



2017-2018 APSA DEPARTMENTAL SURVEY: Enrollments and Curriculums



Executive Summary

In 2017-2018, APSA's survey of chairs of political science departments on undergraduate enrollments and curriculums included questions on faculty size, degree offerings, online courses, core curriculum courses, and changes in enrollments from 2016-17 to 2017-18.

On average, 1,784 undergraduates enrolled in all courses across a political science department. Public institutions, and departments granting PhDs, had the highest average enrollments in political science courses. Introduction to American Politics dominated the core-curriculum courses offered and was offered nearly all the time (97.6%) regardless of type of department, or type of institution. Departments at public institutions were likely to offer any given course than those at private institutions. This year's instrument also included questions on online courses and enrollments. More departments at public institutions reported offering exclusively online courses and/or hybrid online classes than departments at private institutions.

Generally, average enrollments and curriculums were related to both type of institution and type of department. PhD-granting departments, and departments at public institutions, had larger faculties, and averaged higher enrollments than departments granting lower degrees. These differences in size are, in part, driven by the larger proportion of public institutions with PhD-granting and MA-granting departments that have higher enrollments, and the larger proportion of BA-granting departments at private institutions that have lower enrollments. Public PhD-granting institutions had undergraduate cohorts twice the size of those at private PhD-granting institutions.

Undergraduate enrollments increased slightly or significantly over the past academic year at more than half of institutions surveyed (50.3%), compared with about one-third of institutions in 2015-2016 (30.7%). Department chairs overwhelmingly attributed increased enrollment to factors within their institutions and/or departments (72.5%), or to the current political climate (40.9%).

To review past reports from APSA's Departmental Survey, please visit the [American Political Science Association website](#). The *2015-2016 APSA Departmental Survey: Undergraduate Enrollment and Curriculums Report* can be accessed [here](#).

We welcome your questions, thoughts, and ideas. Please contact us with any specific questions about these findings, as we try to address broader questions that members bring to our attention in subsequent reports and data collection efforts. Please contact us at surveys@apsanet.org, or by calling the main APSA office at 202-483-2512.

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About the Data

The 2017-2018 APSA Departmental Survey was administered to 1,263 departments at four-year colleges and universities offering degrees in Political Science and Government in the United States. The survey was administered online from June 6 to October 15, 2018. 383 departments responded to the survey for an overall response rate of 30.3%.

Response Rates by Department Type, Institution Type

	N	Response Rate
Departments		
BA Combined Departments	54	20.5%
BA-granting Departments	134	28.9%
MA-granting Departments	72	38.9%
PhD-granting Departments	89	56.3%
Social Science Departments	34	17.5%
Institutions		
Publicly-controlled Institutions	178	24.4%
Privately-controlled Institutions	205	38.4%

Glossary of Terms

Department Types	Social Science Departments	Social Science departments offering degrees and/or courses in political science
	BA Combined Departments	BA departments combining political science with at least one other field, e.g. History
	BA-granting Departments	Departments of political science or government granting a 4-year degree as their highest degree
	MA-granting Departments	Departments of political science or government granting a MA as their highest degree
	PhD-granting Departments	Departments of political science or government granting a PhD as their highest degree
Enrollments	Enrollments	Seats filled
Additional Undergraduate Requirements and Offerings	Capstone	A senior capstone course or senior capstone experience
	Undergraduate Research Program	A formal program (i.e. undergraduate research that is funded and where students present at a conference)
Online Courses	Exclusively Online Courses and Enrollments	Courses and enrollments that take place exclusively online, with no in person component
	Hybrid Courses and Enrollments	Courses and enrollments that take place partly online and partly in-person

Department Characteristics

Most departments at public institutions granted graduate degrees, with over half of departments offering a PhD or MA as their highest terminal degree (62.9%). Over half of all private institutions were BA-granting departments (53.0%)

Most departments offered both an undergraduate minor (90.6%) and an undergraduate major (97.1%) in political science. An undergraduate minor was least available at private institutions offering Social Science degrees and private, PhD-granting departments, with a quarter of departments at each not offering minors. Social Science departments were the least likely to offer an undergraduate major, but more than three-quarters (79.4%) offered a political science major (Table 1).

Table 1. Degrees in Political Science Offered by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
All	Undergraduate Minor	90.6%	86.4%	97.2%	88.8%	96.2%	85.3%
	Undergraduate Major	97.1%	97.7%	98.6%	100.0%	98.1%	79.4%
	MA	34.9%	69.3%	100.0%	--	--	--
	PhD	33.2%	100.0%	--	--	--	--
Public	Undergraduate Minor	94.6%	89.7%	98.4%	94.9%	100.0%	94.4%
	Undergraduate Major	95.5%	95.0%	90.9%	100.0%	97.1%	68.8%
	MA	53.7%	72.1%	100.0%	--	--	--
	PhD	23.1%	100.0%	--	--	--	--
Private	Undergraduate Minor	85.8%	75.0%	90.9%	86.3%	94.1%	75.0%
	Undergraduate Major	98.5%	98.5%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	88.9%
	MA	14.2%	60.0%	100.0%	--	--	--
	PhD	11.4%	100.0%	--	--	--	--

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Department size was dependent on both institution type and the department type. Overall, responding departments averaged 20 faculty members, and 14 full time faculty members. Departments at public institutions tended to be larger, with an average of 25 faculty compared to an average of 15 faculty at private institutions. PhD-granting departments tended to larger than other departments, averaging 39 faculty members. Departments offering MA, BA, BA Combined, and Social Science degrees were all larger at public institutions, while departments offering PhDs were larger at private ones (Table 2).

Table 2. Average Faculty Size by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
All	All Faculty	20	39	21	11	13	15
	Full Time	14	27	14	8	8	10
Public	All Faculty	25	37	23	15	15	15
	Full Time	17	26	15	10	10	13
Private	All Faculty	15	43	12	9	12	15
	Full Time	10	30	7	7	6	8

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Undergraduate Course Offerings, Enrollments, and Curriculums

Course Offerings

Any given course was more likely to be offered by political science departments at public institutions than departments at private institutions (Tables 3 and 4). Of all courses offered by political science departments, Introduction to American Politics was the most common, with (97.8%) of departments offering. This was followed by Introduction to International Relations (89.9%), Research Methods/Statistics (82.4%), and then Introduction to Comparative Government (80.0%). This pattern extends to our findings about the prevalence of new positions in political science's academic subfields (access our most recent eJobs report [here](#)). The least offered core course was Introduction to Politics/Political Science (34.3%). BA Combined departments were most likely to offer this course (41.9%). Except for Introduction to Constitutional Law/Judicial Politics, Social Science departments were less likely to offer a core-curriculum course than other department types. This difference is most pronounced for Research Methods/ Statistics, where 82.4% of all departments offer this core course, and just 37.0% of Social Science departments do. PhD-granting departments were more likely to offer all core-curriculum courses, except for Introduction to Politics/Political Science and Introduction to Constitutional Law/Judicial Politics, than other departments (Table 3).

Of non-core courses, departments were most likely to offer additional courses not captured by the survey (74.8%), and Internship courses (76.4%), and courses in Regional Politics (72.0%). Like departments offering core courses, Social Science departments were least likely to offer any non-core course. This disparity is greatest where 38.1% of all departments offer study abroad courses, and just 3.7% of Social Science departments offer them. Apart from courses in Minority/Ethnic Group Specific Studies, MA-granting departments were the most likely to offer any non-core course (Table 4)

Enrollments

Average enrollment for the total of all undergraduate courses offered by a department was 1,784. Average and median total undergraduate enrollments are the highest at PhD-granting departments, followed by MA-granting departments, BA-granting departments, BA Combined, and Social Science departments. This trend holds across public and private institutions. The type of institution strongly impacted undergraduate enrollments. Public departments have higher undergraduate enrollments than departments at private institutions. For example, PhD-granting departments at public institutions enrolled more than twice as many undergraduate students, an average of 4,452, while PhD-granting departments at private institutions enrolled an average of just 1,937 undergraduate students (Table 5).

In aggregate, departments at public institutions had higher average enrollments in all courses offered than private institutions. Of the core-curriculum courses, Introduction to American Politics averaged the highest enrollments (495 per department per year), followed by Introduction to International Relations (169), Introduction to Politics/Political Science (162), and Introduction to Comparative Government (136). Besides BA Combined Departments, departments of all types at public institutions averaged higher enrollments than their private counterparts in core curriculum courses (Table 6).

Table 3. Core-Curriculum Courses by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
Introduction to Politics/Political Science	All	34.3%	28.9%	37.9%	34.2%	41.9%	29.6%
	Public	39.0%	33.9%	41.2%	44.1%	53.3%	23.1%
	Private	28.8%	11.8%	14.3%	30.0%	35.7%	35.7%
Introduction to American Government	All	97.8%	98.7%	98.3%	98.2%	97.7%	92.6%
	Public	98.3%	98.3%	98.0%	97.1%	100.0%	100.0%
	Private	97.3%	100.0%	100.0%	98.8%	96.4%	85.7%
Introduction to International Relations	All	89.9%	96.1%	94.8%	93.9%	79.1%	63.0%
	Public	93.0%	96.6%	94.1%	97.1%	86.7%	61.5%
	Private	86.3%	94.1%	100.0%	92.5%	75.0%	57.1%
Introduction to Comparative Government	All	79.6%	94.7%	82.8%	78.1%	79.1%	37.0%
	Public	84.9%	96.6%	82.4%	85.3%	86.7%	38.5%
	Private	73.3%	88.2%	85.7%	75.0%	75.0%	35.7%
Introduction to Political Theory/Ideology	All	73.0%	82.9%	75.9%	73.7%	67.4%	44.4%
	Public	76.7%	81.4%	78.4%	73.5%	73.3%	61.5%
	Private	68.5%	88.2%	57.1%	73.8%	64.3%	28.6%
Introduction to Constitutional Law/Judicial Politics	All	66.0%	63.2%	77.6%	64.9%	58.1%	66.7%
	Public	69.8%	66.1%	76.5%	67.6%	60.0%	76.9%
	Private	61.6%	52.9%	85.7%	63.8%	57.1%	57.1%
Research Methods/Statistics	All	82.4%	94.7%	93.1%	85.1%	67.4%	37.0%
	Public	87.8%	93.2%	94.1%	94.1%	73.3%	38.5%
	Private	76.0%	100.0%	85.7%	81.3%	64.3%	35.7%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Table 4. Courses by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
State and Local Government	All	58.2%	60.5%	70.7%	50.9%	65.1%	44.4%
	Public	70.9%	66.1%	76.5%	73.5%	80.0%	53.8%
	Private	43.2%	28.6%	28.6%	41.3%	57.1%	35.7%
Constitutional Rights/Civil Rights and Liberties	All	67.9%	81.6%	91.4%	61.4%	53.5%	29.6%
	Public	81.4%	86.4%	94.1%	82.4%	60.0%	30.8%
	Private	52.1%	64.7%	71.4%	52.5%	50.0%	28.6%
Gender and/or Sexuality Politics	All	48.1%	71.1%	50.0%	44.7%	27.9%	25.9%
	Public	55.8%	71.2%	52.9%	50.0%	33.3%	38.5%
	Private	39.0%	28.6%	28.6%	42.5%	25.0%	14.3%
Minority/Ethnic Group Specific Politics	All	39.3%	68.4%	41.4%	31.6%	23.3%	11.1%
	Public	45.9%	69.5%	45.1%	29.4%	20.0%	15.4%
	Private	31.5%	14.3%	14.3%	32.5%	25.0%	7.1%
Regional Politics	All	72.0%	77.6%	79.3%	78.9%	55.8%	37.0%
	Public	75.6%	78.0%	78.4%	79.4%	66.7%	15.4%
	Private	67.8%	85.7%	85.7%	78.8%	25.0%	21.4%
Public Policy	All	65.4%	68.4%	82.8%	64.9%	48.8%	48.1%
	Public	71.5%	72.9%	82.4%	73.5%	46.7%	46.2%
	Private	58.2%	85.7%	85.7%	61.3%	50.0%	50.0%
Public Administration	All	35.5%	30.3%	60.3%	24.6%	37.2%	40.7%
	Public	48.8%	35.6%	66.7%	41.2%	46.7%	61.5%
	Private	19.9%	14.3%	14.3%	17.5%	32.1%	21.4%
Internship	All	76.4%	75.0%	93.1%	78.1%	69.8%	48.1%
	Public	83.7%	79.7%	96.1%	85.3%	80.0%	53.8%
	Private	67.8%	11.8%	71.4%	75.0%	64.3%	42.9%
Study Abroad	All	38.1%	36.8%	46.6%	39.5%	46.5%	3.7%
	Public	41.3%	40.7%	49.0%	35.3%	60.0%	7.7%
	Private	34.2%	58.8%	28.6%	41.3%	39.3%	0.0%
Other Courses	All	74.8%	82.9%	89.7%	72.8%	69.8%	37.0%
	Public	81.4%	83.1%	92.2%	73.5%	66.7%	69.2%
	Private	67.1%	71.4%	71.4%	72.5%	71.4%	7.1%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Table 5. Enrollment Distributions by Institution Type and Department Type

		n	Min	Max	Mean	Median
All	All	318	37	15784	1784	973
	PhD	76	336	15784	3889	3737
	MA	58	94	8390	2310	1606
	BA	114	37	5105	869	651
	BA Combined	43	53	3405	612	335
	Social Science	27	40	4475	451	205
Public	All	172	55	15784	2681	1784
	PhD	59	336	15784	4452	4205
	MA	51	94	8390	2545	1973
	BA	34	126	5105	1298	1034
	BA Combined	15	125	3405	958	531
	Social Science	13	55	4475	783	335
Private	All	146	37	4803	726	477
	PhD	17	548	4803	1937	1735
	MA	7	199	860	595	519
	BA	80	37	4611	687	554
	BA Combined	28	53	1932	427	289
	Social Science	14	40	254	143	146

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Except for Introduction to Constitutional Law/Judicial Politics and Introduction to Politics/Political Science, PhD-granting departments at public institutions averaged the highest reported undergraduate enrollments in every core curriculum course. In every course but Introduction to International Relations and Research Methods/Statistics, Social Science Departments averaged the lowest enrollments (Table 6).

For non-core curriculum courses, courses that did not fit into the survey's predefined categories (662), courses in Regional Politics (110), and State and Local Government (101) averaged the highest reported enrollments. Apart from study abroad courses, like core-curriculum courses, PhD-granting departments at public institutions averaged the highest reported enrollments in every non-core course. For all non-core courses, Social Science Departments averaged the lowest enrollments (Table 7).

Degree Requirements and Undergraduate Research

Departments were most likely to require 3 to 4 core courses for their undergraduate majors (34.4%). PhD-granting departments at both public and private institutions tended to have fewer core requirements than departments offering lower degrees, with 71.0% of departments requiring between 1 and 4 core classes for undergraduate majors. BA, BA Combined, and Social Science departments tend to have more core requirements for their undergraduate majors than departments granting graduate degrees, especially at private institutions (Table 8).

Table 6. Average Undergraduate Enrollment in Core Curriculum Courses by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
Introduction to Politics/Political Science	All	162	245	290	102	80	63
	Public	222	265	301	144	114	59
	Private	66	50	25	75	53	65
Introduction to American Government	All	495	908	885	178	254	194
	Public	821	1121	990	355	553	328
	Private	108	181	138	105	88	48
Introduction to International Relations	All	169	344	186	90	46	90
	Public	237	378	207	141	33	151
	Private	82	223	50	68	55	22
Introduction to Comparative Government	All	136	264	126	84	45	27
	Public	178	286	134	114	36	42
	Private	79	180	72	70	51	12
Introduction to Political Theory/Ideology	All	95	189	87	61	32	25
	Public	123	207	93	81	32	31
	Private	58	130	26	53	33	14
Introduction to Constitutional Law/Judicial Politics	All	60	114	70	41	26	21
	Public	68	113	74	63	29	21
	Private	38	120	42	31	25	21
Research Methods/Statistics	All	82	161	83	44	27	32
	Public	110	183	88	57	22	47
	Private	44	91	44	38	30	17

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Table 7. Average Undergraduate Enrollment in Courses by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
State and Local Government	All	101	265	71	29	57	28
	Public	139	307	72	36	88	34
	Private	28	35	43	25	35	19
Constitutional Rights/Civil Rights and Liberties	All	59	103	59	36	25	21
	Public	72	110	61	42	28	23
	Private	37	74	45	32	23	20
Gender and/or Sexuality Politics	All	41	54	34	36	26	20
	Public	48	59	35	58	16	20
	Private	28	36	23	26	33	20
Minority/Ethnic Group Specific Politics	All	63	98	37	43	32	20
	Public	82	114	37	81	27	18
	Private	31	34	25	28	34	24
Regional Politics	All	110	231	90	69	38	33
	Public	146	258	99	91	35	41
	Private	63	134	26	60	41	14
Public Policy	All	59	115	59	35	24	21
	Public	75	122	63	46	15	21
	Private	35	83	29	30	30	21
Public Administration	All	62	93	94	34	24	20
	Public	76	100	96	42	34	23
	Private	21	27	25	26	15	10
Internship	All	26	43	35	17	10	9
	Public	33	43	37	22	11	11
	Private	16	42	14	15	9	5
Study Abroad	All	23	51	16	13	15	6
	Public	25	44	16	17	10	6
	Private	20	90	17	12	20	0
Other Courses	All	662	1535	554	314	117	240
	Public	874	1694	593	324	104	259
	Private	358	978	187	309	124	68

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Table 8. Number of Core Requirements by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
All	1 to 2	15.2%	26.1%	13.6%	15.0%	4.7%	5.6%
	3 to 4	34.4%	44.9%	37.3%	28.3%	30.2%	33.3%
	5 to 6	30.8%	14.5%	39.0%	32.7%	37.2%	38.9%
	7 or more	18.2%	10.1%	10.2%	23.0%	27.9%	22.2%
	Don't know	1.3%	4.3%	0.0%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%
Public	1 to 2	15.2%	25.5%	15.7%	3.0%	6.7%	9.1%
	3 to 4	40.0%	43.6%	37.3%	33.3%	46.7%	45.5%
	5 to 6	30.9%	18.2%	39.2%	36.4%	40.0%	27.3%
	7 or more	12.7%	9.1%	7.8%	27.3%	6.7%	18.2%
	Don't know	1.2%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Private	1 to 2	15.3%	28.6%	0.0%	20.0%	3.6%	0.0%
	3 to 4	27.7%	50.0%	37.5%	26.2%	21.4%	14.3%
	5 to 6	30.7%	0.0%	37.5%	31.2%	35.7%	57.1%
	7 or more	24.8%	14.3%	25.0%	21.2%	39.3%	28.6%
	Don't know	1.5%	7.1%	0.0%	1.2%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Most departments require undergraduates to complete a senior capstone course or experience (71.2%). Overall, departments at public institutions are less likely to require a capstone than their private counterparts. Both private and public PhD-granting departments are less likely to require a capstone for undergraduates majoring political science than departments offering lower degrees (Table 9).

Significantly, few if any departments have formal undergraduate research programs, such as undergraduate research that is funded and where students present at a conference. Private institutions are slightly more likely to offer a research program to undergraduates than public. Of any department, MA-granting departments at public institutions were the least likely to offer a formal undergraduate research program (11.8%) (Table 9).

Table 9. Capstone Required for an Undergraduate Major in Political Science and Formal Undergraduate Research Program by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
All	Capstone Required	71.2%	40.5%	76.3%	83.9%	93.7%	75.0%
	Undergraduate Research Program	24.5%	24.1%	15.3%	27.1%	32.6%	21.1%
Public	Capstone Required	63.8%	39.3%	72.5%	86.1%	73.3%	72.7%
	Undergraduate Research Program	21.8%	24.6%	11.8%	27.8%	33.3%	18.2%
Private	Capstone Required	80.0%	44.4%	100.0%	82.9%	89.3%	77.8%
	Undergraduate Research Program	27.8%	22.2%	37.5%	26.8%	32.1%	25.0%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Online Course Offerings

More than half of departments offered online and hybrid online (partly online and partly in-person) courses and enrollments (59.2%) to undergraduates. More than three-quarters of public departments offered classes online or partly online (77.0%) compared to 38.6% of private departments. PhD-granting, MA-granting, and BA Combined departments were all more likely to offer exclusively online courses and enrollments than hybrid courses and enrollments. MA-granting departments were most likely to provide any form of online courses and enrollments (84.7%) (Table 10).

Table 10. Online Course Offerings by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
All	Exclusively Online	46.2%	47.5%	74.6%	30.8%	48.9%	44.4%
	Hybrid	39.9%	35.0%	71.2%	30.8%	28.9%	44.4%
	Any Online	59.2%	58.8%	84.7%	45.0%	57.8%	70.4%
	None Offered	40.8%	41.3%	15.3%	55.0%	42.2%	29.6%
Public	Exclusively Online	62.4%	58.1%	80.4%	64.9%	80.0%	53.8%
	Hybrid	53.9%	41.9%	70.6%	59.5%	46.7%	38.5%
	Any Online	77.0%	71.0%	86.3%	67.6%	93.3%	76.9%
	None Offered	23.0%	29.0%	13.7%	32.4%	6.7%	23.1%
Private	Exclusively Online	27.5%	11.1%	37.5%	26.5%	33.3%	35.7%
	Hybrid	23.5%	11.1%	75.0%	18.1%	20.0%	50.0%
	Any Online	38.6%	16.7%	75.0%	34.9%	40.0%	64.3%
	None Offered	61.4%	83.3%	25.0%	65.1%	56.7%	35.7%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values. 'Any online' courses includes all departments that offered exclusively online courses and enrollments and/or hybrid online courses and enrollments.

Enrollments to Graduate Programs

This survey captured total enrollments in MA programs at both MA-granting and PhD-granting departments. Of responding PhD departments, 69.3% offered an MA. Average enrollment in an MA program for all departments was 36.7%. Departments where the highest terminal degree was an MA tended to have higher enrollments in their MA programs than PhD-granting departments. MA-granting departments at public institutions had the highest average program enrollments overall of all MA program enrollments (46%) (Table 11).

Of responding departments, 23.1% offered a PhD. PhD-granting departments reported an average enrollment of 50 PhD students. With an average of 64, departments at private institutions had larger average PhD cohorts than those at public ones (Table 11).

Table 11. Graduate Department Enrollments by Institution Type and Department Type

			n	Min	Max	Mean	Median
All	All	MA Enrollments	103	1	360	33	21
		PhD Enrollments	79	7	145	48	43
	PhD	MA Enrollments	47	1	200	30	12
		PhD Enrollments	79	7	154	50	44
	MA	MA Enrollments	56	5	360	43	26
		PhD Enrollments	--	--	--	--	--
Public	All	MA Enrollments	86	1	90	34	35
		PhD Enrollments	61	7	145	46	66
	PhD	MA Enrollments	39	1	200	27	12
		PhD Enrollments	61	7	116	46	42
	MA	MA Enrollments	47	5	360	46	26
		PhD Enrollments	--	--	--	--	--
Private	All	MA Enrollments	17	2	90	34	35
		PhD Enrollments	18	12	145	64	66
	PhD	MA Enrollments	8	2	90	43	42
		PhD Enrollments	18	12	145	64	66
	MA	MA Enrollments	9	5	60	27	18
		PhD Enrollments	--	--	--	--	--

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

Undergraduate Enrollments Over Time

Department chairs were asked if undergraduate enrollments in their departments declined, stayed the same, or increased over the previous academic year (2016-17). Most department chairs reported that enrollments in their department had increased slightly (38.7%). Chairs in departments at public institutions were more likely to report that undergraduate enrollments had increased slightly or significantly (56.0%) than their private counterparts (40.5%). Chairs of departments that granted PhDs (62.0%), and chairs of departments that granted MAs (61.1%), were almost equally likely to report enrollment increases, followed by BA Combined Departments (50.0%), BA Departments (38.7%), and then Social Science Departments (25.7%). In contrast to reported enrollment increases in departments at public institutions, private institutions' departments were more likely to report that enrollments had declined slightly or declined significantly (32.7%) than public departments (18.3%). Social Science departments (40.7%), followed by BA-granting (26.9%), and then BA Combined departments (25.0%) were most likely to report a decline in undergraduate enrollments (Table 12).

Table 12. Enrollment Changes from 2016-17 to 2017-18 Academic Year by Institution Type and Department Type

		All	PhD	MA	BA	BA Combined	Social Science
All	Declined Significantly	3.7%	0.0%	5.1%	4.2%	0.0%	14.8%
	Declined Slightly	21.3%	19.0%	16.9%	22.7%	25.0%	25.9%
	Stayed the Same	26.2%	19.0%	16.9%	34.5%	25.0%	33.3%
	Increased Slightly	38.7%	44.3%	45.8%	31.1%	50.0%	22.0%
	Increased Significantly	10.1%	17.7%	15.3%	7.6%	0.0%	3.7%
Public	Declined Significantly	2.3%	0.0%	3.9%	2.8%	0.0%	7.7%
	Declined Slightly	16.0%	18.0%	17.6%	11.1%	7.1%	23.1%
	Stayed the Same	25.7%	14.8%	19.6%	47.2%	28.6%	38.5%
	Increased Slightly	41.1%	49.2%	41.2%	25.0%	64.3%	23.1%
	Increased Significantly	14.9%	18.0%	17.6%	13.9%	0.0%	7.7%
Private	Declined Significantly	5.2%	0.0%	12.5%	4.8%	0.0%	21.4%
	Declined Slightly	27.5%	22.2%	12.5%	27.7%	33.3%	28.6%
	Stayed the Same	26.8%	33.3%	0.0%	28.9%	23.3%	28.6%
	Increased Slightly	35.9%	27.8%	75.0%	33.7%	43.3%	21.4%
	Increased Significantly	4.6%	16.7%	0.0%	4.8%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values.

When asked to attribute increases in enrollments in the 2017-18 Departmental Survey, chairs often cited departmental and/or institutional factors, as well as greater interest in politics, the 2016 election, and/or the Trump Presidency. Nearly three-quarters cited departmental and/or institutional related factors (72.5%). Over a third of responding chairs reporting increased enrollments cited the current political climate (40.9%). Departments that reported enrollments increased significantly from 2015-16 to 2017-18 were more likely to attribute the change to increased political interest than departments that reported slightly-increased enrollments (33.3%) (Table 13).

	Total	Increased Significantly	Increased Slightly
Department and/or Institution-related factors	72.5%	68.8%	73.5%
Increased Political interest, Trump, and/or 2016 election	40.9%	68.8%	33.3%
Other	8.7%	6.3%	9.4%
Don't know	1.3%	0.0%	1.7%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values. Reported in aggregate due to small n size. Departments could attribute more than one reason for changes in undergraduate enrollments, so column totals may add up to over 100%.

When departments reporting declines in enrollment were asked to attribute the change, chairs often cited departmental and institutional factors, a general decrease in interest in the political science major, greater

interest in politics, the 2016 election, and/or the Trump Presidency, as well as other uncategorized factors. Three-quarters of departments reporting declines in enrollments cited departmental and/or institutional factors (75.3%). This attribution was practically equal in departments reporting that enrollments had declined significantly (75.0%) and that enrollments had declined slightly (75.4%) (Table 14).

Table 14. Attributions to Enrollment Decline 2016-17 to 2017-18 Academic Year

	Total	Declined Significantly	Declined Slightly
Department and/or Institution-related factors	75.3%	75.0%	75.4%
Less interest in political science major	13.6%	8.3%	14.5%
Less interest in politics and/or current political climate	6.2%	0.0%	7.2%
Other	21.0%	41.7%	17.4%
Don't know	1.2%	0.0%	1.4%

Note: Calculations do not include missing values. Reported in aggregate due to small n size. Departments could attribute more than one reason for changes in undergraduate enrollments, so column totals may add up to over 100%.

Compared to all reported changes in undergraduate enrollments in the previous academic year (2015-16 Departmental Survey), departments were more likely to report enrollment increases in the 2017-18 Departmental Survey. This comparison only includes institutions that responded to the question in both 2015-16 and 2017-18 Departmental Surveys. Departments reporting slight increases grew from over a quarter (25.9%) to over a third (39.0%). Departments reporting significant increases doubled, from 4.8% to 11.3%. While the proportion of both private and public institutions reporting an increase in enrollments grew, the proportion of public institutions reporting enrollment increases grew more than did the proportion of private (Table 15).

Table 15. Reported Enrollment Changes from 2014-15 to 2015-16 Academic Year and Reported Enrollment Changes from 2016-17 to 2017-18 Academic Year

		Declined Significantly	Declined Slightly	Stayed the Same	Increased Slightly	Increased Significantly
2014-15 to 2015-16	All	2.0%	30.6%	36.7%	25.9%	4.8%
	Public	2.3%	29.9%	33.3%	27.6%	6.9%
	Private	1.7%	31.7%	41.7%	23.3%	1.7%
2016-17 to 2017-18	All	1.9%	23.9%	23.9%	39.0%	11.3%
	Public	1.1%	20.4%	21.5%	40.9%	16.1%
	Private	3.0%	28.8%	27.3%	36.4%	4.5%

Note: Includes 159 departments responding to both the 2015-16 and 2017-18 Departmental Surveys. Calculations do not include missing values. Department Type is not included due to a small number of institutions responding to the question in

Takeaways

The relationships between average enrollments, curriculums offered, and department and institution type, are relatively consistent, according to our data, but the data further conveys a more important narrative.

Overall, trends in undergraduate enrollments and curriculums were nearly identical to trends in previous years ([read the 2015-16 Enrollments and Curriculums Report here](#)). PhD granting departments had larger faculties, and averaged higher enrollments than departments granting BA or MA degrees. Departments at public institutions tended to have higher enrollments than those at private and had larger faculties. These differences in size are linked to a larger proportion of PhD-granting and MA-granting departments at public institutions, which tend to have higher enrollments, as well as the larger proportion of BA-granting departments at private institutions, which tend to have lower enrollments. Public PhD-granting institutions had undergraduate cohorts twice the size of those of private PhD-granting institutions.

The more important narrative emerging from the data indicated year-on-year *growth*: more departments reported *enrollment increases* for the 2017-18 academic year than did for 2015-16. These departments attributed increases to departmental and institutional factors, as well as the current political climate.

Additional distinctions between types of institutions also emerged: Online courses and enrollments, including those offered exclusively online and those in a hybrid online-offline form, were far more likely to be offered by departments at private institutions than by public institutions. Across the data, few departments offered formal research programs to their undergraduates (particularly institutions granting graduate degrees).

Finally, PhD-granting departments required less core courses than departments offering BA or MAR degrees and were 30% less likely than average to require undergraduate capstone experiences. Public institutions even less likely than their private counterparts to *require* these options. However, PhD-granting departments at public institutions were more likely to *offer* these core courses, except those courses more indicative of a pre-law degree, like Introduction to Political Science or Introduction to Constitutional Law/ Judicial Politics.

All in all, more students of political science are charting their own course to construct their degrees from what is offered to them in larger, public, more research-oriented departments, while a fewer number of students navigate through a predetermined set of required courses at smaller, private, more teaching-oriented departments.