

**POLITICAL SCIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
OKLAHOMA, 1975-2001**

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When I joined the Department of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma in January of 1975 on a one-semester visiting appointment, I was the only non-tenured member of the faculty. A substantial majority of faculty members were tenured full professors. I served on a visiting appointment for a year and a half before obtaining a tenure-track appointment. During that time, the University revised its promotion and tenure requirements to extend the probationary period from four to six years, and the Department substantially enhanced its research expectations.

Thus, I entered the Department on the cusp of its transformation from a teaching-oriented faculty to one that stressed research as well as teaching. While there were at that time a substantial number of faculty members, most hired in the previous ten years, who had active research agendas, from the mid-1970s forward all newly hired members of the faculty were expected to pursue research as well as teach well. A research faculty appropriate to the needs of a comprehensive research institution was in the making.

Of course, the transition was not quick. Those senior faculty members who defined their role primarily in terms of teaching did not turn into avid researchers. Instead, the transition of the Department was accomplished very gradually by attrition, as retiring faculty were replaced by a new generation of research faculty. This process was given impetus in the mid-1980s due to the changes in the Oklahoma Teachers Retirement System, which made retirement more attractive. Still, the process of building a stable research faculty has been slow. Today around one half of the faculty are on tenure-track.

Aside from generational turnover, the other main feature in the evolution of the Department has been institutional development. The Political Science Department at OU has always been entrepreneurial, and the University has fostered a climate in which entrepreneurs could build programs. When I arrived in 1975 the Department had already created the Bureau of Government Research, the Science and Public Policy Program and the Advanced Programs in Public Administration. A program in International Relations had been undertaken but closed down in the 1960s.

Since 1975 the Department has witnessed a continuing ebb and flow in program development. The Advanced Programs in Public Administration has continued to thrive, albeit at reduced levels of deployment. Whereas twenty years ago we offered the MPA degree in Europe, the Pacific, and at various locations in the continental United States, we are now offering courses at a half dozen locations in the United States. Three years ago we lost the Pacific MPA contract but a new round of contract bidding is in the offing and it is possible that we will resume instruction in the Pacific theater. In the meantime, OU has begun offering an interdisciplinary international relations degree in Europe, and a number of our faculty are teaching in that program.

In 1979 the Carl Albert Congressional Research and Studies Center was created, bringing new faculty strength in American institutions. In the mid-1980s the Bureau of Government Research was the victim of the crash in the oil industry and the budgetary crunch that it produced. During the late 1980s and early 1990s the Science and Public Policy Program, under the leadership of Tom James, continued its close relationship with the Department, even though colleagues Jack White, Don Kash, and Steve Ballard had left the university.

In the mid-1990s the Department began a new period of creative growth. The Bureau of Government Research was recreated as the Institute for Public Affairs. The Department severed its last link with Science and Public Policy when Tom James moved over to head up IPA and colleague Rajeev Gowda departed. IPA now conducts over \$400,000 per year in externally funded research.

Under the leadership of President Boren, the International Programs Center was created, led by our colleague Ed Perkins. This produced a number of jointly appointed faculty positions of which four are in Political Science: Suzette Grillot, Mitchell Smith, Eiji Kawabata, and Renee de Nevers. Just this past year, President Boren created a new School of International and Area Studies with departmental status, and appointed our colleague Bob Cox as its first director. The IPC and SIAS are closely related and the Department has strong links to each. Other faculty appointed full-time in the Department in the fields of International Relations and comparative Politics - Steve Sloan, Larry Hill, Charlie Kenney, Greg Russell, and Brian Taylor - add further strength.

Another Boren initiative has been the creation of the University of Oklahoma Public Opinion Learning Laboratory (OUPOLL). This state of the art survey research center has begun to develop clientele among state agencies, media organizations, and private organizations. This year it will conduct nearly \$500,000 of externally funded research. In connection with the development of OUPOLL, the Department has enhanced its faculty resources in political behavior, with Professors Paul Martin and Michele Claibourn joining Gary Copeland and Keith Gaddie in offering expertise in this area.

Even as the Department has diversified it has retained its core strengths in American politics, public administration, and public policy. The Carl Albert Center and its faculty - Director Gary Copeland, Associate Director Cindy Rosenthal, and myself - provide a foundation in American institutions. Tom Keck provides expertise in public law, and Ann Marie Szymanski offers strength in American political institutions, American political thought, religion and politics, and political theory.

The public administration field has experienced considerable turnover among its faculty, and our MPA and undergraduate public affairs and administration degree is now served by a strong group of faculty. These include Larry Hill, Tom James, Cindy Rosenthal, Jos

Raadschelders, Aimee Franklin, and Jill Tao. This year we are seeking to fill two positions in public administration and public policy.

President Boren has helped the Department in this area as well. In 1996 he assigned the Bellmon Chair in public service to the Department. Dave Morgan was named to the Bellmon Chair at the time, and upon his retirement last year, Jos Raadschelder was named to the position. The Bellmon Chair serves the Department, University, and state by offering a linkage between the academy and the world of political and administrative practice. Each year the Bellmon Lecture brings to campus an outstanding scholar or practitioner.

These various institutional developments have helped shape the faculty. The Department has institutional strengths in American politics, public administration/policy, and international relations/comparative politics. Our faculty are now spread relatively evenly across these fields of study. Whereas two decades ago the Department was substantially understaffed in international relations and comparative politics, we now have a solid faculty core in these areas. This has led to intellectual diversity as well. Faculty members pursue behavioral institutional research in American politics, public law, political theory, theoretical and applied policy analysis, historical approaches to American political development and public administration, survey research, public opinion and political psychology, international relations theory and practice, and area studies in Europe, the post-Soviet republics, Latin America, the Pacific Rim, the commonwealth nations, and the global South. I should also mention that political theory is alive and kicking as well. Don Maletz, the primary faculty member in the field, is joined by a number of other faculty members who share strong interests in theory and teach courses from time to time.

Faculty research has reached new levels. Half of the faculty have books that are recently published, in press, or forthcoming in the next two years. Faculty are publishing in the leading journals including the *American Political Science Review*, *World Politics*, *Social Science Quarterly*, *Political Research Quarterly*, *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Public Administration Review*, *American Journal of Political Science* and others. Faculty have also been recognized with grants and fellowships to pursue their research including, for example, funding from the Fulbright Fellowship program (Bob Cox and Charlie Kenney), the German Marshal Fund (Bob Cox), the Smith-Richardson

Foundation (Brian Taylor), the Social Science Research Council (Eiji Kawabata), and the Carnegie Endowment (Brian Taylor).

The increased level of faculty research has also led to increased research by our graduate and undergraduate students. Recent graduates of our Ph.D. program have received national and regional awards for their work, including four American Political Science Association dissertation awards. Students are collaborating with faculty in research. The Carl Albert Center and the OU Honors College sponsor research programs that enable outstanding undergraduate students to work with faculty, and several faculty members have participated as mentors and collaborators with undergraduate students.

The emphasis on research has not come at the expense of teaching. Our faculty continues to take teaching very seriously, from our commitment to Political Science 1113, American Federal Government, right on up to our doctoral seminars. A number of our faculty have received multiple teaching awards, including David Ray (who has primary responsibility for 1113 instruction and our teaching development program for graduate students), Don Maletz, Allen Hertzke, Shad Satterthwaite, and myself. Professor Cindy Rosenthal was named outstanding assistant professor in the College of Arts and Sciences, a high honor. I should also mention that President Boren teaches 1113 every semester and was honored by the University's award for excellence in teaching a general education course.

Thus, two key characteristics have marked the Department's development over the past twenty-five years: the transition from a teaching-oriented department to one stressing both teaching and research, and the diversification of the Department across the main fields of the discipline. These changes have created new opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students. At the graduate level, students now have options to pursue major fields in fields other than American politics, public administration, and public policy, the traditional choices. While it remains to be seen how the pattern of doctoral dissertations will evolve, students confront many new possibilities.

At the undergraduate level, the Department has participated in the national trend toward declining enrollments at comprehensive research universities. In 1991 the Department enrolled over 900 majors in three undergraduate degrees (political science, public affairs/administration, and law enforcement administration). Today that number is between

300 and 350. A major reason for the decline was the termination of the Law Enforcement Administration degree upon the retirement of Professor Sam Chapman, who had been responsible for it. On the bright side, the quality of our undergraduate majors has continued to improve as evidenced by their ACT/SAT scores and grade point averages.

One major trend of recent years that cannot go unmentioned is the use of technology in the classroom and in lieu of the classroom. A number of faculty members now utilize computer applications and computer-enhanced presentation techniques. The University is adopting a Blackboard platform for on-line applications. The Department currently is in the planning stages of implementing its first distance learning courses. These things appears pretty daunting to Luddites like me, but many of our newer faculty members take to technology as fish to water.

So, in the year 2001 the Department of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma is a true microcosm of the discipline at large. We have faculty strength and organized institutional presence in every field of the discipline. Some will say that this diversity comes at a price. By covering most bases, we fail to concentrate our strengths in any area. This may be thought to limit the Department's potential to climb in the rankings of graduate research departments. We are not a "theme" department nor have we fought to battle in which a victor claimed the field and banished the defeated. But we are generally a healthy and happy lot, intellectually diverse and interesting, productive and, importantly, at peace.