

Association News

The Political Science Professoriate: A Report on the Profession

Michael Brintnall, *American Political Science Association*

Academic institutions are facing complicated questions about costs, enrollments, and prospects for growth. Recent predictions of a shortage of faculty in the social sciences have heightened speculation about emerging job opportunities, while declines in numbers of graduate degrees and reductions in the size of the pool of traditional-age college students for the next several years have raised immediate fears of academic retrenchment.

APSA collects several types of data which can help form a picture of how political science is weathering these trends. They show political science fundamentally is doing well. The total active political science professoriate, full-time and part-time, is estimated to be 11,875 faculty—a 20% increase from the mid-1980s (APSA *Survey of Departments*, various years, adjusted). Enrollments are increasing, and the profession is centered in leading areas of academic growth—particularly global studies and international relations.

... student interest in political science is on the increase.

But the complete picture is complex. This overview examines trends in enrollments, departmental growth, and hiring in political science, drawing on data from political science department chairs, graduate advisors, and personnel programs.

Student Enrollment

To begin with, student interest in political science is on the increase.

Both undergraduate and graduate student enrollments are growing. An evaluation of the Departmental Services Survey from 1984 to 1990 shows that the number of students taking political science undergraduate courses totals more than 1.5 million enrollments, increasing by 235,571 over the last six years. Political science undergraduate degrees likewise have grown, from about 39,000 to over 44,000 per year (APSA, *Survey of Departments*, adjusted).

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Institutions of all sizes are experiencing enrollment growth—60% of all academic departments reported enrollment increases for AY 1989-90, and only 9% reported a decline. Growth is found most frequently in the largest Ph.D. institutions, where over three-quarters report undergrad-

uate enrollments are increasing. The smallest schools, those with combined political and social science departments, are less likely to report growth.

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Graduate enrollments have also increased since the mid-1980s, reversing a downward trend. Latest enrollments of about 1,300 new graduate students are substantially above the most recent low point of just 1,000 new students in fall of 1984, as shown in Figure 1 (APSA, *Graduate Students and Faculty*, adjusted).

Size of the Professoriate

Overall, the political science professoriate has grown with the student body. Total numbers of faculty

FIGURE 1.
Ph.D. Students in Political Science
Numbers Enrolling and Graduating

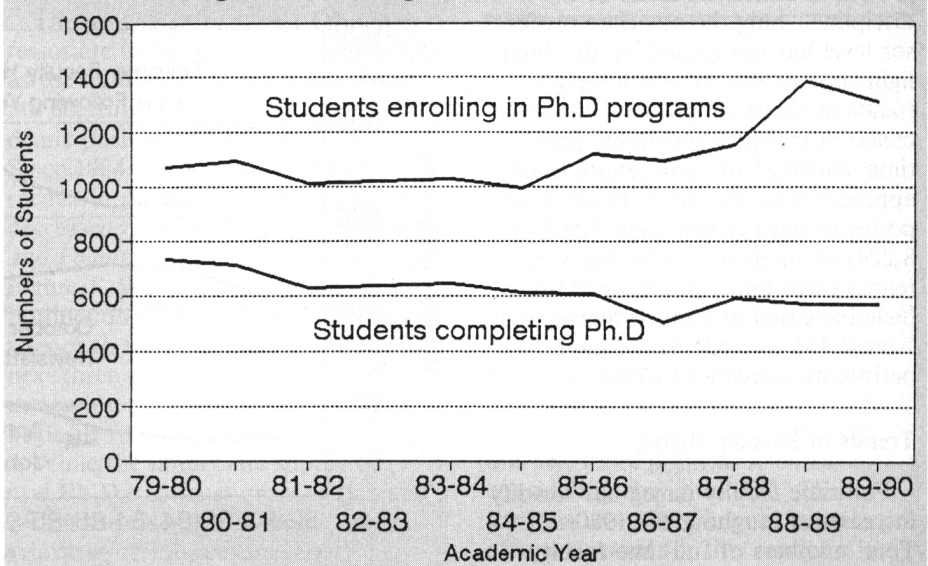
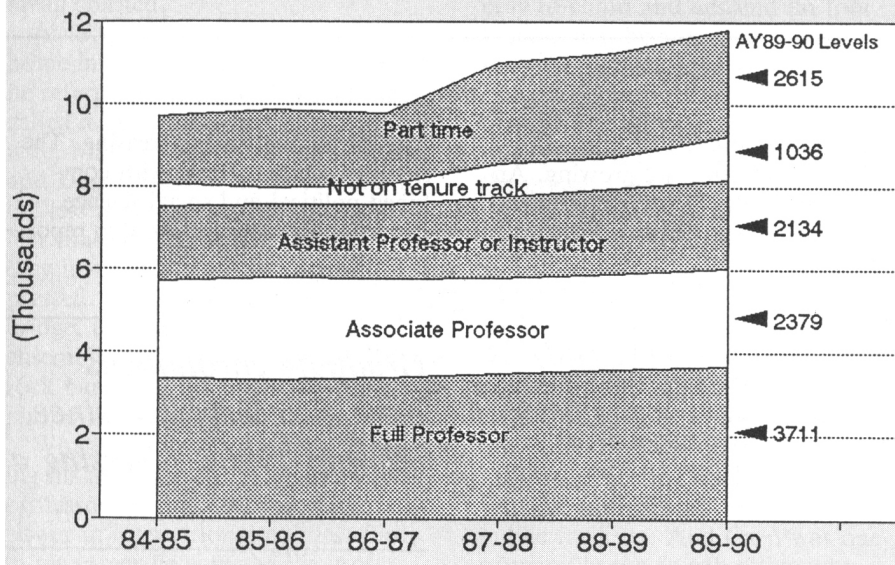


FIGURE 2.
Total Political Science Faculty by Year and Rank or Status



teaching political science have increased from 9,748 in AY 1984-85 to 11,875 in AY 1989-90. The number of full-time positions has increased in that period from 8,135 to 9,260, a net addition of 1,125 positions.

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Figure 2 shows total numbers of political science faculty from the mid-1980s to present. It shows growth at almost all levels of the discipline—only the associate professor level has not gained. It also highlights one of the more troubling trends in academic growth—the increase in marginal positions, part-time teaching, and non-tenure track appointments. Full-time, tenure track positions have grown from 7,565 to 8,224, an increase of 9%, but non-tenure track and part-time positions have increased at a much higher rate, from 2,183 to 3,651 in the same period, an increase of 67%.

Trends in Faculty Hiring

Full-time faculty hiring has steadily increased throughout the 1980s. Total numbers of full-time faculty

hired by political science programs in all academic departments in the U.S. has increased from 633 people recruited in 1983-84 to begin work the next year, to 936 recruited in AY 1988-89 for work starting last academic year, as reported by department chairs (APSA, *Survey of Departments*, adjusted).

Data measuring job listings correspond with this trend. Monthly listings of openings in the *Personnel Service Newsletter*, and positions advertised at the annual meeting have also increased in recent years. The

number of positions advertised in the October edition of the *Personnel Service Newsletter* increased steadily from 1985-88. In the last two years the 1988 level of approximately 280 job listings for this peak recruitment month has been maintained. The positions available at the APSA annual meeting placement service have followed a similar growth pattern. All of these trends are illustrated in Figure 3.

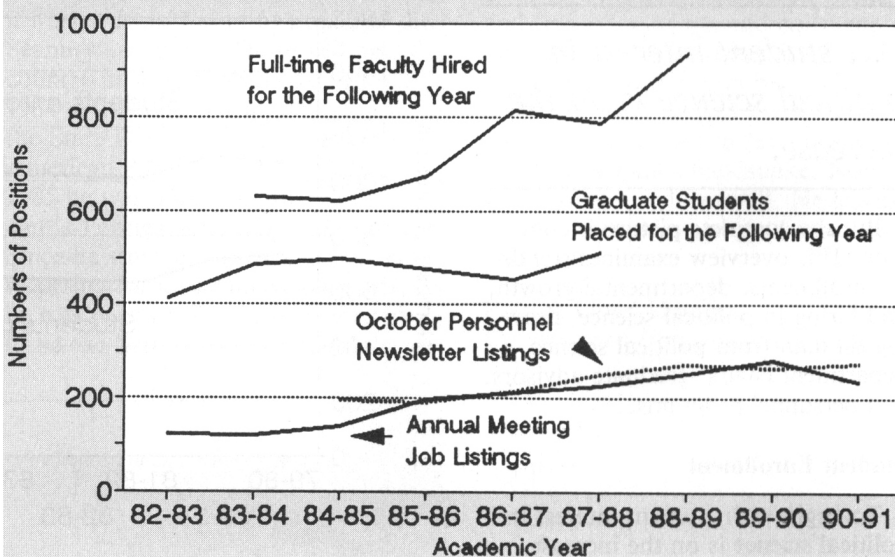
New Openings

Newly created positions form an important component of the increased job listings and recruiting that has occurred. Numbers of new full-time positions established annually in the profession have doubled since the mid-1980s. Two-hundred thirty-one new full-time positions were created for AY 1989-90, compared to 111 in 1984-85.

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Another area of opportunity for new entrants into the profession is a growth in positions available because of retirement or death. This number remained relatively steady through

FIGURE 3.
Trends in Openings in Political Science Positions Advertised and Filled



the 1980s at around 110 positions per year until the current academic year, when it increased to 175. While obviously there is no way now to determine whether this increase will continue, it may reflect the beginning of a growing number of retirements projected for the large group of faculty who entered academe in the 1960s and 1970s (Bowen and Sosa, 1989).

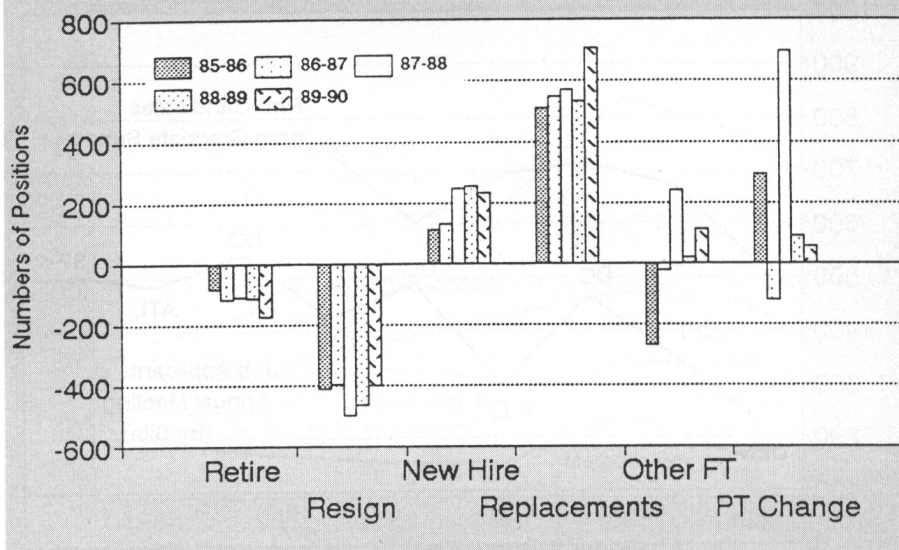
Altogether, change in the profession in academic institutions is a function of multiple factors, numbers of retirements and resignations, numbers of replacement hires, numbers of new positions created, degree of reliance on part-time faculty, and other factors. Figure 4 compares different components of change in the size of the professoriate from year to year. It shows the events occurring prior to each academic year which affect the size of the professoriate in that year, as reported in the *APSA Survey of Departments*.

The first cluster of bars in Figure 4 shows the change in the number of retirements from year to year, representing potential openings for new hires in the profession. Due to limits in the data, these numbers technically represent retirements which led to openings that were filled the next year. There is no data on retirements which are unreplaced. The second cluster shows number of other openings from resignations, tenure denial, etc., reported by department chairs. The next cluster shows the reported numbers of new positions created annually, followed by reported numbers of full-time hiring for replacement of faculty who retired or left.

The next cluster, titled "Other FT," is a residual category, necessary to adjust total full-time faculty reported in one year to totals reported in the next year's survey. It probably reflects full-time positions created or lost by idiosyncratic means, such as part-time faculty converted to full-time and faculty inherited from other parts of the institutions, as well as reporting errors. Finally, the last cluster shows the net change in numbers of part-time positions reported.

This figure illustrates the trends described above—growth in retirement, in newly created positions, and general hiring. It also shows a period

FIGURE 4.
Components of Change in Size of Faculty
Annual Data by Reason for Change



of substantial part-time hiring for AY 1987-88. While numbers of part-time hires have not grown substantially since then, neither has the profession reduced its reliance on such faculty after that period.

The largest academic institutions are the primary beneficiaries of trends in faculty growth. Forty-four percent of the larger Ph.D. programs reported adding new faculty last year, compared to 28% of Masters and smaller Ph.D. programs and 20% of undergraduate schools.

Job Seekers

The growth in the size of the professoriate in recent years is appearing as the number of new Ph.D.s (who are entering the market for academic positions) is tapering off. Since 1984 the number of Ph.D.s earned in political science has slowly decreased (*APSA, Graduate Students and Faculty*, adjusted), as shown in Figure 1. We can expect the annual production of doctorates in political science to begin to increase after the next three to five years, as the increasing numbers of new students begin to fill the pipeline.

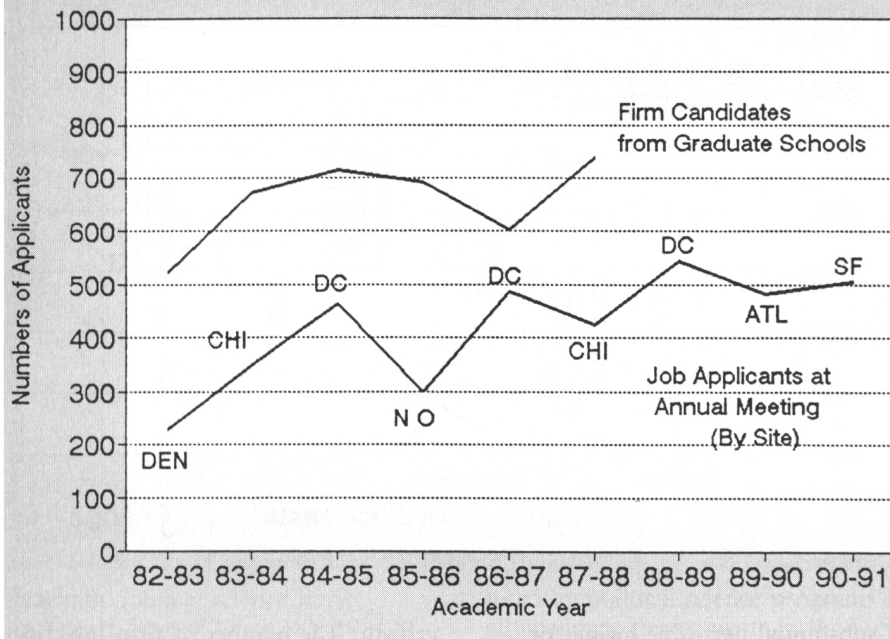
While the immediate supply of new Ph.D.s to meet growing demand within the discipline is small, other measures of job seekers show

growth. The number of firm job candidates fresh from graduate study goes up and down, but shows some increase, presumably because more ABDs have entered the market. For a fuller description of recent graduate school placement classes, see the analysis by Sheilah Mann in *PS* (Mann 1990).

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Numbers of applicants for positions advertised at the APSA annual meeting also appear to have increased from 229 in AY 1982-83 to 506 in AY 1990-91. This number includes first-time job seekers, faculty seeking new positions, and others seeking to return to academia. This increase may be attributed to more candidates choosing to use the annual meeting placement service in their search or it could indicate that upon perceiving an improving job market, more political scientists are considering changing jobs. Clearly the location of the annual meeting affects turnout for this service.

FIGURE 5.
Job Seekers
Candidates on Market for Following Year



These data are summarized in Figure 5, where firm candidates from graduate school and annual meeting job seekers are listed for the year during which they are conducting their job search. These numbers can be compared to data in Figure 3 showing actual hiring during the search year, for full-time positions beginning a year later.

Fields of Interest in Political Science

Most of the growth in political science is occurring in the fields of comparative politics and international relations, and each field now has exceeded the number of openings in American politics. October listings by all fields used in the *Personnel Service Newsletter* are shown in Figures 6 and 7. For the most part, other fields have remained relatively steady in the number of openings advertised.

Student enrollments conform to departmental hiring priorities. More department chairs report increases in undergraduate enrollments in courses in comparative government and politics, and international relations, than any other fields except introduction to political science and to American government.

Conclusions

At a time of concern about levels of undergraduate enrollments in general, and a climate of academic retrenchment nationwide, political science as a whole is doing well. Enrollments are up, graduate study is increasing, and departments are expanding.

One of the most compelling and intense themes in higher education,

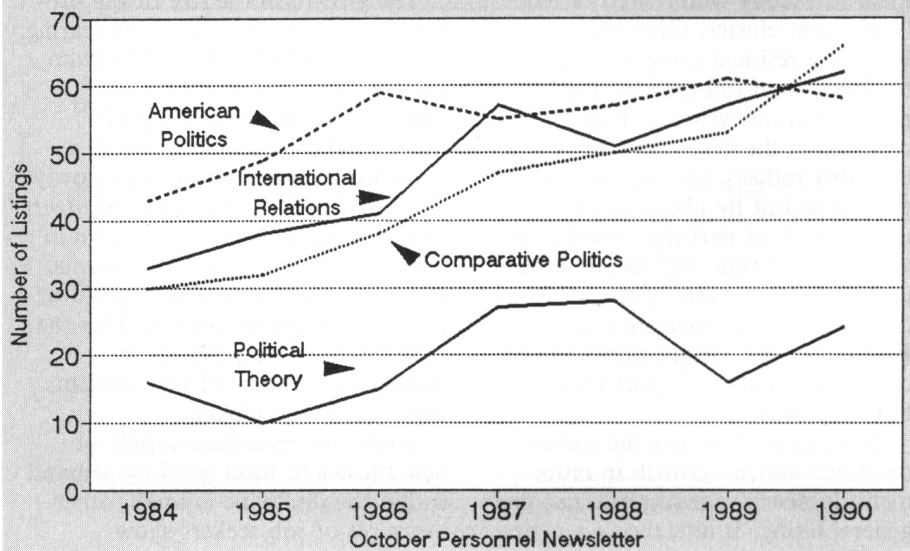
the move toward global understanding and awareness, has clearly struck a resonant chord in political science as international relations and comparative politics lead the growth in enrollment and in hiring. Clearly the discipline has the opportunity to lead in one of the most important trends in higher education.

. . . political science as a whole is doing well.

But cautions are warranted as well as optimism. Much growth in the profession is tenuous, occurring outside the permanent professoriate in non-tenure track positions and part-time appointments. Time will tell whether this is a temporary development, as institutions hedge their bets for the future or not. APSA will track this closely.

There is also evidence that growth is unevenly distributed within academia, with larger institutions—presumably state-supported—showing more growth in hiring and enrollment than smaller schools. Subsequent reports by APSA will examine this issue, and others of importance to the profession, such as the situation of women and minorities in academic professions.

FIGURE 6.
Political Science Fields
Personnel Newsletter Listings by Year



Appendix: APSA Data Sources Used in the Report

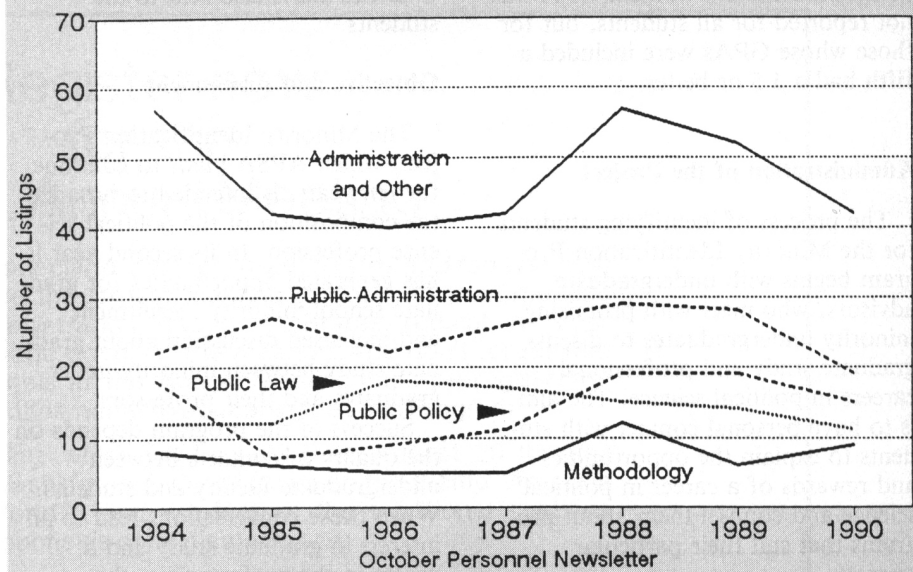
Departmental Survey. Departmental survey data are taken from the annual *Survey of Departments* completed by political science department chairs and compiled by APSA. This survey is mailed to all 1,300 political science department chairs offering political science in four-year colleges and universities in the United States. Overall response rates are typically about 54%. However, institutions of different sizes report at different rates, with many more surveys returned from graduate institutions than undergraduate.

Data from the Departmental Surveys used in this report have been weighted to reflect the universe of 1,300 departments. Responses from different subsets of institutions have been weighted differently to reflect the response rates for different schools. For example, for 1989-90, response rates for Ph.D. programs were 87%; for Masters programs, 90%; for undergraduate programs, 55%; and for undergraduate social science and combined departments, 33%. (These rates, incidentally, correct numbers reported on page 41 of the 1989-90 survey for undergraduate and combined departments.)

Personnel Service Newsletter. For purposes of this report, the October editions of the APSA *Personnel Service Newsletter* were used to gauge hiring trends. The October listings include carry-over listings from September as well as most new fall listings. September, November, and December issues showed similar patterns.

Graduate Student Survey. Each year, APSA collects information on graduate students and faculty from departments of political science. These are listed for each department in the annual report *Graduate Students and Faculty in Political Science Ph.D. and M.A. Programs*. Totals used in this report were weighted to adjust for missing data, and thus will differ from the tallies in the published results of the survey. Data not collected for 1983 was interpolated.

FIGURE 7.
Political Science Fields
Personnel Newsletter Listings by Year



References

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- APSA. October edition, various years. *Personnel Service Newsletter*.
- APSA. Various years. *Survey of Departments*.
- Bowen, William G. and Julie Ann Sosa. 1989. *Prospects for Faculty in the Arts and Sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Mann, Sheilah. 1990. "Finding Jobs: Placement of Political Scientists, 1988." *PS: Political Science & Politics* XXIII (3): 495-99.

Minority Identification Project

Shelley Sallee, American Political Science Association

Participation in APSA's Minority Identification Project increased dramatically this fall. Political science faculty from 56 schools identified 482 promising minority undergraduates who are potential candidates for doctoral programs in political science. Last year the project identified 144 minority students interested in graduate study.

The increase in students identified this year is attributed to earlier and more active promoting of the program by undergraduate faculty and to participation by many more undergraduate and graduate pro-

grams. This year 26 graduate and 30 undergraduate schools have referred students for the project.

Development of the Project

APSA instituted the Minority Identification Project in 1989 under the leadership of Robert Keohane of Harvard University. The increased job opportunities for political scientists expected in the next decade provide an opportune time to increase the numbers of minorities entering political science programs now. Information about each of these students has been provided to leading graduate schools who actively recruit the students and make extra efforts to provide financial aid to those accepted to their programs.

The Minority Identification Project augments other efforts already underway through APSA. The Ralph Bunche Summer Institute and the Graduate Fellowship Program both aim in part at recruitment and retention of underrepresented minority students in graduate programs.

Composition of Student Pool

This year's pool of identified students is ethnically diverse. Forty-six percent of the students are African Americans, 2% American Indians, 13% Asian Americans, 35% Latinos,