

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
WSU Political Science Program
Self-Study Document, Fall 2021

Author's Contact Information: Dr. Thom Kuehls, tkuehls@weber.edu, 801-626-6698

The following is a summary of the self-study document, highlighting important points. For complete information, please refer to the full, self-study document itself.

Standard A. Mission Statement:

The mission of the Political Science program, in keeping with the missions of the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences and of Weber State University, is to provide excellent educational experiences for students through classroom instruction, research, public service and community-engaged learning opportunities. Pursuant to that mission, the program is designed:

- To provide a solid liberal arts curriculum that informs our students of the issues, authors, and content, of the principal subfields defining the discipline of political science: American Institutions and Politics, American National Government, Constitutional Law, International and Comparative Politics, Political Theory, and Public Administration.
- To examine the history and evolution of governance, the relationship of the state to society as a whole as well as to the individual, and the fundamental ethical questions arising from relationship of power and politics;
- To educate life-long informed and engaged citizens who demonstrate the finest ideals of citizenship through participating in civic discourse and sustaining a vibrant democracy;
- To cultivate the reasoning and analytic abilities as well as the oral and written communication skills which provide the hallmarks of a liberal arts education;
- To contribute to a deeper understanding of politics through offering students a range of extra- and co-curricular opportunities including internships, community engaged learning projects, individual research and with faculty, and participation on academic teams like the Model United Nations or Moot Court teams.
- To offer an excellent undergraduate education in political science so that Political Science graduates are well prepared to start careers in government, business, non-profits, international non-governmental organizations, journalism, politics, education, or to continue their post-graduation education in professional or graduate school.

In addition, the program has adopted the following three strategic goals:

1. **Bigger:** A) *we want to continue to increase the number of majors and minors; B) we want to increase the "pot of money" available for faculty research.*
2. **Better:** A) *1. we want to provide better opportunities for our students to present their research both on and off campus, 2. and to be active in the program; B) we want to provide better mentoring for our students, particularly those who may not be doing so well in the program; C) and we want to do a better job of tracking/keeping in touch with our graduates.*

- 3. Relevant:** a) *we want make sure that the faculty in our program are offering courses that are up to date and in keeping with current developments in the field, are actively involved in scholarship in their fields, and that they are sharing their knowledge and expertise with the campus community specifically and the northern Utah community more broadly;* b) *we also want to insure that the program is a good “stepping stone” for our graduates who are heading off to graduate programs or into the work force.*

Standard B. Curriculum:

The political science program offers a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science, a Bachelor of Science in Political Science, and a minor in political science. The program offers 42 courses in political science (and allows 3 courses from other programs to count toward a major or minor). Of those 42 courses, one is an American Institutions course (a University requirement), 6 are Social Science general education courses, and one is a diversity course.

Standard C. Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment:

The program operates with five basic learning outcomes.

Because the program offers an American Institutions course and six Social Science general education courses, additional learning outcomes are attached to these courses.

The effectiveness of assessment is questioned in the report, specifically as a tool for improving courses and revising the political science curriculum.

Standard D. Academic Advising:

Any student who wishes to major or minor in political science must first meet with Thom Kuehls, the program academic advisor. Advisor notes of each meeting are entered into the students' Cattracks pages. Before students can graduate they do need Thom to “check” the graduation clearance box in Cattracks. Approximately 90% of political science majors who have completed at least 25% of their degree have had at least one advising session.

Standard E. Faculty:

There are six full-time faculty in the political science program, each specializing in a specific subfield of the discipline. Of these six, three are tenured, full professors, and two are tenured associate professors, and one is an assistant professor on tenure-track. In addition, the program employs a varying number of adjunct instructors each semester. The faculty are a definite strength of the program both in terms of their teaching and their scholarship. The faculty have consistently earned ratings of excellent in teaching in their formal reviews and over the past five years, they have published ten articles in journals or edited collections, and delivered over thirty papers at conferences or as invited talks at other Universities.

Standard F. Program Support:

The program receives adequate support from the College’s Dean’s office, including an annual travel budget of roughly \$800 per faculty member, technology support for both our offices and classrooms, and academic advising covering University-wide requirements for all of our majors and minors. The Department of Political Science has struggled with a high turnover at the Administrative Specialist position, having had four different persons in that position since 2017 and currently going through the hiring process for a fifth.

Standard G. Relations with External Community:

Our faculty are involved with a number of external groups at the local, state, national, and international levels.

Standard H. Previous Program Review

The program has responded, in one way or another, to all six of the “challenges and opportunities” and all three of the “recommendations” from the previous self-study, five-year review. We have enlisted the services of the same two individuals for this year’s review team as we had five years ago. We are looking forward to seeing their assessment of our program five years after their first visit.

Information Regarding Current Review Team Members:

Name	Position	Affiliation
Dr. Adam Johnston	Professor of Physics	Weber State University
Dr. Anne Hildreth	Interim Director of Undergraduate Studies and Associate Professor Emerita Department of Political Science Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy	University at Albany, SUNY