Review of Graduate Programs  
Department of Political Science and Public Administration  
March, 2007

Executive Summary

Pursuant to the periodic review policy of the Graduate School of Texas Tech University, the graduate degree programs of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at Texas Tech University were reviewed and evaluated by a committee that included Dr. Paul Carlson (Department of History), Dr. Paul Johnson (Professor of Sociology), and Dr. Eduardo Segarra (Professor and Department Chair of Agricultural and Applied Economics). This report is based on information obtained from the department’s self-study document and from a series of separate meetings the committee held on March 6, 2007, with the department chairperson, each of the two graduate program advisors, faculty, and graduate students. The committee also met with the outside reviewer, Dr. Gregory Gleason (University of New Mexico), who also attended all meetings.

The committee was charged with the task of evaluating the quality, size, reputation, and effectiveness of the department’s graduate programs, strengths and weaknesses, current resources and future resource needs, and overall contributions to the mission of Texas Tech University as a basis for future planning. The review focuses specifically on: (1) program overview and vision, (2) faculty productivity, (3) quality and quantity of graduate students and graduates, (4) curriculum and programs of study, and (5) facilities and resources.

The program overview and vision were evaluated as “good/excellent.” The department has two distinct degree tracks: the academic M.A./Ph.D. track and the applied M.P.A. (Master of Public Administration) track. The Ph.D. program is designed to produce research scholars for faculty careers at major research-oriented institutions, while the M.A. program prepares individuals for non-academic careers or for teaching careers at non-research oriented academic institutions. The M.P.A. program is intended to train students to enter public service careers or to advance in their current careers.

Faculty productivity was also rated as “good/excellent.” In addition to the two graduate program tracks the department has a large number of undergraduate majors and is responsible for basic political science courses that all students are required to take. The number of public administration graduate students is almost twice as large as the number of M.A./Ph.D. students (even though the number of faculty is less than half of the number of political science faculty), but this was not seen by the faculty as problematic in view of the lack of a doctoral dissertation research requirement. Faculty in both programs maintain active research programs and are productive in journal publications, books, and professional conference presentations. A major concern, however, is the apparent inability of the department to retain high-quality faculty members.
The quality and quantity of graduate students and graduates was rated as “good+.” Recruitment efforts have been large successful, especially within the region, and the programs in both tracks are seen as operating at maximum capacity (or above). The educational and professional development of graduate students is clearly a high priority for faculty, and students acknowledge and appreciate the guidance and support they receive from the faculty. However, students share with faculty the concern with faculty retention, especially when the departure of a faculty mentor makes it difficult to maintain continuity with dissertation research. Also, the committee suggests that the formation of a graduate student association be considered. The placement of both political science and public administration students upon graduation appears to be highly successful and no doubt helps contribute to the department’s strong reputation.

The curriculum and programs of study were rated “good.” The M.A./Ph.D. track and the M.P.A. track are quite distinct. Both programs offer several areas of specialization, but the overlap is minimal. Faculty in both programs appear to respect one another, but the smaller size of the public administration faculty suggests the need for ongoing attention to insure its continued strength. Potential opportunities for collaboration might be advisable to explore. The revised first-year political science curriculum that was implemented a few years ago seems to provide a good foundation for more advanced study in specialized areas as well as for orienting students for involvement in research and professional activities. M.P.A. students engage in research in connection with their internship; perhaps such research may be an area for collaboration with political science faculty.

Facilities and resources were seen as “good.” The recent refurbishing of the library provides an excellent physical place for faculty and/or student meetings. The main limitation in this area is the scarcity of office space for graduate students and teaching assistants. The department is clearly at or above capacity in this regard, and both faculty and students indicated this as a constraint. If the department were to develop its potential through expanding the number of teaching assistants and/or faculty, additional office space would be a high priority need.
Introduction

This review of the graduate programs in the Department of Political Science and Public Administration (hereinafter the Department) was conducted by Dr. Paul Carlson (Department of History), Dr. Paul Johnson (Professor of Sociology), and Dr. Eduardo Segarra (Professor and Department Chair of Agricultural and Applied Economics) in accordance with the standard periodic review policy of the Graduate School of Texas Tech University. The committee, appointed by the Graduate School, was charged with the task of evaluating the quality, size, reputation, and effectiveness of the Department’s graduate programs, their strengths and weaknesses, current resources and resource needs, and contributions to the mission of Texas Tech University and to the discipline. In addition, Dr. Gregory Gleason, Professor of Political Science at the University of New Mexico was selected by the Graduate School as an external reviewer and will provide a separate report. This report is based on the department’s self-study document, covering the years 2000-2006, plus additional information and insights acquired through meetings with the department chairperson, the graduate program advisors, faculty, and graduate students as described below.

On Thursday, March 1, the internal committee met to discuss preliminary impressions of the information in the self-study document. Some areas were identified where committee members had questions about specific details. These questions were communicated via e-mail to Dr. Philip Marshall, Department Chair, who responded by return e-mail. On Sunday, March 5, Dr. Gleason and Dr. Johnson met with Dr. Marshall for a general orientation to the department. On Monday, March 6, Dr. Gleason and the internal committee had separate meetings with (1) Dr. Philip Marshall, Department Chairperson, (2) Dr. Brandon Prins, Advisor for the M.A./Ph.D. program, (3) Dr. Brian Collins, Advisor for the M.P.A. program, (4) department faculty (not including the chairperson), and (5) graduate students. The committee also met separately with Dr. Gleason. At the end of the day, Dr. Gleason and the internal review committee had a final meeting with Dr. Marshall, Dr. Prins and Dr. Collins.

Program Overview and Vision
Rating = “good/excellent”

The department offers the following graduate degrees:

- Ph.D. in political science
- Master of Arts (M.A.) in political science
- Master of Public Administration (M.P.A.)

The Ph.D. and M.A. programs are considered a single academic track. The goal of the Ph.D. program is to prepare research scholars for faculty careers at major
research-oriented academic institutions. The goal of the M.A. program is to provide graduate-level training for non-academic careers as well as for academic positions in institutions focused primarily on teaching. The M.A. program includes a thesis and nonthesis (comprehensive exam) option. The department places major emphasis on its Ph.D. program and allows students with a bachelor’s degree to enter the doctoral program without the M.A. degree. The department also allows well-qualified undergraduates to take graduate courses that could count toward their M.A. degree during their senior year.

The goal of the M.P.A. program is to produce graduates to enter public service careers or to advance in their current careers. The program is accredited by the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). Options for M.P.A. students include a joint M.P.A./J.D. program with the Texas Tech University School of Law and a joint M.P.A./M.A. program with the economics program of the Department of Economics and Geography.

The M.A./Ph.D. program includes 16 faculty members, and the M.P.A. program includes 6 faculty members. The culture of the M.A./Ph.D academic program track clearly differs from the more applied focus of the M.P.A. program, although the relations between the faculty in the two tracks were reported to be amicable and cooperative. Enrollment in the M.P.A. track is considerably higher than in the M.A./Ph.D. track. It may be advisable to consider collaborative research projects for faculty and/or students in both programs when feasible. In addition, the department provides an undergraduate major in political science and is also responsible for offering state-required political science courses for all undergraduates throughout the University.

The faculty and staff are clearly committed to the highest possible level of excellence in all areas of teaching, research, and service. One faculty member described the department as having a strong work ethic, and several of them expressed pride in their professional accomplishments and reputation and the achievements of their graduate students and graduates. The specific values promoted in the program include creative and critical thinking, diversity, inclusiveness, conformity to ethical principles, academic freedom, and personal responsibility.

Beginning in September, 2002, the M.A./Ph.D. track faculty initiated a standardized first-year curriculum required of all students that emphasizes research methods, core courses in the primary areas of concentration (American politics, international relations, and comparative politics), and professional socialization. The M.P.A. track includes an internship requirement of approximately 300 hours in a government or nonprofit agency which serves as the basis for a substantial research paper. (The internship requirement may be waived for students with substantial public service work experience.) The department provides various services to local, regional, and state government agencies through the Center for Public Service (with which the M.P.A. program is
closely related) and through the Lewis and Maxine Earl Survey Research Laboratory.

A major area of concern for both faculty and students is the high turnover of high-quality faculty. Another concern is that the pattern of having a department chairperson who is not a political scientist seems to have evolved into a permanent or long-term arrangement. (This concern is clearly a structural issue, not personal.) The chairperson was described by the faculty as following a consultative and supportive style that had proved to be effective in moving the department beyond the tensions and conflicts that were being experienced at the time of his initial appointment several years ago. Despite his readily acknowledged effectiveness, it was widely felt that it would be highly desirable for the department’s general reputation in the discipline and for faculty morale to have a political scientist as chairperson.

Overall, the department currently enjoys a strong reputation in the University, the discipline, the community, and the region. Its contributions are consistent with the mission and goals set forth in the department’s strategic plan as well as the mission and goals of Texas Tech University. The department makes excellent use of its resources, but its continued development and expansion is limited with current resources. Additional resources would enable the department to recruit more TAs and faculty in the Ph.D. program and/or the M.P.A. With expansion in the Ph.D. program, advanced doctoral students could contribute in the area of undergraduate teaching so as to enable faculty to shift toward working with the increased numbers of graduate students as well as expanding their own scholarly research and publications.

**Faculty Productivity**
Rating = “Good/Excellent”

The review committee was impressed with the level of productivity of the entire faculty, including the assistant professors both in Public Administration and in the major Political Science fields. Over the past six years faculty members have published a large number of articles, presented many papers at professional meetings, and written books—both monographs and textbooks. The department has been highly successful in gaining research funds through grants. This area merits an overall rating of “good” to “excellent.”

- It was apparent to the entire review committee that the 22 faculty members have a heavy teaching responsibility in that the department has almost 400 undergraduate majors, 33 graduate political science majors, and 70 public administration majors. That members of the department, nonetheless, achieve a high level of publication—large numbers of articles in superior journals—and stay active in presenting their research at conferences is remarkable and highly commendable.

- It was also apparent that the department has a significant problem in retaining good faculty members. The self-study addressed the retention problems, but the review committee’s findings suggest that more is involved,
including issues of early tenure, or lack thereof, and what members in the department view as a lack of recognition beyond the social sciences.

- All members of the review committee agreed that the department has made excellent hires over the past few years. The heavy teaching load, however, and the lack of early tenure for truly outstanding assistant professors is an area of concern for both the internal and external reviewers.
- A key area of success is the faculty profile, particularly the diversity among the teaching faculty and graduate students. But, given the location of Texas Tech University in the American Southwest, perhaps the department should establish as a priority an aggressive search for Latino faculty and students.

Quality and Quantity of Graduate Students and Graduates
Rating or Grade Assessment = “Good +”

Graduate programs cannot be looked at and be objectively evaluated in a vacuum by themselves. That is, graduate programs in a specific unit have to be looked at and evaluated considering everything else around them within the unit. The Political Science Department (PSD) has two core missions: the “political science” and the “public administration” missions. PSD manages and sponsors ALL university-wide core requirement courses in political science, has an undergraduate enrollment of almost 400 majors, and has a graduate program with approximately 100 students. Of the 100 graduate students in PSD, approximately 30 graduate students are enrolled in either the M.S. or Ph.D. programs in Political Science and approximately 70 graduate students are enrolled in the Master of Public Administration program. Overall, these programs are supported by a faculty composed of approximately 16 faculty members in Political Science, 6 faculty members in Public Administration, and 5 to 6 teaching assistants. Given the resources PSD has, this department does a great job in its graduate programs.

Graduate student profile in the department is well balanced and quite diverse. Student recruitment has been good, but additional resources and efforts should be devoted to enhance enrollment and quality of incoming students. Student retention has been very good (except for few instances when faculty have left and some students have left with them), and students feel that the faculty truly cares about their professional development. Program applicant pool has been appropriate, given the “geographical” area served by PSD, but along with the recruitment efforts highlighted above emphasis should be given to enhanced recruitment efforts in “non-traditional” geographical areas. Using all information available, it seems that student productivity and preparation of teaching/research assistants has been very good. Graduate students feel good about their programs and faculty feel good about the performance of their graduate students, not only with respect to their academic performance but also with respect to their performance in professional activities such as conducting research projects, presenting research findings at professional gatherings, and performance in internship related activities. The evidence available suggests that both student placement of graduates and the success of recent graduates, have been
outstanding. It seems that graduate students, once they complete their degrees, are fully enabled to join the workforce and have a positive impact on society.

With respect to the question about whether the PSD graduate program is at capacity or not, there no question about it ……… the PSD graduate program should be considered to be operating at slightly above full capacity. If GROWTH in the PSD graduate program beyond the current level is expected and/or desired, ADDITIONAL resources are likely to be required.

**Curriculum and Programs of Study**
Rating = “Good”

The review committee was impressed with the offerings and areas of specialization within the department and found the offerings compatible with similar institutions—with one exception, the Public Administration unit within the Political Science Department. This area merits an overall rating of “good.”

- There is very little crossover between the MPA, on one hand, and the political science M.A. and Ph.D. programs on the other. With the exception of one faculty member in political science who teaches a course in MPA, the two groups seem to be separate. Members of the two units respect one another and seemingly work well together, but at least one committee member has serious reservations about the department’s ability to maintain such success.
- About four years ago, the department redesigned its graduate curriculum in political science with highly favorable results. Both faculty members and students like the new curriculum and see it as in keeping with other political science departments across the country.
- Some members of the review committee were concerned with the department’s practice of admitting into the Ph.D. program students who have not written an M.A. thesis, but the reviewers also recognize that the practice is not unique to Tech’s political science department.
- The continuing high turnover in faculty members impacts negatively on students, their preparations for qualifying exams, and their dissertation research projects. Too, often, it seems, students three or four years into the program lose their major professor.
- The Master of Arts program in Interdisciplinary Studies with a concentration in International Affairs needs to be reexamined and perhaps reinvigorated.

**Facilities and Resources**
Rating or Grade Assessment = “Good”

The information provided and the opinions elicited from both faculty and graduate students suggest that the availability of departmental reference resources and information technology and computing related resources are appropriate and adequate to support the graduate programs and their activities. However, physical space was highlighted to be a binding constraint. Specifically, the availability of graduate student office space, especially for those graduate
students who have teaching related duties, was highlighted as a high priority. It is important to mention that everyone felt that the support staff in PSD does a tremendous job and had many good things to say about their commitment to the department as a whole, and the graduate program in particular.

Suggestions (listed in the order of importance): (1) PSD administration and faculty need to sponsor and support the creation of a graduate student association; creation of this association would have positive impacts on graduate student life, the faculty and the entire department; (2) address faculty turnover issues by whatever means necessary; reducing faculty turnover would enhance graduate student perceptions and recruitment, faculty morale, and departmental pride; (3) add one additional faculty position in Public Administration; this will help lessen faculty workload in the Public Administration portion of the program; (4) evaluate the possibility adding additional teaching assistants, possibly around five NEW teaching assistant positions in Political Science with the objective of freeing-up some faculty resources from the undergraduate program to enhance course offerings at the graduate level and/or enrollment in the Political Science programs (based on how peer institutions operate); (5) add one additional faculty position in Political Science (faculty and graduate students mentioned a desire to expand a “policy” track within the department); and (6) appropriate additional resources to support graduate student travel at a higher level. The department does a great job of encouraging graduate student participation at professional meetings and financially sponsors these activities, but an increase in the level of support would have positive impacts on recruitment of graduate students, quality of preparation of graduate students, and departmental image in professional circles. Also, in view of current space limitations, an increase in the number of teaching assistants would require additional office space.

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