

Proposition: 01-24/25

Proposal Type: Bill Resolution Memorial Joint Proposition Other
(If Joint proposition, also select type)

Title: Proposal for name change of the Department of Government to the Department of Political Science, Public Law and Administration

Date Submitted: 02/16/24

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Proposed Committee: Curriculum and Planning

Prior Approvals: Department Faculty, Department Head, Dean of Arts & Sciences, Department of Communication, Associate Dean's Academic Council (ADAC), and Finance Department (see attached documents).

Proposal: This resolution is a formal proposal for the name of the NMSU Department of Government to be changed to the Department of Political Science, Public Law and Administration. Below, we outline the justification for this name change, the benefits it will bring to NMSU, and how this name change will support NMSU LEADS 2025 and NMSU's Carnegie R01 status. We also address potential conflicts with other programs at NMSU.

Rationale:

There are three main reasons why we propose this name change:

1. The academic study of politics was traditionally housed in units called Departments of Government. This was the case at NMSU when our department was established in the 1960s as an independent unit. While there is still a minority of universities that have Departments of Government, the most common name used today is Department of Political Science. Our national association is called the American Political Science Association and the Honors Society for students is called the National Political Science Honors Society. We also offer POLS 1110G Introduction to Political Science.
2. The New Mexico Higher Education Department (NMHED) revised the prefixes of our courses in 2020 as part of the state-wide Common Course Numbering initiative. As a result, all classes in the Department of Government at NMSU that had the GOVT prefix were replaced with the POLS prefix. We would like to eliminate the resulting confusion between a department name Government and a curriculum with POLS as the prefix.
3. Our department provides students with several areas of study that allow them to pursue careers in many areas, including political analysis, public service, non-profit leadership, and legal professions nationally and internationally. In addition to our BA and MA programs, we also have many students who participate in internships and service-learning programs in public affairs. We also offer a nationally-accredited Masters of Public Administration (MPA) program and the interdisciplinary Law and Society Supplemental

Major. Pre-law advising and the teaching of the Law School Admissions Test (LSAT) Prep class are also offered by Dr. Kim Seckler, College Professor in our department. We wish to make potential majors aware of these departmental strengths through the name change to Department of Political Science, Public Law and Administration.

Support of LEADS 2025 and R01 Status

The proposed name change supports LEADS 2025 and R01 status in at least three ways:

1. This name change will help increase enrollment in our undergraduate and graduate programs by more accurately describing the content and career value of what we offer than the Department of Government may suggest. This will support efforts to increase student enrollment and success at NMSU (LEADS 2025, Goal 1, Objective 1).
2. The name change will help promote readiness for the workforce in New Mexico and beyond by highlighting our areas of strength – political science, public law, and public administration. This will help students find meaningful careers in public service, including the growing non-profit sector, that will enhance their social mobility (LEADS 2025, Goal 1, Objective 4).
3. The name change also supports LEADS 2025, Goal 2, Objective 2, to elevate research and creativity by attracting students seeking the kind of training and acquisition of advanced research skills that are central to political science. Our connections with a variety of non-profits, government agencies, advocacy groups, and international collaborators allow students and faculty to apply their research skills in advancing our knowledge of important political problems and challenges. An example of this effort is the department's role in promoting and implementing the new interdisciplinary doctoral program on Transborder and Global Human Dynamics. Each of these efforts are aligned with the goal of sustaining R01 status for NMSU.

Potential Conflicts with Other Programs at NMSU

Given that our proposed new departmental name includes the word “Law,” the department head, Dr. Neil Harvey, consulted in the summer of 2023 with Dr. Tim Cleveland, head of the Department of Philosophy which houses the BA in Justice, Political Philosophy, and Law. Dr. Cleveland in turn consulted with all of his departmental faculty and there was no objection to our proposed name change. Instead, Dr. Cleveland indicated that our programs are very different in what we offer. In addition, both departments already collaborate well through the interdisciplinary Supplemental Major in Law and Society and look forward to strengthening our collaborations in the future.

The Department of Communication Studies also offers Political Communication in their curriculum. Dr. Anne Hubbell consulted with Department Head Greg Armfield and Professor Jeanne Flora who expressed support for the name change in September 2023. The Department of Government looks forward to collaborating with the Department of Communication Studies on shared interests with our students.

The proposed name change was also formally approved by the Associate Dean's Academic Council (ADAC) on November 27, 2023 after consultation with the Finance Department who offer the Business Law undergraduate minor. After discussing the proposed name change with Dr. Fuchs, Department Head of Finance, we revised the original name to the one proposed in the present resolution that more accurately identifies "public law" as the area of expertise in the Department of Government. The revised name to the Department of Political Science, Public Law and Administration was approved by the faculty in the Department of Finance in November 2023. The Department of Government greatly looks forward to exploring opportunities to work together in providing a holistic background in law for our students at NMSU.