

Trends in Numbers of Degrees Earned in Political Science, 1990–2004

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The number of students pursuing degrees and graduating in political science is growing again after the discipline experienced falling or stagnant enrollment numbers at all academic levels in the 1990s, according to data in the latest *Digest of Education Statistics* (2005). After experiencing a growth in enrollments and degrees awarded in the 1980s, political science departments reported falling enrollments in the early 1990s and stagnant numbers of degrees awarded in the later half of the 1990s (Mann 1996; 2002). Political science departments began to report increasing enrollments starting in 1998–1999 (Mann 2002), reflected in the increase in graduation numbers beginning in 2002.

In 2004, a total of 45,273 Bachelor's degrees in political science¹ were awarded, a 5% increase from 1990, and the highest graduation number reported since 1992. The number of Bachelor's degrees awarded has increased since 2002, a trend that appears to be continuing, perhaps due to the events of September 11 (Figure 1).

At the Master's level, there has been generally steady growth in the number of political science and public administration candidates since 1990, with a stagnant period corresponding from 1998 to 2000. In 2004, a total of 14,682 Master's degrees in political science were awarded, up from 8,628 in 1990, a 70% increase (Figure 2).

At the Doctoral level, growth has also been steady. In 2004, 961 doctorates were awarded, up from 737 in 1990, a 30% increase. Much of that growth however occurred in the first part of the 1990s, reflecting the popularity of a political science Ph.D. in the 1980s. Since 1994, the number of doctorates awarded has remained constant (Figure 3).

The Gender Gap in Political Science

A significant gap remains at the Doctoral level, while gender ratios at the Bachelor's and Master's level have balanced out. Despite the gains made at lower academic levels, only 38% of all Doctorates awarded in political science were awarded to women. At the under-

Figure 1

Bachelor's Degrees Awarded in Political Science*, by Sex, 1990–2004

Source: Digest of Education Statistics, Annual Survey of Colleges and Universities
*Includes Political Science, Public Administration, Public Policy, and International Relations Majors

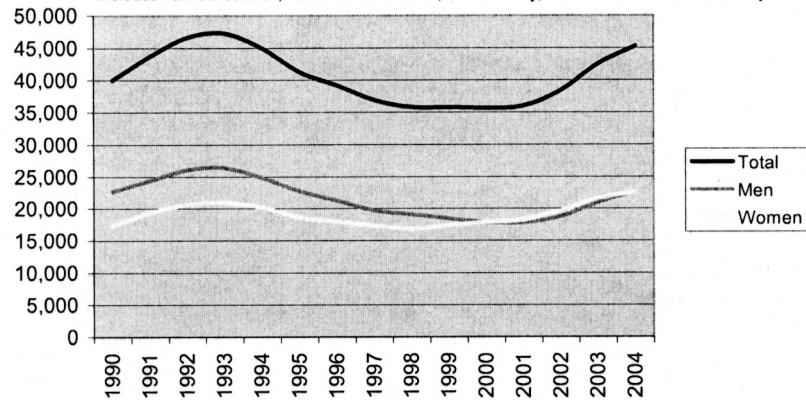


Figure 2

Master's Degrees Awarded in Political Science*, by Sex, 1990–2004

Source: Digest of Education Statistics, Annual Survey of Colleges and Universities
*Includes Political Science, Public Administration, Public Policy and International Relations Majors

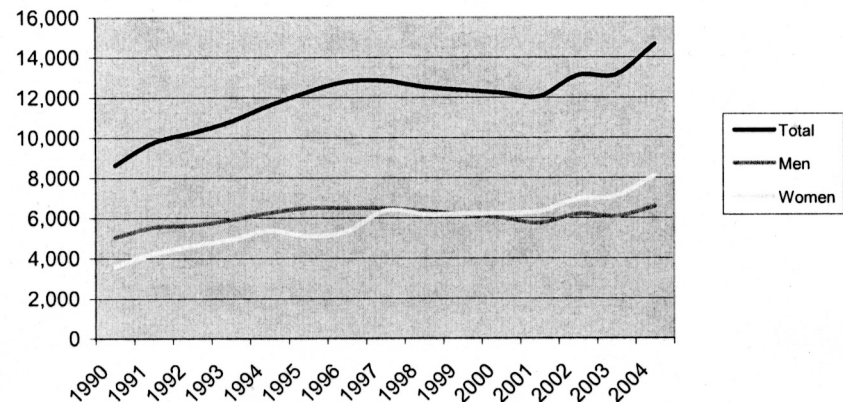
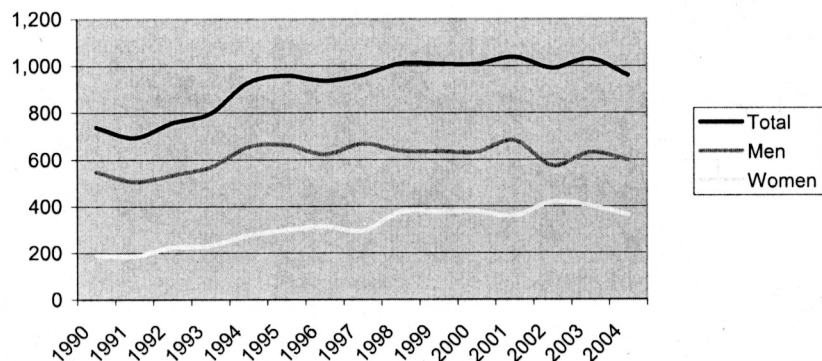


Figure 3

Doctorates Awarded in Political Science*, by Sex, 1990–2004

Source: Digest of Education Statistics, Annual Survey of Colleges and Universities
*Includes Political Science, Public Administration, Public Policy, and International Relations Majors



graduate and graduate levels, the gap between the sexes has been all but eliminated. At the Bachelor level for the past five years, men and women have been achieving a Bachelor's degree in approximately the same numbers. At the Master's level, women have surpassed men in receiving M.A.s in political science, especially in the sub-fields of public administration, public policy, and international relations, which make up 80% of all Master's degrees awarded in 2004. Overall, women exceed men in the number of political science Master's degrees obtained by 10%.

Political Science in Comparison to Economics, History, and Sociology

If comparing earned political science degrees alone, without including international relations or public administration, to its sister social science degrees, political science ranks first in the number of earned Bachelor's degree, followed by history, sociology, and economics (Figure 4). At the Master's level, however, political science ranks fourth in comparison to economics, history, and sociology (Figure 5). At the doctoral level, a political science degree ranks third, after economics and history (Figure 6).

Resources

There are several data options available for more information on earned degrees. The National Center for Education Statistics (<http://nces.ed.gov/>) is the best resource for enrollments and degrees earned in report form. The National Science Foundation has a web interface, WebCASPAR, to search its data (<http://caspar.nsf.gov/>) as well as NCES databases. Also check the APSA web site at: www.apsanet.org/section_416.cfm.

Note

1. Political science here includes public administration, public policy, international relations, and political science and all its sub-fields, according to the classification system of the Department of Education.

References

Mann, Sheila. 1996. "Political Science Departments Report Declines in Enrollments and Majors in Recent Years." *PS: Political Science and Politics* 29 (September): 527-533.

Figure 4 A Comparison of Selected Earned Bachelor's Degrees, 1950-2004

Source: *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, Table 293

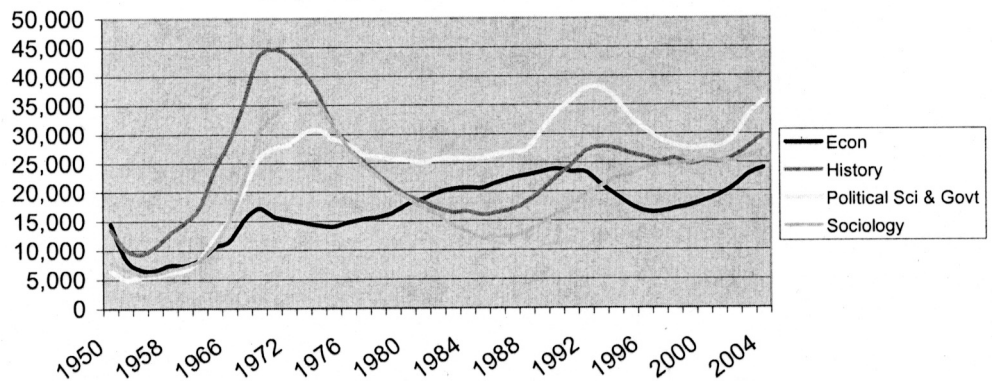


Figure 5 A Comparison of Selected Earned Master's Degrees, 1950-2004

Source: *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, Table 293

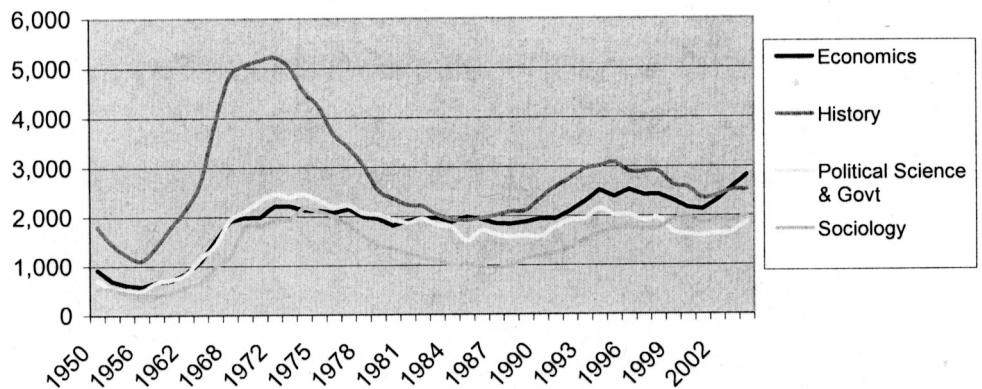
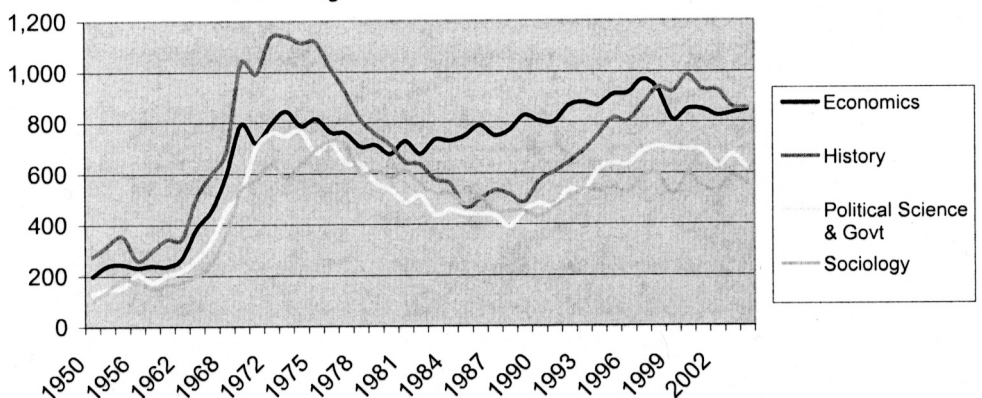


Figure 6 A Comparison of Selected Earned Doctoral Degrees, 1950-2004

Source: *Digest of Education Statistics 2005*, Table 293



—. 2002. "Political Science Enrollment and Majors: An Update." APSA web site: www.apsanet.org/content_16858.cfm.
Snyder, Thomas D., Alexandra G. Tan, and Charlene M. Hoffman. 2005. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2005*. Washington, D.C.: Department of Education. NCES document #2006030.