



ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW NEWS

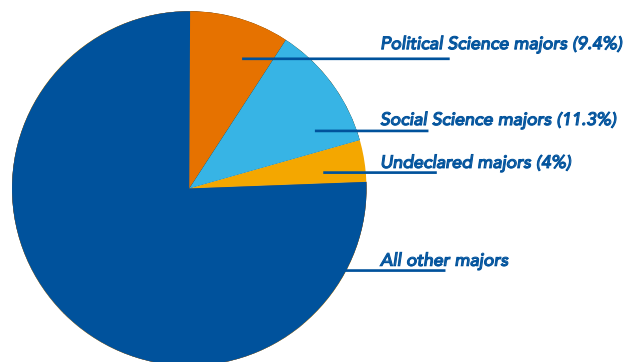
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Erika Masaki, Political Science Faculty, interviewed by Shannon Ball, Winter 2023.

This interview has been edited for clarity and space considerations. To read the entire interview, please use this link (https://docs.google.com/document/d/1EnleyMI0gtx7jOJOpcbF3YL_nuS5cX9mSjwz4URk0yY/edit?usp=sharing)

What did you discover through the APR process (specifically, through the self-study)? What, if anything, surprised you?

I think for me the most surprising thing was how few of our students are either declared as political science students or intend to be. It was a single digit percentage. And so you know, when you're thinking about how you teach the subject matter and what you present, and how you present it, especially when you're trying to think of how to make a lot of the content more applicable, it did change my perception of how to make our curriculum more general and to ensure that we were both giving the real specific content to political science majors, or intended majors, but also to making sure that the class was really applicable to other majors. So I know one thing that I really wanted to think about doing when we did some of the outcomes and things like that was to think about how to have students think about how politics affects their chosen interests, or their intended major, so that they could see that there was some overlap. And so that was the most surprising thing to me when I read the study was just how few of our students were actually political science majors.

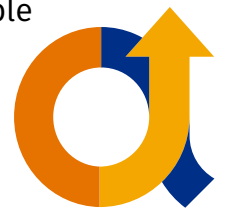


What improvements/changes have you made in response to your discoveries? Which of these changes has been easy to implement? Which have been challenging? What, if any, have been the barriers to implementation? What do you need to implement?

So we definitely worked on improving our outcomes. And that was a big process, as you know, and we're continuing to work on some of our other outcomes. And one thing that I think again directly related to that self-study is thinking about not just sort of the strict content political science part of it, but tying them into our ILOs. Thinking about broader implications for these courses. Not just, "Oh, you need to know the 3 branches of government," but "how do the 3 branches of government potentially affect other parts of society?" And so it really, I think, gave me the opportunity to be very reflective about my discipline, and to answer some real questions about "what do students learn when they step into our classroom?" Not just, you know, again, being able to recite off certain aspects that are related to political science, or to just, you know, define concepts. But how do

they really apply them? I think what was both easy and difficult to implement were those outcome changes, you know. Really taking a deep, serious look at the outcomes and then working to change them. It was easy because it was clear that they needed work. It was clear that, even if someone were just sort of starting over from the beginning, they wouldn't probably choose such detailed, specific, down-to-the-chapter outcomes. What was difficult was, again, thinking about everything that a student who takes one of the courses would want and what we would want them to come away with from that course. And also sort of the process of it was difficult, too, because I think when we are subject matter experts but not assessment experts, we tend to be a lot more one-track-minded about how we approach our disciplines. And so that was difficult in the sense that it took a lot of time. It took a lot of thought and honest reflection about the discipline, and also its role within higher education, but more specifically in the Lane context.

And I think it would have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, to come up with really satisfying outcomes without the assessment team. So for me, you know, I think where I was on day one when I sort of wrote them myself versus what we came out with at the end, after working particularly in the Community of Practice, that was... you know, it wasn't miles different. But the way in which they were framed and worded, in the sort of breadth and depth part of it we're definitely much better, and I think it also gave me at least the opportunity to really think about "Well, this is how I teach things, but that might not be how some someone else does it." And so it really kind of forced me to think about diverse perspectives, and I don't think I could have done that without the assessment team's help. And I think it is a barrier, like that specific knowledge. When I first stepped into this role, you know, I took one assessment class in graduate school for a teaching credential type of thing, and it's really like you think you know things. But then, when you're actually trying to put them into words, it's actually really difficult. That's where that collaboration piece is really important, because without that we never would have come up with truly measurable outcomes that covered both the content and something that was measurable, and that also really fit in well with what would later become our program outcomes.



[. . .]

A barrier has been, I think, not having a dedicated [marketing] team to work with, like the way that we did with assessment, because we know who to go to. And there's someone who is sort of an expert in that, and who is helping to guide the process so we can say, "Look, these outcomes kind of need a lot of work. What do students need to know? What do they need to do?" And then there's a designated person and team that will help us with that. With the marketing piece, it does feel like we have ideas of our own, even if it's as simple as a social media post, or, you know, maybe printing out some flyers. We've done that. And so some of the things that we've done on our own involve sort of us making our own flyers for upcoming classes and just putting them around the campus. But for broader marketing we haven't been able to achieve any of that, and that's been a huge barrier, and you know, in our APR, we have that as cost neutral, except for printing costs for promotional materials, and so that felt like low-hanging fruit, that we should have been able to do better on over the past 3-4 years. And that is listed as cost neutral because we have marketing in-house that we shouldn't have to spend extra money and someone for it. I did do a Google site, and it's there. I don't know how many people look at it, but the problem is that it's not really referenced anywhere. So if we could get Lane to even just put that somewhere, then students could say, "oh, I'm interested in this course." And so everything else that I've done and we've done has been like our own outreach, like whenever the college offers the free class to high schoolers, I reach out to like the social studies teachers at all the schools in Lane County and let them know, like, "hey, we have a lot of online classes that might benefit your students" and things like that. But as far as the true marketing campaign, we haven't made any progress really on that.

Political Science Program Learning Outcomes

Identify, explain, and analyze historical foundations, core concepts, theories, and debates in political science

Develop and express political ideas and opinions through the critical evaluation of political information with respect for different points of view

Apply knowledge and experiences to increase appreciation for and participation in political science

If you were to talk to a colleague in another department who is nervous about stepping on to APR, what advice would you give them?

Ask all the questions and lean on the APR team. Because that's literally what they're there for. They're there to guide you through the process. I would also say to you, "Approach it with an open mind" because, you know, when I stepped into this role, a lot of it felt like mandates, like "Oh, if you don't do this, you're gonna be punished, or there's some kind of underlying punishment if you don't get all of these things done." But I think a lot of us step into these faculty positions because we truly want to serve our students. We want to do justice to our disciplines, and to make sure that our students are really getting the best experience. So I know for me, when I would feel sometimes frustrated with the process, or unsure about what I was doing, I would think about "Wow! Imagine I'm a first generation student coming into this classroom with these improved course outcomes, and having such a clear idea of what I'm expected to learn, and what I'm expected to take away from this class or this program." And so for me it's about the students, and then also continuously relying on the APR team to sort of help me through the parts that I didn't know. I didn't have those contacts on campus where I could just say, "hey, I just need this or that." Of course, in our example, assessment was a big part of that, and so always coming to [Shannon Ball, former Assessment Coordinator], with questions, or like, "hey, what am I doing?" But again, you know, I think even something I would tell myself is, "hey, I maybe I should have reached out to the APR team when we did hit some of those walls with marketing or trying to reach out to to get on Guided Pathways" or things like that.

Interested in showcasing what you've learned through the APR process and/or highlighting important program improvements? Contact APROC Chair Kate Sullivan, and she'll put you in touch with the newsletter interview committee (Shannon Ball, Hannah Hamalian, and Rich McBride). Share your accomplishments with the campus community!

