessment challenge: one that pertains to students who matriculate at UMBC for all four years; and one that pertains to students who transfer or who are exempted from Intro American Politics through AP courses. To address these challenges, it would be helpful to develop a multifaceted assessment mechanism. Perhaps the Department might consider developing 25 questions that any student who has completed Intro to American Politics should be able to answer readily. The department could then collaborate with the Community Colleges that send the greatest number of transfer students to UMBC to administer the test to students who take Intro to American Politics on their campuses, sharing the results for transfer students. UMBC students who complete Intro to American Politics would

also complete the questions at the end of the course; and AP students would be asked to complete the questions after their arrival on campus. The data from these three sources would then provide a useful assessment tool that provides comparative information about three means to complete American Politics. The results would be useful to the Department not only to meet the demands of Middle-States accreditation, but also to provide information essential to course revision and for any remediation required for transfer and AP students.

As a second prong in the assessment effort, the Department might consider developing a new introductory course that integrates material central to the discipline more generally. For example, if they chose a course such as “Political Power in Contemporary Societies,” the faculty could explore theories of power, the structure and operations of power at local, national, and international levels, the intricacies of various regime types (authoritarian, liberal democratic, social democratic, state socialist), and the complexities of diverse political institutions, behaviors, and cultures, on a particular policy domain (e.g., environmental policy, human rights, transitional justice). Such a course could capitalize on the broad strengths of the faculty while illuminating the distinctive methodologies that political science brings to bear in understanding such complex issues. It would also open an opportunity to pose a general question to students at the beginning of the course that would be ideal for assessment purposes. Students could be asked to reconsider the question at the end of the semester and then again at they approach degree completion. Comparing those responses over time would provide important insights into the value added by the political science courses. Some curricular revision to mitigate the silo effect, might also free up time to offer capstone courses that supplement capstone experiences such as internships, honors theses, or independent research projects.

Although the subfield organization fosters individual autonomy and contributes to curricular breadth, it might be helpful for the department to undertake discussions to streamline minors and consider cross-cutting themes. Whether the introductory course and capstone experiences focus on the nature of power, cross-cutting themes such as democratization, globalization, human rights, or transitional justice, they would involve a move away from a major organized largely by subfield. The Department has not yet had serious discussion about how such courses would be organized or how faculty would be assigned to teach them. If the strategy is simply to have each faculty member teach an Intro course and a capstone course *seriatim*, then there is great likelihood that these courses would default to a series of subfield courses rather than courses that seek to integrate the subfields into a larger conception of the discipline of political science. If, on the other hand, the Department works collectively to design integrative courses, then some decisions must be made about the possibility of team teaching and/or equitable rotation of the courses, which breaks from current practices of individual autonomy within subfields.

An additional unintended consequence of the curricular organization by subfield is that some of the most exciting recent developments in political science are not yet reflected in the Department curriculum. Critical race theory, feminist theory, and the cutting-edge scholarship using intersectionality as an analytical tool is vital to an adequate understanding of national and global politics. Whether the focus is urban riots in the United States, the rise of the Tea Party Movement, transnational migration, South-North global flows, securitization and surveillance, or organized conflict and postconflict reconstruction, the politics of race, ethnicity, nationality,

gender and sexuality are crucial. Particularly on a campus that actively seeks to serve students of color, first generation university students, and students whose families have migrated from diverse regions of the globe, intersectional analysis and the politics of race, ethnicity, gender and nationality would be strong enhancements to the curriculum. Drawing on university commitments to target of opportunity hiring, adding faculty expertise on the comparative politics of race, ethnicity, nationality and identity might be one way to add faculty to the Department while also strengthening ties with Africana Studies, Asian American Studies, Judaic Studies, and Gender and Women's Studies.

We have no question that the Political Science faculty possess the knowledge and creativity to design excellent courses as an introduction to the discipline or as an additional capstone. We signal this issue simply because it will require important departures from existing practices of long standing and some effort will be required to develop mechanisms to distribute teaching responsibilities for any such courses equitably over time.

## **Queries from Political Science**

### ***Hybrid Courses***

Hybrid courses are fast becoming state-of-the art in undergraduate education. Taking advantage of recent developments in information and communication technology, hybrids can foster a vibrant learning community, facilitating intellectual exchange, networking, information sharing, and solidarity across distance. Attentive to differences in students' learning styles, the best hybrids experiment with virtual plenary sessions, online threaded discussions, individual tutorials, facilitated small group discussion, as well as individual and team research.

For an honors university such as UMBC, one key guideline would be to commit to the model of distributed online collaborative courses (DOCCs). As an alternative to massive open online courses (MOOCs), DOCCs create small online communities of learners who take advantage of social media to facilitate innovative audiovisual contacts, live conversations, discussion threads, student networking and problem solving as part of assigned course work. Capitalizing on faculty's transnational networks, a DOCC model might connect faculty and students across state and national borders, building global policy circuits and transnational activism into the course design.

In contrast to the E-college and Pearson strategies to anonymize teaching by building course shells that could be used indiscriminately by any set of "graders," it is important to build hybrids that respect intellectual property rights and academic freedom. Above all, it is critical that the department maintain control over the product that is being delivered online so that any concerns about disciplinary integrity and learning outcomes are subject to routine departmental assessment and correction.

### ***Preparing Students for Global Engagement***

Course syllabi indicate that faculty are already engaging students in global challenges and problem-solving in areas as diverse as climate change, globalization, human rights, postsocialist transformation, and transitional justice. Building on existing course work and the award-winning Model UN program, the Department might use social media to link students with transnational activists working on related issues. Forging virtual ties is central new modes of virtual mobilization. Plans to supplement the Department's overseas study program in Ghana with programs in Italy and Poland would also be helpful to heightening students' international experience. Fostering interaction with international students already studying at UMBC is yet another way to increase students' awareness of global issues.

Access to a computer lab thoroughly equipped with software programs designed for a quantitative and qualitative analysis in the social sciences could also contribute to market readiness in this global era. Comparative analysis, international political economy, and global studies all require competence in "big-N" studies, as well as familiarity with discursive analysis of multiple interpretive frameworks. As indicated elsewhere in this report, the access to a computer lab is essential to producing graduates who possess the quantitative and qualitative skills necessary for the contemporary political science enterprise.

UMBC's Career Center is charged with the responsibility to assist students in their preparation for diverse careers. Political Science faculty might work with the Career Center to develop training directed toward the international sphere. The Department's track record in placing its graduates with the NSA (National Security Agency), for example, might be the basis for an innovative training module that features alumnae/i. Inviting successful graduates to participate in a panel discussion of their international careers can be a particularly smart strategy as it foregrounds the Department's past successes, builds ties with alumnae/i, and provides role models and career tips for current students. Video-taped versions of these sessions can then be made available online through the Department's website, affording students helpful glimpses of possible future careers.

### ***Communication***

The cultivation of external supporters—alumnae/i and friends—can be a very important resource for the Department. In times of economic scarcity, it can provide a crucial means of external funding, beyond grants and contracts, to support innovative initiatives. Looking forward, a broad and effective exit interview process can be a helpful step in creating mechanisms to track and maintain contact with graduates of the program. Working with the Alumnae/i Office, the Department might also build an email network with its many graduates over the past fifty years. Crafting an annual newsletter for the entire political science community (faculty, students, and alumnae/i) is a great way to highlight important accomplishments, while "friend-raising" and fundraising. Having students contribute essays on their internship experiences, faculty contributing items on their current research, and graduates sharing information about the scope of their current employment and civic engagement can make the newsletter a fascinating document, augmented by brief accounts of programs and developments on campus. Email distribution of the newsletter helps minimize the cost of production, while

also achieving greater circulation. Sharing material from the newsletter with college and university public relations departments can also keep political science visible in university publications, heightening donors' awareness of the impressive work of the department faculty.

As the Department becomes more informed about its graduates, it could work with the Development Office to identify potential supporters who might underwrite funding priorities. To prepare for serious fundraising the Department should develop a "wish list" that is visionary, identifying multiple projects that would-be donors might consider. Cultivation can be a fairly long process before actual support is generated, so it is also critical to develop avenues for constant communication and engagement with external audiences. The electronic newsletter, coupled with specific invitations to alumnae/i to attend special campus events linked to the potential donors' interests are good ways to keep information flowing and to have alumnae/i return to the campus with some regularity.

### ***Maximizing Student Involvement in University Honors and Research***

At present, students are being encouraged to undertake Honors initiatives and to participate in URCAD by their faculty advisors and mentors. A few small changes might enhance the number of students taking advantage of this advice. The Department could send a letter to each rising junior who has the requisite GPA to complete an Honors Thesis, inviting the student to participate in the Department Honors Program, explaining the requirements for the program, and identifying a contact person in the Department to provide additional information. By fixing the students' attention on the Honors Program early, it could help the students to plan their schedules to enable successful completion of the Honors Thesis.

Many of the outstanding students, who could be recruited to Honors work, devote the fall semester of the senior year to preparation for (GRE, LSAT, MCAT) and applications to graduate schools. They worry that the demands of grad school application might interfere with the completion of an Honors Thesis. If the Department allowed students to begin their theses in the spring semester of the junior year, with a view to completion in April of the senior year, the students could fulfill the research requirements of the Honors Program. Those doing Honors projects could in turn be encouraged to submit their work for University Research Awards and presentation at URCAD.

### **Recommendations**

Given the resource constraints created by shrinking state contributions to higher education, we are keenly aware that there are limited funds available to take steps to strengthen this already strong and dedicated faculty. Nonetheless, we offer the following recommendations in the hope that some small steps might be taken in the short term and that there be a record of larger steps for future consideration once the economic crisis eases.

- 1) Whether engaged in quantitative or qualitative research, contemporary political scientists require access to a computer lab equipped with software including SPSS, SAS, R, STATA, Atlas TI, and NVIVO. A lab is essential both for faculty research and for student instruction. Given budgetary constraints, a shared facility (with Economics,

Public Policy, or the Library) might be the most viable option at the current time. But at a minimum, the Department should have access to a computer lab for 20 hours/week.

- 2) Additional office space should be allocated to ensure that adjunct faculty can comply with privacy regulations and preserve the confidentiality of their conversations with students.
- 3) To ensure equitable treatment of faculty across UMBC units and to equalize student-faculty ratios, additional faculty should be added to the Department of Political Science. In keeping with the university's commitment to devote 20% of future hiring to diversity candidates, a scholar specializing in intersectional approaches to the comparative politics of race, ethnicity, and nationality would enable the university to advance its diversity goals while helping to mitigate the teaching burden borne by the Department of Political Science, and also affording students the opportunity to explore one of the most exciting analytical innovations in the discipline.
- 4) As an additional means to ease the teaching burden in the Department, a Visiting Scholars Program could capitalize on UMBC's distinctive location and on faculty connections in Washington, D.C. Visiting Scholars recruited through Fulbright Lectureships, and Diplomat/Activist-in-Residence Programs could teach courses that bring together practitioners' expertise, national and regional diversity, and timely topics that supplement the rich course offerings taught by permanent faculty.
- 5) Retention of talented professional staff is essential to the smooth operation of every academic unit. Professional staff are particularly critical in department that regularly rotate Chairs. As departmental leadership changes, the department administrator is often the only source of institutional knowledge and memory. To enhance the retention of dedicated professional staff, the University should make special efforts to recognize the changing demands imposed on long-time professionals and reclassify positions to reflect expanding scope of responsibilities, as well as additional educational attainment and heightened professional competence.
- 6) Begin discussions about the feasibility of developing an introductory course and a capstone course that integrate key themes that cut across subfields. Whether the focus is interdisciplinary, exploring the rich nexus of politics and STEM, such as the policy dimensions of science or the politics of regulation, or a theme-based course drawn from overlapping faculty interests, the goal should be an integrative approach that cuts across subfields in political science. Particular attention should be given to the possibilities for team teaching and ensuring that these integrative courses mitigate rather than exacerbate the teaching burden on department faculty.
- 7) Develop a multi-pronged approach to assessment that facilitates increased articulation between community colleges and UMBC. An assessment tool grounded in the Introduction to American Politics course should provide one touchstone for assessment that could involve community colleges, Advance Placement students, and four-year UMBC students. Data collected over time could enable course revision to ensure that

students demonstrate comprehensive understanding of key aspects of the U.S. political system. Linked to an integrative course that spans the subfields of the discipline, a second assessment focus should foreground the “value added” by political science, contrasting understanding in a 200 level course with understandings manifested in conjunction with a capstone experience.

- 8) The Shady Grove program raises equity issues in terms of the treatment of faculty and students. Minimally, a program director on the Shady Grove campus ought to have the same voting rights, stature, and rank as his/her counterparts on the main campus. Undergraduate majors on the satellite campus should have greater access to courses, advising, and mentoring offered by permanent faculty to ensure their degree experience is comparable to that of students on the main campus. More thought should be given to the challenge of full integration of the Shady Grove program into the UMBC community.
- 9) Using UMBC media, public relations, undergraduate recruitment and orientation programs, and the University Development Office, the University should heighten the visibility of the Political Science Department, highlighting its teaching excellence, the exciting intellectual content of the course offerings, and the centrality of the discipline to an adequate understanding of local, national, and global affairs.