



FACT SHEET APSA Road Map for Departmental Data Collection

Dear Department Chair,

Now that the “new” APSA Departmental Survey is underway, we wanted to provide greater information and a roadmap for the next steps in data gathering and reporting for political science departments.

A. BENCHMARKING: Our main goal is to establish a benchmarking and data profile resource that political science departments can use to understand trends in the field and to compare themselves to a pool of like departments. Our resource for doing this is the PeerFocus data site, which you can access from your DSPonline account (accessible at www.apsanet.org). This site serves both as the platform for administering our surveys, and then, once populated, as a place to contrast your situation with similar departments.

You will be able to select similar standard comparison groups (for example, all BA granting political departments), or define your own comparison (all departments with less than 30 faculty in the central region of the US), or select individual institutions so long as you select enough to create a pool that protects in the anonymity of any single other school (we’re told the most common comparison group is the schools in your football conference!)

As we complete the first rounds of data collection this spring, we’ll brief you on how to conduct these comparisons. And if you don’t want to do the benchmarking, we’ll also be reporting in print the aggregate results for various major groups of departments.

B. DATA COMPONENTS: The data available for benchmarking will come from four distinct components that form the core of our data gathering program. Yes, we’ll need your help supplying much of this information, but with the technology we are using it will get much easier as we go along. By Spring 2010 all these components will be in use.

The data components in our overall survey program include the following elements.

1. A Profile of the Professoriate: total number, distribution by rank, sex, race and ethnicity, and so forth. This is derived from the faculty rosters that we ask each department to update annually in DSPonline.
2. Departmental Characteristics and Enrollments: starting salaries for new hires, faculty policies, turnover, and benefits, information on your graduate and/or undergraduate programs, and data on the impact of current economic conditions—this is the survey you’re working on now. Additional questions on

enrollments (by sex, race, and ethnicity) and types of degrees offered will be added to the Fall 2009 iteration.

3. Salaries: this survey will ask for customary starting salaries offered new assistant professors, and for medians salaries currently paid to faculty at different ranks, by gender.

4. Graduate Placement: this survey for doctoral programs asks about the experience of the current placement class in finding jobs, by types of institutions.

We'll fill you in as each element rolls into place. And in each case, after your response the first year, subsequent responses will only require updates to previously entered information.

COMPONENT	ROLL-OUT DATE
Faculty Roster	Ongoing (via DSPonline)
Departmental Characteristics & Enrollments	Spring 2009; Fall 2009; annually in the fall thereafter
Salaries	Spring 2010; annually in the fall thereafter
Graduate Placement	Summer 2009; annually in the summer thereafter

C. PROGRAM DATA: There is also a good deal to learn from program information. We'll continue to track patterns in job listings through the eJobs site. All assistant professor positions are listed there and we can report time series comparisons with previous years and types of openings. We also maintain dissertation listings that provide content information about the direction of the field. We'll report periodically on all these sources.

D. THIRD-PARTY DATA: APSA posts information from other sources regularly on our website and we'll continue to bring this to the attention of department chairs. These data include the NSF Doctoral Production data and enrollment numbers country-wide from the Department of Education.

We welcome suggestions from members about what information to gather and how to present it. We appreciate the work required at your end to assemble the relevant information, and we trust we can provide value in return to warrant your contributions.