

## *Summer/Fall 2019 Newsletter*

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#### **Information**

#### **Message from Section President**

*Patrick McKinlay, Morningside College*

Dear Colleagues:

Greetings! I hope this note finds everyone enjoying some rest and rejuvenation during these long summer days. Our 2019 APSA Annual Meeting is coming up soon (August 29-September 1). The section continues to contribute to excellence in teaching and learning. We are especially excited for the second TLC at APSA on Saturday, August 31. If you have not done so, please pre-register for this conference within a conference.

The PSE Section Annual Business Meeting: **Friday, August 30, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.**, at the Omni Hotel in the Senate Room.

At the meeting, we will conduct regular section business (treasurer's report, newsletter, and other business). We will also be electing a number of officers and executive board members at this meeting, so please join us and consider nominating yourself or someone you believe would be a great addition to our leadership team. Contact Sherri Wallace ([Sherri.wallace@louisville.edu](mailto:Sherri.wallace@louisville.edu)) regarding nominations.

We also plan to present our Section awards at the Business Meeting. 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: Carlos Huerta (Texas A&M Corpus Christi)

Committee Members: Fletcher McClellan (Elizabethtown College) and Allison McCartney (Towson University)

*The Best APSA Conference Paper Award*

Chair: Michael Rogers (Arkansas Tech University)

Committee Members: Bobbi Gentry (Bridgewater College) and Terry Gilmour (Midland College)

*The Lifetime Achievement Award*

Chair: Sherri Wallace (University of Louisville)

Committee Members: Executive Committee

*The Distinguished Service Award*

Chair: Sherri Wallace (University of Louisville)

Committee Members: Executive Committee

We hope you will attend.

*The APSA Annual Meeting and TLC at APSA*

Please be sure to attend and support all of our panels, posters, and roundtables. 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. Of course, I also encourage everyone to participate in the second Teaching and Learning Conference at APSA, which will be held on Saturday, August 31. The Day will start

with a keynote address from Lynn Pasquerella, President, Association of American Colleges and Universities. It features workshops, a luncheon hosted by CQ Press, Teaching Cafés, and a series of panels using the track model we have used at previous TLCs. The day will conclude with a joint reception hosted by APSA, Political Science Education Section, and the Committee on the Status of Community College Faculty in the Profession. Please attend as much of the mini conference as you can and please be sure to join us for the reception from 5:30-7:00 PM.

*TLC in Albuquerque*

We also want to encourage everyone to consider submitting a proposal for the next Teaching and Learning Conference February 7-9, 2020 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. This year's theme is "Teaching to Empower Students" and plans to emphasize pedagogies that assist students in responding to challenging conditions in the political and professional world and preparing them to help solve tomorrow's problems. The call for proposals is open thru September 23. We hope you will submit proposals and plan to attend this always inspiring and energizing conference.

*PSE Program Division Co-Chairs for APSA 2020*

Maureen Feeley (UC San Diego) and Matthew Platt (Morehouse College) were selected to serve as our program co-chairs for the upcoming 2020 Annual Meeting. They will draft the Call for Papers that will appear on the APSA website shortly after the 2019 Annual Meeting. Thank you in advance, Maureen and Matthew 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.

Please continue to read and submit manuscripts for the Journal of Political Science Education. As it is now an APSA-wide journal, it receives broad exposure. Please be sure to read the recent edition.

I wish you a productive but relaxing summer, a successful conference, and I look forward to seeing you in Washington!

Sincerely,

Patrick McKinlay, President

### **The Teacher-Scholar Column**

#### ***Creating a Campus-Wide Assessment Rubric for Critical Thinking***

*Elizabeth A. Bennion, Professor of Political Science, Indiana University South Bend, [ebennion@iusb.edu](mailto:ebennion@iusb.edu)*

All students graduating from Indiana University South Bend must take at least one course designated as a “critical thinking” course. Instructors offer these courses across the curriculum, in subjects including English, mathematics, statistics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, computer science, communication studies, informatics, and political science. I recently participated in an interdisciplinary taskforce created to devise campus-wide assessment standards for courses meeting the critical thinking requirement. These courses teach critical thinking in a systematic way. Instructors spend at least half of their course time teaching logic, regardless of the subject designation, title, or home department, of the course. But what do they have in common? How can instructors from such diverse disciplinary backgrounds agree upon a single, streamlined, assessment plan encompassing a few central learning objectives and a shared assessment rubric? How would such a standardized rubric work for political science?

And what would this mean for my critical thinking course: Controversies in U.S. Politics?

Our first brainstorming session generated a long, but familiar, list of critical thinking learning. These included:

1. Compare opposing points of view
2. Connect conclusions to lived experience or current events
3. Distinguish arguments from non-arguments
4. Distinguish premises and conclusions
5. Identify stated (and unstated) reasons that support a claim
6. Recognize common mistakes in reasoning patterns
7. Construct argument for and against a claim
8. Analyze and challenge definitions used in an argument
9. Recognize information as supporting or weakening an argument
10. Foresee the consequences of making a claim
11. Distinguish between categories of reasoning (such as inductive and deductive)
12. Analyze an argument in terms of its structure
13. Use widely accepted standards for evaluating the quality of evidence and reasoning
14. Weigh fairly all available reasons or evidence
15. Engage respectfully in argument

In order to create a manageable rubric for campus-wide assessment of general education courses, the co-directors of our general education program asked taskforce members to rank these group-generated learning outcomes and to identify our choices for 3-5 common learning objectives.

The next assignment was to consider how to incorporate 3-5 general education learning objectives from our list into our own course

syllabus, and to note any additional critical thinking learning objectives we might highlight in our own syllabi. My list looked like this:

Campus-Wide Critical Thinking Learning Objectives:

1. Distinguish between an argument and non-argument.
2. Distinguish between premises and conclusions.
3. Identify the stated (and unstated) reasons that support a claim.
4. Construct arguments for and against a claim.
5. Evaluate the quality of evidence and reasoning provided to support a claim.

Students completing the Controversies in U.S. Politics course will also be able to:

1. Recognize Common Mistakes in Reasoning
2. Compare Opposing Points of View
3. Weigh Fairly All Available Reasons and Evidence
4. Connect Conclusions to Lived Experiences and Current Events
5. Engage Respectfully in Argumentation (including political debates)

Determined to streamline the campus-wide assessment rubric by focusing on three central learning objectives, the taskforce opted to isolate the three top-ranked items on our original list of 15 learning objectives. These state that students completing a critical thinking course will be able to: identify stated (and unstated) reasons that support a claim, construct arguments for and against a claim, and use widely accepted standards for evaluating the quality of evidence and reasoning. Taskforce members decided to treat my first two proposed learning objectives, (distinguishing between and argument and a non-argument and distinguishing between

premises and conclusions), as prerequisites for the three listed SLOs. Despite this winnowing process, instructors were encouraged to include additional learning objectives, including disciplinary learning objectives, on their course syllabi.

Having decided on three common learning objectives, the next step was to draft a rubric to evaluate how well students, across the disciplines, were meeting these objectives. Rather than framing the rubric in a way that mirrored letter grades (excellent, good, fair, poor), the rubric focuses on levels of competence, from introductory to mastery. This is an important distinction because departments offer critical thinking courses at all levels, from 100 to 400, and we expect different levels of mastery from students taking introductory-level than we do from students completing advanced-level undergraduate courses. We should not view a course, instructor, or program as a failure because students in a 100-level course have not all achieved mastery-level critical thinking skills. Rather, departments are encouraged to scaffold students' learning by offering critical thinking courses at multiple levels throughout the curriculum.

Instructors of our campus-wide critical thinking courses created the rubric. This taskforce represented all disciplines offering a critical thinking course, and all taskforce members provided input throughout the process. The resulting faculty-generated rubric is simple and straightforward. It works for critical thinking courses across the curriculum, including political science. Evaluators will be able to assess student work using a wide range of instructor or department created assignments. The process was both interesting and useful in thinking about syllabus and

assignment updates for my political controversies course, and in thinking about how to better integrate these learning objectives into courses throughout the political science curriculum.

I encourage faculty in other departments to consider this exercise when determining their own department, unit, or campus-wide learning objectives, and when considering how to better integrate the political science major into the campus general education program. Declining enrollment in political science courses presents us with a challenge and an opportunity to redesign our curriculum, courses, and learning objectives in ways that boost enrollment while providing students with the essential skills they need to become successful contributors in the workplace and the political process.

Student Learning Outcomes	0) Does not meet benchmark	1) Introductory level	2) Practice level	3) Mastery level
Identify reasons that support a claim	Cannot identify stated reasons that support a claim	Identify stated reasons that support a claim	Identify both stated and unstated reasons that support a claim	Articulate stated and unstated reasons that support a claim
Construct arguments for and against a claim	Cannot construct arguments for and against a claim	Construct arguments for and against a claim, but leaves some terms undefined, ambiguities unexplained, boundaries undetermined, and backgrounds unknown	Construct arguments for and against a claim that are clearly stated and described so as not to be impeded by omissions	Construct arguments for and against a claim that are considered critically, stated clearly and described comprehensively, delivering all relevant information necessary for full understanding.
Use widely accepted standards for evaluating the quality of evidence and reasoning	Cannot use accepted standards for evaluating the quality of evidence and reasoning	Take information from source(s) without interpretation/evaluation. Viewpoints are taken as fact, without question.	Take information from source(s) with some interpretation/evaluation, but not enough to develop a coherent analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints are taken as mostly fact, with little questioning.	Information is taken from source(s) with enough interpretation/evaluation to develop a comprehensive analysis or synthesis. Viewpoints are questioned thoroughly.

## Community College Voices

### ***Success Stories of Community Colleges: Three Views***

What are the success stories of community colleges? Some members of the APSA Status Committee on Community Colleges in the Profession will be discussing this topic in a panel discussion entitled “The Future of Community Colleges: Success Stories from Community College Experiences.” The panel discussion will be held from 4-5:30 p.m. on August 30 at the 2019 APSA Annual Meeting. Here are three views from people who will be participating in the discussion.

#### **Community Colleges are engines to success in higher education (and in life).**

I taught for eleven years as a faculty member at the Borough of Manhattan Community College and then for eight years at four-year colleges. Community college students are awesome. They work hard, bring needed diversity to classrooms and campuses, and are successful in all realms of life. Moreover, many community college students transfer to four-year colleges, and those that do, do as well or better than many “traditional” students, even at elite institutions. Don’t take just my word—colleagues share my experiences, and more to the point, our collective experiences are borne out by data.

Nationally, almost 40% of all students in college attend a community college, according to the Community College Research Center of Teachers College at Columbia University. Data shows that 49% all students who receive a degree from a four-year college had been enrolled at a community college within the last 10 years.

Community college students bring lots of benefits to four-year colleges, including a broad range of life experiences, prior academic preparation, and diverse perspectives. A recent report from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation, *Persistence: The Success of Students Who Transfer from Community Colleges to Selective Four-Year Institutions*, examined data from the National Student Clearinghouse to see which four-year institutions are enrolling community college transfer students and how these students fare at their new schools. The report found that community college students persist and graduate at all types of four-year institutions.

Community college students largely are the first in their families to attend college, disproportionately come from poor and working-class backgrounds, and are female and ethnic and racial minorities. Thus, their success points to a viable strategy to address the historical legacy of discrimination and exclusion, and to a concrete path to address contemporary patterns of segregation and discrimination. In short, community colleges are an escalator to opportunity, a means to address growing inequalities in America.

Furthermore, the future success of four year and graduate institutions is linked to the fate of community college students – and community colleges. The APSA’s Committee on the Status of Community Colleges in the Profession seeks to help bridge our common interest and purpose.

We all know that governments need to reinvest in higher education, big time. Thankfully, public opinion polls consistently show vast majorities support increasing higher education funding and opportunities, including by voters of both political parties and among independent voters. Let’s work together to

remind lawmakers, administrators, and ourselves how we can expand pathways to opportunity and success for all.

*Ron Hayduk  
Professor of Political Science  
San Francisco State University*

### **Lecture series builds bridge between two-year and four-year institutions**

There are many variations of success stories that we in the community colleges have seen and been a part of. For community college political science professors, stories of transfer success are the ones we relish the most. One critical avenue to achieving this success involves the building of bridges between two-year and four-year faculty. The community colleges are a crucial feeder to the four-year universities. It is, hence, incumbent that four-year faculty appreciate this and appreciate the role of two-year institutions. Likewise, it is important for would-be transfer students to get a both appreciation and a sense of what upper division work entails. At my institution, Palomar College, we have developed a program that facilitates these two-year/four-year bridges.

The Political Economy lecture series is a two-day program held every primary semester, put together by the political science and economics faculty from our social sciences department. When the lecture series runs, regular political science and economics class sessions are cancelled. In lieu of the classes, the time slots are filled by special topics lectures on current affairs germane to social sciences, with the majority of the talks emphasizing politics/political science and economics. While resident CC faculty in political science, economics and other social science-related disciplines certainly can and do give lectures on their areas of expertise, we also place a high importance on inviting four-year faculty in political science and economics from some the nearby universities to visit the campus and present for our students.

The student audiences are exposed to topics that often go beyond the lower division curriculum. They hear expert perspectives on highly relevant topics, such as immigration, the politics and economics of health care, the 2016 election and North Korea's nuclear weapons program. Our students are also exposed to less discussed topics and regions of the world and, in turn, get a good sampler of the research agenda of the presenting faculty. Students get a good perspective of their future upper division work. They get a glimpse into the world of research and academe - all with topics crucial and relevant to their understanding of the politics and economics of the country and of the world.

In the 14 years of the program's existence, I have heard from too many students to count who have attended the talks, become inspired to major in political science and pursue their own studies in the topics and areas of expertise that they were first exposed to through these lectures. I'd say that is a pretty good success story.

*Peter J. Bowman  
Associate Professor of Political Science  
Dept. of Economics, History & Political Science  
Palomar College*

### **Learning from a community college success story**

Dalton Haupt was not the valedictorian of his graduating class this year. He's not going to Harvard in the fall or interning with a congressman this summer. Nonetheless, if I were to identify a success story at the community college where I work, I'd talk about Dalton Haupt.

Dalton has changed his major to political science – so I guess that is part of why he's a success story. (This last year, I had Dalton in five courses. He took the introductory

political science course – then changed his major and took four of my course offerings then next term.)

Dalton wrote me the other day to ask about citing sources. He’s started a YouTube channel, where he and other friends are taking on big philosophical, psychological and political questions.

When I first met Dalton, he described himself as a libertarian. Generally conservative, Dalton also enjoyed the examination of views on the other side of the political divide. Certainly, in the introductory political science class, he had many opportunities to engage with people of different beliefs, and he did so respectfully, and with an admirable curiosity.

I think of Dalton as a success story because he took advantage of what the community college offered, learning not only course material, but going beyond to engage with other students in lively and wide-ranging discussion. He did not dramatically change his views politically, but he heard – and understood – other points of view. And I think of him as a success story because he took what he learned – and put it to use in the community. Dalton didn’t write a book. He didn’t write a doctoral dissertation (yet). He decided to start a YouTube channel because reading is not something that comes easily for him, and he thought other young people could benefit from some of the educational discussions he now puts online.

Considering the example of Dalton Haupt, three points come to mind.

First, I have to remember to start where I am, not where I want to be. Many – but not all – of the students I meet in my courses face some sort of challenge, whether it’s difficulty reading the textbook or even buying the

textbook. Those challenges, however, also come with gifts. That leads me to the second point.

Be prepared to be surprised. One of the wonderful things about teaching at a community college is the broad diversity of my students. I have had 16-year-old students and students in their eighties. I can be surprised by all of them.

And finally, we need to reach across political divides. Political science education has never been more important in this country – and the level of hyper-partisanship has never been so high. It is essential that as educators we foster fact-based discussion in and outside of our classrooms. If we are to make our democracy stronger, we must practice listening and learning from people across the yawning political divides.

(Here’s the [link](#) to Dalton’s YouTube channel.)

*Eric Schwartz  
Instructor  
Hagerstown Community College*

### **Featured Essays**

#### ***Rethinking the Undergraduate Political Science Major***

*John Ishiyama, Professor of Political Science  
University of North Texas,  
[John.Ishiyama@unt.edu](mailto:John.Ishiyama@unt.edu)*

From May 31 to June 2, a major conference was held in Denton, Texas, hosted by the Department of Political Science of the University of North Texas and generously funded by a special projects grant from the American Political Science Association (APSA). The conference had 30 participants from across the country, with 16 presentations on various aspects of the undergraduate political science

curriculum. These included presentations on the first day of the conference about the current state of the major nationally, and how various colleges and universities are restructuring their major to meet new challenges and demands. On the second day the conference focused on various models of curricular structure that exist, the need for the reaffirming role of civic education and engagement in the curriculum, and how different departments are addressing the demand for marketable and employable skills.

There is clearly a need to seriously rethink the undergraduate political science major. Indeed, there has not been a major APSA sponsored curriculum reform effort regarding the undergraduate political science major (hereafter, UPSM) since the publication of “Liberal Learning and the Political Science Major: A Report to the Profession,” referred to as the now-famous “Wahlke Report” because the chair of the committee was John Wahlke (pictured on the cover of the program) (Wahlke 1991). That report promoted a vision of liberal education and the political science major that emphasized the structure and sequencing of courses to better promote the acquisition of critical thinking and other important transferable skills.<sup>1</sup> This report was a landmark in the history of the discipline and the APSA. In many ways, this conference honored the contributions of Wahlke and his committee to the UPSM. The conference discussion laid out the basis for a new set of recommendations regarding the UPSM, which we hope to work out in greater detail and present at the Teaching and Learning Conference in Albuquerque in February 2020.

### Why a need for this conference?

Today, the discipline faces many new challenges that did not exist in 1991, including declining enrollments, changes in the demographic composition of incoming students,

and demands for the development of “employable skills”<sup>2</sup> at the undergraduate level.

However, there are new opportunities as well. The rise in mass political engagement—exemplified by the “Black Lives Matter,” “#MeToo,” and “March for Our Lives” movements—suggests a rising interest in politics. The Wahlke Report, although a major step in providing association-wide guidance on the structure of the political science major is, in our view, outdated. It is time for the association to consider new recommendations regarding the structure of the undergraduate major in political science.

This workshop/conference, was a first step in the direction of reconsidering the recommendations of the Wahlke Report on how to structure the UPSM, will have enormous implications for the discipline as a whole. The time is ripe for such a reconsideration, given the challenges and opportunities currently facing the discipline in terms of undergraduate education. In the next few days, we will be discussing varying aspects of the UPSM—including the learning goals and the skills we want our students to acquire, as well as the various ways majors can be structured to achieve those learning objectives. This conference will work towards putting together a report to address the desirable features of the structure of the UPSM for a new era.

### Current challenges facing the political science major

There are number of current challenges facing the UPSM in the United States. First, there has been not only a marked decline in the number of students, but also a “reorientation” regarding where undergraduate political science majors are currently enrolled. Overall, based on data from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), the number of bachelor’s degrees awarded in political science from 2011-16 has declined significantly. Over that period, the number of undergraduate

<sup>1</sup> Transferable skills are talents and abilities that will travel/transition beyond degrees, hence “life experiences.”

<sup>2</sup> Commonly referred to as “employable skills,” “career-readiness” and “job-readiness” these include: Critical Thinking/Problem

Solving; Oral/Written Communications; Teamwork/Collaboration; Digital Technology; Leadership; Professionalism/Work Ethic; Career Management; and Global/Intercultural Fluency to name a few.

degrees awarded in the field has declined from about 40,000 per year in 2011-12 to about 34,000 per year in 2015-16. Further, currently only 1.77% of all bachelor's degrees awarded are in political science—the lowest level ever recorded (reported in APSA 2017). In comparison, the field of Economics has experienced growth in degrees conferred and is now close to equaling political science in the total number of undergraduate degrees awarded.

In addition to the overall downward trend in enrollments in UPSM, there has been a shift in the institutions that are contributing the most in terms of undergraduate degrees conferred. According to the “2016-2017 APSA Departmental Survey: Degrees Awarded Report,” Political Science programs at public universities (and particularly among PhD-granting departments, which are generally at larger universities) experienced an increase in the average number of bachelor's degrees conferred between 2014-15 and 2016-17 (APSA 2018). Thus, although enrollments in undergraduate programs have declined overall, there has also been a shift in where those degrees are awarded—in the direction of larger public universities. Such universities tend to have very large class sizes at the undergraduate level. Further, at public institutions there has been an increasing reliance on distance and online learning platforms to deliver content. As conveyed by *US News and World Report*, which cites a 2016 study by Babson survey group, public colleges and universities had the largest growth in online course enrollment between fall 2015 and 2016, at 7.3 percent (Friedman 2018). Additionally, the report found that roughly two-thirds of all online students enroll in programs at public institutions. It is likely that this trend will continue in the future. The move in the direction of larger class sizes and greater emphasis on “distance” learning, represent important challenges to the traditional liberal model of education.

The student population is also changing. As McClellan (2015) has noted, current curricular models in political science assume a traditional, 18-24-year old, residential,

university student population. However, many studies suggest that higher education enrollment will change dramatically in the coming years. The student body will be more ethnically diverse, predominately female, and less likely to comprise 18-year-olds fresh out of high school. The NCES estimates that by 2025 women will outnumber men in enrollment by 11.3 million to 8.4 million. Moreover, it is estimated that African-American enrollment will increase by 25% and Hispanic/Latino enrollment will increase by 34% by 2023. There will also be significantly more older students, with increases expected in both the 25-34 and the 35 and over cohorts by 2025, as well as increases in proportions of the student population who are First Generation College and Nontraditional students. In sum, many curricular models were based on designing a political science major based on the assumption of a large cohort of majority White middle-class young people in a full-time residential setting. This is no longer the case.

A third challenge is the rising demand from various “stakeholders” in higher education that there be a greater emphasis on employable skills at the undergraduate level. Although this has been accompanied by some emphasis on practical skills (and STEM fields), there has also been a re-emphasis on skills that have been associated with liberal education. For instance, the National Association of Colleges and Employers, through a task force of college career services and HR/staffing professionals, has recently pointed to aspects of “career-readiness” (NACE 2018) and has suggested that undergraduate majors should develop the competencies that employers associate with job-readiness, particularly critical thinking, communication skills, and global/intercultural fluency, and perhaps leadership and teamwork. Although traditionally political science has emphasized some of these competencies, other aspects for career preparation are largely missing from many programs. Yet, it is likely that incoming students interested in employment will demand the development of skills beyond the traditional ones emphasized in political science programs.

Beyond these challenges, there is also growing support for reforming the political science curriculum *within* the discipline. The assessment movement had led to call for greater attention for learning objectives in the undergraduate curriculum. In addition, a rediscovery of civic and political engagement as a goal of the political science curriculum has occurred. Going back to the rise of the service-learning movement in the 1990s, colleges and universities now recognize the need for “quality civic education to foster the redevelopment of a knowledgeable, capable, and informed citizenry” (Matto, McCartney, Bennion and Simpson 2017, 3). Political science has rediscovered its roots in promoting civic and political involvement, bolstered by a vibrant scholarship of engagement (McCartney, Bennion and Simpson 2013).

#### **Prior disciplinary efforts at curriculum development**

As Ishiyama, Breuning, and Lopez (2006) noted, attention to the undergraduate political science curriculum has long occupied the attention of the APSA. In the early period, from about the 1900s to the 1930s, the focus was largely on designing a major that focused on understanding political institutions with a secondary goal of preparing students for public service. In the 1950s, there was a shift away from the descriptive and practical approach to emphasizing the development of critical thinking, communication, and analytical skills and the promotion of liberal education. A major shift occurred after the issuance of a 1987-88 APSA survey report on the undergraduate curriculum that suggested that the predominant model to organize the undergraduate curriculum was a loosely organized collection of distribution requirements, as well as “faddish” electives that had more to do with faculty interests rather than student learning. At about the same time, the Association of American Colleges (AAC)—which had become increasingly critical of loosely organized majors—called on disciplinary associations to formulate

recommendations to “strengthen study-in-depth” (AAC 1990). In response, APSA appointed a task force with John Wahlke from the University of Arizona as chair.<sup>3</sup>

Building upon the AAC’s view that depth of understanding cannot be reached “merely by cumulative exposure to more and more subject matter,” the task force report set out to design a model that featured sequential learning, “building on blocks of knowledge that lead to more sophisticated understanding . . . leaps of imagination . . . and efforts at synthesis” (McClellan 2015; AAC 1990, p. 131). Responding to the 1987–88 APSA survey results, the Wahlke task force strongly criticized what it saw as common practice in political science to structure majors in a “disparate and unstructured” way and argued that this tended to reflect not the promotion of student “experiences in depth,” but rather “bureaucratic conveniences” (AAC 1990, p. 134).

Unlike previous APSA curricular reform efforts, the Wahlke task force attempted to directly link curricular integrity to liberal learning (McClellan 2015). In particular, the group argued that to best develop critical thinking, analytical and communication skills, it was necessary was to base majors on a sequential model upon which students would build increasingly sophisticated structures of knowledge and intellectual skills. The goal, according to the task force report, would not be to produce “good citizens” or train future public employees. Instead, political science instruction should turn “politically interested and concerned students into politically literate college graduates, whatever their career plans or other interests” (AAC 1990, p. 134). The intent of the task force was NOT to create a model curriculum, but to suggest guidelines for undergraduate political science programs to help promote liberal education.

To that end, the report suggested the following structure for an undergraduate program:

<sup>3</sup> The task force was made up of exclusively of representatives of large PhD-granting institutions and small private (and often elite)

liberal arts colleges. What was notably absent was representation from regional public universities and community colleges.

- A common introductory course (ideally, introduction to politics, but also introduction to American government taught in comparative context);
- A capstone experience in the senior year, such as a senior seminar or research project, which would give students the opportunity to integrate and synthesize prior learning;
- A scope and methods course that would expose students to methods of inquiry, normative and empirical (AAC 1990).

What the report did not do was to recommend specific subfields or distributional requirements for a major. Rather, the report suggested that a common set of core topics be covered in one way or another, but these be carefully sequenced in order to build upon—and expand—previously developed skills and competencies. The primary goal was the development of skills, and the task force believed that a structured and sequenced major would lead to the better development of such skills.

Several studies have supported these claims. Breuning, Parker and Ishiyama (2001) demonstrated such positive effects of a highly structured and sequenced program at Truman State University (favorable exit interviews and surveys, insightful portfolios, nationally normed exam results above the national average). Ishiyama and Hartlaub (2003) compared two differently organized political science programs and discovered that the more structured program (at Truman State) was better at developing abstract and critical thinking skills. More generally, Ishiyama (2005a) found in a survey of 32 colleges and universities that programs arranged more along the guidelines of the Wahlke Report (more common courses, senior capstone and early methods course) produced greater learning, as measured by political science field test scores, than did less structured programs. Despite this, it was also found that the Wahlke Report has had a limited impact on the discipline. Ishiyama (2005b) found that of 193 Midwestern political science programs only 18 percent included the basic

elements suggested by the Wahlke Report (common introductory course, methods course and capstone experience). Even when considering the minimal recommendation for the adoption of a capstone course or experience, the APSA 2015-16 departmental survey reported that only a little over half (55%) of programs nationwide had adopted this minimal feature. Although perhaps not as impactful as originally intended, the Wahlke Report remains the last attempt by the APSA to provide guidelines on the structure of the undergraduate political science major.

### **Moving forward**

In a very insightful observation McClellan (2015, p. 12) notes

If APSA commissions another blue-ribbon panel, it will have to take into account extraordinary changes surrounding higher education, the discipline and the profession, and.... the emergence of new alternatives to traditional ways of organizing the curriculum. The biggest obstacle to curriculum reform remains the inability of the discipline to come to an agreement on the goals of political science education. If no agreement can be reached, it might be best for the next 'report to the profession' to admit candidly that there is no one right way to organize the political science major. Then we can proceed to identify the curricular and pedagogical conditions under which different goals can be achieved. This may be the way to avoid the failures of past reform efforts, and provide our students with the best chances for success.

The primary purpose of this workshop/conference was to begin the process is to directly address the call issued by McClellan. This conference is as a first step towards rethinking the undergraduate political science curriculum as proposed by the Wahlke Report. To that end we assembled scholars from a variety of different institutions—Public Research Universities, Regional Public Universities, Liberal Arts Colleges, and Community Colleges—to discuss their experiences and perspectives, and to work together to move towards rethinking the UPSM.

In particular, some of the issues we discussed included:

1. What are the goals and learning outcomes of political science education, and how do curricular models promote different sets of goals and outcomes?
2. Should the Wahlke guidelines be retained or abandoned altogether?
3. Skills that have traditionally been emphasized in political science curricula are critical thinking and communication skills—should other skills as suggested by the employment report also be included?
4. Also, the structured and sequenced nature of the curriculum recommended by the Wahlke Report assumed a traditional four-year residential college population—how can this be adapted to meet the needs of transfer students, or non-traditional students, or students at community colleges?
5. How can two-year institutions and high school curricula be included in this report? With increased enrollments at two-year institutions and emergence of “dual credit” courses in the high schools, how should the political science major be adapted to fit these new realities?
6. Is there a need to more systematically include global and intercultural perspectives into the major?
7. Should civic engagement be recognized as a central goal of the political science major, and what role should experiential learning play and how should it be made a part of the structure of the major?
8. How and to what extent should the political science major expose students to the subfields of the discipline? How should the traditional dilemma of breadth vs. depth of knowledge be addressed?

Moving forward, two additional planned meetings will occur in the future to further discuss the formulation of a new report to the discipline. The first will be in the form of a working group at the APSA annual meeting in Washington DC in August-September. Second, we are arranging for the creation of a separate “track” at the TLC meeting at Albuquerque NM to move towards putting together a draft document based upon our discussions in Denton and Washington, as well as further discussion in Albuquerque.

Stay tuned, this promises to be quite a ride!

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### **Teaching Together: Expanding the Classroom Curriculum through Small-Group Student Presentations**

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Small-group projects advance learning for both students and instructors, and they develop student skills and confidence in speaking, research, and writing. They require student initiative, with instructor guidance, to select a specialized topic that builds upon the course curriculum. In this process, instructor

knowledge of the subject often expands through student selection of case studies that may not be in the instructor's immediate scholarly expertise.

Small-group projects also promote peer engagement, as students prepare and organize presentations, and share findings with the class (Bose, 2004) They additionally develop critical thinking abilities, an essential area of development in an advanced liberal arts course (Archer and Miller, 2011; Marks, 2008; Phillips, 2005; Pollock et al, 2011). Through small-group projects, students may identify specialized areas of interest in a discipline as well as interdisciplinary approaches to study. Furthermore, students hone communication and collaboration skills that are essential in the twenty-first century workforce.

#### *ACTIVE LEARNING IN POLITICAL SCIENCE*

The importance of student participation in learning is grounded in the twentieth-century progressive movement in education. >John Dewey discussed the necessity of education for an informed citizenry to guide politics and policy making (1916). This was in sharp contrast to earlier views of education as one-way instruction, in which expert teachers impart knowledge to disciplined pupils (Freire, 1970; Farrar-Myers, 2007). Dewey maintained that for democracy to thrive the public must be educated, not just to elect officials; but, more importantly, for the public to engage in political discourse and influence public decisions.

Dewey's argument applies to all levels of education and illustrates well why active learning projects are essential for undergraduates. Students who major in political science in college use their degree in many fields, including law, education, politics,

and journalism. Each of these professions requires engagement with others to develop and achieve goals, and create products (APSA, "Career Sectors for Political Science"). Building those skills in undergraduate courses assists with professional development and often demonstrates the applicability of classroom learning to decision making in the work force (Pennock, 2011).

#### *INCORPORATING SMALL-GROUP EXERCISES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CLASSROOM*

In the past two academic years, I have used two versions of a group exercise, one for an elective on the American presidency and one for an introductory public policy course. For the American presidency course, the group project is part of a larger individual research paper assignment, and it allows students to present their work in progress in conjunction with peers working on similar topics. For the public policy course, the group project is a stand-alone graded assignment with a group presentation and an individual policy memo.

In my Spring 2018 American Presidency course, students participated in small-group presentations about the modern presidency, focusing on their research for a term paper about a president's leadership and policy making. Students selected paper topics in the first few weeks of the semester and then were assigned to groups of 4-6 to give presentations. Multiple presentations on one presidency were permitted, so long as they focused on different topics – for example, four students studied FDR, examining his campaign strategies, 100 Days leadership, creation of Social Security, and foreign-policy leadership in World War II.

Every student selected 2-3 short reading links for the class in preparation for the presentation, as well as 4-6 PowerPoint slides

to accompany the presentation. One student (either a student completing an honors option in the course, or a volunteer) served as group coordinator, sending me the consolidated reading links to post on Blackboard one class period in advance, and sending the consolidated slides on the presentation morning to post on Blackboard. Each student had about 5-6 minutes to present research and findings to date, and then the group addressed class questions for about 10 minutes. In the next class, I gave each student a one-page evaluation sheet with comments, which was required to be returned with the completed research paper. The presentation was thus incorporated into the research paper, but not graded separately.

Having students present their work in progress helped them greatly with their research and analysis. Identifying their proposed argument about presidential leadership required them to compile their research, make preliminary findings, and identify areas for further analysis. Peer feedback within small groups and from the rest of the class also was instructive and informed the research papers.

In my Fall 2017 and Spring 2019 Introduction to Public Policy and Public Service courses, small-group student presentations were an integral component to classroom instruction. In the second week of the semester, I asked students to identify a national policy area of interest, such as education, environmental policy, health care, immigration, military intervention, or refugee policy. Based on their topic, students were assigned to small groups, usually 3-5 people, to develop a presentation that examined three policy options and made a group recommendation. To ensure sufficient time for collaboration, presentation work began during class time, so

students could work together on initial ideas, make individual assignments, and raise group questions directly with me. Outside classroom work was required for research and preparation, and one student was responsible for each group's coordination.

Each student had four responsibilities for the assignment: 1-2 class readings, which were posted on Blackboard a few days before the presentation; preparation of slides for the presentation; participation in the presentation; and a short individual writing assignment based on the student's part of the presentation. Each group's presentation slides were posted on Blackboard, so peers had time to review, ask questions, and provide commentary. Students worked together to develop slides and commentary, and they were graded individually on their contributions. As with the American Presidency course, an evaluation sheet for the presentation and writing assignment was included in the course syllabus, so the requirements were clear from the start of the semester.

This assignment required more substantive small-group work than the one in the American Presidency course. Students had to organize the presentation and develop a policy recommendation (which could be one of the three options presented or a combination). Consequently, in-class time was needed to ensure that students discussed directly and electronically. Given that the course aims to prepare students for actual policy work, attention to time constraints for the presentation and word-count limit for the policy memo were especially important as well.

*PROSPECTS FOR SMALL-GROUP PROJECTS IN PSC COURSES*

These case studies illustrate both academic and professional development from small-group projects in political science courses. Having students work together on a presentation in small groups develops organizational, critical thinking, interpersonal, and communication skills. Connecting the presentation to individual writing assignments produces advanced independent work in the field of study as well. These results are connected in part to small class size (usually 20-25 students) in a course directed by one instructor. With sufficient resources (student assistants, weekly section meetings), the small-group activity model discussed here could be applied to larger courses with multiple instructors as well.

Generalizing recommendations for group projects in political science courses is difficult without other case studies. One option is for faculty at several schools to develop, conduct, and evaluate a similar group exercise, examining faculty experiences as well as student evaluations. Another option that is less scientific, but perhaps more feasible and readily informative for instructors, is for faculty to develop their own exercises and then share experiences and recommendations at events such as the TLC at APSA conference. As liberal arts programs face heightened expectations for demonstrating students' career prospects, identifying classroom activities that make this connection is especially instructive and important.

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### ***JPSE Seeks Reviews***

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The Journal of Political Science Education is soliciting reviews of relevant materials for our Reviews section. The primary function of this section is to offer informative, constructive discussion of resources for teacher-scholars in the discipline of political science. These reviews might address how recent scholarly work in the discipline affects our efforts to engage students in the classroom. For example, a review of a recent work on increasing partisan polarization among the electorate might address the difficulty such circumstances pose for discussing controversial political issues with students. Meanwhile, the review of a new scholarly book on diminished political participation might emphasize the way the findings underscore the importance of adopting civic engagement pedagogy. In addition to recent scholarly works, the Journal of Political Science Education (JPSE) also accepts reviews of books that address specific pedagogical approaches (e.g., service learning, civic engagement, simulations, on-line learning, inclusive classrooms), current trends in higher education (e.g., decline of shared governance, increased reliance on adjunct instructors, changing demographics of the student body), and professional development (e.g., landing a job in academia, balancing teaching and research, earning tenure).

Unlike the traditional book review section of other journals, however, the JPSE solicits reviews of a much wider array of teaching materials and professional development resources. Examples of these material includes not only traditional textbooks, but any widely available resource or activity related to teaching. Such resources might include on-line textbooks and course materials, supplementary course materials, simulations, films and documentaries, professional development workshops or conferences, consortiums, or professional associations.

The JPSE reviews should not simply describe the book or materials under consideration. They should explain to readers how the resources address our ability to more effectively teach students – whether the effect on our teaching comes from a more diverse array of professors earning tenure in the discipline, the strengths and weaknesses of a new pedagogical approach, or the features of available textbooks and teaching materials for a particular class.

If you are interested in writing a review (of materials you have already read/used or are willing to accept an assigned topic), please contact the JPSE Reviews Editor, Cherie Strachan (at [strac1jc@cmich.edu](mailto:strac1jc@cmich.edu)).

### ***New Resource: Pedagogical Journeys Through World Politics***

*Jamie Frueh, Professor of Political Science, Bridgewater College, [jfrueh@bridgewater.edu](mailto:jfrueh@bridgewater.edu)*

This edited volume is a collection of twenty-three autobiographical narratives by successful teachers of global politics and international relations. The diverse contributors (from a variety of institutional contexts, sub-disciplines, and countries) describe their development as teachers, articulate mission

statements for their teaching, and link both to pedagogical practices that exemplify their teaching philosophies. Rather than provide specific recipes for authoritative techniques, the essays empower readers as creative developers of their own approaches to teaching global politics. They demonstrate the multiple ways that instructors have grounded deliberate pedagogical designs in a variety of deeper philosophical commitments, and resources are provided to facilitate discussion and collaborative deliberation between groups of readers.

Frueh, Jamie ed. 2020. *Pedagogical Journeys Through World Politics*. Palgrave Macmillan.

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### ***Call for Undergraduate Research Submissions***

*Christopher Lawrence, Associate Professor and Chair, Department of Political Science, Middle Georgia State University, Macon Campus*

Dear colleagues: I recently accepted the position of political science content editor for [Papers & Publications: Interdisciplinary Journal of Undergraduate Research](https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/papersandpubs/aimsandscope.html), a regional, peer-reviewed, interdisciplinary open-access journal dedicated to undergraduate research and creative works, published by the Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Activities at the University of North Georgia.

We are actively seeking student papers for upcoming issues of the journal. Any original work that has been presented as part of a capstone course or at a conference or research symposium (either on-campus or at a regional/national meeting) from any discipline will be considered for publication. Students can find more information about submitting their work to Papers & Publications at the following link:  
<https://digitalcommons.northgeorgia.edu/papersandpubs/aimsandscope.html>.

We are also seeking faculty to serve as reviewers for the journal. Individuals who are interested in reviewing political science papers can contact me directly at [christopher.lawrence@mga.edu](mailto:christopher.lawrence@mga.edu); faculty in other disciplines should email the editor-in-chief, Leigh Dillard at the University of North Georgia, at [papersandpubs@gmail.com](mailto:papersandpubs@gmail.com).

I encourage you to share this information with both students and other colleagues who may be interested in this publication opportunity or serving as reviewers, as appropriate.

**Announcements**

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

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Please send any article submissions or announcements for future newsletters to Bobbi Gentry at [bgentry@bridgewater.edu](mailto: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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Bobbi Gentry, Newsletter Editor