

Summary of Internal and External Review Team Reports
Department of Political Science
Fall 2006

The following summarizes the findings of the internal and external reviews teams that conducted reviews during the Fall semester of 2006.

The Department is performing at a very high level and contributes significantly to the educational mission of SIUC through effective undergraduate and graduate programs, relevant intellectual contributions, and varied service and outreach activities. All program facets appear to provide good value to students and reasonably well-trained students to employers. Faculty members, in general, appear to be capable, committed to good teaching, concerned about student achievement and welfare, and conscientious about delivery of a quality program. Areas of improvement include the obvious and critical concern regarding the appalling disrepair of Faner Hall physical facilities. Also, there is a critical need for at least one additional faculty member with an international relations specialty, a strategic plan to address issues related to high faculty turnover and the resulting large number of junior faculty on staff, and a realistic plan to improve professional communications between faculty in public administration and those in other program areas. Overall, the program is exceeding strong; program improvements are consistent, timely, and reasonable; faculty members are diverse and appear to be both good teachers and good researchers; levels of student satisfaction and enrollment remain steady and within expected norms; and regard for the program both regionally and nationally remains high. Recommendations include:

Faculty

- Top priority should be given to recruiting at least one additional faculty with a specialty in International Relations; Public Administration positions need to be filled to prepare for potential retirements.
- Faculty turnover and salary compression issues need to be addressed.
- Instructors/adjunct faculty members need to be monitored consistently, as quality of instruction varies.

Students

- A formal orientation for new majors is suggested to provide an overview of program options, course requirements, and career paths. Academic *and* professional advising especially during the senior year, should be considered.
- Supporting a professional society/club for undergraduates to encourage participation in local decision-making and career activities and to facilitate membership in professional organizations should be considered.
- Systematic effort should be made to attract higher quality students into the graduate program.
- Written guidelines for new graduate students regarding department policies, assistantships, and advisement procedures delivered in an early fall orientation are suggested.
- Student involvement in curriculum related decisions and in research forums to expose students to faculty research should be encouraged.

Curriculum

- The number/variety of electives should be expanded to provide breadth and flexibility to attract high caliber students and faculty.
- Standardizing POLS 140 sections with same text, readings, assignments, and exams should be considered.
- Capitalize on a current opportunity to become the nation's premiere institution for a degree in Aviation Policy.
- Analyze and adjust frequency and times during which specific courses are offered to prevent scheduling issues, especially with related programs such as Aviation and Law.
- Streamline the course structure and clearly communicate both the schedule and specific degree requirements to students to enable them to develop realistic programs of study.
- Maintain the current emphasis on three fields of expertise for those in the Ph.D. program to assure that graduates will be marketable to small liberal arts colleges.
- Assign all new graduate students a faculty advisor or committee that can assist them in making program decisions at the beginning of their program.
- Establish a program of core and elective courses for all programs and ensure they will be offered on a regular basis that meets student needs.
- Provide students with opportunities for co-authorships, collaborative research with faculty members, and/or independent research and presentation colloquia.

Resources

- Top priority should be given to addressing dilapidated Faner Hall physical facilities.
- Sufficient travel dollars to facilitate professional development of faculty and graduate students should be provided.
- Ensure continuing availability of ICPSR (research and teaching database); provide more and improved space/facilities/computer capabilities for graduate students.

Unit Administration

- Program directors need to meet regularly to ensure program consistency.
- MPA core faculty need to provide direction for the program and identify a long-term faculty recruitment plan.
- Department faculty need to develop a strategic plan on how particular issues (e.g., priority in faculty hiring, course sequencing, programming needs) will be addressed.
- The Department needs to identify mechanisms to bridge the communication gap between its Public Administration component and the rest of the faculty.