**STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY FORM AY 2013-2014**

**Degree and Program Name:** Political Science (B.A.)

**Submitted By:** Richard Wandling and Lilian Barria

### PART ONE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are the learning objectives?</th>
<th>How, where, and when are they assessed?</th>
<th>What are the expectations?</th>
<th>What are the results?</th>
<th>Committee/ person responsible? How are results shared?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Students will demonstrate satisfactory knowledge of politics, government and public policy. | Student writing samples are assessed at the end of each semester in two courses: PLS 2001 - Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science (N=40) and PLS 4600 - Political Science Capstone (N=21). For the academic year 2013-2014, two sections of PLS 2001 and two sections of PLS 4600 were used for assessment purposes. Writing assignments include book/article reviews, research papers, reading responses, and case briefs. Faculty members teaching the courses are asked to complete an evaluation of a writing assignment for each student in their course. The evaluation is filled out without identifying the particular student, in order to | For the writing sample analysis, students should understand how to use scholarly literature, documents, and other sources to conduct Political Science research. In addition, students should demonstrate knowledge of their subject area through their writing samples. For PLS 2001, the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #1 will be at least 3.0. For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #1 will be at least 3.5. | **Mean ratings PLS 2001 writing samples:**  
1. Development of literature review/use of documents and sources.: 3.58  
2. Knowledge of the subject area: 3.72  
**Mean ratings PLS 4600 writing samples:**  
1. Development of literature review/use of documents and sources.: 4.38  
2. Knowledge of the subject area: 4.52 | The Assessment Coordinator, working with the Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee, is responsible for analyzing the learning objectives. The results are shared with and discussed by department faculty during the 1st faculty meeting of the Fall semester. Results are also shared with the student representative to College of Sciences Dean’s advisory board. The Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee members use these results to continue discussions and guide curriculum changes during the next academic year. |

Please complete a separate worksheet for each academic program (major, minor) at each level (undergraduate, graduate) in your department. Worksheets are due to CASA this year by **June 13, 2014**. Worksheets should be sent electronically to kjsanders@eiu.edu and should also be submitted to your college dean. For information about assessment or help with your assessment plans, visit the Assessment webpage at http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/ or contact Karla Sanders in CASA at 581-6056.
establish general trends that will help us determine the effectiveness of our program in meeting our objectives. The department Assessment Coordinator and her graduate assistant collect and analyze the results. Ratings are based on a Likert scale, from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), and include NA (not applicable).

Students in PLS 2001 are typically sophomores, while students in PLS 4600 are typically seniors. Assessment in these two courses will allow us to compare changes between sophomores and seniors as students progress in the major.

Two questions on the evaluation rubric relate to learning objective #1:
1. How well did the student develop his/her literature review, or use relevant documents and sources in his/her writing sample?
2. How would you rate the student’s knowledge of the subject area, based on this writing sample?

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<th>2. Students will demonstrate the ability to think critically.</th>
<th>The same analysis described in learning objective #1 (above) is used here. Ratings are based on a Likert scale, from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), and include NA (not applicable).</th>
<th>To demonstrate critical thinking, faculty members were directly asked to evaluate students’ critical thinking and writing skills. For PLS 2001, the expectation is that the average rating for Mean ratings PLS 2001 writing samples: 1. Evaluation of critical thinking skills: 3.75</th>
<th>academic year.</th>
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| 3. Students will demonstrate the ability to write effectively. | One question is included in the rubric:  
1. How well did the student demonstrate critical thinking and writing skills through his/her writing sample? | the question relevant to learning objective #2 will be at least 3.0.  
For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for the question relevant to learning objective #2 will be at least 3.5. | **Mean ratings PLS 4600 writing samples:**  
1. Evaluation of critical thinking skills:  
   4.33  
**Additional Results:**  
Although a student perception-based measure of critical thinking skills, one item from the PLS Major Exit Survey (now administered in PLS 4600 each semester) has direct relevance. Based on a scale with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree, the mean score was 4.25 for “The PLS Major helped me develop my critical thinking skills” (N=24). | met. |

| The same analysis described in learning objective #1 (above) is used here. Ratings are based on a Likert scale, from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), and include NA (not applicable).  
Three questions are included in the rubric:  
1. How well developed was the student’s research question, hypothesis, or focus of his/her writing sample?  
2. How well written was the student’s writing sample?  
3. How well did the student apply consistent, appropriate citations in the writing sample? | To demonstrate writing skills, students should be able to develop specific, appropriate hypotheses or research questions. They should be able to communicate and argue effectively through their research and writing. They should be able to cite appropriate sources related to their topic.  
For PLS 2001, the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #3 will be at least 3.0.  
For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #3 will be at least 3.5. | **Mean ratings PLS 2001 writing samples:**  
1. Development of research question/hypothesis:  
   3.9  
2. Quality of writing:  
   3.7  
3. Consistent and appropriate citations:  
   3.93 | **Mean ratings PLS 4600 writing samples:**  
1. Development of research question/hypothesis:  
   4.38  
2. Quality of writing:  
   4.48  
3. Consistent and appropriate citations:  
   4.67 | As with learning objective #1, the department faculty members will be discussing what, if any, changes will be necessary to ensure that this objective continues to be met. |
learning objective #3 will be at least 3.5.

**Additional Results:**

1. The Department Honors Coordinator has initiated assessment data collection for PLS Majors involved in Departmental Honors. Although the N at this point is small, 3 students for Spring 2014, the preliminary results are promising. For 9 rating surveys submitted by Departmental Honors Thesis Committee faculty members, based on a 5 point scale with 5 being excellent and 1 failure, the Mean ratings relative to this learning objective are:
   - *Writing Skills:* 4.1
   - *Applying appropriate social science research methods:* 4.3.

2. The PLS Department also has initiated a process of keeping track of undergraduate student presentations of their research at professional conferences and in organized poster programs. This type of activity is another useful indicator of PLS student performance in the intricately related processes of research and writing. For AY 13-14, the participation rates include:
   - *1 poster at the Midwest Political Science Association Conference.*
   - *1 poster at the Illinois*
Political Science Association Conference.
*2 posters at the National CUR Conference.
*1 poster at COS Sciencefest (SURE Award winner).
*5 posters at EIU Showcase.
*And although not a presentation, a PLS Major received one of the Social Science Writing Awards.

(3) A PLS Exit Survey item also is directly related to this area. Based on a 5 point scale, with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree, the Mean was 4.21 (N=24) for the following statement: “The PLS Major helped me develop my writing skills”

| 4. Students will demonstrate the ability to function as responsible citizens. | At the beginning of the semester, students respond to a survey that represents a refashioning of the earlier EIU Global Citizenship Survey. Questions were considered and adapted from the university survey to work for departmental purposes and needs. Student survey responses are assessed in two courses: PLS 2001 - Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science (N=30) and PLS 4600 - Political Science Capstone (N=17). For the academic year 2013-2014, two sections of PLS 2001 | To demonstrate the ability to function as a responsible citizen, students should indicate a capacity for political engagement through questioning government decisions, as well as considering multiple perspectives when making political/policy decisions. For PLS 2001 , the expectation is that the average rating for each question relevant to learning objective #4 will be at least than or equal to 2.5. For PLS 4600, the expectation is that the average rating for | Mean ratings PLS 2001 survey:
1. Citizens should actively question government decisions: 1.37
2. Considering Multiple Perspectives: 1.47

Mean ratings PLS 4600 survey:
3. Citizens should actively question government decisions: 1.47
4. Considering Multiple Perspectives: 1.65 | As with learning objective #1, the department faculty members will be discussing what, if any, changes will be necessary to ensure that this objective continues to be met. |
and two sections of PLS 4600 were used for assessment purposes.

Students taking the courses are asked to complete a survey at the beginning of the semester. The survey is filled out without identifying the particular student, in order to establish general trends that will help us determine the effectiveness of our program in meeting our objectives. The department Assessment Coordinator and a graduate assistant collected and analyzed the results. Ratings are based on a modified 4-point Likert scale, from 1 (Strongly Agree) to 4 (Strongly Disagree) with no NA (not applicable) response category.

Students in PLS 2001 are typically sophomores, while students in PLS 4600 are typically seniors. Assessment in these two courses will allow us to compare changes between sophomores and seniors as students progress in the major.

Two statements were selected for analysis:
1. I believe that citizens should actively question government decisions.
2. My Political Science education has taught me to consider multiple perspectives when making decisions.

Each question relevant to learning objective #4 will be at less than or equal to 2.0.

(Note: The directionality of the Likert numerical values for the PLS 2001 and 4600 results, as summarized in Column 2 of Learning Objective 4.)

Additional Results:

An additional way of assessing PLS students on this objective is to consider data on actual student participation in activities that indicate, both directly and indirectly, embrace of the value of responsible citizenship. For this, we have data collected from the past year in three ways:

(1)From PLS student Exit Surveys which we have started a practice of administering in PLS 4600. One question item asks for the PLS seniors to indicate whether they have been involved in various types of experiential learning activities, and encouraging results are emerging. For example, of 24 students completing the survey in AY13-14, 6 students participated in Volunteer Work or Alternative Spring Break; 7 of the 24 in Campus Leadership positions; 6 of the 24 in government simulations (Moot Court or Model Illinois Government); and 8 of the 24 in the Political Science Association. Most of the students participated in multiple activities of this genre.

(2)From the same Exit...
5. Students will demonstrate the ability to speak effectively.

| Speaking assessment is done by professors of PLS 4600, the senior capstone course for PLS majors. This course is conducted in a seminar format with numerous opportunities for speaking assessment, from assigned presentations of readings to the end-of-the-term research poster presentation program. (For this assessment the N=21.) Starting with Fall 2013, PLS instructors were asked to rate students at the conclusion of the course on a 5-point rating system, with 5 the highest rating and 1 the lowest, on the following dimensions of It is expected that for each of the six dimensions of speaking assessment (i.e., Organization, Language, Material, Analysis, Nonverbal Delivery and Verbal Delivery) that mean student ratings will be at least 3.5 or higher. Mean ratings for PLS 4600 Speaking Assessment: *Organization: 4.29 *Language: 4.33 *Material: 4.19 *Analysis: 4.19 *Nonverbal Delivery: 4.19 *Verbal Delivery: 4.19 Overall Holistic Score: 4.29 |

| Survey (N=24) one survey item is particularly relevant. Based on 5 to 1 scale, with 5 being Strongly Agree and 1 Strongly Disagree: Mean value of 4.29 for “The PLS major strengthened my awareness of the value of political participation”. (3) Initial efforts at assembling information on specific students and their leadership positions have yielded the names of 16 PLS Majors in important leadership positions, such as Student Action Team; Student Government; and Students for Peace and Justice—to name a few high profile campus-level activities. |

As with learning objective #1, the department faculty members will be discussing what, if any, changes will be necessary to ensure that this objective continues to be met.
speaking assessment:

*Organization: Clear 
Arrange of Ideas? 
Introduction, body, conclusion, 
transitions? Was there an 
identifiable structure?

*Language: Clear accurate, 
varied vivid? Appropriate 
standards of usage? Was 
language appropriate for 
situation and audience?....

*Material: Are supporting 
materials specific, credible, 
relevant, sufficient, interesting? 
Appropriate to the situation?....

*Analysis: Was the presentation 
adapted to the audience and the 
situation? Was critical thinking 
employed in examining the 
issue(s)? Was the approach and 
structure consistent with the 
overall purpose?

*Nonverbal Delivery: Eye 
Contact? Awareness to audience 
reaction? Do gestures seem 
natural? Did presenter use notes 
and/or audio/visual aids 
effectively?

*Verbal Delivery: Varied in 
pitch, volume, rate, emphasis? 
Enthusiastic? Free of 
fillers….Effective articulation 
and pronunciation?

Faculty ratings also were asked 
to assign an Overall holistic 
score after the ratings for the 
above dimensions. The overall 
holistic score used the same 5-
point scale, with 5 being the 
highest rating and 1 the lowest.
The faculty-completed assessment forms were collected by the Undergraduate Assessment Coordinator and then entered into the ongoing departmental assessment data system, and it must be noted that the individual rating forms also included no student-specific identifying information—outside of academic year, semester and professor’s last name.

PART TWO
Describe what your program’s assessment accomplishments since your last report was submitted. Discuss ways in which you have responded to the CASA Director’s comments on last year’s report or simply describe what assessment work was initiated, continued, or completed.

This academic year we continued with the central role of PLS 2001 and PLS 4600, both required courses for the PLS Major, in our assessment process. Highlights of key steps in our assessment processes include the following:

* Revising the Global Citizenship assessment instrument to better focus on departmental purposes and needs, particularly with respect to categories of citizenship that are important to engagement in the political/policy world, from local levels on through larger systems of participation. In sum, the department has implemented a PLS Citizenship Survey, in conjunction with a restructuring of the assessment objective itself—from the vague, amorphous notion of “global” citizenship to responsible citizenship.
* Implementing Speaking Assessment through the PLS 4600 course, including reporting the results from our first year of focused collection of speaking assessment data.
* Restructuring the Exit Survey process, including building it into the PLS 4600 course, and taking steps toward using exit survey results in our overall assessment strategy.
* Moving toward regular and systematic collection of information and data on undergraduate student participation in undergraduate research activities such as conference and poster presentations, on through various categories of student leadership and service.

We will continue with the aforementioned efforts, including opportunities for seamlessly infusing exit survey results into our assessment summary report: additional examination of the meaning and dimensions of citizenship relative to being a PLS major; and further examination of the interplay between research and writing and effective ways of assessing these two intricately related activities. Another agenda item is to continue exploration with CATS concerning building an online data-collection system.
PART THREE

Summarize changes and improvements in curriculum, instruction, and learning that have resulted from the implementation of your assessment program. How have you used the data? What have you learned? In light of what you have learned through your assessment efforts this year and in past years, what are your plans for the future?

Past assessment reports suggested that we needed some curricular changes specifically geared toward writing, since this is a major thrust of our departmental learning objectives. The result was the creation of PLS 2001 (Introduction to Research Methods in Political Science). This course began in the fall of 2010, and the department is seeing tangible evidence that this course has helped to strengthen our majors’ knowledge of the research process and methods/strategies involved in writing within the political science discipline. A related and equally important curricular change was addition of the senior capstone course (PLS 4600), which was first offered in AY 2011-2012. Students focus on the research process, engaging in extensive writing and critical thinking activities, with the course culminating with a poster session in which students present the results of the major research project for the course.

We have linked PLS 2001 and 4600 for assessment purposes, with these courses the main focus of our assessment strategy. These two courses allow us to perform a pre- and post-test to compare the development of our majors from sophomore to senior level status. In particular, since we have moved our collected data to SPSS, we now are building a longitudinal dataset that will allow us to see departmental trends across academic years. These data in particular will prove helpful as the department undertakes an evaluation of its undergraduate research methods courses (PLS 2001 and 2033, along with the 4600 course). We are considering matters such as their coverage and focus on through the best way to design the set of courses. In addition, the department has initiated a process of collecting information on how programs at comparable universities design key facets of their Political Science curriculum, from the mix of required core classes on through options and concentrations. Again, our assessment data will play an important role as we review our undergraduate curriculum. Beyond this, it is important to note that this assessment report shows noticeably improved results for our majors, from PLS 2001 to 4600, for key areas such as critical thinking, writing and elements directly related to the research process.

Our curricular changes since 2009 also have strengthened our Integrative Learning component including the simulations, internships, study abroad, national student exchanges, independent study or research, and Departmental Honors. These are now playing a prominent role in our curricular offerings. As more students participate in these Integrative Learning opportunities, the department will continue to discuss improvements in our assessment instruments and how these activities will contribute to achieving our learning objectives. One definite development, and a very positive one, is the increased output of our undergraduate students in presenting their research projects, from conferences on through university/college programs such as Showcase EIU. It also must be noted that this increased activity in student research presentations beyond the classroom also speaks to the cumulative benefits associated with the mission of the PLS 2100 and 4600 courses. It also should be noted that the department in Spring 2014 began offering a new required course for the major, Introduction to Public Policy (PLS 2703). Its addition grew out of assessment activities, particularly with respect to the intersection of student research and writing processes, critical thinking and analysis skills and integrative learning opportunities. This course presents another set of opportunities for our students to become engaged in experiential/integrative learning as they move through the curriculum, both in the sense of development of analytical and research tools that lend themselves well to the applied policy setting on through undergraduate research projects for conferences, campus poster sessions and even publication.