integrated with program assessment to meet the standards of regional and other accreditors. Several track contributors noted that the logical way to address this challenge is to identify how each course in the curriculum supports larger programmatic purposes, thereby aligning course assessment with programmatic student outcomes.

Track participants acknowledged that this effort will not be easy, since the challenges of connecting course and program assessment are symptomatic of larger issues identified by several track papers. Typically, program curricula in political science are idiosyncratic and distributional, and faculty members primarily seek to create and teach courses that align with their individual specialty. If the curriculum is not intentional in its development of students' knowledge and skills, then it will be difficult to create program assessments that accurately measure the essence of the degree program.

Although most track participants reported that their interest in assessment stemmed from accreditation pressures, a number of participants argued for a larger, more purposive motivation for assessment. Rather than just doing assessment to comply with accreditors' requirements, they believed that the APSA should be helping departments think about using assessment more strategically. Specifically, these participants suggested that more assessment should be designed to respond to the larger higher education predicament. As higher education comes under increased pressure and scrutiny from regional accreditors and the public, demonstrating strong evidence of improved student learning outcomes in important skills, knowledge, and attitudes could be the most successful way to change the public's view. Embracing assessment as a change agent could also help programs avert even more draconian assessment mandates. Collecting information on successful assessment strategies would help the discipline identify political science's unique learning outcomes and role in higher education. Given the discipline's use of social scientific methods and its development of policy analysis, several participants envisioned the potential for political science to serve as a policy consultant for higher education. Why not use our discipline to help advance the interests of higher education in general? Better curricular planning, data collection, and dissemination strategies could enable higher education to "tell its story" more effectively.

The opposite strategy for assessment was also outlined by track participants. This perspective suggests that it is important for the APSA working group to identify ways to comply with assessment mandates that do not require much time or investment of other resources. Those who suspect that the assessment movement will be a temporary feature of accreditation might be more likely to embrace a minimal compliance model. Similarly, those whose administration provides neither resources nor support for assessment are likely to favor the minimal model.

The pressures from accreditors, the public, and a highly competitive world economy suggest that demands for accountability are here to stay for the foreseeable future. Some panel participants focused their assessments and analyses on the macro-level needs of higher education, while others limited assessment efforts to minimal compliance. In this regard, the Program Assessment track seems representative of higher education. As political science departments consider which strategy to pursue, the APSA working group should investigate programs in the country, offer support materials, and report on the costs and benefits of effective practices in assessment to help departments navigate their place on the assessment spectrum.

TRACK: SIMULATIONS AND ROLE PLAY I: AMERICAN POLITICS AND INSTITUTIONS

Chris Stangl, *West Chester University*
Henrik M. Schatzinger, *Ripon College*
Christopher J. Schaefer, *George Washington University and Ripon College*
Ryan Emenaker, *College of the Redwoods*

The Simulations and Role Play I track conducted a series of engaged discussions regarding what a successful simulation requires and what aspects are customizable, given the wide variety of contexts in which a simulation may be used. Recognizing the presence of significant variance in available time, institutional support (both financial and technical), student demographics, and class size, the track concluded that any successful simulation must include several core components, which can be presented in a variety of ways. Chief among these components are a balance between providing necessary structure and allowing room for engaged student creativity and the need for thorough, reflective debriefing.

Several of the presentations made note of the importance of role assignment, especially the strategic value of having the instructor assign roles. Despite the potential cost of student disgruntlement at not being allowed to choose their roles for themselves, track participants largely coalesced around the view that role assignment was an effective check against the free-rider problem, and that it helped bring competitive balance to more involved simulations. Jeffery Osgood and Chris Stangl ("Teaching Millennials Urban Political Theory: The Case of the Local Government Simulation") imposed roles after administering a personality inventory that took different learning styles into account. This step was well-received by other track members and may be a particularly effective strategy when dealing with both the various learning styles of Millennials and classes featuring a high number of nontraditional students from different backgrounds. Moreover, the prudent assignment of roles provides an opportunity for more cynical students to work through a political decision-making process, perhaps shedding new light on the reality of political institutions and policymaking.

Another point of discussion was how to best ensure that student enjoyment of the simulation is connected to learning goals and is not just a function of the "game" element involved. To this end, several presenters incorporated a reward structure into their simulations that was tied to effective performance. Luke Perry ("Comparing Electoral Simulations for the Presidency and Congress") ran a successful election simulation that intentionally assigned students with different ideological views to the same campaign team and rewarded the team that won a congressional election. Kent Park ("Learning by Experiencing the Law Making Process: Congressional Simulation Exercise") imposed a forced distribution of grades at the end of a competitive simulation that assigned students to one of a number of specific political profiles and required the students to compete against each other in acquiring political capital. Both presenters reported a high level of student creativity that largely stemmed from how well the structure of the simulations allowed game elements to dovetail with course objectives.

Simulations that placed a greater emphasis on performative elements also stressed the need to link the role-playing aspect

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001004 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with learning objectives. Nina Kasniunas ("The Case is Submitted: Reenactment Theater and U.S. Supreme Court Oral Arguments") organized a reenactment of Supreme Court oral arguments that began with a visit to hear actual arguments in person. Combined with careful case selection and the administration of a learning style inventory, that visit helped infuse the culminating performance with elements of civic participation and experiential learning. Margaret Tseng ("Teaching Electoral Politics through Role Playing Simulations") created a presidential election simulation that also sought to stress political engagement and concluded that an enhanced focus on civic engagement was likely to strengthen a simulation that already featured a high level of student creativity.

The area of strongest agreement among participants was the need for a strong debriefing component. All agreed, however, that different debriefing exercises are appropriate to different simulations. Debriefing can be oral or written and either a one-shot effort or a series of reflections. Indeed, a more continuous debriefing process appeared promising in several contexts. Henrik Schatzinger and Christopher Schaefer ("A Presidential Simulation: A Student's Guide to Understanding the American Presidency") ran a presidential simulation requiring students to serve as president in a series of clearly defined scenarios and then implemented group discussion after each exercise. Multiple iterations of group evaluation helped focus the participants' attention and encouraged reflection. Similarly, in his Supreme Court decision-making simulation, John Gates ("An Online Simulation of the Decision Making of the U.S. Supreme Court") integrated a strong online component that required students not participating directly in a given iteration to post evaluative comments to an online forum. This element required students to think reflectively about the roles being played and, so long as tech support was reliable, improved the effectiveness of the simulation in a larger class setting.

Participants concluded that a well-structured debriefing component strengthens the connections that students make between the simulation and overall course learning goals and provides an opportunity for students to take ownership of their education. This component also allows students to demonstrate higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating content. By providing an opportunity for students to close the loop, debriefing becomes a crucial element of a successful simulation. The stronger the debriefing component, the better one can assess how well the learning outcomes have been met.

In the years ahead, the participants of the Simulations and Role Play I track hope that the APSA will place a more profound emphasis on interactive learning by facilitating learning communities. In particular, this emphasis could be made by creating a clearinghouse for research on best practices, hosting a series of traveling workshops dedicated to interactive learning techniques, fostering hands-on learning, and integrating civic engagement into the simulation experience.

TRACK: SIMULATIONS AND ROLE PLAY II: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Nina Kollars, *The Ohio State University*
Chad Raymond, *Salve Regina University*

In a weekend of pedagogical fury, members of the Simulations and Role Play II track queried their peers to refine their ideas, presented data on the effectiveness of simulations as pedagogical tools, and shared methods of using simulations in the classroom. Paper presentations and discussions examined simulations from a variety of paradigmatic perspectives, including the use of simulations as summative assessment instruments, the role of competition in generating targeted learning outcomes, and the difficulty in balancing pedagogical objectives with design constraints.

These presentations spurred a series of debates about how the creation of fictional realms can be used to better understand empirically factual ones. The first debate explored whether simulations must incorporate some degree of competition in order to induce student engagement, and, if so, whether simulations can effectively showcase cooperative endeavors. The second debate focused on how instructors who use simulations must be careful of how students use and perceive them. Students can have a tendency to focus on the underlying processes upon which simulations are constructed rather than the concepts that the instructor wants the simulation to demonstrate. Students may regard simulations as exercises with little educational value or, conversely, as highly educational enterprises—though an instructor might lack the evidence that his or her simulation actually contributes to student learning in ways that match the instructor's rationale for using the simulation in the first place.

Participants also discussed the relationship between simulation design and assessment. At present, self-reported and empirical data on whether and how simulations generate learning is mixed; nevertheless, participants argued that the need for assessable outcomes should not overshadow the important role that simulations play in allowing students to develop professional skills such as team problem-solving, public speaking, and productive operation in environments with limited time and information. Track members agreed that simulations function as more than just replacements for lectures.

Finally, the broad range of simulations available for use generated discussion of the tensions that are inherent in simulation design. Simulations need to strike a balance between fun and function, complexity and simplicity, and instructor control and the degrees of freedom that students engaged in a simulation enjoy. Despite the difficulty that instructors can encounter in achieving proper balance in these areas, track members agreed that variations in class size, course content, semester length, student demographics, and other factors make the multiplicity of simulation designs welcome.

Participants identified potential areas for further scholarship. Political science faculty need to better understand assessment techniques and ensure academic rigor, since these two conditions are likely to affect whether faculty choose to implement simulations in the classroom. A more extensive literature on the subject of simulations would help fulfill these aims. Second, simulation designers and potential users would benefit from a framework that clearly delineates the different types of simulations and the qualities of each type. Finally, faculty should be encouraged to gather and publish pre- and postsimulation data—whether quantitative or qualitative—to allow those who use simulations to continue to refine their designs and improve the learning outcomes of students. Many faculty are already using markedly sophisticated measurement and assessment devices, but these efforts remain largely unknown to fellow political scientists engaged in teaching. Track participants noted that they lacked a collaborative database of resources that would help them achieve this goal.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S1049096511001004 Published online by Cambridge University Press