

GPSS Report
Graduate Program Review
Comparative Law and Society Studies (CLASS)
Law, Societies & Justice (LSJ) Certificate Program Review
December 3, 2009

On November 5th, 2009, one representative senator of the GPSS attended the program review site visit of the LSJ undergraduate program and the CLASS graduate certificate program. Five graduate students attended the graduate student session with a peer committee to discuss their critique of the program. This report comprises the overall concerns and sentiments of the graduate students as it pertained to the strengths and weaknesses of the CLASS Graduate Certificate Program and its future.

Interdepartmental Collaboration

- Students felt the departmental sense of community was fairly loose due to the interdisciplinary nature of the program.
- Students expressed that there were few opportunities to collaborate with each other.
- Students felt more in tune with their Home Department and felt the certificate program was more of a supplement.

Committees

- Students were satisfied with their committees and felt they were receiving enough support, advice and knowledge.
- Students credited their Home Departments with the high level of interaction with their committees.
- Students noted that the program did not seem to have a Graduate Advisor to guide coursework or studies within the program itself.

Program Communication with Students

- Without a program advisor students felt their communication with Home Departments was satisfactory in guiding their studies.
- Students also noted the lack of communication between the departments involved with the certificate program.

Student's Confidence in Career Paths

- Students felt the certificate program added to their current studies and career path.

- Students felt that advice on job opportunities and career advances were lacking in the program.
- Students felt TA opportunities and funding for the students added to their academic development.

Research Groups

- Students would like to see more student outreach programs to strengthen student involvement with the program.
- Students suggested seminars, work sharing events, and similar departmental activities to foster collaboration between departments.

Program Courses

- Students felt that the program had a disjointed curriculum, which they attributed to the interdisciplinary nature of the program.
- Students noted they had to rely on word-of-mouth information regarding new classes associated with the program.
- Students felt the program appeared to lack specificity.
- Students suggested having classes specifically for the program, which were also related to other departmental programs.

Recruitment

- Students were primarily recruited through faculty and students who had previously taken the program.
- Many students came from LSJ, and Political Science backgrounds.
- Students felt a desire to increase recruitment in other related fields such as Public Law, Geography, etc.

Overview

In summary, students were satisfied with the goals and direction of the program, but felt it lacked a strong sense of community and involvement. Active recruiting to the program appears to be a strong factor, as the program itself did not appear to discourage students from enrolling, but it was also not a strong factor in student decisions to study at the University of Washington. Expansion of core curriculum requirements and communication of the program with interdisciplinary departments could greatly contribute to the development of this program to aid in graduate student involvement and collaborative research.