**STUDENT LEARNING ASSESSMENT PROGRAM SUMMARY FORM AY 2004-2005**

**Degree and Program Name:** B.A., Political Science  
**Submitted By:** Melinda Mueller & Richard Wandling

### PART ONE

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<th>What are the learning objectives?</th>
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| 1. Students will demonstrate satisfactory analysis of politics, government, and public policy. | Student writing samples were evaluated from two types of courses. First, writing samples from PLS 2003 (Introduction to Political Research) were evaluated during both semesters, with an N of 61. This writing sample represented a traditional Political Science research paper, using qualitative analysis, due at the end of the semester. Most students in the course are sophomores, with introductory level writing and research skills. The second writing sample comes from upper division writing intensive courses, from both semesters, with an N of 160. These samples range from analytical book reviews to traditional research projects. Most students are juniors or seniors, with more writing and research skills. | 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 be able to support their conclusions and findings, using appropriate analytical techniques or sources. Finally, students should portray satisfactory knowledge of their subject area through their writing sample. | For PLS 2003 writing samples:  
1. 77 percent of students were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for their development of a literature review or use of documents & sources.  
2. 84 percent were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for supporting their findings & conclusions.  
3. 93 percent were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for demonstrating knowledge of their subject area.  
For upper division writing samples:  
1. 91 percent of students were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for their development of a literature review or use of documents & sources.  
2. 86 percent were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for supporting their findings & conclusions.  
3. 92 percent were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for demonstrating knowledge of their subject area. | The Assessment Coordinator, working with the Undergraduate Curriculum & Assessment Committee, is responsible for analyzing this learning objective. The results are shared with and discussed by department faculty, as well as the student representative to the Dean’s advisory board. This past year, the Undergraduate Curriculum & Assessment Committee, working with the Methods Curriculum Committee, used the assessment results to recommend significant improvements. |

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 1**. Worksheets should be sent electronically to cskjs@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/](http://www.eiu.edu/~assess/) or contact Karla Sanders in CASA at 581-6056.
Each writing sample is evaluated using a rubric designed by the Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee. The faculty teaching the courses completed the evaluations. The department assessment coordinator collected and analyzed the results. With these evaluations, we can compare introductory and advanced level writing skills. We may also be able to make limited longitudinal comparisons over the past three years.

Three questions on the evaluation focus on 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 well did the student support his/her findings & conclusions?
3. How would you rate the student’s knowledge of the subject area, based on this writing sample?

For each question, faculty ranked students on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), or NA (not applicable).

To complement the writing sample analysis, the a literature review or use of documents & sources.

For the student surveys, we expect that most students will be highly satisfied with how the department provides them with knowledge, pursuant to learning objective #1. We expect the average response to be a 4 or higher.

2. 93 percent were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for supporting their findings & conclusions.
3. 92 percent were evaluated at a level of 3 or higher for demonstrating knowledge of their subject area.

For student surveys:
The average student rating for this question was a 4.24 on a scale from 1 to 5.

changes in the methods curriculum for the major.
Undergraduate Curriculum and Assessment Committee also conducted a survey of undergraduate majors, with an N of 82. One set of questions on this survey focused on students’ perceptions of how well the department has helped them achieve the learning objectives.

For learning objective #1, students were asked to rank on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), how well the department provides you with knowledge of politics, government, and public policy.

### For PLS 2003 writing samples:

1. 74% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for their ability to develop a research question/hypothesis, or focus for their writing. They should be able to write well, and conduct satisfactory research. Part of writing well includes their ability to cite sources appropriately.

2. 89% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for how well written their sample was.

3. 84% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for how well-researched their work was.

4. 77% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for their citation method.

5. 89% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for demonstrating critical thinking and writing skills.

The Assessment Coordinator, working with the Undergraduate Curriculum & Assessment Committee, is responsible for analyzing this learning objective. The results are shared with and discussed by department faculty, as well as the student representative to the Dean’s advisory board.

This past year, the Undergraduate Curriculum & Assessment Committee, working with the Methods Curriculum Committee, used the assessment results to recommend significant improvements.
ranked students on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent), or NA (not applicable). In the student survey, students were asked to rank on a scale from 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) the following two measures:

1. How well the department helped them develop their critical thinking skills.
2. How well the department helped them develop their writing skills.

expect that most students will be highly satisfied with how the department helps them develop their critical thinking and writing skills, and we expect the average response to be at least a 4.

For upper division writing samples:

1. 89% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for their ability to develop a research question/hypothesis/appropriate focus.
2. 91% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for how well written their sample was.
3. 92% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for how well researched their work was.
4. 90% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for their citation method.
5. 92% were evaluated at a 3 or higher for demonstrating critical thinking and writing skills.

For student surveys:

The average student rating for critical thinking skills was 4.11 on a scale from 1 to 5.

The average student rating for writing skills was a 4.02 on a scale from 1 to 5.

ADDENDUM ON PRELIMINARY PLS EXIT SURVEY RESULTS:

Exit Surveys of PLS graduates during this academic year also are yielding positive results in changes in the methods curriculum for the major.
3. Students will demonstrate the ability to apply skills and knowledge in practical educational settings.

**For Simulations:**
*First, completion by the instructor of a newly developed assessment instrument for each student simulation participant, based on a 1 to 5 scale (1 poor, 5 excellent). Instructors rated the students in response to the following questions:
1. How would you rate the student’s speaking and communication skills demonstrated during simulation activities?
2. How well did the student demonstrate analytical skills associated with “thinking on one’s feet” at the simulation?
3. How would you rate the student’s quality of background research related to simulation activities?
4. How well prepared was the student for meeting the range of role requirements and demands once formal simulation activities began (i.e., being ready for the “show”)?
5. How would you rate the student’s level of professionalism displayed?

**For Simulations:**
*On the instructor-completed surveys, most students should earn a score of 3 or higher on the assessment questions. On the student-completed assessment surveys, clear evidence should exist of students perceiving the acquisition or strengthening of skills or abilities as a result of simulation activities, along with most students finding the simulation experience to be educationally or professionally beneficial.

**For Internships:**
*Most if not all students should receive a site supervisor evaluation rating of satisfactory or better. Most if not all students will find the internship experience to be educationally and/or professionally beneficial.

**Simulation Results:**
*For the instructor-completed assessment instrument, 19 of the total of 21 assessment items (7 items per simulation) yielded results of 100% for ratings of 3 or better. However, the two non-100% items were very high—one with 83% and the other with 93% of the students assessed by the instructor as performing at the 3 or better range. In addition, strong results are shown for students assigned ratings of 4 or 5 by the instructor. 62% (13 of 21) of the assessment items had 80% or more of the students in the 4 or 5 range, and 81% (17 of 21) of the assessment items had 70% or more of the students in the 4 or 5 range. For Mock Trial, the most common skills/abilities acquired or strengthened as a result of simulation activities. For the student-completed assessment surveys, there is strong evidence of student perception of a range of important skills or abilities acquired or strengthened as a result of simulation activities.

*The results will be shared with members of the Political Science Department, and in particular the members of the departmental simulations and internship committees. In addition, the Undergraduate Curriculum/Assessment Committee will draw from the results as part of the department’s ongoing efforts to strengthen student applied learning experiences.*
6. How would you rate the student’s teamwork or interpersonal cooperation skills?
7. How well did the student appear to apply their knowledge of government and politics to simulation activities?

*Second, completion by the student of an assessment survey that included the following information:
   1. Up to three skills or abilities considered to be the most important ones acquired or strengthened as a result of participation in simulation activities.
   2. Whether the student found the simulation to be educationally or professionally beneficial—and if so in what ways.

*Third, evidence of external individual student or group awards earned during simulation activities.

**For Internships:**
First, evaluation letters from site supervisors indicating satisfactory or better levels of performance.
Second, evidence in student internship papers of an educationally and/or professionally beneficial educational experience.

For external student awards for simulation participants, Model Illinois Government students received the Best Budget Analyst and Outstanding Journalist Awards, and Model United Nations students received two Honorable Mention Committee.
Awards and one Outstanding Security Council Delegate Award.

**Internship Results:**

For assessment focus purposes, this year’s internship results focus only on non-Pre-Law internships coordinated by the department internship coordinator, mostly during the Summer 2004 period. The undergraduate PLS major internships included in this report (total of 6) consisted of placements at a regional planning office; a Latino leadership institute program; a congressional candidate campaign organization; a Washington, DC congressional office; a suburban police department; and a state legislator’s Springfield office. All of the undergraduate PLS majors completed their internships with very praiseworthy evaluation comments in the letters from their site supervisors. Thus, there was no doubt of achievement of the satisfactory or better performance level in the eyes of the site supervisors. Furthermore, the internship papers written by the students all included clear statements of student perception of strong educational or professional benefits resulting from the internship experience. Students pointed not only to benefits for their knowledge of government
and politics but to personal growth benefits associated with skills in areas such as organizational operations, research and analysis.

(Continue objectives as needed. Cells will expand to accommodate your text.)

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.

Our inclusion of the student survey results stems in part from a suggestion from the CASA Director’s response to our AY 2003-2004 Assessment. In addition, this year we included percentages of the number of students we expect to achieve or surpass goals for each level of writing sample analysis.

We are particularly proud of the consistency of our department assessment plan for the past three years. Our sample size has grown each year, in part as our major enrollment has grown significantly. Faculty members continue to discuss how we complete the evaluations, to take into consideration differences in rankings between faculty members. In addition, the fact that nearly all students in PLS 2003 were sophomores, we are more confident in the validity of the comparisons between PLS 2003 and upper division writing samples. It is really quite interesting to note the marked improvement in student writing between PLS 2003 and upper division courses.

Worth special mention is the significant improvement of the assessment of the department’s government simulations—specifically the design of assessment forms to be completed both by instructors and the students. These forms have yielded a more systematic and more readily analyzable body of assessment data, while also standardizing the assessment process across the three simulations. With this completed, the next step in the assessment of applied learning opportunities will be the development of standardized assessment forms to be given to internship students and site supervisors, to complement the ongoing use of letters of evaluation and the assignment of student internship papers. The plan is to begin implementation of these improvements during Summer 2005.

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?

As mentioned in Learning Objectives #1 and #2 (above), the assessment results from last year, combined with this year’s assessment results, and the results of the student survey, have led to a significant change in the Methods curriculum, which is expected to go into effect in Fall 2006. We also have recognized and discussed the importance of writing in the curriculum. In addition, the student survey provided us with a wealth of other information about our major curriculum, aiding us as we develop our curriculum, particularly in the American Politics and Government sub-field. We intend to continue using the writing sample
assessment as our primary method of assessment next year. We will not conduct the student survey next year, but plan on conducting one every 2-3 years. Furthermore, the department will continue to develop assessment-related information through a planned external review of the department in Spring 2005 coupled with a large-scale survey of PLS alumni this coming academic year in preparation for the IBHE Review process.