

Dear Prospective Political Science TAP Student,

Congratulations on your acceptance to the University of Massachusetts Amherst and invitation to join the Political Science Talent Advancement Program (POLISCI TAP) freshman year program. Have you ever had a conversation in which you felt that almost every second of it you were learning something valuable? A conversation in which even though the other person's views differed from yours, and you could not help but admire their passion and listen to what they had to say? Well, that is how I have felt during so many conversations I have had with other members of the Political Science TAP.

The people in this program are not only the people who with whom I share a floor, and often my class notes. They are first and foremost my friends. From them I have learned valuable things not only about class, but about life as well.

I have learned more about politics in the past few months than I think I have my entire life. That is not due simply to the fact that the program has provided me the opportunity to take political science classes in a small classroom sitting, or that our instructor appears genuinely interested in helping us learn, and shows a passion for what he teaches. I feel it is because almost every other person in the POLISCI TAP is as passionate about politics as I am. It is because this program has given me the chance to have heated political debates with someone and then be able to walk with them to lunch. It is because if a political discussion arises at two in the morning, most of us will simply run with it. It is because when you live with people who share your interests, the learning can go on for as long as you would like it to.

The benefits of living in the same floor as your classmates extend beyond the chances to debate. It is great to know that when you have a big Polisci paper due, you are not alone, or that you will have over 20 people to study with for your midterm and final. It is great knowing that if you are ill one day and can't attend class, there are plenty of people whose notes you can borrow and who will be more than happy to fill you in on what happened in class. It is also good to always have people around you who can help you when you are struggling with a point, or who you can help if they are struggling.

However, not everything that goes on in the POLISCI TAP is about learning, there are endless moments of fun. During the year, we have held dozens of movie nights, poker tournaments, small parties, and even a boxing match. We have devised plans to start an underground fight club, (which I'm not supposed to talk about because I'm breaking the first and second rules). Unfortunately we have not been successful in getting that fully started, but we have hope. There are long nights of just sitting around in the lounge talking. You will always find someone to talk to and hang out with, no matter what time of day or night. You are very likely to find another person who shares your love for T.V. and shows like The Daily Show, Lost, or in my case, Anderson Cooper 360. There is never lack of movies to watch, because with so many friends willing to let you borrow something, you are bound to find something you have not seen before. These are just some of the many social benefits of belonging to the TAP.

The close relationship that develops between the members of the TAP in no way means that you will become isolated from the rest of the campus. You will only take about two classes together, and you are free to choose what classes you want to take to fill up the rest of your schedule. You will be able to take the large lecture courses that are usually expected of a large school like UMass. You will meet plenty of people outside -your TAP through your classes, the various extra-curricular activities that are offered. In a school of the size of UMass, it is almost assured that you will find the type of people you are searching for.

If you still doubt whether or not the Polisci TAP is for you, ask yourself a couple of questions. Would you like to start college off with an instant group of new friends? Would you like to meet people who share many of your interests? Would you like to learn in an environment in which you are both intellectually challenged and provided with the tools needed for success? Would you like to make your freshman year at UMass Amherst, the best it could possibly be? If the answer to any of these questions is yes, the Polisci TAP program is for you. Think about it, you have nothing to lose, and so much to gain, and remember that for me, and so many others that have done the program before me, choosing to belong to this TAP has turned out to be one of the best academic and social decisions I have made.

Sincerely,

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