The Political Science department has for a long time run a small, focused interdisciplinary program. Whereas the PhD programs at most public AAU schools have 5-6 substantive areas, we have had three: political psychology, political economy, and American Politics. We also provide state-of-the art training in statistical methods. One result of this sharp interdisciplinary focus has been a placement rate that on a per capita basis had us rated fifth nationally in terms of the percentage of our PhD students placed at PhD granting institutions and fourth nationally in terms of a network analysis of the quality of our placements (both studies were published in PS, a publication of the American Political Science Association).

Despite this extraordinary success, we believe that the time has come to revamp both the political economy and political psychology programs to take advantage of recent developments in economics and psychology.

Political Economy

The political economy program grew out of an older public policy program built on the reputations of three tenured faculty who are no longer at Stony Brook: Mark Schneider (SUNY Distinguished Professor, now at AEI); John Scholz, now Epps Professor of Political Science at Florida State; and Paul Teske, who is Dean and Distinguished Professor of the Univeristy of Colorado-Denver School of Public Affairs.) With the growth of our Masters of Arts in Public Policy (MAPP) program, the PhD program shifted emphasis to political economy.

With these scholars no longer at Stony Brook, there is a critical need to rebuild the political economy program as we would be overloaded in political psychology without the balance that political economy

provides. To achieve this goal, it is important to understand the challenges that we face, and appreciate the opportunities that we have. We must look for creative opportunities and use our existing strengths in the department in order to rebuild the political economy program effectively and efficiently.

First, the political science program has rigorous statistical methods training. Second, the department has one of the best political psychology programs in the world, with a focus on survey research and experimental methods. Both statistical and experimental methods play an important role in the field of political economy, specifically, in the areas of experimental and behavioral economics. Shifting focus of the political economy program to the field of behavioral (and experimental) economics appears to be at the intersection of the necessity to rebuild the program as well as an opportunity to grow and achieve national recognition.

Experimental economics is concerned with empirical testing of theoretical models in laboratory settings. Substantively, experimental economics uses the insights from

psychology to test the traditional economic models of a man as a selfish utility-maximizing actor. Behavioral economics takes these psychological insights and experimental results further and offers alternative theoretical models that incorporate emotions, altruism, sense of fairness, inequity aversion, and so on. The behavioral models can then be applied in any substantive field of economics or political science.

Having a strong political psychology program would help behavioral political economy students design their own laboratory experiments and closely interact with the relevant political psychology faculty and other graduate students. Having a strong statistical methods program would be conducive to the analysis of experimental data. Furthermore, our existing strength in formal theory (assistant professors Steinwand and Smirnov both teach Game Theory at the graduate level) would allow political economy students work on their own original behavioral models. Finally, these models could be applied in the areas of American politics, which is another strength of the department. Thus, choosing the direction of behavioral economics potentially allows for the maximum cross-field collaboration and synergy within the political science department.

Another reason to adopt behavioral economics as the core of the political economy program is the fact that it is one of the fastest growing areas in economics and, likely in the future, political science. While there are no behavioral economics programs in political science, some schools—such as Caltech, Carnegie Mellon, and NYU—have already moved in that direction. Therefore, there is an opportunity to be one of the pioneers in the field and establish early the reputation of a political economy program that provides behavioral and experimental economics training. The proximity to NYU, in this respect, could be very beneficial.

Political Psychology

The political psychology group within the Department of Political Science at Stony Brook University is arguably one of the best recognized and most influential in its subfield. Political psychology is a niche area within political science and psychology that is growing rapidly in both disciplines, and gaining increased international attention. The program's traditional focus has been on the social and psychological determinants of attitudes. The end of communism and the terrorist events of 9-11 have heightened interest in the psychology of attitudes and politics in myriad ways. From ethnic conflicts that emerged at the end of the cold war to the terrorist threats that took center stage with a vengeance in 2001, scholars have looked increasingly to psychology to explain political phenomenon. Political psychology at Stony Brook is especially well placed to capitalize on this growing international interest in the psychology of politics.

The political psychology group has always pioneered an interdisciplinary approach, but there are a number of ways in which we see ourselves growing and strengthening our group in the coming years. While we are a very visible and highly respected group

comprised of 5 core faculty (Feldman, Huddy, Lavine, Levitan, and Taber), one affiliated faculty (Smirnov), and one highly active emeritus (Lodge), it is important to maintain our stellar reputation and high profile. We confront several challenges.

Current and Future Challenges

In various locations around the country, political scientists have become interested in the biological bases of behavior, including the study of genetic, neural, and hormonal influences. In particular centers of strength are emerging at UC San Diego and the University of Nebraska, Lincoln where our colleagues have received administration support to develop these subfields and foster interdisciplinary research. This is consistent with our focus on attitudes but brings new tools and theories into focus. To maintain our prominence in the field of political psychology and attract even stronger funding from NSF, we need to develop expertise in biological approaches to politics. We are also aware that we need colleagues from across campus to do this well.

Several potential collaborations are in the early stages. Smirnov has received NSF funding to work with investigators in five different disciplines on and off campus to develop a computational model to assess the political, economic, and security effects of abrupt climate change on modern populations. In the past, Lodge and Taber have worked with faculty in social/cognitive psychology and neuropsychology on the role of automatic, pre-conscious influences on decision making. Feldman and Huddy are about to collect pilot data with psychologist Pat Whitaker for a series of studies on the effects of oxytocin on trust, fear and political decision making. Feldman has approached Eli Hatchwell about collecting gene marker information for inclusion in various projects concerning the assessment of political attitudes.

These projects exemplify the kinds of collaborations that we wish to grow far more actively than has occurred in the past. Unfortunately, it is often difficult to convince skeptical biological and psychological researchers that political scientists have something valuable to add to a research project. As a consequence, we feel we need initial resources to attract colleagues and launch pilot projects that we believe will be of considerable interest to the political science directorate at NSF, as well as other funding sources. We have a plan to amass some resources to foster such growth and would hope that as our enterprise grows, other departments will see the potential value in joint hires or even the development of a specialty in their own departments that would complement our strengths.

MA program & Center for Political Psychology Research.

We plan to launch a new MA program in political psychology that will focus on the psychology of attitude change and public opinion. It is designed for students who wish to acquire an MA prior to entering a PhD program, or who wish to work on political information campaigns designed to influence public opinion in health, environmental

and other broad policy domains. We plan to use funds to launch a Center for Political Psychology Research that would bring together campus researchers in political science, psychology, sociology, and the biological sciences to foster various kinds of intellectual activities. The Center would host a speaker series, reading groups, and perhaps in the future postdoc and visiting scholar positions. In addition, if the Center is able to generate sufficient grant activity and tuition revenue, we would use funds to support a half-time staff person who could help with grant writing and submission. Finally, the center would be designed to solidify the kinds of interdisciplinary research projects outlined earlier.