



Program Name: Political Science	Degree Designation as on Diploma: BA
Program Degree Level: Undergraduate	CIP Code: 45.1001
Program Director: Lynnette Noblitt	Program Implementation Date: Unknown
Institutional Recommendation:  Continue without Modification   Continue with Modification   Close within Three Years  Feedback:	

### 1. Program Goals and Student Learning Outcomes

*Reminder: Include the TracDat four-column report with your submission.*

<p>After reviewing TracDat reports and APAC evaluations for the current strategic planning cycle (2016 – Present), please provide a summary of the effectiveness of the program in achieving its student learning objectives (SLOs). Be sure to refer to both data/results compiled and meaningful changes implemented as evidence to the summary.</p>
<p>The EKU Political Science Program focuses three student learning outcomes for program assessment; substantive knowledge of political science, critical reading/thinking, and written communication. The focus of curriculum and course changes have been to improve student learning in these areas and to prepare graduates for entry into the workforce and continuing education opportunities.</p> <p><u>Substantive Knowledge of Political Science:</u></p> <p>The faculty jointly developed a field test to assess student knowledge of fundamental concepts in political science. This field test incorporates questions on concepts in all subfields taught in the program. Faculty annually review student field test results and alter teaching and course content accordingly. This constant assessment and alignment of the curriculum to the field exam allow faculty to concentrate on fundamental concepts taught in their courses and to ensure that political science students have a body of substantive core knowledge despite taking a variety of different courses throughout the program. Throughout the review period, faculty</p>

have generally been pleased with the results of the field test and have noticed improvement in student scores based upon targeted course changes.

Critical Reading/Thinking:

Program faculty carefully assess critical reading/thinking learning outcomes in the Capstone Course for Political Science, POL 400W. The Reading Report assignment in this course assesses student's abilities to analyze data based upon readings from the political science field. When the assignment was first introduced, faculty noted that students struggled with empirical readings and lacked basic skills to analyze research literature and research design. To address these issues, faculty targeted instruction in lower-division courses to introduce students to these skills early in the curriculum and then to repeat exposure/practice to these skills in upper-division courses. Faculty integrated some of these lower-division course assignments into general education courses so that a broad range of students could benefit from this instruction.

Curriculum changes have resulted in significant gains in student learning. Faculty are quite pleased with our students' abilities to analyze empirical research readings as well as engage in basic research design.

Written Communication:

Program faculty carefully assess students' written communication skills through the Final Paper assignment in POL 400W. This paper requires that students identify appropriate academic sources and integrate these sources into a coherent argument discussed and defended throughout the paper. In general, faculty are pleased with students' abilities to identify sources, form arguments, and analyze counterarguments in a coherent and professionally appropriate manner. Political science faculty introduce these skills in lower-division coursework through short essays and then build upon these basic skills in upper-division coursework through longer essays and short papers so that students have a solid foundation by graduation to complete the Final Paper project successfully. Faculty have been frustrated, however, with students' basic writing and grammar skills. Students also fail to proofread appropriately.

Curriculum changes have improved some aspects of student written communication skills, particularly those closely related to critical reading/thinking skills. The faculty still struggle to improve student's basic grammar and proofreading skills, but plan to seek assistance outside the department for further support on this issue.

Professional Development:

During the assessment period, Capstone Course for Political Science, POL 400W, has been an area of major concern for the faculty. The DFW rate was unacceptable and faculty teaching course were concerned that students did not have a sufficient base of knowledge and skills to be successful in the course. There was also concern that the course was too quantitative in nature and did not address the skills and knowledge needed by the vast majority of majors graduating from the program.

Dr. Kerem Ozan Kalkan completely redesigned POL 400W with guidance and input from the entire political science faculty. The faculty tasked him to design a course that would serve the career and continuing education goals of the vast majority of the graduates in the program. In previous years, the course had a heavy quantitative and programming focus despite the vast majority of majors not choosing career paths that required such skills. Informal surveys of student and recent graduates concluded that most students in the program pursued continuing education in law schools or applied master's programs, neither of which required significant quantitative research. Students also entered directly into the workforce into a wide variety of positions that did not require quantitative research and programming skills. (Note: The faculty certainly recognize that some employers value such skill sets, but political science majors do not appear to pursue such job offerings.)

Dr. Kalkan redesigned the course to concentrate on basic quantitative and programming skills using R rather than SPSS. As an open source code, R, is used widely by governmental and non-profit agencies, areas where political science majors often seek employment. In addition, the course focused on professionalism and career development/searching skills. Dr. Kalkan worked directly with ECU Career Services staff to develop a series of assignments that allow students to explore career options and develop resumes, cover letters, and interviewing skills. Students participate in workshops on career networking and participation in professional organizations. Students also receive information on options for continuing education.

Dr. Kalkan annually reports to the faculty on student learning outcomes and other aspects of student performance in POL 400W. Faculty, in turn, use this information to inform their teaching in other courses. The faculty also collaborate on the content and focus of this capstone course annually to confirm that students are receiving relevant and useful information as they approach graduation.

## 2. Outcomes Data Evaluation & Alignment

*Data regarding enrollment, degrees awarded, retention rates, graduation rates, progression, and student credit hours are posted here: <https://oie.eku.edu/program-review-data>*

2.1 Using the data charts above, provide a description/interpretation of the program's past trends regarding student success, and a rationale of the performance.

Despite steady annual decreases in university enrollment, the enrollment of the Political Science program remains strong. During the program review period, the program increased 5.25% on average while university enrollment decreased 3.7% annually. Much of this growth results from the implementation of an online program that allows students to complete the program without coming to campus.

Retention and graduation rates for the Political Science faculty steadily increased over program review period and follow general trends for the college and university. Faculty attribute implementation of best practices in advising and other student support services for this increase. Student evaluations of courses also denote robust and engaging teaching practices. Students generally rate political science courses above the university mean.

For a full analysis and discussion of program enrollment, retention, and graduation, please see attached Program Review Analysis and Interpretation.

## 2.2 How does the program intend to improve enrollment, retention, and graduation going forward? What projections and goals will the program be setting to achieve improvement?

While enrollments have increased over the program review period, faculty remain vigilant to maintain growth and react to negative political forces that threaten future enrollments. ECU eCampus Marketing is currently completely revising the online marketing plan for the online Political Science program and will release their proposal in March-April 2021 for immediate implementation in the second quarter of 2021. Current marketing techniques show that large numbers of students are attracted to the current program website through the use of blog posts on current political events. The yield rate of these students, however, is unacceptably high. The program is working with eCampus to increase this yield rate. Using the eCampus facilitator model, the program has significant capacity for growth. The program could grow by fifty percent using current faculty resources.

The program also seeks to recruit majors through active recruitment in closely related programs. The Pre-Law minor was recently implemented in the 2020-21 Undergraduate Catalog. This minor features several political science courses. The program hopes these courses will allow faculty to recruit students originally interested in attending law school to the full major. This Pre-Law minor is also designed to demonstrate career applicability of political science courses.

The department has recently proposed to offer an undergraduate Applied Social Science Analytics Certificate which is currently undergoing the curriculum approval process. Faculty and students have noted that many entry-level/bachelor-degree positions require or prefer quantitative methods and programming in major computer languages. Faculty hope that this certificate will allow ECU to compete with institutions that offer quantitative versions of several social science majors, including political science.

Faculty continue to diligently review the content, learning outcomes, and student success in Capstone in Political Science, POL 400W. In previous years, this course has had an unacceptably high DWF rate and has prevented students from graduating on time. The course has been redesigned to align with the program curriculum and to prepare students for employment/continuing education after graduation. The program also now offers sections of POL 400W in summer and winter terms to facilitate graduation.

Alumni Survey data regarding satisfaction with degree program are posted here:

<https://oie.eku.edu/program-review-data>

Kentucky Employment Outcomes Data: <https://kystats.ky.gov/Latest/PSFR> (This information can be filtered by major using the *5-Year Employment Outcomes by Specific Major* located in the bottom right of the page)

2.3 Using the data linked above, provide a description/interpretation of the program’s results, and plans to improve the outcomes.

Alumni survey data demonstrate very high levels of alumni satisfaction with the Political Science program and faculty. Alumni do not express any consistent complaints or concerns.

The Kentucky Employment Outcomes Data does not reflect the faculty understanding of the current employment of program graduates. This data set describes political science graduates as having a 50% employment rate and an average \$29,000 salary five years after graduation. While the program does not systematically gather employment and salary data on its graduates, this high unemployment rate and low salary is not consistent with anecdotal evidence of graduate employment. Faculty do not know how to explain this discrepancy other than this employment statistic might simply reflect the percentage of graduates that have employment in the government sector directly and fails to capture graduates who attend law school (approximately 25% of program graduates) or obtain employment in business, teaching, or with NGO’s/non-profit organizations.

Program faculty plan to reflect upon ways that they can gather their own alumni employment data in future years. However, gathering such data can be quite resource-intensive and may not be possible without university support.

### 3. Faculty and Teaching Data

3.1 Indicate how faculty workload and utilization, course offerings, and course enrollments positively and negatively impact the degree program, as well as what changes will be made for improvement.

While program enrollments have steadily increased over the program review period, faculty resources have steadily decreased. As a result, section sizes of general education courses, especially Introduction to American Government, POL 101, have increased significantly. The department now offers multiple sections each year with over 100 students enrolled. These sections suffer from a demonstrably higher DFW rate despite the use of embedded course consultants, graduate assistant graders, and the implementation of large section best practices. Faculty express concern and frustration in large sections as students “simply disappear” and

faculty are not able to convince them to return. Faculty also note that students with weaker reading skills particularly struggle in large sections as there is less individualized instruction and oversight of small group work.

Fewer faculty resources have also limited upper division course offerings. The department has not been able to offer multiple general education courses, including Element 6 courses African-American Politics, POL 356, and Politics of Appalachia, POL 373, in a few years despite previous demand. These limited course offerings also negatively affect interdisciplinary programs such as African-American Studies, Appalachian Studies, and Women & Gender Studies.

3.2 After reviewing the past 5 years of scholarly productivity, teaching effectiveness, and service outcomes, indicate how these factors positively and negatively impact the degree program, as well as what changes will be made for improvement.

The EKU Political Science faculty are all active scholars in their field and contribute to service at all levels from the department to the general public. The faculty use this scholarship to inform their teaching and provide students the latest information and concepts in the field. The faculty also teach courses for outside the political science program, including Globalization & International Affairs and the Masters in Public Administration. A summary of individual contributions is below:

Dr. Anne Cizmar regularly completes academic peer reviews for the political science discipline, including reviews for the journal *Political Behavior* and book reviews on presidential politics. Her participation in these efforts ensures she brings the most up-to-date research to students in her classes. She also disseminates her knowledge through peer-reviewed publications in *The Forum*, the *Kentucky Journal of Excellence in College Teaching*, and *Public Administration Quarterly*, which provides her with the opportunity to give guidance about the academic research process to her students in various classes at EKU. Dr. Cizmar also serves as an expert on U.S. politics and elections for various media outlets around the world, including completing interviews with local stations WKYT, WLEX, and the *Courier Journal*, and national and international outlets such as *The New York Times*, the *Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, *Pravda*, and the *London School of Economics*. This regular engagement with current political events helps her in teaching students about real world politics in her classes.

Dr. Steven Barracca published the second edition of his textbook, *Introduction to Political Philosophy* in 2018, and a chapter on civil-military relations in Pakistan in an edited volume with Routledge press in 2016. This scholarly activity helps Dr. Barracca stay current on developments in his field, which is important for his teaching. In terms of service, Dr. Barracca serves as a reviewer for article manuscripts in political science journals, he chairs panels at the annual conference of the Southern Political Science Association, and he is regularly interviewed by local television station (KYMT) for analysis of state elections in Kentucky.

Dr. Kerem Ozan Kalkan has published several articles in academic journals such as *American Politics Research*, *Politics and Religion*, and *Turkish Studies*. In addition, he contributes regularly to academic blogs published in the *Washington Post* and EKU's online programs. His research on intergroup attitudes, race, ethnicity, and Muslim Americans inform his teaching in comparative politics, religion and politics, and political science capstone course at EKU. Dr. Kalkan continues his methodological interest in advanced quantitative techniques and creates or redevelops courses with a statistical focus in our department's undergraduate curriculum. He served on the editorial board of *the American Journal of Political Science* in the past; and is still serving on the editorial board of *Political Behavior*. Dr. Kalkan is invited to review scientific manuscripts multiple times a year from different academic journals in the discipline.

Dr. Austin Doctor has published several peer-reviewed research articles in academic journals, in addition to additional policy engagement pieces in outlets like *The Washington Post* and *War on the Rocks*. In addition to quantitative-based research, Dr. Doctor has conducted qualitative fieldwork in sub-Saharan African countries with former militant actors. This experience helps to offer political science, globalization, and other EKU students a more in-depth understanding of what scientific research looks like in the political science discipline as well as a more thorough understanding of the types of political actors behind many of the threats at the center of international security today.

In addition to these individual accomplishments, the Department of Government has taken a leadership role in the promotion of civics education and engagement on campus. Political Science faculty have served as advisors to the Student Government Association, including recently assisting in the revision of the SGA Constitution. The faculty have also hosted events for Constitution Day and First Amendment Week. The faculty regularly participate in voter registration drives and election education events, including sponsoring political speakers. The faculty also facilitates a variety of events supporting basic functions of government and citizenship, including Census promotion and participation in local and state government.

Finally, the political science faculty are genuinely engaged and talented faculty. They consistently pursue professional development both through EKU resources and external sources to improve their pedagogy and substantive knowledge in the field. They consistently engage in high-impact teaching practices, including elaborate semester-long simulations, field trips to Frankfort, Washington, DC, and other locations of political activity. Faculty mentor students in research projects that results in conference presentations and peer-reviewed publications. They also engage students outside of class, promoting service projects, such as the formation of a diaper bank on campus that allowed students enrolled in a non-profit politics course to study the role of non-profit organizations in providing basic services to the public using governmental support and coordination.

#### **4. General Education Contribution (if applicable)**

4.1 How does this program provide value to General Education? Include in this narrative, the evaluation of past courses, enrollments, efficiencies, and planned changes.

The Political Science and Globalization programs are heavily involved in General Education. The programs offer courses in Elements 3B, 5A, 5B, and 6. All program faculty are actively involved in the assessment of these courses and take great pride in their contributions to General Education at ECU. Faculty strive to provide students with information that will allow them to appreciate and analyze the ways in which politics and political systems affect them throughout their lives.

During the program review period, the department has explored various ways to increase efficiency in offering these courses, including offering classes online, via ITV/ePresence, and in large lecture sections using course embedded consultants. These efforts have allowed for steady enrollments despite decreasing faculty resources.

General Education Enrollments

Course/Element	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
POL 101 (5A/B)	858	875	959	914	872	795
POL 212 (5A/B)	89	82	92	71	94	88
POL 220 (5A)	65	99	65	94	33	82
POL 250 (3B)	75	109	115	90	91	144
POL 356 (6)	0	0	0	0	0	0
POL 373 (6)	0	55	55	0	55	0
ECO 120 (5B)	78	91	73	69	108	83

Program faculty strive to continue to offer a broad selection of political science and related courses through General Education. Faculty constantly update course materials to reflect current events and implement best practices to improve General Education student learning outcomes for all courses. Faculty hope to be able to offer Element 6 courses, specifically African American Politics, POL 356 and Politics of Appalachia, POL 373, more frequently in upcoming years as students need to be able to study the roles of race and rural poverty in American politics.

4.2 How would General Education be impacted if this program did not participate?

Political science faculty educate well over 1,000 General Education students every academic year. The courses contribute to the course offerings in Elements 3B, 5A, 5B, and 6. Several of these courses also serve as supporting or required courses for other majors and minors. Furthermore, each of these courses explores concepts that are necessary for students to be informed national and global citizens in an ever-changing, complex society.

The purpose of a general education curriculum is to impart knowledge that *all* students need to know in order to flourish as individuals and as members of a particular society. It is distinct from specialized knowledge—information that only *some* individuals need to know to succeed in a profession. For example, not all students need to know how to read an EKG, manage a construction site, or program a computer. However, as citizens of a representative democracy, *every* student needs a basic understanding of politics. This is because citizens have a right to influence the direction of our political system in a variety of ways, including voting, petitioning public officials, and running for office. Accordingly, the quality of our democracy is dependent on how informed citizens are about politics. The Department of Government at EKV contributes to this goal by helping our students become informed citizens.

Introduction to American Government, POL 101, is required for all undergraduate students in some states. State legislatures have recognized that it is essential that students understand the basics of American government. Whether students like it or not, federal and state governments touch every aspect of their lives forever. Students must be educated to understand the political system in which they live. College graduates should be educated citizens and serve as examples for others in society in their ability to engage in the political process. POL 101 has met expectations in General Education Assessment. As the evaluation report indicates, most students are developing or competent in the 5A and 5B learning outcomes. This success is due to increased instruction on critical reading and the encouragement of reading assessment activities in classes.

Introduction to Comparative Politics, POL 212, familiarizes General Education students with different political systems, social structures, and historical concepts from all around the world. The course emphasizes global citizenry that critically thinks through arguments, facts, and concepts generated by political science scholarship. If this course were removed from General Education, students would have no opportunity to explore compare/contrast forms of government throughout the world and make informed decisions about issues of both local and global importance.

POL 212, overall, has met expectations in General Education assessment. The course exceeded expectations in discussion of fulfilling General Education goals and student learning outcomes in Elements of 5A and 5B. Part of the course's success is incorporating critical reading as one of the core components into its assessment toolkit and providing critical reading instruction throughout the course.

Introduction to World Politics, POL 220, equips our students with the tools they need to understand how international politics affect their day-to-day lives and, conversely, how our students' careers, votes, purchases, and other actions shape the trajectory of world affairs. If Introduction to International Relations were removed from Eastern Kentucky University's General Education program, our students would be left unprepared to be mindful and proactive members of our increasingly globalized world. General Education assessment for this course has been delayed due to a lack of qualified faculty, however, a new assessment instrument has recently been approved and will be implemented Spring 2021.

Introduction to Political Philosophy, POL 250, students compare competing conceptions of the good and the just society, assess different forms of political and economic systems, and evaluate competing conceptions of the foundation, purpose, and scope of government and law. Since all these questions are matters of ongoing debate in our political community, this course is essential for informed citizenship.

In 2018-2019, General Education assessment data for POL 250 was collected for the first time using the new instrument for the new QEP. This base data indicates roughly 50 percent of students score competent, and 40 percent developing, in the areas of application, analysis, methods, and integration. Students were weaker in the areas of comprehension and clarity of expression. To improve comprehension, beginning in the 2019-2020 academic year, the course instructor encouraged students to use a study guide to prepare for the final exam. The study guide lists key concepts and helped students to better recall reading material from earlier in the semester.

## 5. Curriculum Changes

*Reminder: Include a Curriculum Map with your submission*

5.1 Reflect on the latest trends in curriculum changes or modernization in the discipline. Cite professional organizations or standards that have guided these changes in the discipline. Specifically address how your program has responded or will respond to those changes. Describe any results you have observed regarding those changes.

While Political Science does not have an accrediting body or professional standards, the faculty are well aware of the academic, economic, and professional developments in their subfields. Faculty also participate in professional development reflecting upon entry-level careers for political science undergraduates. The faculty meet annually to determine how the curriculum should be updated to reflect these changes and demands.

To support the large number of students pursuing future employment in governmental entities and non-profit organizations, the faculty ensure that the curriculum emphasizes concepts related to public administration and bureaucracy. To respond to increasing employer demands for graduates to have quantitative analysis and programming skills, the faculty have carefully designed coursework that help students develop these skills throughout the program. The faculty have also noticed that graduates need career development assistance as they approach graduation. In response to this need, the faculty worked in cooperation with ECU Career Services to develop a series of lectures and activities to assist students while entering the workforce as a college graduate.

Student and faculty have been generally pleased with the course design and learning outcomes for the current political science curriculum. The newly redesigned Capstone in Political Science has been reviewed positively both by students who can successfully complete required assignments and describe the career development sections of the course informative and helpful for their transition after graduation.

5.2 Provide an overview of curriculum changes that have been implemented in the last five years and the data that supported those changes. Also discuss any plans for upcoming changes. If you have already described those changes in previous sections, refer back to those sections.

During the program review period, the Political Science Program made a few targeted curriculum changes designed to increase breadth of the political science curriculum, provide sufficient quantitative training, and ensure students have the skills necessary to engage in a professional employment search.

Political Science students are now required to take upper-division courses in multiple subfields. Faculty were concerned that students did not explore all subfields in political science prior to this curriculum change. This potential lack of breadth in the curriculum could cause students to only study a single country or type of government and fundamentally limit their education. The new distributional requirement ensures that all students study multiple perspectives in the field both at the introductory and upper-division levels.

Faculty developed a Capstone in Political Science, POL 400W, course to allow students to have a final experience in conducting research, developing quantitative and programming skills, and to interact with ECU Career Services on best practices for developing a professional employment search and continuing professional development. While early iterations of this course yielded high DFW rates and illuminated curriculum alignment issues, annual evaluation and revision of the course has proven successful. Students are now succeeding in the course and faculty are pleased with student learning outcomes. In future years, the program hopes to gather data on graduate employment to further refine the professional development activities.

The program is currently developing a certificate in Applied Social Science Analytics Certificate. This certificate is designed to equip students to collect, analyze, and interpret social science data. With the rise of so-called “Big Data” as well as the widespread integration of data analysis and visualization into today’s information environment, the ability to understand and employ a broad variety of data analysis techniques has become ever more important for professionals working in a variety of career fields. The certificate focuses on developing appropriate technical training in combination with an understanding of important social processes.

## 6. Reflection and Recommendations

*Reminder: Include supporting evidence and documentation, as appropriate.*

6.1 Reflect on and make recommendations for the future of the program.

The Political Science Program plans to continue to increase its accessibility to a broad spectrum of students through online and in-person course offerings. While the program strives to increase the number of majors/minors, the faculty also encourage students outside the major to take courses in areas that complement their interests or other courses of study. Politics touches every aspect of our lives and students should be empowered with this knowledge. As such, the department continues to be open to partnering with other departments to develop and offer courses that assist students in other majors. In the past, the department has offered special courses on topics ranging from terrorism to human resources to support other majors.

Additionally, the program plans to expand its role course offerings related to the politics of diverse groups. As recent months have proven, understanding the roles of race and ethnicity in national and international politics is of pivotal importance. In recent years, the program has not had sufficient resources to offer courses in these areas. The faculty feel strongly that these courses must be made a priority. The program plans to reallocate resources and target new hires toward this goal.

The Political Science Program also plans to continue its leadership role in promoting civics education and citizenship on campus. The faculty strongly believe that the program must lead initiatives to support voting, Census participation, and civic engagement on campus and beyond.

6.2 If applicable, address plans to extend degree program to online delivery. If already offered online, reflect on the value of providing the program in this manner. What can be done to make this online program more innovative and unique?

The Political Science Program is already completely online. The program, however, is planning to make fundamental changes to online marketing techniques to reach a broader audience. The program is striving to reach non-traditional student and students from diverse backgrounds for whom a traditional on-campus education is not possible.

The program, in conjunction with eCampus Marketing staff, has evaluated how to make the program more innovative and attractive to these groups of students. The program recently began marking a collection of subfield emphases. While these emphases do not change the credential that the student obtains, some students enter the program with particular areas of interest that the current major can accommodate. These areas of emphasis are hoped to recruit students looking to focus on such areas as international relations or constitutional law.

The program is also planning to market minors and certificates available online with the Political Science major. Many students enter the online program interested either in legal or governmental careers. Depending upon the student's area of interest, there are minors and certificates that might be of interest to these students and may make the ECU Political Science Program more attractive than competitors.



# Program Review Data: Analysis and Interpretations

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# 1 Overview

This document includes figures and their interpretations related to [the program review data](#) reported by ECU Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE).

## 2 Enrollments

Number of enrollments are reported for Fall and Spring semesters separately. The numbers include 2nd majors. It is important to contextualize the department's and major's trend in enrollment within college-level and university-level trends. I created figures to include trends per unit across reported academic years. The trend figures for Fall enrollments and Spring enrollments are in figures 1 and 2, respectively.

We can derive at least three conclusions from the data presented in figure 1:

1. Political science as a major has been experiencing a *steady -almost a linear- increase* in popularity among Fall enrollees. There were 84 majors during the 2015-2016 academic year. The number increased to 104 during the 2020-2021 academic year with peaking at 128 during the 2019-2020 academic year.
2. Both political science as a major and the department begin a tumultuous academic year due to global pandemic at its moving average number of enrollments, which is represented by a horizontal red line.<sup>1</sup> In other words, both the department and major were able to keep its average popularity among ECU Fall enrollees.
3. Items 1 and 2 above have happened while the overall number of enrollments has been declining steadily since the 2015-2016 academic year.

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<sup>1</sup>The moving average is computed by taking a simple average of all reported numbers.

## Fall Enrollments

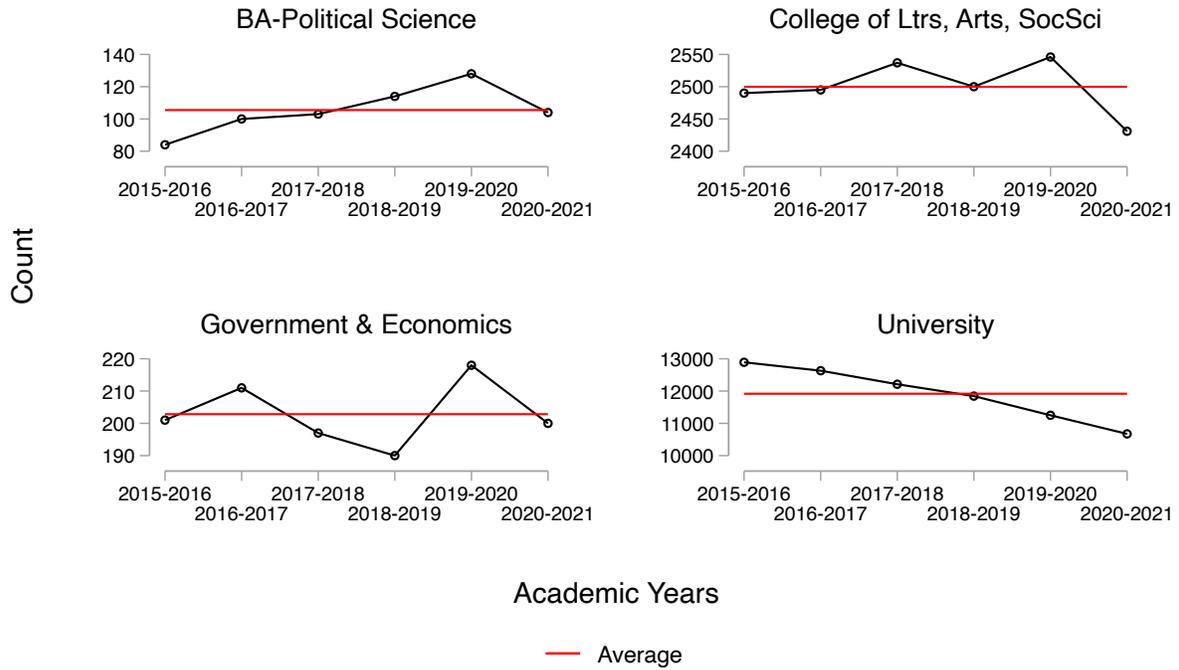


Figure 1: Fall enrollments

We can reach similar conclusions for the Spring enrollment trends reported in figure 2. Both the department as a whole and the political science major have kept its popularity among Spring enrollees, on average.

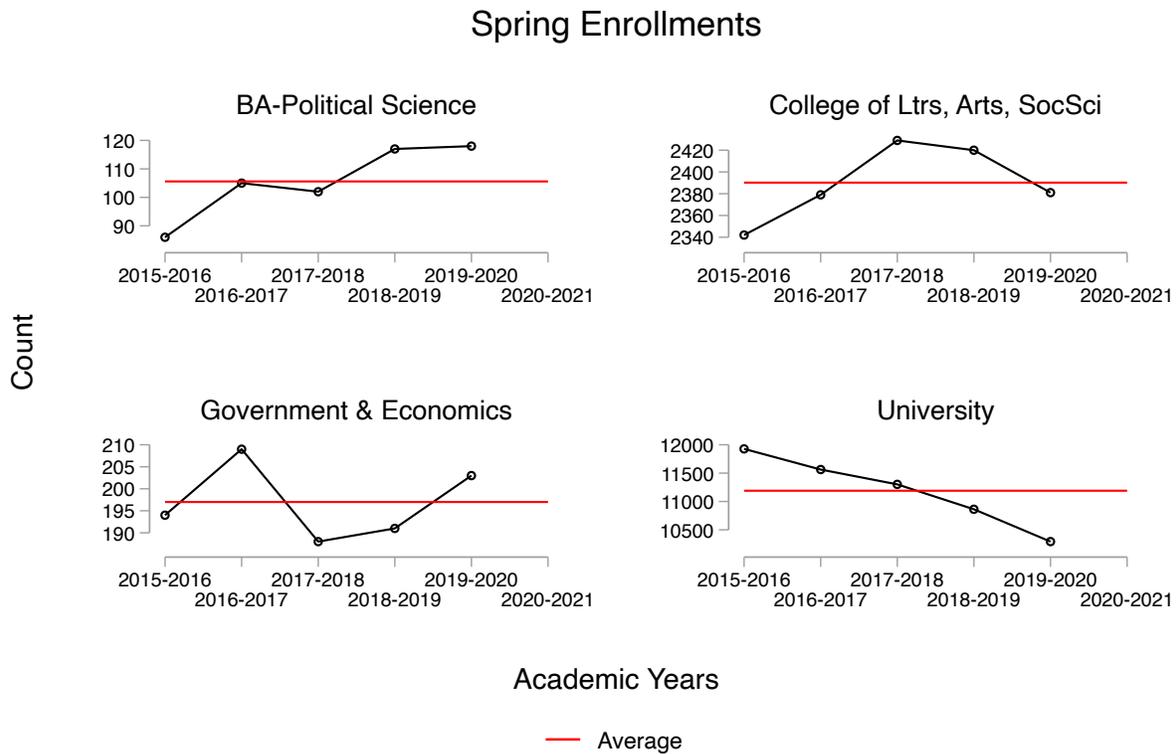


Figure 2: Spring enrollments

## 2.1 Growth rate

One major caveat about figures 1 and 2 is that they do not have a common vertical axis. Since the axis scales change from one unit to another, it is hard to reach comparable conclusions across units with different sizes. In other words, drops in smaller units such as at the departmental or major levels can look steeper due to uncommon vertical axis.

To overcome this problem, I computed average annual growth rate for Fall enrollments per unit. Growth rates are computed by dividing the difference in enrollments between periods  $t$  and  $t - 1$  by the enrollments in period  $t - 1$ . Then, I took the average of these growth rates based on the number of computed growth rates. The results are presented in table 1.

Table 1: Average growth rates of Fall enrollments across different units

Unit	Average growth rate
Political Science - BA	5.25%
Government and Economics	0.25%
CLASS	-0.45%
University	-3.70%

Source: ECU OIE

Growth rates cover between 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 academic years.

The table shows that political science as a major has experienced an average growth rate above 5 percent among Fall enrollments between the 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 academic years. The political science major has maintained a positive outlook in growth rates.

The university's linear downward trend is concerning. On average, the enrollments fell by almost 4 percent between 2016-2017 and 2020-2021 academic years.

## 2.2 Enrollment and instructional expenditures

There might be multiple explanations for the linear decline in the university-wide enrollments. Among many indicators, I focused on the percentage of instructional services expenditures within our university's total operating budget over time. The numbers are collected from the official *fiscal year* reports on [EKU Budgeting website](#). The bivariate relationship is depicted in figure 3. Please note that academic years and fiscal years do not overlap.

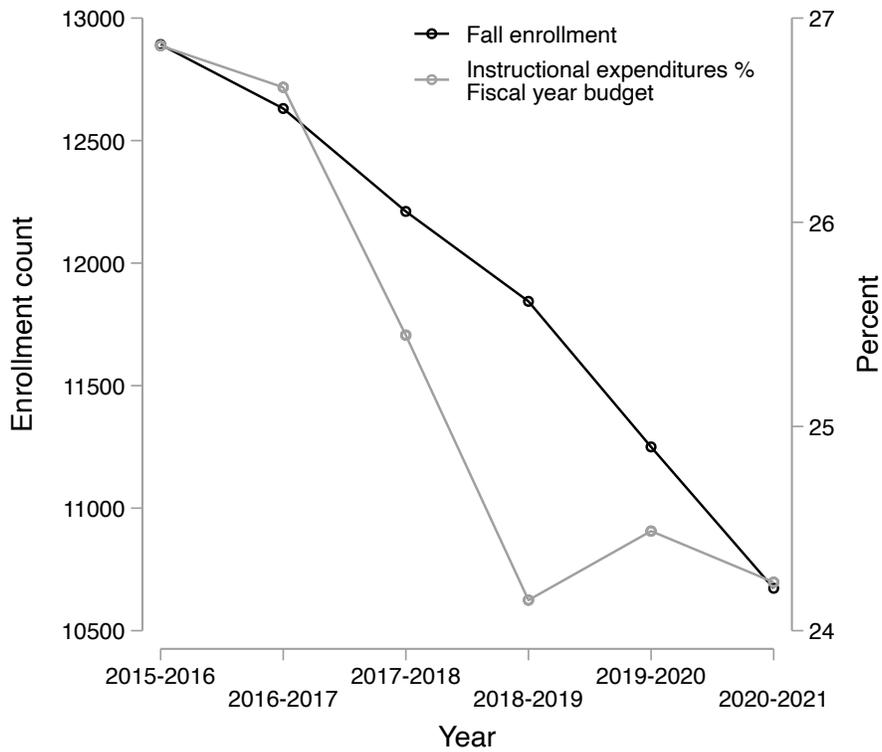


Figure 3: Enrollment and instructional expenditures

The black line in figure 3 represents the trend in enrollment numbers over academic years. It is using the left axis as a reference point. The gray line represents the trend in percentage of instructional expenditures within ECU’s total operating budget. The budget line is using the right axis with percentage as the reference point.

Both lines indicate a strong downward trend between 2015-2016 and 2020-2021 academic years. Although we *cannot* ascertain a clear causal flow between these two variables, the figure shows a close and strong association between the enrollment trends and decline in the percentage of instructional expenditures within the total operating budget of ECU. To be able to identify a causal link, we need a lot more data points than what we currently have. Nevertheless, it might be important to think about the relationship between how much we spent on instruction and how many students we attract to the university.

### 3 Graduation Rate at 150%

Graduation rate (150%) shows a promising story at all units. I depicted the rates in figure 4. The political science major, department, college, and the university have been experiencing a positive trend in graduation rates. In addition, the political science major's graduation rate is far above the the college's and the university's graduation rates, as the vertical axes' scales show in figure 4.

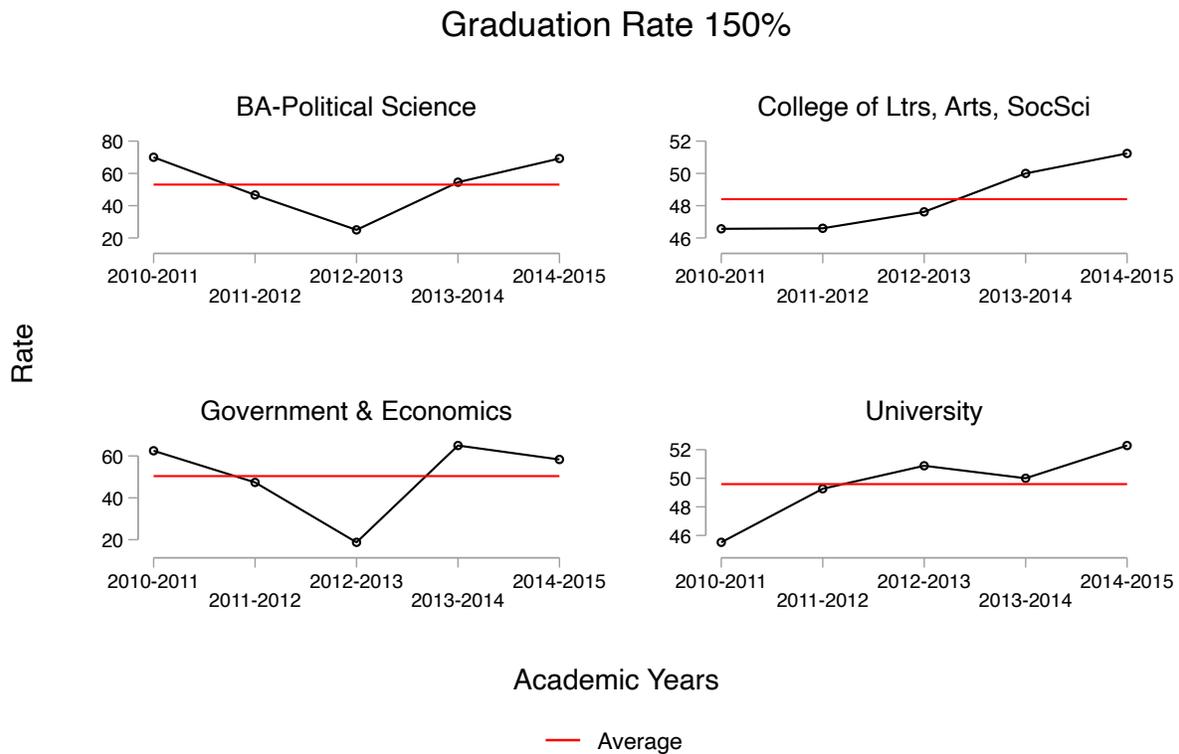


Figure 4: Graduation rate 150%

### 4 Retention Rate - Fall to Fall

Positive outlook also shows itself in retention rates (Fall to Fall) since the 2015-2016 academic year. The longitudinal trends in retention rates can be found in figure 5. All units experience an overall positive trend in their retention rates. The political science major, the department,

college, and the university have been experiencing a positive trend, on average, in retaining the majors. The rates are comparable across units.

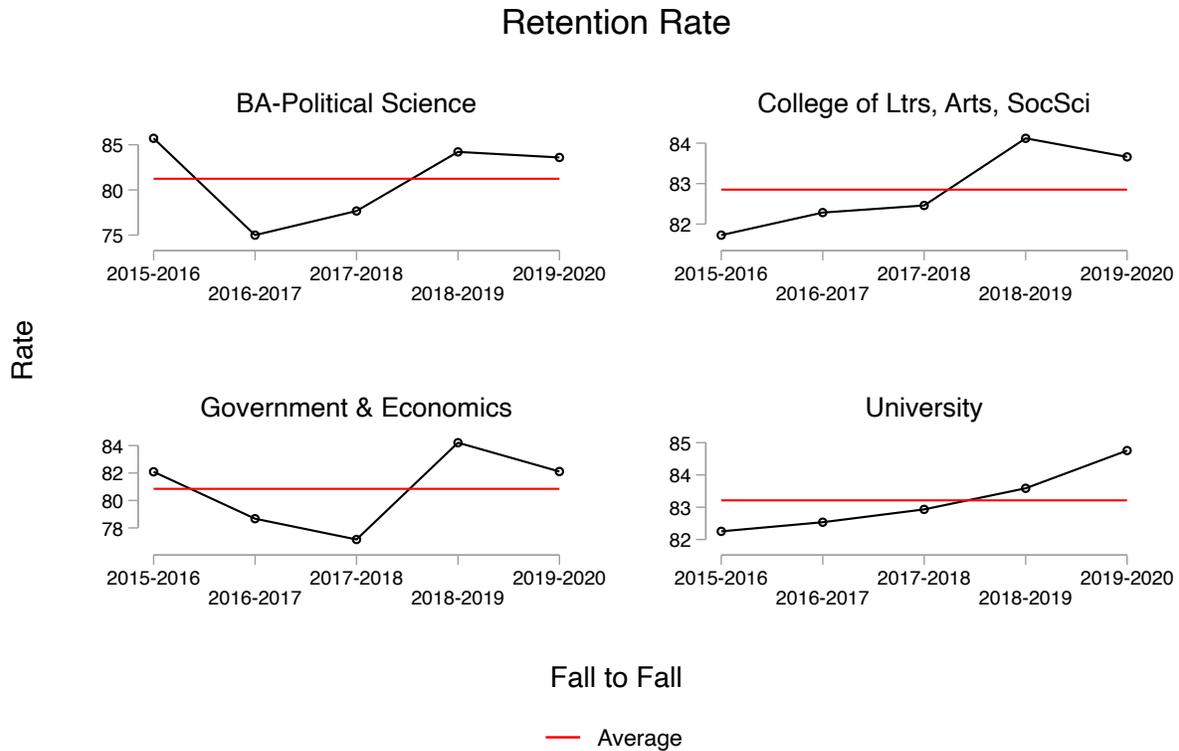


Figure 5: Retention rate - Fall to Fall

## 5 Conclusion

In this brief analysis, I tried to analyze the program review data of various units from different perspectives. Political science program, overall, keeps its average appeal among enrollees. Until the most recent academic year, it had maintained positive trend in enrollment numbers. The program and the department exhibit a positive average growth rate while the university enrollments indicate a negative average decline. One interesting finding suggests that the decline in university-level enrollments go hand-in-hand together with decline in percentage of instructional expenditures within ECU's total operating budget. More data

and sophisticated modeling are needed to identify a causal link. The political science program and the department present promising numbers with positive outlook on both graduation and retention numbers, like the university and college do.