Graduate Program Review  
Department of Political Science  
Texas Tech University  
Programs Reviewed: Political Science and Public Administration  
Chair’s Response

_Introductory Note:_ I begin this Chair’s Response to the review of graduate programs in the Department of Political Science, first, by thanking three members of the Texas Tech University faculty, Dr. Darren Hudson, Dr. Carole Edwards, and Dr. Ron Mitchell. I thank them for taking time out of their busy schedules to evaluate what we have accomplished in graduate education in Political Science and Public Administration, and I thank them for providing eminently useful suggestions for how the department can sustain the positive trajectory it has established by addressing the items that they brought up in this Review. Next, I also extend my thanks to the two outside reviewers, Dr. Christopher Plein, Associate Dean at West Virginia University (Public Administration), and Dr. Anthony Nownes of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (Political Science). The thoroughness of the Review prepared by these individuals was exceeded only by the insights it offered into how department leaders, together with political science faculty, can sustain the progress that has been made since the last Graduate Program Review and build upon past achievements to provide first-rate graduate programs in Political Science and Public Administration. All comments offered in this Chair’s Response then should be interpreted in light of my gratitude for their efforts.

**General Evaluation of the Department’s Ph.D. and M.P.A. Programs:**
The Department of Political Science offers graduate degrees in two general areas, Political Science and Public Administration. It also offers a Ph.D. degree that allows students to combine Political Science (social science methods and American Politics) with Public Administration in a way that emphasizes selected aspects of Public Policy. Overall, the review noted that, while there is more that can be accomplished, the department had made great strides in growing the quality of the Political Science graduate program. It also noted that while the MPA degree is a solid, practitioner oriented graduate program, it does require more effort to maintain its current quality and to be more successful in the future.

For the Political Science program, among the suggestions offered, two were most important, recruiting and training the best students possible and working to see that all faculty members know and agree on department goals, especially targeting better placements for students who obtain the Ph.D. degree. These points are well taken as they reflect areas requiring more attention, and, while they have been the focus of department efforts in the last several years, I agree with the reviewers in that they require more attention. To that end, I will take several actions early this fall to begin the process of
implementing their recommendations. These involve making administrative changes that will allow for more faculty participation in department administrative efforts so that we can recruit more quality graduate students. It will also involve establishing regular meetings under these administrative changes so that goals can be set, vetted by the faculty, implemented by appointed administrators, and then the effectiveness of strategies can be reviewed at frequent intervals to determine how successful the department is at achieving goals. In addition to these, the department will build on certain actions initiated in the recent past to produce more Ph.D.s who can compete at higher levels in the academic market for Political Scientists. Specifically, the department will expand on recently started, faculty-led sessions with graduate students to better and more thoroughly socialize our Ph.D.s on what it takes to be successful in the academic job market and, ultimately, obtain jobs as professors at a larger number of research universities. These actions as well as those related to strategic planning in the department—discussed in more detail later—will go a long way to helping narrow the gap in faculty perceptions of graduate student capabilities and the actual performance of the Ph.D.s that the department produces. It will also encourage more faculty involvement in the process of producing Ph.D. candidates that can then more effectively compete on the academic job market.

The Department’s Master of Public Administration program, while accepting and graduating a substantial number of students (20+ admissions per year with 12-15 successful degree completions), the majority of whom obtain meaningful employment upon graduation, is undoubtedly in need of attention. This program has suffered the most turnover in the department and, as a result, has been performing above what one could expect. What I mean by this is that the MPA program has been operated and maintained in the last several years by something less than a skeleton crew, consisting of a retired, untenured professor, and full professor actively engaged in projects outside of the program (thus, with the exception of meeting class obligations—barely—this faculty member is disengaged utterly from the program’s current operations), and an untenured assistant professor. In spite of this, it has operated smoothly and maintained its overall quality. Having said this, I want to emphasize that I in no way dispute the reviewers’ conclusion that it is in need of attention.

The specific kinds of attention it will require will begin with a NASPA-inspired self-study that will be completed in the upcoming academic year. This self-study is the precursor to an on-site inspection in the next academic year that involves a review to determine the program’s qualifications for accreditation by the National Association for Schools of Public Administration (NASPA). We approach this process with optimism because of the three excellent faculty hires the department made last year, one specialist in Health Policy, another in Non-Profits and Science Policy, and a third in Environmental and Energy Policy. As chair, it is my intention to integrate these three new faculty members with an eye toward strengthening existing track (specializations) options available to MPA students and, in addition to this, establishing interdisciplinary research and education options with other units on campus, especially, Health Sciences, Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, Law, and those units related to environmental, climate change, and science policy areas.

These are short-term efforts that must be implemented with all deliberate speed, but I plan some longer term actions that will deal with how to better integrate the Public Administration graduate program
with other research and teaching efforts going on in the department. While much of this will be contained in the next section Department Management and Strategic Planning, I will note here that there are more areas for collaboration between the two sides of the department. Points of contact exist in the Earl Survey Research Lab, the South Central Climate Science Center, the Center for Public Service, and in the fact that the department has experts on both sides of the department on Public Policy, Health (comparative and domestic), and how such things as water issues, environmental degradation, and climate change relate to civil and inter-state conflict. Collaboration in these areas, areas that offer great possibilities for external financial support, portend well.

**Strategic Planning/Department Management**

There is no doubt that, since I was appointed chair, I have assumed many of the administrative duties that were previously delegated to department faculty. The motivation for this has been to relieve faculty, especially untenured faculty, of those burdens that take them away from their primary task of establishing research programs of sufficient quality and quantity to be promoted with tenure. This has been successful in this somewhat narrow sense, but it has come at the expense of operational transparency and led to the department being run in somewhat of a top-down manner. At this point, I agree with reviewers that this issue needs to be addressed, and I will take the following two actions to accomplish the inadequacies that have been identified. First, I will form an executive committee that will be tasked not only with implementing strategic goals of the department (enrollment growth, program development, and the like) but also of rewriting department operational rules and procedures so that how we operate as an academic department has less to do with who occupies the Chair’s Office than with how we are organized and operate as a matter of established procedure.

The Review also mentioned a lack of connection between University, College, and Department Strategic Goals and what is done on a daily basis in the department, including how goals are communicated and whether or not they even understood by the faculty at large. I agree wholeheartedly with this observation and, in conjunction with the other efforts in this category of items to be addressed, will set the drafting, vetting, and implementation of a Department Strategic Plan as a high priority this academic year. The truth is that the Department of Political Science faces both physical and structural constraints in any effort it makes to grow its graduate and undergraduate enrollments. In fact, even accommodating the faculty and programmatic growth it just experienced is straining its whole structure as a department. This issue becomes urgent when considered in light of the parallel challenge of housing Political Science and Public Administration programs under the same roof, as the reviewers correctly pointed out. It will be my goal to produce a strategic plan in the 2013-14 academic year and then engage in strategy to task exercises so that it can be implemented. To keep the department on the positive trajectory it began a few years ago, being successful in this strategic planning effort is absolutely necessary.

**Other Specific Action Areas and Items**

There were other excellent comments and recommendations that were made in the Review that I will address in a summary fashion. (Forgive me if I missed some)
RESEARCH AND FUNDRAISING: Continue to incentivize the raising of outside funds and the production and publication of the highest quality research in the best outlets.

VISION CONFLICT: Involve more faculty in the creation of new programs, recruitment and training of graduate students, and the development and implementation of other department goals so that there are fewer gaps in faculty perception of what Political Science as a department in the College of Arts and Sciences is about. This is also about the transparency issue, which I believe I have addressed above, but it is also about spreading the message that all faculty benefit from the success of the department and its programs.

INTERNATIONAL EFFORTS: Encourage more faculty to participate in the expansion of the Department's international efforts by encouraging more teaching at TTU’s international campuses, more seeking of Fulbrights, and more efforts to develop additional contacts with universities in other countries.