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TO: Digvir Jayas
President and Vice Chancellor

DATE: October 22, 2024

FROM: Lynn Kennedy
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee

RE: Department of Political Science Program Academic Quality Assurance Review

In accordance with the U of L *Academic Quality Assurance Policy and Process*, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee approved the review of the Department of Political Science at its September 24, 2024, meeting.

The Self Study Committee for this review was comprised of: Yale Belanger (Program Review Coordinator), John von Heyking, and Lars Hallstrom.

The review produced 4 documents:

1. Self Study Report. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received January 21, 2024.
2. External Review Report. Written by Dr. Sara MacDonald (Huron at Western University) and Dr. Jocelyne Praud (Vancouver Island University) based on a virtual site visit May 7 to 8, 2024. Received April 2, 2024.
3. Program Response. Written by the Self Study Committee. Received May 29, 2024.
4. Dean's Response. Written by Matt Letts, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science. Received August 6, 2024.

Self Study Report

The Self Study Report asked for External Reviewer feedback on several areas:

- Given limited resources, should the Department suspend or close its M.A. program?
- What should Departmental hiring priorities be, in order? (EDI? Sub-discipline?)
- Given the infrequency of hiring, how can the Department develop and maintain a livelier intellectual culture and a stronger sense of community for faculty members and students?
- How can the Department increase its overall enrolment? Or limit attrition?
- How can the Department improve its appeal to students not majoring in Political Science?
- How can the Department grow in a time of (1) decreasing political engagement among youth (i.e., poor Social Studies preparedness) and (2) growing reliance of university on international students who mainly study sciences?

The body of the report noted several strengths of the Department of Political Science:

- Despite a lack of resources, the Department has maintained a high quality of instruction and has a strong commitment to student engagement in research and research productivity.
- There is a strong commitment to academic excellence and the student experience.
- One of the university's core commitments is "enhancing student experiences." The Department is proud of its record of undergraduate mentoring and placement of students in graduate schools and opportunities like the Municipal Internship Program or the Prentice Institute's Work Integrated Learning Program with the City of Lethbridge titled City Scholars. The Department has established a Political Science Graduate Studies Award to aid former undergraduates who have gone on to graduate studies. The 2014 curriculum revisions were designed to facilitate student completion of their degrees in a way that prepares them to enter the workplace or pursue further studies. Classes are small, and faculty get to know their majors well.
- The Department has attracted many majors given its small size.
- Individual faculty members have maintained a high level of research and publication across several sub-disciplines despite limited capacity for collaboration or co-authorship.
- After several years of decline, enrolments have stabilized, and there are signs that post-COVID-19, they are set to increase and will continue to do so.
- The Department's revamp of major requirements for the B.A. and the B.A./B.Ed. to make its programs more streamlined and flexible has been successful.
- The Department was physically relocated to be near more of its cognate departments (History, Sociology).
- The Department has a moderate, if not growing, sense of community.

The following weaknesses and challenges were mentioned in the body of the report:

- The Department has an insufficient faculty complement to offer a diversity of courses appropriate to a university of this size, limiting both the breadth of the curriculum and opportunities for curricular or pedagogical innovation...The Department's curriculum strengths have shifted in recent years. Whereas previously, we were most potent in the Canadian Government and Politics subfield, when half of the Department's faculty members taught primarily in that area, recent retirements mean the Department could use additional resources.

The Department includes course offerings on communications, social movements, and Indigenous issues emphasizing public policy and reconciliation. Significant curricular omissions in Canadian Politics remain such as courses on gender and politics, and the constitution and federalism (the latter is scheduled to be taught next year). In International Relations, a high-demand subfield, we are strong in Canadian foreign policy. We are missing courses on political economy and international organization. With a new hire, we see the potential to grow our course offerings on security, particularly international conflict and conflict resolution. We also do not teach courses from a critical perspective on international relations. In Comparative Politics, we cover a lot of courses with few resources, although we struggle to offer the courses listed in the calendar regularly. We now have an area specialist who can teach about the European Union and South America. In Political Theory, we are especially strong in ancient and modern political theory but would welcome the prospect of offering courses on contemporary political theory. These problems all would require additional staffing resources to solve.

- There needs to be more diversity among faculty in terms of personal characteristics and approaches to the discipline.
- The Department needs more resources to offer adequate graduate programming.
- The Department has added only 2½ new FTE faculty members since 2007 while losing 5 FTE faculty members, leading to stagnation if not regression. If each of the senior faculty members retires in the next 10 years and they are not replaced there will be the only remaining faculty member.

Recommendations taken from the body of the report:

- The Department must be able to replace a faculty position that retired in 2022 with a full-time tenure-track appointment. The Department should use this opportunity to hire in Political Economy and/or Public Policy to better align course offerings with student interest and demand and to balance course offerings between the sub-fields.
- One faculty member is now the University Librarian and Dean of the School of Liberal Education with no scheduled return to the department. Their replacement must be hired. The Department should use this opportunity to hire in Political Behaviour and Provincial Politics (Canadian) to better align course offerings with student interest and demand and to balance course offerings between the sub-fields.
- Related to the above two points, the Department also needs to replace a faculty position retired in 2018, and we should use this opportunity to hire in Constitutional Politics and Federalism to better align course offerings with student interest and demand and to balance course offerings between the sub-fields. Doing so would also help us support Philosophy, Politics, and Law (PPL) and teach pre-law, which aids in career preparation.
- Suppose the Department cannot, at the very least, be restored to its original complement of 7 full-time tenure-track positions in the short term. In that case, the Faculty of Arts and Science should fund at least two three-year term appointments in Political Science as an interim measure.
- For the Department to participate meaningfully in graduate studies on more than an ad hoc basis, it needs additional full-time permanent faculty appointments well beyond the current 4½ (FTE) positions.
- The Department must address the issue of faculty diversity and related EDI concerns in all future hiring.

External Review Report

The External Review Report contained eleven (11) recommendations for improving the Department of Political Science:

1. The Department should be given the resources to hire one full-time tenure-track professor, with an expertise in Canadian Constitutional Law and competency in International Relations.
2. The Department should be given a sufficient course allocation (in addition to what is required for Recommendation One), so that it can offer a one-year instructor contract to at least one of its long-term sessional instructors and increase the pool of sessional instructors the Department can draw on.
3. The Department should explore potential intersections with cognate departments and, when of benefit to each, find ways of working with one another.
4. The Department should look through the course offerings in cognate departments to determine if there are any courses that might be cross-listed with Political Science as a way of giving students greater options.
5. The Department should explore experiential learning opportunities for students that can be incorporated into their curriculum.
6. The Department should meet at least once a year with the University's recruiters to ensure that the recruiters are able to fully appreciate and subsequently market Political Science as a major for potential University of Lethbridge students.
7. The Department should consider using the option of Applied Studies courses to provide direct support and mentorship from upper-level Political Science students for first-year students.
8. The Department should use the funds from its David Elton Fund in creative ways (depending on the terms of the endowment) to raise its profile, engage Political Science students, and enhance the Department's sense of community.
9. The Department should adopt a reasonable "term limit" on the role of Chair (perhaps 2 two-year terms) and try to ensure that those responsibilities rotate through each faculty member.
10. The Department should hold more regular meetings (two per semester).
11. The Department should hold an off-campus retreat to determine how it will respond to these recommendations and the challenges that it faces.

The following direct quotations taken from the report note challenges discussed in the body of the report:

- "The primary challenge, identified in the Self-Study and again in our visit, is a lack of resources. As a department that at one time had 6 full-time members, the Department is now offering its full program with what amounts to 4.5 teaching members (excluding those members who have moved on to administrative positions and are no longer regularly teaching members of the Department). As a result of this increased workload and the sense that there is no flexibility in their teaching schedules or room for innovation (as they must teach the required courses for majors), the Self-Study described a lack of morale in the Department."
- "Without adequate resources to offer a full range of graduate courses, students who enter the MA program are left with taking Independent Studies, and it is difficult to find sufficient expertise in a particular area to form committees to supervise MA students. We understand that Political Science is not the only Department in this position. As a result, the Department rarely takes on

graduate students, and when it does accept one, that student is most often working without a cohort of student colleagues.”

The following direct quotations taken from the report note the opportunities discussed in the body of the report:

- “While meeting with the Political Science faculty, two subject areas were consistently raised as being subjects where the Department needed more strength: International Relations and Canadian Government and Politics. International Relations is a popular concentration in Political Science, and adding another potential faculty member in that area would allow the program to diversify their offerings.”
- “While we think it is necessary to have a full-time person concentrating on Canadian Government and Politics, the Department also requires “bench strength” to help it cover study leaves, develop new courses, and offer students more options. As we spoke to the students, it was noticeably clear that they hold their professors in Political Science in high regard. The students indicated that they appreciated the hard work, effort, and time that their professors dedicate to them. When pushed to comment on what they would like to see changed, the only topic was the possibility of a greater diversity of courses to be offered more often. Some of these students are not yet at the point where they can graduate, but they have taken most of the courses available to them in Political Science. The students spoke very favorably about the current sessional instructors offering courses in Political Science and suggested that having even more sessional instructors would be a benefit as this would provide different perspectives from which students might learn. Other students commented on not being able to get the course that they felt would really augment their career readiness because of the timing of study leaves. While the Political Science program serves many students at the first- and second-year levels, this naturally drops off at the third-year level as students choose other majors or must concentrate on their chosen major. One way to increase enrolment in these third-year courses, could be to offer a larger variety of courses that may have broader appeal and low requirements for prerequisites, such as Politics and Pop Culture, Protest Politics, etc.”
- “A current trend in Liberal Arts University curricula is the development of experiential learning opportunities for students. These opportunities give students a way in which to see how the ideas they learn in a classroom might have real world application. The University of Lethbridge is drawing a fair number of international students who are primarily interested in the sciences or business (as is the case at other universities). This is in part because these students and many domestic students can see a clear professional pathway from these disciplines. Developing experiential learning opportunities in Political Science courses, particularly in the first and second years could provide students who had not seriously considered Political Science as a major a way of seeing how it connects to professional and career pathways. These can be as simple as in-class simulations, mini model UNs, game jams or as involved as partnering with a local non-profit to analyze and assess a particular issue.”

Program Response

In their Program Response, the Self Study Committee addressed the recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. The Department should be given the resources to hire one full-time tenure-track professor, with an expertise in Canadian Constitutional Law and competency in International Relations.

Agreed. The size of the department should grow in order to meet both student-based (course) demand and enrollment growth, as well as the curricular and supervisory expectations of a department at a CARU in Alberta. The priority should be in Canadian constitutional law at this time.

<p>2. <i>The Department should be given a sufficient course allocation (in addition to what is required for Recommendation One), so that it can offer a one-year instructor contract to at least one of its long-term sessional instructors and increase the pool of sessional instructors the Department can draw on.</i></p>	<p>Agreed, although the continued reliance upon sessional faculty should not be considered anything more than a temporary solution. The ideal and preferred solution is the addition of (at least) two FTE, tenure track faculty members. However, in the interim expanding the teaching resources of the department on a short to medium-term basis is essential, and developing a consistent core of locally-based sessional faculty is a viable way of doing so.</p>
<p>3. <i>The Department should explore potential intersections with cognate departments and, when of benefit to each, find ways of working with one another.</i></p>	<p>Agreed, but as many cognate departments face similar staffing trends in terms of declining complement size, inter-departmental collaboration should be considered and explored not just as a way to bolster the course offerings for small departments, but also as part of a broader pattern of curricular innovation and reform.</p> <p>Note: This has been identified as a high-probability intervention in the relatively near future, and opportunities for such collaboration have already been explored, largely due to lack of interest from other departments.</p>
<p>4. <i>The Department should look through the course offerings in cognate departments to determine if there are any courses that might be cross-listed with Political Science as a way of giving students greater options.</i></p>	<p>We have cross-listed course with Women and Gender Studies. The recent mergers of various other departments, while shoring up their curricula, have closed off potential pathways in this regard. Indigenous Studies is a potential partner, since they do not currently have a political scientist, and the department already offers 3 courses in that area of study. We also recognize that it has become less common at universities to cross list courses due to the significant administrative and curricular challenges. These issues must be considered prior to pursuing similar proposed changes.</p>
<p>5. <i>The Department should explore experiential learning opportunities for students that can be incorporated into their curriculum.</i></p>	<p>Agreed. There are numerous areas where applied studies should and could be generated, particularly in terms of courses such as IR, provincial/local politics, social and public policy, etc. Particularly as collaboration with local partners continues to grow (e.g. With the City, County, or local NGOs) there may be numerous opportunities for such curricular interventions. However, given the current staffing complement of the department, such opportunities may generate an unreasonable labour cost in the short term.</p>
<p>6. <i>The Department should meet at least once a year with the University's recruiters to ensure that the recruiters are able to fully appreciate and subsequently market Political Science as a major for potential University of Lethbridge students.</i></p>	<p>The strategies and actions of the University's recruiting office are not under the purview of the department. Should Recruiting wish to meet with the department, it can of course be accommodated.</p>
<p>7. <i>The Department should consider using the option of Applied Studies courses to provide direct support and mentorship from upper-level Political Science students for first-year students.</i></p>	<p>Finding such supports is a pedagogically valid strategy – particularly given the absence of a cohort of graduate students who would, traditionally, provide such mentorship and tutorial services. Developing a peer leadership and student-based support structure (particularly one focused toward undergraduate research, writing and a “First Year Experience” is a synthesis of a number of Kuh's (2008) High Impact Teaching Practices. However, such an intervention will also add to the teaching/supervisory load of the department).</p>
<p>8. <i>The Department should use the funds from its David Elton Fund in creative ways (depending on the terms of the endowment) to raise its profile, engage Political Science students, and enhance the Department's sense of community.</i></p>	<p>Agreed.</p>
<p>9. <i>The Department should adopt a reasonable “term limit” on the role of Chair (perhaps 2 two-year terms) and try to ensure that those responsibilities rotate through each faculty member.</i></p>	<p>Given the small size of the department, a two-term limit per Chair (with a minimum of one term out of office prior to any return) is appropriate.</p>
<p>10. <i>The Department should hold more regular meetings (two per semester).</i></p>	<p>Agreed. A semesterly departmental council (or more depending on demand) is appropriate)</p>

11. *The Department should hold an off-campus retreat to determine how it will respond to these recommendations and the challenges that it faces.*

Given the budgetary realities of the Province and University, the likelihood of any significant change to the status quo is unlikely. A retreat is unnecessary at this time.

Dean's Response

The Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Science responded to the eleven (11) recommendations from the External Review Report:

1. *The Department should be given the resources to hire one full-time tenure-track professor, with an expertise in Canadian Constitutional Law and competency in International Relations.*

We understand the Department of Political Science need for sufficient academic staff to reliably meet its teaching and research needs. Severe budgetary limitations resulting from unprecedented reductions to our Provincial Operating Grant have reduced the complement of faculty members in the Faculty of Arts & Science over the past decade, though with some replacement growth in 2024. The impact of this on Political Science was a reduction from 6 to 4.5 fully dedicated faculty members, resulting in a loss of the previous balance that existed among the thematic areas of Canadian Politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations and Political Theory. The result is that the Department, even with six members, now must be supported by at least three committed sessional instructors and our ability to form committees to effectively supervise graduate students is constrained. There was also a cognate hire, with the Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership landing in the Department of Philosophy, with cross listing opportunities of benefit to Political Science students, but also the certainty of expanded programming involving Political Science.

The Department is consistently well-led, informing existing students about upcoming courses and providing personal attention to students through to graduation and beyond. In the face of a reduced complement in the professoriate, it has satisfactory enrolment and is positioned in an area of strategic potential growth. We expect demand for Political Science courses to increase with the launch of the Bond dual degree program (B.A./LL.B.), the Jarislowsky Chair in Trust and Political Leadership, as well as the Philosophy, Politics and Law (PPL) program now under Ministry review. The Department consistently achieves a large number of Majors and, for a writing-intensive department, has a reasonably high number of credit hours taught per faculty member.

The Department priority of hiring a faculty member with expertise in Canadian Constitutional Law is justified in its own right, but especially considering that (i) we will be required to teach CCL and two other courses for the dual degree program by 2026-27 and this will include students in all B.A. programs, (ii) we will need to deliver the law stream in the new PPL program and (iii) we will need to participate in the multi-institutional Jarislowsky Chair programming, which is interdisciplinary but grounded in Canadian Political Science. As such, we agree with the external reviewers on the two areas of need in the Department and with the Department program review committee recommendation that the priority be a position in Canadian Constitutional Law. With respect to timelines, we hope that budgetary conditions and other needs in the academy allow us to hire in this area in advance of students needing these courses for the new programs.

2. *The Department should be given a sufficient course allocation (in addition to what is required for Recommendation One), so that it can offer a one-year instructor contract to at least one of its long-term sessional instructors and increase the pool of sessional instructors the Department can draw on.*

The Dean's Office team is open to Department recommendations about how to move forward with any new position request we submit with our annual staffing plan. On the one hand, there is an existing need for additional teaching capacity that we prefer to satisfy with continuing and tenure-track appointments, and this is met most efficiently with positions with a teaching focus. On the other hand, as a Comprehensive Academic and Research University as mandated by the Provincial government, we are committed to intensive research and quality graduate programming, which is compromised by insufficiently comprehensive research expertise in all fields within and across disciplines, a problem that is

	<p>particularly acute in the social sciences and humanities. If the Department priority, in an environment of limited resources, is that we request the next position be within the professoriate, we would do so, and this may result in an ongoing need for sessional support at least in the short-to-medium term.</p>
<p>3. <i>The Department should explore potential intersections with cognate departments and, when of benefit to each, find ways of working with one another.</i></p>	<p>We are pleased to see that both external reviewers and the Department agree on the need for interdisciplinary collaboration with cognate units. The Dean's Office concurs with the program response with respect to the need for curricular innovation. Limited discussion of the opportunity for curricular and / or structural changes among the Departments of Political Science, Economics and Philosophy did not result in any action, but we are delighted by new and ongoing plans for program collaboration related to the interdisciplinary PPL, Jarislowsky and B.A. / LL.B. programs. With respect to research and graduate studies, there is also a great deal of potential interdisciplinary collaboration, especially to enhance involvement in graduate programming, making use of interdisciplinary programs and centres and institutes.</p>
<p>4. <i>The Department should look through the course offerings in cognate departments to determine if there are any courses that might be cross-listed with Political Science as a way of giving students greater options.</i></p>	<p>During the Fall 2022 Arts & Science DAC discussions on streamlining (to address externally-imposed budget reductions), there was general reluctance to restructure Departments, but overall agreement on the need for sustainability initiatives, including cross listing, to generate efficiencies. Cross listing of courses can help students to move through their programs in the context of a reduced faculty complement. The program response references cross listing of a course with the Women & Gender Studies program, and a review is warranted to assess the potential of cross listing with other cognate departments, including but not limited to Philosophy, Economics, History & Religion and Sociology.</p>
<p>5. <i>The Department should explore experiential learning opportunities for students that can be incorporated into their curriculum.</i></p>	<p>We are encouraged by the opportunities outlined by in the Program Response for experiential learning opportunities such as Applied Studies or within-class activities in collaboration with the City, County and local NGOs, especially in International Relations and in courses related to provincial and local politics, or social and public policy. Students are also encouraged to connect with CareerBridge and to take part in the community engagement opportunities such as those afforded by the Community Bridge Lab and Community Lab.</p>
<p>6. <i>The Department should meet at least once a year with the University's recruiters to ensure that the recruiters are able to fully appreciate and subsequently market Political Science as a major for potential University of Lethbridge students.</i></p>	<p>Recruitment activities are carried out by SEARS, with support from strategic enrolment committees and Marketing and Communications, including the shared Director of Marketing & Communications and Communications Specialist for the Dean's Office. The Department of Political Science does a very good job with their graduates and following alumni and has one of the Faculty's best websites, which is kept up to date. If the Department has ideas on students and programs to promote on social media or in articles, or recruitment strategies specific to the discipline, they can feel free to reach out to the Dean's Office directly.</p>
<p>7. <i>The Department should consider using the option of Applied Studies courses to provide direct support and mentorship from upper-level Political Science students for first-year students.</i></p>	<p>We agree with the Program Response, which indicated that this can be a pedagogically supportive, student-based peer leadership approach that supports high-impact undergraduate learning experiences, including writing, research and social benefits.</p>
<p>8. <i>The Department should use the funds from its David Elton Fund in creative ways (depending on the terms of the endowment) to raise its profile, engage Political Science students, and enhance the Department's sense of community.</i></p>	<p>We agree with the external and program reviewers that the Department should continue to use this fund effectively and to emphasize these goals.</p>
<p>9. <i>The Department should adopt a reasonable "term limit" on the role of Chair (perhaps 2 two-year terms) and try to ensure that those responsibilities rotate through each faculty member.</i></p>	<p>The Dean's Office is pleased with leadership in the Department and has no concerns with the current model.</p>
<p>10. <i>The Department should hold more regular meetings (two per semester).</i></p>	<p>We agree that meetings should be held at least every semester, with additional meetings whenever there are time-sensitive agenda items to address, as noted in the Program Response.</p>

11. *The Department should hold an off-campus retreat to determine how it will respond to these recommendations and the challenges that it faces.*

Whereas we agree with the program response on the need for prudent budgeting, there are lower and intermediate cost options for a retreat (e.g. Penny Building or other UofL properties). If the Department decides to hold a retreat (alone or with another unit) as a specific outcome of this AQA review and available funds are not sufficient internally, the Dean's Office would consider assistance with an appropriate rationale / agenda.

While the External Reviewers' Report contained 11 (eleven) recommendations for improving and/or maintaining the Department of Political Science, the area, Dean Letts, and the Academic Quality Assurance Committee felt that the recommendations were too narrow in focus and were better presented as broad goals to be met before the next review. The committee modified and consolidated the 11 (eleven) recommendations into the following 4 (four) recommendations:

1. The Department of Political Science will work with the Faculty of Arts and Science Dean's Office to develop a proposal for a tenure-track professor, with an expertise in Canadian Constitutional Law and competency in International Relations who can meet the needs of the department as well as the exchange program with Bond University and the pending Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy, Politics, and Law as resources permit across the Faculty.
2. The Department of Political Science will hold a retreat to discuss issues such as:
 - a. Potential intersections with other departments and, when of benefit to each, find ways of working together, including examining course offerings of other departments to determine if there are any that might be cross listed or taken for credit in the major.
 - b. Work integrated and experiential learning opportunities for students that can be incorporated into their curriculum.
 - c. Using the option of Applied Studies courses to provide direct support and mentorship from upper-level Political Science students for first-year students.
 - d. The strategic use of sessionals/instructors in offering the Political Science program.
3. The Department of Political Science will consult with External Relations and work together to determine how to better use its David Elton Fund to raise its profile, engage Political Science students, and enhance the Department's sense of community.
4. The Department of Political Science will begin to hold regular meetings (at least two per semester).

The Academic Quality Assurance Committee is satisfied that the Department of Political Science academic quality assurance review has followed the U of L's academic quality assurance process appropriately and acknowledges the successful completion of the review.

Sincerely,



Dr. Lynn Kennedy
Chair, Academic Quality Assurance Committee
Associate Professor, Department of History and Religion

cc Michelle Helstein, PhD.
Provost & Vice-President (Academic)