Department of Political Science

The MIT Political Science Department remains one of the country’s leading departments. It continues to attract top-quality graduate students and junior faculty and serves as the home of several important educational and research activities.

Over the last three years, the Political Science Department has experienced a very exciting (and at times intense) process of rebuilding. The goal is to make the department, within the next three to five years, one of the country’s top five political science departments—and, in the process, help transform the discipline by showing that analytical and theoretical rigor can go hand in hand with policy relevance and that the field of political science can make significant contributions toward solving the world’s great challenges while also advancing the frontiers of knowledge. To achieve these goals, we built on existing strengths within the department, developed stronger ties to other departments and research initiatives at MIT, and invested new resources into the department, both in the short and medium term. Our rise in U.S. News & World Report’s rankings and tremendous success in recruiting new PhD students indicate that we are well on the way to achieving our goals.

This past year, the department has focused on:

- Strengthening our finances so that we can support a healthy (and competitive) PhD program and hire to fill all open faculty slots.
- Reviewing and upgrading our graduate and undergraduate programs so that we offer our students the very best possible education in politics, policy, and the underlying methods required to understand and evaluate competing political positions/policy options.
- Increasing the quantity and quality of scholarly activities occurring within and sponsored by the department in order to enhance both our visibility (within MIT, the discipline, and the world) and our intellectual community.
- Changing the norms and culture of the department so that we can create a rich and nurturing intellectual community.
- Building stronger ties to other departments and research centers at MIT by both playing a greater role in various policy-related debates on campus and promoting collaborative projects and joint courses with faculty from other units at the Institute. Strengthening our ties and identification with MIT is key to our return to prominence.

Although we still have much work to do, we have begun to make some progress on each of these tasks.
**Fundraising**

We continued to make progress on raising funds for our graduate program. Funds from external donors (Andronico Luksic, Jon Borshow, Nike Inc.) were raised to establish three new endowed graduate fellowships in the department. We also received $200,000 from the Korean Development Institute to support graduate students working on industrial policy and/or economic development issues in Korea and other “late industrializing” countries (including but not limited to China, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Brazil); $250,000 from Li & Fung to support graduate students with projects in the areas of work organization, supply chain efficiencies, and labor standards; and $300,000 from the Just Supply Chains project, which explores how best to promote a shared goal of achieving just working conditions, fair competition, and broad adherence to ethical business practices in an open, competitive environment. In addition, we received smaller gifts (totaling $90,711) from a variety of donors. We still have a major gap in our graduate fellowship budget, but we are working hard to close this gap.

We also received a $5 million gift from the Stanton Foundation to establish a new, chaired professorship in nuclear security policy studies in the Department of Political Science. We successfully recruited Francis Gavin to this new endowed professorship.

**Faculty Searches**

We ran two junior faculty searches this past year, in the areas of comparative politics and international relations, in an effort to strengthen both our graduate and undergraduate programs. In addition, we conducted two searches at the senior level: the first to find a distinguished scholar to hold the Stanton chair in nuclear security and the second to find a distinguished scholar to head the political economy and development group. The senior-level searches were not run as open searches but rather were targeted to specific scholars who were known to be highly qualified and potentially open to accepting the position.

The comparative politics search resulted in the appointment of Regina Bateson (PhD, Yale University) as assistant professor. Bateson was chosen because she is a scholar who studies the high rates of criminality and homicide in post–civil war societies. Through a fine-grained analysis of different regions within Guatemala, Bateson was able to explain why certain regions have far higher levels of post-conflict violence than others. She related the variations in regional patterns to distinct civil war experiences rather than (as other scholars have explained them) to economic or social characteristics of the regions. After last year’s unsuccessful search, we are very excited that we were able to successfully recruit a top junior comparative politics scholar to our department.

The international relations faculty search resulted in the appointment of Richard Nielsen (PhD, Harvard University) as assistant professor. Nielsen is an impressive scholar of international relations. He completed his dissertation in the Harvard Department of Government on the radicalization of jihadi clerics in Egypt and based his research on fieldwork in Cairo mosques. In addition to path-breaking work on this important topic, he writes on international law, the political economy of human rights, development, and violence. We were attracted by the way his interests and expertise bridge disparate parts of the department and impressed by the importance of his questions and the sophistication of his analytical tool kit.
Three candidates for the Stanton chair were identified and invited to visit the department and give talks. Of the three, Professor Gavin, a historian and political scientist from the University of Texas at Austin, was considered to be the clear choice. He was offered the position and accepted, and he will be joining the department in January 2014.

The senior search for the political economy and development position focused on recruiting professor Thad Dunning from Yale University. He was offered the position, and his wife, comparativist Jennifer Busell, was also offered an assistant professorship in the department. After a recruitment process that involved considerable time and effort, Professor Dunning chose not to accept our offer.

**Intellectual Commons**

We have instituted a series of research-related activities, including the Political Experiments Research Lab (PERL), the American Politics Seminar Series, the Experimental Working Group, the Ideas Matter Forum, and the Security Studies Workshop, that have created a sense of intellectual energy and excitement within the department. Faculty from the department (Suzanne Berger, Edward Steinfeld, Michael Piore, and Richard Locke) played a key role in the Institute-wide Production in the Innovation Economy project and have been meeting with leaders of both the MIT Energy Initiative and the Environmental Research Council to discuss ways in which the department can play a more active role in policy analyses and debates related to energy and the environment. In addition, department faculty (Chappell Lawson, Richard Samuels, Daniel Posner, and Ben Schneider, along with Steinfeld, Piore, and Berger) continue to play a major role in the MIT International Science and Technology Initiatives (MISTI) program.

Last June, the department hosted the annual meeting of the Society for the Advancement of Socio-Economics, which greatly increased our international visibility. Over 800 scholars from around the world came to MIT to attend this annual conference.

In short, we are making progress on all of the key issues facing the department, issues we need to address if we are to meet our goals of becoming one of the country’s top five departments and reinventing the discipline.

**Educational Initiatives**

The department’s core mission is education, starting on the MIT campus and extending into the wider world. Fulfillment of that mission is centered on the undergraduate and graduate programs, both of which have established equilibria following the reforms of several years ago.

One important development in the graduate program was a revamping of the formal methods sequence, which was spearheaded by professor Jens Hainmueller and others in the methods field, following widespread consultation with faculty and graduate students throughout the department. This involved a “math boot camp” for incoming graduate students and a rearranging of the three-semester statistics sequence. This required sequence has helped strengthen the methodological skills of our PhD students.
Over and above its own curriculum, the department is home to a number of internship and other “hands-on” experiences, mostly for undergraduates. These activities allow science and engineering students to engage with policymakers at home and with laboratories and industries abroad.

In addition to attracting qualified underrepresented minority candidates to the department through the regular search process, we have launched a new race and diversity predoctoral fellowship. We identified a very promising African American candidate, LaFleur Stephens, who applied for our American politics position last year but was not quite ready for the job market. We made her an offer, she accepted, and joined the department as a predoc for AY2013. Stephens works on American politics and public policy and is finishing her dissertation on “Campaigning in a ‘Post-Racial’ America.”

Although MISTI is formally affiliated with the Center for International Studies, almost all of the faculty directors of the country programs are from the Department of Political Science, as is the director of MISTI, Professor Lawson. In addition to being an important part of the education of hundreds of MIT students each year, MISTI serves as a model of international education among other colleges and universities with a large number of students in science and engineering.

The minor in applied international studies is now housed in the department. Many students who participate in the MISTI program also pursue the applied international studies minor, which is now the third-largest minor at the Institute.

Departmental faculty have developed new subjects aimed at increasing our undergraduate enrollments. For the second time, professors Locke and Lawson taught 17.33 Building a Better World. The course focuses on key policy challenges including state building, economic development, environmental protection, corruption and the rule of law, provision of basic public services, democratization, strengthening civil society, and international security. In addition, professor Adam Berinsky taught 17.28J The War at Home, which examines the relationship between war and domestic politics in the United States since the start of the 20th century. Also, professor Fotini Christia designed a new course, 17.583 Conflict and the Graphic Novel, which was launched this past spring. Professor Christopher Warshaw taught 17.245 Constitutional Law (a course that had not been offered for several years), and professor Devon Caughey taught 17.264 Electoral Politics, during the election cycle this past fall semester.

The MIT Washington Summer Internship Program continues to allow MIT’s technically oriented students to experience how institutions vital to their later success operate, along with giving the federal government and other policymakers early access to the best young scientists and engineers in America. Fifteen undergraduates, representing four of the Institute’s schools, participated in the summer of 2013. They are working at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Institute of Medicine, the Government Accountability Office, Gryphon Scientific, and the White House Office of Science and Technology.
Student Recruitment, Placement, and Enrollment

The department reviewed 389 applications for the PhD program. We accepted 39 applicants, of whom 19 accepted our offer of admission. Once again, we aimed at a first-year PhD class of 15. We attribute this year’s success in part to a revamped open house format and the extensive participation of faculty and current students in the recruitment process. Our yield was highest in international relations (80%), followed by security studies and political economy (each at 66%). Although we continue to struggle in the field of American politics, a number of our applicants in other areas have expressed an interest in working with our American politics faculty.

A number of current and incoming graduate students won prestigious fellowships and awards, among them two National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowships, two Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Doctoral Fellowships, two Fulbright Fellowships, a Smith Richardson Fellowship, and an NSF dissertation grant.

Our graduating doctoral students continue to garner rewarding and prestigious appointments in academics and industry. Our PhD graduates this year obtained faculty appointments at Harvard Business School, the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, New York University, Sam Houston University in Texas, and the University of Hong Kong, along with postdoctoral fellowships at Harvard University’s Belfer Center and the University of Toronto.

Undergraduate enrollments in our major were higher than in past years, but enrollments in our three minors and in our concentration were slightly lower than in past years. We had 25 majors, 41 concentrators, and 57 minors overall (21 in political science, 4 in public policy, and 32 in applied international studies).

Faculty and Promotions

We are delighted that we had a faculty member promoted this year: David Singer to associate professor with tenure.

Awards and Grants

Notable awards, grants, recognitions, and important professional responsibilities given to faculty members during the 2012–2013 academic year include the following.

- Professor Suzanne Berger won the 2013 Gordon Y. Billard Award for special service of outstanding merit performed for the Institute.
- Professor Adam Berinsky was honored with a 2013 Warren J. Mitofsky Award for Excellence in Public Opinion Research and an NSF Political Science Program Grant.
- Professor Devin Caughey received an Editor’s Choice Award and the Warren Miller Prize for the best work appearing in Political Analysis.
- Professor Fotini Christia received a Draper Laboratory grant (with Roger Petersen), a Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative grant towards
her new research project in Yemen (part of a larger multimillion-dollar grant submission by Daron Acemoglu and colleagues), and the 2013 Luebbert Best Book Award for Alliance Formation in Civil Wars (Cambridge University Press, 2012). This award, presented by the American Political Science Association (APSA), recognizes the best book in comparative politics published in the past two years.

- Professor Jens Hainmueller received the Best Paper Award from APSA’s Elections, Public Opinion, and Voting Behavior Section for “The Hidden American Immigration Consensus: A Conjoint Analysis of Attitudes toward Immigrants.” In addition, he served as a fellow at the Institute for Quantitative Social Science at Harvard University and as research director at the Sustainability, Transparency, and Accountability Research Lab at the University of Sydney Business School.

- Professor Daniel Hidalgo received a Norway Research Council seed grant.

- Professor Chap Lawson was presented the James A. and Ruth Levitan Award for Excellence in Teaching by the MIT School of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (SHASS).

- Professor Melissa Nobles was selected as one of three APSA vice presidents for 2013–2014.

- Professor Ken Oye was awarded an NSF grant (“Creating a Research Agenda for the Ecological Implications of Synthetic Biology”) through the MIT Center for International Studies (with a subcontract to the Smithsonian Woodrow Wilson Center) and a grant from NSF and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory for research on intellectual property, safety, and security.

- Professor Roger Petersen received the 2012 Ethnicity, Nationalism, and Migration Studies Award and the Marshall Shulman Book Prize, which recognizes an outstanding monograph dealing with the international relations, foreign policy, or foreign-policy decision making of any of the states of the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe.

- Professor Barry Posen was awarded a Frankel Family Foundation grant and a Carnegie Corporation of New York grant in support of the Security Studies Program.

- Professor Richard Samuels was named co–principal investigator of a Japan Foundation Center for Global Partnership research and education project and received a Toshiba Foundation grant for the MIT-Japan Program.

- Professor Ben Schneider was awarded an Inter-American Development Bank research grant and received a fellowship from the Institute for Applied Economic Research (Brazil) for collaboration on a project focusing on democratic developmental states.

- Professor David Singer was elected as a member of the executive committee of APSA’s Political Economy Section.
• Professor Charles Stewart III won the Patrick J. Fett Award, which recognizes the best paper on the scientific study of Congress and the presidency, for “The Value of Committee Assignments in Congress since 1994.” Also, he received grants from NSF (through a partnership with R. Michael Alvarez at the California Institute of Technology) and the Carnegie Foundation for work on voting technology research and education.

• Professor Kathleen Thelen served as a research fellow at Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (Science Center Berlin) during 2012–2013.

• Professor Lily Tsai was awarded a three-year grant (in collaboration with Daniel Posner and Evan Lieberman of Princeton) by Twaweza, a nongovernmental organization in Tanzania focusing on project evaluation research.

• Professor Christopher Warshaw received a SHASS dean’s award for faculty development and a SHASS Research Fund award for AY2013.

Faculty Leaves, Departures, and Visitors

Professors Andrea Campbell and Taylor Fravel, as well as Professors Steinfeld, Hainmueller, and Tsai, were on leave for the entire 2012–2013 academic year. Professor Nazli Choucri was on leave during the spring semester.

At the end of AY2013, Professor Posner departed for personal reasons, and Professor Steinfeld departed to serve as professor of political science at Brown University. Professor Locke stepped down as department head on June 30 and has departed for Brown University to become the director of the Watson Institute for International Studies.

Professor Caughey taught 17.264 Electoral Politics in the fall as a visiting instructor before his appointment as assistant professor began in the spring semester.

Faculty Research and Publications

The faculty of the department are prolific in their publication activity across a variety of topics. The faculty’s research is funded through a combination of outside grants and internal Institute funds. The following is a representative sampling of faculty publications over the past year.


Professor Lawson authored the manuscript “Rulership: When Political Leaders Matter” (forthcoming, 2013).


Professor Oye authored “Legal Foundations of Adaptive Licensing,” forthcoming in *Clinical Pharmacology & Therapeutics*.

Professor Petersen authored the forthcoming manuscript “The Iraq War: A Social Science Guide” (with Jon Lindsay and Austin Long).


Professor David Singer authored “The Family Channel: Migrant Remittances and Government Finance” (MIT working paper, under review).


**Institute Service**

An important aspect of academic life is contributing to the educational commons through service to the Institute. Members of the Department of Political Science have historically been significant contributors to these efforts across the Institute. The following is a sample of the contributions that political science faculty made to Institute enterprises in 2012–2013.

Professor Berger chaired the comparative politics search committee, directed the MIT-France MISTI program, chaired the MIT-France board of advisors, and was a member of the MIT-France seed research selection jury and the Empowering the Teachers (Nigeria) planning and organizational committee.

Professor Berinsky served as director of PERL and was a member of the Committee on the Use of Humans as Experimental Subjects, the Student Evaluation Advisory Committee, and the Undergraduate Program Committee.

Professor Choucri served as the associate director of the Technology and Development Program and was a member of the Graduate Program Committee, the MIT Faculty Newsletter Editorial Board, and the of Technology and Culture Forum’s steering committee.

Professor Christia served on the Undergraduate Program Committee and the Frank Stanton chair/security studies search committee.

Professor Hainmueller served on the political economy and development search committee and was a member of the Tenure Committee.

Professor Hidalgo served on the comparative politics and political economy and development search committees.

Professor Lawson served as MISTI director and secretary of the faculty and was a member of the Undergraduate Program Committee and Tenure Committee.

Professor Locke served as department head and was a member of the Faculty Policy Committee and the Distinguished Fellowship Committee.

Professor Nobles was associate head of the department, chair of the Undergraduate Program Committee, and a member of the SHASS Levitan Prize/Research Fund committee.
Professor Oye served as director of the Program on Emerging Technologies and was a member of the international relations search committee, the Tenure Review Committee, the MIT Technology and Culture Forum Advisory Committee, and the MIT Committee on Science and Technology Policy Certificate Program.

Professor Petersen served as chair of the graduate program and was a member of the Frank Stanton chair/security studies search committee.

Professor emeritus Piore served on the Admissions Committee.

Professor Posen chaired the Frank Stanton chair/security studies search committee, directed the Security Studies Program, and was a member of the Graduate Program Committee.

Professor Posner chaired the political economy and development search committee and the Tenure Committee, coordinated the graduate student job market workshop, and was a member of the Graduate Program Committee.

Professor Samuels served as director of the Center for International Studies and the MIT-Japan Program, chaired the international relations search committee, and was a member of the Graduate Program Committee.

Professor Schneider served as director of the MIT-Brazil Program, supervised the MISTI internship program, was a member of the Graduate Program Committee and the political economy and development search committee, served as coordinator for minor in applied international studies.

Professor David Singer served as associate housemaster of the MacGregor House and was a member of the international relations search committee.

Professor Stanczyk served on the Graduate Admissions Committee and the Undergraduate Program Committee.

Professor Stewart was housemaster of McCormick Hall, served as faculty director of the MIT Washington Summer Internship Program, chaired the Committee on Academic Performance, and was a member of the Undergraduate Program Committee, Admissions Committee, Orientation Review Committee, Housing Strategy Group, and House Dining Advisory Group.

Professor Thelen chaired the Graduate Admissions Committee; cochaired the Seminar on the State and Capitalism since 1800 and the Boston-area Research Workshop on History, Institutions, and Politics; and was a member of the Graduate Program Committee and the comparative politics search committee.

Professor Tsai served on the political economy and development search committee.
Professor Stephen Van Evera served as associate director of the Center for International Studies and was a member of the Political Science Graduate Admissions Committee and the Frank Stanton chair/security studies search committee.

Professor Warshaw served as a faculty organizer for the political economy breakfast and participated in the job market workshop for graduate students.

Professor Yamamoto served on the Admissions Committee and was a faculty organizer for the political economy breakfast.

Richard M. Locke  
Department Head  
Class of 1922 Professor of Political Science and Management