Academic Program Review
Summary of Review

Department: Department of Political Science
Faculty: Social Sciences
Date of Report: November 2008

The Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) has determined that UVic’s department of Political Science has a strong profile in Canada and internationally as an innovative and productive mid-size unit with recognized strengths in critical political theory, interdisciplinary cultural and political thought, and international political economy. As well, it has emerging strengths in European Studies, democratic constitutionalism, media, and technology and Canadian and comparative public policy. The department has a well-deserved reputation for exceptional scholarship, interdisciplinarity, and program in innovation.

Since its last review in 2000, the department has experienced a series of transformative changes and while the changes have been mostly positive, they have presented new challenges. The department provided the APRC with an extensive and thorough self-study which indicated that its strategic plan in the immediate and medium term will concentrate on consolidation. The APRC noted that this is an appropriate strategy and makes a number of recommendations to help consolidate and strengthen an already strong unit.

The Dean of Social Sciences confirms that the department has gone through a recent period of change associated with rapid growth and that a period of consolidation is opportune to allow resulting challenges and stresses to be managed. The Department worked closely with the Dean in considering the APRC’s recommendations and preparing their responses.

The Department accepts the APRC’s recommendations to: reprioritize the hiring agenda to seek an appointment focusing on the economics of the Global South; enhance access to research methods training at the undergraduate level; and adding a research design/methods component at the graduate level. The Department reorganized its hiring plan to focus the first possible opportunity for an appointment on expertise in economics and politics of the Global South and address the APRC’s concern regarding gender balance. Since the review, Dr. Amy Verdun has been appointed as department Chair. The Department will begin exploring its options for enhancing access to research methods training at the undergraduate level and has taken the lead on a faculty wide discussion to explore sharing of methods courses between units within the Faculty.

The APRC’s recommendation to restructure the MA program into two streams is being cautiously considered by the department. With the support of the faculty Dean and the Dean of Graduate Studies, they will review this possibility with due diligence and careful thought.

Since the external review, the Department has appointed a female into a new senior instructor position. With the support of the Dean and the Office of the Provost, funds have been confirmed to hire an incremental teaching fte, to re-design and maintain the department’s website and to hire an Administrative Officer dedicated to Political Science.

The Office of the Provost congratulates the Faculty and the Department of Political Science on an extremely positive review. The department’s growth in both undergraduate and graduate enrolments is notable and the Provost plans to continue to support this growth. Especially gratifying to the university is the very high level of student satisfaction with the program as shown in the Student Outcome Surveys.