

**Report from the Department of Political Science
University of Illinois at Chicago
For The PFF 4 How To Manual**

**by Dick Simpson
April, 2002**

Organizing Our Program

The Political Science Department at the University of Illinois at Chicago had been planning two years ago to revise its graduate program even before we received the Preparing Future Faculty Program (PFF) grant. We were revising our curriculum because of the arrival of new faculty and our switch from a more specialized multi-disciplined Public Policy Analysis Ph.D. to a more general Political Science Ph.D.

Based upon our curriculum planning, the PFF grant application process, and a PFF national conference which provided us with “best practices” from other PFF experiments throughout the country, we organized our PFF program around the following building blocks:

- 1) We created two new PFF courses: a) Introduction to the Political Science Profession and 2) Teaching Political Science as a two course sequence. The first course was required of all new Ph.D. students and the second was required of all Teaching Assistants and others interested in a teaching career.
- 2) Our university, through its Council for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL), began offering a series of workshops on teaching techniques in conjunction with our course in Teaching Political Science. CETL also provided a certificate attesting to our students’ training in teaching for those who created their own teaching portfolio and took our PFF class and three CETL workshops.
- 3) We improved our mentoring and supervision of the 15-20 graduate students

serving as Teaching Assistants each year, beginning them as graders and discussion group leaders in introductory courses and , later in their career, allowing some to teach their own independent courses.

4) Through our ten Partner Institutions, including both community colleges and four year colleges, students work as adjunct faculty under the supervision and mentoring of partner institution faculty. (Some PFF students instead have full-time appointments as high school and community college faculty.)

5) Our university provides up to three tuition and fee waivers and one \$1000 PFF fellowship each semester for PFF students serving as adjunct faculty at partner institutions since adjunct salaries are frequently paid less than Teaching Assistant at UIC.

6) We have our students practice presenting their conference papers before they attend conferences – especially the Midwest Political Science Association each spring where many of our students present papers or poster sessions.

7) In addition to the commitment of the Department Head, the Director of Graduate Studies, department faculty teaching in the Political Science Profession course, and faculty at partner institutions who coordinate and guest lecture in the Teaching Political Science course, provide tours of their campus for PFF students, and serve on the PFF steering committee – the entire program is headed by a Director of PFF who oversees the program, raises funds, negotiates university support, awards the tuition waivers and PFF fellowships, and places PFF students in their adjunct faculty appointments at partner institutions.

Taken together these elements better introduce our students to the profession, stimulate their conference papers and publications, better train them to teach, and help them to get better jobs at the end of their training.

Graduate and Partner Faculty Activities

Our division of labor is very straightforward. Graduate faculty at UIC direct the program, teach the Introduction to the Political Science Profession course and mentor and supervise our graduate students in their first teaching experiences as Teaching Assistants. Partner faculty teach the Teaching Political Science course, share their experiences as faculty at very different types of institutions, hire our students as adjunct faculty at their colleges, and supervise their first full teaching responsibilities on their own in the classroom. Both faculties provide advice and guidance to our graduate students as they mature into the profession.

Graduate Student Experience

Our graduate students response to the program has been very positive. We have had 24 students take the POLS. 506 (Introduction to the Political Science Profession) and 21 students take the POLS. 510 (Teaching Political Science). Almost all students taking POLS. 510 have also served as UIC Teaching Assistants. Twenty-one students have obtained their CETL teaching certificates and have created their own teaching portfolios. Seven tuition and fee waivers and two PFF Fellowships have been awarded in the first two years of the program. Fourteen of our students have presented conference papers in the last two years and several have published coauthored papers with our faculty. Perhaps, most importantly, four PFF students have held full-time positions and six have held adjunct positions at our partner institutions or comparable colleges.

Our students have been uniformly positive in their formal, written evaluations of the PFF courses. Ph.D. Student Cheryl Brandt, who has gone through the entire PFF program and served on the PFF steering committee from the beginning, is now applying for a full-time teaching position at community colleges. She says of PFF:

The PFF program has not only made me a better teacher but strengthened both my credentials and my self-confidence as I apply for the community college teaching position I have always wanted. My enhanced PFF credentials – in addition to my substantive course work – helped me get a phone interview for a job at the first community college to which I applied. Materials from my teaching portfolio and job hunting advice from my PFF teacher helped me to become well prepared for the job market. Because of PFF, I am confident that in the near future that I'll get hired, even in this tight job market.

Evaluation, Recognition, and Awards

In addition to written evaluations by the PFF students of the PFF courses, the evaluations of our Teaching Assistants at UIC since we instituted the PFF program have dramatically improved. One of the important outcomes has been that we as a Department are doing a better job of teaching our Undergraduate, not just our Graduate Students.

These are some of the faculty evaluations of the teaching of PFF students:

“Anita was outstanding, reliable, and strives to excel in pedagogy.”

“Anita, based on my observations and student reports...did an excellent job as a discussion leader.”

“Randy presented an interesting, well-prepared and clearly organized lecture. He

is a very good teacher who is at ease in the classroom and clearly has fun with the material and the students. He is articulate, animated, poised, and very comfortable teaching.”

“John will become a wonderful professor.”

“John was able to engage the interest of his students...The students were asked to think yet were clearly enjoying themselves....John – to his credit – has been able to develop a rapport with his students that is rewarded in the work they are willing to do for him.”

During the last two years of PFF, we have also had more students presenting conference papers at professional meetings and coauthoring published journal articles with our faculty than even before.

Likewise our PFF faculty have received a number of honors. Professor Constance Mixon of Richard Daley Community College teaches our PFF course, POLS. 510: Teaching Political Science. Since she has begun doing so, she has received tenure at Daley College and she was awarded the prestigious Carnegie Foundation “Illinois Professor of the Year Award” in 2001. UIC Professor Dick Simpson, who is Director of PFF, was nominated by the Department and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences for the highest teaching award given by the campus, The UIC Teaching Excellence Award. Both Professors Mixon and Simpson received their nominations and awards in part because of their documented contributions to our department’s PFF program.

Furthering PFF in the Discipline of Political Science

Thus far, we have made presentations on our PFF program twice at Illinois Political

Science Association and once at the American Political Science Association (and we are scheduled to make a second presentation at APSA next fall). We have provided information on our departmental website and the APSA website, and are preparing articles for next winter's **PS** journal on political science published by APSA. We have made presentations at the special Political Science Department Chairs' meetings and workshops which occurs immediately before the APSA meeting last year and we will again this year. We have collaborated with the other three PFF political science programs in developing and improving programs in each of our departments and regions.

Institutionalization

We have institutionalized one of the PFF courses completely within our own departmental budget and UIC has institutionalized the CETL workshops and teaching certificates. We have sufficient funds for next year (2002-2003) to offer the second course on Teaching Political Science. Even with significant budget cuts because of lost state financing since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 (-3% in 2001 and an additional -6% in 2002), we expect to be able fully to institutionalize the second course by 2004.

We have two PFF discipline programs at UIC – English and Political Science. We are in discussion with the Chancellor, Provost's office, and Graduate College about expanding these programs to more departments at UIC. However, the budget cuts have put immediate expansion to UIC departments on hold. All university officials agree on the desirability of expanding PFF to all departments following the Political Science and English Department models. We are currently seeking additional funding to make implementing this possible. Over time the costs of PFF will be able to be absorbed by various units in the university but not in the next year or two.

Ideas for Further Work

I think the quickest way to advance PFF would be to award additional grants to universities (and their clusters of partner institutions) to expand from one or two departmental PFF programs to five or ten departmental programs. The grants could require an equal match for the university and departments. Even a \$25,000 grant per university could leverage a doubling or tripling of the PFF programs immediately until a critical mass was reached on those campuses across disciplines.

Further Information

Contact Persons: Dick Simpson, PFF Director, simpson@uic.edu

Marilyn Getzov, Assistant to the Dept. Head, getzov@uic.edu

Resources particularly helpful in developing our program were the oral and written information about best practices at different universities presented at the PFF national conferences in 2000 and 2001.