

Dear Colleagues,

We are writing to solicit your advice and some information regarding your APSA affiliated organization. In 2004, the American Political Science Association established a new committee on Teaching and Learning to renew efforts to make support of teaching one of the highest priorities for the discipline.

The Committee on Teaching and Learning was created with the following charge:

This committee develops and promotes the activities within the Association and the political science community regarding political science and the practices and policies of higher education, including undergraduate, graduate, professional and life-long education. The committee addresses issues of course and curriculum preparation and assessment, the professional development of college and graduate teaching, pedagogies and strategies of teaching and learning for the diversity of our students and program missions, instructional technologies and other resources, and higher education policy. It encourages studies in these areas, promotes supportive projects and materials development, and advises the APSA Council. The Committee also advises the APSA Council on the practices and policy for the annual Teaching and Learning Conference.

Our committee functions to coordinate, support, and evaluate on-going activities of the APSA regarding teaching and learning and to recommend new policies and practices to the APSA council. The committee is particularly committed to recognizing the diversity of institutions that are represented within APSA — we seek to productively address the challenges and opportunities faced by both research universities as well as more teaching-intensive institutions. We also aim to coordinate the APSA's efforts to support teaching in continuing and civic education settings.

We need your help in mapping the diverse programs, practices, and policies that already exist under the APSA umbrella. Given that many of the other committees and organized sections of the APSA do work with teaching and learning implications, the success of the Teaching and Learning Committee will be contingent on our ability to work with related bodies that share common concerns and linkages. With this in mind, we are interested in your views of what further work should be done within APSA to further the quality of teaching and learning in political science. We would be grateful if you could give some thought to the following specific questions:

- Has the teaching mission of political science been an **explicit** concern of your organization (your organized section, committee, caucus, or task force)? If so, what are the programs, practices, or policies of your organization regarding teaching? [If you have relevant reports or other documents we would be pleased to have copies of them.]
- Many APSA organizations have past or ongoing projects in the area of teaching and learning such as syllabus collections, workshops, materials development, journals, web resources, etc. Could you tell us about any such projects you have?
- How might the APSA better support the teaching and learning aspects of your organization?
- Do members of your organization make use of the teaching and learning content on the APSA website? Does your membership have any particular suggestions for improving the resources on the website?
- In terms of addressing issues of race, gender, and sexual orientation in the classroom, does your organization have any suggestions regarding how political scientists can better teach these topics? For example, how can enhancing our teaching of these subjects be mainstreamed into the political science curriculum at both the undergraduate and graduate level? How can we make issues of diversifying the curriculum department-wide, as opposed

to having the onus of “teaching diversity” fall only (or primarily) on minority, gay and/or female faculty? Does your section, status committee or caucus have any comments, ideas, or suggestions for confronting this problem?

- Would your organization support efforts to “internationalize” American political science by teaching American politics comparatively with other polities? If not, why not? If so, do you have any concrete suggestions regarding how to do this?
- Have members of your organization attended the annual Teaching and Learning Conference? Do you have any suggestions for how the conference can better serve your particular intellectual community?
- Does your organization have reactions to the recent APSA report on graduate education? Are there activities that the association should become involved in to better prepare graduate students for teaching responsibilities?
- Professional associations like the APSA are increasingly being asked to provide assistance in assessing teaching – both assisting teachers to better assess the progress of their students and assisting departments in assessing the success of their teaching programs. Has “assessment” been an issue of concern to the membership of your organization? If so, has your organization developed ideas or practices for more effective assessment?
- Teaching and Learning is, obviously, a broad portfolio. Our committee will not be able to give every relevant topic under this rubric equal attention. Are there other issues regarding teaching that you think should be given highest priority for the APSA to address?

We look forward to hearing your suggestions, concerns and ideas. We would be grateful if you could respond by **March 15, 2006** so that you have time to consult your membership if you need to do so. Please send your responses to:

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Thank you in advance for taking some time to reflect on these issues.

Sincerely,

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Michael Baer, American Council on Education
Cristina Beltrán, Haverford College
John Ishiyama, Truman State University
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