

Department of Government

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TO: ISCAPC
FROM: Sue Peterson
RE: International Relations CFAC Report

_____ International Relations finally has a CFAC. Despite comprising the largest major under the International Studies rubric, the IR faculty have long been reluctant to form a Concentration Faculty Advisory Committee. In October 2004, however, faculty from Economics, Government, History, and Sociology met to discuss curriculum and staffing concerns and to form a CFAC. Since then, we have met twice and conducted other business electronically. Additionally, the CFAC chair participated in a Reves-sponsored meeting of CFAC chairs, met with the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, and organized a meeting with the chairs of Economics, Government, and History, the Associate Director of the Reves Center, and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies to discuss the IR major and enrollment demands.

The major issue of concern within the CFAC this year is the continued high demand for International Relations courses. We now have 232 declared International Relations majors at the College, including 82 in the class of 2005, 85-90 in the class of 2006, and 60-65 so far in the class of 2007. (It is difficult to know exactly how many IR majors are sophomores or juniors at this point, since many come in with substantial transfer or AP credit and many mark their forms incorrectly.) Students continually complain that they cannot get the introductory IR course, which is a pre-requisite for numerous other classes, until at least the second semester of their sophomore year and that they cannot get into other courses, including required classes, until their senior year. After examining departmental offerings and meeting to discuss them, CFAC members identified four major bottlenecks in the major:

(1) Govt 204 Introduction to International Relations: The Government Department has increased its offerings of this required introductory course from 10 sections (40 students each) in 2004-05 to 12 sections in 2005-06. There is demand for more seats, but the faculty opposed increasing our offerings beyond 12 sections, because we would not be able to handle the additional demand on the upper level courses that such an increase would generate. The faculty agreed that we should not be discouraging students from majoring in IR by limiting the number of seats in Govt 204, but we lack the resources to offer additional upper level courses at this time.

(2-3) Govt 328 International Political Economy and Govt 329 International Security: In recent years, these two required core courses have created a problem for students, since each is taught by only a single faculty member. The demand on both classes has eased somewhat for the moment. In the case of Govt 329, however, this is only because the course has been offered nine times in two years, and three to five more sections will be offered in 2005-06. This has caught

up the backlog of students waiting to get into the class, but it also seems to have generated the unintended consequence of further increasing demand for the course. It is impossible to sustain these offerings with only a single faculty member in this area.

(4) Non-western History survey courses: Many IR majors seek to fulfill their History requirement by taking a non-western survey class. Because these courses also fulfill GER 4B, however, student demand is very high. Students routinely report difficulty getting into these classes before their senior year.

One other issue of concern raised in CFAC meetings is the loss of an Economics faculty member. Although there does not seem to be a bottleneck in any Economics courses, the failure to replace Yana Rodgers last year with another economist with an international focus resulted in a loss of IR courses, particularly electives, and increased demand on other departments within IR.

Two recent developments promise to ease some of the demand on the Government courses. First, the Environmental Studies Program funded a new position on international environmental issues, and this faculty member will be housed in the Government Department and offer two sections a year of International Environmental Politics. Although her other courses will be taught in Environmental Studies and VIMS, IR will have a net increase of two electives each year. CFAC members agreed that, while it makes sense intellectually to require International Environmental Politics of majors, we lack the resources to do so with only two sections a year. Second, the Dean has promised the Government Department a new position in International Relations, and the IR CFAC will offer its recommendations to the department on how this position might be filled to best serve the needs of the IR major.

Assuming the Government Department is able to hire in IR, the other major challenges for the next year are:

(1) easing enrollment demands on History courses

(2) increasing Economics electives

(3) increasing the multi-disciplinary nature of the major. If we succeed on (1) and (2), students should start taking more non-Government electives.

(4) sustaining faculty involvement and leadership. Most immediately, we need to select a new CFAC chair, since I will have to step down after 1 July when I begin an administrative appointment. Finding a replacement is somewhat harder than it might initially sound, since two of our most active members chair other CFACs and another will be on research leave.