

Minutes of the Political Science Regents' Advisory Committee (POLS RAC) annual meeting

DoubleTree Hotel, Savannah, Georgia

November 12, 2015, 2-4 p.m.

Those present:

Matthew Hipps (Chair), Dalton State University  
Tom Rotnem (Secretary), Kennesaw State University  
Bob King, Georgia Perimeter College  
Tom Dolan, Columbus State University  
Roger Marietta, Darton State College  
Peter Brecke, Georgia Institute of Technology  
Brandy Kennedy, Georgia College and State University  
Joseph Njoroge, Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College  
Julie Lester, Middle Georgia State University

The Chair began the meeting by welcoming those nine faculty members of USG institutions who attended the meeting. The meeting began at 2:22 p.m, as no quorum was reached at 2:00 p.m.

The Chair instructed those attending to review the past minutes. **As no quorum was reached, the minutes were not accepted.**

Professor Hipps continued by discussing various points of information received by him at a September meeting with officials from the central USG office:

On consolidation, there were no definitive plans for additional consolidations.

Campus safety was discussed at this meeting. A task force was created at the system level to examine campus-level and system-level safety procedures and practices. Among other safety issues/concerns, the system office is ensuring that all USG campuses are in observance with their responsibilities under the Clery Act.

The meeting discussed Title IX issues, too. There is increased focus on this, as lawsuits are increasing at the system level.

Regarding athletics, the USG will be paying greater attention to athletic budgets, as they wish to make certain that athletic funds are being kept separate from educational budgets at each institution.

Professor Hipps discussed various faculty development opportunities in the USG. Faculty were asked to go to the USG Faculty Resource Page for additional information on these. The Fall 2016 Webinar Series is in full swing, and faculty are encouraged to take advantage of these. Magna Commons availability was also discussed; faculty can subscribe to this at the system level. It was also mentioned that the system subsidizes a significant portion of these development opportunities. Lastly,

the Regents Excellence in Teaching and Learning Award, which provides a \$5000 stipend, is open for nominations. Last year only five applicants applied for this award.

The Chair also discussed the Affordable Learning Georgia (ALG) program. The USG is pushing to move to online no-cost or low-cost textbooks, which have saved USG students \$8.3 million. Professor Higgs asked those assembled, given that eCore will be required to be offered/accepted for credit at all USG schools, does the POLS RAC wish to have review control over the textbook used by eCore for POLS 1101, "American Government"? (If so, the text has to be a no-cost text, according to the central office.) General discussion ensued. In the end, a recommendation was made that "If eCore continues, a sub-set of faculty members of the POLS RAC would strongly desire to have oversight over the selection of a no-cost or low-cost introductory American government textbook for POLS 1101 classes."

The Chair then introduced the subject of math pathways for POLS majors. The USG has asked us to consider the appropriate math pathway for our majors. The notion was mentioned that if our students do not need calculus, then there is no reason to require college algebra. The options that were discussed were MATH 1001 (Quantitative Reasons), MATH 1101 (Math Modeling), MATH 1111 (College Algebra), MATH 1113 (Pre-Calculus), or Calculus I. The nine faculty members present discussed the various pathways and accepted that either MATH 1001 or MATH 1101 as an appropriate pathway for majors in political science.

Professor Higgs then provided those present with information concerning the academic degree proposal process. The USG believes that there are too many degree programs, thus it is conducting an inventory of all programs and evaluating them in light of enrollment figures and graduation/matriculation data. Over a three-year period, should an Associate's degree program graduate less than five students, the program will be flagged; as well, should a Bachelor's degree program graduate less than ten students in the three-year period, that program will also be flagged. "Flagging" means that a comprehensive program review will be forthcoming. The USG will be taking a system-wide view.

The new review process will help to provide solutions for low-producing programs, e.g., program mergers. A new academic policy review task force has been created to help provide program development, and program accountability and assessment.

The Chair then discussed some general responsibilities of advisory committees that the USG would like to see implemented. The USG expressed some concern that not all documentation from various RACs can be found online. It was our charge to develop an introductory statement on political science. The following is the wording approved by the nine faculty members present:

"Political Science encompasses multiple perspectives and uses a mixture of methods to analyze data and explain political systems, institutions, and behaviors. As one study of human behavior, political science examines the state, in general, and government, in particular, and explores public law, political theory, comparative government, international relations, public administration, and American government."

The USG also requires us to have approved Area F Learning Outcomes. As such, the nine faculty members present approved the following as the introductory statement and the Student Learning Outcomes for the Political Science Area F:

“Student Learning Outcomes for the Political Science Area F

Introduction:

A student who successfully completes the Political Science Area F has made the first important steps down the road that leads to knowing how to think about the nature of the political world, how we have gotten to the current system, how political systems operate, and how to reason critically. The road also leads to the ability to write clearly, concisely, and cogently.

An area F is an introduction to a Bachelor’s degree, not a Bachelor’s degree. Students who complete the Political Science Area F have only begun their studies in political science. For this reason, the learning outcomes should be modest.

The student learning outcomes for the Political Science Area F are:

1. Students will demonstrate an introductory collegiate-level understanding of some of the key debates in political science.
2. Students will demonstrate an introductory collegiate-level knowledge of some of the central concepts and theories in governance, politics, or international relations.
3. Students will produce written work that shows an introductory collegiate-level understanding of methods of critical thinking.”

The Chair then discussed the creation of a sub-group to review the issue of common course prefixes. Dr. Tom Dolan, as a member of this committee on common course prefixes, will be sending out information to the group for comment and consideration.

Before closing, two other pieces of business were conducted. First, the Chair recognized Dr. Tom Rotnem as the incoming Chair. Additionally, those assembled made a motion to elect Professor Matthew Higgs as incoming Secretary. The motion was seconded and was passed.

Lastly, Professor Higgs mentioned that an email will go out to ascertain the current representatives of the POLS RAC committee at each USG institution.