Georgia Southwestern State University
Department of History & Political Science

Comprehensive Academic Program Review

B.S. in Political Science

Fall 2013

Prepared by:
Dr. Gary Kline, Professor of Political Science
& Department Chair

In consultation with:
Dr. Brian Smith, Associate Professor of Political Science
Dr. Jason Berggren, Assistant Professor of Political Science
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A. Mission Statements

Mission of Georgia Southwestern State University:
“Georgia Southwestern State University cultivates excellence in learning and teaching that encourages intellectual, personal, and social growth for students, faculty, staff, and the community. Georgia Southwestern State University is a comprehensive state university within the University System of Georgia that offers a full range of bachelor degree programs, along with selected master’s and specialist degree programs.” Approved by GSW Faculty April 30, 2010.

Diversity Statement
“Georgia Southwestern State University embraces diversity as an integral part of being a caring community of lifelong learners. We are committed to building and maintaining a diverse, accessible, civil and supportive campus. GSW provides an environment and curriculum which affirm pluralism of beliefs and opinions, including diversity of religion, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, disability, age and socioeconomic class. The University will implement and adhere to policies and procedures which discourage harassment and other behaviors that infringe upon the freedom and respect that every individual deserves.” Adopted August 10, 2000

Mission of the Department of Political science and Political Science:
“The disciplines in the Department of Political science and Political Science focus on humanity in action and in thought as well as humanity’s relationship to the earth and the allocation of its resources, historically, at present, and in the future. The general study of these fields provides that broad base which is essential for effective functioning in humanistic areas. Specialized study in specific social science areas may lead to careers in teaching, governmental services, public information, business, the legal profession, or simply provide the broad based liberal arts education fundamental to a fuller understanding of life, whatever the specific career choice.

“The Department accepts the particular challenge of promoting awareness of our cultural heritage and the responsibilities of citizenship within a democratic society and the world community. The Department encourages self-realization, intellectual inquiry, and the examination of personal and professional values. The activities of the Department also encourage the discovery and study of those societal needs which may be effectively addressed in an academic setting.” Bulletin, 2011-2012. Georgia Southwestern State University

Mission of the Political science Program:
“Political Science is a means to understand politics or, in other words, the processes, activities, and behaviors that occur across the political system and its components. Political science is a method of critical thinking that enables identifying not only the empirical and normative questions about politics but answering them. Specifically, to this end, political science as a discipline has three goals. Political science first seeks to describe and reveal political
phenomena. The discipline’s second goal seeks to explain why phenomena occur by creating theories and models. After describing what political phenomena is occurring and why, the third goal is to evaluate political processes against some normative standards of judgment.”

II. Brief Program Overview

Background
In the mid-1960's, when Georgia Southwestern College was in transition to a four-year institution, the academic disciplines now within the Department of History and Political Science were a part of the Division of Social Science along with those disciplines now in the Department of Psychology and Sociology. Dr. Alexander A. Palamiotis was Division Chair.

The Division had been approved by the Regents to offer the B.A. in History and the B.A. in Political Science. (The decision to offer those two majors was made jointly by Dr. Palamiotis – whose field was political science – and by the University System Vice Chancellor for Academics – whose field was history.) The Division was also approved to offer in cooperation with the Division of Education the following degree programs: B.S. Ed. in Social Science, B.A. with Teacher Certification in History, B.A. with Teacher Certification in Political Science, B.S. with Teacher Certification in History, and B.S. with Teacher Certification in Political Science.

In 1970, the Division began to offer the B.S. in History and the B.S. in Political Science. In 1973, almost the history, political science, and economics faculty moved into the B300 area of the new Business/History & Political Science Building. Prior to this, these faculty members had been located in a couple of different buildings across campus.

In 1974, the Division began offering graduate courses and, in cooperation with the Division of Education, M.Ed. programs in social science, in history, and in political science. In 1977, Dr. C. Stephen Gurr replaced Dr. Palamiotis as Division Chair. Palamiotis retired a few years later.

In 1980, the college’s academic units were reorganized. The academic divisions were eliminated, and units were formed into five Schools. The School of Arts & Sciences was then composed of ten Departments, including the Department of History and Political Science with Dr. Richard L. Baringer as Acting Chair then Chair. Dr. Gurr had become the Chair of the School of Arts & Sciences. Gurr served there for three years and then left to become Academic Dean at Gainesville (GA) Junior College. A few years later the School Chair position’s title was changed to Dean. (Arts & Sciences now is composed of nine departments, Health & Human Performance having been transferred to the School of Education.)

For thirteen years, from 1981 to 1992, the Department included a Military Science Program, which was a branch of the program at Mercer University. During those years, the Department included usually two U.S. Army officers and two sergeants, as well as a secretary for that
program. They were housed at first in the annex end of Jackson Hall and then in Sanford Hall. The rappelling tower on the Perimeter Road was constructed for the ROTC program’s use. A number of GSW graduates received commissions as U.S. Army officers through the program.

In 1988, the Department’s graduate programs were changed to an M.Ed. in Social Science with either history or social science as the content fields. Both the B.A. and B.S. with Teacher Certification in Political Science were deleted in 1992 because of insufficient enrollment. The B.A. with Teacher Certification in History was dropped in 1996 because the program’s requirements could not be met within the Regents mandated 120 semester hours. In 2000, the B.S. Ed. in Social Science was phased out due to impossible program requirements dictated by the Regents.

In 2001-2, the B300 office area was re-designed and renovated, replacing the original inadequate cubicles with complete and good-sized offices and with a central secretarial area. In 2002, Dr. Baringer was replaced as Department Chair by Dr. Richard C. Hall. Baringer then served for one year as Interim Dean of the School of Arts & Sciences and retired in August of 2003.

In the summer of 2007, Dr. Gary Kline, Professor of Political Science, assumed the position of department chair. This report will summarize subsequent developments and conditions to the present.
III. Quality, Viability, and Productivity of Program

The B.S. in Political Science Program is quite strong in terms of the quality and productivity of the program, making it unquestionably viable. American Government is a required course in the general core; and political scientists also cover two optional courses offered in the core, Global Issues (POLS 2401) and World and Its Peoples (SOSC 1101). The program enrolls a consistently healthy number of majors and minors, and it graduates a proportionately reasonable and satisfactory number of them each year. (See the annual reports in the appendix for details.) This is possible due to the quality of faculty instruction that is provided, and to the care with which students are mentored and advised. The program is fortunate to have a stable group of very capable, talented, and conscientious faculty members who work extremely hard despite being at the very bottom of the salary scale state-wide, regionally, and nationally for political science faculty members who are similarly situated (by institution, rank, and years of service).

a) Student Indicators

Over the period covered by this report (fall 2007 – fall 2013) and even before, the number of majors has fluctuated slightly from year to year, but has averaged about 45. Major enrollment peaked at 59 in spring 2011. As institutional enrollment has fluctuated slightly, but has remained generally stable over this period of time, the B.S. in Political Science Program has held on to its healthy share of majors and minors in comparison with other programs across the University campus. Graduation rates have also been satisfactory and proportional to the number of students in the program. The average number of majors graduating annually is 5.83 for 2007-2013.

b) Teaching

The faculty members who teach in the political science program are highly qualified and mostly very experienced, as well. Dr. Jason Berggren received the Professor of the Year Award in 2012 and Dr. Gary Kline was honored with the University Excellence and Commitment to Teaching Award in 2011. (See Appendix A – Faculty CVs.) As indicated by student opinionnaires, they are consistently at or above University averages in all respects. Nevertheless, they are rigorous and challenging teachers, a fact that does not always please students who prefer easier classes. (See Appendix B – Annual Reports.)

With careful planning, we are able to schedule the requisite courses to meet the needs of students in the core and our majors-minors, and to offer those courses in a timely fashion. (See Appendix C – Course Offerings and Rotations) This responsibility strains our resources and might become difficult to balance if we were to lose a faculty member, either full time or part time. So far, however, we are meeting University and student needs and we are doing so in a very satisfactory manner. To repeat, the faculty members of our department deserve full credit for their dedication and hard work in service to our students.
Political scientists are very productive members of our campus community in terms of credit hours generated per instructor. The table below buttresses this claim.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credit hours by term</th>
<th>Full-time pol. science faculty</th>
<th>Ave. per pol. scientist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall 2012</td>
<td>876</td>
<td>292.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring 2013</td>
<td>933</td>
<td>311.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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When we compare the productivity of our political science faculty to faculty members in other units on campus, we find that our department ranks very high. While we have figures for political science for fall 2012 and spring 2013 terms, the most recent figures we are able to obtain for other units are for spring 2012. However, we believe that this comparison provides the requisite commensurability. The table below summarizes statistics for a representative sampling of campus units; it reflects figures for full-time faculty members only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Average credit hours per full-time faculty member*</th>
<th>Political Science</th>
<th>School of Education</th>
<th>Computer &amp; Info Sciences</th>
<th>English &amp; Modern Languages</th>
<th>Biology</th>
<th>Chemistry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>301.5</td>
<td>195.23</td>
<td>177.66</td>
<td>210.27</td>
<td>296.0</td>
<td>155.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The figure for our program covers fall 2012 and spring 2013 averaged; all other unit figures are based on spring 2012 numbers.

c) Scholarship

Political science faculty members are also active and productive scholars at Georgia Southwestern State University. After hours and during weekends, it is rare not to find at least one of them working at the office on some scholarly project. Our political scientists regularly give scholarly presentations and conference papers; and they have produced published articles and reviews, as well. Given the heavy teaching and service loads, and the lack of support for faculty research, they have managed to generate a respectable body of scholarly work. (See Appendix A – Political Science Faculty CVs for individual summaries, or Appendix B – Annual Reports for collective summaries of their scholarly achievements.)

d) Service

Political scientists of the Department of History and Political Science have also been very engaged in service activities at GSW. They regularly serve on committees (standing and ad hoc) and positions such as the Faculty Senate; and frequently they assume leadership roles. They serve as academic advisors, of course, and as faculty sponsors/advisors for student groups and organizations. One of them serves as faculty advisor to the Student Government Association. Dr. Brian Smith was given the President’s Excellence in Service Award for 2011. The political
scientists are very accessible to our students and they take a keen interest in activities to promote student awareness and learning. As in the other areas (teaching and scholarship) it is difficult to identify any other department or program on our campus where the faculty members are more obviously concerned and engaged. (See Appendix A – Faculty CVs for individual summaries, or Appendix B – Annual Reports for collective summaries of their scholarly achievements.)

e) Program Resources
The annual budget of the Department of History and Political Science has been adequate to meet our basic, no-frills needs, but it is not conducive to growth or enrichment of any kind. The department budget was $624,166 in 2008-2009 and it is $651,459 for the current fiscal year. The budget for supplies and equipment meets our basic need for those items and we have adequate classrooms with technology available in them and in our offices. In 2008-2009 we were allocated $19,424 for these operating expenses, but this year we were given only $11,375, a reduction of more than 41%.

Many of our desks are small and very old, and should be replaced. We have experienced cuts in our department budget over the past several years and we have had to take furlough days, tantamount to salary cuts. Our underpaid administrative assistant is assigned only half time to our department; she works half time in the Office of the Dean of Arts and Sciences (and half time she oversees testing for the University – i.e., in addition to being underpaid, she is overworked). Our personnel funding has not improved for more than six years (except for the recent $1000 increase announced by our University President at the fall 2013 opening assembly). The travel budget has remained constant for decades. (Details of our annual budgets are included in Appendix B – Annual Reports.)

IV. Adjustments and Improvements to Program
With each annual report, we have identified areas where we would work to further assess and/or amend, modify, or otherwise revise our practices in accord with previous feedback. (A summary of those actions and activities can be found in Appendix B – Annual Reports.) On a regular basis, department members review and (when indicated) revise student learning outcomes, program goals and objectives, program assessment measures and processes, program mission, and the like.

In this connection, the members of our department have always done what we said we would do in an attempt to constantly improve and strengthen our pedagogy and assessment practices. We cannot, however, remember an instance when anything we recommended in an annual report that required tangible administration support was in fact funded or supported. Every change and improvement has been accomplished within our department relying solely on department personnel devoting their time and effort to the tasks at hand. Though moot, it is interesting to speculate about what might have been accomplished with some outside help.
V. Summary Recommendations

Here is where we have to speak frankly and get serious. It is extremely unlikely that the next comprehensive program review will be as positive or as sanguine as this one has so far been, unless serious efforts are made to augment University resources and faculty salaries, in particular. Years of “belt-tightening” have resulted in near strangulation at this point. To say that we have been operating with a paucity of resources is an understatement. Faculty salaries are now so low by state, regional, and national standards that it will be nearly impossible to recruit qualified faculty members to replace those who retire or leave for greener pastures.

While the program has a core of very dedicated faculty members who are enthusiastic about their discipline and about teaching, morale is extremely low after years without any salary increases or cost of living adjustments, and regular increases in insurance payments. Faculty members in the Arts and Sciences have been especially disadvantaged, and salary compression is now a major problem on our campus.

While we have had an abundance of administration over the years covered by this report (more administrators, new initiatives on a regular basis, additional assessment activities, record keeping, and an accretion of report-writing and other time-consuming responsibilities imposed on University faculty), what we have lacked is any real leadership (advocacy for the University and for the faculty and staff of Georgia Southwestern). We are aware of the fiscal constraints faced by all state institutions over the past several years, but many other system schools have addressed the resulting issues in a more proactive manner and we, on the contrary, have been left behind.

To cite one small example of the lack of support to which we refer, the travel budget for the entire department including eight full time and several part time faculty members is only $1000. The current department chair arrived at GSW in 1990 and no one in the department can remember when our travel budget in support of conference attendance and the like was anything but $1000 annually. In 1990, this allocation was woefully inadequate to say the least; in 2013 it is nothing short of ludicrous. Yet every year faculty members are evaluated in part on their scholarly activities and accomplishments, but almost nothing is allocated to the department in support of those activities. Probably every annual report since 1990 has included a department plea for more travel monies, but there is no indication that this remedy has ever been considered, or whether these reports were ever read by any administrator with the power to act upon such requests.

The gravamen that genuinely threatens the long term health of our program, however, is the low salaries of our faculty members. The University cannot depend upon the sense of loyalty and the dedication of faculty to their students forever to countervail the corrosive effects of salaries that have stagnated at the bottom of the pay scale – within Georgia, in the region, and nationally.
In sum, there is no way that this prolonged dearth of resources and of low salaries can continue without eroding the ability of the department to carry out its core mission in a satisfactory way. Across the University spectrum, even tenured faculty members with many years of service at GSW are looking for positions elsewhere, and departments are finding it increasingly difficult to attract qualified faculty when positions need to be filled. That is, the situation is untenable in the long run, absent immediate and significant redress.