

# Political Science

Results of a comprehensive review of the undergraduate major in Political Science, initiated and undertaken by the Department's Undergraduate Studies Committee. The review was conducted in part in preparation for the Department's AQAD review, scheduled for the 2001-2002 cycle, with the idea that the Department will have had some experience with changes in the undergraduate major by the time the AQAD review occurs.

## ■ Purpose and Goals

In January of 1999, a memorandum to all departmental faculty from the Undergraduate Studies Committee suggested that the Department was "at a crossroads in terms of the undergraduate program." Over the previous decade the number of majors had declined by almost half, the number of students taught had fallen by a third, and there was no strategy in place to reverse this trend. With the support of the Department the Undergraduate Studies Committee undertook a comprehensive review of the entire undergraduate program in Political Science. The Committee addressed the curriculum — including requirements for the major, the departmental honors program, and the junior writing requirement — as well as other issues related to the quality of the undergraduate experience in the major, including course scheduling, recruiting into the major, and advising.

The Committee examined enrollment trends, comparative data from similar political science programs, and policies and practices of other departments within the College of Social and Behavioral Science and other parts of the University. The Committee then drafted a set of specific proposals for change in the undergraduate program for discussion and action by the entire Department faculty in May of 1999.

## ■ Outcomes

In response to the Committee's recommendations the Department adopted a set of sweeping changes in the undergraduate program. Major changes included:

- New departmental expectations regarding involvement of tenure-system faculty in undergraduate advising.
- Agreement to pursue the establishment of concentrations in the undergraduate major.
- Major new expectations regarding Departmental participation in the General Education program.
- An examination of all lower-division offerings "with an eye to increasing enrollment through new offerings, retitlings, redesign of content, and/or redesign of format."

- Conversion of the junior year writing requirement from a one-credit course to a three-credit course with limited enrollment and participation of all tenure-system faculty on a rotating basis.
- A commitment to actively encourage majors to participate in the internship program, and to develop appropriate faculty rewards for sponsorship of internships.
- New course scheduling policies to make Political Science courses more accessible to a larger number of students.

#### ■ **Future Action**

The Department will now move forward with implementation of these changes during the 1999-2000 academic year, with the intention of creating a new benchmark to coincide with the AQAD review to follow. The Department is also initiating a process to develop a five-year plan, organized so as to allow a first round of faculty discussions to occur as the backdrop for the development of the AQAD self-study.