**Annual Assessment Report for 2018-2019 AY**

Reports completed on assessment activities carried out during the 2018-2019 AY will be due September 30th 2019 and must be e-mailed to the Director of Assessment, Dr. Melissa Jordine (mjordine@mail.fresnostate.edu).

Provide detailed responses for each of the following questions within this word document. Please do NOT insert an index or add formatting. Furthermore, only report on two or three student learning outcomes even if your external accreditor requires you to evaluate four or more outcomes each year. Also be sure to explain or omit specialized or discipline-specific terms.

Department/Program: \_Political Science\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Degree \_\_BA\_\_\_

Assessment Coordinator: \_\_\_\_Holyoke\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Please list the learning outcomes you assessed this year.
2. Students will learn, explain, and analyze the primary concepts, analytical techniques, and theoretical and empirical literatures in the major subfields of the academic discipline of political science.
3. Students will think critically about, and discuss their critiques of, the primary issues in American government and world affairs with these theories and techniques.
4. Students will demonstrate a mastery of critical political and policy evaluation skills, as well as the methods necessary to effectively present analyses of issues and policies, and the arguments the information supports, in a professional fashion, which includes both oral and written communication.
5. What assignment or survey did you use to assess the outcomes and what method (criteria or rubric) did you use to evaluate the assignment? **Please describe the assignment and the criteria or rubric used to evaluate the assignment in detail and, if possible, include copies of the assignment and criteria/rubric at the end of this report.**

* Pre and Post tests- The Political Science Department faculty have created a set of questions capturing the most crucial concepts students should learn in political science and testing their ability to use political science theories and statistical tools in critical analysis, reflecting the goals and objectives laid out above. This is knowledge all political science majors ought to have when they graduate from our program and is therefore a direct measure of outcome A. Unlike the paper portfolios (see below), which are designed to assess thinking ability and skill, this measure assesses the acquiring of knowledge.

The pre-test version of the test is administered in PLSI 1, the first course that new majors take in political science. All students in the course will take the short test, but only the tests for students declaring a political science major will be kept and assessed. Each semester the Department receives a list of all students applying to graduate with a political science major. These students will be contacted and asked to take the same test once again (this is done by e-mailing the test to students, having them indicate their answers and e-mailing it back). Thus they take the same test twice, at the beginning and end of the major. If learning concepts occurred, the average student score in the post-test will be greater than in the pre-test. The faculty will then be presented summary data from these tests on an annual basis for assessing whether any changes need to be made to the curriculum.

Although student names will have to be used to connect the pre-test to the post-test, these names, along with the tests themselves, will be held in strict confidence by the faculty member designated by the Department as coordinator for the program. No other person will see the student names and all individual student data will be kept strictly confidential. Only aggregate statistics will be released.

The pre-tests and post-tests will be done every year and every year summary data will be presented to the department. While we certainly want each graduating student to get all of the questions on the post-test correct, if significant numbers of students get less than 70% of answers correct we will have a serious problem on our hands and need to take significant corrective action to our curriculum. Otherwise we will use these results to make only marginal adjustments to our curriculum.

* Student Paper Portfolios- All students write research papers in our upper level undergraduate courses and this provides faculty an opportunity to assess their progress in learning how to think analytically, express abstract concepts, and conduct basic research from one core course to another across their time in the major. In other words, it assesses how well students have learned concepts that are the foundation of each student’s development. It therefore provides a direct measure of outcome C. The ability to write well to convey ideas and arguments is also one of the most important tools students can develop as they prepare for careers or graduate school. These papers are major components of student grades in these courses, and usually they must get a C or better on the paper to pass the class. For purposes of assessment, however, we have created a rubric to analyze the papers and assess whether students are making progress in terms of developing their analytical thinking and writing skills.

Students majoring in political science in every upper division core course are required to turn in two copies of their paper, one of which is held in that student’s file in the department office until the time comes for assessment. Because papers are kept in the Department office in folders for each student, the assessment will involve reading an older (at least one year, though two is preferred) paper along with a new paper for each of the selected students in a random sample (we have too many majors to do them all). This way we can see if students are improving their writing skills over time as they take the upper-level courses. Responsibility for analyzing the papers is divided up among all tenured and tenure track faculty who then discuss the data yielded from the rubrics in a department meeting where changes will be considered to further improve student abilities.

* Policy argument memos- All students must learn how to write short but effective arguments on what public issues are currently most important in local, state, national, or international politics, as well as take positions on what policies would best address those issues. To demonstrate how well they understand these concepts and can make effective arguments, they must learn how to develop and use the tool of the policy argument memo. It is therefore a direct measure of outcome B.

All political science majors are required to take the course Public Policy Analysis (PLSI 150). A major component of this course is learning how to write a policy argument memorandum, done as an exercise in learning how to comprehend an important issue in contemporary politics, formulate a position, and communicate that position to public sector officials. This is something political science graduates frequently have to do in their professions.

The Department has developed a rubric for assessing these memos that reflects how well each student understands the issue at hand, how well they lay out their position on the issue, and how clearly and concisely they communicate this understanding and position to public officials in the memorandum. The memorandum is added to each student’s portfolio and a random sample are annually assessed using the rubric.

1. What did you learn from your analysis of the data? Please include sample size (how many students were evaluated) and indicate how many students (number or percentage instead of a median or mean) were designated as proficient.

* Using the pre-test / post-test, 69 students were surveyed approximately four years apart. The average number of questions answered correctly in the pre-test was 3.2 and the average number answered correctly in the post-test was 5.3. A difference of means test finds the difference to be statistically significant. Proficiency is a fairly random idea, but if we assume that 4 out of 6 is proficient, then about 87% are proficient.
* Quantitative analysis was nor performed on the policy memos, though about 100 students submitted them. Students usually struggle with this writing assignment because they are not used to the format of a formal policy memo. They typically approach it like a thesis paper. The intent of the writing assignment is to have them identify a policy problem and its causes, develop criteria for developing solutions, and evaluate solutions against this objective criteria. This is a standard approach in the public policy field. After reviewing the AY 2018-2019 memos, students have the most difficulty with the proper identification of a problem and separating the causes from the consequences. Many used data to illustrate the problem, but do not always use the most valid data to demonstrate a particular problem. Students also struggled with the evaluation of solutions. This requires a higher level of analytical thinking, which some students are able to do, but perhaps a majority of the class cannot. Many have a difficult time using research to evaluate their solutions against a set of criteria. In terms of students’ writing ability, sentence structure and word usage are problems. This detracts from the clarity of their points and logical flow of their arguments.
* Copies of writing assignments by students in required upper level courses (except PLSI 150) are provided to the assessment coordinator. A sample of these papers are then assessed with the appropriate rubric to see how well students are fulfilling the writing requirement. There are six questions on the rubric, all scaled 1 to 5. The average score for AY 2018-2019 was 3.5, which is more or less what it has been the last several years.

1. What changes, if any, do you recommend based on the assessment data?

None, really. In terms of knowledge, the students are doing quite well. Writing quality is always a challenge. Nearly all of our courses emphasize writing, whether it is short pieces (like the PLSI 150 memos) or long research papers (though fewer courses do this), and will continue to do so.

1. If you recommended any changes in your response to Question 4 in last year’s assessment report, what progress have you made in implementing these changes? If you did not recommend making any changes in last year’s report please write N/A as your answer to this question.

N/A

1. What assessment activities will you be conducting during the next academic year?

Same ones.

1. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?

It has taken a while, but we have finally created a capstone for the political science major and it has been approved by all of the necessary committees and is listed in the catalog. Students must do one of three things before they graduate: 1.) complete an internship for credit along with an internship course 2.) complete a study abroad experience 3.) complete the research paper course.