



Political Science [POLS]

Cycles included in this report:

Jun 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024

Program Name: Political Science [POLS]**Reporting Cycle: Jun 1, 2023 to May 31, 2024****1 Is this program offered via Distance Learning?**

100% Traditional or less than 50% Distance/Traditional

2 Is this program offered at an off-site location?

No

2.1 If yes to previous, provide addresses for each location where 50% or more of program credits may be earned.**3 Example of Program Improvement**

2019-2020:

During the 2019-2020, we hired a new POLS tenure-track faculty member, Dr. Diane Verrill. However, after the Spring 2020 semester, Ms. Jessica Markstrom was not retained as an Instructor of Political Science. With the above-noted changes in the POLS faculty within the Department of SOSC, it is anticipated that the assessments found within the POLS program plan will be revised by Dr. Verrill during the 2020-2021 reporting period. Finally, under the guidance and training of Dr. Angelica Ogea, Dr. Verrill is currently taking part in revising the POLS 201 class for the General Education curriculum at McNeese.

2020-2021:

During 2020-2021, POLS 201 was included in the General Education curriculum redesign. Based on the redesigned schedule, the training is completed during the summer of 2021, the course will be redesigned during the fall 2021, a pilot course will be taught during the spring 2022, and the fully redesigned course with increased student enrollment is planned for the fall 2022. The new redesigned course will include a major civic engagement component that has been missing from previously taught POLS 201 courses.

2021-2022:

During the 2021-2022 reporting period, an example of program improvement was the implementation of the redesign of the POLS 201 course. This class includes a major civic engagement component that was missing in previous taught introductory American Government classes. On a side note, Dr. Diane Verrill, the POLS coordinator, resigned from McNeese on March 8, 2022. With the departure of Dr. Verrill, the Department of Social Sciences is in the process of hiring a replacement that will "embrace excellence with a personal touch" as a servant leader for Political Science degree program within the Department of SOSC.

2022-2023:

In January 2023, Victoria Jeansonne, ABD was hired to teach four POLS courses. In the redesigned 201 course, Mrs. Jeansonne included several inter-disciplinary studies in the course to demonstrate the broad grasp Political Science has in other disciplines—further demonstrating the inclusion of 201 as a general education requirement is not only a necessity, but fruitful for students. She is also assisting with undergraduate research alongside two other members of the Department of Social Sciences. Mrs. Jeansonne currently serves as a TT Assistant Professor of Political Science, Chi Psi Chapter Advisor and the Pi Sigma Alpha advisor. She is preparing growth assessments to be administered in each POLS class beginning in Fall 2023, the assessments will include not only field-content, but also research skills.

2023-2024:

During the Fall 2023 semester, Assistant Professor Jeansonne redesigned courses to include undergraduate research skills, critical thinking skills, and knowledge application in upper-level Political Science courses. In the Fall semester, in the POLS 401 course, she included activities in courses in which students, as a class, developed two research questions that could be answered using publicly accessible data. The students used their research question to then select variables to be included in a quantitative study using a public Political Science dataset. They also learned to find and analyze academic works on a topic. Specifically, to write a theory/literature review and develop hypotheses. Mrs. Jeansonne ran the models according to their variable selection for the students to preview. Students then learned to interpret the models and write conclusions for the project. The redesign of the course in this example developed skills of undergraduate research and writing. In POLS 449 she introduced students to using AI in a creative manner by utilizing AI to generate basic facts of a criminal case, in which students then used the case to manipulate by including evidence, context behind actions, and witnesses to later apply the skills and knowledge gained in the course to demonstrate a Mock Trial for a criminal case, in which students from other Political Science courses were invited to watch and participate in as members of a jury and witnesses. In the POLS 201 course, Mrs. Jeansonne continued to include interdisciplinary works to demonstrate the vast grip the field of Political Science has in other disciplines.

During the Spring 2024 semester, Asst. Professor Jeansonne continued to redesign courses by implementing video lectures into online courses, specifically POLS 201, and by including activities in the course to develop skills that are marketable to students. In POLS 301, students gained hands-on experience of legal research by studying state laws in Louisiana and other states, they also gained experience of research and presentation of a variety of topics as a class project. In POLS 360, the redesign included experience of creating political advertisements and utilizing campaign strategies (critical thinking and knowledge application) for candidates that may have blemishes in their background. She also introduced this class to AI by having students utilize AI to research specific information that students later had to present to the class and apply in a campaign strategy activity. Moreover, the students gained experience in experimental research design in which they created sample ballots and sample candidate backgrounds that could be used in an experimental design for research. They concluded the course with a research proposal that included an experimental design regarding political behavior. Finally, the redesign of POLS 421 included skill application in which students served as a mock government making foreign policy decisions in which they had to apply and critically engage in possible decision outcomes and ways to combat possible outcomes. This activity included in the course redesign also included introducing students to appropriate-use of AI, in which they used AI to create a foreign relations problem needing resolution. The students also applied these same skills to a real-world scenario when the Baltimore bridge was struck and collapsed in Spring 2024.

Furthermore, Asst. Professor Jeansonne is working with other faculty members to enhance the course offerings within the Political Science program that takes advantage of faculty members' areas of expertise. Asst. Professor Jeansonne is also working on course creation and curriculum revision for Political Science, to be implemented into the McNeese Academic Catalog.

The focus on redesigning upper-level courses to include skills like undergraduate research, implementing new technology, and implementing cooperative work among peers was accomplished this year and will continue in the upcoming terms. The program-related organizations are also growing in membership and interest.

4 Program Highlights from the Reporting Year

2019-2020:

During the 2019-2020 reporting period, Dr. Michael Buckles appointed Dr. Diane Verrill as the Associate Dean of Internships and Research for the College of Liberal Arts. In addition, two POLS students (Alexys Peron and Alexandra Williams) were chosen for internships in Washington, DC by Senator Bill Cassidy.

2020-2021:

During the spring 2021 semester, one POLS student (Ryan Gardebled) is studying abroad in Lithuania. Alexys Peron graduated and is now attending Loyola University Law School in New Orleans. Two students are graduating in the spring 2021 and will be attending graduate school in the fall. Kerven Adajanov will be attending Hamad bin Khalifa University in Doha, Qatar for his M. A. degree in Political Science. Matthew Harding will be attending the University of Missouri for his MPA degree. During the summer of 2021, Dr. Diane Verrill has two conference presentations. In July, she will be presenting "Food Incubators: A Survey of the Industry" with her co-authors at the Community Development Society Conference. In August, she will be presenting "Generating Social Enterprise in Local Food Systems: A Survey of Food Incubator" with her co-authors at the International Society for Quality of Life Studies.

2021-2022:

During the Fall 2021 semester in the POLS 201 course, Dr. Diane Verrill hosted a Congressional Debate between two candidates that were running for a political office. Within that POLS 201 class, students were able to develop questions that were used during the congressional debate. In short, the use of this debate format reinforced the civic engagement component of the redesigned POLS 201 class.

2022-2023:

Drew Brown, the McLeod Scholar focusing on a civic-engagement project, is also scheduled to be inducted into the Chi Sci Chapter by May 30, 2023. Drew is also a member of the Pre-Law and Politics Society, and is gaining hands-on experience as a Fourteenth Judicial District of Louisiana intern. Alannah Chapman, achieved hands-on experience at Stockwell Sievert Vicchello Clements & Shaddock, who reached out to McNeese seeking a Political Science student to join their team. These examples demonstrate McNeese Political Science is not only instilling knowledge and skill within courses, but are also preparing students to apply their knowledge and interest within the community. LSU Law School visited McNeese, with the help of Mrs. Jeansonne and the Pre-Law and Politics Society, which attracted several students to the department. Another visit by LSU Law is planned for Fall 2023, with preparations in place to invite other law school recruits. A focus on undergraduate research will be included in POLS classes be enhanced in Fall 2023, by including lectures and a class project in the upper-level POLS courses, which not only instills knowledge and experience, but also builds a foundation for students to excel after earning their McNeese State University degree.

2023-2024:

The program had eight graduates within the 2023-2024 year. Several students have gained hands-on experience through internships and employment within the Lake Charles area in agencies and businesses looking for skills gained through studying Political Science. Political Science major, Alannah Chapman, who gained experience in a law firm last year, when the firm reached out to McNeese, has since moved to a larger law firm gaining more experience and networking prospects. Double major student, Drew Brown, has landed the position of being a Campaign Manager, as a student at McNeese, and is anticipated to graduate within the next year with a double degree in Criminal Justice and Political Science. Junior Political Science major, Catherine Watkins was selected as the 2024-2025 Police Jury Association of Louisiana Scholarship recipient. Tyler Perron was inducted into the Chi Sci Chapter in the Fall semester, and reported admittance with scholarship to two law schools in Louisiana for Fall 2024. Several other students qualify for membership in this Political Science Honor Society. Baylor Law School visited McNeese, with the help of Mrs. Jeansonne and the Pre-Law and Politics Society, which attracted several students to the department. The Pre-Law and Politics Society traveled to Baton Rouge, LA to tour Southern University Law School and Louisiana State University Law School.

Files:

POLS(BA) 2017-18 Achievements

POLS(BA) 2017-18 Achievements

5 Program Mission

The purposes of the Bachelor of Arts degree in political science are:

- Students will broaden their knowledge of political science through a program of liberal arts study as well as specialized study in political sciences.
- Students will be introduced to political theories, comparative politics, political history, and other important aspects of government and its historical development.
- To offer students opportunities to minor in political science and/or better acquaint themselves with political sciences.
- All political science majors will receive instruction in statistics, the scientific method, languages, and philosophy to enhance their political science studies.
- To prepare interested political science majors for the study of law or graduate level study in political sciences.
- To serve the University, the academic community, and Southwest Louisiana through teaching, research, community service and University service. Faculty is encouraged to be engaged in research and publication.

6 Institutional Mission Reference

This degree supports the University's fundamental mission to offer baccalaureate curricula in service to the residents and employers of the SWLA region and beyond. It provides opportunities for student internships in local industry and prepares students to become effective in academic and professional environments.

7 Assessment and Benchmark

Assessment: POLS 201 pre-test and post-test.

Benchmark: 75% of students will correctly answer 8 out of the 10 questions on the post-test, and there will be a 50% increase in the average score on the post-test over the pre-test.

Prior to 2022-2023, the benchmark was 84% of students will earn a score of 80% or higher on the post-test.

Outcome Links

American Political System [Program]

Students will describe and analyze American political system.

International Politics [Program]

Students will analyze the international political environment.

Writing [Program]

Students will demonstrate effective written communication skills.

7.1 Data

Fall 2020:

Section	# of students completing pre- and post-test	Students meeting benchmark		Average scores		% change from pre- to post-test
		#	%	Pre-test	Post-test	
7WA	30	25	83.3%	5.5/10	8.4/10	52.7%
7WB	32	27	84.4%	5.63/10	7.69/10	36.6%

Spring 2021:

Section	# of students completing pre- and post-test	Students meeting benchmark		Average scores		% change from pre- to post-test
		#	%	Pre-test	Post-test	
7WA	21	19	90.5%	5.86/10	8.14/10	38.9%
7WB	22	18	81.8%	5.82/10	7.86/10	35.1%

Term	# of students completing pre- and post-test	Students meeting benchmark		Average scores		% change from pre- to post-test
		#	%	Pre-test	Post-test	
Fall 2021	45	17	37.8%	5.96/10	7.73/10	29.70%
Spring 2022	68	18	26.5%	5.39/10	7.49/10	38.96%
Fall 2022*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Spring 2023*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Fall 2023	33	27	81.8%	12.4/20	15.39/20	24.11%
Spring 2024	42	39	92.9%	13.4/20	17.2/20	28.36%

* No pre-test/post-test data was collected. Dr. Stefan Brooks, a POLS Assistant Professor, left McNeese at the end of the 2022 Fall Semester. The emergency hire replacement for Dr. Brooks, Ms. Victoria Jeansonne, did not include a pre-test/post-test assessment for her Spring 2023 POLS 201 class.

7.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2020-2021:

The results show that no changes are required at this time given that there was an approximate 50% improvement between the pretest and the posttest. The posttest is also aligned with the courses' actual grades. That being said, this was a new assessment and all four courses were held online. That will not be the case moving forward; therefore, it is anticipated that areas for course improvement will be identified once the new redesigned gen ed course is taught in a traditional in-person format.

2021-2022:

As reported elsewhere in the POLS assessment report, Dr. Diane Verrill resigned from McNeese on March 8, 2022. At the time of her resignation, Dr. Verrill was teaching this POLS 201 class in the Spring 2022 semester. The assessment data for the two POLS 201 classes (one class in the Fall 2021 semester, and one course in the Spring 2022 semester) had to be retrieved by Dr. Clark from Dr. Verrill's MOODLE classes. The assessment data, albeit trite, can be found in the data section of this report. An examination of the percent of students meeting the 80% benchmark for the post-test in the Spring 2022 POLS class reveals that only 26.5% (18 out of 68 students) met the said benchmark. In my professional opinion, the performance on the post-test was a function of Dr. Verrill resigning from McNeese at the midpoint of the semester. I have this opinion because the percent rate of students meeting the benchmark was dramatically higher in previous semesters.

The plan for continuous improvement will include adopting a new benchmark as suggested by Wesley LeJeune and IRE. The new benchmark for POLS 201 will be: 75% of students will correctly answer eight of the 10 questions on the post-test, and there will be a 50% increase in the average score on the post-test over the pre-test. This change in the benchmark for the POLS 201 course will reflect a more robust and vigorous assessment marker. Finally, this change in the benchmark for POLS 201 will be communicated to the new coordinator of the POLS degree program.

2022-2023:

Due to a faculty change mid-year, no pre-/post- assessment data is available. However, Mrs. Jeansonne will be including pre-/post- assessments to measure benchmark data in all POLS courses by Fall 2023. The inclusion of the assessments and benchmarks in both the lower-level and upper-level courses will not only measure growth among students as a general education requirement for the redesigned POLS201, but will also measure growth among students who are within the Political Science degree program. By including POLS201 and upper-level course assessments, the POLS degree program can continually improve by ensuring knowledge and skills are gained not only in the POLS 201 class, but also in the upper-level content-specific courses. Between the assessment and benchmark data and the class research projects in the upper-level courses, this new approach within Political Science at McNeese brings a pathway to measure intellectual and critical thinking growth among students and instills research skills and experience to prepare students for a career in Political Science.

2023-2024:

As planned, most Political Science courses, while not being a general education requirement, included assessments to measure student growth. In each course taught by Asst. Professor Jeansonne, a Pre-Test and Post-Test was given to students. The results of the Assessments demonstrate a growth in knowledge from the first week of class to the last week of class. In the Fall 2023 POLS 201 class, 81.8% of the students (27 out of 33) met the benchmark. The change from the pre-test to post-test was 24.11%. With respect to the Spring 2024 POLS 201 course, 92.9% of the students (39 out of 42) met the benchmark. Furthermore, the change from the pre-test to the post-test was 28.36%. In addition to the pre-test/post-test, other assignments, such as written exam questions and written assignments encouraging persuasion, critical thinking, and content analysis, were also assigned to students. While not required by the university, pre-/post-tests were administered in Mrs. Jeansonne's other courses as well. The results of those assessments will be made available in Fall 2024 upon request, and will be included in the 2024-2025 Program Report. The plan for continuous improvement will be to streamline the pre-test/post-test evaluation instrument to enhance the quality of this said testing assessment.

8 Assessment and Benchmark SOSC 499 Capstone Assignment

Assessment: SOSC 499 prospectus grades for political science majors.

Benchmark: 90% of students will successfully (earn a B or better) develop a prospectus for future research as their capstone assignment in SOSC 499.

Files:

SOSC499 Grades 2017-18

SOSC499 Grades 2017-18

SOSC499 Syllabus

SOSC499 Syllabus

Outcome Links

American Political System [Program]

Students will describe and analyze American political system.

Critical Thinking [Program]

Students will demonstrate critical thinking.

International Politics [Program]

Students will analyze the international political environment.

Writing [Program]

Students will demonstrate effective written communication skills.

8.1 Data

Term	Students earning B or higher		Benchmark met?
	#	%	
Fall 2019	3/3	100%	Yes
Spring 2020	2/2	100%	Yes
Fall 2020*	—	—	—
Spring 2021	5/5	100%	Yes
Fall 2021	1/1	100%	Yes
Spring 2022	7/7	100%	Yes
Fall 2022	1/1	100%	Yes
Spring 2023	4/4	100%	Yes
Fall 2023	4/4	100%	Yes
Spring 2024	2/3	67%	No

*No Political Science majors were enrolled in SOSC 499 for the Fall 2020 semester.

8.1.1 Analysis of Data and Plan for Continuous Improvement

2019-2020:

SOSC 499 is offered every Fall and Spring Semester. During the present reporting period, five students that are majoring in POLS took the SOSC 499 class. In analyzing the data from the Fall and Spring SOSC 499 courses, all five POLS students scored above 90% on the SOSC 499 assignment. The scores are as follows:

Fall 2019: 94, 93, 90

Spring 2020: 94, 92

The data suggest that the POLS students have a good understanding of how to critically apply their knowledge in a theoretical way to a research endeavor. The plan for continuous improvement will center on refining the SOSC 499 assignment to enhance the quality of the assessment.

2020-2021:

The SOSC capstone assignment used to assess the QEP outcome of demonstrating competency in professional writing involved each POLS student developing a prospectus for future research (please see the attached assignment). Simply put, this assignment allowed the student to demonstrate his or her knowledge with respect to explaining how he or she would use a particular research methodological approach to study or to understand a societal issue or problem. During the 2020-2021 reporting period, five POLS students were enrolled in SOSC 499 (all during the Spring 2021 semester). The final scores for the capstone project are as follows:

Spring 2021: 95, 94, 94, 92, 90

After analyzing the data, it is evident that the POLS students have an excellent command of how to analyze and assess a contemporary social or political issue by utilizing their critical thinking skills that they have acquired by taking classes at McNeese. Indeed, their average scores are higher than students from other disciplines (CJUS, CJSO, SOCL, SOCO) that took the same class during the 2020-2021 reporting period. Finally, a plan for continuous improvement will include a refinement of the assignment because the POLS students have consistently met the benchmark that has been set for this particular assessment.

2021-2022:

The SOSC capstone assignment used to assess the QEP outcome of demonstrating competency in professional writing involved each POLS student developing a prospectus for future research (please see the attached assignment). Simply put, this assignment allowed the student to demonstrate his or her knowledge with respect to explaining how he or she would use a particular research methodological approach to study or to understand a particular political issue. During the 2021-2022 reporting period, eight POLS students were enrolled in SOSC 499 (one POLS student in the Fall 2021 semester; seven POLS students in the Spring 2022 semester). The final scores for the capstone project are as follows:

Fall 2021: 95

Spring 2022: 95, 94, 93, 93, 93, 92, 90

After assessing the data for the POLS students, it is evident that they have an excellent command of how to analyze and assess a contemporary social or political issue by utilizing their critical thinking skills that they have acquired by taking classes at McNeese. Indeed, their average scores (93%) are higher than students from other disciplines (CJUS, CJSO, SOCL, SOCO) that took the same class during the 2021-2022 reporting period. Finally, a plan for continuous improvement will include a rough draft assignment that will be due at the approximate midpoint of the semester.

2022-2023:

The SOSC capstone assignment used to assess the QEP outcome of demonstrating competency in professional writing involved each POLS student developing a prospectus for future research (please see the attached assignment). Simply put, this assignment allowed the student to demonstrate his or her knowledge with respect to explaining how he or she would use a particular research methodological approach to study or to understand a particular political issue. During the 2022-2023 reporting period, five POLS students were enrolled in SOSC 499 (one POLS student in the Fall 2022 semester; four POLS students in the Spring 2023 semester). The final scores for the capstone project are as follows:

Fall: 91% Average: 91% Spring: 95%, 93%, 92%, 85% Average: 91.3%

After assessing the data for the POLS students during the 2022-2023 reporting period, it is apparent that the POLS students have a firm grasp on how to analyze and assess a contemporary social or political issue by using their critical thinking abilities that they have acquired by taking courses at McNeese. Indeed, four out of five students scored 90% or above on their capstone project. This said performance is higher than students from other disciplines (CJUS, CJSO, SOCL, SOCO) that took the same class during the 2022-2023 reporting period. Finally, a plan for continuous improvement will center on making refinements to the class assignment for the capstone project.

2023-2024:

The SOSC capstone assignment used to assess the QEP outcome of demonstrating competency in professional writing involved each POLS student developing a prospectus for future research. In short, this assignment allowed the student to demonstrate his or her competency with respect to explaining how he or she would use a particular research methodological approach to study or to understand a societal and/or political issue or problem.

During the 2023-2024 reporting period, seven students were enrolled in SOSC 499 (four POLS students for the Fall 2023 semester, and three POLS student for the Spring 2024 semester). The final scores for the Capstone assignment are as follows:

Fall 2023: 94, 92, 90, 80

Spring 2024: 93, 92, 74

In evaluating the data, it was found that the Fall 2023 average for the four POLS students was 89%, while 86.3% was the average for the three POLS students for the Spring 2024 semester. An analysis of the capstone projects reveal that most of the students were able to express how they would use a particular research methodological approach to assess a given problem that has political relevance (i.e., 86% of the students scored above 80% on the capstone assignment).

My plan for continuous improvement will center on changing the benchmark for the assessment of the SOSC 499 final capstone project. The benchmark will be:
"85% of students will earn a score of 85% or higher on the SOSC 499 capstone assignment"
In my professional opinion, by elevating the desired performance objectives and/or benchmark and by providing constructive feedback during the learning term, this will equip and empower the student learners with the skills needed to be successful critical thinkers as they embark on their professional journey in life.

Files:

SOSC 499 assignment

SOSC 499 assignment

SOSC 499 Rubric

SOSC 499 Rubric

End of report