

January 17, 2017

TO: Ian McNeely, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education

FROM: Craig Parsons, Department Head, Political Science

RE: Assessment plan of action

The Department of Political Science is currently undergoing a major revision of its undergraduate curriculum that will continue into 2017-18. We expect that these reforms will lead to pressure/opportunities to adjust the Learning Outcomes for our major; they will certainly change how we are helping students to reach those outcomes. Despite these ongoing changes, which will weaken the direct implications of assessments of learning under our pre-revision curriculum, we are eager to begin to experiment with models for assessment that can become part of our revised major going forward.

Given these transition, we think it wise to focus our trial assessment plan on just one Learning Objective that is sure to be part of our future LOs in some shape or form:

LO 1: Have a deeper understanding of the workings of the American political system at local, state and national levels.

For an initial step, we propose that our departmental Curriculum Committee develop an online assessment tool that will be administered to at least 30 freshmen and 40 seniors in early Spring quarter 2017. It will both evaluate students' factual knowledge of American political institutions, public policies, and political ideologies and ask them to apply analytical concepts from political science to brief topics/examples in short-essay form. Curriculum Committee members will create a scoring rubric, evaluate the submissions, and present data on the results to the Department Head.