TO: Assessment Committee

FROM: Greg Saltzman, chair, Public Policy major

SUBJECT: Survey of graduating seniors in Public Policy

DATE: May 3, 2011

Four seniors graduating in May 2011 are completing the Public Policy major. I asked these students to complete a two-part survey instrument, and all completed it. The first part requested anonymous feedback about the major. The second part asked about their plans and contact information after graduating from Albion. Appendix 1 presents the survey instrument for the first part. Appendix 2 presents the complete results for the first part (feedback about the Public Policy major) as well as what the four graduating seniors are doing after graduation.

Feedback from the four graduating seniors indicates that the Public Policy major is a successful academic program. Two of the seniors reported that they were “very satisfied” overall with Albion’s Public Policy major, and the other two reported that they were “somewhat satisfied.” None reported that they were “very dissatisfied,” “somewhat dissatisfied,” or “neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.” On all of the specific questions about detailed attributes of courses for the Public Policy major, the answers were more favorable than unfavorable.

The Public Policy major seems to be particularly good at preparing students to “Work effectively with others who have different values or political views.” An area where the Public Policy major seems to be not as strong is instructor feedback to students about students’ work. In open-ended comments, students seemed to value A&S 224 Social Research, E&M 101 Principles of Microeconomics, PHIL 304 Ethics and Public Policy, PLSC 216 Public Policy, and statistics. Students were split about E&M 230 Intermediate Microeconomics and E&M 322 Issues in Modern Political Economy: each course drew positive comments from one student and negative comments from two students. One student was unhappy with the Political Science courses.

Three of the four graduating seniors have been admitted to graduate or professional programs: the PhD program in political science at Michigan State University, the JD program at Loyola University of Chicago, and the master of education program at Aquinas College. The fourth graduating senior has chosen to work for a year after graduation; she may eventually pursue an MPH.

APPENDIX 1: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Albion College

**Public Policy Major – Graduating Senior Survey**

April 2011

***Part I: Required Courses for Public Policy Major***

In this section, you will be asked a series of questions about REQUIRED courses for the Public Policy major:

* E&M 101 Principles of Microeconomics
* E&M 230 Intermediate Microeconomics
* E&M 322 Issues in Modern Political Economy
* PLSC 101 Politics of American Democracy
* PLSC 216 Public Policy
* Statistics (E&M 235, Math 109, or Math 210)
* Research methods (A&S 224 Social Research, E&M 379 Econometrics, or PLSC 201 Scope and Methods of Political Science)

*To what extent did one or more of these required courses contribute to your ability to:*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Not at***  ***All*** | ***To***  ***Some***  ***Extent*** | ***Adequately*** | ***More***  ***Than***  ***Adequately*** | ***Extremely***  ***Well*** |
| Understand economic and political issues relevant to analysis and implementation of government policy decisions |  |  |  |  |  |
| Effectively communicate (in writing and orally) ideas, observations, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use quantitative and qualitative techniques for problem solving and policy evaluation |  |  |  |  |  |
| Address policy issues and arguments critically and reflectively, across a range of disciplines |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work effectively with others who have different values or political views |  |  |  |  |  |

*How often did the following occur in the* ***required*** *courses you took for the Public Policy major?*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Almost***  ***Never*** | ***Occasionally*** | ***Usually*** | ***Almost***  ***Always*** |
| Assignments and class activities were clearly explained |  |  |  |  |
| We did things that required students to be active participants in the learning process |  |  |  |  |
| The instructor gave me ***frequent*** feedback on my work |  |  |  |  |
| The instructor gave me ***detailed*** feedback on my work |  |  |  |  |
| I worked cooperatively with other students on course assignments |  |  |  |  |
| I interacted with the instructor as part of the course |  |  |  |  |
| The instructor welcomed participation in class discussion regardless of whether the student’s political views matched those of the instructor |  |  |  |  |

*Which required courses for the Public Policy major did you find* ***most*** *valuable? Why?*

*Which required courses for the Public Policy major did you find* ***least*** *valuable? Why?*

*Are there other courses not yet required for the Public Policy major that you think ought to be required? If so, which ones, and why?*

*Other comments on required courses for the Public Policy major:*

***Part II: Elective Courses for Public Policy Major***

In this section, you will be asked a series of questions about ELECTIVE courses for the Public Policy major, including the following that have been taken by the four seniors graduating in 2011:

* A&S 345 Race and Ethnicity
* E&M 273 Environmental and Natural Resource Economics
* E&M 331 Money and Banking
* HSP 154 Health Policy in the U.S. and Canada
* PHIL 206 Contemporary Moral Problems
* PHIL 304 Ethics and Public Policy
* PHIL 335 Philosophical Issues in the Law
* PLSC 214 Congress and the Presidency
* PLSC 319 Political and Social Movements

*To what extent did one or more of these elective courses contribute to your ability to:*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Not at***  ***All*** | ***To***  ***Some***  ***Extent*** | ***Adequately*** | ***More***  ***Than***  ***Adequately*** | ***Extremely***  ***Well*** |
| Understand economic, philosophical, political, or social issues relevant to analysis and implementation of government policy decisions |  |  |  |  |  |
| Effectively communicate (in writing and orally) ideas, observations, analyses, conclusions, and recommendations |  |  |  |  |  |
| Use quantitative and qualitative techniques for problem solving and policy evaluation |  |  |  |  |  |
| Address policy issues and arguments critically and reflectively, across a range of disciplines |  |  |  |  |  |
| Work effectively with others who have different values or political views |  |  |  |  |  |

*How often did the following occur in the* ***elective*** *courses you took for the Public Policy major?*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | ***Almost***  ***Never*** | ***Occasionally*** | ***Usually*** | ***Almost***  ***Always*** |
| Assignments and class activities were clearly explained |  |  |  |  |
| We did things that required students to be active participants in the learning process |  |  |  |  |
| The instructor gave me ***frequent*** feedback on my work |  |  |  |  |
| The instructor gave me ***detailed*** feedback on my work |  |  |  |  |
| I worked cooperatively with other students on course assignments |  |  |  |  |
| I interacted with the instructor as part of the course |  |  |  |  |
| The instructor welcomed participation in class discussion regardless of whether the student’s political views matched those of the instructor |  |  |  |  |

*Did you think that any of the elective courses you took for the Public Policy major were inappropriate as electives for this major? If so, which course, and why was it inappropriate for the list of electives?*

*Are there other courses not yet included as electives for the Public Policy major that you think ought to be included? If so, which ones, and why?*

*Other comments on elective courses for the Public Policy major:*

***Part III: Overall Assessment of Public Policy Major***

*Overall, how satisfied are you with Albion’s Public Policy major?*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ***Very***  ***Dissatisfied*** | ***Somewhat***  ***Dissatisfied*** | ***Neither***  ***Satisfied nor***  ***Dissatisfied*** | ***Somewhat***  ***Satisfied*** | ***Very***  ***Satisfied*** |

*What other comments or suggestions do you have about Albion’s Public Policy major?*

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY RESULTS

All four graduating seniors completing the Public Policy major in May 2011 completed the survey. The survey had two parts:

1. Plans and contact information after graduation, with each student identified by name, and
2. Assessment of the Public Policy major, with anonymous responses

Three of the four graduating seniors completing the Public Policy major plan to go to graduate or professional school immediately after graduation:

* Adam Enders will enter the PhD program in political science at Michigan State University, where he has received full funding. He hopes eventually to be a professor at a research university.
* Nate Mitcavish plans to complete a master of education degree at Aquinas College. He will also accept a commission as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve.
* Stephanie Potocny will enter the JD program at Loyola University of Chicago. She plans to go into business law.

The fourth graduating senior, Hanah Papp, will work as an educational leadership consultant for Alpha Xi Delta Fraternity, traveling across the country advising chapters. Eventually, she plans to work in nutrition policy and health behavioral education.

The results of the second part of the survey, the assessment of the Public Policy major, are summarized below.

Some of the answers to the second part of the survey were multiple choice. Where a student gave two responses to a single question, this is recorded below as 0.5 students giving each response. Numeric codes for each response were not presented to the students in the survey instrument. They are presented here for purposes of calculating the mean response to each question.

Other answers to the second part of the survey were open ended.

*To what extent did one or more of these required/elective courses [for the Public Policy major] contribute to your ability to:*

**

*How often did the following occur in the required/elective courses you took for the Public Policy major?*

**

*Open-ended comments on required courses*

*Which required courses for the Public Policy major did you find* ***most*** *valuable? Why?*

**Student A:** [E&M or PLSC?] 101, [PLSC] 216, and [E&M] 322. I felt like I learned the core principles of Public Policy in 101 and 216 and then applied them in 322.

**Student B:** E&M 101, Statistics, A&S 224. I think having a basic understanding of microeconomics, as well as statistics and quantitative research methods is important to students’ education whether they pursue some sort of graduate degree or look for a job in applied politics or policy.

**Student C:** I found PLSC 216 and A&S 224 the most valuable because they featured information about practicle [*sic*] application for the real world.

**Student D:** E&M 101 and 230. Statistics. Allowed for greater understanding of policy beyond the political position.

*Which required courses for the Public Policy major did you find* ***least*** *valuable? Why?*

**Student A:** I found [E&M] 230 to be the least valuable because we just went into the concepts of [E&M] 101 farther

**Student B:** E&M 322. Simply did not understand the goals of the class.

**Student C:** The courses that I found the least valuable were E&M 230 because I do not remember anything from the course, and I don’t feel you have to have that detailed knowledge to be successful in the policy world.

**Student D:** E&M 322. Did not understand the overall objectives of the course and did not gain any significant understanding of economic policy. PLSC 201. Did not enhance my quanititataive [*sic*] problem solving skills. PLSC 201 should be revamped to include computer lab time using SPSS.

*Are there other courses not yet required for the Public Policy major that you think ought to be required? If so, which ones, and why?*

**Student A:** I would like to have learned more macroeconomics and more finance

**Student B:** Have heard that Ethics and Public Policy is very good, but cannot comment since I was unable to take it (and I know its [*sic*] an elective already).

**Student C:** I think sociology 101 should be required because it gives a broad overview of the social system withing [*sic*] America. If you have future policy makers or leaders, they should be more knowledgable [*sic*] about the people their policies are directly affecting.

**Student D:** I took a philosophy course (Ethics and Public Policy) and found it to be a chance to examine viewpoints other than mine and advanced my speaking and writing skills. I think that instead of being an optional elective it should be a requirement.

*Other comments on required courses for the Public Policy major:*

**Student B:** Would be interesting to have a Public Policy Analysis class taught by an economist rather than a faculty member of the Political Science Department. Looking for a little more quantitative analysis.

**Student D:** While a statistics course allows for basic quantitative understanding, using SPSS in a research course is needed for effective understanding and use of quantitative public policy.

*Open-ended comments on elective courses*

*Did you think that any of the elective courses you took for the Public Policy major were inappropriate as electives for this major? If so, which course, and why was it inappropriate for the list of electives?*

**Student A:** No I thought the classes I took as electives fit into the public policy major well

**Student B:** None seemed inappropriate.

**Student C:** I thought all of the electives I took were appropriate for the major.

**Student D:** No

*Are there other courses not yet included as electives for the Public Policy major that you think ought to be included? If so, which ones, and why?*

**Student A:** Not that I can think of but it might be helpful to include a writing requirement

**Student B:** RDA I and/or II [PSYC 204 and 206] may be useful – Scope and Methods [PLSC 201] does not provide any sort of information on quantitative analysis, nor does it focus on basic philosophy of social science-type stuff. In A&S 224, you do learn about concepts such as validity, reliability, correlation vs. causation, and all the other basics of research, but Dr. Togunde’s knowledge of SPSS seems limited. I believe that, even though it may be a simple class, RDA could be useful as an introduction to research methods (at least, more so than [A&S] 224 or PLS 201).

**Student C:** I think Sociology of Youth by Raymond Garcia should be included because he touches on aspects of policy and political economy to explain our current system surrounding the youth of our country.

**Student D:** Ethics and Public Policy should be made a requirement. (reference my comments above)

*Other comments on elective courses for the Public Policy major:*

**Student B:** I would advertise the major a little better if possible. Just talked to someone last week who said that they spoke to their academic adviser (Dabney) a couple of years ago who had no idea that a public policy major existed (and that’s a poli sci person!). I think that a lot of political science majors may be more interested in the PP major or at least in taking some classes in E&M if it was encouraged through a major that is similar to PoliSci (Public Policy). I think the basic Econ background might make class discussions more fruitful and well-rounded.

**Student D:** Explore the possibility of a SPSS-based research course.

*Overall assessment of Public Policy major*

*Overall, how satisfied are you with Albion’s Public Policy major?*

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*What other comments or suggestions do you have about Albion’s Public Policy major?*

**Student C:** Although there are only a few majors, I wish that there was more we could can done as a group besides involvement with the Ford Institute.

**Student D:** The E&M department was impressive. The professionalism and knowledge of the staff was very encouraging. However, the professionalism of the PLSC professors and the low level of challenging material (easy course evaluations and no quanititative [*sic*] research courses) did not impress me and did not live up to my interactions with faculty in other departments.