Long Beach City College - Program Review

Program Review 2014-15 - Political Science AA-T

PR 2A - Enrollment Data:
The Department of History and Political Science is part of the School of Social Science and Arts offering courses and degrees which are at the core of both department’s mission and the college’s educational mission. The History and Political Science Department supports and enhances Long Beach City College’s mission in several ways. Our department offers a rigorous and rich academic curriculum designed to provide students with the knowledge, critical thinking and communication skills that are needed to succeed in transfer to four year colleges and universities, in the completion of certificates and associate degrees, and in the workplace. Departmental offerings perform four essential functions. Our courses are essential to complete an Associate Degree at LBCC, to meet multiple General Education requirements needed to transfer; to satisfy the Graduation Requirements of the CSUs and finally to fulfill the new requirements for the Transfer Degree for History or Political Science and the new Political Science Certificates of Accomplishment.

Within the Department of History and Political Science, each discipline now offers individual programs. Specific to this program review, Political Science offers an Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) as well as two Certificates of Accomplishment in Political Science – one General, one Global. These new additions to the Department were approved in the current academic year (2013—2014), with plans for furthering their growth to take place over the ensuing five years.

Political Science offers academic level transfer courses in the introductory course, Political Science I, Introduction to American Government as well as a variety of specialized political science courses. The introductory course is not only required for the degree in Political Science but is also a requirement for all Associate’s degrees as well as all ADT degrees conferred by the college. In addition, Political Science faculty participate in teaching Human/SocSc courses 1, 1H and 7 with other areas of the School of Social Science and Art.

The current mission and educational plan of the college is to further basic skills and increase the provision of degrees and transfers of students to four year institutions. Therefore, all Political Science human and fiscal resources have been redirected towards these goals. Previously offered non-credit and Senior Studies courses have not been reinstated due to a lack of human and financial resources to provide non-credit community courses.

1. Enrollment Patterns
The Political Science program is committed to offering quality undergraduate training to assist our students to successfully graduate with a Certificate, associate degree, ADT in Political Science and/or in transferring to a four-year institution. The Department focuses on offering courses that fulfill core lower division general education requirements and specialty courses and political science for future majors in the field. The Department plays a central role in fulfilling the college’s mission to enable students to earn the AA/AS degree or to gain general education certification for UC/CSU transfer. Our courses are among the most in demand on campus because they fulfill core requirements in Plans A, B, and C.

Our overall enrollment from the Summer 2011 through Spring 2014 stayed virtually constant, due to the dramatic cuts in summer offerings for the past two summers. The number of sections offered in 2013-2014 rebounded from past cuts and is current at 114 sections, 10 above the 2011-2012 level, but still not as high as before the economic crisis resulted in cuts. The Political Science program has begun to offer more specialty courses each semester and not just once a year as in this past. This should enable us to attract more majors and help them to finish the ADT more rapidly.

The vast majority of our students (approximately 3900 over the last 3 years) are enrolled in Introduction to Government (POLSC 1). Over the last three years, Political Science has offered more than 100 classes each year. In the past three years, Political Science enrollment has remained steady. From 2011 to 2014, Political Science has continued to see a rise in the number of Female students who continue to comprise a majority of enrollment. Enrollment of groups by ethnicity has remained stable with a small increase in the number of Hispanic students.

Online courses continue to be enrolled however they have steadily maintained low success and retention numbers; the college continues to request these course offerings. Political Science expects to add new classes to its current course offerings to expand the ADT and two Political Science Certificates of Accomplishments; the discipline of Political Science expects to therefore realize an increase in enrollment over the next five years, provided that additional faculty can be hired.

PR 2B - Achievement Data:
Political Science provides courses that are required for General Education and various transfer patterns. To this end, we are teaching are very large and diverse segment of our student population. We are doing this with a high degree of efficiency as defined by college leadership. According to data supplied in the President’s Load Study Fall 2013, Political Science is doing an impressive job of meeting the college’s goals for efficiency. Our classes averaged (using 2012 & 2013 data) 41 students per with an average WSCH of 6902.71; a higher than average collegewide load (WSCH/FTEF) of 584.77, and a collegewide index average of 115.58%. This indicates that Political Science is 15.58% more efficient than the collegewide average. While Political Science is a new program this academic year, six ADT degrees were awarded. The awarding of degrees and increasing numbers of students transferring to four-year institutions is part of the mission and educational master plan.

In terms of Student Success, Completion and Retention rates (using 2011-2013 data), Political Science, in accordance with the mission and master plan has been working to increase in success rates. Our Student Success Rate increased at LAC from 55% to 62% over the three year period; success at PCC suffered an initial downturn from 63% to 55% and then returned in the positive direction to 60%. This phenomenon may be due to a full time faculty member’s permanent move to PCC, where academic standards as well as success and retention are priorities. Success rates for Web classes continue to be dismal at approximately 40% during the three years. In terms of instruction mode, lecture classes are more successful than Web classes, in addition, students in day classes are more successful than students in night time classes. In terms of instruction mode, lecture classes have higher retention rates than Web classes, while both day and night classes have seen higher retention rates, students in day classes have higher retention rates than students in night time classes. In terms of demographics, both men and women have seen increases in retention over the three year period. Men have
Included in our department plan are goals to create a liaison between Political Science and the Student Success Centers on each campus. This liaison will help coordinate with instructors to insure that students have access to study materials and appropriate tutors with an eye on continuing increasing success and retention rates.

PR 2C - HR (Staffing) Data:

With the addition of the ADT and two Political Science Certificates of Accomplishments the discipline of Political Science is woefully understaffed, in terms of both faculty and support staff.

a. Faculty

The full time faculty in Political Science is currently at 6 members, with the loss of a full time faculty member in 2008. Last year, the college approved a position for Political Science however, the applicant pool was less than satisfactory and the position remains unfilled. The hope is to fill this position in the current year. If this addition is successful, Political Science will return to the staffing level of 2008. This will not add the necessary additional faculty necessary to create the Success Center liaisons, create a comprehensive outreach program to attract students to the ADT and certificates, or work on adding additional courses to our offerings. Political Science is woefully understaffed to attempt any expansion of the program, in fact at current staffing levels; the best hope is to maintain the gains in success and retention to date. The department also maintains a core of part-time faculty who are assigned to meet additional course offerings. At present, Political Science continues to hire part time faculty to make up the gap in staffing of our courses. Our part time hiring efforts have been successful in temporarily providing for our program as well as meeting diversity needs and requirements of the institutional mission and educational master plan.

The Political Science Department continues to lack the full-time faculty essential to fulfilling its mission and meeting college obligations. During most of the past 8 years, the department has grown more dependent on adjunct faculty to teach many of the courses required for graduation, for transfer and for majors. We are no longer able to offer sufficient sections of courses designed to respond to the diversity of our student body, community and globalized world.

Our already understaffed full-time faculty has had dropped 33%. Our long-term goal is to return to a full complement of nine (9) full-time faculty. The last faculty we hired was in 2005 and that position was lost due to her subsequent resignation in 2008, coming just prior to the economic recession. That resignation coupled with earlier retirements and resignation has left our department with only six (6) full-time faculty members. With the "maturing" of our faculty, two (2) more retirements are anticipated in the next few years.

In Academic Year 2013-2014, the department offered 114 sections, taught by political scientists, 4 were offered in Summer 2013, 54 were offered in Fall 2013, 1 in the Winter, and 55 in Spring 2014. They taught courses in the disciplines of Political Science and Social Sciences - General. Part-time sections numbered 60 or 54.5% of the sections offered last year. Overall our ratio is 45.5:54.6.

b. Support Staff

In terms of support staff, Political Science does not have any specifically designated support staff. The Social Sciences Division of the School of Social Science and Art now provides the History and Political Science Department with 1/5 (share services with four other departments) of one Administrative Assistant. We also share the services of one Academic Administrative Assistant with four other departments. While these staff members are competent the program of Political Science would be best served with a dedicated assistant to complete clerical tasks, specifically in the area of computerizing records and assisting in creating and printing outreach information. As a new program, administrative support in the future is essential to success.

PR 3A - SLO - summary of collected program data:

All courses in the Political Science Program have course-level student learning outcomes and assessment plans in place. Assessment of course-level SLOs in all class sections has become more regularized over the past several years, though work continues to assure more timely and complete reporting of all data from all class sections during the fall and spring semesters from both full-time and adjunct faculty in the program.

PR 3B - SLO - uses in program improvement:

Two program-level learning outcomes have also been established for Political Science. Since program level outcomes are harmonized with course-level SLOs in the program (particularly in POLSC 1, our “gateway” course) assessment at the program level has been based on course-level SLO assessment data to this point. The current, program-level learning outcomes are:

1. Examine and comprehend various forms of political, social science, and relevant historical literature, as well as interpret and analyze statistical and other, non-narrative sources.

2. Organize social scientific argumentation in both written and oral presentations by using facts, ideas, and events to ask questions, assemble evidence, and support conclusions with clarity and coherence.

Please note that the course-level SLOs for POLSC 1 and other program courses are in the process of being modified to more precisely identify what students will know and be able to do upon successful completion of a course, as well as to reflect statewide ADT language. As this process of course-level SLO review proceeds, program-level outcomes will also be revisited and modified accordingly.

PR 3C - SLO - action/ change based on results:

Please note that the course-level SLOs for POLSC 1 and other program courses are in the process of being modified to more precisely identify what students will know and be able to do upon successful completion of a course, as well as to reflect statewide ADT language. As this process of course-level SLO review proceeds, program-level outcomes will also be revisited and modified accordingly.

To this point, course-level SLO data and, by extension, data from the program level has revealed decidedly mixed results in terms of our student’s ability to master the content and skills specified in the learning outcomes. At the same, data available to us from our current outcomes assessment regime cannot provide the detail and nuance necessary for us to gain insight into the potential causes of students’ inability to master specific learning outcomes and, at the same time, makes it virtually impossible for program faculty to develop strategies and innovations to improve students’ mastery of learning outcomes and, by extension, increase their level of overall success in both course and the Political Science program. Those strategies and innovations that have been developed, including our attempts to pilot learning communities combining a section of POLSC 1 with an appropriate Reading class, have been derived from extensive discussions amongst program faculty that are based largely on anecdotal evidence, rather than concrete data.

To address this problem, program faculty, working in conjunction with Jennifer Holmgren, are currently in the process of developing new mechanisms for assessment that we are planning to implement during the Spring 2015 semester. First, the department is developing an online, affective assessment
tool that will be completed by all students in every Political Science class every semester. Based on an instrument developed and pilot-tested in select sections of POLSC 1 during the Spring 2014 semester, the purpose of the affective assessment tool is to accurately make group-focused inferences regarding students’ attitudes towards course content, learning techniques, as well as students’ individual efforts to successfully complete the course and master its student learning outcomes.

In addition, program faculty are currently working with Jennifer Holmgren and Pearson Learning to develop and implement a standardized, online assessment instrument to measure student mastery of all learning outcomes in the POLSC 1 course. Our current assessment plan for each of the SLOs in the POLSC 1 course utilizes a standardized scoring rubric, giving individual instructors significant flexibility in terms of the specific assessment tool that they utilize in their class sections to measure. Unfortunately, our experience with the current assessment regime demonstrates its inability to consistently measure student mastery of learning outcomes across all course sections. Lessons learned through this process will then be applied to similarly modify the assessment plans in all other Political Science Courses.

**PR 4A - Projects/ Strategies-development & change:**

The Political Science ADT program is quite new, having only been established in 2012. The political scientists hope build this program in the coming years, and are collaborating with other areas of the college to develop strategies to assist our students. The most recent department plan for the Department of History and Political Science outlines a number of department initiatives. For example, political scientists are working with Emily Gehrmann of the Learning and Academic Resources department to develop a paired Learn 11 course specifically tailored to the needs of students enrolled in core classes. This program will begin in Spring 2015. The political scientists are planning to revise the Political Science ADT to better meet the needs of majors and to offer greater flexibility in meeting the requirements while retaining academic integrity. Further, political scientist will be using an affective assessment tool to use as part of overall student success assessment. The goal of the affective assessment tool is to accurately make group-focused inferences regarding student attitudes towards course content, learning techniques, as well as students' individual efforts to successfully complete course requirements. We are working with Jennifer Holmgren to get this online for Spring 2015.

Additionally, we will be developing new courses to complete and expand the ADT offerings. The hiring of another full-time faculty will help with this process. Additionally, we are meeting with our adjuncts and using their talents to expand our program.

A degree will be meaningless without students and we are working out details to recruit and orient students to the field of political science. We plan to develop materials and programs to help educate our students and those in the high schools about our program. We plan to continue of speaker series and community service programs.

Finally, as part of our department plan we have proposed a faculty liaison to link us to the areas of the college that support and enhance student success.

A series of discussions are taking place regarding the use of pre- or co-requisites for our classes. The discipline is also exploring an assessment instrument for knowledge mastery and placement, adding a fourth hour of instruction and the development of our own critical thinking course.

**PR 4B - Projects/ Strategies - results:**

To political scientists will be able to hire a new faculty member for 2015-2016.

New technology has been purchased to assist in student success, both clickers and Camtasia.

**PR 4C - Projects/ Strategies - future plans:**

The Political science Program plans to develop strategies to identify potential political science majors at LBCC and to increase the numbers of students completing the Political science ADT. We plan to update our website and create an “opening day” information video to be used in all classes to introduce the field of political science. We are planning workshops to increase the understanding of all faculty within our discipline about the courses, their rigor and our expectations.

**PR 5 - Dept - how does it fit into big picture?:**

The projects and strategies currently being developed and implemented by Political Science Program faculty are all designed to support the two, program-level outcomes listed and discussed in prompt #3 above and, by extension, harmonize with various institutional goals and initiatives, as expressed in the College’s current Educational Master Plan, Annual Institutional Priorities and the President’s Agenda. Our current initiatives include:

- Developing and implementing the course-level affective assessment instrument for use in all program classes, as well as the revamped SLO assessment tool for all POLSC 1 sections, discussed in prompt #3 above. These initiatives support the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan, as well as the student success component of the President’s Agenda, which calls for all college programs to, “Continue to support the development and implementation of outcomes assessment, focusing on the use of data to improve student learning and achievement and organizational efficiency and effectiveness.”

- Implementing and evaluating a pilot project of utilizing learning communities where political science classes (specifically POLSC 1) are paired with reading classes for the purposes of increasing student success and retention. The department will designate a political scientist to collect data as to the effectiveness of these learning communities versus the non-paired classes. Several of these learning communities were scheduled to run during the Spring 2014 semester, but were cancelled at the outset of the semester by the Dean of Language Arts due to enrollment concerns. This initiative supports the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan, as well as the student success component of the President’s Agenda, which calls for all college programs to, “Continue to support the development and implementation of outcomes assessment, focusing on the use of data to improve student learning and achievement and organizational efficiency and effectiveness.”

- Designating one political scientist to serve as an on-going liaison between each discipline and the Multidisciplinary Student Success Centers, the Writing and Reading Success Center, Tutoring and Learning and Academic Resources, As a liaison, they will work to coordinate activities, monitor projects development, trac student use and collect data as to the effectiveness of these efforts. This initiative supports the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan

- Exploring the feasibility and potential effectiveness of adopting reading, math and/or English classes as pre- or co-requisites of both History and Political Science classes. The department recognizes the need for early completion of basic skill courses, along with the proper alignment of course offerings to ensure that students are prepared and successful in taking transfer level course work. This initiative supports the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan.

- Exploring and making of current technologies (i.e., – clickers) and software for utilization in the classroom as a tool for teaching and student success.
Specifically, three classroom sets of clickers have been obtained and will begin to be utilized in Political Science classes beginning in Spring 2015. Program faculty will also be utilizing newly obtained software that will enable them to create and implement “flipped” class lessons. This initiative supports the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan, as well as the student success component of the President’s Agenda, which calls for all college programs to, “Continue to support the development and implementation of outcomes assessment, focusing on the use of data to improve student learning and achievement and organizational efficiency and effectiveness.” These strategies also support the 2014-15 Annual Institutional Priority for technology, which calls for all areas of the college to, “Facilitate, advance, promote, and support effective integration of technology into the learning and work environment.”

Projects/ Strategies and Resources Needed

Creating an on-going outreach program between LBCC History and Political Science faculty and neighboring high schools. History and political science faculty will visit local high school classes and college fairs to discuss and encourage enrollment at LBCC in each of our majors. Full and part-time faculty will be encouraged to participate in this effort. This initiative supports the Educational Master Plan Goal for Community, which requires that, “The college will strengthen its internal and external community relations to promote efficient student pathways to academic and career success and to strengthen local economic and workforce development.”

Developing both print and multimedia materials to be used at the high schools, on campus, on U-Tube and on our website. These materials will be designed to answer questions about our degrees, emphasize the advantages of earning an ADT in History or Political Science at LBCC, and provide interesting and timely career information pertaining to the professions, salaries and opportunities. This initiative supports the Educational Master Plan Goal for Community, which requires that, “The college will strengthen its internal and external community relations to promote efficient student pathways to academic and career success and to strengthen local economic and workforce development.” These strategies also support the 2014-15 Annual Institutional Priority for technology, which calls for all areas of the college to, “Facilitate, advance, promote, and support effective integration of technology into the learning and work environment.”

Designating one faculty member in political science to coordinate the outreach efforts. They will work to develop and maintain the department website related to majors. They will work with the counselor assigned to our discipline, with the new classified staff, with other members of our department and with other areas of the college working on outreach. They will also maintain our Facebook efforts. This initiative supports the Educational Master Plan Goal for Community, which requires that, “The college will strengthen its internal and external community relations to promote efficient student pathways to academic and career success and to strengthen local economic and workforce development.” These strategies also support the 2014-15 Annual Institutional Priority for technology, which calls for all areas of the college to, “Facilitate, advance, promote, and support effective integration of technology into the learning and work environment.”

Creating an environment for success of students seeking a degree or certificate within the department. Some full-time faculty within the department will be identified to serve as degree and/or certificate advisers. These advisers will also serve as liaisons to the counselor(s) assigned to the department. In addition, in order to encourage greater levels of communication and collaboration amongst department students, faculty, and staff, Facebook groups for Political Science and History at LBCC will be created and maintained. This initiative supports the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan. These strategies also support the 2014-15 Annual Institutional Priority for technology, which calls for all areas of the college to, “Facilitate, advance, promote, and support effective integration of technology into the learning and work environment.”

Adding courses in the area of discipline based skills, specifically the CSU core required course in the major. These courses will develop reading, writing and critical thinking skills necessary for success within discipline course work. Subsequently, the new courses will be added to the ADTs in both majors, as well as the currently available certificates of achievement. These initiatives support the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan.

Adding elective courses to provide a broader variety of offerings to allow for greater student choice, meet the needs of our changing disciplines and fulfill ADT options. To insure the highest level of “vested” interest in the program and student success, these new electives are best taught by full time faculty. These initiatives support the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan.

Regularly collaborate with faculty from political science departments at major transfer institutions to maintain program currency and relevance, as well as transferability of program courses. This initiative supports the student success goal specified in the current Educational Master Plan. This initiative also supports the Educational Master Plan Goal for Community, which requires that, “The college will strengthen its internal and external community relations to promote efficient student pathways to academic and career success and to strengthen local economic and workforce development.”