

**Assessment Plan and Report  
Southern Utah University**

**Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice  
2004-2005**

**Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose:**

**Mission Statement:**

It is the mission of the Department of Political Science and Criminal Justice to encourage a life-long passion for learning and a quest for knowledge by providing an environment that fosters academic excellence and unfettered inquiry. We encourage the development of ethics and values that recognize knowledge in all its diverse and creative forms. The primary goal of our department is to offer excellence in instruction while meeting the academic needs of the students. Our mission is to foster a creative learning environment and assist students through meaningful and relevant experience. This is one of the newest departments on campus established on July 1, 2004.

**Goal Statements:**

1. Guide students in developing analytical, communication, and information-gathering skills.
2. Encourage students to be tolerant, informed, and responsible citizens.
3. Offer opportunities for practical experience through internships, work studies, and memberships in honorary societies in political science and criminal justice.
4. Contribute to the cultural, political, and justice development of Southern Utah and the surrounding region.

Political Science is devoted to the study of the theory and practice of government and politics. The political science program complements a student's liberal arts education with an emphasis on understanding the theoretical and practical aspects of political philosophy, public law, international relations, and American government and policy. Vocational alternatives for political science majors include teaching, public management, law, and foreign service.

The goal of the Criminal Justice Program is to provide students with a comprehensive practical and professional knowledge of the Criminal Justice System consisting of law enforcement, courts, and corrections process. Students will develop an understanding of the application of the law, social sciences, and natural sciences to the problems of crime and delinquency.

### **Program Intended Educational Outcomes:**

1. Students will successfully complete academic requirements for the course of study.
2. Students will develop the ability to conduct research on theoretical and practical aspects of the department disciplines and to present findings and conclusions in their written work.
3. Students will improve upon their critical thinking and analytical skills and articulate their views in oral presentations and discussions.
4. Students will improve upon their vocabulary as it relates to some of the unique terms in criminal justice and political science.
5. Prepare students for admission to law school and other graduate degree programs.
6. Prepare students to meet career and professional goals.

### **Means of Program Assessment and Criteria for Success:**

1. Evaluation of student success in course work will be determined by the high percentage of students who receive a final grade of “C” or higher. It is expected that 90% of the students enrolled in the department’s courses will achieve this.
2. Written projects and term papers are required in all upper division courses, and some lower division classes. This written component is a significant part of the final grade. In assessing the written assignments, instructors provide constructive comments, give direction during the process, and written feedback to the students.
3. In class discussions, instructors promote critical thinking and analysis of pertinent issues related to the course topics. Further assessment involves oral presentations by students in class, group projects, and panel discussions. Instructors expect these activities to result in improvement of these skills over the semester period. These classroom activities will also provide opportunities for instructors to assess students’ growth in utilizing the vocabulary of the disciplines.
4. All graduating seniors in Political Science and Criminal Justice are expected to complete an Exit Survey form given to them by the department chair when graduation papers are signed. This Exit Survey collects information on students’ plans for graduate school, law school, jobs, and professional positions after

graduation. This form is an excellent assessment instrument and helps the department to track our students after they leave the university.

### **Summary of Data Collected:**

An analysis of final grade performance for the school year 2004-2005 disclosed the following: 91.5% of the underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) completing course work in the department achieved a final grade of “C” or higher. 97.5% of the upperclassmen (juniors and seniors) achieved a final grade of “C” or higher. The overall average for all students completing courses in the department with a final grade of “C” or higher was **93.5%**.

Regarding written projects and term papers, it has been noted by some faculty that the quality of the written product has improved by the time the students take the Senior Seminar class, a required course in both Political Science and Criminal Justice. The professor teaching the Criminal Justice Seminar course CJ 4990 particularly noted a marked improvement this past spring semester in the area of attributing sources, citing sources correctly, more effective abstract writing, and even sentence structure.

Critical thinking skills are promoted in all departmental courses and particularly the upper division classes where enrollment numbers are usually smaller and more conducive to meaningful class discussions. The Criminal Justice program uses its Senior Seminar course, CJ 4990, as a capstone course that serves as an excellent tool in evaluating students’ understanding of concepts, terminology, and vocabulary of the discipline. It is expected that Political Science will be moving in this direction as well. Appropriate POLC faculty have been re-evaluating the current goals and course description of the Research Seminar course POLC 4990. It is anticipated that this course will be redesigned to more closely resemble a capstone course in Political Science rather than a senior thesis course. More data needs to be collected for evaluation.

During the school year 2004-2005 a total of 47 students successfully completed departmental internships for credit in Criminal Justice, Political Science, and Paralegal Studies. These internships provided the students with meaningful practical experience in various government agencies, private enterprise, Utah State Legislature, and mentoring programs related to their disciplines of study. Approximately 45 students were active members in the Political Science and Criminal Justice Honor Societies.

As previously noted, this department is only one year old. During its inaugural year Exit Survey forms were created and given to graduating seniors in an effort to determine their future plans for graduate school, law school, and employment. Some data has been collected, but it is far from complete. More needs to be done in this area.

### **Use of Results:**

Data collected this past year will be used to monitor and compare results with next year. As more data is collected for this new department it will be used to measure the level of success in meeting stated goals. Some of the goals may be difficult to measure, but as the assessment program continues into the future, it is expected that some definitive results may be captured for review, evaluation, and change.