DePaul University
Academic Program Review

Memorandum of Agreement -- July 1999

Department of Political Science

As a result of the first cycle of DePaul University's Academic Program Review Process (Cycle I), the participants in the process enter into the following agreements. The participants understand that this document will be available to be made public once the signatures are in place: for the unit, the chair of the unit's review committee and the department chair/program director; for the college/school, the dean; for the Academic Program Review Committee, the unit subcommittee members; for the university, the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Acknowledgements

The Academic Program Review Committee and subcommittee members would like to thank the members of the Political Science review committee for their time invested in the review process. In the midst of their own departmental curricular review process, the department identified the key issues and produced a self-study that responded to the university APRC committee's review guidelines. The APRC subcommittee members hope that the department can continue the conversations about these major issues as a way to capitalize on the findings and recommendations made during the university's program review process.

Common Issues and University-level Commitments

During Cycle I, the unit program review self-studies raised several issues generally in common that have important university-wide implications, although the issues don't apply equally to each unit. In subsequent conversations about these major issues, the units, the deans, the Academic Program Review Committee members, and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs all have recognized the need for university-level coordination to support units in the following areas as appropriate to each unit: a) advising activities; b) recruitment and marketing efforts; c) structures that facilitate cross-departmental and cross-college collaboration; d) improvement of the university-level data collection and reporting efforts on academic programs; e) assessment efforts and research on students; f) efforts to maintain connections with alumni. To follow up on these common issues and determine the appropriate courses of action needed to address them at the university and unit level, the Academic Program Review Committee and the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs agree to do the following:

1. The Academic Program Review Committee agrees to prepare a summary report on Cycle I to the Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs which discusses these and other issues that have important connections to other university-wide initiatives, especially to the Strategic Plan. This report will clarify and contextualize the common issues as they relate to individual units and will be shared with the units in draft. The final report will be made public, along with the Memoranda of Agreement.

2. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs agrees to direct the appropriate university-level offices to work with the units and their deans on how to effectively address these issues.

3. The Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs will require a progress report in June of 2000 from the appropriate administrative offices that will be shared with the Academic Program Review Committee.

4. The Academic Program Review Committee will invite representatives from the appropriate offices to an Academic Program Review Committee meeting in the fall quarter of 1999-2000 academic year to follow-up on these issues and discuss possible courses of action to support the units.
In addition to these university-level commitments, the following are issues and actions agreed upon at the unit level.

**Issues and actions agreed upon**

**Curriculum Review**

1. The department commits itself to conclude its current process of curriculum review by December 1, 1999, with the recognition that the components of experiential learning and capstone will probably need to be refined further after that time. Elements of this curriculum review include editing the bulletin course listings and refining course offerings and concentration areas.

2. The department will develop a process to evaluate and improve individual and overall curriculum effectiveness. In doing so, the department will consult with the Office of Academic Affairs, OIPR, and the Title III managers.

**Sense of Community**

3. The department agrees to take steps to improve intellectual exchange among faculty and students and to improve department morale. Proposed initiatives include the creation of a calendar committee to organize a year-long schedule of departmental events, which may include
   - faculty presentations open to students;
   - events sponsored by the Political Science Association on current events/topical matters
   - events for students on career choices
   - student-faculty social events.

**Advising**

4. The department has agreed to develop a concrete plan to address advising issues. Proposed recommendations of that plan include a) the creation of a student advising coordinator with a one-course administrative release who will coordinate advising assignments, serve on the department's calendar committee, and advise entering majors, current majors, and evening students; b) contacting current majors during the summer through a mailing that updates each student on his or her academic progress; and c) providing more opportunities for students to meet with faculty on advising.

5. The dean agrees that these recommendations in the advising plan are all good ideas and reasonable ones, and that the advising coordinator position is worthy of support. He is willing to make a commitment to an advising coordinator with a one course reduction in response to a formal request from the department outlining the specific responsibilities of this person. It should also be made clear that the purpose of this position is to enhance advising of undergraduate majors rather than to replace the normal advising responsibilities of all faculty members.

**Issues and actions on which there is agreement to do further work and continue conversations**

**Curricular Review**

1. The department agrees to consider ways to develop assessment plans, perhaps with the assistance of Title III resources, and will think about ways to incorporate assessment results into ongoing discussions about the curriculum. The dean and the department recognize that the department was supposed to have drafted an assessment plan last year, and that there are a variety of acceptable assessment strategies to consider.
Advising

2. The department and the dean agree to continue the conversations about the creation of a student advising coordinator role.

3. The department can benefit from the emerging recommendations of the university Advising Project, which has done advanced thinking on assessment issues. A departmental advising coordinator can draw upon the resources and information of the Title III advising funds and activities for assistance.

Areas of discussion in which further work is needed, as yet unspecified

Sense of Community

- The department and the dean recognize that the issue of departmental sense of community may not have an immediate solution, but that a weak sense of community makes it difficult for the department to develop collective approaches to the curricular and student issues that it confronts.

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A hard copy of this document was signed by:

Chair of the Unit Review Committee: Larry Bennett

Department Chair: Patrick Callahan

APRC Subcommittee members: Jane Rutherford and William McNeill

Dean of the College: Michael Mezey

Executive V.P. for Academic Affairs: Richard Meister

*The hard copy with signatures is on file in the Office of the Associate V.P. for Academic Affairs and is available upon request.