

Example: Introduction and Scan of Environment

Excerpt from the Political Science proposal (April 2017) to modify the Bachelor of Arts in Political Science.

Motivation and Overview

In Fall 2015, the Department of Political Science established an undergraduate curriculum review committee to assess both the Political Science and International Relations majors. The faculty committee consisted of Bonnie Meguid (chair), Gerald Gamm, Gretchen Helmke, Bethany Lacina, and Dick Niemi. In addition, we also recruited three undergraduate majors to join us: Angela Remus, Luke Meyerson, and Justin Yang.

The main questions that our committee sought to answer were the following:

- What is the current state of both majors in terms of enrollments and trends over time?
- How can we continue to attract and retain majors?
- How can we provide more opportunities for undergraduate research?
- How can we improve the community among our majors and increase networking opportunities?

To answer these questions, the committee met multiple times in Fall 2015. Following an initial set of strategic meetings in which we laid out our agenda, we invited multiple staff and faculty from across campus to meet with us to share their perspectives. These included Jon Burdick from Admissions, Joe Testani from the Career Center, Stu Jordan from CETL, and Lynda Powell, who directs our internship programs.

In Spring 2016, we then worked to develop a set of specific reforms, which can be summarized as follows:

1. Increase the relevance and substance of our Political Science major, moving towards specializations or tracks that are driven by real world topics.
2. Build in a “team learning” requirement for Political Science majors, which will subsume the current internship program as well as identify other opportunities for experiential learning or research experience.
3. Increase the technical training and analytical tools for our International Relations major.
4. As part of the mandated redesign of our webpage, we are providing students with a series of links to internships and career opportunities, research funding and opportunities, and alumni networking. We are also introducing two undergraduate major “fairs” to give students information about our courses and career paths.

This proposal was endorsed by the faculty of the Department of Political Science in June 2016. We are now seeking approval, where needed, of the Deans, the College Curriculum Committee, and/or the Faculty Council. We aim to complete this process so that we will be able to begin implementing the curricular reforms so that they can go into effect for the 2017-2018 academic year.

Our expectation is that students entering the College in Fall 2017, whether as first-year or transfer students, will be expected to satisfy the new requirements for the majors in Political Science and International Relations. Students entering before that date can opt to satisfy either the new requirements or the old requirements.

