

November 9, 2005

To: Dean Suzanne Ortega, Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School  
From: Stephen Majeski, Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science  
Re: Response to the Political Science Program Review Committee Report

### **Overview**

We wish to thank the Review Committee for its careful review of our department and the series of thoughtful suggestions about how to capitalize on opportunities that our efforts over the past ten years offer. The committee affirms the steady rise in the quality of the department as measured by scholarships, grants, entrepreneurial drive, success in recruiting and placing graduate students, and quality and innovation in the education we offer to our undergraduate students. The committee notes, however, that we have accomplished this in spite of serious resource constraints (insufficient faculty lines, a low and compressed faculty salary structure, high undergraduate teaching demands, and insufficient fellowship money to recruit graduate students). Given this evaluation the committee argues that the department is underrated and, with more resources, continued effort on our part, and new suggestions to raise our visibility and productivity, we can become a top twenty department. We share this view.

The Review Committee correctly described our department as medium sized and this is a fundamental problem for us. First, we are embedded in a very large public research university and we are trying to compete with top twenty public and private political science departments that typically have ten more faculty lines (in some cases twenty more). In addition, political science nationally is a discipline that is dynamic intellectually and one that is growing in student popularity. As a result, our competitors, both those whom we are trying to catch up to and pass and those who are ranked just behind us, are growing in faculty size and making recognizable quality hires. A key to our success (visibility, productivity, and addressing our heavy undergraduate teaching demands (recall that we have one of the highest SCH/FTE ratios in the College) is to grow (net gain in faculty lines) by at least five positions over the next five years with a target of 35 FTEs. Second, we are a faculty that is underpaid and has serious salary compression problems. This has two potentially negative consequences. First, the salary problems, particularly compression, are a threat to faculty morale and what is now a very cohesive and collaborative unit. Second, our competitors recognize that we have many high quality faculty who are underpaid so it is no surprise that a large number of faculty

have had competitive offers (sixteen retention cases in the past five years). We cannot expect our success in retaining faculty to continue without a more coherent and equitable approach to raising faculty salaries at both the individual and unit level. Below we address some specific ideas and concerns raised in the review committee report.

## **Response to Suggestions to Help the Department Realize Its Potential**

### **Raising the Department's National Standing**

#### *A Plan to Grow the Faculty (Hiring priorities)*

The committee recognizes the strengths of the department in American politics and at the nexus of Comparative and International Political Economy. The committee recommendation to prioritize hiring in these areas was foreshadowed by our own hiring plan developed in the late spring of 2005. Our hiring plan recognizes our strengths and follows a long tradition in the department of building clusters of strength. Our five-year plan targeted four areas of immediate importance: American politics; national institutions and political behavior; Comparative Politics/International Relations in political conflict and democratization; and Political Theory in democracy, justice, and political conflict. All were seen as important priorities but given faculty losses due to retirement, tenure denials, and failed retentions, we proposed to hire in American Politics and Political Theory now and other areas in the following years. Our request to hire in American politics was granted by the Dean and we are currently searching at the Assistant Professor level.

We agree with the review committee that hiring at the senior level in American Politics and Comparative/International Relations would raise the visibility of the department. Since the market for hiring senior faculty nationally is very hot and closely observed by key scholars and top departments, it is one sure way to signal to the profession that this is a department is on the move. Senior positions are difficult to come by in the College, but we feel that a senior hire in either or both these areas would do much to build on existing department strengths and raise our national visibility. In our view, hiring at the senior level (most likely given College resources at the senior Associate level or early Full level) is challenging and can take several years, so a multiyear commitment to this type of hire is essential.

Political theory has traditionally been a strength of the department. It has always had fewer faculty than other fields, and it has been down one FTE for five years. Nonetheless, the group has placed an enviable number of graduate students in good positions and played a significant role in teaching both our graduate and undergraduate students. In addition, the group has developed strong connections to Public Law, Comparative Law and Society Studies Center (CLASS), as well as to clusters in Comparative Politics, International Relations and Race and Ethnicity Politics. Almost all top twenty departments have strong political theory groups - it is one of the four main fields of political science - and we are committed to ensuring that it is a viable and strong

group that is integrated into a number of the clusters of strength in this department. Hiring a Political Theorist remains an important component of our five-year hiring plan.

We appreciate the review committee's support of our initiative to build a strong Race and Ethnicity politics group. We have hired three excellent scholars in the past two years and will continue our plan to round out the group with a fourth scholar of African-American politics.

### **Enhanced Visibility in the Profession**

We agree that the perception of the reputation of the department lags behind its actual quality and we recognize the need to enhance the visibility of the department, particularly given our geographic location and the fact that we do not benefit from the "halo effect" many of competitors share by being merely one of many highly ranked social science departments at their institution. Below are some specific areas where we intend to expand our efforts.

#### ***Increasing Journal Publications***

We recognize that the faculty needs to increase the number of publications in high visibility major journals. There has been improvement in this area over the past five years but the numbers need to increase. We are working on two proposals to provide both resources and incentives to publish more in top journals. We will introduce an annual award to a faculty member (perhaps limited to Assistant and Associate Professors) who publishes the best paper in a top-tiered journal. Also, we are working to develop a faculty development plan (targeted initially for Associate Professors) involving a package of course reduction and research stipend to increase research output.

#### ***"Marketing" our Quality and Achievements -- Better Public Outreach***

The department webpage is outdated and needs a complete overhaul. Most important to the revision is highlighting faculty activities (awards, grants, etc.), recent publications, and graduate student placements. Recent publications and CVs of faculty and graduate students should be downloadable in PDF form. We intend to make it a regular practice to submit new faculty appointments, promotions, tenures, teaching awards, and any notable news to the *PS* (the main national association news forum). We hold a University of Washington party at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association that is very well attended and we will consider hosting a party at the annual Midwest Political Science Association, the second largest annual political science convention. We also plan to circulate a letter to highlight our successes to key faculty and department chairs at the top thirty departments.

We welcome the committee recommendation to have more influential political scientists visit the department so that more people recognize what we have accomplished. We are putting into place now a new plan for the department colloquium series. The focus will be on fewer seminars (two and perhaps three per quarter) so that we can bring in

prominent scholars. The committee notes that the CHAOS/Cambridge University Press seminar series has been an excellent vehicle to bring in outstanding scholars. Several of the Centers (CAPP, CLASS, Labor Center) also bring in scholars as well. We will institute a seminar series in Race and Ethnicity Politics and have startup funding already in place to generate more visibility for this area.

The committee expressed concern that faculty and graduate students were not participating frequently enough at professional conferences. This view was probably based upon the fact that the department travel budget is meager relative to the funds available at other institutions. However faculty and graduate student participation (particularly at major conferences APSA, ISA, Midwest) is quite high. The fact of the matter is that we guarantee graduate students support for three trips and often support four or five trips to conferences over a five-year period. The department typically can fund two trips per year for faculty. It is correct, however, that the travel fund is limited to funding airfares. Additional resources to support travel are generated by the major centers connected to the department. Nonetheless, it is obvious that we could use more travel money and that we cannot survive any reductions in the resources we currently have

### **Professional Development of Younger Faculty**

Reflecting a trend that is college wide and seen also across the profession, there is, on average, some loss of momentum at the Associate Professor ranks. The idea of replicating the College Junior faculty development program (course release time and either research support or additional salary support) for Associate Professors (perhaps Full Professors as well) is a very good one and the Chair has had conversations with the Divisional Dean about such a plan. The resources (at least a good portion) would have to come from the College or Central Administration and department resources will need to come from either development success and/or indirect cost returns from sponsored research. We are working on developing a pilot program (hopefully in collaboration with the College) where we can provide at least one Associate Professor per year a course release and a small but significant research stipend (hopefully eventually \$5000.00).

Currently, the Associate professors have a mandatory meeting with the Chair every two years and have the option to meet every year. At these meetings we thoroughly review the progress of the faculty member and establish and document plans and guidelines for promotions. In addition the department's Personnel Committee, composed of three Full professors, meets every year with the Chair and advises the Chair on the development of all junior faculty regarding possible early promotions to Associate Professor and about promotion to Full Professor. The committee's advice is used by the Chair and also passed along to the faculty.

The department criteria for promotion to Full Professor have been in place for many years and have been consistently applied. They reflect the standards used by our peer institutions and those listed in the University of Washington faculty code and by the College Council of the College of Arts and Sciences; a major research project beyond promotion to Associate Professor that has a national and/or international impact.

Depending upon the type of research the scholar is engaged in, evidence of merit may be the publication of a book or a series of well-placed and connected articles. These standards have been in place and have been articulated on many occasions to all faculty.

We share the committee's concern about the importance of training a new cohort of administrative leadership. Over the past several years, Assistant and Associate Professors have held many key administrative positions: Associate Chair, Graduate Program Coordinator, and Undergraduate Program Chair to name a few. Currently Associate Professors hold the following administrative positions: Associate Chair, Graduate Program Coordinator, Undergraduate Program Chair, Chair of Graduate Admissions and Financial Aid, and Chair of the Honors Program. In order to ensure that a significant number of Associate Professors and those recently promoted to Full Professor gain administrative experience, a new policy has been instituted whereby individuals will serve in the same positions for relatively short terms, on average two years.

### **Fundraising**

We are in complete agreement that, given the current and future budgetary environment facing the department, we must focus more efforts and resources on development. The department has had its share of success over the past five years: three endowed professorships (Matthews, Bacharach, and Hirabayashi), \$500,000 Matthews graduate fellowship endowment, a \$500,000 Speyer graduate fellowship endowment, \$60,000 Curtis undergraduate fellowship endowment, and the Kaplan/Levi and Olson endowments to support both undergraduate and graduate student research and service learning. In addition annual giving to the Friends of Political Science discretionary fund has increased both in terms of the number of donors and the average size of the donation. Nonetheless, our efforts need to step up to achieve the goals elaborated in our department development plan. We have had limited success building our donor base via newsletters and events (faculty talks, political science alumni forum) and will work with the College to focus these methods to achieve better results and search for other alternatives. We will establish a visiting committee this year to help us in our search for large endowment gifts. The review committee notes the substantial development success of some that some Centers associated with us. This is certainly the case for the Bridges Center and we can learn from them. More importantly, we think that ultimately the department, with additional professional help from the College, needs to work in collaboration with all the Centers (CLASS, CAPP, CCCE, CHAOS, Bridges, and the new Race and Ethnicity Politics Center, all of which are headed by political science faculty with strong research, teaching, and administrative links to the department) on the development front for us all to be successful. The committee feels we could use additional help from the College. This is true, but it is also the case that we have benefited from College assistance in fundraising.

## **Instructional Programs**

We are pleased that the committee recognizes our commitment to teaching excellence at both the graduate and undergraduate level (four Distinguished Teaching Award winners and two Sterling Munro Award winners). In spite of the massive number of majors (second highest in the College) and the attendant number of large upper-division courses (60 to 150 students), we still run an outstanding honors program and have substantial numbers of our undergraduates engaged with our faculty in research and internships. The question is how to manage the number of majors (well over 900 now) and the total number of students we teach. We are currently taking a systematic look at this via our Undergraduate Program Committee. Under consideration are the following possibilities: adding a methods requirement to the major, raising the GPA requirement to enter the major, and adding to the current list of prerequisite courses to enter the major. As we seek to manage the number of majors, our objective is to improve the quality of education we can offer our students while, at the same time, preserving access to the diverse group of students we currently serve.

The committee suggests that the department could use more TA slots both to control class size and for financial support for the graduate program. TA slots have been and remain the single most important source of financial support for our graduate students and we do not want them to diminish. However, we currently have about as many TA slots as we need to staff our large courses and, in combination with fellowship money and RA support, we are usually a full employment shop. In order to be competitive in recruiting graduate students we need more fellowship money and RA slots rather than TA slots. Also, while TA slots are essential for us to manage the very heavy lower-division student demand, they do not help us increase the number of small upper-division courses that we can offer. The most effective way to reduce class size at the upper-division level and increase the opportunities for undergraduate research is to hire more permanent faculty.

We appreciate the recognition of the quality of our graduate program and the advances made in the past ten years: the success in recruiting graduate students, placing graduate students, their positive evaluation of the department and our graduate program (see the GPSS report), and the innovations taken to improve their graduate education. We are fully aware that our current success in recruiting graduate students against top twenty departments is fragile. We have been successful because we have had just enough fellowship money, research assistant money, and creativity in packaging them to make competitive offers. But we agree with the committee view that our competitors continue to “up the ante.” It will be crucial for us to continue to build our graduate fellowship endowments and to generate more research assistant support from both faculty grant activity and increased support from the Graduate School and/or the College. The Graduate School has responded favorably over the past several years to our Graduate School Recruitment Fund proposals and our ability to successfully recruit top students demonstrates that those resources are being used effectively. We are aware that there are many demands on the Graduate School’s resources but three quarters of RA support per year in addition to the support we currently receive would help us to maintain our competitiveness over the next several years.

## **Summary**

To continue the Department's momentum and to become a recognized top twenty program, we need to make progress in all the following areas.

1. Hire five more (net) faculty in the next five years, hopefully with two senior appointments, to reach a goal of 35 FTE faculty lines.
2. A Unit-based merit salary adjustment to address serious salary compression and retention challenges
3. Increase department development efforts particularly to support graduate fellowships and faculty research
4. Increase department national visibility
5. Continue positive trends in increasing grant production and scholarly publications
6. Manage the number of undergraduate majors to improve the quality of the educational experience for our undergraduate majors
7. Work with the numerous Centers associated with the department and the College to build a strong research infrastructure (grant and contract staff support and more quality office space)