

Summer/Fall 2017 Newsletter

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Announcements

Information

1) Message from Section President

Sherri L. Wallace, University of Louisville

Dear Colleagues:

It's that time of year again. Our 2017 APSA Annual Meeting is just around the corner in San Francisco, CA (August 31- September 3). This will be my last greeting to you as President of the Political Science Education section. **It has been my absolute pleasure to serve you in this capacity!** I worked with a great team of colleagues, who remain dedicated to the business and success of this section. We remain in excellent hands!

By now, many of you may have received these announcements via APSA Connect. This message repeats most of that post with a few additions. Please mark your calendars for:

The PSE Section Annual Business Meeting and Reception: Friday, September 1, 6:30 to 9:00 p.m., Carmel I room at the Hotel Nikko San Francisco.

At the meeting, we will discuss the changes to the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference. By the way, the **Call for Papers for the TLC 2018** to be held in Baltimore, MD, February 2-4, 2018 is OPEN on the APSA website. Proposals are due by September 24, 2017.

At the reception, we will recognize the recipients of our 2017 Awards. We extend a Special Thanks to our Award Committee Chairs and Members. It takes time to receive, review and deliberate on award submissions, especially when many nominations are worthy of

recognition. We truly appreciate of your due diligence and dedicated service to our section.

The Craig L. Brians Award for Excellence in Undergraduate Research and Mentorship

Chair: Thomas Ringenberg
(Thomas.Ringenberg@rockhurst.edu)

Committee Members: J. Carlos Huerta (Texas A&M Corpus Christi) and Karen Hult (Virginia Tech University)

The Best APSA Conference Paper Award

Chair: Bobbi Gentry
(bgentry@bridgewater.edu)

Committee Members: Ellen Claes (University of Leuven) and J. Cherie Strachan (Western Michigan University)

The Lifetime Achievement Award

Chair: Elizabeth Bennion
(ebennion@isub.edu)

Committee Members: Executive Committee

The Distinguished Service Award

Chair: Boris Ricks (boris.ricks@csun.edu)

Committee Members: Executive Committee

Also, we will celebrate (with delicious cake), the book launch of the new edition of the APSA text, **Teaching Civic Engagement Across the Disciplines**, edited by Alison Rios Millett McCartney, Elizabeth Bennion, Elizabeth Matto, and Dick Simpson (ALL members of PSE).

We hope you will attend.

PSE Executive Committee Nomination/Election

Three terms will end this year. Two current members will seek reelection to assume new positions, leaving one seat open/unopposed. If you are interested in any of the positions, please send your nomination directly to our Nominating Committee (please be sure to copy all):

- Rick Battistoni,
RICKBATT@providence.edu
- Mary McHugh,
mchughm@merrimack.edu
- Tressa Tabares,
TabareT@arc.losrios.edu

The Nominating Committee will present the candidates to the membership at the business meeting. We are ever grateful to the members of the committee for your willingness to serve.

The APSA Annual Meeting

Please be sure to attend and support all of our panels, posters, etc. Your attendance matters in future allocations to the section. You can find the listings in the online program. Look for Division 10: Political Science Education, and our sister Division 9: Teaching and Learning in Political Science.

APSA Council and Officers Election

By now, you should have received notification for elections for the APSA Council and Officers. Please support our interests and elect our section members, **Erin Richards and Lilly Goren**, both of whom have been active leaders/members in the section. The voting began in July 19, 2017 for all active members.

PSE Program Division Chair for APSA 2018

Michael Rogers was selected to serve as our division chair for the upcoming 2018 Annual Meeting. He has drafted the Call for Papers that will appear on the APSA website right after the 2017 Annual Meeting. Thank you in advance, Mike for your service.

PSE Newsletter, the Political Science Educator

A Big Thanks goes to Bobbi Gentry, the newsletter editor, for her leadership and dedication to TPSE. We value her continued service in keeping the section informed, connected and inspired via the various submissions to TPSE.

Finally, although we may no longer “officially” own the Journal of Political Science Education, JPSE is still ours, and the new editorial team are members of PSE. The latest edition has been released via APSA. Please be sure to check it out!

I wish you a successful conference and I look forward to seeing you in San Francisco!

Sincerely,

Sherri L. Wallace, President
Wishing you much success,



Sherri L. Wallace, President

The Teacher-Scholar Column***To Assess Civic Learning Outcomes, Start with Your Desired Results***

Elizabeth A. Bennion, Indiana University South Bend, ebennion@iusb.edu

Civic engagement initiatives take many forms. These include, but are not limited to, service-learning, community-based learning,

community-based research, and other forms of experiential education. The list of possibilities for promoting civic knowledge and skills is almost endless. Different disciplines use different terminology and focus on a wide variety of skills including capacity-building, community service, economic development initiatives, mentoring, needs analysis, patents, public outreach, social entrepreneurship, philanthropy, sponsorships, training and technical assistance, translational research, and workforce development.¹ All of these activities are amenable to meaningful and useful assessment as long as participants define their goals and articulate measurable objectives connected to each learning activity.

The key to a successful assessment strategy is to start with the desired outcomes. Instructors, department chairs, deans, program directors, and others involved in civic engagement pedagogy and research should start by identifying the desired results. A good assessment tool provides valuable feedback whether one is designing a single activity, course module, complete course, or academic program. Developers should ask themselves: What do we hope to accomplish? What would “success” look like? These are questions to ask before selecting or designing an assessment plan. The next step is determining acceptable evidence. What evidence is easily available? Easy to collect? Possible to gather? The defined outcome should determine which evidence is collected. Finally, it is time to plan the learning experience and instructional approach. To assure proper alignment between the activity, desired outcome, and assessment methods, plan the experience after identifying the desired outcomes and most relevant (and

accessible) evidence. For example, an instructor of a service-learning course should ask what key knowledge, skills, or attitudes a student will acquire, deepen, and display through completing the activity. By specifying what students should know – and what they should be able to do – after completing the activity, the instructor can design a module, unit, assignment, or activity to develop the desired knowledge and skills. Instructors should consider cognitive, affective, and kinesthetic outcomes. What will students know, believe, or do after the learning experience?ⁱⁱ

Taking a “backward design” approach to course, program, and activity development ensures proper alignment between civic engagement activities, desired outcomes, and assessment methods. As noted earlier, this approach requires that desired outcomes be measurable. It is important to distinguish between broad goals (i.e. ambiguous general statements) and measurable outcomes. Breaking a goal into measurable objectives (or learning outcomes) is required to assess whether the activities undertaken advance the advertised broader goal.

NOTE: Excerpted from Elizabeth A. Bennion, “Moving Forward with Assessment: Important Tips and Resources,” in *Teaching Civic Engagement across the Disciplines*, ed. Elizabeth M. Matto, Alison Rios Millett McCartney, Elizabeth A. Bennion, and Dick Simpson (Washington, DC: American Political Science Association, 2017).

Featured Essays

Pillars of Support: Six Tips for Faculty Advising Undergraduate Honors Theses

*Jessica Candela, MPA Student,
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Faculty at the university I attend have expressed interest in a guide to the undergraduate honors thesis (UHT), a high-impact practice (“Engagement Indicators & High-Impact Practices” 2015). In this piece, I intertwine my reflections on the UHT with tips for faculty advisors to successfully navigate the process alongside their undergraduate students.

Personal Experience with the UHT

In May 2017, I completed an UHT on civic engagement curriculum that combined my two fields of study: multicultural and gender studies, and political science. I was fortunate to have two advisors – one from each academic field – to provide feedback on my work. To receive credit for my UHT through the “honors in the major” (HITM) award, I enrolled in six units of honors thesis credit, and presented findings at my college’s annual student research and scholarly work symposium.

University and Department Logistics

At California State University, Chico (CSUC), 60 out of 3,500 students – under two percent – graduated with HITM in the 2016/2017 academic year (Gebb 2017; “One Hundred Twenty-Seventh Annual Commencement” 2017). The HITM achievement is recognized on students’ diplomas and transcripts, and students receive a medallion to wear at commencement. Participating departments administer their own HITM programs, yet some departments offer no honors in the major. Student requirements include securing a faculty advisor, and department approval of the UHT project. Moreover, students must have a 3.5

grade point average on a 4.0 scale, both cumulatively and within the major (“Honors in the Major” 2016).

Here are six tips and ten questions for advisors to consider when assisting their students in navigating the UHT process.

1. **Student preparation in research**

methods: The first institutional step before advising students on their UHT is to require a sufficiently rigorous research methods course. Indeed, studies have found benefits of research methods courses to include competence in reading literature, demystification of the research process, increased perceived knowledge, and increased research self-efficacy (Boswell 2013, 54; Peachey and Baller 2015, 439). A question to consider: What research tools do students require to successfully complete an UHT?

2. **Advisor expertise in research area:** One of my advisors has published in the same research area as my UHT: civic engagement curriculum. My advisor’s experience was helpful in determining my UHT’s direction. Advisors’ resources in specific research areas may be vital to the success of the UHT. Questions to consider: If you do not have expertise in specific fields, do your colleagues? Or could students alter their proposed research topics to better fit your expertise?

3. **Time commitment:** Perhaps the most important aspect of the advisor-student relationship is mutual understanding of the time and dedication necessary to complete an UHT. I sought vital advice regularly from my faculty advisors. Being an UHT advisor is a significant

time commitment. Remember, this is all brand new to students. Students are excited and daunted by their UHT. They will require extensive guidance during the research process. A question to consider: Are you able to dedicate time to students’ UHT projects?

4. **Application process:** At CSUC, it is expected that students apply to the HITM program by the second semester of their junior year (“Honors in the Major” 2016). In my program, applications require a description of the proposed research topic, recruitment of a faculty mentor, and approval by the department chair. The completion of this process before the end of junior year is imperative to the success of the senior UHT. Further, planning in advance may help to produce a higher-quality UHT. Questions to consider: Can you assist in identifying potential HITM students early in their academic careers? How can you help these identified students through the application process?

5. **Data collection and analysis:** Students may be familiar with research methods, but may not know how to properly conduct their own research. This could be a vital mentoring moment for advisors. Questions to consider: Do students know which research method is most feasible or how to collect data? Are consent forms or Institutional Review Board approval required? Do students need access to specialized software or data sets?

6. **Public presentation:** An UHT is a good opportunity for advisors to encourage students’ professional skill development. Further, public dialog assists students in expanding their

awareness of active citizenship and the value of their studies (Wolf et al. 2016, 6). A highlight of the HITM process was sharing my UHT findings with the campus-community. Next steps for advisors may include helping students apply to academic conferences or undergraduate journals. A question to consider: How can you assist students to best utilize their UHT academically or professionally?

The UHT is a key opportunity for undergraduate students to develop research skills. Moreover, the UHT, and the support of faculty advisors a student receives during the process, can be instrumental to students envisioning themselves as future educators, graduate students, professionals or researchers.

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American Teacher: Adventures in the Classroom and Our Nation's Capitol

Douglas Graney, *High School Teacher*
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American Teacher-Adventures in the Classroom and Our Nation's Capital chronicles a career as a social studies teacher. Starting first in Connecticut and upstate, N.Y. you will read the struggles of a young teacher learning his craft in different public and private, rural, suburban and small town schools while also searching for meaning in America and American history.

After arriving in Fairfax County Public Schools the author immediately took advantage of nearby Washington, D.C. for field trips, guest speakers and in many other ways exploiting D.C. for the betterment of my students. The field trips would exceed one-hundred during his career as well as half as many guest speakers.

Exploiting D.C. would ultimately lead to the author to create the largest intern placement program in the U.S. as his Political Science students invaded Capitol Hill (and other offices) every spring.

American Teacher also discusses current education topics (many of which I find dubious),

political commentary and the voices of students and parents who contacted the author over the years sometimes for good reasons, sometimes not. Major historical events are seen through my eyes and the eyes of my students including the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion, many

elections presidential and otherwise, 9/11, the Iraq War including pro and anti-war demonstrations, the immigration battles over the years, race issues and the election of Donald Trump.

Announcements

Archived issues of *The Political Science Educator* can be found here:

<http://community.apsanet.org/TeachingCivicEngagement/additionalteachingresources/new-item>

Please send any article submissions or announcements for future newsletters to Bobbi Gentry at bgentry@bridgewater.edu. Submission deadlines are **June 15** for the **Summer/Fall newsletter**, and **December 15** for the **Winter/Spring newsletter**. Contributions may be as brief as 200 – 500 hundred words, but should not exceed approximately 1000 words, and should use APSA citation style. Please include "**PS Educator submission**" in the subject line of your email. Thank you!

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All address corrections should be sent directly to APSA.

Bobbi Gentry, Newsletter Editor

ⁱ The civic engagement pedagogies listed here represent some of the experiential learning strategies best suited for teaching civic and political engagement. For a discussion of a full range of approaches to experiential education in the disciplines of political science and international relations see Elizabeth A. Bennion, "Experiential Education in Political Science and International Relations," in *Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations*, ed. John Ishiyama, et al. (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2015), 351-368.

ⁱⁱ For more information about backward design see, "Backward Design," in *Understanding Design* (expanded 2nd edition), Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc., 2006), 13-34.