I. What student learning outcomes were assessed this year, and why?

In answering this question, please identify the specific student learning outcomes you assessed this year, reasons for assessing these outcomes, with the outcomes written in clear, measurable terms, and note how the outcomes are linked to department, college and university mission and goals.

The Political Science (POSC) Department identified the following four “learning goals” as appropriate to obtain a B.A. degree in Political Science. They were developed to carry out the larger goals of the COTS and the University. This assessment report is to measure the attainment of these goals.

**Goal #1.** Thorough familiarity with the structure and organization of the discipline of Political Science. Specifically, in four subfields of political science: American Politics, Comparative Politics (the study of other political systems), International Politics, and Political Thought and Philosophy.

This Goal corresponds to the COTS goal of “providing for an outstanding academic life in COTS”; and the University goal of “providing for an outstanding academic life at all sites.”

The reason it was selected is that we believe all students should demonstrate an ability to explain the major approaches to study politics in a systematic manner. In particular, we wanted students to survey the four major sub-fields of the discipline in which different approaches and methods were developed to inquire into what constitutes resources of power; who has power; and how power is used under what ideological and institutional arrangements. The above four sub-fields have traditionally been recognized as the major subject areas of the political science discipline, and they are 4 of the 5 core required courses in the field (the other, Political Science 101, is mainly an introduction to the whole field).

**Goal #2.** Demonstrate an understanding of basic concepts and facts in each of the above four subfields, especially as demonstrated in the end-of-major capstone course.

This goal relates to the COTS goal of “providing for an outstanding academic life in COTS”, and the University goal of “providing for an outstanding academic life at all sites.”

The rational for this selection is that we believe all students should have at least a reasonable familiarity with and command of the basic, core terms and concepts that make up the sub-fields of the discipline. Thus, all graduating political science majors, no matter their area of
interest or pursuit of advanced courses through their electives, should know the basic building blocks and knowledge of the field.

**Goal #3. Acquire the analytical skills and tools** useful to and associated with the discipline of Political Science (and demonstrate it).

This goal relates to the COTS goals of “provide an outstanding academic life” and “create, sustain civil and diverse workplace,” and the University Goals of “providing for an outstanding academic life at all sites.”

The reason it was selected is that we believe that, after four years as a political science major, students should learn and be able to use the analytical, research, question-asking-and-answering skills utilized in political science, albeit at a much lower level. In other words, we would not expect that they would all be able to do original political science research (both in terms of questions and data collection/analysis) at the caliber of graduate students or professors in the field. But that they should be able to craft such basic research questions as “what to see, how to see, and why to see such things?” using secondary materials and data and other scholarly works/findings researched by professionals/experts, and to show they can think and craft an argument, apply political science models, etc. (see next Goal 4 below, as well). Indeed, this is a key aspect of their ability to think for themselves and think critically about politics.

**Goal #4. Demonstrate a familiarity with scholarly resources** available to CWU students (e.g., the library and internet resources) and demonstrate how to utilize these resources in carrying out a research project - a project which is also part of the capstone.

Again, this goal relates to the COTS goals of “provide an outstanding academic life” and “create, sustain civil and diverse workplace,” and the University Goals of “providing for an outstanding academic life at all sites.”

This goal was selected because we believe that in order for political science majors to effectively utilize the analytical skills and tools of the field, they also have to have basic information literacy with the accepted subject matter of the field. Thus, they should be able to show they know - through actual use and practice in a paper - how to find, gather, absorb, use and reference accepted scholarly (or at least quality) materials to develop theses, support arguments or sides in topical controversies in the field, such as they would do in research papers in the upper-level courses. We would hope that after four (or at least two) years of coursework, they would know how to do this. Furthermore, this is an important skill and competence acquisition: to be able to tell wheat from the chaff when it comes to political (and political science/scholarly) information.

**II. How were they assessed?**

In answering these questions, please concisely describe the specific methods used in assessing student learning. Please also specify the population assessed, when the assessment took place, and the standard of mastery (criterion) against which you will compare your assessment results. If appropriate, please list survey or questionnaire response rate from total population.
The POSC Dept.’s assessment of student learning was focused on the POSC 489. Senior Assessment course (2 credits). POSC 489 consists of three components, namely written exams of four sub-fields of political science, a research paper, and the graduating senior’s Exit Survey of the POSC Dept. Through exams and a research paper required in POSC 489, we believe all students will reasonably demonstrate their familiarity with the discipline, and command of the basic, core terms and concepts that make up the sub-fields of the discipline, and demonstrate the use of analytical research tools/methods with proper library work for research. The Exit Survey (must answer survey to avoid “I” grade) is to measure student self-evaluation of his/her learning goal attainment, as well as overall evaluations on the POSC curricular, faculty instruction, academic advising/guidance and performance, etc.

A) What methods were used?

B) Who was assessed?

C) When was it assessed?

**Goal # 1: Familiarity with the structure and organization of the discipline &
Goal # 2: Demonstration of an understanding of basic concepts and facts**

A. **Assessment Methods**

A - 1) **Written Exam**

*To assess mastery of the sub-fields of the discipline with key concepts and theories, all students must take a Senior Assessment Exit Examination, which is a 4-part written exam consisting of 50 short-answer questions (worth 2 points each) designed by the department and based on basic knowledge in the required four “introduction to the sub-field” courses of POSC 210 (American), 260 (Comparative), 270 (International) and Theory. For the Theory course requirement, students have a choice of choosing one from the following four courses: POSC 481 (Ancient); 482 (Early Modern), 483 (Contemporary) and 485 (American) Political Thought.

*Students collectively are graded on a scale 100 total points, which is one-half of their grade in the course (the other half from their research paper). Together, they must get a “C-“ in the course to graduate. Our minimum expectation is a 70 on the exam, 80 or higher would be above expectation, and 60 or lower, below.

*Three faculty members (the instructor and two who have expertise in respective sub-fields, grade the exam and the score is averaged between the two (sets) of professors. However, when there was shortage of faculty (Todd Schaefer’s sabbatical leave, Matt Manweller’s professional leave, and Bang-Soon Yoon’s course reduction due to new Chair duty), less than three faculty as a group graded the test in some quarters.

A - 2) **Capstone Research Paper**

*Students write a major research paper of 10-12 pages. The students have two options: to make a major revision to a paper they have already submitted for work in the department, or to choose a new topic.
*The paper is evaluated based on the degree to which they can ask appropriate questions, make an analytical argument backed by evidence, and communicate effectively.

*The goal is for the majority of students to get a “B” (80-percentile) or higher.

*Generally, an “A” (or 90-100) paper shows a strong argument with thesis, an analysis backed up with valid evidence, and written/presented clearly; B (80s) shows some degree of analysis and application, though thesis and/or evidence was weak, along with writing issues; C (or 70s) is mostly descriptive, with little or no analysis and use of evidence to make an argument; and D is a weak argument or rant with virtually no evidence, etc. An F is given when the topic is inappropriate or student fails to complete the assignment in a timely fashion.

A - 3) **Senior Assessment Exit Survey**

Feedback asked for in the survey shows some measure of students’ acquiring “attitudes” and self-evaluation of the mastery of the field, and the POSC Dept. has used this data since around 2001. Four Exit Survey questions are analyzed for this report:

#9. “Do you feel the political science education you’ve received has prepared you reasonably well for your future, whether in a job or graduate study in political science or in another area? Explain” (open-ended question);

#16. “Is there anything about your perception of politics that has changed substantially from the time you first took a political science course here in this department to the present time of your impending graduation? Explain and interpret this question as broadly as you like” (open-ended question);

# 6. “On the following scale, where 5=excellent, 4=good, 3=fair, 2=sub-par, 1=poor, indicate how you feel about the overall quality of teaching in this department” (close-ended); and

# 8. “Would you recommend this department to a graduating high school senior who has some interest in the study of politics and might be considering coming to CWU?” (close-ended question).

B. **Population**: Senior Majors, in the last 1-2 quarters, in the required POSC 489.

A. **Timeframe**: At the end of their career, as noted above.

**Goal #3: Acquisition of the analytical skills and tools**
A. **Assessment Methods.**

A - 1) **Capstone Research Paper.**

Refer to the above section: **Goal #1 & #2, A – 2).**

A - 2) **Senior Assessment Exit Survey**

An Exit Survey question (open-ended) #9 is analyzed: “Do you feel the political science education you’ve received has prepared you reasonably well for your future, whether in a job or graduate study in political science or in another area? Explain.”

B. **Population**: Senior Majors, in the last 1-2 quarters, in the required POSC 489.

C. **Timeframe**: At the end of their career, as noted above.

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**Goal #4**: **Demonstration of familiarity and competence with scholarly resources to be used in their Research Paper.**

A. **Assessment Methods.**

A – 1) **Capstone Research Paper.**

The Capstone Research Paper is a basic tool to assess this goal. However, this was not assessed this year, because instructors for each of the sections didn't keep records on this per se, just paper evaluations.

A - 2) **Senior Assessment Exit Survey**

An Exit Survey question (open-ended) #9 is analyzed: “Do you feel the political science education you’ve received has prepared you reasonably well for your future, whether in a job or graduate study in political science or in another area? Explain.”

B. **Population**: Senior Majors, in the last 1-2 quarters, in the required POSC 489.

C. **Timeframe**: at the end of their career. (Must answer survey to avoid “I” grade)

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III. What was learned?
In answering this question, please report results in specific qualitative or quantitative terms, with the results linked to the outcomes you assessed, and compared to the standard of mastery (criterion) you noted above. Please also include a concise interpretation or analysis of the results.

**Goal # 1: Familiarity with the structure and organization of the discipline & Goal # 2: Demonstration of an understanding of basic concepts and facts**

1) **POSC 489 Exam Score (F2012-Summer 2013, 45 students total):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Exceeds Expectation (80+)</th>
<th>Met Expectation (70-9)</th>
<th>Below Expectation (60s-)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N:</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%:</td>
<td>53.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Out of 100 points possible, 50 short-answer questions worth 2 points each. Like in previous years, only two sets of exams were given covering 4 sub-fields of Political Science. On this measure, 87% students who took exams met (33%) or exceeded (54%) expectations, a noticeable improvement compared to past years when the percentage of students who met or exceed expectation were roughly three-fourth of the students. Especially, during Spring 2013, 96% (23 students) of those who took the exams (24 students) met or exceeded expectation.

*Includes incomplete students.

2) **Exit Survey Result (n=41):**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Exit Survey #6 (5point scale): 3.82

For Questions #9 and 16, well over 80% of students (87.8% and 83% respectively) responded that they received proper training in our Dept. to advance for graduate studies or for their career. This shows a similar pattern of positive self-evaluation compare to the previous years.

For the question #8 (recommendation of the POSC Dept. to graduating high school seniors), roughly two thirds of students responded “yes” and among those who said “maybe” also wrote positive tones. In the past, we didn’t analyze this question, so no comparison
is possible this time. However, we may watch the trend, for the question “Would you recommend this department to a graduating high school senior?” may indirectly indicate student’s self-evaluation of their learning goal attainment.

The question #6 (the overall quality of teaching in this Dept.) is 3.82 this year. Again, since we didn’t analyze this data in past years, there is no comparison available at this time. However, this is some what lower than the POSC Dept.’s SEOI data about the instructors and Dept. (on average around 4.2 on a 5 point scale). Perhaps, POSC 489 students seemed to be frustrated with capstone research projects and the written exams, as reflected in their other open-ended Exit Survey sections.

**Goal #3: Acquisition of the analytical skills and tools**

1) POSC 489 Capstone Research Paper (F2012-Summer 2013. 45 students total):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Advanced (90+)</th>
<th>Proficient (80s)</th>
<th>Minimally Proficient (70s)</th>
<th>Not Proficient (60-)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>N:</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>%:</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Includes incomplete students.

64.4% of students’ research papers exceeded expectations (22.2% and 42.2%) or meet expectations (22.2%). All together, the passing rate of 86.6% is quite satisfactory, on par with past years’ performance.

2) Exit Survey Result: Question #9.

The survey result of the question (open-ended) #9, “Do you feel the political science education you’ve received has prepared you reasonably well for your future, whether in a job or graduate study in political science or in another area?” indicates that the 87.8% of the respondents said very positively, 2.5% of the taking a kind of neutral position, and 9.8% expressed their negative evaluation. Compare to the last year (80% said unequivocally “yes” or some equivalent; 20% said maybe” and none (0%) clearly responded no or negatively). Nonetheless, students’ satisfaction remained high as in past years.

**Goal #4: Demonstration of familiarity and competence with scholarly resources to be used in their Research Paper.**

A. **Assessment Methods.**

A – 1) Capstone Research Paper
The POSC Dept. identified/developed in the past some measurement tools such as thesis statements, the use of proper citation style, procedure and format in their research papers. However, this was not assessed this year because the majority of instructors for each of the POSC 489 sections didn't keep records on this per se, just paper evaluations, and the data was not available to analyze by the Dept. Chair at the time this report was done.

A - 2) **Senior Assessment Exit Survey Question #9**

See the above page.

**Timeframe**: at the end of their career.

IV. **What will the department or program do as a result of that information?**

In answering this question, please note specific changes to your program as they affect student learning, and as they are related to results from the assessment process. If no changes are planned, please describe why no changes are needed. In addition, how will the department report the results and changes to internal and external constituents (e.g., advisory groups, newsletters, forums, etc.).

We plan some improvements in the assessment process, which are listed below:

1) Update student’s exam guide as well as test bank itself to reflect/accommodate new terms/concepts/issues. This “updating” project, focused on the four sub-fields of political science, was conducted in Summer and Fall 2013 with near completion. POSC 489 Students for Fall 2013 took the exam based on new study guide and new sets of exams. The analysis of the student learning outcomes of this new exam will be done by the end of 2014.

2) Teaching students about “how to write” a research paper, and conduct research. The POSC Dept. does not have a research methodology course to teach these subjects. Either we will create a new course on research methodology, or allocate designated class hours in POSC 489 to teach students about the specifics of “how to do” research and writing.

3) Development of Assessment Tools. We do not have a standardized evaluation kit that all the POSC 489 course instructors will use in the evaluation of the student capstone research paper. One faculty has developed a basic rubric, and others have educational “how to write” materials. I, as the Dept. Chair, will propose to review/modify these “kits” to be used by all instructors of the POSC 489 course. Standardization and establishment of “kits’ and implementation are key words that I plan to discuss with colleagues at POSC Dept. meetings soon.

V. **What did the department or program do in response to last year's assessment information?**

In answering this question, please describe any changes that have been made to improve student learning based on previous assessment results. Please also discuss any changes you have made to your assessment plan or assessment methods.
1. Since more faculty offered the four sub-fields political science courses, we communicated with new instructors about course contents, test, etc. so that students are taught properly to complete their POSC 489 courses.

2. We updated/modified the POSC 489 Student Exam Guide and test bank questions during Summer and early Fall 2013, which was almost completed. The basic terms/concepts listed on the Exam Guide for senior assessment was not only outdated in some sense, but there were many different versions that instructors used. By developing a new study guide contributed jointly by those who teach major sub-fields of political science, we aimed at to provide a better guidance to help student successfully complete their learning.

VI. Questions or suggestions concerning Assessment of Student Learning at Central Washington University:

1. As a new Dept. Chair, I did not know about this assessment report until sometime in Fall, 2013. Naturally, I didn’t know to plan on “what to prepare to do an assessment of student learning.” In the past, there were different assessment methods required (e.g., General Ed. course literacy test in 2011-12, etc.) and I thought it was a rather sporadic assessment exercise. I recommend that New Chair orientation/training program include this assessment writing as a curriculum.

2. One of the most difficult areas that I struggled in the preparation of this report was the very fundamental/basic one: Where to find out the “goals” “learning objectives” of the Department, COTS and the University? For those of Political Science Department, I referred to our “mission” statement which identified the “learning goals.” However, I could not find any of these at the COTS and the University levels even though I searched through CWU web pages. I assume that our strategic plans at various levels (e.g., COTS & the University) identify these leaning goals. Actually, the COTS 2013 Strategic Plan documents had both college and CWU goals clearly identified. For the future assessment report, is the strategic plan document the right place to find various “goals”?

3. In reviewing the previous Dept. Assessment reports, I sometimes found that the Dept.’s “Learning Goals” and “Outcomes” were used interchangeably. We need to get guidance as to the universal and standardized definitions of such terms used for the assessment report of “goals,” “objectives,” and “outcomes” with specific examples provided. A college or university level of training session would be desirable.

4. For the next year’s report, I think that the POSC Dept. needs to develop an Assessment grid and fill out boxes which may be easier to read/understand to get a complete picture of student learning. This grid may be supplemented with written descriptions as well.

5. Internal house-keeping issue. While I was working on the analysis of the POSC 489 outputs, I found many of student’s papers are not kept. I will inform all the instructors to keep them with
their initial analysis of student learning outcomes (e.g., Any thesis statements?, Do they meet proper citation?, etc.).

6. Assessment report deadline. Perhaps moving it to mid-Winter quarter seems to be a better fit for the Chair, given other time-sensitive reports (although they never end…!) to be completed in Fall (not to mention about the new academic year’s rush in Fall).

7. Workload issue. Both faculty who teach the POSC 489 course (for the extra time they would spend in the analysis of student learning outcomes in their own class), and the Dept. Chair who would compile and do an overall analysis, need to be recognized for their extra work (one or two work load units).

Submitted by
Bang-Soon Yoon
Chair, Dept. of Political Science

*A special thanks to Dr. Dave Darda for accepting this late submission of the report!