



Faculty of Arts

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October 23, 2008

TO: The Planning and Budget Committee

FROM: Reeta C. Tremblay, Dean, Faculty of Arts

SUBJECT: Political Science Department, Action Plan

I am forwarding you the Department of Political Science's action plan. The Political Science Department was reviewed in 2007 when it was in the process of selecting an external Head. Dr. Roger Levy was hired in 2007 and began his term as the Head of the Department in July 2008. Despite the lag of time, it was important that the new Head undertake the responsibility to guide and lead the Department in reviewing and implementing the recommendations proposed by the APR panel. I am pleased to note that under the direction of the new Head, there has been a conscious cultivation by the members of the Department of a culture of collegiality through which it has begun a process of considering and implementing the APR recommendations.

During the last six months, the Department began a series of discussions. This action plan is a result of those departmental deliberations and a consultation with me. I am pleased to report that the Department has begun to implement several of the APR recommendations, such as: a review of the undergraduate curriculum (Recommendations 1, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 20, 24); a review of the graduate curriculum and the delivery of the graduate programme (Recommendation 25, 27, 28); an efficient usage of its faculty resources with regard to the academic delivery of its undergraduate program – including a review of workload (Recommendations 4, 7, 15, 16, 18). The Department has also paid serious attention to the recommendations pertaining to governance and has implemented a process of holding regular monthly meetings (Recommendation 3). It has set up a new website which includes programme information for both its undergraduate and graduate students (Recommendation 22) and is in the process of drafting a comprehensive guide to graduate studies (Recommendation 26).

I am pleased to note that since 2006, the Department has hired six new faculty members (including the Head) and it is in the process of hiring another junior faculty member. I am encouraged to see the Department's responses to Recommendation 31. The Department is cognizant of the fact that it must develop a stronger research profile and has set the strengthening of its research profile as a priority. With the departmental renewal at the junior level, this Department has the potential to be the best political science department in Atlantic Canada and one of the promising ones in Canada.

Reeta C. Tremblay
Dean, Faculty of Arts

c: Dr. Roger Levy, Head, Department of Political Science
 Ms. Joan Bessey, APR Coordinator

Department of Political Science

Response to the Academic Programme Review Report, August 2007

Introduction.

The departmental review was conducted in springtime 2007, and it has now been 11 months since the department received the committee's report on 22 August 2007. In her covering note to the then head, Dr Peter Boswell, the Dean expected the new head to lead the response and submit it 'sometime at the end of the winter Term 2008'. As the new head took office only on July 1, the response has been unavoidably delayed. Nevertheless, the department has not been idle in the meantime in considering and acting on many of the review recommendations.

In general, colleagues welcomed the opportunity afforded by the review to take stock of the department's strengths, weaknesses, needs and future orientations, and were pleased to see these recognised in the review report. Since receiving the report, the department has responded very positively to many of the review's suggestions, putting them into action as is documented in the narrative below. Equally, the department has welcomed the positive indications of support from the Faculty for the resource needs of the department, and the recognition of the higher than average loads carried by colleagues over many years.

It was also gratifying to receive recognition for the sustained upward trend in student enrolment and for the levels of scholarly activity sustained by some departmental members in spite of continued staffing difficulties. The latter are well documented in the review report and we are reassured that the review panel was so sensitive and sympathetic to these problems. As the report pointed out, the department is significantly disadvantaged compared to the average in the Faculty (2005-06):

- Expenditure per lecture registrations is 62.5% of the Faculty average
- Net expenditure per degree awarded is 59.1% of the Faculty average
- The staff-student ratio is 103.1% over the Faculty average

Commenting on the changing staffing profile, the review observed that the department was in a state of transition, but was hesitant to change. It argued that there was an urgency to the renewal process and a need for a bolder outlook to the future. This is the challenge for the department, and one which colleagues will undoubtedly respond to positively.

Responses to individual recommendations.

Recommendation 1: The department should begin a collegial renewal process as soon as possible, beginning with a statement of its aims and objectives, and continuing with curriculum revision and the definition of new appointments.

Agreed. The department has been proceeding apace with collegial renewal. As stated in the most recent request for new faculty, the department is committed to sustain and build strength in the two broad areas of International Relations (IR) and Canadian politics and public policy, subject to the recommendations of the curriculum review (see below), and also has a major focus on comparative politics. More generally, the department aims to provide a high quality education in political science at both undergraduate and graduate levels which meets the needs of stakeholders in the Newfoundland and Labrador communities. The department has also prioritised the expansion of the MA programme, collaboration on a new Master's programme for in-service public service managers, and supports the further development of on-line delivery insofar as staffing resources allow.

Actions taken: In addition to the four hirings of younger faculty over the last couple of years, there have been two **new appointments** starting 2008 including a head with public policy and management and EU specialisms, and a specialist in comparative and Canadian politics from a behavioural perspective. Three faculty have retired, and there has been the **approval of one further post designated in the IR area**. While the department originally intended to request three posts to bring it up to full strength, it was advised that this request was unlikely to succeed and to request 2 posts. Finally, only one post was approved because of financial stringencies in the Faculty.

Responsibility: Head and Search Committee

Timeline: Ongoing

There is an **extensive curriculum review process underway**. This has so far included Canadian politics, public policy and comparative politics, and will set the department's teaching priorities for the coming review period. This affects both the undergraduate and graduate programmes, and the calendar will be modified as a result.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum review committee

Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 2: The department should re-examine its committee structure and revisit departmental procedures to make sure they function well.

Agreed. **Actions taken:** Since spring 2008, the department has **reinvigorated its committee system** engaging all full time members of the department in its deliberative and decision making functions. The Departmental Committee comprised of all full time members of the department has been meeting regularly since the early spring as recommended. The Departmental Committee will receive reports from its sub-committees (see below), and making decisions as necessary. In addition to the statutory committees for Search and Promotion and Tenure, there is a Curriculum committee, a Graduate committee, a Communications committee and an Executive committee. The latter is made up of the convenors of these committees plus the head. Its role will be primarily advisory and coordinative. The head will keep its operation under review and report back to the Department next year concerning its future.

Given the challenge of declining enrolments in the Faculty of Arts and in Atlantic Canada generally, the **department created a new, Communications and Marketing Committee**. This committee has been charged with the task of improving the provision of information to existing students, recruiting new students and improving the department's profile in the community. The new committee has already conducted a complete overhaul of the Department's web site and marketing documents and has cooperated with Faculty of Arts staff similarly charged with marketing and communications to further these projects.

Responsibility: Head and department members
Timeline: completed

Recommendation 3: The department should meet regularly: at least once every two months.

Actions taken: The department agrees with this recommendation. A **calendar of regular monthly meetings** is in place for 2008-09.

Responsibility: Head
Timeline: Completed

Recommendation 4: The department should carefully review workloads both for administrative responsibilities and teaching assignments to ensure they are equitable across the department.

Agreed. **Actions taken:** With the rebalancing of the staffing profile because of new hires and retiring staff, these issues are resolving themselves to some degree. Nevertheless, it can be stated that **senior members of the department are playing a full role in the committee system and are active on working groups and committees across the university**. They will be encouraged to take more of these opportunities as they arise. Equally, it is important to recognise and fulfill the staff development needs of younger faculty who are the institutional and academic leaders of the future. Denying them opportunities they are eager to pursue is neither helpful to them nor the institution. Where there are heavy class loads, GA resources are available for assistance with routine marking duties. The head **is undertaking a review of workloads** based on the most up to date information available. Class size is an issue in some cases. The department is blessed with a number of exceptionally able colleagues who are serving in other roles which prevent them from contributing as fully to the department as they might wish to. This is a burden of success rather than failure.

Responsibility: Head
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 5: Efforts should be made to spread out sabbatical leaves and to balance buyouts in order that the regular faculty complement is not seriously depleted.

Agreed. All future requests for sabbaticals and buy-outs will be treated in this context.

Responsibility: Head
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 6: The department should place a priority on hiring full time women and non-white males. (sic)

Since the report, the department has recruited two new faculty members, one of whom is a woman. There were no women or non-white minority candidates for the post of Head. There are currently two female members of the department, one of whom is also non-white. Every effort is made to ensure there is a full spread of candidates of exceptional quality from all backgrounds for faculty posts.

Responsibility: Head and Search Committee
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 7: The department should focus on mentoring new faculty and developing workload policies and procedures designed to retain new members.

Agreed. **Actions taken:** As for mentoring, **there is a supportive environment in the department with senior colleagues working with younger members of faculty on research collaborations for example.** The University has an extensive programme of in-service staff development focussed on pedagogical and related issues, and the department encourages colleagues – old and new – to take advantage of these. The issue of **workload is under review** (see above) in the context of minimum class size numbers, and policies will be put in place consistent with the principles of equity and fairness.

Responsibility: Head
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 8: The department should have a second full time secretary.

Agreed. **Actions taken:** One of the actions that could immediately alleviate some of the administrative burdens on staff, particularly younger staff, is the implementation of recommendation 8. This is unanimously and vigorously supported in the department and **a request has been lodged with Dean's office for some months** that it should be actioned without delay.

Responsibility: Dean
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 9: The department should undertake a process of serious curriculum review that examines issues of overlap, considers students interests in new subjects and reflects contemporary topics and directions in the discipline.

Agreed. **Actions taken:** This process is underway and **substantial progress has been made** in identifying areas of overlap, eliminating dormant courses, and revising calendar descriptions. Incoming faculty have acted as a great catalyst to this process, so this momentum will continue. The next stage (fall/winter 2008) will be to prepare proposals for new courses.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum review committee
Timeline: Ongoing in 2008/9

Recommendation 10: Additional faculty appointments should be made in order to allow the department to meet its teaching responsibilities. Returning the departments staffing numbers to the level it had in the early 1990s (i.e. 15 faculty) would be a desirable objective.

Agreed wholeheartedly. **Action taken:** The department intended to **request three faculty positions this spring**, but in the event, only one has been approved owing to budgetary constraints in the Faculty of Arts. Additionally, there are severe accommodation constraints within the department which the faculty must address. We will continue to press our case so that the quality of education available to political science students at MUN does not deteriorate further compared to those in better funded political science departments elsewhere in Canada. At the least, we will seek to raise departmental strength to the Faculty of Arts averages at MUN.

Responsibility: Dean
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 11: Calendar descriptions should be revised as soon as possible and kept updated to reflect the content of course offerings and whether or not they are active.

Agreed. The aforementioned curriculum review is addressing these issues.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum review committee
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 12: The department should explore the potential for cross listing courses and for developing interdisciplinary courses with other departments.

Agreed. **Action taken:** Given our limited resources, this option represents an opportunity for the department. In this context, a member of the department approached the linguistics department in April 2008 with a view to cross listing and is awaiting a reply. There **are discussions with the Faculty of Business Administration** to develop a collaborative post-graduate Master's programme in public administration and management. The department also **contributes to the Law and Society and policy studies programmes**, including the distance learning mode. Further forward,

collaboration with other departments in the Faculty of Arts in a doctoral training programme is something the department will consider and evaluate.

Responsibility: Head and department members
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 13: The department should maintain strength in its curriculum in the politics of Newfoundland and Labrador and Atlantic Canada.

Agreed. **Action taken:** As stated, the **department is prioritising Canadian politics, comparative politics, public policy and IR.** These fit well with this recommendation. There are senior colleagues well versed in the politics and policy environment of Newfoundland and Labrador, and newer colleagues in the general area of Canadian politics and policy are developing their expertise and contacts locally. In addition, the cohort of per course instructors employed in the department add a rich loam of expertise and experience in this area, many having worked in the public services locally.

Responsibility: Head and department members
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 14: The department should devote attention to the problem of overlap to ensure it is minimised, and teaching is carried out in a coordinated manner. Overlap may be addressed through curriculum review and/or through having faculty teaching courses at this level meet regularly to plan courses and assign texts.

Agreed. **Action taken:** The **curriculum review** is addressing the issue of course overlap. In addition to informal mechanisms, operational coordination between colleagues on these matters is effected through the sub committees of the department (the graduate and curriculum committees).

Responsibility: Head and curriculum committee
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 15: The department should discuss strategies for assigning introductory courses and consider the appropriate role for per-course and per-term appointees in the delivery of the core curriculum at the introductory level.

Agreed. **Action taken:** As for the assigning of introductory courses, it will be noted that **as of fall 2008, the overwhelming majority will be taught by full time faculty.** Given its limited resources, the department at all times seeks to achieve a balance between expertise and availability. Per course and per term instructors are no less valued (and valuable) colleagues than full time members of the department. POSC 1000 will also be offered as a web-based course for the first time this year.

Responsibility: Head

Timeline: Completed

Recommendation 16: The department should consider introducing tutorials for its large first year courses using graduate students to conduct tutorials.

It would be desirable to introduce tutorial support for all classes, first year ones included, if the staff resources – either full time or appropriately experienced graduate students - were available. From a pedagogical point of view, it is essential that a tutorial system is staffed by appropriately trained individuals. It is for this reason, for example, that the department uses its GA units for assessment rather than teaching purposes, and then for the marking of multiple choice type assignments rather than essay type assignments. As and when resource constraints ease, this issue can be revisited.

Responsibility: Head and department members

Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 17: As more faculty resources become available, the department should consider creating a section of PS1000 specifically for nursing students, although open to all students interested in learning about political science.

Agreed. The curriculum review is addressing the issue of how POSC 1000 can be made more accessible to students outside the Faculty of Arts generally.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum committee

Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 18: Fourth year courses should have a maximum enrolment of 15-20 students.

Agreed. As well as maximum numbers for fourth year courses, the department supports a minimum number of 8 for both pedagogical and resourcing reasons.

Responsibility: Head

Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 19: Fourth year courses should have prerequisites. These may be either subject-specific requirements, or a minimum number of credit hours in political science.

Agreed. **Action taken:** The department will put structures in place via the curriculum review within the course descriptors (by adding in pre-requisite requirements where necessary, and adopting the 'wayfinders' philosophy). However, care must also be taken not to damage enrolments and student choice through an overly-prescriptive policy, and the **curriculum review will be very sensitive to this** when addressing the issue.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum committee
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 20: The department should consider the possibility of requiring political theory and/or a research methods course for all majors.

Agreed in principle subject to the recommendations of the curriculum review.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum committee
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 21: The department should consider developing examples of combinations of courses and their sequencing to provide 'Wayfinders' for their majors.

Agreed in principle subject to the recommendations of the curriculum review.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum committee
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 22: The department should attempt to make the list of course offerings available to students much earlier than is the current practice and should consider developing descriptions of upcoming courses for posting on the departmental website prior to registration.

Agreed. **Action taken:** Much progress has already been made with the **regular updating of the departmental website and the enrichment of its content.** Comprehensive and user friendly descriptors are now available online for all undergraduate courses (also in paper form), and some detailed syllabi are also downloadable. However, there is still much work to be done on the graduate courses in this area.

Responsibility: Head and relevant department committees
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 23: The Undergraduate Studies Committee should be responsible for the honours programme and should designate a faculty member to advise honours students.

Agreed. **Action taken.** This task is currently handled by the head in consultation with the convener of the undergraduate studies committee.

Responsibility: Head
Timeline: Completed

Recommendation 24: The department should look at the structure of its honours programme in comparison with those in other department in the Faculty of Arts, and in other Political Science departments.

Agreed. **Action taken:** The department will effect changes via the current **curriculum review**.

Responsibility: Head and curriculum committee
Timeline: Ongoing 2008/9.

Recommendation 25: The department should continue to emphasise the internship option within the MA programme and link it with an emphasis on Public Policy and on Canadian Politics. The Public Policy specialty MA should be linked to resources in other units of the Faculty of Arts.

Agreed. **Action taken:** First, the department welcomes the recognition (on page 22 of the report), that more resources are needed to help develop the graduate programme. The internship option grows more popular – this coming year, there are 10 likely internees – and the **department is working closely with the University's co-op office** which will take over much of the responsibility for finding internships and sponsorship (via the MITAC programme for example). While it is the case that the subject areas of Public Policy and Canadian Politics are closely allied to the internship, IR is also a relevant field for many students. As for the future, the department is engaged in **preliminary work with the Faculty of Business Administration** concerning the development of a Masters in Public Administration and Management. This appears to be the best option to meet the needs of local public service stakeholders.

Responsibility: Head, co-op office
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 26: The department should create a more formal structure for advising graduate students which includes a document setting out the rules and regulations and an orientation session in the first week of classes.

Agreed. **Action taken:** The Graduate and Communications and Marketing Committees **have drafted a comprehensive guide to graduate studies in the department**. This information is now posted on the departmental website. It includes information about the programme structure and requirements for each program stream, a list of courses, FAQs, student financial support, internships, plus more general information about St John's and Memorial. Also, there will now be a formal orientation for graduate students in the first week of classes. The orientation will address advising issues.

Responsibility: Head and graduate studies committee
Timeline: Completed

Recommendation 27: Students in the MA thesis/major research paper stream should have a supervisor throughout their programme, including from the time they are admitted, although they should be allowed to change supervisors to reflect their thesis/paper topics. The Chair of the Graduate Committee or his/her deputy should be available on site throughout the year to provide guidance to students.

Agreed - it is the department's standard practice. Students are assigned an advisor upon admission. Students also meet regularly with the Graduate Coordinator who is on site all year.

Responsibility: Head and graduate studies committee

Timeline: Completed

Recommendation 28: The requirement for the one year thesis stream should be revised, preferably by reducing the number of courses and substituting a major research paper for the thesis.

Agreed. **Action taken:** The department shares the reviewers' concerns about poor completion rates in the thesis stream and has comprehensively adopted its recommendation. First, **course requirements for the thesis stream have been revised**, bringing them in line with national disciplinary norms. The thesis stream has also been more clearly identified to students as taking longer than twelve months. Given the appetite for one year master's programs, the Department **has had a new one year "Research Essay Stream" added** to its graduate programs. This stream requires a Research Paper of approximately 12,000 words to be graded within the department. This stream can be completed within the academic year avoiding the longer time commitments associated with thesis work. These changes have given students an expanded "menu" of political Science graduate programs. The response has been **an increase in applications and student enrolments**.

Responsibility: Head and graduate studies committee

Timeline: Completed

Recommendation 29: The department should consider using MA students as teaching assistants as long as the requisite training is undertaken.

Agreed. From a pedagogical point of view, it is essential that a tutorial system is staffed by appropriately trained individuals.

Responsibility: Head, graduate studies committee

Timeline: Ongoing.

Recommendation 30: The department should ensure that teaching and administrative loads for new hires are reduced in accordance with Faculty of Arts policies.

Agreed, subject to the staff development needs and opportunities for younger faculty.

Responsibility: Head
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 31: New faculty should be encouraged to publish in refereed journals and to apply for SSHRC research grants.

Agreed. It is always desirable that members of the department should obtain more SSHRC funding and publish in refereed journals. The emerging staffing profile has already produced outputs in these directions.

Responsibility: Head and department members
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 32: Senior members of the department should mentor new members as they develop their research programmes by, for example, giving them opportunities to contribute to edited collections being developed within the department.

Agreed. **Action taken:** This is already departmental practice, and a number of such **collaborative research projects are currently underway.**

Responsibility: Head and department members
Timeline: Ongoing

Recommendation 33: The department should ensure that it is properly represented at all levels of university governance.

We echo the report's positive comments regarding the department's positive contribution to wider university life. In the context of the serious resource constraints on the department outlined in detail on page 27, it is difficult to see how we can do more in this regard without further disadvantaging our students. It is a priority for new faculty to establish their publications records and achieve tenure.

Responsibility: Head and department members
Timeline: Ongoing

Professor Roger Levy
Head, Political Science
July 31, 2008