Academic Year: <u>2013-2014</u>

Academic Unit: <u>Politics & International Relations</u>

Chair: <u>Daniel Whelan</u>

Student Assessment Plan (SAP) – Basic Check-list

1. Have any changes been made to your program's student assessment plan or student learning goals? Your recent version should be on the web at http://www.hendrix.edu/academics/academics.aspx?id=7264. If you have made changes, then attach a copy of the new plan or goals.

   ☑ yes ☐ no

   - We formulated our learning goals for the Department:

       o An initial development of critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills with primary reference to political science and the social sciences more generally.
       o Familiarity with the major concepts and theoretical traditions in political science.
       o Exposure to and familiarity with the content of the five subfields in political science: methodology, American politics, political theory/philosophy, international relations/global politics, and comparative politics.
       o Exposure to the inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of the study of political, economic, and social phenomena.
       o Enhancing oral & written communication skills
       o Prepare our students for engaged citizenship

2. Are student learning goals available to students on the web on the departmental/programmatic page(s)? If not, then this will be considered as an action plan for the coming year.

   ☑ yes ☐ no

3. Are student learning goals, appropriate for each course, included in the course syllabi in your department or program? If not, then this will be considered as an action plan for the coming year.

   ☑ yes ☐ no

Student Assessment Plan Development - Departments and programs who have a complete and current SAP should consider the next step in SAP development.

1. As a next step in SAP development, departments/programs are encouraged begin working on an assessment audit to determine how student learning goals fit across the courses in the major. Sometimes the term "scaffolding" is used to describe this process. This could be as complicated as a full grid of student learning goals, or a single learning goal, across the courses in the major. (This has not been required of departments, but it is a recommended next step when the SAP is up to date.) Has your program already done this?

    □ yes ☑ no *If yes, please provide any **new** results in either in prose or as a table. If no, then this could be the next annual action plan for your program.*

Yearly Assessment Report – each department or program is expected to have assessment discussions for at least two hours each academic year. If necessary, help is available from David Sutherland, just call.

1. What was your planned action item identified in your last report?

    We have finally developed and posted our Departmental Learning Goals to the website, and have included four of those goals as common to all sections of POLI 100 *Issues in Politics* (and included on those syllabi). We have also developed a pre/post-test that we will use to assess the extent to which these goals are being met in all sections of that course.

2. Briefly summarize the topics discussed in your annual assessment meeting.

    The bulk of our assessment discussion arose from the results from our annual exit survey of graduating seniors. We discussed the following:

    *   Whether we should consider alternatives for the IR study-abroad requirement for students who are not able to successfully participate in a substantial study-abroad experience
    *   Updates to the Guide for Academic Planning to clarify some issues
    *   Standardization of course evaluation forms (beyond POLI 100, which is a common form to which each individual instructor can add elements specific to their course)
    *   How we can better address student oral/verbal skills (e.g., making presentations) and the question of promoting professional development/career skills in our curriculum
    *   The ongoing discussion about how Statistics dovetails with our Research Methods course
    *   Should we consider alternatives to the traditional thesis as a capstone, or perhaps replace it?
    *   Whether to make the UR Odyssey credit that is currently attached to POLI 497 an "opt-in" choice rather than being automatic

3. What was the conclusion of your assessment discussion and how did the collected assessment data inform your conclusion? Specifically describe any curricular or programmatic changes that have been made that were based, at least in part, on the data in your SAP.

    *   We decided we ought to strongly encourage our Seniors to present (for the UR) at the Arkansas Political Science Association rather than NCUR. ArkPSA is more relevant while also being very undergraduate student-friendly.

- To continue to build a sense of community among our majors, we've decided to sponsor an annual "Welcome Back" event for our majors early in the Fall semester, and to create a departmental Facebook page, where we can more easily share news and events than on the Department website.

4. Define one new action item for your assessment discussions next year.

- We all agree that we need to continue to discuss how to best scaffold our curriculum, especially with reference to the connections between the courses that are common to all of our majors: POLI 100 *Issues in Politics*; POLI 400 *Research Methods*; and POLI 497 *Senior Research Seminar*. Of these, the research methods/capstone link is the most critical (that also includes MATH 215 *Statistical Analysis*).