Departmental and Program Assessment 2015-2016
Annual Assessment Plan Basic Update

Academic Year: <u>2015-2016</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

2. Are student learning goals available to students on the web on the departmental/programmatic page(s)? If not, then this needs to occur during the next academic 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*. **As we move toward the next NCA-HLC evaluation, we need to work on documenting these meetings**.* If necessary, help is available from David Sutherland, just call.

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

   There will be more than one – revamping certain elements of the IR major will be one; but a larger discussion about our overall curriculum, and especially the POLI 100 – Research Methods – Capstone sequence/scaffolding will be central.

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

   Based on assessment data-guided discussions we began at our last retreat, in the Fall of 2015 the Department began to consider a fairly substantial overhaul/redesign of our POLI 100 – Research Methods – Capstone "scaffold," which led to proposed redesigns of both the Politics and International Relations majors. Those, along with a slew of course additions and deletions (owing to Tim Cloyd joining the Department in a full-time teaching capacity), were submitted to the faculty and subsequently approved.

   As for POLI 497 *Senior Research Seminar*, at our assessment meeting, which happened in summer 2016, we also discussed how to improve on our programming in support of professional/career development, as well as how to redesign the Seminar so that each section could be adequately led by only one person, rather than our two-reader model (which was unsustainable and inequitable, since second-readers were in essence teaching an extra half-credit).

   We also need to figure out how we are going to assess the new courses (outlined below), POLI 201/202 and 303.

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.

   - POLI 400 *Research Methods* was normally taken by student in their junior year. Its purpose was to introduce students to the wide variety of quantitative and qualitative methods used in the

discipline, and to require students to begin to design a research project that they could carry forward into POLI 497 *Senior Research Seminar*. Based on our discussions and other assessment data (especially the Senior Exit Surveys), we determined that the demands on this course were really too great. For one, the coverage of breadth of research methods was limited by time – and that non-quantitative methods were not being adequate covered to meet the needs of students interested in projects involving something other than formal hypothesis testing (quant methods). Again, owing to time, the research designs for POLI 497 were underdeveloped, leading to difficulties in the Senior Thesis process.

- Thus, we decided to implement the following changes to the majors:
    - Create two separate research methods courses, to be offered at the 200-level: one on Quantitative Methods (POLI 202); the other on Normative Methods (POLI 201). Students would be encouraged to take both, but only required to take one.
    - Create a new research design course, POLI 300 *Analyzing Politics*. This course would be taken after research methods, as a prelude to POLI 497. Sections of the course could be taught by anyone, and will be topically oriented. This shifts the burden away from Kiril Kolev and allows all of us to contribute.
    - We also added a revised a component of the IR major. Students were required to take one course in Foreign Policy, but usually only two courses were offered each year, meaning that those courses were very large. By adding courses in Security Studies (which Tim will teach) to that category, we've reduced that pressure.

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

   Among the most critical will be assessment and discussion of necessary revisions to our new research methods/design sequence.

5. Does your department or program have a summary assessment file in the chair's office? During external visits, random departments or programs will be selected by NCA-HLC to show and discuss assessment activities.

   Yes.