

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Linda Buckley, AVP Academic Planning and Educational Effectiveness

FROM: Sanjoy Banerjee, Chair of IR Department

DATE: July 27, 2012

RE: Assessment Report

I am happy to report the results of the International Relations Department's 2012 Assessment. This year we have examined our MA program. The Assessment looks at how our alumni have done, at our graduation rates, and examines theses and internship reports submitted during 2011-12 according to specified rubrics. For the theses and internship reports this Assessment notes strengths and weaknesses and proposes solutions for improvement.

The Department is proud to report that it consistently sends a number of students to Ph.D. or terminal degree programs. Some of our students who have attended doctoral programs are Randall Cohn (George Mason), Nathaniel Cogley (Yale), Skyler Cranmer (UC Davis, post-doc Harvard), Jennifer Ramos (UC Davis), and Lee Ann Fujii (George Washington University). John Whooley is a doctoral student at the University of Florida and the Managing Editor of the International Feminist Journal of Politics (from which he was assigned readings while at SFSU). Alp Tuncaci has just received a full scholarship to the Political Science doctoral program at Rutgers. Marcos Scauso is headed for a doctoral program at UC, Irvine. Eric Crosbie, after working as a researcher at UCSF focusing on international tobacco and health issues at UCSF, is headed for a doctoral program at UC Santa Cruz. Ambrogino Giusti has been admitted to the University of Pennsylvania law school.

Six of our former MA students are now teaching at Universities. Professors Sophie Clavier and Amy Skonieczny received their doctorates from the Sorbonne and the University of Minnesota, respectively, and are now teaching in our Department. Dr. Skyler Cranmer now teaches in the Political Science Department of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Dr. Jennifer Ramos has a book forthcoming from Oxford University Press and is teaching at Loyola Marymount University. Dr. Lee Ann Fujii has published a book and teaches at the University of Toronto. Dr. Landon E. Hancock is on the faculty of the Center for Applied Conflict Management and Political Science Department at Kent State.

A substantial number of our graduates enter diplomatic or other government service. Conrad Hässler is Second Secretary in the German Ministry of Culture, posted in Beijing, China.

Saeb Erakat became Chief Negotiator for the Palestine Authority; Javad Zarif became the Iranian Ambassador to the U.N.; while Nicolas Roncagliolo Higuera has been the Peruvian Consul in San Francisco. Nancy Varela is working at the International Labor Organization in Geneva. Ten or more of our graduates have entered the U.S. Foreign Service, serving in locales such as the Middle East. A number of MA program work in the intelligence community. In addition, Nancy Shepherd was elected to the City Council of Palo Alto.

Historically, our graduates have had a strong presence at professional conferences, especially at the International Studies Association (ISA) annual meeting as well as regional meetings. For example, at the 2006 ISA annual meeting, we had five students give presentations, an impressive feat given that presentation proposals pass through a peer review process. In 2007, two IR MA students presented papers at ISA annual meeting while at the following year's ISA five students gave presentations. In 2009, at least one IR MA student delivered papers. In 2010 three MA students delivered five papers. The number for 2011 could not be determined for technical reasons. In 2012, one student delivered a paper.

The Department has maintained a strong graduation rate, with an average of 14 degrees awarded over the last seven years (see Table I). An average of 20 students per year completed the required first semester course, IR 720, in the corresponding period.

Table I

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS MASTER'S DEGREES GRANTED

(2005/2006 to 2011/2012)

Academic Year	Number of Students Graduating
2005/06	18
2006/07	13
2007/08	12
2008/09	7

2009/10	11
2010/11	19
2011/12	19 (more to come)
Average	14
Source: Graduate Studies Statistical Reports	

Culminating Experience Assessments

The International Relations Department has assessed MA theses and internship reports submitted during 2010/11. The theses and the internship reports have been assessed by two different rubrics. Each of these written works has been assessed by a faculty member who was not a culminating experience adviser to the student. The assessment does identify some areas where improvement is needed, but it also demonstrates excellent graduate work and shows that our faculty has collectively the breadth of expertise to support the students' pursuit of their own passions.

MA Theses

The faculty examined seven MA theses, assessing each by twelve criteria. The selection of theses for assessment was not guided by any substantive criteria and was random. The criteria for MA theses were:

1. Has a minimum 15,000 words/12,000 for quantitative thesis
2. Has a testable hypothesis
3. Has a literature review with at least 10 sources supporting the hypothesis and at least 3 sources opposing it
4. Has a theoretical argument supporting hypothesis with assumptions and conclusions
5. Has a statement of empirical methodology citing methodological statements or examples of similar methods in IR or related disciplines
6. Has data in format required by methodology
7. Applies a clear methodology to data
8. States the results of methodology application
9. Compares results to hypothesis and to literature opposing hypothesis
10. Has good grammar and style
11. Has appropriate terminology
12. Has clarity of exposition

The strengths and weaknesses brought to light by this assessment are:

Strengths:

- Our MA students have examined and built expertise in a great variety of topics across the world's populated regions. This reflects positively on the faculty and its ability to

- support that diversity of investigations. Students have been able to pursue their own passions and have not been restricted by the collective limitations faculty.
- Our MA students consistently use explicit and disciplined methodologies, whether qualitative or quantitative. In doing so they often create new varieties and combinations of their chosen methods. This assessment shows that the faculty does support students in their pursuit of a considerable variety of methods and does not impose a few favorites.
 - The majority of assessed theses demonstrate a strong command of the relevant literature across disciplines. They are able to identify key debates in the literature they survey.
 - Most of our MA students formulated testable hypotheses, compared them to existing theories in the discipline and related disciplines, gathered appropriate data, and tested their hypotheses

Weaknesses:

- A number of theses had significant flaws in writing. In some cases the student was engaged in unusual research and appropriate standards of exposition were unclear
- A few students wrote passable but low quality theses

Solutions:

The assessment of theses shows that the Department has been consistent in enabling students to produce quality MA theses that meet disciplinary criteria of scientific method. Some theses are not very well written due to language difficulties of foreign students. While we do check for English proficiency in the admissions process, the linguistic demands of an innovative thesis are severe. We must recognize that we face trade-offs. Also, some students have little interaction with faculty during their thesis writing process, and this can lead to quality problems. The Department depends on the self-motivation of students in their thesis writing phase as faculty time is focused toward newer MA students.

The Department has a thesis writing course, IR 750, that all students intending to submit theses are required to take. This course has supported the students and enabled them to choose methodologies and implement them, and to carry out hypothesis testing.

MA Internships

The faculty examined four internship reports, and assessed them by eleven criteria. The section of the internship reports was not guided by any substantive criteria and was random. The criteria for assessment were:

1. The report was at least 12,000 words in length
2. The site organization is widely respected
3. The internship entails analysis drawing on IR knowledge presented in written or oral form
4. The student had direct communication on IR topics with organizational leaders and with other sections
5. The student had direct communication on IR topics with people in other organizations
6. The student was able to demonstrate distinctive analytical perspective with practical use in the internship report

7. The report presents propositions and arguments student could not have conceived without both internship experience and academic knowledge
8. The report presents evidence of making useful professional contacts
9. The report has good grammar and style
10. The report uses appropriate terminology
11. The report has clear exposition

The strengths brought out by this assessment are:

- Many students have been successful in finding prestigious and valuable internship sites, and these engaged the students' knowledge well
- The reports were written with good style
- The students clearly gained some valuable experience and some potentially useful contacts. Sarah Jean Harrison has become a full-time employee of the State Department

The weaknesses brought out by this assessment are:

- Some reports failed to address crucial questions about the students' role and experience within their site organization
- The reports provide little evidence of the students' interaction with other organizations

Solutions:

The LCA College and the Department have engaged a full-time staff person, Ms. Kathy Johnson, to coordinate internships. She has begun to meet students early on to plan their internships. This should lead to substantial improvements in Internship outcomes and in the quality of reports.

Tables of the assessments of theses and internship reports are below in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Rubric table for assessed MA theses

Criterion	Ahmed	Beck
Minimum 15,000 words/12,000 for quantitative thesis	Yes	Yes
Testable hypothesis	Non-linear statistical model of impacts of India's and China's foreign aid on Bangladesh's development.	Alliance between intergovernmental financial institutions and agricultural corporations promotes neoliberal policies in Latin American countries which inhibits adoption of agroecological techniques, resulting in national and individual food insecurity
Literature review with at least 10 sources supporting the hypothesis and at least 3 sources opposing it	Has over 10 sources supporting hypothesis. Has over 3 sources opposing the selected econometric method.	Yes, by a wide margin
Theoretical argument supporting hypothesis with assumptions and conclusions	Little use of IR theory literature. A prominent IR theory used inappropriately. Extensive use of International Economics. Theory takes the form of an econometric model. Control variables inadequate for IR.	Identifies key variables
Statement of empirical methodology citing methodological statements or examples of similar methods in IR or related disciplines	Compares novel non-linear statistical model, based on new literature, to a more established linear model. No consideration of reverse causation.	Uses comparative-historical case study method, citing prominent exemplars
Data in format required by methodology	Yes.	Yes, excellent data from Mexico, Paraguay, and Cuba
Application of methodology to data	Yes. Both linear and non-linear models run using data.	Yes. Identified variables are evaluated and described for the three cases in appropriate detail
Statements of results of methodology application	Statement of results suited to non-linear methodology. Additional details in appendix.	Yes. Case studies are written up according to method
Comparison of results to hypothesis and to literature opposing hypothesis	Compares standard and novel results, finds similarity but more depth in novel model results.	No, except that criticisms of agroecological techniques are refuted with data
Grammar and style	Grammar good. Some paragraphs far too long.	Good.
Appropriate terminology	Appropriate to hypothesis and method.	Yes.
Clarity of exposition	Does not meet expository criteria common in IR.	Good exposition.

Criterion	Guy	Andreades
Minimum 15,000 words/12,000 for quantitative thesis	Yes	Yes
Testable hypothesis	Domestic inequality in economic development in India is a result of internal elite class reinforcement through use of state resources as an economic mechanism, keeping the state present in economic policy as an actor and facilitating it to serve the elite as opposed to the development needs of the masses	Joining EU halted creative destruction in Greece. Dominant coalition emerged between political class and public sector employees
Literature review with at least 10 sources supporting the hypothesis and at least 3 sources opposing it	Meets minimum, but bibliography not impressive	Good
Theoretical argument supporting hypothesis with assumptions and conclusions	Yes, but conclusions are narrower than initial discussion	Good, uses neo-Schumpeterian economics and historical structural analysis
Statement of empirical methodology citing methodological statements or examples of similar methods in IR or related disciplines	Yes, good methodological focus on particular economic sectors	Yes, nice discussion of self-reproducing structures and well thought out methodological framework based on actions-outcomes of various actors.
Data in format required by methodology	Yes, good sector-based data	Yes, examines 16 practices of Greek and foreign actors protecting self-interests at the expense of the Greek economy
Application of methodology to data	Good, but some discourse analysis does not heed context adequately	OK, but many assumptions are imported into data, with bias toward showing Greece as victim. It was impossible for student to do justice to the complex dynamics within the space devoted
Statements of results of methodology application	OK, but too many assertions unsupported by evidence	The author did a much better job in the conclusion in linking various portions of the argument together and also showed how the historically embedded relationships that led to the crisis were already being changed and altered to provide room for innovation.
Comparison of results to hypothesis and to literature opposing hypothesis	Good conclusion statement	Good discussion of how these issues relate to the literature review and the points made overall in the theoretical discussions. Reviewer can see many similarities with the processes described here and Spain
Grammar and style	Good	Some flaws in writing
Appropriate terminology	Yes	Yes
Clarity of exposition	Good	Good

Criterion	De Souza	Calouro
Minimum 15,000 words/12,000 for quantitative thesis	Yes	Yes
Testable hypothesis	U.S. support of Musharraf's ill governance led to an increase of fundamentalism and extremism in Pakistan	Pathologies of DR Congo civil war were the result of a self-reproducing historical structure of practices by rebels, government, and foreign actors
Literature review with at least 10 sources supporting the hypothesis and at least 3 sources opposing it	No, only two opposing sources	Yes
Theoretical argument supporting hypothesis with assumptions and conclusions	Weak conceptual framework	Yes, clear identification of practices
Statement of empirical methodology citing methodological statements or examples of similar methods in IR or related disciplines	Good, proposes to examine interplay between rules and structure	Yes, demonstrates how practices were reinforced by other practices
Data in format required by methodology	OK	Yes, but supplementary statistical analysis is not consistent with assumptions of historical structural analysis
Application of methodology to data	Insufficient data	Yes, extensive data on DR Congo war
Statements of results of methodology application	Insufficient data	Yes
Comparison of results to hypothesis and to literature opposing hypothesis	Weak	Yes, good rebuttal of some published explanations of civil war duration
Grammar and style	Issues with tense and syntax	Good
Appropriate terminology	Some errors	Good
Clarity of exposition	Lacked focus	Good

Criterion	McCanna
Minimum 15,000 words/12,000 for quantitative thesis	Yes
Testable hypothesis	Yes, foreign aid effectiveness in Africa is determined by variables measuring different dimensions of recipient state strength
Literature review with at least 10 sources supporting the hypothesis and at least 3 sources opposing it	Yes, this section includes sources from economics, international relations, and comparative politics
Theoretical argument supporting hypothesis with assumptions and conclusions	Yes, author uses World Bank studies and other sources to define dimensions of state strength
Statement of empirical methodology citing methodological statements or examples of similar methods in IR or related disciplines	The study uses both statistical and qualitative methods for testing the relationships between state weakness and foreign aid effectiveness. She begins by testing relationships between disaggregated variables related to foreign aid and state strength. After learning about existence of hypothesized relationships, she selects for additional testing three cases along the state strength continuum – Ghana (strong state), Nigeria (weak state), and Sudan (weak state). Overall, the idea is well-conceived and executed although more discussion of methods of combining quantitative and qualitative research would be welcome.
Data in format required by methodology	The format selected is appropriate for the study's objectives. For instance, for a causal claims to be validated, a more sophisticated statistical analysis with full diagnostics would need to be conducted. Some measurements would need to be corroborated too – Freedom House index of political and civil freedoms, for instance, has been widely criticized. However, the author does not claim causality; instead she claims linkage and for that her tentative multivariate regression analysis seems appropriate.
Application of methodology to data	Yes
Statements of results of methodology application	Yes
Comparison of results to hypothesis and to literature opposing hypothesis	The author is clear that she seeks to challenge neo-liberal economic explanations of foreign aid (in)effectiveness such as Burnside and Dollar 2000. The overall analysis of the explanatory potential of political variables associated with state weakness is persuasive.
Grammar and style	Good
Appropriate terminology	Good
Clarity of exposition	Good

Table 3: Rubric table of assessed MA internship reports

Criterion	Harrison, US Department of State, Government)	Zhang , Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, (Government)
At least 12,000 words in length	No	Yes
Internship experience and report clarifies student's career plans, and report explains how internship supports career plans	No evidence of this	Yes, this student is keen on moving in this direction for her future career.
Site organization is widely respected	Yes	Yes, BASS was established in 1978.
Internship entails analysis drawing on IR knowledge presented in written or oral form	Yes	Yes, it does meet this criterion: charts and analyses demonstrated IR knowledge. The review of the literature on globalization throughout the paper is compelling. Liuyi Zhang worked as a research assistant; she has gained a very fine learning experience
Direct communication on IR topics with organizational leaders and with other sections	Not known	Yes, especially on the topic of decision-making
Direct communication on IR topics with people in other organizations	Not known	Yes, interactions with other similar research institutes
Student able to demonstrate distinctive analytical perspective with practical use	Yes, report examines UDAID and DoS aid programs relating to gender and climate, applying theoretical knowledge. Some data is derived from other DoS researchers.	Yes, indeed, especially on the issues of funding, globalization trends, foreign direct investment (FDI) and whole host of IPE perspectives
Presents propositions and arguments student could not have conceived without both internship experience and academic knowledge	Yes, report combines detailed knowledge of USAID and DoS with detailed knowledge of IR literature.	Yes, practical experience with IPE issues, ranging from positive to negative ("dark") side of globalization.
Report presents evidence of making useful professional contacts	Not clear from report, but she gained employment at the State Department	Yes, with similar research institutions: working on the topic of the global production networks and the theory of "world cities"
Grammar and style	Good	Fairly good; problem areas: long and tedious paragraphs; the paper is not paginated.
Appropriate terminology	Good	Yes: all IPE-related terminologies are properly used: FDI, WTO, IMF, WB, SAPs, UNDP, TRIPS, TRIMS, GATS, etc.
Clarity of exposition	Good	Yes

	Brady, Global Exchange (NGO)	Conrad, US Embassy, Moscow (Government)
At least 12,000 words in length	Yes	No
Internship experience and report clarifies student's career plans, and report explains how internship supports career plans	Helps student understand how to organize political activism. Otherwise, issue is not adequately addressed in report.	The report is not clear on this point
Site organization is widely respected	Yes	Yes
Internship entails analysis drawing on IR knowledge presented in written or oral form	Yes- There was an need for her to draw on knowledge about Mexico-US relations and the drug war	Yes, the assessment of rational choice and cognitive perspectives through interviews is relevant
Direct communication on IR topics with organizational leaders and with other sections	Yes. She relates many interviews with US-Mexico experts.	Yes, interviewed Embassy staff
Direct communication on IR topics with people in other organizations	No	Not reported
Student able to demonstrate distinctive analytical perspective with practical use	Her review on theoretical action, identity theory and power of identification was good but too brief for a written work of that length.	Not really. Analysis of rational choice and cognitive perspectives has little practical use
Presents propositions and arguments student could not have conceived without both internship experience and academic knowledge	This is the main problem with her work, to no fault of hers. She could have probably written a strong thesis on social movements without the internship. Instead her report is a day-by-day account of fairly basic tasks and, a short paper on social mobilization.	Interviews are valuable
Report presents evidence of making useful professional contacts	It is hard to say what contacts may or may not prove useful at some point.	Possibly, through the interviews
Grammar and style	Good	OK, need better spelling
Appropriate terminology	Good	Good
Clarity of exposition	Good	Good