TO: Greg Saltzman, chair, Public Policy major committee
FROM: Lisa Lewis
CC: Beth Lincoln
SUBJECT: Feedback on assessment plan for Public Policy major
DATE: October 20, 2010

Thank you for the submission of your assessment plan for the Public Policy major. Your work is very much appreciated. A subcommittee of the Assessment Committee reviewed your plan and has provided some feedback for you to consider as you continue your assessment of the Public Policy major.

Please don't hesitate to contact any of us about any of the comments that we provided below. The Assessment Committee wants to make this a successful process for you. We will be happy to work with you on revisions or development of the next steps.

Assessment Committee Contact Person: Lisa Lewis

Plan also reviewed by: Beth Lincoln

Comments specific to your plan:

Step 1: (Mission)

Looks good; it incorporates broad student learning goals.

Step 2: (Goals & Outcomes):

Comments: Very good outline of the five major learning outcomes.   Generally, we recommend the use of measurable active verbs in defining goals and outcomes.

Step 3: (Identify Program Components):

Comments: The mapping of the specific courses offered by the department to the five learning outcomes is excellent. Public Policy majors have a variety of course choices in fulfilling their requirements. The challenge here is to make sure that each course is still assessing student learning tied to the programmatic learning goal. If you would like some examples of how other interdisciplinary programs are meeting this challenge, we recommend that you review the assessment plans for the Ford Institute and/or the Center for Sustainability and the Environment.

Step 4: (Select methods/data sources and instruments):

Comments: Your plan to survey your four students to assess their perception on the extent to which the major helped them to achieve the learning objectives is a good indirect measure of student learning. We ask that you consider ways to obtain direct measures of student learning to compliment your indirect measures.

In assessing student learning, there are direct and indirect sources of evidence. Direct evidence is clear and convincing information about student learning, such as: tests, examinations, papers, projects, assignments, field experience assessments, and portfolios. These are particularly strong sources of evidence especially when accompanied by articulated standards (such as a rubric). On the other hand, with indirect evidence there is room for other factors to affect the outcomes either positively or negatively. Examples of indirect evidence include: retention, graduation, and placement rates (may be impacted by economic conditions or college policies); surveys of students and alumni (may indicate feelings about college experience); grades (standards and even content may differ across instructors and institutions).

For your next round of assessment plans and reports, please consider the comments, suggestions, and recommendations above, and incorporate these as feasible and appropriate. Overall, a good start toward developing and presenting an effective assessment plan for the program.

Next Steps:

In coordination with your Assessment Committee reviewers and their feedback, please observe the following deadlines for your assessment cycle:
· January 15: Revisions to Steps 1-4 and completion of preliminary data collection using indirect measures for Step 5.

TO: Lisa Lewis
FROM: Greg Saltzman, chair, Public Policy major committee
SUBJECT: assessment plan for Public Policy major
DATE: October 1, 2010

Below is a draft of the assessment plan for the Public Policy major. Other faculty members involved in the Public Policy major have not had an opportunity to give feedback on this draft. It is therefore possible that this draft may be subject to major revisions in the future.

Step1: Mission of Public Policy Major

The Public Policy major allows students to get a broad background in the relevant social sciences and humanities, while getting institutional knowledge and analytic tools relevant to current domestic public policy debates. The major prepares students for careers in government or for private-sector careers related to government policy. It also provides good preparation for students planning on attending law school or earning a master's degree in public policy, public administration, public health or social policy.

Step 2: Educational Goals and Outcomes

The Public Policy major produces graduates who:

1. Understand both economic and political issues relevant to analysis and implementation of government policy decisions.

2. Effectively communicate (in writing and orally) ideas, observations, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations to others in a variety of professional and personal contexts.

3. Possess a quantitative and qualitative toolkit to facilitate problem-solving and evaluate policy-related research.

4. Address policy issues and arguments critically and reflectively, across a range of disciplines.

5. Can work effectively with others who have different values or political views

Step 3: Program Components and Their Relationship to Goals and Outcomes

Goal	Program Component
Understand both economic and political issues relevant to analysis and implementation of government policy decisions	*Required courses* E&M 101 Principles of Microeconomics – Introduces concepts such as weighing benefits against costs, market efficiency, and market failures. Students distinguish average effects from incremental effects, clarifying the impact of a decision on subsequent changes. E&M 230 Intermediate Microeconomics – Addresses similar topics to E&M 101 at a more advanced level. E&M 322 Issues in Modern Political Economy – Addresses both substantive public policy issues and methods of policy evaluation such as cost-benefit analysis. PLSC 101 Politics of American Democracy – Examines the impact of legislators, elected executives, bureaucracy, interest groups, and political parties on the making of public policy. PLSC 216 Public Policy – Addresses both substantive public policy issues and methods of program and policy evaluation.
Effectively communicate (in writing and orally) ideas, observations, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations to others in a variety of professional and personal contexts	*Required course* E&M 322 – Requires students to prepare written papers on public policy and to give a PowerPoint presentation in which they argue on behalf of a specific public policy proposal. *Restricted elective* PLSC 323 Introduction to Constitutional Law – Requires writing and arguing of case briefs.
Possess a quantitative and qualitative toolkit to facilitate problem-solving and evaluate policy-related research	*Restricted electives* Math 109 Statistical Methods, Math 210 Introduction to Statistical Analysis, or E&M 235/235H Economic Statistics – Using statistical significance to assess the strength of evidence in support of a claim. A&S 224 Social Research, E&M 379 Econometrics, or PLSC 201Scope and Methods of Political Science – These courses differ substantially, but all address social science research methods relevant to policy research.
Address policy issues and arguments critically and reflectively, across a range of disciplines	*Required course* E&M 322 - Draws from economics, law, political science, history, and cognitive psychology. *Restricted electives* A&S 370 Social Stratification – Sociological perspectives on

	income and wealth inequality, education and social mobility, the reorganization of the workplace, poverty and social welfare. E&M 273 Environmental and Natural Resource Economics – Applies economic theory to analyze issues such as pollution control. PHIL 303 Business Ethics – Weighing profit maximization against corporate social responsibility, employee autonomy vs. corporate loyalty, and other issues from a philosophical perspective. PLSC 322 Crime, Politics, and Punishment – Examines connection between punishment and politics.
Can work effectively with others who have different values or political views	*Required course* E&M 322 – Requires students to read two books on affirmative action, one in favor and one opposed, and summarize and analyze the arguments of both books. Draws from economics, law, political science, history, and cognitive psychology. *Restricted electives* A&S 345 Race and Ethnicity – Presents alternative theories of racial and ethnic relations PHIL 206 Contemporary Moral Problems – Addresses a variety of issues on which there are intense disagreements, including abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering, sexual morality, gender and racial discrimination, corporate crime, pornography and censorship, the death penalty, ecology, world hunger. PHIL 304 Ethics and Public Policy – Considers how different ethnical values related to rights, obligations, justice, and autonomy help determine public policy.

Step 4: Data Sources Regarding Achievement of Learning Objectives

The Public Policy major has few students. This makes it hard to distinguish the impact of the program from the impact of the individual characteristics of the students who choose to complete the program. In May 2011, however, the largest cohort ever of Public Policy majors will graduate from Albion College: four students. We will conduct a survey of these four students to assess the extent to which the Public Policy major did, or did not, help them achieve the learning objectives for the program.

Step 5: Analyze and Interpret the Data

Data not yet collected.

Step 6: How will the data collected be used for decision-making, strategic planning, etc.

The committee overseeing the Public Policy major consists of Greg Saltzman (E&M, chair), Bindu Madhok (Philosophy), Gene Cline (Philosophy), Al Pheley (Ford Institute), and Bill Rose (Political Science). They will review and revise this assessment plan and consider the implications of the data we collect for possible curricular revisions.