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To: Jane G. Dewitt
From: Department of International Relations
Reg: Department's reply to the external review report
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The faculty of International Relations Department have read the external reviewers' report prepared by Dr. Heather Elko McKibben (UC-Davis) and Dr. Karthika Sasikumar (CSU-San Jose) regarding our 7th Cycle Program Review. We have found the report immensely helpful, constructive, and timely. The reviewers have commented on several parts. Our replies will be directed toward those parts more generally but we will also address and several sub-sections more specifically.

Part I. Overview of the program is positive and very encouraging.

Part 2.1: Program Planning. Reviewers have noted that the program's mission statement does not showcase the goals, strengths, and achievement of the program. They suggest that the goals of our undergrad program be reworded as "learning outcomes." We plan to revise the department's mission statement and make measurable learning outcomes more central to it. As the chair of the department, I plan to collaborate with the Curriculum Committee in order to develop a roadmap that help us achieve our new goals. Prof. Amy Skonieczny, the chair of the Curriculum Committee has expressed her willingness to have the Curriculum Committee take on the task of revising our department students learning objectives and presenting a draft of it in the Spring 2019. There is a broad consensus among our faculty, as noted by Prof. See-Won Byun, that our undergrad "learning outcomes" could highlight more explicitly the Department's multidisciplinary and diverse functional/regional expertise, and the program's practical relevance. Multiple sections of the same courses should/could be coordinated for overall coherence.

Part II.2: Student Learning and Achievement: In this section, the reviewers recommend that the department bring back Model UN and Model Arab League, currently absent, courses either through a new faculty hire to cover these courses, or by having the next line take up such courses. We will work toward submitting a request for two lines—one for International Organization and the other for International Security/Terrorism. Equally important for us, as reviewers have suggested, our new hires will help us revive our Model Simulation Programs. As pertinent and useful as this recommendation is, unfortunately, the department's immediate need to hire an expert on Security (conventional and non-conventional) and Feminism, as well international law/diplomacy, is far more urgent. In this regard, Prof. See-Won Byun states that our graduate program is more region-oriented than other MA programs in the country. Hence the need to hire a person with expertise in security.

Part III. Undergraduate Curriculum. This part of the report points to a lack of course offerings in research methodology. Most everyone in our department agrees that our program clearly lacks quantitative methodology classes and types of quantitative training that may help students find jobs. There is a broader sense among IR faculty in which offering a new course on research methodology, rather than arguing for the “replacement” of those faculty who have retired or left us, would be a much more effective approach that could complement our departmental vision and strategy for growth in the coming years.

Along these lines, Prof. Scott Siegel has started to incorporate more data analysis into his IPE course (IR 312), while noticing that the students’ skillsets in this area are somewhat underdeveloped. Prof. Siegel plans to design in the near future an introductory quantitative methods course geared toward problems/challenges facing international relations. Similarly, Prof. Juanita Darling has noted that for the past three semesters, she has taught IR 309 GW (International Relations Analysis and Application GWAR) with a piece of short writing (a two-page policy memo) early in the semester. She argues that students who finish that paper generally finish the class. Her conclusions are as follows: 1) The short paper is an effective early warning sign of students who have issues with writing; however, 2) it does not solve issues with writing. Students who are reluctant to write are no more inclined to write a short paper than a long one.

2.3 Curriculum

2.3.1 Undergraduate Curriculum: much is made here about IR 550 (Senior Thesis) and its demanding research paper’s length (45-50 pages). The report indicates that this course “has a relatively high dropout rate, as many students are unable to complete the required paper within the semester.” While we concur with the fact that finishing this course is challenging, we disagree with the statement that we have a high dropout in this class. The attached document from the University institutional Research shows that since fall 2013, IR 550 has had only 20 students with (D+, D, D-, F, WU) out of 577 students, with a DFW of 3%, which is an excellent rate for a six unit capstone thesis course. This rate shows that we don’t have a problem there (please see the attached chart). Furthermore, IR 550 enables students to deepen their understanding of an issue area and concepts and data associated with building knowledge in that particular topic. The focused research undertaken for the project connect the students to epistemic communities and professional networks on that issue, leading to excellent rates of graduate school acceptance and job opportunities that wouldn’t have been possible in the absence of the in depth research experience.

With regard to the length of the paper, there exists a general agreement in the department that the paper’s standard length be from 40 to 60 pages—or approximately 10000 to 15000 words. That said, the broader consensus in the department is that the long assignments in IR 550 and/or IR 898 (Master’s Thesis) teach skills that would not be gained otherwise. Furthermore, we believe that this matter needs to be fully examined and eventually settled by the Curriculum Committee.

2.3.2. Graduate Curriculum: The reviewers’ comments are overwhelming favorable when it comes to our graduate program. The only problem they cite is the lack of much exposure to a variety of *methods*, including statistical methods. In this regard, Prof. Juanita Darling has noted that she has revamped her IR 751 (Data Analysis and Evaluation Research in International Relations), with about 40% of the class dedicated to statistical methods. The absence of such

courses in our graduate program is an issue that our department plans to frontally address in our next departmental meeting.

2.4 Faculty: The report speaks to the strength and diversity of the faculty in IR Dept. The core suggestion here related to a more even-handed faculty workload distribution and advising responsibilities. This is emblematic of a major concern in our department, as Prof. Volk notes that, for instance, supports giving a teaching reduction for Grad Coordinator, and possibly teaching reduction for a designated Undergrad Advisor who would serve in that position on an annual or two year rotation; assign secondary MA thesis advisors in a more equitable fashion, realizing that students choose who their primary advisor is. Prof. Siegel echoes a similar sentiment, arguing that advising duties are concentrated among a few faculty members. Prof. Siegel suggests that either we appoint one person who can be present on campus most of the time and handles students' needs or assign all IR majors an advisor, evenly distributed amongst us, that they are required to meet with periodically, at least once a semester. Students can then construct positive informal relationships with another faculty member on their own. Likewise, Prof. Byun supports the idea of streamlining advising. For thesis advising, she suggests, "we could have students indicate research interests and allocate advisors accordingly."

Resources: some of the key recommendations here had to with the particular attention that needs to be paid to the resources that newly hired faculty and their needs dictates in terms of their research and teaching duties. While acknowledging that the AOC is extremely competent, they specifically pointed to the faculty's request that additional tasks be performed by her, going beyond the expectations of her position. We are working toward resolving the equity issue in advising with an alphabetically assigned advising system.

4. Recommendations and Strategies for Program Improvement: The reviewers' suggestion to create "a pool of designated advisors, who would receive training—such as university workshops—a course reduction" will be discussed in our future departmental meeting. So will their suggestions in terms of uploading past and present syllabi of courses as well as providing detailed roadmaps of recommended sequencing of courses for timely graduation. The updating of IR website and other related matters need to be discussed fully with all faculty members so that the lines of communications between the AOC and faculty are clearly established. All of our faculty believe that outreach to alumni needs further attention. In the past, we have made several efforts to effectively engage them. We should continue to do so in the coming months and years.

On balance, we express our deep gratitude to both reviewers for the time, energy, and efforts they have invested in this endeavor. Their thoughts, feedback, suggestions, and recommendations have been extremely helpful in nudging ahead successfully our department's strategic plans.

Sincerely



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Professor and Chair