



## **First Choice Graduate Program Report**

**Department of Political Science  
Master of Science in Political Science  
College of Sciences**

**May 7, 2009**

# First Choice Graduate Program Report Master of Science in Political Science

## Part 1 Program Team & Review Board

Master of Science in Political Science Program Team

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## Part 2 Consultation and Review Summary

Initial Consultation April 8, 2008

Consultation Report May 6, 2008

Program Review Request May 13, 2008

First Review Report October 4, 2008

First CGS Review November 4, 2008

Second Review Report March 5, 2009

Second CGS Review April 7, 2009

Review Report and Recommendations May 7, 2009

## Part 3 Report

**Program Mission:** The program provides a flexible curriculum for students interested in American government, comparative politics, international relations, public administration and public policy. Students will receive training in the advanced analytical, methodological, and theoretical approaches used in political science. The curriculum prepares students for work in public affairs, including employment in local, state and national government. Other graduates from the program have found employment in journalism, international business, community college teaching and administrative positions in higher education. The program also prepares students for future Ph.D. or legal studies. Internships related to government, politics and the legal system are available.

**Criterion 1: The program documents sustained achievements in strengthening the quality, diversity, and internationalization of the University's student body by attracting candidates who have the potential for academic and professional achievement and who complete degrees and succeed as alumni.**

a. *Enrollment Management:*

- i. *Recruitment Plan:* A clear plan meeting application, enrollment, and diversity goals. The program documented the use of electronic/web processes, newly developed print materials, and recruitment programs targeted to internal (current undergraduates in the program) and external (regional institutions) audiences. The report provided a comprehensive summary table to document that the Recruitment Plan has successfully generated an application rate that has sustained the program's optimal enrollment of 25 candidates per year during the past three years. In addition, during the past three years, the program has sustained an average domestic diversity rate of 8.4% which exceeds the university's graduate diversity participation rate of 7%. The program has also sustained an average international participation rate of 12.4% which is significantly above the

graduate international participation rate of 5%. The program has achieved an average gender diversity mean of 38.6% women over the sustained period which was considered exemplary for programs in political science. The program also has an impressive mean undergraduate diversity rate of 29.6% which indicates that it attracts nearly one-third of its candidates from non-EIU programs. The Recruitment Plan verified that the program has achieved its targeted enrollment and diversity rates during the sustained period and will continue to advance its diversity goals. The Review Board noted that the program exceeded expectations for this criterion.

- ii. *Selection Criteria: A rationale for selection decisions; fulfilling its expectations for quality.* The report documented well-focused selection criteria appropriate to achieving its admission goals. Selection criteria include the standard Graduate School requirements. In addition, new requirements were added in the Fall of 2007 that include a written personal statement, two reference letters, and a GRE score for applicants who have less than a 3.00 GPA. The program has a well-focused process in place for pursuing candidates with strong academic credentials and with strong research interests. The program also has in place a process for screening prospective students and discouraging applications from students with limited academic credentials. The program documented an effective rationale for making its selection decisions and evidence of increasing its selectivity criteria. The Review Board reported that this criterion was met but not for the sustained three-year period.
- iii. *Acceptance Rate: Desired applicants accept admission offers.* The program has sustained a 66% admission rate, or two-thirds of those who are offered admission attend during the sustained period documenting that it met its acceptance rate expectations. The Review Board determined that this criterion was met.

b. *Assistantship/Scholarship Management*

- i. *Annual Awards: Attracting desired applicants; teaching, research, or service experiences add value to the degree.* The program documented the availability of assistantships and evidence that the awards successfully attract candidates with an impressive record of scholarship. The report noted that candidates who hold assistantships have an incoming average GPA of 3.49. During the past three years the awards have attracted candidates from a wide range of prestigious universities. Examples include William Penn College in Iowa, St. Thomas University in Florida, Westminster College in Missouri and the University of Illinois. The report further documented that assistantships attract desired applicants who engage in teaching, research, or service experiences that add value to the degree. Candidates support the teaching mission particularly PLS 1153G and PLS 2253G. The report identified an exemplary range of research support that graduate assistants provide. Examples included research on motivational theory, urban mayoral leadership, decision-making, budgeting, and non-profit organizations, Croatia's membership in NATO, congressional views on NATO's transaction, truth and reconciliation commissions in Africa, and international war crime tribunals. The range of research and research rigor were exemplary and serve as an example of excellence of the use of graduate assistantships to attract candidates and to enhance their graduate studies using research. Service assistance is also included among the GA contributions to the program primarily in the form of data analyses related to department service. The Review Board reported that this criterion was achieved.
- ii. *Competitive Awards: Competitively acquires additional assistantships; attracts additional desired applicants; teaching, research, or service add value.* The report provided evidence that the program successfully sought and secured an impressive range of competitive awards during the sustained period. These include securing Presidential Graduate Assistantships for five years, summer research assistantships for five years. In addition, the program has two endowed scholarships to further advance and support graduate study. These include the Howell Scholarship and the Graduate Scholarship in Political Science. The Review Board determined that this criterion was an area of exemplary performance.

c. *Matriculation Management: A targeted graduation rate; candidates consistently meet the program's degree completion expectations.* The report provided a comprehensive analysis of

the program's degree completion rates and the processes that are used to manage candidates who are unable to complete the program. The desired graduation rate is 50 to 60% and the program has sustained that target for four years. The program also has data to identify the "stopping points" in the program and provides assistance to students who discover that the degree is too rigorous or that the candidate cannot complete the capstone. Actions to address each of these include increasing the admission standards to better identify candidates who can complete the program and a communication program to mentor completion or provide advice on alternatives to program completion. The program verified that it met its targeted graduation rate and provided support to those candidates who will not complete. The Review Board concurred that this criterion was met.

- d. *Graduate Placement: The program can document sustained placements; earn required credentials; make important contributions to society; pursuit of advanced degree programs.* The program has collected placement data on candidates since 2003 and can verify that 37.5% of its graduates enter post-graduate study or law school and have been admitted to prestigious institutions including Purdue University, University of Delaware, and the University of Nebraska. Another 25% of its graduates pursue work in the private sector taking jobs in business or journalism. The remaining 25% pursue careers in teaching or government work. The report identified several examples of alumni who have made significant contributions to society via roles in Illinois government, the academy, law enforcement, and development. The program has worked diligently to develop strong relationships with its alumni and their work has been successful and verified that graduates enter into desired professions or advanced programs of study. The Review Board identified this as a program strength.

**Criterion 2: The program documents sustained achievements in fostering advanced scholarship through a depth of knowledge, critical thinking, problem solving, oral and written communication, application of technology, research/creative activity, and commitment to professional ethics.**

- a. *Center for Academic Support and Achievement documents that assessment data are used to improve student learning, to guide improvements to the curriculum and to achieve academic excellence.* The assessment data summarized in the report documented that the program has achieved a CASA rating of "3" or its highest rating for using assessment data to improve student learning. According to the Primary Trait Analysis used by CASA a rating of "3" means that the assessment data is used by the faculty to improve student learning, that student learning is central to the department and that assessment is part of the culture of the department. In addition, the program earned ratings of 2 or 3 in all of the other categories of assessment. The report provided examples of how the program has used its assessment data consistently to improve the program. Examples included developing a Graduate Handbook, adopting a new course, and revising other courses to further strengthen a strong curriculum. The Assessment Program has shown that across the current curriculum, students are meeting the program's objectives, and provides validation to the faculty that the current curriculum is meeting and exceeding the student learning needs of the program. Letters from alumni verifying the quality of the program were an especially impressive part of the review. The Review Board noted this as an area of strength.
- b. *Graduate School documents that assessment data are used to improve student learning based on CGS Criteria.* The report documented that the program has developed learning outcomes identified by the Council on Graduate Studies. Council guidelines include depth of knowledge, oral and writing communication, critical thinking, and scholarship. The program has sustained evaluations from the Dean of the Graduate School and the Review Board determined that this criterion was met.

**Criterion 3: The program documents sustained achievements in expanding the curriculum with rigorous advanced courses and options offered through lectures, laboratories, seminars, forums, practicum field experiences, internships, and partnerships with education, business, and industry.**

- a. *Sustained Mission and Planning Leadership: Articulates a clear mission; aligned with current and future trends in the discipline; states the program's strengths.* The report clearly described how the program's current mission statement reflects and is aligned with the American Political Science Association's Report on Graduate Education. That alignment included verification that

the program offers coursework in the major sub field of the discipline verifying its relationship to currency in the discipline. The program has also included a statement in the mission that focuses on advanced analytical, methodological and theoretical approaches in the field which confirms a program strength and offers critical flexibility with developing a plan of study. The program's mission was last updated in 2004 which further confirms its currency. Finally the Graduate Coordinator has responsibility for monitoring and refining the mission statement which offers a clear administrative pathway to maintaining mission currency. The program has sustained its mission planning and leadership. The Review Board reported that this criterion was met.

b. *Sustained Curricular Leadership*

- i. *Administrative Leadership: Documents how its administrative structure and leadership advance the quality of its curriculum.* A thorough and comprehensive summary of the duties of the Graduate Coordinator in leading the program was provided. These were contrasted with a thorough and comprehensive summary of how the Coordinator works with the Chair and committees, and the role that the Chair has regarding administration of the graduate program. The report explained how admission standards, courses and support programs such as a Graduate Handbook have been added to the curriculum, not to address weaknesses, but to further advance and strengthen the program by capitalizing on some faculty strengths. The examples included courses on the politics of Asia, Africa, and American Political Thought. Another course included an additional 1-hour research course to add to the existing research experience. These examples documented the program's sustained ability to advance the quality of graduate study using an effective administrative structure that shares assessment and external review data, considers how to enhance quality based on that data, and then successfully implements changes that further advance the quality of the curriculum. The Review Board stated that this criterion was achieved.

*Graduate Faculty Leadership: Documents the significant role of the graduate faculty with advancing the curriculum through curriculum committees or appropriate curriculum processes.* The graduate faculty members effectively contribute leadership through the Graduate Assessment and Curriculum Committee. The report and presentation outlined the impressive list of recent achievements of the graduate faculty. Examples include participation in admission decisions, contributing to the assessment process, coauthoring articles with graduate students, selection of the Distinguished Graduate Student, securing Williams Travel Awards, and participating in the graduate assistantship selection process. The report also verified that the graduate faculty members are fully involved with the development of curriculum advancements and related quality changes. The report confirmed that the graduate faculty members are fully engaged in the program, have a significant role in advancing the curriculum, and provide impressive contributions to the quality of the political science program. The Review Board stated that this criterion was met.

- c. *Sustained Curricular Leadership by External Review: Sustained excellence based on external reviews as appropriate to the mission/discipline.* The program documented that it used an external review by Dr. James M. McCormick from Iowa State University to review its program in 2006. Dr. McCormick's report was included in an appendix. The report noted that Dr. McCormick identified faculty research mentorship, assessment, faculty research, and recruitment as program strengths. He recommended that the program implement more rigorous admission standards, and additional coursework in research and both of these recommendations have been addressed. The program will be adding an Alumni Advisory Board to further advance their external reviews. The Review Board determined that the evidence documented sustained application of an external review as appropriate to the discipline.
- d. *Sustained Capstone Leadership: Requires a rigorous capstone appropriate to the mission and documents the impact of each of its capstones on the quality of learning in the degree program.* The report provided a review of how each of its new capstones, the comprehensive exam and the thesis contribute to program excellence. The comprehensive exam was thoroughly and comprehensively advanced in 2002 and increased from a three-hour to a five-hour exam. The thesis capstone is exemplary and the reported noted that the program is the recipient of four

recent awards for thesis excellence. The Review Board determined that the evidence confirmed that the capstones impact the quality of learning and are recognized externally for excellence.

- e. *Sustained Student Leadership: Fosters participation of its graduate candidates on student advisory boards.* The program documented an extended history of student leadership. Examples included student leadership as Student Dean of the Graduate School, Vice President of the Graduate Student Advisory Council, President of the Association for International Students, and leadership through the peer advisor group. The Review Board determined that the report documented sustained achievement in this area.
- f. *Sustained Alumni Leadership: The program documents how it fosters participation in alumni programs sponsored by the Graduate School Alumni Advisory Board.* The report provided impressive evidence of consistent participation in alumni programs. PLS alumni have consistently been recognized for both graduate and international contributions. In addition PLS alumni offer financial support in the form of scholarships for the program. The Review Board determined that the report documented sustained and exemplary achievement in this area.
- g. *Sustained External Partnerships: Sustained external partnerships appropriate to its mission; assets of partners advance the program's quality.* The report offered examples of extensive external partnerships. These include the use of eight internship sites across multiple states, funded assistantships with an external partner, and collaborations with multiple academic societies. The extent of the program's collaborations was outlined in an attached appendix that amplified exemplary performance in this category. The Review Board verified that the evidence indicated achievement in this area.

**Criterion 4: The program documents sustained achievements in research/creative activity with graduate students and faculty.**

- a. *Sustained Student Research Leadership:*
  - i. *Research Productivity: The program has an annual research productivity goal and documents that its candidates meet or exceed it.* The report noted that the program had concentrated on student research as an area of exemplary accomplishment and the Review Board agreed that student research productivity is exemplary. One of the most impressive areas of achievements is the sustained record of peer-reviewed publication that the graduate students in Political Science have successfully pursued. As the report noted, since 2002, students in the program have published in 34 venues ranging from book reviews, encyclopedic entries, political essays, and peer-reviewed journal publications. The level of publication and mentors mirrors the expectation of doctoral-level programs and is creating strong visibility for the program and effective opportunities for its graduates. An appendix provides an impressive summary of student publications in journals such as the *Journal of Conflict Studies*, the *Canadian Military Journal*, the *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, and the *National Security Studies Quarterly*. In addition, the faculty have embraced co-authorships with student mentees providing further opportunity to engage candidates in original research that frequently leads to further study. The Review Board agreed with the program that student research is an impressive strength that should be shared with the broader campus community.
  - ii. *Research Engagement: Graduate candidates achieve a sustained record of scholarship through presentations, etc.* The program has emphasized student presentation and publication as part of the culture of the program. As a result, students in the program present through many venues including on-campus expositions and forums, and off-campus discipline conferences. As noted in the section above, these students enjoy a highly successful publication rate. The Review Board concurred that this is also an area of strength.
- b. *Sustained Commitment to Research & Travel Grants:* The report noted that candidates in the program have consistently earned research or travel awards during the sustained period. The Review Board noted that research and travel awards had been earned in multiple venues

including the Graduate School and the College of Sciences. One of the program's most distinguished records is the acquisition of four Master's Thesis awards during the past eight years. The Review Board documented exemplary achievement in this area.

- c. *Sustained Commitment to Showcasing Scholarship: Showcases graduate research and scholarship through the Graduate Exposition or other means.* The report noted that students in the program participated in 13 different conferences between 2005 and 2008. The ranged in multiple states and in international venues. Again the Review Board identified exemplary achievement in this area.
- d. *Sustained Record of Award Program Participation: Demonstrates participation in the Graduate School's Distinguished Awards Program.* The program documented sustained participation in the Distinguished Awards Program and many other venues. The Review Board agreed the program documented sustained achievement in this area.

**Criterion 5: The program documents a sustained record of developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge with graduate faculty members who reflect the University's teaching and mentoring priority and who have a record of research/creative activity and professional service.**

**The evidence demonstrated sustained achievements in a sustained record of developing opportunities for the discovery and application of knowledge**

- a. *Coordinator Leadership:* The report documented the extensive leadership of the current Coordinator at the department, university, and discipline levels. The Coordinator has earned the Graduate School Award for Leadership and has provided extensive service on subcommittees of the Council on Graduate Studies. The report verified that the Coordinator met the criteria for leadership.
- b. *Faculty Scholarship:* The report provided a summary of the scholarly contributions of the faculty, the grant success, and awards earned for scholarly work. The evidence documented contributions at state, regional, national, and international levels. The report verified the productivity and leadership contributions of the faculty met the criteria.

## **Exemplary Achievements**

The following achievements were found to be examples of excellence that should be modeled by other graduate programs:

- a. *Criterion 1ai Enrollment Management/Recruitment Plan.* The program successfully developed a well focused recruitment plan to increase enrollment, increase diversity, achieve strong gender balance, and secure candidates from numerous institutions. The program has worked hard to implement best-practices in enrollment management and its success serves as a model for other graduate programs.
- b. *Criterion 1d Graduate Placement:* The Review Board noted that almost 40% of the programs graduates go on to post-graduate studies indicating that the candidates are well prepared and well respected. The program's strong links to its alumni and effective tracking of placements were considered exemplary.
- c. *Criterion 3b Sustained Curricular Leadership:* The report offered examples of the effective strategies that the program has implemented to keep the curriculum rigorous and in-line with current trends in the field of political science. The effectiveness of the administrative structure for using assessment data, external reviews, and self analysis to advance the curriculum and improve student learning were considered exemplary.
- d. *Criterion 3e Sustained Student Leadership:* The field of political science is related to an engaged and active student body and the program has done an exemplary job mentoring its candidates to be active in campus leadership roles. Their work to bring visibility and to encourage committee and council service were exemplary.
- e. *Criteria 4a through 4d Student Research:* This program has set an impressive standard using multiple venues to encourage and advance student scholarship and research. All areas of student research were exemplary. The program has created a strong culture of student research mentoring, presenting, publishing, and investigation. Candidates have multiple opportunities to present and publish and are consistently earning awards and grants to support their work. This is

an area that should be shared with a broader audience as they serve as an example to other programs.

### **Other Observations**

The Review Board recommended that the program consider adding the following to further enhance excellence: a process to track the graduation rates; a method for evaluating the success of their attrition strategies, and a thesis workshop designed to help students matriculate when they select a thesis option.

### **Part 4 Recommendations**

Based on the evidence presented, the Review Board determined that the program met the criteria and recommended that the Council on Graduate Studies accept the recommendation and that the Dean of the Graduate School provide the First Choice Program Designation. The Council accepted the recommendation. The Dean of the Graduate School designated **Master of Science in Political Science** as a First Choice Graduate Program at Eastern Illinois University.

### **Part 5 Period of Designation**

The First Choice Designation begins immediately and extends for an additional three fiscal years ending June 30, 2012. The next review will be in the Fall of 2011.

### **Part 6 Benefits**

Based on the program's designation as a First Choice Graduate Program at Eastern Illinois University, the **Master of Science in Political Science** is awarded an annual Presidential Graduate Assistantship, an Annual Graduate School Initiative Award of \$500, two Summer Research Graduate Assistantships, two Williams Travel Awards to support student travel and any new funding that may be designated for First Choice Graduate Programs. The First Choice Program Designation and the data used to support that designation will be used to market and advertise the program by the Department, College, and the Graduate School.

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Robert M. Augustine, Dean

May 7, 2009  
Date

C: College of Sciences  
Office of the Provost