

**PROGRAM REVIEW
SADDLEBACK COLLEGE
POLITICAL SCIENCE PROGRAM
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SECTION I: PROGRAM OVERVIEW

A. Mission

The Saddleback College political science program is dedicated to promoting student success, fostering intellectual growth, and providing baccalaureate-level political science courses for students working toward transfer in a wide range of disciplines.

B. Historical Background and Unique Characteristics

The political science program serves Saddleback College students in two ways. First, it supports the political science major for transfer-bound students interested in careers in government, law, journalism, public service, policy analysis, staff support to elected officials, and the academic discipline itself. Second, it is the program responsible for political science 1: American Government, which must be taken by any student seeking to be graduated from any California State University as part of CSU's "U.S. History, Constitution, and American Ideals" and "California Government" requirements.

C. Progress Since the Last Program Review

The program's most recent progress has been development of Student Learning Outcomes for all its courses. In Fall 2009 the Department of Political Science and Economics is reviewing all political science courses for currency and SLO compliance.

D. Current Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges

One of the program's major strengths lies in its portfolio of distance education courses. Development of these courses has generated high enrollment growth over the past several years. Enrollment growth has also been helped by the adoption of flexible scheduling, such as 8-week and hybrid courses.

Another strength is the breadth of the curriculum. In addition to the American Government course, the program offers eight specialty courses

to help students meet the diverse transfer requirements for this highly competitive major.

Faculty, especially associate faculty, in the program have a high degree of computer literacy and have been eager to develop online political science courses, not only of American Government, but also of many electives for the major. Dr. Howard Gensler has taken the initiative to become adept at Blackboard, and plans to develop an American Government hybrid class (as he has developed online courses in economics).

We are well-situated to expand online offerings tremendously, with College and District support. It is important to note, however, that American Government students come from all majors, they tend to be CSU- rather than UC-targeted, and many do not have a great deal of computer literacy. Technical support for students is essential to their success in online courses. This is discussed further in section D of this report.

The primary challenge of the political science program is finding adequate instructional budget resources to support the enrollment growth it has experienced. Also important is the need to keep the program's media current, and to update the holdings to be Section 508-compliant.

SECTION II: REVIEW REPORT

A. Political Science Faculty and Staff

Full-Time Faculty

Howard Gensler, J.D., Ph.D. (joint appointment with economics)

Lee Haggerty

Sharon MacMillan, Ph.D.

Lawrence Twicken, Ph.D.

Associate Faculty

R. Guerra

Austin Gordon, Ph.D.

G. John Nguyen, J.D.

T. Norlen

Michael Petri

Glenna Pieri

N. Rabii

Derek Reeve, J.D.

B. Curriculum and Instruction

The political science program supports the Associate in Arts degree in Political Science. However, political science majors are a small minority in the American Government class, which is a CSU graduation requirement, and which some political science majors do not take because their score on the Advanced Placement examination provided that credit for them. Of the 30 to 34 courses we offer every semester, 22 to 25 are PS 1: American Government offerings, serving approximately 1100 students per semester (End of Term Enrollment).

The political science program provides electives to the following majors: economics, general studies, geography, history, liberal studies, and social sciences.

As mentioned before, the curriculum in the political science program is broad and strong. An average of 250 students per semester are enrolled in our elective courses. Considering all courses, we continually maintain approximately 65% success with 90% retention. As might be expected, this varies by course; our elective courses, taken mainly by majors, average success rates in the 70s and retention rates in the mid-to-high 90s. (Exact

numbers are not meaningful here because of the low number of observations and the numerous variables, such as changes in faculty, that occur within the observations.)

The program is unique in offering an Honors-level course in political theory every semester. The 25-student, seminar-style structure of the Honors Program is particularly well suited to this course, which demands strong reading comprehension of both primary and secondary sources, critical thinking and argumentation, and solid writing skills. This course was developed by Dr. Lawrence Twicken to enhance our students' ability to transfer to UCLA's "highly selective" political science major, which lists political theory as desired preparation. Most community colleges, even in Southern California, do not offer such a course.

Our international studies offerings make up an exciting part of the program's development. We have recently hired two associate faculty members who attended the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) One, Tova Norlen, has practical experience as well in the area of international relations, having worked with Paul Wolfowitz, among others. The other, Ferdinando Guerra, who is a Saddleback College alumnus, has a specialty in economics. This gives us unusual strength in the international area, especially for a community college. With Professors Norlen and Guerra, we are able to offer students outstanding courses in both International Relations and International Political Economy on a regular basis.

The international and "area studies" curriculum of the program relates also to the strong cross-disciplinary focus of the program. Political science courses are cross-listed with both economics and history courses.

The political science program fits into Saddleback College's mission by contributing to its ability to pursue three of its main objectives:

1. provide educational programs leading to the Associate in Arts and Associate in Science degrees;
2. provide a comprehensive, broad range of high-quality courses and programs to enable students to pursue their educational objectives and career goals;
3. provide a meaningful general education program including baccalaureate-level transfer and occupational criteria.

Student Learning Outcomes have been written for all political science classes. In the field of political science, as opposed to a field in which a technical skill is being taught, it is more difficult to come to agreement on what counts for mastery in the subject. It is easy to agree on the most fundamental competencies, but enumerating only those as SLOs might eventually create a classroom culture in which those fundamentals are the whole, rather than the very rudiments, of the work that an instructor believes needs to be done.

This is especially true in the more advanced courses, where students are beginning to develop the skills of critical inquiry that can take them beyond what has previously been accomplished in the field. Moreover, political science involves a great deal of comparison, contrast, and evaluation of unsettled controversies, and faculty are especially careful to protect both their own academic freedom and that of their students in their exploration of the subject.

One weakness of the program is that full-time faculty are needed to teach online courses, *in addition* to the courses that are currently offered by part-time faculty. That portion of the program is growing faster than any other. Associate faculty have developed excellent courses for distance education, but the program needs a full-time faculty member with special expertise in political science distance education in order to ensure curricular consistency and be able to obtain adequate resources for curriculum development.

C. Student Success

Largely because the majority of transfer-bound students will at least attempt PS1 during their time at Saddleback, the demographic characteristics of political science students closely mirror those of the college overall. Unfortunately, we do not have any information available to us about the demographic characteristics of political science majors.

Program-wide, we find that women outnumber men in enrollment, but do so to a lesser degree than they do campus-wide: On average, approximately 54% of enrolled students are female. (Interestingly, the only semesters in which females are below the 50%-mark is Fall; it would be interesting to track the population of males vs. females in the first year of college schooling to see whether success and retention rates differ between the two.)

As can be expected, about 88% of students are from “Saddleback College” ZIP codes as opposed to those associated with Irvine Valley College or out of the District. The Out-of-District percentage has been rising slightly, but we cannot expect that trend to continue because colleges and universities are evening out in their level of distance education courses.

Over two-thirds of political science students are in the 18-to-21 age group, and another 15 to 20 percent of students are 22 to 25 years old. This, too, reflects the transfer-bound population we serve. Transfer is the stated goal of the majority of our students (approximately 58%). Perhaps as a reflection of the relative youth of our population, we have an average of 13% who state they are “Undecided.”

The ethnic mix of the political science student body – and again, PS1: American Government is the dominant population – is that there are slightly more minority students than at Saddleback overall. The difference is most striking in our service of African-American and Hispanic students. Using the average populations since 2002:

Population	Political Science	Saddleback College
Asian	9.09%	8.38%
African-American	2.22%	1.50%
Hispanic	13.37%	12.27%
Native American	0.57%	0.48%
White non-Hispanic	57.33%	66.58%

In addition to looking at the ethnic, age, and gender data available, we need to be aware of the ebbs and flows of enrollment that are caused by economic upheaval. Community colleges are counter-cyclical entities; enrollment increases in hard times. People undergoing job loss, or having to work more than one job, or having child care issues, press harder on them in these times, all are greatly assisted by the availability of online courses. Under these conditions eight-week courses are also more popular.

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The Department has been extremely responsive to the scheduling needs of students in its face-to-face classes as well, regularly offering both core courses in every time block, and in full-semester and eight-week configurations. As mentioned above, because of economic conditions we expect an increasing demand for distance education and flexible scheduling in at least the short term, and are trying to respond to it with the limited faculty resources we have.

D. Facilities, Technical Infrastructure, and Resources

Information technology provided by the College and District have enabled us to survive our move as well as bring our course offerings to new people in new ways.

The rehabilitation of the Business and General Studies building has made large lecture classrooms once again more available, modernized the information technology resources of classrooms and offices, restored lost full-time faculty office space, and increased facilities available to associate faculty. We all hope that the discomforts, illnesses, and recurrent property damage caused by the building's prior condition will not recur.

In particular, the increased number of more quiet, although only semi-private, workspaces for associate faculty has been of great help to the program because of its heavy reliance on those individuals.

SECTION III: NEEDS ASSESSMENT

A. Political Science Faculty and Staff

The full-time complement of faculty in the department is too low. For the past three years, our capacity enrollment (census enrollment divided by course capacity) has averaged over 112%. The average fraction of full-time load in the weekly faculty contact hours is only 40%. Weekly student contact hours per full-time equivalent faculty member (WSCH/FTE) is averaging over 660 (and in 2008 is up to 695).

One particular reason for the need for full-time faculty is that with such a large component of associate faculty, it is not possible to maintain effective, active political clubs (such as the Republican and Democrat clubs), a continuously strong Model United Nations (MUN) program, pursue and monitor the many internship opportunities available for political science students, and ensure the curriculum is maintained in such a way that the transfer schools' changing – and rising – articulation hurdles demand.

B. Curriculum and Instruction

Increased competitiveness for upper-division acceptance of political science majors, especially at UC institutions, is challenging us to develop new courses to give our students a competitive advantage in transfer.

Examples of this type of challenge are these:

- § Recent changes in the statistics requirement for political science majors at UCLA, which we expect to be paralleled elsewhere for both statistics and “methods” courses;
- § UCLA's requirement of a “politics and strategy” course, which we do not have;
- § UCSD's requirement of a “power and justice” course, which we do not have;
- § CSULB's requirement of an “issues” course, which we do not have;

- § UCR's option (vis-à-vis a comparative politics course, of a "politics of the underdeveloped world course, UCI's option of a "minority politics" course, which although not essential for transfer would greatly enrich our curriculum; and
- § The near-universal requirement of an international relations course, which we do have, but for which we must rely on the availability of associate faculty with expertise in this highly specialized field.

C. Student Success

One of our biggest challenges is in doing program review itself and evaluating the program's success in fulfilling its mission.

"Fostering intellectual growth" is of course essential, and needs to be a goal, whether measurable or not. We have no way of knowing, for example, whether students engage in a higher level of critical thinking when casting votes or deciding their positions on political issues.

But more concretely, the political science program is designed to promote student success and serve the needs of transfer students both generally and in the political science major. However, none of the data available to us helps us evaluate at all how successful we are at our mission.

Specifically, the following information is unavailable to us:

- § Transfer rates of students who complete the class, as opposed to those who don't;
- § Number of students who seek transfer but are exempted from Political Science 1 because of Advanced Placement scores;
- § Number of political science students overall and in political science classes;
- § Number of students who state their major as political science but change it later (and after what history);
- § Number of students who do *not* state their major, but become political science majors after exposure to one or more classes;

- § Transfer rates of political science majors;
- § Transfer rates of political science majors to their preferred schools;
- § Baccalaureate (or higher) degree completion of political science majors.

Other items of interest exist, of course, but the above list highlights our present inability – pervasive in community colleges – to measure our final success in pursuing our mission.

D. Facilities, Technical Infrastructure, and Resources

Increased facilities support is needed in several areas:

First, the campus has no testing center. This is a special hardship in two areas on which Saddleback relies heavily: courses taught by associate faculty, and online courses.

When makeup exams are needed, it is difficult for any faculty member, but especially an associate faculty member, to have a student take such an exam in a secure environment. Students end up taking exams unsupervised in the hallways. With associate faculty, who have no offices and do not spend the hours on campuses full-time faculty do, students often end up taking the exams not only unsupervised but also during a subsequent class! This puts that student even further behind.

With online courses, where technical trouble as well as personal issues cause face-to-face make-ups to be sometimes needed, students who are *remote* from Saddleback frequently have better opportunities to take exams than our native students do. There is currently discussion of UC Berkeley's requiring proof that all distance education grades are assigned to the person actually doing the work, and one option is to have an exam to be taken in person. There are many testing centers nationwide that can accommodate this, but we have no facilities for our own students.

A second issue is the dearth of support for students after 7pm. Services for evening students are virtually nonexistent for most of the year, and yet these students represent a third of our enrollment. Secure study space, computer lab availability, access to associate faculty workspace, library hours, etc., make our campus uncollegial and even forbidding during nighttime hours.

Third, the move of the Library is expected to create some difficulty for both students and faculty, and we are aware that the Library is seeking to minimize any negative impact. Their increased reliance on electronic media, such as their recent purchase of JSTOR access to scholarly journals, is a great help. The political science program is not alone in greeting a generation of students who believe Wikipedia and Encarta are scholarly sources, have no tools for evaluating the quality or pedigree of a website, and can't identify plagiarism even when they have no intention of committing it. The wealth of resources available on the Internet promotes an epidemic of garbage research. The program desperately needs increased resources available for classroom faculty to use both in face-to-face and online courses in order to provide students with the information literacy necessary for the literacy in political science and government necessary for participation in a republic.

Fourth, Blackboard statistics indicate that most online students do the bulk of their work on weekends or very late at night. Saddleback has no support for these people when they need it. A college that seeks to serve its community by energetic expansion of distance education must have a help desk available 24/7, at least during the first and last two weeks of classes (including exams), including eight-week classes.

Fifth, it is not acceptable to have Blackboard "down" or to lose any information in the event of crisis. Backups should be numerous and frequent. Also, enough redundancy needs to be built into the system to make sure that there is no break in service except in the case of catastrophic events, *not regularly scheduled ones*. It is no surprise that there will continue to be upgrades, maintenance needs, etc.; when we have events that we know will happen, we need to make sure they are completely transparent to our students.

Finally, in terms of face-to-face classes, our wireless campus has greatly increased the opportunities for academic dishonesty among students. Now, in addition to cell-phone communication, students have laptops available. In most disciplines, faculty grapple with issues of the proper use of laptops in the classroom. The wireless environment is a damaging distraction, creating an additional hurdle for students rather than helping them. Even students who don't themselves surf the web during lecture are distracted by those who do. And during exams, the ability of students to communicate with each other or even download textbook resources has greatly increased. There is insufficient training regarding high-tech cheating, and there are no facilities for a secure "cold spot" should an instructor wish to shut down access for an exam or other activity.

SECTION IV: CONCLUSION

The political science program is a large, highly productive, understaffed, but essential part of Saddleback College that would put increased technical assistance, data availability, personnel resources, and physical resources to excellent use in the pursuit of our goals of our students' transfer success and intellectual growth into aware and informed members of the American community.