

Provost's Comprehensive Program Review Report

Institution: Middle Georgia State University

Academic Program Name: B.S. in Political Science

CIP Code: 451001

College or School: School of Education and Behavioral Sciences

Department: Political Science

Date of Last Internal Review: 1st CPR (program started fall 2018)

Outcome of Previous Program Review (brief narrative statement): N/A

Current Date: 5/18/2022

Provost Response: Academic Affairs acknowledges the documented opportunity that exists with the B.S. in Political Science. Yet, additional attention to its function and purpose are required. The program's enrollment growth, retention and graduation outcomes lag, suggesting the need for further in depth evaluation. *For this reason, the program will be placed on monitoring and evaluated in 1 years.*

Program Quality and Productivity Improvement Plan: Following a review of the Chairs Report, the IERB comments, and the Deans appraisal, the Office of the Provost concurs with the findings and supports the documented plan of action:

- Engage in a discussion around the department's recommendation to revisit the schools' programs-by-location strategy and adjust the offerings on the Cochran, Macon, and Online campuses
- Expand marketing efforts BS in Political Science
- Demonstrate (market) job opportunities to graduate.

Categorical Summation

Check any of the following to categorically describe action(s) the institution will take concerning this program.

Program MEETS Institution's Criteria

- Program is critical to the institutional mission and will be retained.
- Program is critical to the institutional mission and is growing or a high demand field and thus will be enhanced.

Program PARTIALLY MEETS Institution's Criteria and will be re-evaluated in _____.

X Program DOES NOT MEET Institution's Criteria

X Program will be placed on a monitoring status and will be re-evaluated in FY23.

- Program will undergo substantive curricular revisions.
- Program will be deactivated.
- Program will be voluntarily terminated.
- Other (identify/add text):

Provost or VPAA Signature:



Date:

6/1/2022

Comprehensive Program Review Report

Academic Program Name: Bachelor of Science with a major in Political Science

College or School: School of Education & Behavioral Sciences

Department: Political Science

Date of Last Internal Review: 1st CPR in Spring 2022 (program started Fall 2018)

Outcome of Previous Program Review (brief narrative statement, if applicable): N/A

Current Date:

Executive Summary: *Provide a summary related to the academic program's quality, viability, and productivity of efforts in teaching and learning, scholarship, and service as appropriate to the institution's mission. If this is the initial review of the program address how the program is/is not meeting the enrollment and credit hour projects contained in the original program proposal. Include a statement of plans for action based on the overall categorical summation contained in the next section.*

From the CPR report: "The Bachelor of Science in Political Science is a degree program designed for students interested in careers in government and public service, non-profit organizations, and the private sector, as well as graduate study in law, political science, and public administration. The degree program includes training in the application of research and data analysis skills to real-life political and social problems, as well as opportunities for experiential learning either in the workforce or through the completion of an independent research project. The political science degree is designed to produce graduates who are equipped to meet the changing demands of citizens in contemporary society. The mission of the program is aligned with those of the department, school, and university."

This new degree program has experienced slow uptake by our students. Since this program was designed to be offered in a face-to-face format on the Cochran campus, it enjoyed early growth, but soon was impacted by the pandemic and shift away from physical presence for the 2020 and 2021 academic years. During the return to campus presence strategy, we saw a marked decline in student enrollment for this program in Cochran, followed by a corresponding rise in enrollment on the Macon campus, and a large uptick in a preliminary online offering. Thus, three years into its existence, the program grew to 30 declared majors by Fall 2021. This is in line with the enrollment trajectory of the B.A. in History and B.A. in English programs that were started a dozen years ago. Dr. Lawrence, in reviewing these trends, the faculty composition of his department, and consultation with the School's Dean, plans to switch the program to being offered on the Macon campus and explore an online-only option as well. Additionally, the School is focused on encouraging all students to select minors and pursue certificates which could positively impact interest in political science coursework, if not the

degree program itself. Finally, the program expects to graduate its largest number of graduates in May 2022.

As to the quality of the program, recent hires have replaced faculty who resigned or retired, and have added greatly to the teaching, scholarship and service profile of the department. Course-level and program-level assessments are meeting their targets, in both this degree program as well as in the core service courses. The faculty are engaged in numerous community engagement, student success and scholarly initiatives.

Categorical Summation

Check any of the following to categorically describe action(s) the institution will take concerning this program.

XX Program MEETS Institution's Criteria

XX Program is critical to the institutional mission and will be retained.

Program is critical to the institutional mission and is growing or a high demand field and thus will be enhanced.

Program DOES NOT MEET Institution's Criteria

Program will be placed on a monitoring status.

Program will undergo substantive curricular revisions.

Program will be deactivated.

Program will be voluntarily terminated.

Other (identify/add text):

Academic Dean Signature: *David M. Bisk*

Dean of Graduate Studies Signature (when applicable):

Date: May 2, 2022

IERB's Comprehensive Program Review Rubric and Evaluation

Date Reviewed: 3/4/22

Program Reviewed: B.S. in Political Science

Contextual Notes: Summarize any demographic or environmental factors described in the introduction that might significantly impact assessment of the program

The BS in Political Science is a new program that started in the 2018-2019 academic year. The pandemic and the loss of faculty members on the Cochran campus has had an apparent impact on student numbers, at least in the face-to-face classes. However, online enrollment has been steadily increasing.

Area of Focus	Exemplary Area	Satisfactory Area	Area of Concern	No Evidence	Notes
Enrollment	<i>This program has significantly positive enrollment trends and robust credit hour production</i>	<i>This program has stable or moderately positive enrollment trends and healthy credit hour production</i>	<i>This program has negative enrollment trends and weak credit hour production</i>		Although enrollment has gone down in face-to-face classes, it shows a steady increase in online courses since 2019.
Graduation Trends USG benchmark: Bachelor's Degrees: 10 graduates/year Graduate, Associate's or Certificates: 5 graduates/year	<i>Three year rolling average greatly exceeds USG minimum benchmark for degrees conferred</i>	<i>Three year rolling average meets or exceeds USG minimum benchmark for degrees conferred</i>	<i>Three year rolling average does not meet USG minimum benchmark for degrees conferred; the program is "low performing" by USG definition</i>		No graduates until 2020 and low graduation rates are to be expected because of the newness of the program. The trend is positive, so higher graduation rates should be expected in the future.

IERB's Comprehensive Program Review Rubric and Evaluation

Programs falling under these benchmarks are designated as "low performing"					
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Program Strengths of Note: The faculty's willingness to change and adapt the program structure based on resources and needs is admirable. Positive enrollment in online courses and doubling graduation numbers from 2020 to 2021 are encouraging. Plans to meet enrollment concerns by phasing in a fully online delivery option have a measurable timeline.

Areas of Concern: Although graduation rates are trending upwards, the low number of graduates is still an area of potential concern. Hopefully, the program will continue to see these numbers double every year. Low enrollment in face-to-face classes should be monitored closely, especially on the Cochran campus. Perhaps as we continue to move beyond the pandemic, students will return in greater numbers to campus.

Other Comments: The narrative is well written and posits some logical explanations for a decline in on-campus enrollment and low graduation rates. The department might consider making the program more visible to the community to raise their profile. Advertising the degree in a more public way could change enrollment trends.



Comprehensive Program Review

FY 2021 – 2022

Institution: Middle Georgia State University

Academic Program: B.S. in Political Science

School: School of Education and Behavioral Sciences

Department: Political Science

CIP Code: 451001

Date of Last Internal Review: 1st CPR, program started Fall 2018

Faculty Completing Report: Christopher Lawrence

Current Date: 1/4/2022

5 Year Enrollment by Campus and Graduation Trends

Enrollment

Campus	Fall 2017	Fall 2018	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	4 YR Growth	Fall 2018 compared to Fall 2021 only
Macon	N/A	1	11	12	9	108.01%	800%
Cochran	N/A	1	11	4	1	0%	0%
Warner Robins			2		2		
Dublin					1		
Online			2	9	17		
Total	N/A	2	26	25	30	146.62%	1400%

Graduates

- For data consistency, the fiscal year is in which the degree was awarded. For examples, fiscal year 2019 includes degrees conferred in Summer 2018, Fall 2018, and Spring 2019.

FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020	FY 2021	2 YR Growth	FY20 compared to FY21 only
N/A	N/A	N/A	2	4	100%	100%

The Bachelor of Science in Political Science is a degree program designed for students interested in careers in government and public service, non-profit organizations, and the private sector, as well as graduate study in law, political science, and public administration. The degree program includes training in the application of research and data analysis skills to real-life political and social problems, as well as opportunities for experiential learning either in the workforce or through the completion of an independent research project. The political science degree is designed to produce graduates who are equipped to meet the changing demands of citizens in contemporary society. The mission of the program is aligned with those of the department, school, and university.

The degree program was approved by the USG Board of Regents in early 2018 and was included in the MGA catalog starting with the 2018–19 academic year. The courses unique to the program were initially mostly offered on the Cochran campus, using a mix of faculty based on the Cochran campus and faculty traveling from other campuses to teach in Cochran, with some courses being delivered fully online. In 2019 and 2020, the department also increased the availability of the program by delivering courses on the Macon campus, and in 2022 the department initiated the use of synchronous videoconferencing to provide more access to electives for students on various campuses and ensure faculty on all campuses could contribute equitably to the program. In line with other MGA programs that initiated bachelor’s degree programs, we deactivated the associate of science degree program in political science in 2019, encouraging students to either switch to the bachelor’s program in political science or the A.A./A.S. core curriculum programs. This comprehensive program review is the first scheduled review of the degree program since its inception.

Initially, we planned to offer two tracks in political science in the major, a track on public policy and administration and a track called “applied politics” that was a more traditional political science degree program. However, the public policy and administration track would have required many of the required classes to be taught by a faculty member without a terminal degree and we did not have available resources to recruit additional faculty, so we redesigned the program in 2020 to eliminate the two tracks and add an additional required course in public administration to ensure all students would have exposure to this disciplinary area.

While the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) offers voluntary accreditation for professional master's programs in the listed subfields of political science, there is no recognized accreditation for undergraduate programs in political science. As a result, the political science program is only accredited as part of MGA's general accreditation to confer undergraduate degrees as a Level 5 (Doctoral granting) institution by SACS COC.

While the quantitative measures of program growth to date are satisfactory, they lag substantially behind the initial projections for the program and seem to be well behind the program's potential, especially when compared to most of the other bachelor's programs in the liberal arts and sciences at MGA; the only established program of this type that seems to have similar enrollment is the B.S. in Mathematics, a subject that is notorious for its difficulty in attracting and retaining students. While it would probably be excessively ambitious to expect enrollments comparable to those of the B.S. in Psychology and B.S. in Criminal Justice, we did believe that the political science degree would have at least similar appeal to the B.A. in History, a program that continues to have substantially higher enrollments than the B.S. in Political Science.

We believe that there are four main extenuating factors that may have led to slow program growth: faculty turnover, lack of program awareness, the COVID-19 pandemic, and changes in the institution's first-year student profile. In terms of faculty turnover, one of the two tenure-line faculty on the Cochran campus retired in May 2021, and the other tenure-line faculty member on the Cochran campus resigned for personal reasons in December 2021; while we did successfully replace the retired faculty line for August 2021, we were unable to recruit a candidate to replace the faculty member who resigned in time for the spring 2022 semester and it is unclear when (or if) we will be able to readvertise the position for a fall 2022 start.

We also believe that many prospective students remain unaware of the program, as many tools that students use to identify prospective colleges do not indicate that a bachelor's degree in political science is offered at MGA, either due to a reliance on out-of-date information or because of using IPEDS graduation data which has reporting delays and has only indicated the program's existence since students have begun to complete the program; for example, the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard at <https://collegescorecard.ed.gov/> still does not list the political science bachelor's program as an option as of February 2022.

The COVID-19 pandemic limited our ability to recruit new majors from both the potential student population and students who are considering changing majors or adding a second degree. The pandemic also had an indirect impact on MGA's student profile, as the related decision by the USG Board of Regents to waive the standardized test score requirement at most USG institutions with selective admissions led to a decline in admissions at MGA in 2020 and 2021 among the students most likely to pursue a degree in the arts and sciences (namely, traditional-age students with relatively strong academic preparation in high school who ordinarily would be unable to attend a more selective institution due to poor standardized test scores).

We believe that we can counter these trends by pursuing an untapped opportunity for program growth: delivering the full program to students in a fully online format. As of fall 2021, the majority of students enrolled in the political science program were already taking most or all of their classes in a fully online format even though at present it is impossible to complete all of the degree requirements online (at least without the use of transfer/transient credit from other institutions). While many USG institutions offer a political science degree, only a few currently offer it in a fully online format. Online delivery would also allow for the department to make greater use of qualified part-time faculty and allow full-time faculty on all campuses to contribute more effectively to the degree program. Accordingly, our plan is to phase in a fully online delivery option for students over the next two academic years, while retaining the existing option to complete the degree program using (mostly) face-to-face classes on the Macon campus. We believe this would be an effective strategy to build on the existing program's strengths while also fulfilling the institutional mission to provide an affordable, high-quality education for students in the region and beyond.

MEMORANDUM

February 11, 2022

To: Dr. Laura Thomason, Credentialing Officer; Dr. David Jenks, Provost; Mrs. Jennifer Jones, Operations Manager, Office of the Provost; Mr. Christopher Tsavatewa, Director of Institutional Effectiveness; Dr. Kevin Cantwell, Special Assistant to the President and IAL, SACSCOC

CC: Pam Booker, Executive Director, Human Resources

From: Dr. Christopher Lawrence, Chair, Department of Political Science.

Re: Re-Credentialing of faculty members CPR Year 2021-2022 School of Education and Behavioral Science, Department of Political Science

Academic Year 2021-2022 Roster

Adams-Square, Grace Arden	Full-Time
Bekafigo, Marija Anna	Part-Time
Carroll, William	Part-Time
Caverly, Matthew Mark	Full-Time
Decker, James David	Full-Time
Dickerson, Bradley	Part-Time
Hall, John Powell	Full-Time
Hamilton, Allison Joy	Part-Time
Lawrence, Christopher Neil	Full-Time
Lester, Julie Ann	Full-Time
Makaya, Peter	Full-Time
Matyók, Thomas G.	Part-Time
Miller, Brooke Merritt	Full-Time
Miller, William Jennings	Part-Time
Rabidoux, Greg Robert	Part-Time
Robertson, Naomi	Part-Time
Ruggerio, Jeannie	Part-Time
Svonavec, Kara Smith	Full-Time
Watson, Kerri Anne	Full-Time

Recognizing that qualified, effective faculty members are essential to the execution of Middle Georgia State University’s mission and to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic program, each academic program will undergo faculty re-credentialing and review during their calendared comprehensive program review year.


As of AY22, the above faculty members in the Department of Political Science, School of Education and Behavioral Sciences, hold adequate credentials and/or qualifications for meeting program goals and objectives and the student learning outcomes of the courses assigned.

This memo serves as an attestation that department leadership has:

1. Reviewed MGA's Faculty Handbook and Appendix 1: Faculty Credentialing Guidelines (Approved and Updated 4/2/21)
2. Reviewed MGA's historical faculty rosters (Fall 2019 to Spring 2022)
3. Reviewed each individual faculty member's file
4. Updated the file as appropriate to reflect any changes
5. Secured or updated any documents needed to authenticate credentials and/or qualifications (e.g., transcripts, licensure certificates, etc.)
6. Discussed with the faculty member any changes in their course credentialing status
7. Reviewed faculty credentialing records and changes with the institution's Faculty Credentialing Officer as needed

In signing this memo, the department and school leadership attest that all rostered faculty referenced above hold appropriate credentials and/or qualifications that are justified and documented, and submit them for review to MGA's Faculty Credentialing Officer.

Note: while faculty re-credentialing occurs in conjunction with the CPR cycle (3 years for new programs and 5 years for existing programs), department leadership are required to maintain documentation of appropriate credentials and/or qualifications annually as captured by the faculty roster, to account for changes in course assignment or new qualifications secured between CPR cycles.

Department Chair: 

Date: 2/11/2022

Dean: David M. Bisk

Date: 2/11/2022

In signing this memo, Faculty Credentialing Officer affirms that the above-referenced faculty hold appropriate credentials and/or qualifications and that those credentials are justified and documented per MGA policy and procedure. A copy of this memo shall be included in the file of each referenced faculty member.

Faculty Credentialing Officer: 

Date: 04/15/2022

1. Note: Appendix 1: Department of Political Science Faculty Roster (Fall 2019 to Spring 2022)