

To: Tony Moreira, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

From: Carolyn Forestiere, Chair of Political Science

APR Mid-term report, January 11th, 2019

Department of Political Science

Drawing from our most recent APR, below is a summary of our progress in each actionable item.

1. Improve undergraduate research capacity

The Department of Political Science has made significant progress in expanding its capacity for undergraduate research. The Department offers students opportunities for students to work on their own research projects or as a research assistant to a faculty member. Research assistants can receive either payment or academic credit for their work. In addition to independent study courses, the Department offers students the chance to receive academic credit for writing an honors thesis. Since the APR, the department has averaged 20 independent studies, three honors theses, and four research internships per year. Furthermore, four undergraduate research assistants were hired as a result of external grant funding, and five more were paid for research assistance through UMBC's Supplement for Undergraduate Research Experience. Faculty members have begun to place language in their syllabus to make sure that students are aware of these opportunities.

The Department has also changed its curriculum to create additional focus on student research. Dr. Ian Anson created an advanced research practicum, to be taken after the Department's required research methods course, that exposes students to more quantitative research methods. Working as statistical consultants for the Shriver Center, students in the most recent iteration of this course took data provided by the CHOICE program and used it to answer research questions of interest to themselves and the Shriver administrators. CHOICE is a program which helps at-risk youth in Baltimore City retain accountability through daily check-ins. Using data collected during these check-ins, students honed their research skills while providing a valuable resource to the Shriver Center.

Furthermore, several 309-listed course experiences in the department have recently exposed students to data collection, survey design, data analysis, and other skills critical to research. Of these experiences, the most notable recent effort was the 2018 UMBC Retriever Exit Poll, which analyzed Baltimore County voters' opinions and vote choices. The students' efforts yielded an op-ed in the *Baltimore Sun* that summarized the conclusions of their research. Students also presented their work at the UMBC 2018 Election Night Extravaganza Event.

In the coming semesters, the Department looks forward to building on its strong record of undergraduate participation in research. Along with other campus stakeholders, and consistent with our APR, we have been strongly advocating for the creation of a research laboratory with 30 computer terminals. Investing in educational technology is essential to increasing student achievement in the mandatory research methods class (POLI 301) and will inspire even more students to seek out additional research opportunities.

2. Integrate Shady Grove program and students more with main campus

The Department's external review highlighted the need to integrate the Shady Grove Program (SG) with the Department on the main campus. The task involves three main ambitions: integrate students, integrate faculty, and integrate programming, some of which have been challenging in the face of structural constraints. First, SG is under the budgetary control of the Division of Professional Studies while the Department of Political Science maintains operational control over academic elements of SG. Second, SG involves a shortened version of the Department's undergraduate degree program, offering only the last two years of study. The expectation is that the SG campus would primarily serve transfer students coming from Montgomery College in Montgomery County. This is an important distinction not only because Shady Grove's transfer student population is demographically different from the population on main campus, but also because the program does not offer the Department's introductory or preparatory courses. Third, SG program is staffed by one full-time program director and several part-time adjunct faculty.

In light of these challenges, the Department has made progress toward integrating the Shady Grove Program in all three areas. There is a growing exchange of SG students taking courses on main campus and main campus students taking courses at Shady Grove. The precise numbers are hard to extract from the university's data system because the project would require a cumbersome review of each course offered by the Department on main campus and the Shady Grove Program over a number of years. But even this would miss students who have filed change of campus applications since cross-campus attendance of Political Science students is increasingly noticeable in classrooms. While SG students taking courses on main campus do not require explicit permission (and therefore are not systematically counted) main campus students taking courses at Shady Grove do need explicit permission from the Shady Grove Program Director. These permissions have averaged 3-4 each semester since 2016. The absence of clear accounting of cross-campus attendance reflects the limitation of the university data systems as well as growing integration between the two campuses.

Shady Grove students go to main campus for two reasons: to take courses they cannot get at SG and to participate in extracurricular activities such as Pi Sigma Alpha and Model United Nations. SG students are also increasingly up for consideration of Departmental academic awards. For example, Arnold Adja, a Shady Grove student, won a Departmental student award in the school year 2017-18. Furthermore, SG students Cristina Araujo and Tenzin Yangchen took study abroad courses with Department Chair Dr. Carolyn Forestiere in Italy in 2018. Conversely, main campus students come to Shady Grove when they want to live at home in Montgomery County or to take specific courses not offered by the department on main campus. In particular, Shady Grove has continued to offer POLI 300, a quantitative methodology course that the main campus no longer offers.

Main campus faculty members Dr. Thomas Schaller, Dr. Devin Hagerty, and Dr. Arthur Johnson (prior to his retirement) have taught at Shady Grove in the past. Dr. Schaller is expected to teach at Shady Grove again in Fall 2020 in time for the next presidential elections. Dr. Forestiere is teaching at Shady Grove in Spring 2019 and Dr. William Blake has expressed interest in teaching as well.

The department in 2017-18 adopted a new policy to incentivize main campus faculty teaching at Shady Grove. Historically, this has been a challenge given the commute between the two campuses. The new policy sought to reward the visiting faculty member the difference between Shady Grove's reimbursement rate and what it cost to hire a replacement part-time faculty on main campus. As more main campus faculty visit Shady Grove to teach, we expect the campuses to integrate further.

On the reverse, Shady Grove Program Director Dr. Sunil Dasgupta has regularly taught main campus online courses for a number of years. These courses are intended to help Shady Grove students who have not taken the department's introductory and preparatory courses, but main campus students can also take them. Further, Dr. Dasgupta has attended monthly Department meetings and has participated heavily in the Department's curriculum reform committee.

The Department is committed to improving on these gains in the future. With the Department's curriculum reform, we expect further exchange between SG and main campus students and faculty. There is effort to have Shady Grove students present their research at URCAD on the main campus, though SG has also started organizing its own formal research presentations options. There may even be the possibility of organizing Shady Grove chapters of extant Political Science student organizations.

3. Assessment reform

The Department's post-APR action plan committed it to a thorough overhaul of its approach to student learning assessment. Our reform was aimed to position the Department to collect meaningful data on the extent to which students had satisfied each course's learning objectives, most importantly through using "direct measures." The Department anticipated that this effort would be completed by the end of the spring 2016 semester.

The Department has resoundingly met this goal. Capping an extensive investment by a new assessment committee in conducting research, attending trainings, and engaging the full Department in discussion, in April 2016 the Department submitted to CAHSS a new assessment plan. This plan featured revised student learning outcomes (SLOs), a concrete methodological strategy for measuring students' achievement of those outcomes, and a roadmap

for which SLOs would be assessed in future assessment cycles. In June 2016, the Department submitted its first assessment report under the new plan, and in June 2018, it submitted its second. Not only is the Department now compliant with UMBC and CAHSS assessment policies, but the CAHSS Dean's office has signaled that the Department is a model for its approach to assessment. In an e-mail, Associate Dean John Stolle-McAllister called POLI's 2016 assessment plan, "one of the most complete and comprehensive plans in the College." He offered similar praise for the plan the Department submitted for the following assessment cycle, pronouncing it: "excellent to me--it is well thought out, detailed, practical and connects back to your efforts from last time. I really do appreciate the effort that you have put into this and the progress that POLI has made in this effort." The Department's assessment planning and reporting have received similar praise from UMBC's Faculty Development Center, which has invited the Department's assessment coordinator, Dr. Laura Hussey, to speak at multiple workshops.

POLI's assessment strategy now leans heavily on direct measures of student learning. Its 2016 assessment report, for example, examined 17 direct measures of its SLOs regarding research methods and written communication, addressing such specific skills as selection of appropriate sources, execution and interpretation of bivariate statistical hypothesis tests and the clarity with which a written document articulates its purpose. Data were drawn from scoring distributions on a final research paper rubric and final exam question from POLI's required research methods course, and yielded statistics on the percentage of students exhibiting each skill at levels defined as "excellent," "good," "adequate," "minimally acceptable," or "failing." POLI's 2018 report, given the luxury of a full two-year cycle over which to collect and analyze data, was even more ambitious. It assessed student learning in the areas of written communication, oral communication, and critical analysis, using distributions of scores from 17 distinct paper or presentation rubrics from seven different classes, one of which was taught at the Shady Grove campus. The report featured concrete data on the extent to which students met faculty-defined achievement levels in specific areas such as strength of a thesis statement, the logic of an argument, and eye contact during a formal presentation.

The Department now periodically dedicates faculty meeting time and "brown-bag" conversations to assessment-related data and ideas, and has used assessment data to inform some of its decision-making. Its 2017 interim assessment report, for example, identifies changes made to the assessed research methods course and recommends other interventions. Discussion following the 2018 report has explored a surprising disconnect between prior faculty impressions of students' writing and critical analysis skills and the more optimistic portrait of student performance painted by the assessment data. It has also enabled faculty to examine the efficacy of interventions, such as offering re-draft opportunities, for improvement of student writing.

4. Curriculum reform

In response to the most recent APR, over the past two years the Department has pursued comprehensive curriculum reform. The primary goal of this reform, described below, was to reorganize the minors in a way that would provide students with a broader understanding of the various issues and methods central to both domestic and international politics.

In their final report, APR external reviewers raised questions concerning subfield organization, noting that our Department followed the organizational structure common to much larger Political Science departments characterized by doctoral programs. One problem with this approach, reviewers suggested, was that it could lead to "silo effects," or the creation of artificial boundaries between themes. They suggested that we look for "convergence across subfields" and leverage "the impressive interdisciplinary content" already offered (p. 9). The overall recommendation was that we "streamline minors and consider cross-cutting themes" (p. 10).

Restructuring the minor program has thus been a critical focus of curriculum reform. To this end, the Department is currently preparing to submit to the Undergraduate Council a new set of minors that have culminated from a lengthy yearlong discussion of APR recommendations. The three new minors include: World Politics, Law and Justice, and Practical Policy and Politics. These minors incorporate courses from several old minors that will, beginning in Fall 2019, be dropped for incoming POLI students: American Politics, Political Thought, Legal Policy, Public Administration and Policy, and International Politics. Furthermore, the Department chose to maintain its popular Certificate in Public Administration and Policy and will create a new certificate in Security Studies.

A description of each of these new minors is provided in the appendix at the end of this report. It is important to note here that each of these minors involves courses from what were formerly considered to be other subfields. For instance, the Law and Justice Minor includes courses that were once found in Legal Policy, Political Thought, American Politics, and International Politics. Similarly, the Practical Policy and Politics minor includes courses once housed in American Politics, Legal Policy and Public Administration and Policy. We are confident that the new minors will expose students to a broader array of approaches and issues than they previously had.

In addition to reforming the minors, the Department is considering the possibility of offering a co-taught upper-level gateway course to the discipline. Reviewers had suggested that such a course could be used to explore the interplay between various subfields, simultaneously giving students a broader understanding of what Political Science is while exposing them to areas they might otherwise never study. One practical problem with offering such a course, however, is that it would need to be taught in multiple sections (perhaps four) every year, which would reduce course offerings in other areas. The Department will continue to explore how we might be able to offer such a course given current resource constraints.

Finally, external reviewers suggested possibly adding a capstone course that could “integrate themes that cut across subfields” (p.14). The Department has periodically considered this proposal but, as a result of our resource constraints, has thus far left the capstone as optional with our existing Honors Thesis program. In the spirit of UMBC’s commitment to civic engagement, the Department is also considering adding an experiential requirement, which might include an internship, service-related course, or capstone. One minor, Practical Policy and Politics, is actively pushing this experiential component. Over the next few years, the Department will evaluate their progress as we continue to consider making this a Department-wide requirement.

5. Faculty

On June 6, 2016, our previous Department Chair, Dr. Thomas Schaller, sent CAHSS Dean Scott Casper our five-year hiring plan. This plan included new tenure-track hires for several areas in which we lack substantive coverage: Chinese politics, Ethnicity and/or Gender politics, Middle Eastern politics, and Public Policy/Administration. We also suggested that a full time lecturer position might fill some of the gaps we have in the Department. Finally, our five-year hiring plan mentioned our updated strategies for advertising positions to create more diverse candidate pools.

Dr. Arthur Johnson, former Provost and Professor of Political Science (in Public Administration) retired in December, 2017. As a result, the Dean approved a search for us for in the field of Public Policy and Administration. The search committee met the summer before the search to develop new strategies to reach as diverse an applicant pool as possible. First, we sent our advertisement to Inside Higher Ed, the Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM), the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), the National Conference of Black Political Scientists (NCOBPS), the “Race, Ethnicity Politics” section of the American Political Science Association (APSA), and Diverse. In addition to these advertising strategies, we also engaged in active recruitment. To this end, we contacted the program staff at Public Policy and International Affairs (PPIA), which supports racial and ethnic minority undergraduates interested in public service and graduate school. We also contacted Duke University to solicit names for potential applicants among recent graduates from the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI), a program supported by the American Political Science Association (APSA), that is dedicated to promoting racial and ethnic minority undergraduates interested in graduate study. Next, a search committee member obtained and perused: a) a list of RBSI alumni who had posted reflections on a website marking the program’s thirtieth anniversary; b) several years’ worth of lists of recent winners of APSA’s Fund for Latino Scholarship winners, and c) lists of APSA Minority Fellows dating back to the 2011-2012 cycle. At the same time, a spreadsheet with over 400 entries was compiled from womenalsoknowstuff.com, which was then limited to individuals who identified as Ph.D. candidates in the relevant fields. Through information on the relevant websites and Google searches for additional details, the search committee member identified those who a) had gone onto graduate school; b) were Ph.D. candidates on the job market or recent Ph.Ds without tenure-track academic positions; and c) possessed expertise in public administration and/or policy. The individuals who met these criteria were sent an email by a search committee member with the Department’s advertisement, an encouragement to apply with a testimonial about working life at

UMBC and an offer to answer any questions. As a result of these strategies, we ended up with over 100 applications. After receiving approval from the Dean's Office to move ahead with our short list and interviewing, we ultimately invited Dr. Eric Stokan to join our faculty. Dr. Stokan earned his Ph.D. from the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington University in 2016. He had been teaching at Towson University as an Assistant Professor at the time of his appointment to UMBC. Thus far, he has been an excellent addition to our Department and we look forward to his third year and promotion and tenure reviews.

6. Staffing [not included as part of "Department Action"]

Our current staffing includes one Program Management Specialist (Emma Sellers) and one part-time Office Assistant (Cor-Rae Petri). Ms. Petri does not work for another Department or Program.

7. Add speakers program

In our Department's post-APR debate about what a speakers program would look like, several faculty members suggested that a new current events forum, open to students across campus, would be a useful addition to UMBC's regular programming. We thus began offering our current events forums in February 2018 and have generally scheduled them for every two weeks during the regular semester. (Note that the Shady Grove Program Director, Dr. Sunil Dasgupta, has been holding successful interdisciplinary current events forums every Wednesday during the free hour at SG for many years. This served as a model for the main campus's new current events forum.) The meetings on main campus this past year have been generally well-attended, both by political science students and students from other majors and colleges on campus. In addition, for our last Fall 2018 current events forum, we invited a new adjunct professor to speak at the event about issues facing Baltimore as a means of giving him an opportunity to explain his course content and demonstrate his teaching style for the university community. It is interesting to note that this professor's course enrollment almost doubled after the talk. This experience has prompted us to think about inviting our newer adjuncts to the current events forum around registration time so that our new colleagues can introduce themselves and advertise their courses and teaching styles. In the meantime, we will continue to support the current events forums on both campuses and think about ways of advertising them to the broader campus community.

We are also planning a series of brownbag lunches within the Department centered on issues related to teaching. We started to do this a few years ago; we met to discuss how to increase civic engagement possibilities for our students on one occasion and how to help students improve their writing on another. This upcoming semester (Spring 2019) we will continue this work and offer new lunchtime meetings to discuss relevant pedagogical topics.

Finally, since 2016 several faculty in our Department have invited speakers to come to campus as part of the Social Science Forum. Carolyn Forestiere invited Dr. Thomas Lancaster (from Emory University) in 2017 to speak on monitoring and good governance and Thomas Schaller invited Dr. Jay Barth (from Hendrix College in Arkansas) to speak on LGBTQ Politics in the South in 2018. In addition, in 2017 two of our newer faculty members invited speakers to come to campus as part of the eminent mentors program: Ian Anson invited Dr. Marc Hetherington (from Vanderbilt University) to speak on trust in institutions and William Blake invited Dr. Rogers Smith (from the University of Pennsylvania) to speak on conflicting visions of citizenship in the Trump years. We hope to continue to invite interesting speakers to campus in the upcoming years.

8. Improve communication

Over the past year, we have used new means of communicating with students. We now have a google group listserv for all Political Science majors and minors to which we post communications about solicited internships and other relevant information concerning graduate school or future careers. We have also improved how the faculty communicate with each other.

We also significantly updated our website (poli.umbc.edu). Of particular note is we now have a page with information about university and departmental scholarships and a page for "Department Highlights." This page features overall Department news about publications, media presentations, op-eds, and awards for all faculty,

including lecturers and adjunct faculty, and students. In the upcoming year we plan to work more on the website to make it as informative as possible for current and prospective students who are interested in our program.

In addition, the Department plans to create a comprehensive alumni list so that we can begin to communicate with our graduates about Department events. To this end, we also plan on hosting an alumni event at Homecoming 2019.

9. Update P&T to include interdisciplinary activities

In 2018 and in line with new requirements from the Faculty Senate, we updated our P&T policy to include qualitative evaluation measures for teaching. These are currently under review at the Dean's Office. Over the next year, we will continue to discuss our P&T policy to possibly include more interdisciplinary activities. Many of our faculty, especially our newer faculty like Dr. Felipe Filomeno and Dr. Ian Anson, do engage extensively in interdisciplinary work.

Appendix: Description of new minors

World Politics Minor

Students in the World Politics minor explore the politics of interstate relations and its interaction with the domestic political systems of different countries. Students are equipped with theories and methods to think critically and creatively about foreign policy, diplomacy, international organizations, international security, warfare, terrorism, international law, democratization, political economy, development and other complex global problems of the day. The minor offers students a strong foundation for graduate study and careers in the U.S. State Department, the intelligence community, foreign governments, international organizations, NGOs, public and private international development agencies, consulting firms, and multinational corporations..

Students are required to take both POLI 260 (Comparative Politics) and POLI 280 (International Relations), and must then choose four upper level courses, at least one of which must be at the 400-level. These courses must be in the 360s/460s, 370s/470s, 380s/480s, 390s/490s, as well as any course listed below. Students must also take a language through the second year (202 level), although students committed to World Politics are strongly encouraged to progress to higher levels. Students can also take advantage of active learning opportunities in the Model United Nations student club. In addition, UMBC and the Department of Political Science facilitate a variety of internship and research opportunities that can be valuable stepping stones to the types of careers noted above.

Law and Justice Minor

The Law and Justice minor allows students to develop an expertise in the law, and in how lawyers, courts and judges influence the world. We offer a wide variety of classes in American, comparative, and international law. In addition, the minor features classes that examine the struggle for justice as well as the theoretical foundations of law and justice. The minor is excellent training for students who plan to attend law school, or to work in the many fields where knowledge of the law is a powerful asset. An understanding of law and justice is valuable for students working in politics, business, the arts, science, technology, and engineering. The minor offers students hands-on practical opportunities through legal internships, mock trial, moot court, and legal advocacy.

Practical Policy and Politics Minor

The Practical Policy and Politics minor immerses students in study of the theory and practice of American democracy. It aims to enhance students' capacities as citizens and to prepare them for potential careers in politics, public policy, or public administration and management. Through coursework and opportunities to earn academic credit for an internship, the minor equips students with knowledge about the principles, institutions, processes, and policies of American government and offers chances to develop various professional skills. Students may focus their courses on one particular career field, or may sample from the minor's wide variety of courses on political communications, behavior, strategy and thought; legislative, executive, judicial and electoral politics; and public policy and administration.