

MEMORANDUM

TO: Program Prioritization Committee

FROM: Nancy Spalding, Undergraduate Coordinator for Political Science
Bob Thompson, MPA director and Graduate Coordinator for Political Science
Brad E. Lockerbie, Chair of Political Science

DATE: January 9, 2012

RE: Response to Program Prioritization Recommendations

While we understand that in these budget times hard decisions have to be made, the recommendations of the report with regard to the Department of Political Science are inherently contradictory and damaging to the opportunities available to our students. The recommendations are also not likely to result in any meaningful financial savings.

Recommendation 1: Consolidation or Elimination of Bachelor of Arts degree.

- The recommendation concerning the BA degree assumes that some financial gain can be realized through its elimination via consolidation. This is not the case. Students in the BA degree take 36 hours of the same courses as students in the BS degree, although the BS students take 12 additional political science hours. As a consequence, the elimination of the BA degree would increase enrollments in the political science classes and decrease enrollments in the courses offered by other departments, especially the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures.
- Because of the increased enrollment pressure in political science classes from shifting students from BA to BS, the simultaneous proposed reduction in political science faculty would have a negative effect on instructional quality, and the department's ability to meet student needs in a timely manner.
- The administrative costs of maintaining two programs is no greater than maintaining the one degree program.
- Moreover, many of the students enrolled in the BA degree wish to pursue careers or subsequent graduate study in the comparative politics and international relations fields. Knowledge of a foreign-language is essential in these areas. If ECU eliminated the BA degree and its foreign-language requirement, then such students would seek to enroll at other institutions offering such opportunities. Currently, the number of students enrolled in the BA degree is roughly equal to the number of students enrolled in the BS degree.
 - Language skills, required by the BA degrees, represent important skills in today's globalizing economy, a fact noted by ECU in making Globalization a key aspect of the Mission, the UNC General Administration in its "21st Century Learning" document, and by the North Carolina State Board of Education in implementing increased foreign language requirements for high school graduation. Many of the students enrolled in the BA degree wish to pursue careers or subsequent graduate study in the comparative

politics and international relations fields. Knowledge of a foreign-language is valuable in these areas.

- Eliminating the BA program with its requirement of a foreign language would weaken the global politics portion of the department, which would consequently diminish the reputation of the Security Studies program to which the committee wishes us to redirect resources.
- Students respond intelligently to these changes. For the spring semester, the Department's new upper level elective class on the "Politics of Globalization" is full, with 48 students enrolled.
- If ECU eliminated the BA degree and its foreign-language requirement, then these students would likely seek to enroll at other institutions offering such opportunities.

Recommendation 2: Redirection of internal resources toward Master of Security Studies Program

- The proposed reduction in political science faculty numbers would severely restrict our ability to redirect internal resources. We are already doing this through the use of graduate courses taught by both security studies faculty members and public administration faculty members which may be taken by both sets of students. The Department has already lost its fixed term faculty base and one tenured/tenure-track faculty position beginning in January 2012, thus the reduction proposed has already occurred. We have just been informed that one of our junior faculty in the international relations field is leaving the university at the end of the year. Further reductions would greatly reduce our ability to continue growing the security studies program and to maintain the MPA program as recommended.

Recommendation 3: Reduction of overall faculty FTE

- The recommendation that the Department could witness modest reductions in faculty FTE without reduction of instructional or scholarly programs is misdirected. As noted above, the other recommendations could actually increase instructional demand at the same time faculty numbers are being reduced. Moreover, there is an inherent assumption that faculty skills and knowledge areas can be substituted across the discipline. That is not the case given the nature of our undergraduate program and the specialized natures of our graduate programs. Such instructional transfer would also run counter to the accreditation standards for the MPA program.
- The Department has lost its full-time fixed term position and those part-time fixed term faculty members it currently has are supported through grant generated distance education buyouts. The MPA program has also restructured its curriculum so as to eliminate one course requirement supported by a recurring part-time fixed term faculty member.
- We are reconciled to the immediate loss of one tenured/tenure-track position that has supported the MPA program in the past due to a retirement effective at the end of December 2011. Any further reductions severely affect the ability of the MPA program and for the security studies program to meet the needs of their students.