

To: The Academic Policies Committee  
From: Johnny Goldfinger, Associate Professor of Political Science  
Date: October 18, 2021  
Re: The addendum to the proposal to close the political science program

The addendum to the program proposal to close political science was submitted to the Academic Policies Committee (APC) on October 3, 2021 according to the date on the document. The APC apparently reviewed the addendum Friday afternoon, October 8, and voted on it. I was sent an email after the meeting telling me that the proposal to eliminate political science would go to the Faculty Assembly on October 22. I was sent a copy of the addendum on Saturday, October 9. after asking to see the revised proposal. As such, I was not allowed to respond to the addendum before APC voted on the proposal.

The addendum raises allegations that misrepresent, distort, and impugn the actions and attitudes of the political science faculty, Pierre Atlas, Holly Gastineau-Grimes, and Johnny Goldfinger. We do not appreciate this characterization of our program. We do not appreciate the libelous assertions in the addendum that question our competence and professionalism. Consequently, I will provide a detailed rebuttal showing how the addendum is, at best, lazy and, at worst, dishonest.

Before proceeding, I want to share Pierre Atlas' response to the addendum. He is, a former Professor of Political Science at Marian University, who "retired" on June 29, 2021. Here are his thoughts:

I've looked at this hit job. Most of this is disingenuous.

My comments/questions:

How many SOC majors are there (I assume less than POL)? Is SOC also being targeted?

Point C is a lie. I was never asked to develop or submit a strategic plan for POL from the time I created the program in 2002-03 to the time I left Marian in June 2021.

BTW, we received NO help from the administration to build or recruit new POL students after the VP for enrollment was fired a couple years ago. Before that, we (you, me and Holly) met at the beginning of every year with admissions and admissions counselors to discuss POL recruitment. After the major program revision with new concentrations was approved by the faculty and went into effect, we received ZERO support from the administration to implement it or recruit new students. This is not just on the POL faculty. And yet, there are 31 majors in the program--which I believe is the highest number on record since it was created.

Lies of omission: other POL cross-listed courses not listed: POL/HIS 347 American Foreign Policy, POL/HIS 355 Politics of the Middle East

As for "viability," the administration has made that a self-fulfilling prophesy by not replacing my line.

The addendum was written in response to seven questions posed by the APC after it received the administration's curt initial proposal to eliminate political science. This initial proposal consisted of two

sentences. What follows is my point-by-point rebuttal of this addendum. Texts from the addendum written by the administration are in bold. Each lettered bullet point refers to a question raised by APC.

**a) More information about enrollment and graduation numbers Political Science Information for APC**

The addendum provided major and minor enrollment data for political science from 2016 through 2021. It confirms that there are currently 31 political science majors.

**b) More details about the study that was done**

Here are points related to the decision:

- **There was a major program revision and since that time there has been no significant increase in majors.**
- **There was no clear argument presented on what makes political science at Marian distinctive when compared to competitors.**
- **Program assessment is not clearly aligned with institutional learning outcomes.**
- **Assessment data not explicitly used to assist in program improvement process.**
- **The department admits to being passive about student recruitment.**
- **No plan on how to increase retention. No coordinated effort on the part of the department.**
- **Student outcomes not tracked by department.**
- **Report that was submitted was less than complete.**

The initial proposal to eliminate political science makes a vague reference to “a recent program review of Political Science.” The addendum makes clear that this program review was the 2021 self-study required by the Teaching and Learning Committee (TLC). The political science self-study was completed in January 2021 and a meeting with the TLC Self-Study Subcommittee and other administrative representatives was held on February 10, 2021. The political science program (along with social work and public health) was the first of 27 cohorts to undergo the self-study process that extends from January 2021 through April 2024. A copy of the political science program’s self-study is available upon request.

Using the self-study as an excuse to terminate the political science program is something that should disturb faculty and administrators alike. We had no reason to expect that the self-study might be used punitively. The program self-study was characterized as a tool to “encourage,” “improve,” “document strengths,” “identify opportunities,” and “facilitate evaluation and alignment” (from the “TLC Self-Study Process” sent to the faculty on October 16, 2020.) Nowhere is it stated or even implied that this self-study could be weaponized to punish or eliminate faculty and programs. Moreover, several members of the TLC committee (including members of the TLC Self-Study Subcommittee) confirm it was explicitly and widely understood that the self-studies would not be used to penalize or undermine programs. Yet, this is exactly what the proposal to eliminate political science does. The proposal’s appeal to the self-study to eliminate political science is unethical, dishonest, and a betrayal of faculty trust.

It is bad enough that the proposal to eliminate political science is largely based on the unscrupulous and unprofessional appropriation of the self-study. Perhaps even worse is that the proposal uses a series of one sentence bullet points to misrepresent what is in the self-study; it conveniently omits information and fails to provide necessary context.

- **There was a major program revision and since that time there has been no significant increase in majors.**

The “major program revision” refers to the new minors and concentrations for political science approved by the Faculty Assembly on October 19, 2018. They include “Law Studies,” “Political Leadership and Engagement,” and “International Affairs.” Here are the number of political science majors and minors from 2016-2021 (as provided in the addendum).

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Majors	20	31	28	25	29	31
Minors	2	2	2	7	11	6

It is true that there has not been a significant increase in the number of political science majors since the revisions took effect. However, the number of minors immediately increased significantly after the revisions. Compare the number of minors in 2018 to the numbers in 2019, 2020, and 2021.

Moreover, as Pierre Atlas points out, “After the major program revision with new concentrations was approved by the faculty and went into effect, we received ZERO support from the administration to implement it or recruit new students. This is not just on the POL faculty.” We had the opportunity to meet with P.J. Woolston, the Vice President of Enrollment Management, just one time in 2019 to brainstorm ideas to promote the political science revisions. He was fired and the pandemic closed the campus before we were able to meet with him again. Once again, to quote Pierre Atlas, “we received NO help from the administration to build or recruit new POL students after the VP for enrollment was fired a couple years ago.”

Maybe the new revisions could increase the number of political science majors or maybe not. However, we just do not know given the lack of administrative support and the 15-month long disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Regardless, are programs now being punished when revisions do not lead to a “significant increase” in the number of majors?

- **There was no clear argument presented on what makes political science at Marian distinctive when compared to competitors.**

The political science self-study compares our program with political science programs at Wabash, DePauw, University of Indianapolis, and Butler (see pages 10-12 of the self-study). Information for the comparison was collected from the university websites. We identified the curricular requirements and “unique feature” of each program at these competitor schools. We conclude that “a key unique feature of a Marian Political Science degree is the flexibility to customize your career plan through the new concentrations in Law Studies, Political Leadership & Engagement, and International Studies...in all cases students are encouraged to also complete an applied internship.” Also, “While the Marian curriculum is similar [to competitor programs], it remains unique in the concentrations that provide a ready-made cluster of classes for students to take as they work toward a specific career goal or path.”

Our creation of classes and clusters for concentrations (or minors) in Law Studies, Political Leadership and Engagement, and International Affairs is distinctive as we demonstrated by examining the requirements and unique features of programs at competitor schools.

- **Program assessment is not clearly aligned with institutional learning outcomes.**

The political science self-study discusses clearly and in detail how our program's student learning outcomes align with the institutional learning outcomes (see pages 2-5 of the self-study).

- **Assessment data not explicitly used to assist in program improvement process.**

This point is so vague that I am not sure what it refers to. Looking through the self-study, the only relevant thing I can see is question 11, which asks us to discuss how we used a "summary of aggregate trends from student responses to instruction" to improve our program (see page 10 of the self-study). We found this instruction so unclear and methodologically problematic that we were not sure how to answer it and noted as such in the self-study.

- **The department admits to being passive about student recruitment.**

Our comment about being "passive" needs to be contextualized. Here is the complete statement: "In the past, the program has been relatively passive about recruiting students. This approach was not due to disinterest but more of a desire not to aggressively compete with other programs."

This statement refers to the recruitment of students already enrolled at Marian. In the self-study, it notes that "the program relied on student interest in the subject to draw them to the political science major." We recruit enrolled students only if they communicate an explicit interest in political science. We are not going to aggressively pursue and steal majors from other programs.

Given how the administration fetishizes the number of majors and has used those numbers to eliminate programs and fire faculty, we do not want to contribute to anything that potentially harms our colleagues.

As for the recruitment of prospective students, we have had a long and productive working relationship with admissions up to the point when P.J. Woolston, Vice President of Enrollment Management, was fired in early 2020. As Pierre Atlas notes, before Woolston was fired, "we (you, me and Holly) met at the beginning of every year with admissions and admissions counselors to discuss POL recruitment." Moreover, before he was fired, we frequently met with prospective students. As noted in the self-study, currently, "political science is rarely contacted to meet with prospective students."

- **No plan on how to increase retention. No coordinated effort on the part of the department.**

See page 7 of the self-study (italics added):

Political Science also restructured the major to make it more appealing, dynamic, exciting, and practical, by organizing it into different clusters of courses (Concentrations) tied to specific career and graduate school interests. *The programmatic changes were made with several goals in mind: the revised program should enhance student recruitment and retention in the POL major and serve as an aid for advising; each of the major's three focused Concentrations includes both content-specific courses and practical skills courses (e.g., Public Policy, Leadership and Political Activism, Game Theory and Strategic Thinking) that should prepare students for the workforce and graduate school and give them an edge in the job and grad school application process.*

See page 12 in the self-study (italics added):

*Retention is another area that can be improved through a more explicit tracking of student progress and increasing engagement outside the classroom.* For example, the political science club has been dormant for several years because of a lack of student leadership. The political science faculty have been discussing starting a chapter of Phi Sigma Alpha, the political science honor society. Improvements in retention will likely help with graduation of majors as well.

See page 20 in the self-study (italics added):

*For service, the program is working on a more efficient ways to recruit and retain students.* Developing an effective system to track and monitor student progress, so there can be more proactive intervention to help individuals succeed. The program also wants to build more politically oriented relationships off campus to introduce students to politics in practice, allow them develop networks, and explore possible career opportunities. The program wants to increase engagement with students outside the classroom as well. It intends to revive the Political Science Club (that effort was forestalled by the COVID-19 pandemic) and start a chapter of Phi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honor society. In terms of service to the university and community, the political science faculty are already very active and will endeavor to continue to stay engaged.

- **Student outcomes not tracked by department.**

I did a word search of the self-study document (including the questions we were asked to answer) using “outcome.” I could not find any reference to tracking student outcomes in the questions.

- **Report that was submitted was less than complete.**

The report was less than complete. The self-study did not include an executive summary (question 1). However, given that the summary is a summary and was supposed to be less than one page long, it would have merely repeated information in the report. So, it is true that the executive summary was not included, but it in no way affects the substance of the self-study. Also, as discussed earlier, we were unsure how to answer question 11. Otherwise, all the other 23 questions were answered.

**c) Why is Political Science not a viable program anymore?**

**As there is only one remaining faculty member in the program, with no intention to create additional faculty lines, the program is no longer viable. The department currently has no clear strategic plan for the development of the program and that has been requested of them over a period of some years.**

Why does the administration insist on the falsehood that there is only one remaining faculty member in the political science program? There are two political science faculty members, Holly Gatineau-Grimes (assistant professor) and Johnny Goldfinger (associate professor). As documented in our first response to the proposal to eliminate political science, Holly and I can continue to teach the same political science course load each semester that we had when Pierre Atlas was here (without having to rely on an adjunct).

Moreover, it would be easy to buttress the political science program (if that were even necessary) by using joint appointments and cross-listing courses. The administration never attempted to discuss the future of the political science program or how available resources could be used to strength it. Instead,

the administration made its decision and then informed us with absolutely no opportunity for input or comment.

The program is viable without replacing Pierre Atlas' line.

When Pierre Atlas was told his line would not be replaced, here is how he responded:

The NORMAL thing to do when a professor leaves is to do a search and replace that person. This was a successful program with 31 majors (which is pretty good for a liberal arts major at MU) after all. They used my leaving as an opportunity to kill the program. Claiming that the program is unsustainable because THEY refuse to replace the departed faculty is the height of disingenuousness....The bottom line is that they WANT to kill POL, not that they "have" to.

As for the claim a strategic plan "has been requested of [us] over a period of some years," Pierre Atlas, Holly Gastineau Grimes, and I cannot recall ever being asked to submit a strategic plan. To quote Pierre Atlas:

Point C is a lie. I was never asked to develop or submit a strategic plan for POL from the time I created the program in 2002-03 to the time I left Marian in June 2021.

**d) What impact will there be on the institution if this program is cancelled?**

**This program, if cancelled, will be taught out over the next three years. The impact on the enrollment of the institution will be minimized through increased enrollment in other applied social science programs. There is minimal expected fiscal impact.**

This is perhaps the most disappointing part of the addendum. The administration is only concerned about numbers, that is, enrollment and money. It does not reflect on how the elimination of political science affects the experience of future students or the mission of the university.

If there was ever a time for students at Marian to be able to study political science, it is now. See our first response to the proposal for how the study of political science is essential for understanding and solving contemporary social problems, advancing the Franciscan Sponsorship Values and realizing the potential of transformational leadership.

**e) How was communication handled with faculty about this matter.**

**The remaining faculty member has met with the Provost individually to discuss this matter, in advance of the submission to APC as well as following. This discussion is ongoing.**

There are currently two political science faculty members at Marian, Holly Gastineau-Grimes and Johnny Goldfinger. Why does this proposal purposely ignore this fact?

I have met three times with the Provost after the decision was made to eliminate the political science program. However, it may be useful to understand the nature of those meetings. The addendum seems to falsely suggest that the proposal was discussed with me and I had some input that was considered before the proposal was submitted to APC. I never had a substantive discussion about the decision to eliminate political science with the provost.

Pierre Atlas "retired" on June 29, 2021. I had a meeting previously scheduled with the Provost on July 16 to discuss political science, prelaw, and the liberal arts. That meeting began with the Provost telling me

of the plan to eliminate political science. The rest of that meeting involved a conversation about my status as a tenured faculty member, the performance of the administration, and state of the liberal arts at Marian. We never discussed issues related to the decision to eliminate political science. I asked for a second and third meeting on August 17 and September 8. These discussions did not involve the political science program at Marian.

**f) Political Science and cross-listed classes that would be affected.**

**There is one cross-listed course between POL and GLS. The GLS program director would like to keep the course, and can create paperwork to alter the course to have only the GLS prefix, or to switch the lead department and so have the GLS prefix as the parent department and the POL prefix as the child prefix. This is not an urgent issue, as the decision to cancel the program must first be determined, and the subsequent teach-out of the program must then be completed. This allows for time for this course transition to be processed appropriately.**

This list is incomplete.

**g) The signature page has been updated.**

The justification for eliminating the political science program rests on the unethical and disingenuous use of the program's self-study and the patently false claim that there is only one political scientist at Marian. It makes libelous claims about the competence and professionalism of the three faculty members in political science.

The administration's disdain for the faculty is evident in the original proposal's two-sentence rationale for eliminating political science and the addendum's use of bullet points with no details. It is as if the administration does not feel the need to make a convincing argument. This proposal wants to eliminate a popular and important program at Marian. The faculty and students deserve a serious and honest justification for eliminating a program, particularly one that has been successful and is a standard major in higher education.

It is important to recognize that this proposal also has significant implications that go beyond the political science program. It raises concerns about respect for shared governance and the faculty's role in curricular matters. The proposal to eliminate political science was a unilateral action by the administration without any input from affected faculty members. The proposal itself is a disingenuous outline and does not provide any significant details. It looks like it was just thrown together in perfunctory fashion. Would the APC accept a proposal for a new program that merely consists of several bullet points? If not, then why should the APC or the faculty accept a proposal to eliminate political science that simply consists of several bullet points? This proposal is disrespectful to the faculty and should be rejected on that basis alone.

I will end with some reasonable questions that may be relevant for other faculty members.

- When was it decided to propose the elimination of political science?
- Who initiated the idea to eliminate political science and who was primarily involved in the decision?
- Why was the political science self-study used to justify the elimination of political science?
- Is the purpose of the self-studies, in part, to evaluate the value and worth of faculty and programs?

- Can faculty expect the self-studies to be used to punish or terminate faculty and programs in the future?
- Are programs expected to show significant increases in enrollments after program revisions?
- Political science has 31 majors, Are the 16 other programs in the College of Arts and Sciences with similar or fewer numbers of majors in danger of elimination because of enrollments?
- Why does the proposal falsely claim that there is only one political science faculty member?
- Was any consideration given to using joint appointments and cross-listed courses to buttress the political science program after Pierre Atlas “retired?”
- If no consideration was given to joint appointments and cross-listings, then why not?
- Why was the elimination of political science not discussed with the political science faculty before the decision was made and the proposal was written?
- Does the administration plan to continue making unilateral decisions about proposals to eliminate programs?
- Was there any serious consideration about how the elimination of political science will affect future students including their academic experiences and opportunities?
- Does the administration respect and value the concept of tenure?
- If the administration does respect and value tenure, how will that inform its treatment of tenured faculty members when their programs are eliminated?