

Executive Summary for the Political Science Program

This report was prepared in conjunction with Dr. Ted Becker, Ph.D. and full professor at Auburn University, Dr. Michael Bailey, Chair, Department of Criminal Justice at Columbus State University, and Dr. Nicholas Bolden, Assistant Professor at Columbus State University.

The political science program at Columbus State is a viable functioning department. The department continues to grow. It currently has 9 full-time faculty and 65 majors. The major challenges stem from how faculty are used. This report will address the significant weaknesses and strengths of the program and conclude with a cogent policy recommendation.

- 1) There is a problem in terms of full-time faculty teaching a disproportionate number of Introduction to American Government classes. This causes departmental stagnation whereby faculty are not teaching upper-division classes. This inhibits the major because few upper-division courses are offered. It is hoped that there will be an increase in the number of political science majors to 2011 numbers where there were 115 majors.
- 2) There is some concern regarding teaching loads for senior faculty. The 4-4 teaching load presents challenges because faculty have to spend a significant amount of time grading papers, holding office hours, as well as teaching. This may present an impediment for faculty to engage in an active research agenda. This has the potential to cause challenges in either post-tenure review or with efforts to apply for full professor status.
- 3) The next challenge is research funding. It is imperative that faculty have the opportunity to attend and present at research conferences. However, due to limited resources, it is difficult to fund a professor fully to attend a conference.
- 4) There are also challenges regarding faculty obtaining awards. There was no clear set of standards in this area. This has the potential to inhibit departmental collegiality as well as scholarship. This has proven to be problematic in the tenure and promotion area.
- 5) The Departmental major numbers have dropped to a low of 65 students. Strategic efforts must be implemented to create opportunities for the major to grow.

There are several key important strengths as well. The most notable one is with curriculum development and service. The major has several checkpoints which prevent students from approaching the major randomly. Instead, students must take Introduction to American Government and then follow a queue of classes that lead students to take upper-division political science classes. The most notable sequence is that students must take State and Local Government and Introduction to Political Science before advancing to other classes. They also must take Statistics and Methods before they can take upper-division classes. This rarifies the major and creates a higher level of student accountability. Another significant feature is that faculty have actively sought to develop programs to attract new students. This includes a host of presentations as well as moderating political forums and debates.

There also has been a conscientious effort to recruit more qualified faculty. Four new assistant professors were hired from nationally accredited universities. This will add greater depth and legitimacy to the program. Further, there needs to be a mentor-mentee program to allow junior faculty to develop in a proper and measured way.

Overall, the Political Science section of the department has experienced dramatic change in the past year. The goals are ambitious. The major must be increased. There needs to be a restructuring of the Introduction to American Government classes. One possible solution is to have larger class sizes but offer few sections. This could allow more full-time faculty to teach upper-division classes.

It is also advisable to add another full time faculty member with a specialty in social policy. This addition would be a benefit to both political science and public administration. Another program strength is course curriculum. The challenge is for all of the listed classes to be taught. The scheduling process is daunting and more full time faculty need to be recruited.

OVERALL ASSESSMENT: **Satisfactory** -