

# JET Capstone Project: Backwards Design for Assessment in Political Science Education

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## The Problem:

- Courses in political science may be prioritizing **topics** to be covered rather than **learning outcomes**.
  - Professors have a long list of course requirements.
  - Instruction time is short
  - Natural to consider how best to fit material into strict timelines
  - Much planning is happening, including course objectives on syllabi.
  - *Assessments usually written **during the semester***

# Is this a problem?

## Possibly...



1. Assessments may be co-written with the help of graduate TAs
2. Assessments may not align clearly with course objectives, may be rigid, and/or may not consider student interests and engagement
3. **Retention:** Arts & Sciences enrollment and retention is up from 2024 but far below the high of 2018
4. **Engagement:** Only 16.1% of Arts & Sciences majors are first-generation college students, and only about  $\frac{1}{3}$  are non-white

# The Idea: Backwards Design for Assessment

- In Backwards Design, learning outcomes are student-focused in ways that honor diverse backgrounds and accessibility, and are results oriented.
- Three stages to planning:



*Adapted from Wiggins, G. & McTighe, J. (2005). Understanding by design (2nd edition). ASCD.*

- May increase clarity and thereby student achievement
- May increase intrinsic motivation for students

# Steps for this project

	Meet with Department Leadership	Design survey	Analyze survey results	Design professional development
	January 2026	February. 2026	March 2026	June 2026
Proposed Timeline	<p>Request meeting with Chair and Director of Undergrad Studies</p> <p>Present ideas</p> <p>Request permission to design survey for faculty around assessment design and familiarity with</p>	<p>Write survey</p> <p>Seek feedback from Director of Undergrad Studies and edit</p> <p>Circulate to faculty via email</p>	<p>Read and organize results from survey</p> <p>Compile into report and meet with department Chair and Director of Undergrad Studies to present</p> <p>Decide next steps</p>	<p>Design optional professional development session for faculty and graduate students to present in August 2026</p> <p>Submit to Chair and Director of Undergrad Studies for approval</p>

# References

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