Academic Year 2008-09, 7 graduates

Jeremy L regards,
The online database.

Attached in an HTML outline is the Political science report on outcomes assessment, 2008-09. It should be visible below this message. I will transfer the necessary sections into the online database.

regards,
Jeremy L

2008-09 Assessment Results, Political Science Program
by Jeremy Lewis, PhD, revised 30 June 2009

Summary of assessment: with additional criteria introduced, and a strengthened emphasis on measures in the senior capstone seminar, early returns show achievement or at least early progress on all available measures. The major field test scores (now near the national median) increased significantly in the two year average, 2008-09, compared to the cumulative average since 2000. (2007 scores, likely to be at least as strong, are still not available). The average student performed in 2000-2006 in the 38th percentile nationally of the Major Field Test; the average student in 2008 and 2009 performed in the 48th percentile. (If we omit one student who admitted deliberately underperforming, in the 1st percentile, and one who entered with an ACT of only 16, our average score, 155, was at the 56th percentile nationally.)

The only, minor disappointment is that the subscore for International Relations still lags slightly that of American Government and Comparative Government. However, we have already introduced multiple choice testing of international relations concepts (spring 2009, after the seniors passed through the course in 2007) which should help raise the MFT subscores from 2010. The introduction of an elective seminar in international studies helped, but the program still lacks a basic course on international law and organizations. Co-curricular meetings and guest speakers still stir to stimulate interest in this area: we continue to take students to world affairs council meetings, and in spring 2009 we took a team to the Model United Nations in NYC. Two members of that team have won places in postgraduate schools to specialize in international relations.

Improvements made in 2008-09: To prepare students better for the GRE, LSAT and MFT, multiple choice testing was added to the essay examinations in most courses; criteria for judging oral and written work were made more explicit and consistent. Capstone seniors were even more intensively advised on preparing résumés and application packages, with all completing both projects this year. Program assessment could be more extensively implemented with students required to take both an examination and the MFT. International relations key concepts were emphasized in PSC 303 with extensive multiple choice testing, which should bear fruit in future MFT’s. Another improvement this year is that all seniors cooperated with their best efforts, and there was no senior who admitted having taken the MFT while deliberately not trying to succeed.

Improvements planned for the 2009-2011, 2-year rotation of courses: In addition to spreading multiple choice tests to most courses, IR lectures in PSC 303 will more explicitly discuss and reinforce key concepts and theory. We will monitor to see whether further courses in this subfield are necessary, for example a course in international law and organizations, or an upper level seminar in theories of international relations.

Program Objective: competence in major field

- Cognitive and behavioral measure: senior essay test, now to be taken by all students in the capstone class
  - Expected Outcome: nearly all graduating seniors who take the senior capstone seminar will be judged to have basic competency in the major field, judged by essays in three of the four subfields, by criteria of Narrative, Content, Organization and Writing (NCOW)
  - Observed Outcome: all graduating seniors completed all essays at least at basic competency
  - Observed Outcome: 3 seniors achieved excellence in international relations and 2 also achieved excellence in comparative government and American politics
  - All well exceeded the level of basic competency, except one who achieved basic competency
  - An experimental multiple choice section offered identifications of key concepts and political theorists. All except one achieved or exceeded basic competency on this section.
  - The exception (earning "C" grades on the essays but only 56% on the multiple choice section) was an attending student who, entering with only a 16 ACT composite, had been formerly classified as Learning Disabled. It was considered a success that he achieved basic competency on the essays.
  - Outcome achieved

- Cognitive and behavioral measure: Major Field Test scores
  - Expected Outcome: a three-year rolling cohort of at least 10 seniors, the average of recent graduating seniors will perform at about the national median
  - Observed Outcome: all graduating seniors except one (s efficacy on this section) was a transfer student who, entering with only a 16 ACT composite, had been formerly classified as Learning Disabled. It was considered a success that he achieved basic competency on the essays.
  - Outcome achieved

Program Objective: oral communication

- Cognitive and behavioral measure: senior capstone formal presentation
  - Expected Outcome: all graduating seniors will be judged to have basic competency in the oral presentation, by the criteria of Content, Audiovisuals, Speaking and Organization (CASO)
  - Observed Outcome: 3 seniors achieved excellence, 2 strong competence and 2 basic competence
  - Outcome achieved

Program Objective: written communication

- Cognitive and behavioral measure: senior capstone research paper
  - Expected Outcome: all graduating seniors will be judged to have basic competency in the research paper, by the criteria of Content, Research, Organization and Writing (CROW)
  - Observed Outcome: 3 seniors achieved excellence, 2 strong competence and 2 basic competence (one because his competent paper arrived after the deadline).
  - Outcome achieved
Program Objective: preparation for professional work or further study

- Behavioral measure: self-reported placement into postgraduate or professional schools
  - Expected Outcome: most graduating seniors who seek this, will find places in postgraduate or professional schools
    - Observed Outcome: of the 2 students seeking postgraduate study directly after HC graduation, 1 was awarded a full fellowship package to the Doctoral program of the University of Alabama; 1 was accepted to the Master's program of the University of West Florida. Both intend to specialize in international relations. Others are unknown yet, in June 2009.
  - Good progress on outcome, so far
- Behavioral measure: self-reported placement into professional positions broadly related to field
  - Expected Outcome: most graduating seniors who seek this, will find professional positions within six months of graduation
    - Observed Outcome: one student, after paid political internship positions, won a scheduling position in the campaign of the State Treasurer; for others, it was too early to tell in June 2009
  - Good progress on outcome, so far
- Behavioral measure: senior capstone, creation of brief résumé and plan for applications
  - Expected Outcome: all graduating seniors will create a brief résumé and an appropriate plan for applications for professional work or further study
    - Observed Outcome: all seniors created an appropriate résumé for further study, and all but one created a résumé appropriate for professional work.
  - Outcome achieved
- Attitudinal measure: senior and alumni surveys, self-reported, if available
  - Expected Outcome: nearly all graduating seniors will report they feel prepared for professional work or further study
    - Outcome unknown, so far