

Strategic Plan
Department of Political Science
&
International Relations Program

Last Revised: October 15, 2007

Mission – Political Science Department

The mission of the Department of Political Science is to prepare students for citizenship, post-baccalaureate education and professional careers in the public and private sectors.

Vision – Political Science Department

The Department of Political Science is committed to setting a standard of excellence in the study of the politics, governments, and policies of the United States and other countries, international relations, and political theory with the goal of building the best undergraduate political science program in Michigan. We will prepare our students to be well-informed citizens and to make meaningful contributions to the department of their local, national, and international communities. We will foster a diverse community of inquiry, expression, and rigorous scholarship.

Relationship of International Relations Program to Political Science Department

GVSU offers an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in international relations. The International Relations major leads to the B.A. degree. A minor in International Relations is also offered. International Relations students take courses in the fields of business, economics, history, geography, culture, and politics. The program is governed by an interdisciplinary committee and is housed in and administered by the Department of Political Science.

Mission – International Relations Program

The mission of the International Relations Program is to educate our students in the politics, history, and economics of interaction among citizens, societies, and states. We are committed to preparing our students for citizenship, post-baccalaureate education, and professional careers through interdisciplinary coursework in international relations, advising, participation in internships, and experience in international contexts.

Vision – International Relations Program

We are committed to setting a standard of excellence in the study of international relations, with the goal of building an innovative undergraduate international relations program in Michigan. International relations students will have a comprehensive knowledge of the complex economic, social, and political relationships among international entities, past and present. Students will attain both theoretical and

descriptive knowledge of international relations and critical analytic skills through study on campus and, in most cases, study abroad. We will prepare our students to be well-informed citizens and to make meaningful contributions to the development of the international community in the U.S. and abroad. We will foster a diverse community of inquiry, expression, and rigorous scholarship.

Value Statements - Political Science and International Relations

In the Department of Political Science and the International Relations Program at Grand Valley State University, we believe in the acquisition and utilization of knowledge of the various subfields of political science, based on academic freedom, methodological and theoretical pluralism, and disciplinary and interdisciplinary collaboration.

- We value excellence in political science education facilitated through
 - Active student-teacher engagement and academic achievement in a rigorous and challenging course of study that emphasizes the development of critical and analytical thinking and writing.
 - Student exposure to a variety of theoretical and political perspectives for the purpose of enhancing critical and analytical thinking and writing skills.
 - A comprehensive coverage of the discipline and access to a wide variety of upper-level courses.
 - Emphasis on internships, co-curricular and civic education opportunities in our local, national, and international communities.
- Excellence in political science scholarship supported by appropriate resources.
- Service to the discipline, unit, college, and university community.
- Student development as well-informed citizens in a democratic society and as members of the global community.

Goals and Objectives: An Overview

Goal I. Provide a comprehensive, up-to-date curriculum to promote student learning

Objective 1: Review curriculum and make changes as needed

Objective 2: Hire faculty based on areas of curricular need and program growth

Objective 3: Assess student learning

Objective 4: Provide a physical environment that allows greater interaction among faculty and students.

Goal II. Recruit, retain and develop a diverse faculty engaged in research

Objective 1: Recruit and retain a diverse faculty

Objective 2: Support and foster a departmental culture of faculty engaged in research

Goal III. Promote study abroad, pre-law, internships and career opportunities for Political Science majors

Objective 1: Promote internship and career opportunities

Objective 2: Provide and promote study abroad programs

Objective 3: Provide support for GVSU pre-law students and alumni

Objective 4: Promote co-curricular learning, including supporting student research, speakers and events

Goal IV: Contribute political science, international relations and university-related resources to the community and alumni

Objective 1: Promote civic education

Objective 2: Promote community education about world affairs

Objective 3: Contribute political science, international relations, academic, and educational resources to various charities

Objective 4: Communicate faculty expertise via internet, television, radio and print media

Objective 5: Work with the GVSU Public Policy Institute to provide faculty resources to the community

Objective 6: Use faculty exchange to promote international relationships between GVSU, the University of Perugia, and the cities of Grand Rapids and Perugia, Italy

Objective 7: Build relationships with and support alumni

Goal I. Provide a comprehensive, up-to-date curriculum to promote student learning

Objective 1: Review curriculum and make changes as needed

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

In 2005 and 2006, the department performed a benchmarking analysis, comparing our curriculum to our peer institutions in Michigan and around the country. Based on this analysis, the department revised the curriculum and submitted a major program revision in fall 2007. The revised curriculum will require political science majors to take at least one introductory and one upper-level course in each of the four major disciplinary subfields. By requiring an introductory course in each of the subfields, we will improve students' exposure to the subfields and hence their preparation for corresponding upper-level courses. Moreover, this enhances the rigor of the major and aligns it more along disciplinary conventions. Upon approval by the college and university curriculum committees, the revised curriculum will go into effect in fall 2008. As new faculty are hired, we will continue to revise the curriculum and add courses in areas of need.

In keeping with changing course offerings and our analysis of trends in the field, the International Relations curriculum is regularly revised. Courses in History, Economics and Business, and Political Science were added to the list of IR electives this year to reflect new course offerings by those departments. In addition, a program change was made to require all students to take electives at the 300-level or above in all subfields, beginning next year. Also, IR 490 has been added to the curriculum this year so that IR majors can receive IR credit for internships. Like the Political Science curricular reforms, these aim to improve the rigor of students' course of study and to prepare them for citizenship and work responsibilities beyond the university.

Objective 2: Hire faculty based on areas of curricular need and program growth

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Each winter semester the department revises the five-year hiring plan and makes recommendations based on program growth and curricular need. Our most recent request is for a new faculty member who could teach Middle Eastern Politics and International Relations. Action on this request will be taken pending administrative approval.

Objective 3: Assess student learning

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Each semester, the Political Science Department and the International Relations Program assesses capstone students for student learning as well as student impressions of the curriculum, as per our assessment plan.

Objective 4: Provide a physical environment that allows greater interaction among faculty and students

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

In fall 2008, the department will move to the new Mackinac extension, and our floor will include a space for faculty-student interaction. As part of the budget planning for 2008-9, the department has requested resources for a computer and ceiling-mounted projector to facilitate hosting of presentations and multimedia events. As the departmental host for interdisciplinary International Relations Program, the department administers and provides the physical home for the program. We believe that this arrangement is largely successful. As physical space is important to the identity and success of the program, the faculty-student interaction space is available for both the department and the program.

Goal II. Recruit, retain and develop a diverse faculty engaged in research

Objective 1: Recruit and retain a diverse faculty

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

The department values diversity and inclusion. Diversity includes but is not necessarily limited to intellectual, racial, ethnic, national origin, and gender diversity. The department also values experience in working with diverse student populations. Drs. Polly Diven, Mark Richards and Darren Walhof will be trained as inclusion advocates for the process of recruiting and hiring faculty. Related to Goal I, Objective 2, the department will continue to assess areas of need related to diversity as it engages in annual review of the five-year hiring plan.

Objective 2: Support and foster a departmental culture of faculty engaged in research

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

In April 2007, the department drafted a Workload Expectations document and revised the Performance Expectations for Contract Renewal, Tenure and Promotion document. Through these processes, the department reaffirmed its commitment to fostering and supporting a departmental culture of having a faculty continuously engaged in research. The department finds that performing research is critical for our lives as scholars, and helps to inform and improve our teaching. In addition to revising our expectations, the department helps to develop faculty by offering funds for conference travel, providing mentoring for junior faculty, and making faculty aware of university and other resources for conducting research. We also cover faculty publications and conference presentations on our blog.

Goal III. Promote study abroad, pre-law, internships, co-curricular learning and career opportunities for Political Science and International Relations majors

Objective 1: Promote internship and career opportunities

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

The department and the International Relations program have designated internship coordinators, Dr. Kevin den Dulk and Dr. Diven, respectively. The coordinators supervise internships, maintain a database of opportunities on Blackboard that are accessible only to our majors, and promote internships to majors. Dr. den Dulk organizes the Paul B. Henry Congressional Internship which awards scholarships to top political science students to perform an internship in Washington D.C. with a member of Congress from Michigan. Dr. den Dulk is currently working on expanding our internship offerings by coordinating a program with the Washington Center, pending administrative approval. Dr. Diven supervises international internships for both Political Science and International Relations students. The internships can be located overseas or in organizations with an international focus that are located in the U.S. In addition, all faculty emphasize internships and careers when advising students.

The department and the International Relations Program also coordinate with GVSU Career Services to support and promote Career Services events, and use our blog and websites to make students aware of career information resources and opportunities. Susan Simmerman, Career Services liaison to Political Science and International Relations, makes career presentations in the capstone courses.

Objective 2: Provide and promote study abroad programs

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Dr. Diven has designed a study abroad brochure tailored to Political Science and International Relations students. The department promotes study abroad through the department blog, a bulletin board outside our office, and faculty advising. The department is in the process of creating a student exchange with the University of Perugia and the University for Foreigners in Perugia, Italy, the sister city of Grand Rapids. This exchange will begin in fall 2008. Dr. Diven and Dr. Mark Schaub of the Padnos International Center are preparing an application for an Atlantis Grant (\$400,000) to fund study abroad exchanges for GVSU students with students in Munster, Germany and Cracow, Poland. These grants, funded by the EU and U.S. Department of Education, provide four full scholarships for each of the three partner schools for four years.

Objective 3: Provide support for GVSU pre-law students and alumni

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Dr. Richards serves as GVSU pre-law advisor and faculty director of the Pre-law Education Residential Living program (PERL). He will continue to provide advising to students, maintain a pre-law FAQ on the department blog, operate the pre-law listserv, and plan and promote pre-law, PERL, and Law Society events. He will continue to make students and alumni aware of pre-law opportunities and resources, including Legal Admissions Education Program (LEAP), a program that enables GVSU political science majors to earn a bachelor's degree from GVSU and a juris doctor degree from Michigan State University Law in six years. He also coordinates with the Office of Multicultural Affairs on diversity as it relates to pre-law and maintains a listing of law school diversity scholarships.

Objective 4: Promote co-curricular learning, including supporting student research, speakers and events

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

The Political Science Department and the International Relations Program support student research by supervising Student Summer Scholars, McNair Scholars, Honors Theses and Independent Studies. We also provide financial, planning, and advertising support for a variety of co-curricular events and speakers that enable student learning outside of the classroom. We support events such as Model European Union and Model Organization of American States. Faculty also serve as advisors to student groups such as the International Relations Organization (Dr. Robert Stewart-Ingersoll), Amnesty International (Dr. George Kieh), College Democrats and the Law Society (Dr. Richards). The International Relations director, Dr. Diven, plans to investigate promoting interaction between GVSU international students and International Relations majors.

Goal IV: Contribute political science, international relations and university-related resources to the community and alumni

Objective 1: Promote civic education

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Drs. den Dulk and Paul Cornish have participated in and helped to lead the \$175,000 CIVICS-Grand Rapids Public Schools Teaching Enhancement Grant. This is a state grant that seeks to promote civics education in public schools.

Dr. den Dulk has been co-investigator of a \$100,000 grant from the Bradley Foundation on "The Role of Religion in Fostering Civic Responsibility," again bringing together research and community.

Drs. John Constantelos, Walhof and den Dulk advise local "We the People" teams. These teams of high school students engage in local, state and national competitions.

Dr. Michelle Miller-Adams continues to research the Kalamazoo Promise and disseminates her findings to the community through reports, a book, media interviews, and conferences. The intent of the Kalamazoo Promise Grant is to provide each Kalamazoo Public School graduate with the opportunity to attend post-secondary education with up to a 100% tuition scholarship. In particular, Dr. Miller-Adams provides information about the program to other communities interested in developing similar programs.

Drs. Cornish and den Dulk provide advising support to GVSU Group Social Studies majors (students who are likely to become social studies teachers).

Others, as requested.

Objective 2: Promote community education about world affairs

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Dr. Diven serves on the West Michigan World Affairs Speakers Committee. This committee organizes the annual foreign policy lecture series held in February and March. Her role is to identify and invite speakers, and then help host their visits to Grand Rapids. Students in Dr. Diven's Great Decisions class attend this lecture series.

Objective 3: Contribute political science, international relations, academic, and educational resources to various charities

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Members of the department contribute political science, academic, and educational resources to various charities. Here are some examples:

-Serve as President of the Board of Directors of Humanity for Africa (Dr. Jacques Mangala – ongoing). Humanity for Africa is a Michigan based non-profit organization dedicated to helping African immigrants adjust to American culture and living in West Michigan. In addition to helping Africans that have immigrated to the U.S., the organization also works to help communities in Africa through outreach programs.

-Coordinate departmental giving to United Way (Dr. Richards – each October).

-Coordinate campaign to rebuild University of Liberia's Instructional Resources (Dr. Kieh - ongoing).

-Coordinate recruitment of student pre-law volunteers for Hillman Trial Advocacy Program at U.S. District Court House (Dr. Richards – each January).

-Others

Objective 4: Communicate faculty expertise via internet, television, radio and print media

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Given the fluidity of the world of politics, faculty members are often called upon for commentary and expert opinion. Dr. Erika King merits special note for her willingness to frequently comment on campaigns and elections. The Political Science Department and the International Relations Program coordinate with Dottie Barnes of News and Information Services to make our faculty available for the media.

Objective 5: Work with the GVSU Public Policy Institute to provide faculty resources to the community

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

We will continue on-going discussions with the Director of the GVSU Public Policy Institute to redesign the institute. We envision a model in which visiting faculty with academic and governing expertise will chair the institute for three-year period. The chairs would teach courses in public policy, state government, and American politics for the political science department, and organize interactions between legislators and GVSU faculty in order to bring academic expertise to bear on pressing legislative issues.

This model would also have the advantage of raising awareness of the value to GVSU to state legislators.

Objective 6: Use faculty exchange to promote international relationships between GVSU, the University of Perugia, and the cities of Grand Rapids and Perugia, Italy

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

Due primarily to the efforts of Dr. Constantelos, the department has developed an annual faculty exchange with the University of Perugia. This faculty exchange has served as the genesis for building relations with the City of Grand Rapids, especially the Office of the Mayor and the Sister City Committee in Grand Rapids, as well as Office of the Mayor of Perugia, Italy and the Sister City Committee in Perugia. As mentioned above, the department is developing a student exchange to complement the faculty exchange. The department will continue to support fundraising and other efforts to build international relationships between Perugia and Grand Rapids. Dr. Constantelos, the department chair, and faculty who have participated in the exchange will be responsible.

Objective 7: Build relationships with and support alumni

Action Steps, Time Frame, and Status:

The Political Science Department and the International Relations Program recognize that alumni are an incredibly valuable resource and that our support can also assist alumni with endeavors ranging from building careers and pursuing additional degrees to supporting community and charitable work. Faculty provide advising support regarding careers, graduate school, and law school to alumni.

Through our blog, we feature frequent alumni updates, essentially brief profiles of the activities and achievements of our alumni. This helps to build relationships with alumni, and also helps to highlight the diverse opportunities available to our graduates, not to mention building the reputation of the department by emphasizing the numerous fantastic achievements of alumni. Using the blog and our Blackboard listing of internship opportunities (see Goal III, Objective 1), we make students aware of internship and career opportunities that alumni help to provide.

We participate in the CLAS Alumni-in-residence program each year to recognize one of our outstanding alumni.

The department chair is responsible for maintaining relationships with alumni who have made significant donations to the department. The William Baum Lecture Fund, funded by alumni contributions, connects alumni, students and community by enabling the department to host major speakers.