

Building a More Inclusive Political Science for the 21st Century

This report has highlighted many of the issues facing political scientists as they move forward into the 21st century. It is clear that the APSA as an association has, to a degree, been proactive in dealing with issues related to diversity and inclusion. The Association began constructing a foundation for changing the profession in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement at the end of the 1960s. However, as in many other areas of public life, progress has been slow, and there is always more to be done. Our primary goal in this report is to start a spirited and constructive debate about the profession's accomplishments, and especially about how an agenda might be framed for the 21st century to promote even greater progress. Our final recommendations are in three specific areas:

- The need for richer, more comprehensive, and systematic data regarding research, teaching and pedagogy, and access and inclusion within the profession.
- The need for the APSA to fully consider whether its current good practices can be modified to serve as a catalyst to departments to make more progress regarding issues of race, ethnicity, gender, and diversity more broadly.
- The need for the APSA to partner with other associations or a subset of its own membership to solicit, secure, and utilize external funds to be a leader in developing new research, teaching, and career development paradigms that can serve as models for departments of political science, universities, and colleges to embrace the rich intellectual opportunities presented in the study and teaching of issues related to diversity and inclusion.

The Lack of Data

Perhaps because we are social scientists, each of our three working groups began its investigation by trying to secure systematic data related to the questions it was asking. We were all impressed by the lack of available data critical to our better understanding the progress that has been made in our profession as its attempts to expand access, increase diversity, and become more inclusive in its research, teaching, and career development.

The trend data on faculty recruitment and retention provided by the APSA were extremely instructive. These data allow us to clearly see what many have alleged and what many have noted anecdotally. Although progress toward greater access and inclusion in the profession has clearly been made, the rate of that progress has been extremely slow for women and for those from historically underrepresented groups. Additional analysis is needed as to how these patterns vary by type of institution, including public and private, two-year and four-year, and research-intensive and teaching-intensive institutions, over time.¹⁶ Moreover, analyses by region, ethnic and racial distribution of undergraduate enrollment, and ethnic and racial distribution of the larger community from which students tend to be recruited are

also needed. As social scientists we know that the value of such study will be in allowing us to better understand why such limited progress has occurred. It is only with this knowledge that political scientists can improve and expand strategies for making the profession more inclusive. For example, is the field's pattern of limited progress regarding faculty inclusion due to lack of recruitment, challenges of securing tenure, or individuals choosing to leave the profession due to perceived chilly and at times hostile departmental and university climates? Only richer data and better analyses utilizing these data will allow any chance of making more progress. It is counterintuitive that a profession that has made such progress in analyzing data with increasing technical sophistication has spent such little effort applying its considerable skills to understanding its own professional development. Stated differently, we as a profession make few attempts, if any, to practice on our own profession the good social science that we so effectively practice in studying many political phenomena around the world.

Similarly, there is a clear lack of data related to research productivity in the profession. As best we could determine, there is no consistent reporting of data by editors of flagship journals as to how many manuscripts are submitted that have issues of race, ethnicity, gender, difference, and multiculturalism as their focus; how many such manuscripts are rejected after first-round reviews; how many are sent for a revise and resubmit; how many are rejected on the second round; and how many finally appear in print. As we report here, several scholars have provided insightful analyses based on counts of articles and book reviews published in the discipline's journals. Without systematic data on submissions, however, the power of what we know from the counts is lessened considerably. What is unfortunate about the lack of such data is that it prevents the profession from developing strategic interventions that can enhance the likelihood that a more inclusive body of research will appear in print. The same sorts of counts should be made of university presses and commercial publishers that have a major presence in political science.

Our review also makes it abundantly clear that there is a need for far more systematic data on graduate curricula and training in political science. Following the recommendations of the Task Force on Graduate Education on a range of principles, including the use of multiple methods and the study of marginalized groups, we conclude that little progress has been made. Our effort to secure information on the presence of courses and course topics on race, ethnicity, gender, and multiculturalism in graduate training was instructive, but far from complete. Again, without such data, strategic interventions to broaden the range of topics that graduate students can study and in which they can be trained cannot be made. Is the challenge primarily one of access to course material, faculty training of graduate students, or student preferences? Without systematic data, we cannot know. Again, the acquiescence of so many of us in the profession to this lack of information perhaps makes us complicit in the glacial progress we see in expanding the inclusiveness of the profession to effectively respond to changing demographics.

Finally, it was in the area of teaching and pedagogy where the data challenges seemed to be less pronounced. The Teaching and Pedagogy subcommittee identified national surveys that generate reliable data on how many undergraduate students choose political science as a major; how this varies by race, ethnicity, and gender; and what political science

majors tend to learn about diversity and inclusion. To address issues of expanding the pipeline, it would also be useful to know why more political science majors do not pursue graduate study and what it is they do choose to pursue after graduation. Useful data that address these issues and include racial, ethnic, gender, and other multicultural subsamples would begin to give us insight as to how to systematically expand the pipeline to our profession. Again, why is not knowing such basic facts acceptable to so many of us in the profession? We certainly hope that it is not also a sign of a lack of commitment by leaders and gatekeepers in our profession to make more progress in this regard.

Current Practices and Programs within the APSA

We fully endorse the current practices of the APSA through our Minority Fellows Program, the extremely beneficial Bunche Summer Institute, and the limited effectiveness of the Minority Student Recruitment Program. Several members of our profession have worked tirelessly over the years to make one or another of these programs successful. We are indebted to these colleagues.

It seems to us, however, that there are two efforts within the APSA that need to be expanded to better guide the profession to make more progress toward greater access and inclusion. The meetings held twice a year with department chairs—one is held in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Conference and the other during the APSA annual meeting—are ideal opportunities for the APSA to provide arenas for discussion and training to chairs regarding the issues we address in this report. In our view, chairs are critical decision-makers and gatekeepers regarding curriculum, graduate training, recruitment of new faculty, and retention and promotion of current faculty. The APSA should consider taking a leadership role in considering a long-term process for framing disciplinary leadership and providing information to department chairs. While it is advisable for the Association to prompt broader activities with departmental chairs, we also recognize that chairs are also accountable to their institutions, which can have competing incentives to those that may come from the discipline. The APSA should consider appointing a subcommittee of chairs with current experience and expertise in the areas of access and inclusion to develop workshops for their department chair colleagues. Again, the absence of such a focus in chairs' meetings is yet another sign of the profession not addressing the issues of access and inclusion to the fullest extent possible.

It is also the case that the status committees need to be reinvigorated to take leadership roles in working collaboratively with the APSA Council and APSA staff to help the profession make more progress in preparing the profession for the multicultural reality that is the 21st century. As examples, each status committee could submit a formal report to the APSA Council that represents the work it has completed to make the profession more inclusive over the past year. Each committee could also gather data related to its specific group regarding PhD students, junior faculty, faculty promotion, and faculty retention to structure discussion within the APSA. In addition, each group should issue a report regarding research productivity and success in publishing in flagship journals and major university presses. We well appreciate that these data are not readily available. Our purpose here is to suggest that the status committees consider being important catalysts to making such data available.

Expanding the Capacity of Political Science

We fully recognize that the APSA has limited resources of money and personnel to engage in new areas of professional development and support. The APSA staff already works tirelessly to provide its members with services and support in many areas. We therefore recommend that it partner with other professional associations or a subset of its own membership to secure outside funds to identify best practices in the areas of research, teaching, and professional development regarding diversity and inclusion. In our section on research we made reference to several programs of the American Economic Association. What does the American Sociological Association or the American Anthropological Association do in this regard? What is there to further learn from the actions and activities of professional associations such as the American Medical Association or the American Bar Association that may be adaptable to the APSA? Without a doubt, the challenges of producing inclusive research, providing culturally relevant teaching, enriching the pipeline, and enhancing the recruitment and retention of underrepresented faculty are not unique to political science. We should expand our base of knowledge to incorporate views and experiences that go beyond those most familiar to us.

Our point here is simple: what the APSA has been doing in the past as a professional association has not led to substantial progress over the last forty-one years. Progress in research, teaching, and professional development to expand diversity and inclusion has occurred, but the progress is small and certainly does not put political science in a leadership role in integrating expanding multiculturalism within its professional activities. The profession that studies power and its consequences, the profession that knows more about democracy and effective civic engagement than any other, and the profession that studies the consequences for social stability and human rights resulting from the absence of access and inclusion for all segments of a society's population should take a strong leadership role in advancing its own intellectual, professional, and demographic development. New actions must be taken if the discipline of political science is to have the chance of accepting the responsibilities of leadership in this regard.

In conclusion, we hope that all who read our report will appreciate the great respect and admiration each of our committee members has for our profession. We chose to become political scientists because we were confident that it would provide us the theory, history, research training, and critical thinking to make insightful contributions to scholarship. Some of us also saw in political science the possibility of making contributions to how our nation and the world think about and respond to the most challenging policy questions that societies face. We are firmly convinced that it was in this spirit of appreciating the rich potential of political science to provide ways to better attain peace, economic opportunity, human rights, participatory democracy, and, ultimately, individual fulfillment that led to our task force being appointed. We respect our discipline and our profession enough to see its ever-expanding potential. We hope that our report pushes political science and political scientists to realize this potential as well.