

JULY 2021

APSA DEPARTMENT CHAIR QUARTERLY

WELCOME

by Dr. Holley Tankersley, Coastal Carolina University

Campus is (relatively) empty. Your email notifications show up every 28 minutes instead of every five minutes. Reports are being filed and plans are being made. Welcome to summer “break” as an administrator! While every campus has different expectations for chairs, program coordinators, and other administrators during the summer, I hope that your schedule allows you to stop, breathe, and reflect on your role and your accomplishments. This summer is an especially welcome respite from the COVID-19 pandemic. As you settle into your institution’s “new normal,” you may find yourself balancing traditional day-to-day operational responsibilities with questions about which pandemic-related changes are worth adapting as we return to our campuses in Fall 2021.



This edition of the Department Chair Quarterly is meant to assist administrators who are juggling a myriad of summer responsibilities. Whether you are reflecting on the past year or strategizing ways to make a positive impact moving forward, it is comprised of good advice – and a dose of reality – from experienced department chairs and innovative scholars. Cammy Shay, a longtime chair as well as an expert in integrative teaching and learning strategies for online and hybrid environments, reflects on how her division faculty has responded to the challenges of teaching and maintaining a sense of community throughout the pandemic. Robin Kolodny suggests an outreach project ideal for these summer months that can yield big dividends for departments in subsequent years. Many chairs and deans will spend time this summer writing reviews of their faculty; Phillip Ardoen takes a hard – but refreshingly honest – look at flaws in the way we evaluate faculty performance in research, teaching, and service. Finally, Tricia Stapleton and Melissa Michelson build from their 2021 article in *PS: Political Science & Politics* to offer chairs concrete advice on how to promote gender equity in their departments and colleges.

While there is much work to be done in the summer, I encourage you to make time for yourself. Engage in those restorative practices that help you to relax and reset. Kerry Ann Rockquemore, president of the National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity, offers great advice for faculty members who are battling emotional, intellectual, and physical fatigue. Whether you take Dr. Rockquemore’s advice to develop a “rage practice” (don’t knock it until you’ve tried it!) or simply focus on doing what matters, I urge you to engage in at least one self-care practice this summer. Establish it as a habit now so that you can fall back on that habit when the Fall semester brings its nonstop action and chaos.

As always, we welcome your input. If you would like to see us address a specific issue or concern in future issues of the Quarterly, or if you would like to volunteer a blog post or essay, simply email us at dsp@apsanet.org. Our goal is to feature the breadth of our discipline, from community colleges to teaching intensive to research intensive institutions.

Finally, we hope to see you at the 2021 Department Chairs’ Networking Luncheon at the 2021 APSA Annual Meeting and Exhibition in Seattle, Washington from September 30 – October 3, 2021. Keep an eye on the Departmental Services website for more details!

Best,
Holley

IN THE ISSUE...

Welcome from Professor of Political Science, Holley Tankersley

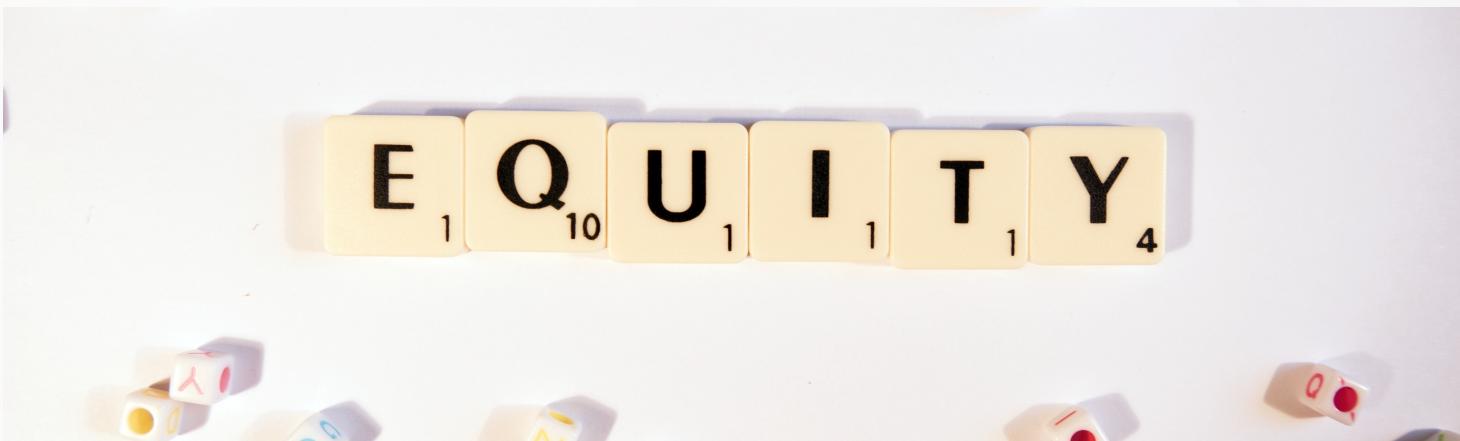
How Department Chairs Can Promote Gender Equity

The Challenge of Annual Faculty Evaluations: A Flawed Process

Post-Pandemic rEvolution Normal

How Chairs Best Use their Time Over the Summer

Department Program Spotlight



How Department Chairs Can Promote Gender Equity

by **Melissa R. Michelson**, Menlo College & **Patricia Stapleton**, RAND Corporation

The discipline of political science and academia more generally continue to evade fully realizing gender equity. Women are disproportionately burdened with service commitments, experience systematic bias in their student evaluations of teaching (SETs), and face institutional barriers to effective performance in their professional responsibilities. Department chairs can play an active role in mitigating these challenges and supporting the women in their departments. We outline the actions that department chairs should take.

First, chairs can maintain service-tracking systems to promote equity in service burdens carried by faculty, as outlined by "The Faculty Workload and Rewards Project" (O'Meara 2018).

A tracking system provides all faculty with information about how much service their colleagues are doing, including advising loads, class sizes, committee work, and administrative roles. Transparency about service commitments helps promote gender equity in service loads by making clear when women are asked to do more than others (and when men need to step up to do more). If possible, department chairs should reward faculty who take on higher service loads with course releases, pay raises, research support, or other forms of compensation (Pyke 2011).

Second, chairs can host discussions or otherwise share information with students, faculty, and administrators about how SETs are biased against women and people of color.

This perspective can inform how tenure and promotion committees interpret SET data, or even spark conversations about how to move away from reliance on SETs as the sole (or primary) means of evaluating teaching effectiveness. Informing students of these biases before administering SETs can mitigate the bias (Peterson et al. 2019).

Third, chairs should consider making public information about faculty salaries and other benefits (e.g., merit raises, research funds, and course releases)—aggregated in ways that protect individual privacy but that make clear any differences by gender and rank.

Chairs can also encourage individual faculty (especially men) to volunteer to share their own personal levels of support, so that women can see how well their own packages compare and whether they might be justified in asking for changes. Pay transparency helps to close the gender pay gap (Bennedsen et al. 2020). Department chairs should also set clear expectations regarding negotiation norms when hiring, and take proactive action to advocate for equity adjustments when there are discrepancies (Cheng et al. 2018).



"Department chairs should also set clear expectations regarding negotiation norms when hiring, and take proactive action to advocate for equity adjustments when there are discrepancies."

Finally, chairs should take a leadership role in communicating zero tolerance policies for sexism, including benevolent sexism.

Male faculty may need training to understand more subtle variations of sexism and to empower them to speak up (Drury and Kaiser 2014). Chairs should clearly communicate what men should do when they witness something inappropriate—whether they should challenge the inappropriate behavior or make a formal complaint. Sexism (and other biases) continue to present challenges to the individual and institutional success of political scientists and political science departments. Taking these steps to mitigate gender bias in departments not only supports individual women, but also generates a culture of inclusion and equity that benefits all faculty, staff, and students.

Chairs are not the only actors able to realize advances in gender equity in political science; all political scientists and administrators can play a role (see Stapleton and Michelson 2021). But chairs have substantial power to remake the culture and climate of their departments. Taking one or more of the steps outlined here, based in robust social science, are ways to exert that power effectively.

References

- Bennedsen, Morten, Elena Simintzi, Margarita Tsoutsoura, and Daniel Wolfenzon. 2020. "Do Firms Respond to Gender Pay Gap Transparency?" Washington, DC: National Bureau of Economic Research, April. www.nber.org/papers/w25435.
- Cheng, Shannon, Linnea Ng, Rachel C. E. Trump-Steele, Abby Corrington, and Mikki Hebl. 2018. "Calling on Male Allies to Promote Gender Equity in I-O Psychology." *Industrial and Organizational Psychology* 11 (3): 389–98.
- Drury, Benjamin J., and Cheryl R. Kaiser. 2014. "Allies against Sexism." *Journal of Social Issues* 70 (4): 637–52.
- O'Meara, Kerry Ann. 2018. "Undoing the Can of Worms" Inside Higher Ed, June 27. www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/06/27/how-make-faculty-service-demands-more-equitable-opinion.
- Peterson, David A. M., Lori A. Biderman, David Andersen, Tessa M. Ditonto, and Kevin Roe. 2019. "Mitigating Gender Bias in Student Evaluations of Teaching." *PLOS ONE* 15 (5): e0216241.
- Pyke, Karen. 2011. "Service and Gender Inequity among Faculty." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 44 (1): 85–87.
- Stapleton, Patricia A., and Melissa R. Michelson. 2021. "Disbanding the Old Boys' Club: Strategies for Departmental Gender Equity." *PS: Political Science & Politics* 54, 2: 20–22.

Dr. Melissa Michelson is Dean of Arts & Sciences and Professor of Political Science at Menlo College. Her academic work is solidly based in activist scholarship. Whether the focus is on members of the Latino, LGBTQ, or other marginalized groups, she uses her research to motivate greater equality and justice for all. Dr. Michelson went to graduate school to become a teacher and delights in leading classroom discussions, but also to write books that might make a difference, inspired by her undergraduate professor at Columbia University, Dr. Charles V. Hamilton. She has since written six books and dozens of journal articles and book chapters and is a nationally recognized expert in Latinx voter mobilization and LGBTQ politics.

Patricia Stapleton (she/her) is a political scientist at the RAND Corporation. Her research interests include science and technology policy, risk perception and regulation of emerging technologies, risk assessment and communication, and the development and evaluation of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. In particular, Stapleton's academic work has focused on the adoption and regulation of emerging technologies in food production and assisted reproductive technologies—with recent attention to CRISPR and human germline editing. She also investigates topics in food security, particularly in the context of climate change. Dr. Stapleton uses qualitative methods and an historical institutionalist approach to examine the factors impacting the development of risk regulation (i.e., timing, political and institutional contexts, and public opinion). She holds a PhD and MPhil in political science from the CUNY Graduate Center, as well as an MA in French literature from Rutgers University.

APSA DEPARTMENT MEMBERSHIPS



Join over 400 departments!

The Departmental Services Program (DSP) provides a forum for political science departments large and small to address common issues, and plan and develop publications and services for chairs, faculty, and students. The program, overseen by the Departmental Services Committee, supports political science teaching, scholarship, and service, and provides resources for department chairs.

<h4>STUDENT SPONSORED MEMBERSHIPS</h4>  <p>Masters and Ph.D. students enrolled in a program with an active departmental membership are eligible for a discount on membership each year.</p>	<h4>EJOBS POSTINGS</h4>  <p>Gain free access to the eJobs platform, the most comprehensive database of jobs related to political science, and post jobs at no additional charge.</p>
<h4>EXTERNAL REVIEW PROGRAM</h4>  <p>As a resource for APSA departmental members seeking external review, the Departmental Services Program maintains a list of faculty who have volunteered to serve as reviewers.</p>	<h4>DEPARTMENT PORTAL</h4>  <p>The new portal features a range of digital resources to support faculty and their leaders, serving as a centralized space for department members to access all of the benefits available to them.</p>
<h4>WEBINARS</h4>  <p>Members are invited to participate in periodic webinars on a range of topics relevant to department chairs.</p>	<h4>RESOURCE GUIDE</h4>  <p>A new resource guide with 30+ pages of links to articles and information for chairs of political science departments.</p>

INTERESTED?

The yearly dues for APSA Departmental Memberships vary based on department type and number of faculty. APSA Departmental Memberships run yearly from July 1st to June 30th of the following year, and memberships cannot be prorated.

Contact membership@apsanet.org to get started!



THE APSA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

by **Steven Rathgeb Smith**

Greetings!

I hope you and your family are healthy and OK in these challenging times. I am grateful for the opportunity to update you on programmatic developments at APSA, especially as it pertains to the concerns and priorities of department chairs. I also would like to express my appreciation for the excellent work of Alycia Chau in supporting our department chairs' programming and her efforts in the preparation of this quarterly newsletter. The APSA leadership believe department chairs are central to the success of our varied and growing array of programs in support of our membership. For this reason, we are actively increasing our support for department chairs through professional development resources like a recent panel on career diversity for political scientists, chaired by APSA president, Janet Box-Steffensmeier. We have also increased our professional development offerings at the upcoming 2021 annual meeting in Seattle which will be held in-person with a significant virtual component. We are looking forward to our traditional department chairs luncheon, and are also planning a career fair, drawing upon the many universities in the region as well as local non-academic employers. In addition, several panels are designed for graduate students and their career advancement and development. In the coming months, we also plan to increase our resources for department chairs on the APSA website.

We also regard department chairs as absolutely critical to APSA's priority goal of promoting greater diversity, equity and inclusion in the discipline. APSA has many longstanding programs to support diversity including the Ralph Bunche Summer Institute (RBSI) and the Diversity Fellowship Program (formerly the Minority Fellowship Program). However, the key role of political science departments in hiring, promotion and professional development, positions them as central to the long-term success of the association in creating a more diverse and inclusive discipline. Let me know if you have any comments or questions about APSA plans and programming. I can be reached at smithsr@apsanet.org.

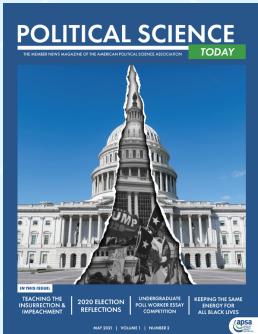
Sincerely,
Steve

PROGRAMS & UPDATES FROM APSA

Registration Open for the 2021 APSA Annual Meeting & Exhibition!

Join us in-person for the 117th American Political Science Association's Annual Meeting & Exhibition, September 30–October 3, in Seattle, Washington, or virtually from September 28–October 3, to address the latest scholarship in political science while exploring the 2021 theme, "Promoting Pluralism."

Click [here](#) to register now!



Renew Now! Departmental Memberships for the 2021-2022 Academic Year

Departmental Memberships are now open for renewals for the July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022 academic year. Easily renew online by logging into your account that is linked to the department. Questions? Email membership@apsanet.org. Learn more about Departmental Memberships.

Read the May Issue of *Political Science Today*

Political Science Today includes public scholarship, association updates, member spotlights, in memoriams, and more. Read the May issue online [here](#). Print issues will be distributed beginning in early May.

Department Program Spotlight

Is your department engaged in inclusive and innovative graduate student recruitment efforts? If so, APSA wants to hear about it and spotlight your program! The Diversity and Inclusion Program Spotlight features examples of recruitment and retention programs and initiatives that political scientists and departments are engaged in to increase and advance diversity and inclusion throughout the profession. Such efforts could include but are not limited to campus visits for students from underrepresented backgrounds, bridge programs, summer research training programs and matching bonuses for incoming graduate students. [Tell APSA about your department's program!](#)

Open Enrollment for Mentors

The [APSA Mentoring Program](#) seeks volunteers for new mentors for Spring 2021 to provide professional advice to political science undergraduates, graduate students, and junior faculty in the profession. We are especially seeking mentors for women, scholars of color, and LGBT individuals. Additionally, we are looking for mentors who research security studies, political philosophy, political behavior, and immigration to meet the needs of current mentees in the program.

APSA members interested in mentoring should log into the APSA website and update their [mentoring profile](#). Please email mentoring@apsanet.org with any questions about the program.

APSA Resources on Systemic Racism and Social Justice

Political scientists have long examined the linkages between race, power, governance, social justice, and oppression. APSA has compiled a collection of resources and scholarly work from political scientists to highlight a range of scholarly expertise that addresses these topics, identify a diverse array of resources that can be used to assist students and faculty in the classroom, and acknowledge that these themes are essential to the study of political science. Review and share the resources [here](#). We also encourage you to [submit a relevant resource for consideration here](#).

Annual Faculty Evaluations: A Flawed Process



by **Phillip Ardoine**, Appalachian State University

Completing the annual evaluation of faculty is one of the most important responsibilities of a Department Chair. The annual evaluation impacts faculty merit pay and is a critical role in a faculty member's tenure and promotion process. While the role of annual evaluations vary across campuses, for many departments one or more negative annual evaluations can significantly decrease the likelihood of a successful tenure and promotion vote for a junior faculty member. Moreover, consistent annual evaluations, which note a faculty member has met expectations, all but guarantees a positive tenure and promotion vote or at a minimum provides a faculty member with substantial cause for an appeal if they are denied tenure and promotion.

Therefore, the annual evaluation process is often one of the most difficult and challenging responsibilities of a Department Chair. Annual evaluations require us to provide honest and direct feedback to our colleagues. While these conversations can be enjoyable and even provide opportunities for mentoring, they can often be very uncomfortable when colleagues have not met the expectations of your department. I know I have spent many sleepless nights dreading annual evaluation meetings with colleagues who did not meet our expectations.

However, I recognize the responsibilities of leadership often require challenging conversations and uncomfortable situations. The more notable issue which makes annual evaluations difficult and the primary motivation for this blog post is the significant flaws with the standard measures chairs must rely on for annually evaluating our colleagues.

The standard dimensions used for evaluating our colleagues are (1) **research**, (2) **teaching**, and (3) **service**. Unfortunately, the standard measures for evaluating each of these dimensions is seriously flawed.

How does a chair or department measure quality/impactful research or the scholarly productivity of a faculty member?

Common methods of evaluating the quality or impact of faculty research include number of publications in ranked journals, number of publications, number of times faculty publications have been cited by other scholars, and number of citations in ranked journals. Unfortunately, each of these measures are plagued by biases and measurement error. Research (Atchison, 2017; Maliniak, Powers, and Walter, 2013) has highlighted substantial gender biases with citations, and significant concerns with journal impact factors led to more than 75 scholarly organizations signing the 2012 San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) condemning the measure. Moreover, scholars publishing in areas which are developing or not part of the mainstream are often significantly less likely to successfully publish in the "top" journals or to receive multiple citations.

For instance, my research on college student voting, which received little (or no) attention when published in 2015, has recently seen a spike in downloads and citations. The quality of my research on college voters did not improve, the political winds simply turned in my favor.

The most common methods of evaluating teaching are student evaluations of teaching (SETs) and peer evaluations by colleagues. Once again, each of these measures present significant issues of bias and measurement error. The significant equity and measurement biases of SETs have been well documented and most recently summarized by the work of Kreltzer and Cushman (2021). Considering the growing recognition of the significant problems with SETs, the University of California System has stopped using SETs as a way of evaluating teaching effectiveness and more than 20 scholarly associations have urged colleges and universities to stop using the evaluations as a way of judging teaching effectiveness. As an alternative or addition to SETs, many universities use peer evaluations.

"Service is critical to the functioning of any academic department and particularly those which believe in democratic governance."

While I am not familiar with the literature regarding the use of faculty peer evaluations of teaching, I have personally found them to be useless. The primary problem I have found during my seven years as department chair is that they lack variation. Specifically, faculty peer teaching evaluations indicate that all 36 of my colleagues consistently exceed expectations on all dimensions of teaching. As I have noted in our department discussions, one of the key characteristics of a variable is that it must vary. Peer evaluations of teaching in my department does not work as a variable for measuring teaching because it does not vary.

Service is critical to the functioning of any academic department and particularly those which believe in democratic governance. I am fortunate to chair a department that supports a culture of service. Faculty actively participate in thesis, curriculum, and even search committees, which are necessary for our department to function. Senior faculty also recognize that our interests will only be heard across campus if they are engaged in university committees. Measuring service, as with research and teaching, is flawed. Most Departments simply count the number of Department, University or Disciplinary committees an individual serves on or chairs. Unfortunately, all committees are not created equal. For instance, some faculty search committees may have to review 50 applications, while others may review 150 applications depending on the line. These differences grow exponentially with committee service outside of the department. I have served on several university committees which required nothing more than showing up for 2 or 3 brief meetings while other committees have felt like a second job requiring weekly meetings after hours and weekends.

In summary, the annual evaluation is broken. As a discipline, we have documented and debated the fatal flaws of measuring research and teaching. Unfortunately, we have spent less time discussing alternatives and improved measures of evaluating faculty research, teaching, and service.

Phillip Ardoine serves as Chair of the Department of Government and Justice Studies at Appalachian State University. He serves with Dr. Paul Gronke as Co-Editor of PS: Political Science and Politics, the journal of record for the American Political Science Association. His research interests address a broad array of issues within the field of American Politics. He is currently working on several research projects that range from an analysis of factors which influence Partisan Polarization in the N.C. General Assembly to an examination of the influence of college student voting on local elections throughout the United States and attitudes of political elites regarding college student voting.

The Chair's Summer

by Robin Kolodny, Temple University

I've been asked to write about how chairs might best use their time over the summer. This suggests you have free time (!). Still, most of us do have a moment when the email requests slow down, and you can take a look at the landscape of what you finished and what you might do to make things work better in the fall.

Most department chairs' duties will depend on whether they have a campus that is decisive about fall COVID-19 arrangements. I do not have such a campus. Changes being made to the fall schedule don't involve me now, but I will need to get involved later down the road. But if you do have a decisive campus, a great deal of that will be done already.

My main, and consistent, summer work has been around extending alumni outreach. By this, I mean making connections at the department level, even if your institution does a reasonable job keeping in touch with alumni. Especially at this juncture in American politics, making our current students aware of the paths former students are on is vital. Running for office doesn't seem like a far-fetched plan. Acquiring data analysis skills can now lead places we never saw political science majors go. Social activism is now a necessity, not a nuisance.

I've developed a multi-pronged strategy for alumni outreach and after five years, I can see how much it is paying off. Here are the things that have worked for us:

1. Social media presence on multiple platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter;
2. Connecting alums and current students through professional networking resources, especially LinkedIn;
3. Creating alumni groups in these venues (especially on LinkedIn);
4. Asking alums to mentor recently graduated students;
5. Requesting that alums, current students, and friends of your department post internship and job openings on LinkedIn or Facebook or share them directly with you.

Some departments can obtain lists of their alums quite readily from their institution. Others will find this surprisingly difficult. If you don't have a list, the first thing I would do is create an alumni group on LinkedIn and a Facebook page. You will be surprised at how quickly alums will find you! LinkedIn also allows you to search for people who have degrees from your school and that list can be further refined by area of employment. Social media's intrinsic beauty is the way it facilitates networking.

Once you have found these alums, what would you like to tell them? If you have an annual report or newsletter, send it to them. You'll be surprised how interested they are in your department news. Next, explicitly invite them to send you any news about themselves or professional opportunities they may have for your current students. I have found the easiest way to make this work is to create a new email address for people to send this information. Then, student workers manage the inbox, forwarding good leads to relevant social media platforms.

I'm now in my sixth (and final) year of chairing, and I am now seeing the alumni outreach paying off. While we might have convinced a handful of alums to donate to the department, the biggest impact has been getting first dibs on good job openings and competitive internship programs. The next best effect has been finding mentors for our freshly graduated students. In one mentor match last year, the mentor moved on to another job and coached his mentee on how to get his current job (she landed it!). We've also benefitted from having our alums running for office reaching out to ask for interns. That's a double win of seeing that they too could run for office while giving them a valuable internship experience.

You won't get an immediate response from all of your alums at first. This takes time. But having places for them to find you helps immensely. Once you invest some effort this summer, you'll get a trickle of requests to join your LinkedIn groups throughout the year.

All of us appreciated a class or professor years after we had them. We may have even disliked it at the time. Likewise, you will be surprised by some of the former students who respond most quickly. And then you'll hopefully see alumni outreach as time well spent.



Robin Kolodny serves as Chair of the Department of Political Science at Temple University. Her research and teaching interests lie in campaigns, electoral systems, legislative studies, and comparative politics. She also writes extensively on political consultants and campaign finance in the US. Kolodny served as President of Pi Sigma Alpha, the national political science honor society from 2010 to 2012, was a 1995 APSA Congressional Fellow, and was named a Fulbright Distinguished Scholar to the UK in 2008-2009.



Post-Pandemic (r)Evolution Normal

by Cammy Shay, Houston Community College

The shocks of the pandemic can color the way we reflect on the experiences of the past 16-months. Still, without sounding too Pollyannaish, I've considered the **constructive lessons** we've learned in my department after being thrust into the new—and completely different—pandemic normal. The lessons are many. As chair of an 80-member department, I am delighted with how the faculty adapted their teaching practice to this new normal. Now, heading into the 2021-22 academic year, the challenge is to hone those lessons as we return to campus in what I'm calling a post-pandemic (r)evolution normal. I'm pleased to share with this larger community as the changes we've experienced are nothing short of revolutionary!



Remote Mentoring

The scene is late February 2020, and I had just become aware of the pandemic's rapid disruptions. Emails fly off my keyboard as I alert the faculty to start thinking about using Canvas ASAP. Then, Spring Break--and more disruptions--arrived. **The sudden shift to remote work and online learning obligated me to reach out to full- and part-time faculty for help moving some 40 faculty members, or half of the department, into online teaching using synchronous and asynchronous tools.** We paired online teachers with those who had little to no experience beyond using the Canvas grade book through the rapid development of a remote mentoring system. The learning curve was steep, but we were ready to go.

The collaboration among full- and part-time faculty members through this remote mentoring initiative strengthened our work and allowed us to continue developing online instructional skills. The combination of technical and pedagogical help and moral support offered by the mentors showed me that we could lay a strong foundation for building our capacity for the coming academic year. I am very impressed with the ways the instructional faculty stepped up to meet the COVID-19 challenges. Beyond the pandemic, we are faced with regular environmental challenges due to climate change. I can now say we have the ability—and agility—to adapt to hurricanes or winter storms or whatever else nature throws our way that may shut down our campuses.

"It is my hope (and plea) that political scientists will continue to provide open access to their webinars. As we move into the next academic year, all instructors will be encouraged to add relevant online content and political science research regardless of the mode of instruction of their classes."

Synchronous Capabilities

In preparation for the 2020-21 academic year, we had to augment our nascent skills in synchronous instruction. Despite the College having a robust online program, most classes were taught asynchronously. Now, with access to WebEx, Kaltura, and Zoom, individual faculty members could choose the tool that best suited their needs. The department offered support by designating one of the associate chairs as our "techie." **Having a technology point person in the department expedited help for relatively simple issues;** the College provided support for more serious matters. Additionally, College-wide training sessions helped make synchronous teaching more engaging.

Now that most faculty members are comfortable using streaming technology, I expect to see virtual synchronous office hours, supplemental instruction, review sessions, and even guest speakers used in campus-based and online classes. Furthermore, the College now offers remote synchronous classes (Online on a Schedule) in addition to asynchronous courses (Online Anytime). There is considerable excitement among some faculty to teach the Online on a Schedule classes, and students are voting in favor of them with their enrollment decisions.

New Professional Development

The confluence of the pandemic, social movements for justice, and the 2020 elections unleashed a flood of open-access webinars by people in teaching and learning, political science, and related fields. Instructors needed access to pedagogical information to support online teaching and current research-based information about what was going on in the United States and around the world in the face of so much change. Suddenly, our promising-but-young Canvas-based Teaching Resources shell received infusions of new source material; another associate chair took charge of building it out. It has grown to include links to many of these webinars and information about the pandemic, wellness, and other content material for the courses in our catalog. I am incredibly excited to have political science research presented by the authors themselves shared with our students, which was entirely beyond our reach before the pandemic. **It is my hope (and plea) that political scientists will continue to provide open access to their webinars.** As we move into the next academic year, all instructors will be encouraged to add relevant online content and political science research regardless of the mode of instruction of their classes.

Moreover, the pandemic meant that professional conferences moved online. Faculty members had unparalleled—and low cost—access to remote conferences in pedagogy and political science. I was able to push out information regularly and encourage participation in ways never imagined before. As with webinars, I hope that remote conference options will be available after we return to campus.

Remote Professional Engagement

Though many faculty members lamented the loss of classroom interactions with students and professional and social conversations with colleagues, we became aware of the many ways we can use streaming technology to communicate in real-time and face-to-face. Remote College-wide and department meetings eliminated the need to drive around the vast Houston metro area that the College serves. Quick conversations or meetings are easier to arrange. Collaboration on projects is simpler to schedule. And, as noted earlier, virtual office hours and supplemental instruction better meet the needs of students. **The convenience of live-streaming is near-universally acknowledged as one of the critical positives to come out of this pandemic.** I look forward to more engagement with instructors in my large and diffuse department using video conferencing tools as we move into the new academic year. Not only will my time be utilized more strategically, but faculty members won't have to face the burden of navigating Houston's notorious freeways to get to my office!

Relationships with Students

Finally, a change deepened by the pandemic is **how instructors perceive their relationships with their students.** Learning from students about the losses they experienced during the pandemic, (loved ones, employment, finances, their health) while striving to continue their studies, peeled back the veneer of academic distance to expose the visceral reality of their lives. The encouragement, support, and guidance the faculty offered their students and how students responded proved to us that compassion does not compromise the quality of instruction. Instead, it increases trust by building deeper connections. Going forward, the leadership team will launch a department-wide inclusive teaching initiative that will build on the foundational experiences of faculty and students during the pandemic. With online access to excellent resources provided by teaching and learning experts, we will fashion our initiative to improve student outcomes in all of our courses.

Teamwork

A department chair's work is often lonely, all the more so when it is done remotely. My work has been supported and augmented by others in the department leadership team, including two Associate Department Chairs (Dr. Veronica Reyna and Dr. Steven Tran), the Program Coordinator (Ms. Brenda Riddick), and a most capable Administrative Assistant (Ms. Ana Garza). Without their consistent support and willingness to dig into the challenges we faced, we would not have succeeded in moving our department forward. With them, I can look forward to building upon our successes as the department continues its post-pandemic revolution.

Cammy Shay is the Chair of the Government Department at Houston Community College, where she got her start in teaching while attending grad school at Rice University. She has accumulated 15 years of experience in department leadership positions, from Associate Chair to Chair. In addition to her Chair responsibilities, she is creating a Department Chair Survival Kit to help incoming Chairs adjust to the demands of the position.

Explore APSA's NEW DEPARTMENT PORTAL



The Department Portal features a range of digital resources to support faculty and their leaders, serving as a centralized space for department members to access all of the benefits available to them. Available resources support:

Making your department more diverse, equitable, and inclusive



Undergraduate and graduate student recruitment



Faculty Hiring



Materials to support improvements in teaching and civic education



External Review



Tips and strategies for department leaders



Contact
membership@apsanet.org
to gain access to the
Department Portal today!

**If you have any questions about APSA
programming and departmental member
benefits, please let us know.** If you need to
notify APSA of any changes to current
department officers, please do so [**here**](#).

Contact the APSA Departmental Services
Program at [**dsp@apsanet.org**](mailto:dsp@apsanet.org).



American Political Science Association

1527 New Hampshire Ave NW

Washington, DC

20036-1206

Phone: (202) 483-2512

Fax: (202) 483-2657

