

**Department of Political Science  
Strategic Plan  
June 2009**

**Section I Department Description**

1.1 Mission, Vision, and Goals

*Mission—Who We are and What we Do*

The Political Science Department at Gustavus Adolphus College is comprised of 6 full time, tenured or tenure track faculty. With visiting faculty, the department has had between 7.0 and 7.5 FTE in the last five years. The current faculty represents the major subfields (U.S. politics, Comparative Politics, International Relations, Political Theory, and Public Law) in Political Science. The Department will graduate 43 majors in 2009 and has enrolled 773 students in Department courses during the 09/10 academic year.

We strive to help students develop an understanding of political processes and institutions and to acquaint them with the issues and problems that politics tries to manage. The Department also teaches students skills of analysis, research, and evaluation so that they can become more informed citizens. Students, therefore, may be interested in taking political science courses as part of their liberal arts education, and particularly for gaining experience in evaluating political issues, formulating personal or group political action, participating in social change movements, or becoming involved in the formal political process.

Careers in law, government service, journalism, teaching, politics, and public administration are directly related to training in political science; but the Department stresses an approach to studying politics that provides anyone with the skills and knowledge to be an informed, active citizen or political participant.

*Vision—Where We Want to Be*

As a major in high demand, we wish to continue to build an excellent program that upholds our departmental mission and serves the larger aims of the College. To this end, we strive to recruit, nurture, and retain an excellent student body. Specifically, we strive to educate our students for a future that requires a variety of perspectives and ways of seeing and knowing, to be critical thinkers who can make unexpected connections between ideas and concepts, to conduct innovative and methodologically sound research, and to thrive in and contribute to the global community and economy. In addition, we strive to recruit, nurture, and retain an excellent faculty. Specifically, we strive to cultivate a faculty that has a specific area of expertise rooted in a broad appreciation for the liberal arts; are outstanding teachers and scholars who are able to pursue their own interests within the department and College; and excited to be members of our department and faculty at Gustavus Adolphus College.

*Goals—Steps to Take to Achieve our Vision*

1. To expand the breadth and depth of our faculty and course offerings.
2. To provide appropriate support for faculty development and retention.
3. To provide appropriate support that enables our students to reach their academic potential. This would include, but not be limited to, opportunities for student-faculty research; student travel to conferences; internship and study abroad opportunities, and so on.
4. To continue to emphasize the interdisciplinary opportunities that the study of Political Science presents, with a visible presence on campus (e.g., through campus-wide forums, lectures, symposia, and so on).

## 1.2 Programs

The Political Science Department offers one major, in Political Science. Our curriculum is structured in a way that allows students to emphasize particular areas of study (International Relations, American Politics, Political Theory, etc.) but we have decided against instituting separate tracks within our majors. We also offer a major with Honors and a minor in Political Science. Our department provides courses that support FTS, General Education (SOSCI, HIPHI, NWEST), Writing Across the Curriculum, Pre-law, the Social Studies Teaching major, and the following interdisciplinary programs: Environmental Studies, Peace Studies, LALACS, GWS, and Japanese Studies. We have also contributed to Curriculum II (Individual and Society). We have two cross-listed courses that count as electives for other departments (Religion and History).

## 1.3 Support relationships

The following programs provide key support for our students:

- International and Cultural Education
- Library
- Internship Program
- Pre-law Advising
- Writing Center
- Kendall Center/Faculty Development
- Community Service Center

## **Section 2      Strategic Review**

### 2.1 Strategic Issues

The discipline of Political Science is diverse both in terms of methods political scientists use and the content they cover. Broadly speaking, Political Science is the study of politics, but faculty show considerable variability in how they approach this study and even what they deem political. This disciplinary pluralism presents opportunities and challenges for any department and especially a smaller department. In general, while other departments have strategically chosen to focus on a particular aspect of the discipline, we have sought to reflect the discipline's diversity at the department level.

The structure of our major exposes students to each of the major subfields of political science, allows students to explore their own interest areas with unrestricted elective courses and easily transferable off-campus course credits, and gives students a capstone experience that includes a major research project. By and large, our majors have high morale and a sense of themselves as students of politics and Political Science. The flexibility of our major also translates into high morale among Department faculty who are encouraged to balance course coverage with the need to develop courses in their research and teaching interests. Three of the College's five strategic goals are thus already directly addressed by our program's requirements and opportunities. But the constraints and weaknesses of our program also hamper the degree to which we can continue meeting these College-wide goals.

One obvious weakness is in the breadth of course offerings. While we can now offer more courses with 6 TT faculty, clearly 6 faculty members cannot cover all areas of our own subfields, let alone all subfields within political science. This gap is most glaring within the subfield of international relations/comparative politics. For example, we offer no specific courses on politics within Europe, the Middle East, Africa, and China. To be sure, certain aspects of these regions and political systems are covered in IR and comparative courses (such as The Politics of Developing Nations) but our coverage is clearly incomplete. The need to offer senior seminars in IR/Comparative has also meant that few (and sometimes no) 300-level courses in this area have been offered as non-senior seminars in the last three years.

Gaps also exist within the U.S. politics curriculum, in part because the U.S. politics faculty also teach Analyzing Politics twice per year and one senior seminar per year. Thus in U.S. we offer no semester courses on specific policy areas, we have dropped courses on the media and politics and contemporary American politics, and we feel somewhat constrained in developing new offerings.

Although we have a strong program in theory and public law--especially for a department of our size, we have gaps in Continental political thought and the emerging area of non-Western political thought. We would also benefit from additional course offerings in Law and Public Policy, Judicial Policy, and the Supreme Court. Hiring in political theory and public law is not an immediate priority, but we are eager to recruit either part-time faculty or tenure-track faculty in International Relations and U.S. Politics who would bring expertise in these areas.

## 2.2 Barriers

The primary impediment to achieving our departmental vision relates to the overextension of our faculty. As we discuss additional things we would like to do as a department, it is very clear that none of us knows where we would find the time or resources to do them. Therefore, increasing our full-time faculty is a top priority. In order to do so, we must overcome specific barriers within Gustavus. Initially, this relates to the simple approval of our line requests; more broadly, it relates to our ability to attract and retain top candidates who not only stay at Gustavus, but are *happy to stay*. To this end, we believe the College needs to make faculty support (supporting existing faculty and adding tenure lines) a top fundraising priority. Specifically, to recruit and retain an excellent faculty that has high job satisfaction demands an increase in salary competitiveness; regularized pre-tenure leaves; less restricted support for research; and necessary technology for new hires and continuing faculty. In particular, as we move forward with our plans to hire in International Relations and/or Comparative Politics draws, we would like to be able to advertise a compensation package that is sensitive to the time and resources necessary to travel abroad to stay current in one's research and teaching area.

Beyond Gustavus, we have both barriers and opportunities. The areas in which we would like to expand are areas in relatively high demand. Thus, top candidates in a field like Middle East politics will be difficult to attract. We would also like to increase the diversity of our faculty and, as has been rehearsed before, there are both qualitative and quantitative challenges to recruiting and retaining under-represented faculty to Gustavus.

## Section 3 Strategic Initiatives and Recommendations

Many of our challenges can be alleviated by increased staffing, and we see the current economic climate to present both an opportunity and a challenge for our ability to fulfill our staffing goals. Specifically, if Gustavus can continue to approve new lines and move forward with hiring and faculty growth, we believe we are in a good position to attract top candidates. Many colleges and universities are in formal and informal hiring freezes. Those in a position to keep positions open may be able to attract a stronger applicant pool than during normal economic times. We believe that additional changes and improvements will make our Department an especially attractive place for top candidates.

We urge the college to recommit its resources and fundraising priorities to faculty salaries and development. To restate our vision for our own department and the College, we want to create an environment in which our faculty is *excited* to be at Gustavus. A reinvestment in the faculty is needed to ensure the excellence of current and future faculty.

As our department has thought through its role in the current Strategic Plan, we have noted the strong affinity between our departmental goals and the broader goals of the College. To this end, we make the following recommendations in order to achieve our goals:

1. Staffing – A two-pronged approach to hiring

a. 2 new TT positions, bringing our total to 8.

i. New position in International Relations and/or Comparative Politics;

ii. New position in either International Relations or U.S. Politics

b. Endowed Chair Lines (comparable to the Sponberg chair) that give a reduced teaching load to the faculty member and a budget to support active programming. We envision three positions, all of which correspond to the College's Mission and Strategic Plan. We believe that these positions would be very attractive for the College's existing and expanding donor base. Each of these Chairs would be responsible for campus-wide programming in their areas of expertise.

i. Chair in Religion and Society

Focuses on the intersections among several important arenas in (but not limited to) American public life, including communities of faith, political discourse, and social movements. While based in the discipline of political science, this person's teaching and research interests will be interdisciplinary in nature. The Gustavus curriculum and faculty already support numerous scholars whose interests overlap with this chair. However, this position would serve to cultivate these relationships in a more intentional manner. Possible initiatives for this chair include the development of an interdisciplinary concentration (e.g. Religion and Society) or sponsorship of an ongoing series of public events centering on these key topics.

ii. Chair in International Relations, Conflict and Development

Focuses on the interrelationships between current global conflicts (particularly religious and ethnic conflict and economic development and international political economy. This chair would also pursue opportunities for collaboration with Peace Studies, Environmental Studies, and possible regional focuses (Africa, Asia, Middle East, Latin American/Caribbean).

iii. Chair in Democracy and Civic Engagement

Focuses on the theoretical and empirical study of democratic ideas and communities with an eye toward increasing both student knowledge about democratization and their own engagement in political and civic life. This scholar would facilitate connections between the Political Science Department and other campus offices and programs, such as the internship program, community service office, and international education. These partnerships would focus on establishing a relationship between our majors and local, national, and international organizations.

2. Faculty Support -- Increased resources for teaching and scholarly activity.

a. Supplemental accounts for faculty, depending on their specific projects and goals, of roughly \$2500/year, to include a summer stipend and individual development account.

i. In order to grow as teacher-scholars, we need increased resources for both course development and our scholarly interests. We believe our professional growth would be best served through the implementation of Personal Development Accounts that individual faculty manage in conjunction with their budget officers. These accounts may be used for travel to conferences or to conduct research; to purchase books and materials for our course development or our research, and so on.

ii. Summer stipends for course development and research. We are frustrated by a 9-month contract that nonetheless requires us to spend a considerable amount of our summers working without compensation. Summer stipends would range (roughly \$2000-5000) depending upon the proposed project.

iii. Increased availability of Presidential and comparable funding opportunities for Student/Faculty Research

iv. Personal laptops available to department faculty.

3. Support for student learning – Increasing student access
  - a. International (and off-campus domestic) Education
    - i. Our departmental mission presumes the availability of affordable off-campus study. Our students who participate in off-campus programs (domestic and international) return to campus with a broader perspective of politics in general and U.S. politics vis-à-vis the global community. We have initiated a Friday Forum that encourages returning study abroad students to share their experiences with current majors and faculty. We are especially concerned that the cost of foreign study is becoming prohibitive for our students. We would like to see a robust endowment to support off-campus study. Given that this is one of the most memorable college experiences for many of our alumni, we see great fundraising opportunities in this program.
  - b. Student Research and Classroom Support
    - i. Our capstone senior seminar and our 200-level introduction to the major emphasize research and require support from the College library. Therefore, we depend upon strong collections and strong library faculty.
    - ii. Technology upgrades in Old main classrooms to provide multimedia teaching and learning opportunities.
  
4. Increase our visibility and relationships with Gustavus' on- and off-campus constituencies.

The Political Science Department is uniquely situated to facilitate cross-campus conversations about justice, ethics, power, and community—conversations that complement the College Mission and the current strategic plan.

  - a. Working in consultation with Alumni and Advancement staff, we are interested in exploring an alumni newsletter; more alumni speaking engagements, and so on.
  - b. Specifically, we would like to be able to host symposia, lectures, campus discussions, and so on that would bring together students, faculty, staff, and members of the St. Peter community.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Section 4      Assessment**

*Note: This section is being re-worked as we respond to our April 2009 report from our external evaluators.*

Goal 1.      To expand the breadth and depth of our faculty and course offerings.

Two new hires, at least one of which covers areas of the world and global conflicts that are not covered by current faculty.

Endowed Chairs and any supplemental hiring needed to offset programming made possible by these chair line(s).

Goal 2.      To provide appropriate support for faculty development and retention.

Faculty able to travel to conduct research and attend conferences beyond the current limitations.

Funding for new course development, books, technology.

Funding for research assistance, as appropriate.

In sum, this goal could be met by establishing endowed chairs with adequate funds to support faculty development and increasing moneys available to regular faculty through the Kendall Center.

- Goal 3. To provide appropriate support that enables our students to reach their academic potential. This would include, but not be limited to, opportunities for student-faculty research; student travel to conferences; internship and study abroad opportunities, and so on.

Eliminate the cost difference of attending Gustavus and studying abroad or participating in a domestic off-campus program. This includes travel IEX courses.

Increased availability of student-faculty research funding.

Increased funding/endowment for student travel to conferences.

- Goal 4. To continue to emphasize the interdisciplinary opportunities that the study of Political Science presents, with a visible presence on campus (e.g., through campus-wide forums, lectures, symposia, etc.).

Creation of endowed chair lines charged with the task of facilitating cross-campus conversations.

<sup>1</sup> Our current budget does not allow for this kind of programming. Last fall, we wanted to invite several scholars to campus to discuss the Presidential election and think that such a forum could be an exciting tradition for Presidential election years. Our budget could not begin to cover these expenses.