To: Faculty Assembly
SUNY Oswego

From: Department of Political Science
Allison Rank, Chair

Proposal New Name: Department of Politics

Justification for the Name Change:

The contemporary discipline of political science stems from a once-popular belief that, with sufficient study, one could predict political outcomes with theories similar to those being developed in the natural sciences. While a belief that we would eventually find the political version of Newton's Law gradually fell away, the field developed a heavy reliance on methodologies that emphasized supposedly objective observation, triggering a number of internal debates regarding the appropriateness of studying politics in a way that abstracts political processes and outcomes from their specific context. Subsequently, one bloc of the discipline came to include a substantial emphasis on studying power within specific contexts and with an eye to supporting individuals' ability to engage with the contemporary political world.

It is within this bloc that our program falls. Our faculty specialize in critical, historical, and interdisciplinary approaches to analyzing political issues that matter. From the local to the global, and from the conceptual to the concrete, our expertise covers a wide range of regions, topics, scholarly traditions, and methodologies. As researchers, we believe in bringing the best ideas to light and advancing our shared understandings of power and governance. As teachers, we believe in firmly grounding those ideas and equipping students with the skills needed to build better lives and build better worlds. Given this focus, we believe that changing the name of our department from the Department of Political Science to the Department of Politics will more accurately reflect our department's orientation toward our field of study.

Making this change will in no way put us out of step with the broader discipline. While "political science" is the most common moniker for our discipline and remains the name of our SUNY-approved major, numerous colleges and universities, including a significant number in New York state, offer a Department of Politics (e.g., SUNY Potsdam, New York University, New School, Drexel, Fairfield University, University of Virginia) or a Department of Government (e.g., Cornell, Dartmouth, Hamilton, St. Lawrence) rather than a Department of Political Science.

Ultimately, we anticipate that this change will have the positive effect of more accurately reflecting our program's research and teaching. We do not anticipate any negative effects to students or alums nor to our budget given how little printed/purchased material we currently possess.