

June 13, 2005

To: Elizabeth L. Feetham, Acting Dean, The Graduate School
David C. Hodge, Dean of Arts and Sciences
George S. Bridges, Dean and Vice Provost,
Office of Undergraduate Education

From: Political Science Program Review Committee
Professors -
William B. Beyers (Geography),
Virginia Gray (U of North Carolina, Chapel Hill)
Debra Minkoff (Sociology)
Edward D. Mansfield (U of Pennsylvania)
Charles R. Nelson, chair (Economics)
Kathleen Thelen (Northwestern U)

Re: Committee Report

Process

This report is in response to the charge letter of February 17, 2005, from Associate Dean for Academic Programs Gail L. Dubrow of the Graduate School. The committee based its conclusions on the self-study report of the Department of Political Science and interviews with its faculty, students and staff during the site visit of May 16-17, 2005. The committee appreciates the full cooperation of the Department, and particularly of its chair, Stephen J. Majeski.

Overview

The committee found the department to be remarkably well-functioning, collegial, and successful, both in terms of its undergraduate and graduate instructional programs and its research activities, despite the environment of resource starvation that prevails at the University of Washington. The department was 25th among the country's departments of political science in the most recent U.S. News and World Report rankings (2005), and in our opinion is poised to break into the top 20. This goal is well within reach; however, it will require significant investment of both departmental and college resources in the near future. We outline our suggestions below.

First, however, we address a number of questions raised in the charge letter about how resources have been spent, namely those spent on retention cases. In our view, these resources were well-deployed, helping to retain some of the leading faculty in the department. However, many department members, including some who are quite productive, strike us as underpaid and most department members seem to understand that attracting an outside offer is the only way to redress this situation. This is an unhealthy situation since talented faculty who attract an outside offer will then be tempted to leave, thereby undermining the department's efforts at growth and development. Further, this

situation has created a morale problem that, unless addressed, is likely to worsen. We recognize that talented faculty will receive outside offers and that the university will need to respond to those offers aggressively. However, there are serious salary compression problems among the ranks of associate and full professors. We recommend that the college adopt the practice used elsewhere of setting aside a pool of raise money each year that departments can apply for in order to rectify these inequities.

Second, the charge letter raised a question about the faculty's entrepreneurial drive as it relates to resources. We think the establishment of five new centers in the past decade is a stunning testament to the faculty's success as entrepreneurs, and their recent record in securing grants and contracts in support of these centers is similarly impressive. Whatever small investment the university made in seed money for some of these centers has really paid off in terms of the centers' leadership being able to secure private endowment funds or grants and contracts. Also, the department has attracted money for three endowed professorships since 2000. For a faculty at a public university with many other responsibilities, this seems like a lot of entrepreneurial activity.

Realizing the Potential of the Political Science Department

This is an excellent medium-sized department with significant strengths in certain sub-fields, but it is seriously under-funded. The following are steps that need to be taken to capitalize on the considerable momentum that already exists and to realize the potential for moving the department into a position of national eminence.

1. Strategic hiring at the senior level.

The department's self-study points out that the department has made recent faculty appointments with an eye toward building on existing strengths. This strategy has been very successful and we encourage the department to continue pursuing it. We were impressed with the initiative the department has taken in the area of Race and Ethnicity and we share the department's collective enthusiasm for its recent recruitment successes in that area.

As indicated above, we think the department is poised to propel itself into the ranks of the top twenty political science departments nationally; it is already ranked 20th in the American politics subfield and 17th in the comparative politics subfield. For this we recommend two additional senior appointments to consolidate and further enhance the department's reputation.

We see two areas where such appointments might be made and where they would have maximum impact on the department's overall stature in the field. One is in American Politics, where the department has considerable strength in public policy, public law, and political communication, and lesser strength in the traditional core areas of national institutions and political behavior. The department should consider appointing a senior scholar working on national institutions who links closely to policy or law or an appointment in political behavior who relates to communication. Another impact area is

in political economy, where the department should consider recruiting someone working at the intersection of international political economy (IPE) and comparative political economy (CPE). The department has strength in both areas (particularly the latter), and an increasing amount of important and exciting research is being conducted at the intersection of the two.

In our discussions, a number of department members raised the possibility of recruiting a political theorist. Making such an appointment would help fill a gap in the department and we understand why it might be attractive. However, in light of the severe resource constraints under which both the University and the department labors, the department is likely to realize more benefit by continuing to build out from existing departmental strengths rather than shoring up its somewhat weaker subfields.

2. Enhanced visibility of the department in the profession.

Faculty visibility depends upon research productivity and impact; the latter often depends upon placing articles in leading journals or publishing books with leading presses. Program visibility depends upon faculty visibility and the placement of graduate students, as well as their research productivity. The national rankings are largely a set of perceptions about quality of the faculty and their research and the quality of the graduate program, and, while imperfect, they do affect recruiting outcomes for faculty and students as well as success in receiving outside grant funding. Our sense is that the external reputation of the department lags behind the reality, and thus the recent ranking does not fully reflect the recent accomplishments of the department. One way to narrow this gap - beyond the obvious ones of publishing in outlets with a wide audience and placing graduate students well - is to find ways to “showcase” the strong group of faculty that has been assembled at the University of Washington. There are several ways this can be done, including:

More visits by political scientists to the University. The department needs to increase interaction between its excellent faculty and the profession at large, in part to make that excellence more visible. Current funding for seminars and workshops is inadequate and should be increased dramatically. Conferences can continue to enhance the visibility of the excellent centers affiliated with the department, and should in turn reflect on the strength of the department.

More participation by UW political scientists in professional conferences. The travel budget is only about \$500 per year per faculty and reimbursement is limited to air travel. Only lack of participation or use of individual grants by some faculty makes travel feasible for the others, an unacceptable situation. The College can make more travel resources available to the department by relieving it of the burden of paying for faculty recruiting travel – a burden that no other Political Science Department that we know of has to shoulder.

Leverage the presence of *Comparative Political Studies*, a leading journal housed at the UW, to raise visibility of the comparative politics faculty. A model of what

might be accomplished exists in the seminar series organized by the department's CHAOS center in conjunction with Cambridge University Press. Conferences held at UW could be the basis for (or offered in conjunction with the preparation of) special journal issues.

3. Professional development among younger faculty.

Future leadership must necessarily come from the ranks of younger faculty as retirement takes its inevitable toll. Thus it is essential to foster their professional and intellectual development. We were impressed with the energy and quality of Assistant Professors, but concern was voiced about whether momentum is waning among some of the Associate Professors. This cohort of potential leaders needs to be nurtured or the department will suffer. Some suggestions:

Regularize the biennial review of Associate Professors, perhaps by incorporating a report on progress towards promotion from a committee of Full Professors. This flow of information should be more current to make signals clearer. While formal mentoring is no longer a part of the UW process, regular reviews may encourage interaction between associate and full professors.

The external reputation of an academic unit is based largely on its research output, and it is essential to support research as strongly as possible. At present, a research budget is part of the hiring package, but similar packages should be part of the promotion to Associate Professor and Full Professor ranks. At present this happens only in response to outside offers, a system that encourages faculty to engage in such negotiations. Funding for faculty development should come in part from UW sources and in part from a proposed new endowment discussed below.

One issue that seems to need clarification is the standards for promotion from Associate Professor to Full Professor. We gather that this standard has traditionally been the publication of a second book, but is moving toward either that or a series of articles depending on the field, a trend that would be consistent with standards already in place at many other institutions. These standards need to be articulated, since some Associate Professors expressed a lack of clarity on this issue.

Also we perceived a need for more leadership training and development for the future among the Associate Professor rank so that as the Full Professors retire the transition to a new generation is achieved seamlessly. It was unclear to us what, if any, administrative positions, other than the Chair, have policymaking responsibility or real authority such that they prepare faculty for larger jobs such as being Chair. Faculty also seemed hazy about how one got on the Executive Committee and about other decision-making processes, though no one was complaining about these matters.

4. A stronger fund-raising program.

The department has a large body of alumni, reflecting its long history and large number of majors, and some significant fraction of these must be financially successful. In light of this potential the department's development program, begun in 2000, appears relatively weak, especially compared to those of some of the affiliated centers. Strong department funding from the college and private fund raising are crucial to maintaining a healthy departmental "core" with which the centers can coordinate their activities. We got the impression that the department has received little active attention from the A&S development staff and, given the multiple professional demands on faculty time, the department simply cannot be expected to raise all the funds it needs on its own. Obviously, successful development efforts go hand-in-hand with success in the recruiting of faculty and graduate students as well as effective support of both. The following are some suggestions for specific objectives:

Start an Endowment for Political Science Faculty Career Development. The income from the endowment would provide additional internal funding for faculty research, beyond that which should be provided by the college. For example, grants of the size that now accompany new hires could be awarded by the college at the time of promotion to Associate Professor or Full Professor, and then these new endowment funds could be used to support faculty in rank at any level who have no research funds but where an infusion of support at a critical stage in a project could help launch them into the next level. Funds from such an endowment could also enhance professional travel funding, perhaps to an international conference, in conjunction with the improved funding needed from the College.

Leverage the appreciation among alumni for distinguished teachers to provide fellowships for the graduate program. A case in point is Prof. David Olson who unfortunately for the department is retiring. He is known as a great teacher and presence in the community. Surely, an endowment bearing Prof. Olson's name with the purpose of supporting graduate students would receive a response among alumni, especially those who have gone onto successful legal careers. In his case the labor community and the Norwegian community are obvious constituencies.

Many lawyers were political science majors and these must be represented among partners of major law firms in the region. Has the development staff and department used this connection effectively for fund raising? Has a list of alumni and their present positions been provided by the development office? Law firms in particular should be approached for graduate fellowships and other named-project development objectives. Ideally, one strives to keep the graduate fellowship unrestricted, but some donors may want to specify that the fellowship go to women, to students in a certain subfield, to minorities, etc.

Development objectives can be linked to the undergraduate program. Happy alumni are a source of departmental support and will expect, in turn, some

evidence that their support benefits future undergraduates. An example of targeted development might be an endowment aimed at enabling a small-class experience, the 'Mary Doe Freshman Seminar in International Relations' for example, where 'Mary' could be a revered faculty member, a major donor or a law firm. Another example is a scholarship in support of the internship program to allow students to move to Olympia for the semester. Or an endowment for the honors program so that students with particular kinds of research needs can apply for small amounts of research funds.

Instructional Programs.

The committee was impressed by the commitment of the faculty to excellence in teaching at both undergraduate and graduate levels, and by the enthusiasm and appreciation shown by the students we interviewed. In spite of what seem like overwhelming numbers of majors, the department delivers an effective learning experience by balancing large lectures with the use of TAs in discussion sections. But it needs more TA slots, both to keep some control on class size and for stronger financial support in the graduate program.

Strong instructional programs are clearly integral to the long-run success of the department as well as being a measure of that success. A department's national reputation in Political Science is earned in part by the success of its doctoral students. That success in turn depends on successful recruiting of strong candidates to the doctoral program. The committee was especially impressed with the way the department has managed to compete successfully for graduate students against top-20 programs that in many cases are able to offer students better funding packages. The department has been able to do this so far by combining TA and RA offers with private endowment income. However, as other institutions up the ante (for example, it is becoming increasingly common to offer graduate students summer financial support), the College needs to offer the department additional support so that they can continue to compete for top graduate students. Such support will be critical in maintaining the strong upward trajectory in graduate placements, which is an important national indicator of the strength of departments overall, and in ensuring that students complete the Ph.D. program in a reasonable amount of time.

The faculty puts a lot of instructional effort into the graduate program in terms of classes taught, advising an MA "paper of distinction," reviewing progress toward degree, holding written and oral prelims, advising a dissertation, and having a final oral. The methods training has improved greatly with the addition of CSSS; placement activities and general socialization to the profession have been enhanced. The graduate students seem generally happy with much about the program, but less happy with the level of their stipends and with their office and computer facilities.

Undergraduate education in the department is innovative and excellent. We have mentioned the internship program and the excellence of teaching. The Honors Program appears to be successful; the honors students we met said the year-long research

experience had changed their lives. An impressive amount of writing goes on in all classes, considering the size of the classes. We were asked to assess the amount of undergraduate research done with faculty, with the self-study noting that “only 1% of majors had the opportunity.” Still that would mean that 90 majors did one-on-one research with 28 faculty members or roughly 3 students per faculty member. We consider this a considerable amount of faculty effort, given the already heavy teaching load carried by the faculty. The question should be: how do you get the faculty to contribute so much individual time to undergraduates?

However, the committee is concerned that the number of majors has reached overwhelming levels, in excess of 900 for a department with an FTE of about 28. This risks straining the program and faculty energy to the breaking point. Efforts are needed to moderate numbers to more manageable levels. The committee considered a number of options, such as instituting higher admissions requirements for the major, increasing the number of required courses, or raising standards to discourage less motivated students from selecting political science as a major.

Conclusion

This is an excellent department with the potential to achieve the level of national eminence, but it is threatened by starvation of resources and overwhelming student numbers. A major effort is required by the College and the department to capitalize on the momentum the department has built up, and to avoid the alternative of atrophy if that effort fails.