



2024-2025 APSA DEPARTMENTAL
SURVEY, ENROLLMENTS AND
CURRICULUM:
RESEARCH BRIEF

APSA Research Department
May 11, 2025

Summary

The 2024-2025 APSA Departmental Survey on Enrollments and Curriculum was conducted from January to February 2026. One of the longest-running surveys of academic departments of politics and government in the country, the survey collected data about enrollments, course offerings, and degree requirements for political science programs during the 2024-2025 academic year. Part Two of the Departmental Survey, which collects information about faculty employment and salaries, will be distributed in the spring of 2026.

The Departmental Survey was sent to 1,188 political science departments and received 133 complete responses for a response rate of 11.2%, a small improvement from the previous year's 9.6% response rate. Adjustments to the survey timing (conducted at the beginning rather than the end of the spring semester) and concentrated outreach efforts may have contributed to the improved response rate.

This research brief summarizes the survey's findings with regard to political science enrollments, degrees awarded, and degree requirements for undergraduate and graduate political science programs. Reported percentages do not include question nonresponses.

Responding Institution Characteristics

The distribution of degrees offered among responding institutions remained similar to the pattern observed in previous years. Nearly all responding institutions offered an undergraduate major in political science (n=127, 95.5%), and a large majority offered an undergraduate minor (n=100, 75.2%), though about 10% fewer institutions reported offering a minor than in 2023-2024. Institutions offering graduate degrees made up a smaller proportion of respondents, with 21.8% (n=29) offering a terminal master's degree and 18.8% (n=25) offering a doctoral degree. A small majority (n=70, 52.6%) of responding institutions were private, while 46.6% (n=62) were public and 0.8% (n=1) selected "Other". Undergraduate BA programs were relatively balanced between private and public institutions (53.5% of institutions offering an undergraduate major program were private, 45.7% public). In contrast, most institutions that reported a graduate program were public universities: 86.2% of reported master's programs and 64% of reported PhD programs were at public institutions.

Table 1. Degrees offered by institution type. Total responding institutions: n=133. Percentages indicate, out of all institutions offering the listed degree type, the proportion that were public, private, or "other" institutions.

| Institution Type | Bachelor's Degree | Terminal Master's Degree | Doctoral Degree |
|------------------|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Private | 68 (53.5%) | 4 (13.8%) | 8 (32%) |
| Public | 58 (45.7%) | 25 (86.2%) | 16 (64%) |
| Other | 1 (0.8%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (4%) |

Degrees Awarded

The reported distribution of degrees awarded in 2024-2025 was largely similar to that seen in 2023-2024. Among responding institutions, bachelor's degrees were the degree most frequently awarded by both private and public institutions, though the number of bachelor's degrees awarded fell at responding public institutions (average=70, compared to 97 in 2023-2024). The numbers of minors, master's degrees, and PhDs awarded by responding institutions remained largely similar to those reported in 2023-2024, and as in previous years, public institutions reported awarding more minors, bachelor's, and master's degrees than private ones on average, while private institutions reported awarding more PhDs.

Table 2. Average degrees awarded by institution and degree program. "Other" institutions (n=1) excluded due to small sample size.

| Institution Type | Undergraduate Minor | Undergraduate Major | Master's | PhD |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------|-----|
| Private | 12.7 | 39.4 | 6.7 | 8.9 |
| Public | 26 | 69.8 | 9.5 | 6.5 |

Enrollments

Enrollments across degree and institution types mirrored the pattern of degrees awarded: more students were reported enrolled on average in public programs than private ones, including minors, BA's, and master's degrees, while PhD enrollments at private universities exceeded those at public ones. Consistent with previous years, on average, undergraduate BA programs had the most students reported enrolled and master's programs had the least across both institution types.

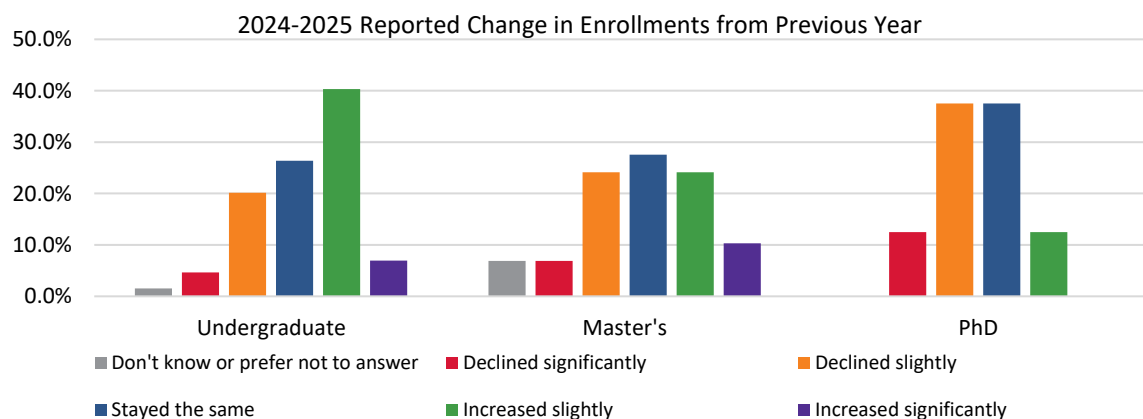
Overall, average enrollments did not differ markedly between 2023-24 and 2024-25. Reported undergraduate enrollments were very slightly lower than in 2023-24 (58 compared to 61 for undergraduate minors, 240 compared to 248 for majors). Master's enrollments were more notably lower (24 in 2024-25 compared to 35 in 2023-24), and PhD enrollments were somewhat higher (46 compared to 41).

Table 3. Average enrollments by degree program and institution type.

| Institution Type | Undergraduate Minor | Undergraduate Major | Master's | PhD |
|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------|------|
| Private | 37.2 | 181.7 | 12.3 | 48.6 |
| Public | 79.3 | 281.2 | 25.8 | 44.3 |

In a marked change from 2023-2024, nearly half (n=61, 47%) of responding institutions with an undergraduate program in 2024-2025 reported that undergraduate enrollments had increased compared to the previous year, compared to only 26% of institutions in 2023-2024. Master's programs reported a more even spread, with 24%, 28%, and 24% of programs reporting that their enrollments had declined slightly, stayed the same, or increased slightly, respectively. 38% of doctoral programs reported a slight decline in their enrollments, more than double the percentage that reported a slight decline in 2023-2024, and the same percentage of programs reported that their doctoral enrollments stayed the same. No PhD programs reported a significant increase in enrollments compared to 2023-2024.

Figure 1. Reported change in enrollments compared to 2023-2024 by degree program



Undergraduate Degree Requirements

Most undergraduate programs required between three and six core courses to earn a bachelor's degree (33% three or four courses, 32% five or six courses), with an additional 19% requiring only one or two core courses. This distribution was similar between both public and private institutions. 72% of undergraduate programs required a senior capstone course or experience, similar to 2023-24 (69%). 30% offered a formal undergraduate research program, an increase from 2023-2024 (22%). As with the number of required courses, these distributions were similar between public and private institutions.

Tables 4, 5, 6: (4) Number of core courses required for all undergraduate majors; (5) Senior capstone requirements for undergraduate programs; (6) Presence of formal undergraduate research program. "Formal research program" was defined as funded research that offers an opportunity for students to present, i.e. at a conference.

| Required courses for undergraduate degree | Percentage | Senior Capstone Requirement | Percentage | Undergraduate Research Program | Percentage |
|---|------------|-----------------------------|------------|--------------------------------|------------|
| 0 or none | 5% | No | 28% | Don't know | 1% |
| 1-2 | 19% | Yes | 72% | No | 69% |
| 3-4 | 33% | | | Yes | 30% |
| 5-6 | 32% | | | | |
| 7 or more | 10% | | | | |

Graduate Degree Requirements and Job Resources

A majority of doctoral programs (88%, n=22) required some form of comprehensive or field exam for PhD students. Across fields of study, written exams were generally the most common format, followed by combined exams. Few programs reported requiring only an oral exam.

About two-thirds (68%, n=17) of graduate programs offered job resources for doctoral students to look for nonacademic positions. Among these institutions, the most common resources offered were information about nonacademic opportunities, guidance on how to search for a job in particular sectors, and contact information for alumni in nonacademic positions. Programs were somewhat more likely to bring in alumni in nonacademic positions to speak with doctoral students than they were to bring in alumni in academic positions (71% compared to 58%). Of 157 reported doctoral students on the job market in 2024-2025, 15% (n=24) were reported to have taken a non-academic position.

Table 7. Nonacademic job search resources offered to doctoral students. Institutions offering nonacademic job search resources (n=17) could select multiple resources; percentages may not add to 100.

| Resource | Programs Offering Resource (%) |
|--|--------------------------------|
| Information on what opportunities are available outside of academia, e.g. nonacademic job possibilities and/or nonacademic job listings. | 88% |
| Free guidance on how to search for a job in particular sectors, e.g. data science vs. government. | 71% |
| Contact information for program alumni who have taken nonacademic positions. | 71% |
| Free guidance on how to write a resume in addition to an academic curriculum vitae. | 59% |
| Membership in nonacademic search support organizations like the Erdos Institute, Versatile PhD, etc. | 12% |
| Other resources | 12% |
| Don't know or prefer not to answer | 6% |