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# 1. Best practices in the American undergraduate political science curriculum

*E. Fletcher McClellan*

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This chapter describes various models for organizing the undergraduate political science major.<sup>1</sup> Though debate and discussion of the proper goals and structure of the political science curriculum go back to the founding of the discipline (Ishiyama, Breuning and Lopez 2006), the present review focuses on activities in the USA since the 1980s to reform the major.

Curriculum reform efforts in political science have taken place in the midst of reform waves in higher education. The circumstances surrounding the last reform effort sponsored by the American Political Science Association (APSA), the 1991 'Wahlke Report' on liberal education and the political science major (Association of American Colleges 1990; Wahlke 1991), are illustrative. After several years of studies criticizing academic majors as loosely organized collections of distribution requirements and faddish electives (Association of American Colleges 1985; Zemsky 1989), the Association of American Colleges (AAC) called on disciplinary associations to formulate recommendations to 'strengthen study-in-depth' (Association of American Colleges 1990). In response, APSA appointed a task force with John Wahlke from the University of Arizona as chair. Sharing AAC's view that depth of understanding cannot be reached 'merely by cumulative exposure to more and more subject matter', the authors of the political science report set out to design a model that featured sequential learning, 'building on blocks of knowledge that lead to more sophisticated understanding . . . leaps of imagination . . . and efforts at synthesis' (Association of American Colleges 1990, p. 131).

Following a similar process, three distinct curricular frameworks in the discipline have developed since the Wahlke Report. The drive for greater student civic and political engagement began with the service-learning movement of the late 1980s and 1990s (Battistoni and Hudson 1997). Outcomes-based curricula grew as part of the assessment movement, which evolved from external demands for accountability (National Commission on Excellence in Education 1983; National Governors Association 1986) and increased interest in student learning within the academy (Study Group on Conditions of Excellence in Education 1984; McClellan 2009). More recently, the successor to AAC, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), spearheaded the use of 'high-impact practices' (HIPs) as a means to broaden and deepen student attainment of 'essential learning outcomes' (Kuh 2008).

Despite the array of curricular models with high potential for increasing student learning, the political science curriculum at most institutions remains organized by distribution requirements. After describing the four alternatives to the distribution model and their status in the discipline, the final section of this chapter will address the question of why the political science curriculum appears impervious to change.

## THE DISTRIBUTION MODEL AND CURRICULUM REFORM BEFORE 1990

Judging from the occasional reports on the political science curriculum commissioned by APSA over the past century, leaders in the discipline recommended different goals and approaches to the undergraduate major at different times. From the early 1900s through the 1930s, the consensus view was that the major should instill in students substantive knowledge of governmental institutions and practical training for public service. World War II brought about a fundamental shift in thinking, leading to numerous reports criticizing the descriptive and practical approach and favoring curriculum reforms that would promote critical thinking and other intellectual skills (Ishiyama, Breuning and Lopez 2006).

Influenced no doubt by the Cold War, curriculum reformers in the early 1950s advocated responsible citizenship as the goal of political science education. The APSA report, *Goals for Political Science*, emphasized skill development and citizenship training through an integrated curriculum with fewer courses. Critics of the report did not dispute the objective of producing critical thinkers, but disagreed with harnessing liberal learning to civic education (Fesler et al. 1951).

Although reform efforts stirred vigorous debate within the profession, they had little discipline-wide impact, according to a review conducted by Ishiyama, Breuning and Lopez (2006). Even the authors of APSA reports acknowledged the difficulty of imposing a standard curriculum on departments of different sizes residing in different types of institutions. Furthermore, the number of recognized subfields in the discipline grew from four in 1915 to eight during World War II to 60 in the early 1970s (Association of American Colleges 1990).<sup>2</sup>

If anything resembling a standard for the political science major existed in the years leading to the Wahlke Report, it was the distribution model. An APSA survey of departments in 1987–88 showed that only one-half of departments required an introduction-to-politics course. More often, departments required several introductory courses – American government, comparative politics, international relations and political theory, respectively – and a choice of upper-level courses in all or most of the same subfields plus a methods course (Association of American Colleges 1990). Less than a quarter of departments required courses in other subfields such as public administration, public policy and public law.

Looking at the 1987–88 survey results, the Wahlke task force condemned what it called a collective picture of ‘disparate and unstructured practices aptly described . . . as not so much experiences in depth as they are bureaucratic conveniences’ (Association of American Colleges 1990, p. 134). This harsh critique not only reflected the negative tone of 1980s national studies toward the lack of coherence in liberal arts majors, but it echoed previous reform analyses in political science. More strongly than prior studies in the discipline, however, Wahlke attempted to link curricular integrity to liberal learning.

## THE BUILDING-BLOCK MODEL, CRITICAL THINKING AND THE WAHLKE REPORT

The Wahlke panel proposed a sequential model upon which students would build increasingly sophisticated structures of knowledge and develop intellectual skills. According to the report, the goal of the curriculum was not to produce ‘good citizens’ or train future government workers; rather, political science instruction should turn ‘politically interested and concerned students into politically literate college graduates, whatever their career plans or other interests’ (Association of American Colleges 1990, p. 134).

Intended not as a model curriculum but as guidelines for political science programs to work toward the aims and objectives of liberal education, the Wahlke Report recommended the following structure for the major:

- a common introductory course (ideally, introduction to politics, but if departmental capacity was limited, introduction to American government taught in comparative context);
- a capstone experience in the senior year, such as a senior seminar or research project, which would give students the opportunity to integrate and synthesize prior learning; and
- exposure to analytical approaches and methods of inquiry, normative and empirical, through a specific scope and methods course, an applied course such as public policy, or across the curriculum (Association of American Colleges 1990).

Interestingly, the report took care not to recommend specific subfields for the major or anything that would smack of a distribution requirement. Instead, the task force proposed that students be introduced to a common set of core topics such as ethical dimensions of government, the role of law and public policy (Association of American Colleges 1990).<sup>3</sup> By organizing learning experiences on those topics in traditional courses or through other vehicles, departments would enable students to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to read, comprehend and analyze contemporary political texts.

The underlying assumption of the Wahlke Report was that curricular coherence led to higher student achievement, and a line of research supports that claim. Breuning, Parker and Ishiyama (2001) showcased the positive effects (favorable exit interviews and surveys, insightful portfolios, nationally normed exam results above the national average) of the Truman State program, which is highly structured (introductory and capstone courses, methods sequence, seven or eight required courses) and integrated (writing, speaking, critical thinking and research skills are developed and assessed throughout the major). Ishiyama and Hartlaub (2003) compared two differently organized political science programs and discovered that the more structured program (Truman State) was better at developing abstract and critical thinking skills. Ishiyama (2005b) examined political science curricula at 32 colleges and universities, and found that programs arranged more along the guidelines of the Wahlke Report (more common courses, senior capstone and early methods course) produced greater learning in terms of better political science field test scores than did less structured programs.

Despite the evidence in support of the building-block model, the Wahlke Report had limited impact on the discipline as a whole. Exploring the websites of 193 Midwestern

political science programs, Ishiyama (2005a) determined that only 18 percent had a common introductory course, methods course and capstone experience, approximating the Wahlke model. Political science programs in combined departments were less likely to require all three elements of the approach, a finding that suggested resource limitations as one explanation for the Wahlke Report's small footprint.

On the other hand, the inability or unwillingness of most departments to embrace the Wahlke Report did not mean that the study was inconsequential. The report's call for more authentic means of evaluating program effectiveness, beyond job and graduate placement rates, presaged outcomes assessment activities in political science over the next two decades (McClellan 2009). Additionally, Wahlke asserted the importance of context in political studies, calling upon faculty to supply the comparative, international, and ethnic and cultural diversity backgrounds of subject matter in all relevant courses (Association of American Colleges 1990). Most importantly for the purpose of this study, the idea of organizing the political science major into building blocks, analogous to natural science curricula, continues to be the Holy Grail for many curriculum reformers.

## THE POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT MODEL AND CIVIC EDUCATION

Civic education and involvement have been traditional emphases of political science since the beginnings of the discipline. Internships in government and politics are features of many if not most political science programs. Indeed, the entire fields of public administration and public policy have their origins in training students for government work and public problem-solving. More generally, the profession has justified the value of a political science degree in part by its capacity to develop the knowledge and skills needed to lead and serve the community.

The discipline has not always privileged civic involvement in the political science curriculum, as noted above, but interest was rekindled in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the rise of the service-learning movement and the establishment of national service programs (Battistoni 2013). In 1996 APSA president Elinor Ostrom initiated the association's commitment by establishing a task force on civic education, and a year later, political scientists contributed a volume to the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) series on service learning in the disciplines (Battistoni and Hudson 1997).

The cause of promoting civic and political involvement among young adults has acquired greater urgency in the past two decades, with studies showing declining social capital with each new generation (Putnam 2000), decreasing youth voting turnout through 2000, and increasing political distrust (Harward and Shea 2013). The situation was exacerbated by the harsh ideological and partisan rhetoric of the Gingrich–Clinton years, and has escalated during the George W. Bush and Obama presidencies. Political engagement advocates were further discouraged when surveys indicated that political interest and activity among young adults declined despite increased volunteer service activities (Sax 2004). Some studies revealed that students preferred community service to political participation as a way to solve social problems (Creighton and Harwood 1993).

Within the political science discipline, some scholars criticized a curriculum that was

at best ambivalent about the significance of political participation (McCartney 2013). To counter pessimism about the effectiveness of civic education efforts, the Carnegie Foundation and other foundation supporters launched the Political Engagement Project (PEP) in the early 2000s (Colby et al. 2007).

The PEP researchers studied over 1000 undergraduates who participated in 21 different political programs and courses between 2001 and 2005. Each of the courses and programs included at least one 'pedagogy of engagement', such as service-learning projects, internships, meetings with political leaders or participation in simulations such as Model UN. Administering pre- and post-tests to the students, Colby and colleagues found increased levels of political knowledge, skills and motivation to participate in politics or government. The increases were larger among students who entered these programs or courses with low levels of political interest. Furthermore, these changes in political understanding took place without significant differences in the students' partisan and ideological orientations (Colby et al. 2007).

Efforts to promote political engagement (PE) accelerated with the establishment of the American Democracy Project in 2003 by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) in partnership with the *New York Times*. Now involving 250 universities, the project sponsors many forms of civic involvement including voter education, special days of action and reflection such as Constitution Day, and community service projects. Within this larger project nine state universities are involved in the continuing Carnegie PEP (American Association of State Colleges and Universities 2013).

The 2012 release of *A Crucible Moment* by a national task force appointed by AAC&U and the US Department of Education continued the momentum for PE. Higher education institutions were put on notice to take 'essential actions' to promote civic and political engagement (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement 2012). The following year, APSA released *Teaching Civic Engagement: From Student to Active Citizen*, the culmination of 15 years of disciplinary work (McCartney, Bennion and Simpson 2013).

Though PE activity has undoubtedly increased at the course level, there is little widespread information about political science departments that have successfully integrated political engagement in their programs or indeed made PE the primary goal in their curricula. To be sure, there are interdisciplinary majors, minors and certificates in civic engagement, some housed in political science (Meinke 2013). Among political science curricula, however, there are only a few recorded examples of how departments have structured PE activities to develop knowledge, skills and dispositions toward effective political action (McHugh and Mayer 2013; Smith and Graham 2014). Consequently, it is probably premature to call PE a fully developed curriculum model at this point, but the potential is there.

## THE OUTCOMES-BASED MODEL, DEVOLUTION AND STANDARDIZATION

With the surge of interest in political engagement over the last decade, the debate within the discipline has arisen as to what the goals and techniques of political science education should be. The sharpness of this dispute is not obvious at first glance. Almost all

members of the profession support the idea that political science should advance liberal learning, and almost all believe it is appropriate to teach citizen duties in some pedagogical situations (Hunter and Brisbin 2003). Even the Wahlke Report, which downplayed citizenship training, stated that all students should have the opportunity to experience real-life political situations off campus through internships, participation in electoral politics or study abroad (Association of American Colleges 1990).

However, few faculty members would question their obligation to teach critical thinking skills, while a 2003 survey of APSA members revealed that fewer than half of them believed it was their duty to provide civic education (Hunter and Brisbin 2003). Further evidence of this divide can be shown by looking at the learning outcomes statements of political science departments. Before we explore this issue, let us examine how an outcomes-based approach to the political science curriculum compares with the distributive, building-block and PE models.

Outcomes assessment in political science comes down to four questions for departments and individual instructors. First, what should political science undergraduates know and be able to do? Second, what are the best ways to promote student achievement of desired knowledge and skills? Third, by what standards and means can we measure the extent to which students are achieving what we want them to learn? Finally, how can we use student achievement evidence to improve political science programs and individual instruction? (Deardorff, Hamann and Ishiyama 2009).

By focusing on student learning, outcomes-based models are neutral as to whether a building-block, distribution or other curriculum structure is optimal for students. Indeed, a pure outcomes approach would be indifferent to the traditional course, credit-hour and seat-time model. Whatever structure or mode of instruction promotes the most learning at a reasonable cost is best, though critics argue the model in practice serves different agendas and has meant 'at the least cost' (Bennett and Brady 2012). The explosion of online or connected learning programs, including Massively Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and the rising interest in competency-based or mastery-learning modules stem from these premises (Fain 2014; Jankowski et al. 2013).

As to which curricular goals political scientists value most, the outcomes model in the USA devolves the responsibility to departments to decide what is appropriate for their programs. With some degree of variation across regional accrediting agencies, institutions are permitted to define the learning goals appropriate to their missions (Young, Cartwright and Rudy 2014). Within constraints set by the accrediting body and individual colleges or universities, academic departments have autonomy to define program and course outcomes.

Looking at learning outcomes in political science departmental websites, we can get a sense of the diversity of the discipline around the issue of curriculum goals. Only tentative generalizations can be made, since only around one-quarter of a random sample of departments, including those in doctoral-granting institutions, provided clear learning outcomes on the Web (Young, Cartwright and Rudy 2014). Focusing on a sample of baccalaureate degree-only programs in political science, McClellan and Maurer (2014) found that 37 percent listed outcomes. The remainder did not provide any learning objectives (24 percent) or provided vague goals in narrative style (39 percent).<sup>4</sup>

Within that group of BA-separate programs with specific outcomes, nearly all departments specified the acquisition of concepts, models and factual knowledge in the

discipline as a learning objective (McClellan and Maurer 2014). Eighty percent of programs promoted the development of fundamental skills such as writing, researching, and critical and analytical thinking. Reflecting the lower priority among political scientists of fostering political engagement, slightly less than one-half of departments mentioned political involvement, effective citizenship or civic engagement as outcomes. Relatedly, specific experiential learning activities such as study abroad and internships were cited as goals in one-quarter of the sampled programs. Over 40 percent of programs stated an outcome of preparation for graduate or professional school, public service jobs or careers in general.<sup>5</sup>

Thus the outcomes-based model provides departments with the flexibility to define learning goals and objectives, the structure of the curriculum and the mode of instruction. Assessment pioneers such as Alverno College and King's College in Pennsylvania have specified competency levels for intellectual skills and, in Alverno's case, effective citizenship. Typically, these institutions have constructed matrices and rubrics to track individual and program success in achieving desired competencies at different stages of the college career (Banta et al. 1996).

Although assessment practice is decentralized in political science and the USA generally, there are efforts to bring about greater standardization of outcomes across institutions. As an example of an important US initiative, AAC&U developed so-called VALUE (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) rubrics for 15 competencies as part of its Liberal Education for America's Promise (LEAP) project. The competencies were derived from the LEAP 'essential learning outcomes' (National Leadership Council and Liberal Education for America's Promise 2007). Not only were intellectual and practical (teamwork and problem-solving) skills included, but there were also rubrics for intercultural competence and civic engagement (Rhodes 2010). AAC&U formed partnerships with several state higher education systems and public liberal arts colleges to align transfer policies around the idea of competencies.

It is possible, therefore, that the language and assessment of some outcomes favored by political science departments could be regularized. For the foreseeable future, though, the widespread use of the outcomes-based model will reflect and even reinforce the lack of curricular consensus within the discipline.

## THE HIGH-IMPACT PRACTICES MODEL AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

To promote student mastery of the LEAP learning outcomes and competencies, AAC&U strongly encourages institutions to adopt 'high-impact' educational practices. These activities include first-year seminars, learning communities, writing-intensive courses, undergraduate research, cross-cultural experiences such as study abroad, community-based learning, internships, and capstone courses and projects (Kuh 2008). What makes these experiences impactful is that, when done well, they engage students and bring to life effective principles of teaching and learning: high learning expectations, faculty–student interaction, student time on task, frequent feedback on student performance, peer cooperation, and respect for diversity and different ways of knowing (Kuh 2008; Pascarella and Blaich 2013).

The student engagement research links HIPs to use of deep (higher-order, integrative, reflective) learning experiences as reported by first-year and senior students in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) (Kuh 2008; Kuh and O'Donnell 2013). These experiences are in turn correlated with positive gains in self-reported learning (Kuh 2008; Kuh and O'Donnell 2013) and direct measures of critical thinking and orientation toward continuous intellectual development, according to the Wabash National Study (Pascarella and Blaich 2013).

The effectiveness of HIPs in promoting learning is good news for political science. According to NSSE, senior political science majors are far more likely than majors in other disciplines to study abroad, participate in internships and complete a capstone course or experience (National Survey of Student Engagement 2010). Around one-half of political science majors are involved in capstones, a higher proportion (along with history) than in any other major (National Survey of Student Engagement 2010). The 40 percent of political science majors who study abroad far exceeds the national average of 14 percent (Kuh and O'Donnell 2013). As for other HIPs, political science ranks in the middle of all majors with regard to students conducting research with a faculty member and engaging in service learning (National Survey of Student Engagement 2010).

In fact, many political science students are likely to participate in multiple HIPs during the college career, which should give the discipline an advantage in making claims about the value of a political science education. A strong, positive relationship exists between students' cumulative participation in multiple HIPs and self-reported gains in deep learning (Finley and McNair 2013). Moreover, there is considerable literature in political science detailing the positive learning effects of specific engaging experiences such as first-year learning communities (Huerta 2004), civic engagement and service learning (Battistoni and Hudson 1997; McCartney, Bennion and Simpson 2013), internships (McLauchlan 2013), and undergraduate research (Ishiyama and Breuning 2003). Most of these studies document the impact of a particular experience or program at a single institution on student learning of knowledge and skills.

This research provides promising opportunities for reform in the political science major. Departments can strengthen student learning by organizing packages of HIPs. With the possible exception of capstone courses, which are often required in the major, political science programs routinely offer HIPs such as internships as opportunities, and advise students to enroll in such programs. However, departments could require specific HIPs or a choice of HIP options for all majors in order to maximize learning for all political science students. This would especially benefit groups such as first-generation students, transfers, African Americans and Hispanics, who are underrepresented participants in some HIPs and who register greater learning gains from HIP participation than do the rest of the population (Kuh 2008; Kuh and O'Donnell 2013; Finley and McNair 2013).

Unfortunately, it is difficult to find examples of political science departments making efforts to provide multiple HIPs to all students and documenting the possible cumulative effects on student learning. As part of a university initiative to implement HIPs to promote student learning of LEAP outcomes, the University of Wisconsin–Whitewater is conducting such an enterprise (Johnson 2012). By offering a first-year seminar, writing-intensive course, pre-law learning community and internship program, the department aims to have nearly all majors participate in more than one HIP. The effects of these

experiences on retention, self-reported learning and student satisfaction are mixed so far, at the beginning stages of the program.

To be sure, requiring or increasing the opportunities for political science students to engage in HIPs is easier said than done. Study abroad can be a costly option for students (and institutions). Activities such as undergraduate research supervision are time intensive for faculty. So too are the placement and oversight of students in internships and service-learning experiences, although strong administrative support can assume some of the workload. As the final section will explore, this raises the question of whether there are sufficient incentives for political science faculty to focus on teaching rather than research (McCartney 2013). When the choice involves curriculum change or teaching activities that are perceived as demanding and time-consuming, the conflict becomes even more acute.

## THE PERSISTENCE OF THE DISTRIBUTION MODEL AND THE FUTURE OF CURRICULUM REFORM

In their review of the history of curriculum reform in the discipline, Ishiyama, Breuning and Lopez (2006) say the story is one of ‘continuity and (little) change’. It is hard to disagree. The building-block model proposed by the Wahlke Report was not widely adopted. Few departments organize their curricula around civic and political engagement, though its various pedagogies have increased appeal and demonstrated effectiveness (McCartney, Bennion and Simpson 2013). Outcomes-based models are widespread and provide departments with the flexibility to prioritize educational goals and structure their programs and pedagogies accordingly, but they do not appear to have produced much in the way of curricular innovation. High-impact practices are extensively used in the discipline but are largely viewed as program options rather than as essentials.<sup>6</sup>

This leaves the distribution model as winner and still champion of the political science curriculum title. In its defense, the model has more going for it than just administrative convenience. There is a building-block pattern in having students take a series of introductory subfield courses, followed by upper-level courses in the same areas. This structure may not promote higher-order skills such as integrated learning, but knowledge acquisition and skill development take place nonetheless. Students in political science are ranked highly in analytical reasoning and critical thinking (Jones 1992; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). In the controversial study *Academically Adrift*, which assessed critical thinking and writing competency as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), social science students, including political science majors, outscored students in the arts, humanities and professional programs, and nearly equaled natural science and mathematics majors (Arum and Roksa 2010).

Still, critics of the distribution approach argue that a sequential or engagement model can do a better job of promoting deeper learning. As supporting evidence for alternative models accumulates, why does the discipline appear so resistant to curricular change? Ishiyama, Breuning and Lopez (2006) suggest four reasons. First, the structure of incentives in the profession favor research productivity over quality teaching, particularly if teaching involves a large commitment of time. This has particularly hampered efforts to promote civic education and engagement (McCartney 2013).

Second, disciplinary leaders have held negative attitudes toward curriculum reform in general and civic education in particular. Third, past curriculum reform efforts have been dominated by scholars from large research institutions, ignoring faculty from undergraduate teaching institutions who could contribute the most and have the most at stake (Ishiyama, Breuning and Lopez 2006).

The fourth reason – no institutional forums existed to discuss ideas for curriculum reform or teaching and learning generally – is less true today than a decade ago. Stimulated by the activities of the APSA Teaching and Learning Committee and the Political Science Education section, the establishment of the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference in 2004, and new publication outlets such as the *Journal of Political Science Education*, there is increased interest in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) among political scientists (Craig 2014).

These discipline-wide activities should produce a robust literature on curriculum reform. So far, unfortunately, this has not been the case. Instead, most SoTL research has focused on course-level teaching interventions (Craig 2014). Reasons for this might include the greater ease with which individual faculty can conduct such research and the difficulty of comparing curricular models empirically. Regardless of the explanation, the dearth of discussion about the state of the political science major from those who have had the greatest scholarly and professional interest is disappointing.

Curriculum inertia in political science can be explained not only by the structure and norms of the discipline, but also by market pressures and increased oversight of colleges and universities by federal and state regulators and regional accreditors. It may be that institutional or departmental control of academic programs has been overridden by curriculum mandates and efficiency-driven initiatives from external stakeholders (Slaton 2014). In other words, even if a political science department wanted to change its major requirements in order to promote greater learning or engagement, it might not have the decisional autonomy or resources to accomplish the change.

Nevertheless, interest in political science curriculum reform is increasing once again (Ishiyama, Breuning and Lopez 2006; Mealy 2013). If APSA commissions another blue-ribbon panel, it will have to take into account extraordinary changes surrounding higher education, the discipline within the profession and, as this review has described, the emergence of new alternatives to traditional ways of organizing the curriculum.

The biggest obstacle to curriculum reform remains the inability of the discipline to come to an agreement on the goals of political science education. If no agreement can be reached, it might be best for the next ‘report to the profession’ to admit candidly that there is no one right way to organize the political science major. Then we can proceed to identify the curricular and pedagogical conditions under which different goals can be achieved. This may be the way to avoid the failures of past reform efforts, and provide our students with the best chances for success.

## NOTES

1. An earlier version of this chapter appeared as: McClellan, E. Fletcher and Brianna Maurer (2014), ‘After Wahlke: new models for organizing the undergraduate political science major and the prospects for

- reform', presented at the American Political Science Association Teaching and Learning Conference, 7–9 February 2014, Philadelphia, PA.
2. As of 2013, there are 43 organized sections in APSA. In addition, the program for the 2013 annual APSA meeting lists 69 related groups.
  3. Some of the core topics, however, are similar to introductory courses in subfields such as political theory.
  4. Following the finding that PhD-granting institutions are less responsive to outcomes assessment demands (Young, Cartwright and Rudy 2014), McClellan and Maurer (2014) focused on BA-granting departments only.
  5. The contour of these findings is similar to that described by Ishiyama and Breuning (2008). In their analysis of the learning outcomes from 50 political science department assessment plans (which included graduate degree-granting institutions), they found that two-thirds of departments mentioned knowledge of theories, political institutions and processes, and around 60 percent mentioned intellectual skills such as critical thinking and writing. Only 24 percent listed effective citizenship as an outcome, and 22 percent mentioned an objective of promoting career goals. On the other hand, the McClellan and Maurer (2014) findings suggest greater departmental attention, at least among undergraduate programs, to political engagement and career outcomes.
  6. This study recognizes that there are more curricular frameworks than the five presented here. For example, values-based models can point curricular structure, offerings and pedagogy toward a particular ideal such as social justice. Often these values will be derived from an institution's educational mission, as is the case with faith-based colleges. In their survey of outcomes in political science programs, McClellan and Maurer (2014) found 15–20 percent of programs contained value-oriented or faith-based outcome statements. The models presented in this chapter were those that are either widely used (distribution model), widely discussed in the discipline (building-block and political engagement), or widely found in the literature on student learning (outcomes and high-impact practices).

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