SPECIAL ISSUE

Let's Be Heard! How to Better Communicate Political Science's Public Value

How Political Science Can Better Communicate Its Value: 12 Recommendations from the APSA Task Force

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Political science is at a crossroads.

Some people see political science as more valuable and influential than ever. Political scientists use an expanding set of methods to study a growing range of topics and to inform an increasingly diverse set of audiences about politics, policy, and government. Government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, and private enterprises seek political science data and analysis. Articles and books about political science enlighten teachers and students in classrooms throughout the country. Political science expertise is sought by people who want to make a difference in their community and by people who want to change the world.

Others see political science differently—*if they see it at all.* Some politicians, for example, question the public value of a scientific approach to politics, policy, and government. Others question whether political science provides information that is distinct from media commentary. Many journalists who write about politics, in turn, do not view political science as informative to their endeavors. And for many citizens, the terms *political* and *science* used together constitute an oxymoron. For such people, the potential value of political science is not well-understood.

The American Political Science Association's (APSA) Task Force on Public Engagement works from the premise that political science has great and growing potential to provide substantial value to many people and organizations. We also contend that *much of that potential value is untapped.* Like many other scholarly disciplines, political science has adopted communicative norms, and developed professional incentives, that limit scholars' abilities to effectively convey useful information to diverse audiences. Political science can improve lives but only if political scientists improve the way we convey their insights.

This article describes the activities of the task force. The task force appraised current communication practices in political science and uses lessons from research and practice to describe better ways forward. This special issue of *PS: Political Science and Politics* includes a contribution from every member of the task force. The contributions include case studies, in-depth interviews, and a well-considered collection of new ways that individual scholars and professional organizations can convey their expertise in ways that are more meaningful, memorable, and actionable to more people.

In this introduction, we diagnose our current situation and explain how it inhibits communicative effectiveness. We then offer 12 concrete proposals to improve public engagement. These proposals are drawn from the entirety of the task force's efforts, and they represent consistent core themes of subsequent articles in this special issue. We conclude by introducing the task force members and briefly previewing their contributions to this collective endeavor.

THE PROBLEM

The first step in improving our communicative effectiveness is to understand how our current practices constrain us. Political science as a corporate entity engages in two principal tasks: the creation of knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge. Knowledge creation is a product of the actions of individual scholars and of small scholarly groups. Universities have developed an infrastructure to nurture and reward these activities. This infrastructure gives scholars a direct personal stake in the

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creation of knowledge products and rewards them for conveying it to students and to similarly situated colleagues.

Universities offer fewer incentives for effectively engaging broader audiences. This absence of incentives forces many scholars to choose between actions that produce pay raises and promotions and actions that broaden the audience for their expertise. At a time when governments and private citizens are raising important questions about the costs of higher education, many scholars who could provide value to diverse audiences lack the institutional support, or a professional incentive, to do so. Indeed, many scholars who work to make their findings more accessible do so for reasons other than professional advancement.

Evolving technologies comprise another factor that affects political science's communicative effectiveness. These technologies provide opportunities for political scientists to reach new audiences in dynamic ways. Millions of people worldwide have an increasing ability to read what we write, hear what we say, and learn from what we do. Previous generations of scholars scarcely could have imagined these opportunities.

At the same time, these technologies increase communicative competition. In previous generations, major institutions (i.e., governments, universities, leading publishers, and large multimedia corporations) had monopolies—or at least substantial advantages—in distributing information to mass audiences. Technology has reduced many of these asymmetries. A broad range of people, including children and relatively poor residents of remote areas, can now post information that anyone with an Internet connection can see.

Accompanying these changes is an explosion in the number of sources from which people can obtain information about many of the topics that political scientists study. We now compete for attention in a space that includes bloggers, private-interest groups, government agencies, and individuals who write in the "comments" sections that accompany many online political articles.

These changes introduce new challenges for effective communication of political science insights. These challenges arise, in part, because many ideas about how political scientists should communicate—through their teaching, journal publications, and conference presentations—were developed in less competitive communicative eras. Strategies for presenting information that were once viewed as acceptable—in part because there were few other options for people who sought our expertise—are now perceived as slow, unengaging, and ineffective. Evolving technologies change individual and cultural expectations about how information should be presented.

Other organizations are facing similar challenges and, as a result, have been forced to transform their communication strategies. Most newspapers and magazines, for example, have sought to maintain former levels of influence by radically restructuring their business models. Those that failed to adapt have been driven out of existence.

In general, people who want to communicate effectively in increasingly competitive communicative contexts cannot expect old strategies to maintain their historical effectiveness. To remain relevant, we must adapt our strategies for communicating our knowledge without reducing the scholarly, scientific standards of our research. *How do we accomplish this?*

Universities, which are also experiencing increasing communicative competition, provide part of the answer. Changing expectations about what information should be publicly and freely available are causing widespread questioning of the traditional university model. In their quest to remain relevant and socially influential, universities are pursuing many new ways to convey knowledge.

Political scientists can depend on universities to aggressively update their communication strategies because it is in their interest to do so. At the same time, we cannot depend on universities to advocate for political science and the distinct value that it offers to society. University public-relations departments lack a strong motive—or sufficient subject matter expertise—to draw sustained attention to the insights and discoveries of any particular discipline. University communications offices can also be reticent to highlight a discipline that examines controversial topics.

Since individual political scientists have incentives to focus on their own research agendas, and since universities tend not to highlight the public benefits of political science in their outreach efforts, there is a need and an opportunity for other individuals and organizations to increase the public value of political science by improving how its insights are conveyed. At this moment, political science's professional associations have an opportunity, *and perhaps an obligation to their members*, to take the lead in this effort.

12 RECOMMENDATIONS

The task force report, commissioned by the APSA, identifies how individual scholars and professional organizations can make political science's insights and discoveries more accessible, more relevant, and more valuable to more people. Our main finding is that there are many ways in which the APSA, as well as similarly situated professional organizations, can help political science communicate its insights to a wide range of diverse constituencies using a dynamic collection of communicative strategies and technologies. At a time when others question the value of our discipline, it is imperative to move aggressively and effectively. The moment to act is now.

To this end, we asked task force members to evaluate existing practices and to offer new ideas. This special issue of *PS* shares their contributions. A common theme in the articles is that for political science to convey valuable insights in increasingly competitive communication environments, it must engage people in ways that can attract their interest and help them to advance their aspirations.

The report offers concrete steps that the APSA and its members can take to convince more of the public, the media, policy makers, and other researchers that political science offers knowledge of substantial social value. However, this does not mean that our goal is to substitute style for substance. The substance of political science is the strong foundation on which this report builds. Our goal is to help the discipline convert that foundation into presentations that provide great insight to larger and more diverse audiences. Our goal is to offer more ways for political scientists to improve the quality of life for people around the world by conveying more insights of greater value to more people.

We now list the task force's 12 recommendations with an explanation of how and why each one can help political science engage others more effectively. Readers will notice that many of the recommendations focus on actions that the APSA can take. We chose this emphasis not only because the APSA commissioned the report, but also because it and other, similar organizations have the size and scale to produce significant improvements in a short period. Moreover, activities that help members make scholars' work more relevant to more people give membership-driven organizations such as the APSA a new way to make membership valuable. Hence, we see these proposals as a win-win-win. They assist professional associations in soliciting and keeping

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members, they provide greater infrastructure and support for individual scholars who seek greater communicative effectiveness, and they produce better information and educational materials for the many social constituencies that can improve their lives by knowing more about political science's insights.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The APSA should hire a high-level staff person as Outreach Director and reconstitute an Outreach Committee.
2. The APSA should commit to a greater program of stakeholder engagement.
3. The APSA should develop a video library.
4. The APSA should develop a speakers' bureau.
5. The APSA should have a visible and effective communications-training program.
6. The APSA should hire one or more dedicated science writers.
7. The APSA and its organized sections should create awards and other incentives to recognize effective outreach.
8. The APSA should add new and dynamic electronic journals.
9. The APSA journals should allow authors to trigger temporary ungating of newsworthy content.
10. Quality cannot be sacrificed. The APSA should internally reorganize peer-review management processes to produce high-quality output more efficiently. This recommendation includes reviewer-incentive systems and voluntary sharing of reviews across journals.
11. Go on offense. Many people do not know what political science is. The APSA should make a series of brief, high-quality videos on this topic.
12. Rethink the communicative value of conference presentations. APSA should consider altering submitter incentives, panel formats, and the use of technology to improve and expand interaction.

Recommendations in Detail

1. The APSA should hire a high-level staff person as Outreach Director and reconstitute an Outreach Committee.

To be effective and efficient in an increasingly competitive communication environment, it is important for academic professional organizations to employ people who have the time and expertise required to oversee, facilitate, and evaluate high-impact communicative endeavors. We propose that the APSA hire an Outreach Director who will be charged with implementing and coordinating the association's outreach efforts.[1]

The Outreach Director should be knowledgeable about the practices and diverse viewpoints that constitute modern political science. He or she should have knowledge of and a willingness to learn about the different methods that political scientists use to create and validate knowledge claims. He or she should be motivated to consider the full range of local, regional, national, and international contexts to which political science insights can apply. The Outreach Director should understand and have a willingness to learn more about people who can benefit from political science insights so that the information produced is relevant to them. He or she also should have constructive relationships with the APSA staff, journal editors and their staff, conference coordinators, leaders of programs such as the Congressional Fellows Program (CFP), and other endeavors to assist these individuals in more effectively converting the APSA members' rich intellectual content into high-value communicative products.

A key part of the Outreach Director's job will be evaluation. He or she will be expected to demonstrate the extent to which attempts to engage important constituencies produce desired outcomes. The Outreach Director will also be responsible for preparing semi-annual reports for Council Meetings that provide not only information about the APSA's outreach activities but also a series of metrics that allow the APSA staff, its council, and its membership to evaluate the effectiveness of the association's various communicative endeavors.

We believe that a dedicated Outreach Director can and should be charged with implementing all except the e-journal and peer-review recommendations listed herein. Such coordination with the remaining recommendations can help the APSA and our discipline more effectively manage the challenge of demonstrating to a broader population how political science can provide great value to numerous social endeavors. The task force perceives the APSA as having a unique opportunity to reframe these conversations.

Our decision to list hiring an Outreach Director as the first recommendation—and our request to have the Outreach Director oversee many of the other recommendations—reflects our more general belief that the APSA needs a broader and more effective communicative infrastructure. Such an infrastructure will offer scholars new and unique opportunities to publicize, amplify, and legitimate their valuable work. This infrastructure would help many constituencies to make better decisions. It would also give scholars and other interested people reason to view APSA membership as valuable. With these goals in mind, our hope is that the Outreach Director can establish for the APSA an improved set of practices that will convert the efforts and wisdom of its members into information and outcomes of great value to diverse audiences.

The substance of political science is the strong foundation on which this report builds. Our goal is to help the discipline convert that foundation into presentations that provide great insight to larger and more diverse audiences. Our goal is to offer more ways for political scientists to improve the quality of life for people around the world by conveying more insights of greater value to more people.

The task force further recommends that the Outreach Director communicate regularly with a reconstituted Outreach Committee. The rationale for this recommendation follows a concern expressed by several task force members. These members drew our attention to the work of previous APSA outreach and publication committees.

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Some were hesitant to join the task force because they believed that the APSA had ignored the previous committees' work. That said, the presence of new leadership and an enthusiastic staff at the APSA helped us to ameliorate these concerns. To this end, the current staff's follow through on our initial presentation of the task force's recommendation has been exemplary in many respects.

To increase the likelihood that this momentum will continue, we propose reconstituting a standing Outreach Committee. The committee will meet regularly with the Outreach Director and serve as a liaison between the APSA's outreach efforts and its membership. This committee does not replace the APSA Committee on Civic Education and Engagement, which focuses much of its attention on K–12 education. We are requesting a committee with a different emphasis. The new committee would be dedicated to helping the Outreach Director develop, deliver, and evaluate the APSA's communicative products. This committee would coordinate with outreach staff on reports to the membership. To convert good intentions into improved outcomes, an Outreach Director and a standing Outreach Committee—or a similar institutional commitment—increase the likelihood of the APSA committing to programs that help its members communicate more information more effectively to more constituencies.

2. The APSA should commit to a greater program of stakeholder engagement.

The APSA provides many valuable services for its membership. These services include conferences that members enjoy attending, publications that members read, journals to which members want to contribute, organized sections that facilitate vibrant intellectual networks, and unique learning and service opportunities such as the CFP. Yet, task force members shared the view that most scholars have limited means of connecting with many audiences that could benefit from knowing more about their work. These audiences include policy makers, the press, community organizations, and many public- and private-sector interests. This shared view extended to the proposition that the APSA could and should play a more constructive role in bringing scholars and stakeholders together.

The articles in this special issue contain creative and dynamic proposals for APSA-centered stakeholder engagement. Regarding the press, for example, changes in the economics of news production has caused many experienced reporters to lose their jobs. In many cases, the people who currently are writing stories for high-visibility outlets are less experienced and have less institutional support than was true in the past. Whereas major media organizations once stocked multiple regional and foreign bureaus with support staff and office space, and whereas these organizations once gave reporters the latitude to integrate into the societies and cultures about which they were writing, reporting is now increasingly produced remotely—far from the places where news is happening, with minimal institutional support, and by freelancers. We believe that the APSA can increase political science's value and visibility by developing new ways to assist this new breed of reporter.

Having a credible source of reliable information can help reporters and many other people make better decisions and aid their communities of interest. Stakeholder engagement gives the APSA new opportunities to act as an "amplifier" for its members' work. With its Washington location and contacts with other professional organizations, the APSA has a unique ability to bring numerous subject experts in contact with people and groups who can benefit from such expertise. The National Academy of Sciences (NAS) provides a model for this type of interaction. In 2013, it held an event in the US Capitol Building that demonstrated how social science saves the government money. The focus was on actual applications of social science that make government actions more effective and efficient. Several task force members made presentations at this event, which was attended by more than 75 congressional staff. The event's emphasis was informed by and designed to serve the interests of that particular audience – a key foundation from which any successful stakeholder engagement must build. The NAS followed up on what was learned at such events by creating the Roundtable for the Application of the Social and Behavioral Sciences (SBS). The roundtable brings together "three sets of stakeholders—those who create SBS research, those who use it, and those who know how to communicate about it—to discuss and develop strategies that maximize the usefulness, application, and communication of SBS research."[2]

Melissa Harris-Perry, a Wake Forest University political scientist with a twice-weekly program on MSNBC, spoke extensively with our group about developing relationships with "the translators." We discussed the virtues of events at which members of the press—particularly young and ambitious members of the press corps—can meet experts in fields of their interest. These events can encourage scholars and reporters to develop relationships that lead to articles that are more informed by political science insights. These events can also motivate scholars to learn how to present their insights in more accessible ways.

Greater stakeholder engagement can also help political science in public debates about its value.

We believe that APSA-led stakeholder engagement can provide a significant benefit to the association's many constituencies. Engagement endeavors need not be the same size or scale as the CFP to be effective. One-day workshops, if sufficiently well organized, can establish or reinforce important relationships. Our main request is that the APSA commit to developing expertise on its staff to identify and execute high-value stakeholder engagement on a regular basis.

Greater stakeholder engagement can also help political science in public debates about its value. Whereas some stakeholders from outside of our discipline argued for continued support of political science at the National Science Foundation during recent congressional debates, the range of actors doing so was not as broad as it could or should have been. More effective engagement—when paired with better communication about how political science improves public decisions, private decisions, and quality of life—is a way to deepen and broaden the coalition of people who support political science. As a guide to how we might effectively grow the coalition, recent actions in Great Britain provide a helpful analogue. There, all of the sciences and humanities are facing funding pressures. Moreover, university

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and departmental funding increasingly is tied to evaluations of public impact. Sara Hobolt, of the London School of Economics and Political Science, described to the task force how many UK universities are developing stakeholder-engagement strategies to increase and document the public benefit of their government-funded research.

Many people can benefit from new APSA infrastructure that more effectively builds relationships with stakeholders, learns about their needs, and finds ways to bring the tremendous talent of our membership to better meet those needs. By amplifying and extending our insights, the APSA can raise the profile of, and appreciation for, the entire discipline.

3. The APSA should develop a video library.

The task force believes that the APSA can and should find ways to amplify its members' work in the areas of research, teaching, and public service. We propose two communication programs that will assist the APSA in providing such value to broad and diverse audiences: a video library and a speakers' bureau. Each program will make the insights of the APSA membership more accessible to more people.

The APSA video library will feature a user-friendly interface that allows visitors to search videos by content, speaker, length, and other desirable attributes. It will contain high-quality videos that relate political science to a wide range of social and pedagogical concerns.

The ability to post short-form videos online has transformed many communicative domains. From homemade videos becoming worldwide sensations to the Khan Academy and similar educational endeavors, people are using short-form videos to increase the vibrancy of many different types of information transmission. The Khan Academy, which is an educational website that contains 4,000 micro-lectures on a range of science topics, has been viewed almost a quarter-billion times and is changing mathematics education around the world.[3]

With these successes in mind, the APSA video library should include a section called the APSA Classroom Video Resource—that is, a set of videos designed to assist teachers at all levels. The videos can be developed at or through the APSA Teaching and Learning Conference and designed through collaborations with political science teachers and education professionals. They can also include videos prepared by other individuals and organizations that speak directly to improving teaching effectiveness or include actual materials prepared for classroom use.

The video library should also contain high-quality presentations on substantive topics that can be used in classrooms, by reporters, and by members of the general public. These presentations can be developed in-house or submitted by other individuals and organizations. Selected conference presentations can also be prepared for this portion of the site.

We also ask the APSA consider including a concept called the V-APSR in the video library. The V-APSR is a video-based augmentation of the *American Political Science Review* (*APSR*). This site would feature 3- to 5-minute video abstracts of papers published in *APSR*, *Perspectives on Politics*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, and other APSA publications that may emerge. The video abstract would introduce a question, highlight its social relevance, and describe how new insight is brought to the question. At the V-APSR, key findings and implications are put into an accessible and captivating visual format. These abstracts can be compiled on the APSA website or be made a regular part of articles published by the association. Production value will be critical to establishing a valuable reputation for the venture. Our task force urges the APSA to consider high-quality, video-fueled strategies that can expand the audience for political science research.

Administratively, the Outreach Director would coordinate this effort. He or she would work with science writers (described later in this article) on scripts and staging for the videos. In all cases, the originating author would retain full editorial rights. Journal editors would suggest articles for this treatment, and an article's inclusion in the series would require the author's consent. A related idea is to add video abstracts of older "classic" articles from APSA publications to this archive. Teams of energetic younger scholars could convey the classic results, finding creative ways to portray its relevance to modern audiences.

For the video library to draw and sustain an audience, the quality of image, sound, and presentation must be professional. Developing such a library could result in the APSA website being the "go to" destination for teachers, citizens, and media organizations that want accessible and dynamic presentations of political science's valuable insights and practices. An example of a template for the video library is Climate Central's video component.[4] The task force chair advised Climate Central on multiple matters pertaining to how it presents its information. Many classrooms, media organizations, and civic groups now turn to Climate Central's video library to improve their understanding of, and ability to convey, important information about how modern climate dynamics affect our lives. Several task force members believe that the APSA has the potential to create a similar product that can bring needed insights to important constituencies.

4. The APSA should develop a speakers' bureau.

A parallel proposal is an APSA speakers' bureau. Articles in this special issue written by John Sides and Rogers Smith describe complementary variations of this idea. The basic premise is for the APSA to develop the capacity to match high-quality speakers to organizations that want to bring expertise to their gatherings. Whether the topic is historical, about educational pedagogy, a particular domestic political issue, or an event happening on the other side of the planet, the APSA can develop a database and a means for these groups to contact experts who can bring high-quality information to a range of valuable civic endeavors.

A critical challenge for this type of effort is quality control. In one version of the speakers' bureau, the APSA's involvement is minimal. The association develops a database of experts and uses this information to provide referrals to interested parties. Its involvement stops there. Smith's version of the proposal includes an APSA-branded project with quality control and oversight. Here, the APSA has a more active role in screening potential speakers and clients. The emphasis is on effective presentation skills and an ability to manage Q&A sessions constructively and professionally. The APSA would make decisions about the types of events to which it would and would not send speakers.

Together, these proposals can address at least four challenges facing our discipline:

- The wider public does not view political science as a useful resource for a better understanding of politics or as an aid in managing public problems.

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- There is demand for public debates that are inclusive of different viewpoints and that present diverse views courteously, constructively, and informatively.
- To the extent that the American public knows what political science is, they know it as something that is taught at universities rather than something that has more widespread use.
- Most libraries, museums, and civic groups operate as bustling community centers. They take pride in offering high-quality educational material and speakers that can address important issues in a civil, accessible, and reasonably entertaining manner that is representative of different viewpoints. However, these organizations lack the infrastructure for identifying political scientists who can help advance their public missions.

Concerning the virtues of a speakers' bureau, Smith explains that "Over time, public perceptions of political science might improve if political scientists came to be regarded in many locales throughout the country as convenient, cooperative sources of interesting, informative, and diverse perspectives on important public matters." To the extent that a speakers' bureau can help the APSA establish a "track record" or reputation for being a reliable source for high-quality and accessible presentations of political science research, teaching, and public service, it can improve the quality of many civic-education endeavors while adding value to the APSA brand.

Moreover, to the extent that APSA members are featured in these enterprises, these programs can increase the value of membership— as a speakers' bureau *that is focused on political science* is a service that universities are not as well suited to provide. Indeed, if the APSA does not pursue a political science–oriented video library or a speakers' bureau, it is difficult to imagine who will. If well managed, the benefit of these activities to the membership, to diverse media and policymaking constituencies, and to the general public can be substantial.

Another benefit of a video library and a speakers' bureau is increasing awareness of, and appreciation for, political science among current and prospective undergraduates. If more young people are exposed to compelling presentations of political science content, they may have greater interest in learning more about the topic during their college career.

Indeed, as Sides's article in this special issue describes, there are numerous potential audiences for political science content that we do not currently serve well. These audiences include civics teachers, political science PhDs who work in policy or the private sector rather than academia, and political science undergraduates who then go on to contribute to society in diverse ways. The task force recommends greater commitment to learning about the types of products that these audiences might want from us, and whether and how the APSA and individual members can serve those needs. In this context, the APSA may consider following the lead of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), which is developing a suite of products that offer value to "citizen scientists." The AAAS also is contemplating a new low-price membership level for a potentially large lay audience that would be interested in having better access to dynamic and effective science-based tools. Does the APSA have parallel opportunities? We believe that it does.

5. The APSA should have a visible and measurably effective communications-training program.

How do political scientists become the people to whom reporters, private- and public-sector decision makers, and interested members of the public turn first when asking questions that political science is well suited to answer? What skills and opportunities can the APSA and other organizations offer to scholars so that they are better positioned to have an impact like Steve Levitt and Dan Ariely? Are there ways to persuade broader audiences that political science creates knowledge of such value? The Monkey Cage's position at *The Washington Post* and the selection of task force members Brendan Nyhan and Lynn Vavreck as *New York Times* columnists suggest an increasing demand in high-traffic outlets for the type of content that political scientists provide. What can we do to provide more frequent and more valuable services of this type?

The initial answer to this question results from taking stock of our discipline's assets and limitations. On the asset side, political scientists have valuable training in collecting data, making rigorously documented observations, and analyzing a wide variety of materials. Like other social scientists, they are trained to produce deductions, inferences, and demonstrations of a range of important phenomena. On the limitation side, effective communication is a less formal part of our training. To the extent that there are rewards for effective communication in our discipline, they often accrue to individuals who can master the skill of speaking to like-minded individuals.

How do political scientists become the people to whom reporters, private- and public-sector decision makers, and interested members of the public turn first when asking questions that political science is well suited to answer?

Many political scientists would value opportunities to improve their communicative effectiveness and efficiency. This is especially true for younger scholars, scholars who seek to be heard in increasingly competitive communicative environments, and scholars who seek to broaden their audiences by writing for other disciplines, nonacademics, and the media. By improving communications training and facilitating high-quality video presentations of members' work, the APSA and similarly situated organizations can:

- increase the value proposition associated with the APSA membership,
- provide iconic images that strengthen the "political science" brand in the public sphere, and
- offer content that makes more political science insights more accessible and more meaningful to more people.

For these reasons, the task force asks the APSA to increase its commitment to communications training. It can do so by many

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means including instructional materials on the association's website and increased training opportunities at conferences. On its website, the APSA can feature a section for improving classroom teaching. For young scholars, it can feature short videos on effective writing tailored to meet their diverse needs. The APSA can also offer short videos and tutorials for how to speak to different types of media organizations.

For younger scholars interested in communicative effectiveness, the APSA should establish a peer mentors program in which small groups of similarly situated young faculty are paired with leading practitioners for a lunchtime gathering at the APSA Annual Meeting. If several meetings could be coordinated with a keynote address on effective communication, the event would be especially influential, bringing together people with a shared interest in improved communication outcomes and providing a platform for them to assist one another in achieving this goal.

There is a template for this type of commitment at the AAAS. Although this organization is known for publishing *Science*—which by many measures is the most influential scientific journal in the world—it also engages in continuing, visible, and effective communications programs. Every recent AAAS Annual Meeting included events in which leading scholars and communications professionals provided dynamic and actionable advice to attendees. Multiple sessions on these topics are regularly offered and are among the most well-attended events in the program. In 2013, the chair of this task force participated on a panel that was attended by more than 800 people. When a similar event featuring the task force chair was held at the Annual Meeting of the American Evaluation Association, it drew an audience of more than 1,500.

In multiple fields of study, effective communication skills are increasingly viewed as a valuable way to establish a presence and provide value in competitive communicative environments. The APSA has a unique opportunity to tailor this type of training to political science's distinctive needs.

6. The APSA should hire one or more dedicated science writers.

The science writers, who will report to the Outreach Director, have the primary responsibility of researching APSA publications and conferences for newsworthy content and then working with authors and other staff members to create cogent and timely press releases and other similar products. The science writers can also write scripts for internally produced videos and participate in advance work for the speakers' bureau.

Ideal candidates for the position will have an understanding of political science's content, the value of its methodological diversity, and the topical range of its inquiries. The candidates will also understand the importance of teaching and public service within the discipline and will work to develop communicative products that can benefit broader audiences.

We request that the science writers also be responsible for preparing a quarterly "public engagement spotlight" to appear in *PS: Political Science and Politics* or in a visible place on the website. This spotlight would show how political science is producing visible and concrete benefits in classrooms and in broader communities.

7. The APSA and its organized sections should create awards and other incentives to recognize effective outreach.

Some task force members examined the relationship among tenure, promotion, and the ability to develop a body of work that is both scientifically defensible and publicly accessible. Many younger scholars, for example, have advanced research skills and want to offer their insight to those who can make good use of it. While increasing numbers of scholars are comfortable writing short and accessible summaries of their arguments for various electronic communication mediums (e.g., blogs), many are concerned that engaging in these activities before a tenure review will impede their tenure and promotion chances.

The task force places strong emphasis on conducting research that is legitimate from a scientific perspective. Yet, given the ongoing questions about political science's public value and the need of colleges, universities, and funding agencies to defend investments in the discipline, increasing the number of scholars who can effectively articulate their findings to broader populations will benefit not only the scholars in question but also the discipline as a whole. For this reason, it is important to develop opportunities and incentives for publicizing broader impacts of high-quality work. The proposals listed previously, including greater stakeholder engagement, a speakers' bureau, a video library, and an Outreach Director, can increase these opportunities. Incentives are also needed.

One idea is to offer fellowships for scholars who seek to engage more effectively. Khalilah Brown-Dean proposes a Public Voices Fellowship, which shares attributes of the CFP in that it provides training and funding for members who want to engage more effectively in public scholarship. Participants in this program would then serve as public ambassadors for the profession and as peer mentors for other scholars entering the public sphere. There is a working template for this proposal available from the Demos' Emerging Voices Initiative.[5]

Several task force members, including some of our more junior members (i.e., Khalilah Brown-Dean, Cheryl Boudreau, Brendan Nyhan, and Victoria DeFrancesco Soto), propose that the APSA and its organized sections establish annual awards for effective public engagement. Boudreau's and Brown-Dean's contributions to this special issue focus on the significant disincentives facing junior scholars who seek to engage broader audiences. Both articles show how these disincentives can have lasting effects. Consider, for example, that scholars who do not learn how to communicate effectively when they are young may find fewer opportunities to learn those skills later in their career as other responsibilities expand.

We see APSA-supported awards for effective engagement, with some of them focused on junior scholars, as a powerful way to incentivize more effective engagement. Our task force members also make compelling arguments for the APSA's organized sections to create similar awards. One appeal of supporting such activities at the section level is that it allows scholarly communities to maintain emphases on their substantive, theoretical, or methodological priorities while also encouraging more effective engagement. To the extent that promotion and tenure committees view these awards as quality signals, the awards can encourage more political scientists to provide more information more effectively.

To this end, we are at a time where universities may be more receptive to these signals. Universities are seeking to convey valuable information in increasingly competitive communicative environments. They have growing incentives to cultivate and showcase gifted communicators. If the APSA and its organized sections send a strong signal that we recognize and value effective

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outreach, universities that perceive such endeavors as advancing their own mission would have incentives to give greater weight to these signals during tenure and promotion evaluations.

As stated previously, it is critical that any such awards not be perceived as rewarding style without substance. As Lynn Vavreck, who writes for university presses as well as the *New York Times*, argues, "What I worry about is sending the signal to young professors…that you can build a career by having a collection of miscellaneous, small findings, and that what you should be doing to get fast publication is to be looking for small questions where you can make an impact right now. In the long term, that's bad for the discipline…"

A related difficulty concerns a generation gap. Today, younger scholars often know more about emerging communication venues than do senior faculty. This asymmetry can make it difficult for senior faculty to evaluate the new types of contributions. For faculty and tenure committees that are accustomed to evaluating books and journal articles, the value of a blog or Twitter posting may be uncertain and controversial. In the same spirit as Vavreck's questions, we contend that new incentives for effective communication should be linked to standards that are currently used to evaluate scientific research.

A model for such linkages can be found in the United Kingdom. One criterion for public engagement to be considered in evaluations that affect departmental funding is that the engagement must be linked directly to research activities—such as a peer-reviewed publication. In other words, voting scholars who receive media coverage for their writing or appearances speaking about elections can earn credit for their department and university; those same scholars discussing a hobby receive no such credit. Similarly, awards committees can state as a requirement for consideration that the engagement be based on the research or pedagogical interests of their sections.

8. The APSA should add new and dynamic electronic journals.

Many political scientists have a love–hate relationship with their journals. On the positive side, journals offer a source of publicity and legitimacy for scholars who publish in them. Journals can expose readers to research that they might not otherwise encounter. Journals offer peer-review services that can help scholars understand the types of insights and presentations that others are seeking. For younger scholars, publishing in a major journal is a form of accreditation. Indeed, success in journal publishing is often a positive factor in tenure and promotion decisions.

The journals also draw many complaints. At leading political science journals, acceptance rates are low—often below 10%. Many journals have long turnaround times for delivering reviews to authors. A common result is that publication of an article occurs several years after it was first submitted. These delays impede information transmission and may result in perverse incentives for junior scholars. Junior scholars who are doing high-quality work must sometimes choose to send their work to low-traffic outlets to increase the likelihood of being published prior to a tenure review—forsaking opportunities to publish in venues that attract broader readership.

Should the journals be changed? Regarding the current business models of our leading journals, it is arguable that these practices once constituted an optimal solution for scholarly communication. Before the Internet, faxes, and removal of government-regulated pricing of long-distance telephone calls and domestic airfares, quarterly journals provided a cost-effective way to learn about the work of other geographically dispersed scholars. The world is different now.

In increasingly competitive communicative domains, thousands of stimuli compete for everyone's attention. If we in political science do not recognize and adapt to this competition, we should not be surprised when others pay less attention to our work than we might want. For example, potential audiences inside and outside of the academy ignore our leading journals because they do not perceive them as an effective way to obtain the types of information that they value.

We asked the task force to examine ways of managing journals that adapt to changing communicative opportunities while also preserving the beneficial attributes of current journal models. One task force member, Adam Berinsky, reported on the value of "e-journals" for our discipline. Many scientific communities are developing electronic-based journal formats that are more dynamic and accessible than traditional print-based journals. E-journals allow text to be more fully integrated with videos, simulations, and other dynamic content. Space is a less important constraint in a journal built primarily for on-line publication than it is in journals that are paper-based. E-journals can also be linked directly to real-time discussion utilities, which allow groups of interested individuals to hold worldwide e-seminars about the content of a specific article. For these and other reasons, dynamic e-journals can be used to convey certain types of information more effectively than even electronic versions of traditional print-based journals.

E-journals occupy an increasingly central position in scientific communication. Their potential for speed and presentational flexibility means that they can be organized in ways that provide valuable information to diverse audiences. In this sense, they complement existing journals and can be used to drive greater traffic to them.

The AAAS recently announced a major new initiative in this direction. In a February 14, 2015, *Science* editorial, Editor-in-Chief Marcia McNutt and AAAS Chief Executive Officer Alan Leshner discussed an important challenge that motivated the AAAS to move aggressively into the e-journal domain:

> The research enterprise has grown dramatically in the past few decades in the number of high-quality practitioners and results, but the capacity for *Science* to accommodate those works in our journal has not kept pace. Its editors turn away papers that are potentially important, well written, of broad interest, and technically well executed. Although other journals provide publishing venues for more papers, many authors still desire to be published in *Science*, a journal known for its selectivity, high standards, rapid publication, and high visibility.[6]

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The AAAS adapted to this current reality by launching a new digital-only journal called *Science Advances*. It will publish more articles more quickly than *Science* while implementing an editorial model that maintains *Science*'s high standards.

Political scientists are contemplating similar moves. Berinsky's contribution to this special issue describes one of the discipline's earliest discussions about this topic. For several years, Berinsky worked with other scholars on an APSA-based e-journal. The APSA has since debated whether and how it wants to enter this publishing domain. The APSA Committee on Publications, which built on Berinsky's proposal, presented a comprehensive proposal to the APSA Council.[7] Because the council did not move forward with either of these early proposals, other political scientists (with the aid of Sage Publications) decided to move ahead on their own. *Research & Politics*, for example:

> provides a venue for scholars to communicate rapidly and succinctly important new insights to the broadest possible audience while maintaining the highest standards of quality control. To meet this goal, *Research & Politics* publishes short, accessible articles that present novel findings or insights, or fresh views on current disputes or classic papers. The journal is published online only and uses an open-access model to enhance readership and impact. Articles are published simultaneously with technical research reports and appendices, with an emphasis on the highest standards of research ethics and, where applicable, replicability. [8]

Given its visibility in the discipline, it is still possible for the APSA to take a focal leadership position in the e-journal space. However, as other organizations develop dynamic e-journals, the APSA's window of opportunity for leadership and relevance in this domain will dissipate. E-journals occupy an increasingly central position in scientific communication. Their potential for speed and presentational flexibility means that they can be organized in ways that provide valuable information to diverse audiences. In this sense, they complement existing journals and can be used to drive greater traffic to them. Professional organizations that do not pursue effective strategies in this arena are likely to be left behind in the increasing competition for scholarly and public attention.

Our sister organizations in economics and psychology have adapted to the changing marketplace of ideas in different ways. Instead of publishing a single quarterly journal, such as the *APSR*, these organizations have sought to better serve their membership's diverse interests by adding subfield journals. Can the APSA provide more value to its members and to more public audiences by following suit? One possible way forward is to augment the existing publications of *APSR*, *PS: Political Science and Politics*, and *Perspectives on Politics* with electronic-first offerings that are marketed to specific interests. Potential candidates include outlets that focus on teaching pedagogies, on longer-form articles (e.g., the 60- to 100-page articles that populate prestigious law journals), and on replication of existing results. These ventures can be structured to better serve major subfields, encourage interdisciplinarity, and offer communicative products that focus on specific events or regions of the world. We recommend that the APSA seek information from its sister organizations about how they measure the value of their new journal-related services and to use that information to determine whether APSA can and should provide similar services.

For many years to come, traditional journals will maintain an important role in scientific communication. The process by which articles are evaluated and improved is not without criticism but it does provide substantial added value to scientific communication. However, the business models for these journals reflect the communicative capacities and expectations of a now-distant era. Readers seeking insight about topics are not prepared to wait years to find the information they want. Therefore, the task force recommends that the APSA become more diverse in its journal offerings. The mission of APSA journals should not change. However, its publications can and should be complemented by more dynamic communicative outlets that are dedicated to quality and that reflect the opportunities and challenges of an increasingly competitive communicative environment.

The APSA brand has significant potential to facilitate new communicative projects. We encourage the APSA to pursue journal strategies that deliver more information to more people. Note: In the months following the initial distribution of this report, the APSA produced a dynamic e-journal proposal that has many of the attributes described above. A contribution to this special issue by APSA Executive Director Steven Rathgeb Smith describes this exciting new endeavor.

9. The APSA journals should allow authors to trigger temporary ungating of newsworthy content.

Changes in communication technologies allow more and different types of people to post politics-related content online. The increasing number of political bloggers and columnists is one manifestation of these changes. While the bloggers and columnists vary in the quality of their work, there is a noticeable increase in the number of such persons who want to incorporate political science research into their products. *The Washington Post*'s acquisition of The Monkey Cage, the *New York Times*'s hiring of Brendan Nyhan and Lynn Vavreck as regular contributors, and Thomas Edsall's numerous long-form *New York Times* articles that are built on academic research are examples of high-quality and broadly accessible political science writing.

As a discipline, we can benefit when skilled communicators take the time to understand our methods and findings. Many nascent and existing efforts to explain important political and social phenomena would be more credible if writers were allowed to use recently published peer-reviewed articles as source materials. Yet, research is often locked behind paywalls. For reporters, citizens, and other interested people, the paywalls can be expensive or impossible to scale. Thus, many reporters and bloggers decide to write their articles without the benefit of peer-reviewed research.

Task force members recommend that APSA journals allow fast and easy temporary ungating for newsworthy content. John Sides, Brendan Nyhan, and Joshua Tucker (each of whom publishes high-profile peer-reviewed research as well as blog posts for leading newspapers) ask the APSA to "Create an easy way to temporarily ungate any APSA journal article about which a blogger is writing." If ungating can be done in a way that gives peer-reviewed research more exposure and conveys the value of this work to broader audiences, the changes could drive increased traffic to the APSA website and lead to increased appreciation of the value of the APSA membership's diverse insights.

Another reason for ungating relates to growing questions about the ethics associated with storing results of government-funded work behind publishers' paywalls. Changing technology and evolving communicative expectations, as well as the premise that federally funded research should be freely available to taxpayers, are fueling these conversations. To be sure, there have

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been compelling reasons for professional associations and publishers to store certain types of content behind paywalls. Prior to the mid-1970s, alternatives to highly priced academic journals were few in number. Even paper-based copies of articles or books were expensive to produce. Asking individuals and institutions to pay for the processes involved in creating, printing, and distributing journals would have been the only way for publishers to produce journals without going bankrupt.

The world has changed. Today, there are numerous sources of free and quickly available information on many of the topics that journals cover. To the extent that current paywalls inhibit public access to political science insights, they also limit their public value. These changes have led some publishers and professional associations to pursue different revenue models. The new AAAS e-journal, for example, is asking authors whose articles are accepted to pay a fee to have them prepared for publication. The resulting publications are then free to everyone. Although this pricing model eliminates the current paywall style, not everyone who produces potentially valuable insights can afford the cost. Others are concerned that asking individuals to pay to provide such "public goods" will decrease their supply. Across the sciences, publishers are experimenting with different pricing structures that will allow them to generate a suitable return for their efforts while also producing the best available content.

Professional associations face a related challenge. Many leading academic journals, such as the *APSR*, are bundled with membership fees. The resulting payments comprise an important source of revenue for professional associations. Access to content currently behind paywalls motivates many people to belong to the associations. If association journals move to an open-source model, individuals will no longer need to pay the association to obtain the content. These changes would reduce the revenue streams of many professional associations. If the APSA develops an e-journal and adopts an open-access pricing mechanism, we recommend that it use membership as a factor in the pricing structure. In other words, the association can offer lower publication prices for members—in addition to any need-based tiered pricing structure that it might develop. E-journals also can be supported by dynamic advertising strategies (e.g., nesting advertisements within related journal articles). Given the APSA's focal presence in political science, it is likely to have an advantage over other organizations in soliciting this type of business.

We believe that, if managed effectively, a voluntary and easy-to-use temporary ungating trigger can increase interest in the APSA membership's work, drive traffic to publishers, and offer the association another way to provide value while enhancing public engagement.

10. Quality cannot be sacrificed. The APSA should internally reorganize peer-review management processes to produce high-quality output more efficiently. This idea includes reviewer-incentive systems and voluntary sharing of reviews across journals.

The APSA and similarly situated professional associations operate in a fast-changing communicative environment. These changes mean that "standing still" is not a viable option for increasing communicative effectiveness—or even for retaining our existing effectiveness levels. An expansive number of entities are providing information about topics relevant to political science. For the APSA and its members to be focal parts of important public discussions and decisions, its intellectual products must have attributes that meet or surpass its desired audiences' evolving expectations. The APSA's communicative products must provide fast, relevant, and accessible representations of political science's extensive knowledge base.

Quality control is a hallmark of academic research. As the APSA ventures into new types of communicative products, its reputation depends on maintaining a high degree of quality control. For peer-reviewed research, this means increasing demands on reviewers. Whether or not the APSA acts affirmatively to provide greater incentives for reviewers, the increasing number of outlets for scholarly reviewing are producing "reviewer fatigue" and declining response rates. Today, many scholars are overwhelmed by requests to review; the corresponding decline in response rates poses a threat to the quality of peer review.

As we seek to draw greater attention to political science's valuable work, we must simultaneously protect its legitimacy. The task force recommends that the APSA act affirmatively to enhance the quality of its peer-review process. This special issue describes two different reviewer-incentive systems, in articles by Diana Mutz and Brendan Nyhan, that are designed for this purpose. The basic premise of each system is that a scholar earns credits for submitting timely and informative reviews of articles for publication. Scholars can then "cash in" those credits when submitting their own work. In Mutz's proposal, the credits become a requirement for submitting to a journal. In Nyhan's proposal, the credits can be used in a two-track system where the credit-based track produces a faster turnaround. Both systems allow credits to be transferrable across journals—for example, a scholar who reviews for *Perspectives on Politics* can use credits for *APSR* and vice versa. Both proposals describe the benefits of expanding the set of journals that participate in the reviewer-incentive system. If, for example, 20 journals participated, the system would provide greater flexibility in how credits are earned and spent. Therefore, if the APSA were to pursue an incentive system, it could increase the value of the new currency by forming partnerships with journals whose author and reviewer pools overlap with APSA publications.

To support the increased volume of communication that the APSA seeks to provide, we recommend that it build a supplementary system to support peer-review quality. Because many in our discipline have voiced repeated objections to paying reviewers and imposing submission fees to fund the payments, reviewer-incentive systems described in this special issue may provide a more effective way to obtain high-quality reviews without introducing disadvantages to those who could not afford the fee.

The two proposed systems not only provide an incentive system for scholars to enhance the quality and accessibility of one another's work but also allow journal editors to coordinate more efficiently when seeking valuable advice from reviewers. Consider, for example, Nyhan's "referee report roll-down" proposal:

> One impediment to the rapid dissemination of knowledge from political science is the serial nature of the journal-submission process. In many cases, it can take six to twelve months or more to receive reviews from an initial submission to a journal. If that submission is declined, the author must resubmit it to a new journal and restart the process, which frequently can result in duplication of effort by reviewers and unnecessary delays for authors. One way to improve the efficiency of this process is for the APSA to offer authors the option of forwarding their *APSR* submissions and

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the resulting reviews to other APSA or affiliated section journals. Many submissions are declined at highly selective journals such as the *APSR* with reviews that indicate that a manuscript should move forward to publication at a field journal. By allowing authors the option to redirect the manuscripts and reviews to such a journal (a process that should be possible in online publishing systems), they could move toward publication more quickly while reducing the burden on scholars, who often review a manuscript more than once during the journal-submission process. The American Economic Association implemented such a system for the *American Economic Review* (*AER*) and its affiliated field journals. Authors are given the option to forward referee reports and correspondence from the *AER* to the *AEJ* editors. Although the APSA does not publish field journals, many of its affiliated sections do (e.g., *Legislative Studies Quarterly*, *Political Analysis*, and *Political Behavior*). The association should consider proposing such a roll-down policy for those journals and explore partnerships with other field journals.

Task force members want to bring the insights of political science to new audiences, but they are committed to maintain and even increase the legitimacy of the publications that produce the insights. Nyhan's contribution to this report describes a series of proposals that can have this effect. These proposals are designed to mitigate publication bias (i.e., a focus on statistically significant claims over those with greater substantive importance) and to increase replication capacity (i.e., which often is useful for understanding whether a specific result generalizes to other cases). Specifically, Nyhan proposes the following:

- *Preaccepted articles.* "Articles would be accepted in principle after a first-stage review to prevent editors and reviewers from backing out of publishing an article due to a null or mixed finding. The authors then would conduct the study and populate the results section based on a prespecified analysis plan." To incentivize scholars to use this format, *APSR* or other journals could offer to fast-track the review process or publish an article as the lead in each issue.
- *Results-blind peer review.* "Reviewers would assess the theory and research design of a manuscript and make an initial decision without access to the statistical findings, which initially would be withheld." To avoid adverse selection, journals could randomize which manuscripts would go through this process.
- *Post-publication replication audits.* "Every APSA journal should…require authors of quantitative studies to provide a full replication archive before publication.…[A] mandatory journal-replication policy would improve the incentive for scholars to engage in careful and systematic research practices."

These proposals can help political science to improve the quality and meaning of the information that it provides to others. Through effective and forward-looking changes to peer-review processes, the APSA can assist journal editors and authors in making more content more accessible to more people while also making the content more trustworthy—and therefore more valuable—to those who access this information. These proposals can also augment the APSA's leadership role in attempts to increase the public's trust in social science research. Like APSA's support of the Data Access and Research Transparency (DART) initiative[9] and its sponsorship of interdisciplinary workshops on replication and effective archiving, the proposals described in this section can provide greater incentives to produce trustworthy discoveries.

11. Go on offense. Many people do not know what political science is. The APSA should make a series of brief, high-quality videos on this topic.

Political scientists study and often seek to communicate in politicized environments. The value conflicts and power struggles that often accompany political decision making also influence the manner in which our work is evaluated. Some members of the public view work in political science as supporting their preexisting preferences and gain an incentive to exaggerate the work's true content. Others view work in political science as threatening to their beliefs and gain an incentive to cast the discipline in unfavorable terms. How can we increase the credibility of political science in such instances?

Some members of the public view work in political science as supporting their preexisting preferences and gain an incentive to exaggerate the work's true content. Others view work in political science as threatening to their beliefs and gain an incentive to cast the discipline in unfavorable terms.

The task force recommends that we "go on offense." In other words, we ask the APSA to make a concerted effort to help audiences understand how political science improves their lives. This proposal is based on the premise that most people outside of our discipline do not know what political science is. One task force member, Brian Baird—who has a PhD in social science and served 12 years in Congress—bluntly stated the matter. He argues that political scientists need to "embrace the legitimacy" of questions about the public value of our research. We then need to apply our discipline's own insights to improve how we communicate that value. Along with other members of Congress with whom task force members have interacted, Baird has noticed the extent to which political science has not effectively described its value to others. Of such failures, Baird says it is "like watching your boxing instructor get knocked out in a bar fight."

Thus, this proposal entails playing offense, rather than strictly being defensive, in public discussions about political science and its value. A series of short videos is one way to grab a more focal position in the public sphere. The videos would distinguish political science from politics as it is practiced and from political commentary that is not legitimated by scientific norms and practices. The videos would be short with high-quality production. They would provide examples of how political science benefits students, communities, institutions, and nations. Individual videos could highlight classroom training and real-world applications.

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Individually and collectively, these videos would send a message that the APSA and its members are a resource for a better world. If individual scholars and institutions made similarly themed videos, the APSA video library (proposed previously) could include them as well.

Political science and its professional organizations can take concrete actions to improve our public presence. We can learn more about what our audiences want from us and, in the process, increase our relevance in their lives. To engage more effectively, we need not "dumb down" what we do; rather, we need to "smarten up" and work harder to translate our discoveries into insights that resonate with the people whom we seek to serve.[10]

Task force members identified circumstances in which political science research has improved the performance of individuals, companies, and countries. Examples include how recent "get out the vote" field experiments affected campaign strategies and how political science research influenced military strategies under General Petraeus (who holds a PhD in our discipline). Task force members also identified examples in which political science findings were not applied and how their application would have improved outcomes. James Druckman's recent work on how to describe new technologies to the public is one example of this research.[11]

The part of this special issue that features Brian Baird most forcefully articulates the value to political science of a video series that "plays offense." To improve communication to policy makers and the public, Baird proposes that political scientists:

- "Recognize that challenging the legitimacy…of elected representatives to question where funding goes is a fool's errand."
- "Apply their own insight into how they approach this problem."
- "Do some serious self-reflection on exactly what we're doing with the people's money, and where the value proposition is for that."

Baird contends that a video campaign illustrating the concrete value of political science will encourage us to communicate our relevance more effectively. Political science has many valuable and inspiring stories to tell. Let's tell them in the most effective ways possible.

12. Rethink the communicative value of conference presentations. Consider altering submitter incentives, panel formats, and the use of technology to improve and expand interaction.

Conferences provide venues for scholars to communicate with one another and, potentially, broader audiences. Many political science conferences provide valuable networking opportunities for individuals who are seeking mentors, collaborators, and jobs. Yet, the marquee events at most conferences are the presentations. Panels, roundtables, and keynote addresses are the common formats for communicating ideas, insights, and discoveries at conferences.

There is no doubt that conferences provide potentially valuable opportunities for scholars to communicate relevant and innovative ideas to important audiences. In many cases, however, conference presentations are of poor quality; many presentations at major conferences are hastily arranged and too often a substantial number of listed presenters fail to appear.

Young scholars attending our conferences for the first time, or visitors from outside of the discipline, experience poor-quality presentations and observe a pattern of "no-shows." What impression of political science does this leave? Many attendees learn that high-quality presentations are not expected. Indeed, it appears that some view a lack of preparation as a "badge of honor" rather than a missed opportunity to provide value to others.

We should also be concerned about the impressions that retrograde conference presentations have on people from outside of our discipline who visit our events. Can we blame them for taking us less seriously than we desire when we appear not to care about the quality of our conference offerings? Put another way, when members of our discipline ask one another why it does not receive more attention or respect, one answer may lie in the fact that when thousands of political scientists gather in a major American city, the event is seldom viewed as worth covering—even by organizations that focus on science and politics.

We can and should do better. Professional associations in other disciplines use their conferences to communicate with broader audiences. The AAAS—which is arguably a larger and far more complex organization than any professional association in political science—uses its annual meeting not only to provide scientists with opportunities to communicate with one another but also to create venues in which broader audiences and the media can learn about the value of scientific activities. By rethinking the communicative value of its conferences, the APSA has an opportunity to produce more value for more people.

How can we improve the quality of conference presentations so that they not only provide greater value to other political scientists but also have the potential to inform broader audiences? In graduate school and as faculty, political scientists are rarely trained in how to effectively present their work to broader audiences. To the extent that any scholars seek these outcomes, they are expected to develop relevant skills on their own. In some cases, scholars who learn how to make more accessible presentations are labeled as "selling out" or as acting in ways that are contrary to their professional development. There is no doubt that spending time on activities other than research design and analysis can be detrimental to the production of credible and valuable insights and discoveries. However, the fact that this can happen does not mean that it always does. The contributions to this special issue by Cheryl Boudreau, Khalilah Brown-Dean, Rose McDermott, and Carol Swain articulate these concerns in important and constructive ways. Political science can do better and each contribution offers a means for doing so.

Task force members also examined how other organizations use application deadlines and full-paper requirements to increase the quality and value of conference-based presentations. Today, political science's largest conferences close application deadlines far in advance of the actual event. Moreover, the typical application only requires an abstract rather than something approaching a finished paper. While this set of procedures offers advantages to those who can state new ideas in a brief written format, it is far from clear that it is the best way to produce informative, high-quality conference presentations. (Many scholars believe that this format discriminates against conference applicants who are not already well established or based at a high-prestige institution.) Numerous other professional associations require something akin to a finished paper or at least a well-developed précis.

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We ask the APSA to consider whether alternative ways of conceiving of conference panels can produce more informative presentations. One alternative is a conference with more diverse and dynamic panel formats. Consider, for example, a conference organized around workshop panels, showcase panels, and posters. A workshop panel would be similar to a typical panel at our current major conferences. It would entail a brief presentation of work in progress. Poster sessions would provide a venue for person-to-person presentations of research in various stages.

Showcase panels would feature high-quality presentations of published work. Today, there is more research published in more areas than anyone can possibly read. Showcase panels would introduce conference attendees to published work and combine that opportunity with the ability to glean additional information from the author. The Empire Series concept, launched by the Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) in 2014, is an example of how this idea can be implemented. An Empire Series lecture is a 30-minute presentation followed by a 15-minute Q&A session. The requirement for being asked to give a presentation in this series is evidence of the speaker's ability to offer a high-quality offering to a diverse audience. For the Empire Series, the speaker selection committee based its decisions, in part, on video evidence of potential speakers' presentational style and effectiveness. In its initial incarnation, however, the MPSA made no effort to publicize this endeavor outside of its own membership. As a result, the broader attention that the event was meant to generate did not materialize. If the APSA includes higher profile events in its programming, it also should develop effective outreach campaigns so that targeted audiences learn about them in advance.

The task force also discussed other ways to improve the conference experience for attendees. We considered, for example, the common format of having a discussant provide commentary on one or more conference papers during a panel. Of what value are these discussants to the audience? In many cases, they offer advice in public that could have been conveyed as effectively to the author in private, and is largely inaccessible to most of the audience. The "inaccessible" outcome occurs when attendees have not read the paper in advance (which is almost always true), the author's presentation does not convey the paper's content well (because it is hastily prepared), and the discussant focuses comments on attributes of the paper that were in the largely unread paper rather than the presentation. Hence, the audience cannot relate to much of what the discussant says. When neither the presenters nor the discussants thinks about the presentation in terms of what content would provide the greatest value for the audience, panel attendance becomes less valuable for conference participants.

Other professional associations use different formats. Some have discussants present the papers with the author responding in the context of a Q&A session with the audience. Others have panels with no discussants. Some associations are starting to use technology to facilitate dynamic author–audience interactions. For example, there are technologies that allow a panel chair to take questions via Twitter or a similar medium and to ask those questions throughout the panel discussion. Task force members have given talks at these types of conferences in other disciplines and are intrigued by their informative potential. We encourage the APSA and similarly situated organizations to pursue means of making the conference-presentation experience more valuable for attendees.

We also ask the APSA to consider an increased role of video at conference presentations. Our major conferences currently record few conference activities. Other organizations put more of their conference content online. Although professional associations may be concerned about declining conference attendance following a decision to place video content online, it is also possible that the content can increase interest and perhaps serve as a new revenue source for the association. The APSA could sell a video pass to select streams of conference activity, or it could label certain video content as "premium" and put it behind a paywall as a way to increase the value of association membership.

The task force also discussed how to increase the value of poster sessions. Today, poster sessions are viewed by many scholars in political science as a "consolation prize." Reinforcing this perception is the fact that attendance at panel sessions is often sparse. In many other professional associations, poster sessions are a focal point and a venue in which a significant amount of effective communication occurs. Some conferences are organized to minimize competition between poster sessions and keynote events. To reduce such competition at political science conferences, the conference program committee could devote part or all of one day exclusively to poster presentations. Given the unique type of feedback that scholars can receive at poster sessions, the APSA and similarly situated organizations should examine the types of incentives that induce people to make better posters and induce audiences to seek out poster rooms in greater numbers. If properly organized, these experiences may also help presenters learn how to engage effectively under a broader set of circumstances and to a more diverse set of audiences.

ABOUT THE TASK FORCE AND THE SPECIAL ISSUE

Every task force member is a social scientist who has sought creative and effective ways to bring actionable and beneficial insights to important constituencies. Some do this through their scholarship, others through their innovative teaching methods. Some have done this by serving in Congress or by holding focal positions in presidential campaigns. Others have their own television program or are regular contributors to leading newspapers. Some members participate in more than one of these activities and do much more to engage broad audiences. Simply following the examples of these individuals would increase our discipline's communicative effectiveness in important ways.

What we asked them to do, however, is more challenging than repeating their past. We asked each member to evaluate our discipline's current actions and then to offer constructive advice about how to convey our substantial insight more effectively to more people. This special issue reflects the energy that every member devoted to the task.

All task force members are serving without compensation. Hence, their situation parallels that of many political scientists: we offered them a choice of whether to continue activities that would directly burnish their individual academic portfolios or to pursue activities that can produce a public good of broad potential value that might not be rewarded in the typical university structure. We appreciate that every member of this task force chose to advance the public good.

We now offer brief descriptions of the articles that constitute this special issue. The task force report that was delivered to and

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accepted by the APSA Council in August 2014 contains more information about how the task force accomplished its work.[12] Table 1 lists those who supported the task force.

Table 1

Task Force Members

Task Force Chair
Arthur Lupia, University of Michigan
Task Force Members
Brian Baird, National Academy of Science Behavioral and Social Science Advisory Board and Former Member of Congress
Adam Berinsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology
Cheryl Boudreau, University of California, Davis
Khalilah L. Brown-Dean, Quinnipiac University
James Druckman, Northwestern University
Melissa Harris-Perry, Wake Forest University and MSNBC
Sara Hobolt, London School of Economics and Political Science
Jennifer Hochschild, Harvard University and Chair of the APSA Publications Planning Ad Hoc Committee
Bruce Jentleson, Duke University and "Bridging the Gap"
Rose McDermott, Brown University
Diana Mutz, University of Pennsylvania
Brendan Nyhan, Dartmouth College and the *New York Times*
Dan Schnur, University of Southern California & Communications Director for the 2008 McCain presidential campaign
Daron Shaw, University of Texas
John Sides, George Washington University and The Monkey Cage
Rogers Smith, University of Pennsylvania
Victoria DeFrancesco Soto, University of Texas
Carol Swain, Vanderbilt University and bethepeople.tv
Joshua Tucker, New York University and The Monkey Cage
Lynn Vavreck, University of California, Los Angeles, and the *New York Times*
Task Force Advisory Board
John Aldrich, Duke University and APSA President
Kathleen Hall-Jamieson, University of Pennsylvania & Director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center
Mala Htun, The New School for Social Research and recent APSA task force chair
John Ishiyama, University of North Texas and *APSR* lead editor
Howard Silver, Former Executive Director, Consortium of Social Science Associations
Kaare Strom, University of California, San Diego, & Chair of the APSA Committee on Publications
Task Force Support Staff
Logan S. Casey, University of Michigan
Dumitru Minzarari, University of Michigan
Christopher Skovron, University of Michigan
APSA Support Staff
Steven Rathgeb Smith, APSA Executive Director
Jennifer Diascro, Senior Director, Program Operations
Liane Piñero-Kluge, Senior Director, Membership and Marketing Operations
Barbara Walthall, Director of Publications
Kara Abramson, Director, Government Relations, Public Engagement, and Congressional Fellowship Programs

The initial articles in section one in this special issue consist of transcripts of interviews with task force members who engage the public in effective ways.

The first interview is with Brian Baird. He has a PhD in social science, served 12 years in Congress, and was a university president. Congressman Baird reveals important details about how legislators view social scientists. His interview then describes ways in which social scientists can convey their value more effectively.

The second interview is with Melissa Harris-Perry. Professor Harris-Perry is not only an accomplished scholar but also has been the host of a nationally televised cable news program for several years. Professor Harris-Perry describes the benefits for political science of forming better relationships with "the translators." She contends that scholars and the public can benefit when members of the press—particularly young and ambitious members—can get to know experts in the fields of their interest.

The third interview is with Dan Schnur. Professor Schnur is a social scientist and pollster who served as an advisor to four gubernatorial and three presidential campaigns. He focuses our attention on learning more about the people with whom we seek to engage. He argues that "to get practitioners to see the value of political scientists' work, we need to make more of an effort to show them that we respect theirs." He offers advice about how we can "present the value of the information without sounding condescending."

The fourth interview is with Daron Shaw. Professor Shaw is a political scientist who served as a strategist in the 2000 and 2004 presidential campaigns and who now conducts polls for Fox News and is a member of the Fox News Election Night decision team. He describes the often-unseen links between political science and political practice. He provides cases in which political science insights have affected campaign tactics in transformative ways. He finds that "the intersection between academia and practical politics is really amazing" and lists ways to increase the understanding of these effects.

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The fifth interview is with Victoria DeFrancesco Soto. Professor DeFrancesco Soto is a political scientist who provides election analysis in both English and Spanish for a range of media outlets. She describes her own efforts to engage broader audiences as a young scholar. She articulates benefits to political science that result from doing less to penalize engagement and more to incentivize relationship building with communities that can make good use of what political scientists know.

The final interview is with Lynn Vavreck. Professor Vavreck has established a reputation for high-quality political analysis in both top-flight academic publishing venues and the public sphere. She offers a constructive assessment of how to improve communicative outcomes. She also discusses the role of incentives and makes the important point that increased communicative success does not require that every scholar "make the results of their scientific work accessible to a layperson." That said, the increasing competition described previously means that political science's communicative presence will depend on producing more people who can be effective translators. Professor Vavreck describes how the APSA and universities can do more to achieve this goal.

These interviews are followed by articles written by task force members. In the first article, "A New and Dynamic Outlet for Communicating Innovative Political Science Research," Adam Berinsky describes the benefits of e-journals for individual scholars, professional associations, and the discipline as a whole.

In her article, "Seen but Not Heard: Engaging Junior Scholars in Efforts to Make Political Science More Relevant," Cheryl Boudreau contends that junior scholars are often discouraged from conveying their research in broadly accessible ways. Such actions are not rewarded in many tenure and promotion proceedings and can also have negative reputational effects. She proposes a series of actions that the APSA and other organizations can take to increase incentives for public engagement. The proposals include establishing awards for junior scholars who do effective outreach, sponsoring roundtables that could draw media attention, and creating engagement fellowships that parallel the CFP.

Khalilah Brown-Dean's article, "Emphasizing the Scholar in Public Scholarship," advances similar themes. Professor Brown-Dean proposes a Public Voices Scholarship that would provide support and incentives for scholars to engage more effectively. She also draws attention to the fact that scholars from historically underrepresented groups face additional challenges. The types of programs that she describes can help underrepresented scholars become a core asset in our discipline's renewed focus on more effective communication.

James Druckman's article, "Communicating Policy-Relevant Science," examines the diverse ways in which policy makers use and interpret social science research. His article clarifies why policy makers may resist or mischaracterize policy-relevant research. He then offers suggestions for making researchers' work more likely to gain the attention and respect of decision makers.

Sara Hobolt's article, "Assessing and Maximizing the Impact of the Social Sciences," uses recent experiences in the United Kingdom as a basis for advice about strategies for more effective engagement in other places. In the UK, university funding depends, in part, on national assessments. Recent assessments place greater weight on the social and economic impact of research. She describes the engagement metrics that have evolved and raises questions about whether and how universities in other countries should follow suit.

In her article, "Incentivizing the Manuscript Review System via REX," Diana Mutz proposes a mechanism whereby scholars gain credits for supplying scholarly reviews. In the REX market, scholars earn credits for their reviews and spend them to have their own articles reviewed. Mutz offers REX as a way to maintain quality control in an era of increased academic production.

Brendan Nyhan's article, "A Proposal for Journal Reforms," advances similar themes. He offers proposals to improve the credibility of published work. If we are to improve at communicating, it will be helpful to have better support for the claims that we make. Nyhan's proposals include seeking to mitigate "publication bias" through preaccepted articles, results-blind peer review, replication audits, reviewer-incentive systems, and allowing journal editors to share reviews.

Rose McDermott's article, "Learning to Communicate Better with the Press and Public," offers practical advice for scholars about how to speak to reporters and large audiences. Her contribution describes the incentives, challenges, and opportunities available in these domains and emphasizes the importance of getting one's point across while staying true to the content of one's research.

The article by Brendan Nyhan, John Sides, and Joshua Tucker, "APSA as Amplifier," offers multiple ways that the APSA and other professional associations can bring important insights to the audiences that can make good use of them. Their proposals include greater incentives for more effective outreach and supporting efforts to ungate academic articles when research can aid the public understanding of an important issue. They contend that this ungating, even for only a brief period, can benefit the public as well as the people who produced the articles.

John Sides' article, "Engaging Political Science Alumni Networks," asks the APSA to commit to providing value to populations that are familiar with political science ideas but who are not academics. This includes PhDs who work outside of the academy, political science majors who work in government, community-college instructors, and high-school civics teachers. He contends that these populations comprise an untapped audience and a potential source of support. He proposes several ways in which individual scholars and professional associations can better serve them.

Rogers Smith's article, "Creating a Speakers and Classroom Resources Program," is based on a similar premise. He proposes a program to help libraries, museums, community organizations, and schools find political science speakers and classroom resources that articulate different perspectives on important issues in an engaging manner. He describes the many topics and audiences that could benefit from such activities and how these benefits could help a broader set of people experience the public value of political science.

Carol Swain's contribution, "Free Speech, Politics, and Academia," lays bare the challenges inherent in expanding not only the audience for political science but also the social sciences in general. Her sober view of the social sciences reveals that a significant portion of its work is not politically or ideologically neutral. Many recent examples of social scientific research, for example, treat conservatism as a pathology and polarization as something that must be cured. Conclusions of this type are infused with ideological assertions and cannot be defended as strictly neutral statements. Moreover, many empirical studies of the political leanings of American social scientists shows that they tend to be more sympathetic to contemporary liberal rather than conservative viewpoints. Given the partisan imbalance within many sectors of the academy, we should not be surprised when people who do not share liberal viewpoints question the validity and value of social science research as a whole. For this reason, we asked our ideologically and

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culturally diverse group to clarify how the politicized environments in which we work as scholars, as well as the politicized environments in which our work is interpreted, affect public perceptions of the value of political science. This report contains important examples of how scholars have established and maintained credibility in high-value and ideologically diverse or heavily conservative communicative environments. Swain's contribution to this special issue offers a forceful example of such an endeavor.

Bruce Jentleson's article, "Bridging the Gap," describes his program in engagement. The program provides advice and offers opportunities to work with policy makers.

Jennifer Hochschild's article, "Reflections on Improving Public Perceptions of Political Science's Value," discusses the task force's stated goal of making "political science's insights and discoveries more accessible, more relevant, and more valuable to more people." She states that the goal is desirable but warns about being too focused on relevance. Hochschild also raises concerns about how many of the task force's recommendations reflect skills most available among younger junior scholars at a time when control of disciplinary and institutional resources rests with more senior scholars.

This special issue concludes with an article by APSA Executive Director Steven Rathgeb Smith. The Executive Director has worked with APSA staff to remake the organization in many constructive ways. His contribution describes APSA's proposed new e-journal. It is a promising conclusion to this special issue as its concrete proposal responds to many of the suggestions described above.

CONCLUSION

Political scientists are working on numerous projects with substantial potential to benefit society. The extent to which this potential is realized depends on the effectiveness with which political scientists convey their insights to students, policy makers, and the public.[13] Many APSA members believe that the association can and should do more help them convey political science's substantial public value. To the extent that the APSA has attempted to improve its communicative effectiveness before the creation of the task force, it is often perceived as having done so sporadically or ineffectively. Such sentiments were common during the era of "the Coburn amendment" that placed special restrictions on political science grants at the National Science Foundation.

Our experience with the APSA has been that individual staff members are highly motivated to serve the association and its members. At the same time, prior to the creation of this task force, individual staff members had no special expertise in developing communicative strategies that effectively convey important information to broad audiences. In recent years, there has been increased recognition of these challenges within the APSA. Staff changes and the creation of committees for outreach, publications, and the APSA website signal increased attention to improving what various audiences can learn from APSA members. Despite the fact that these efforts complemented one another in the quest to improve communicative effectiveness, they did not appear to be well coordinated. Leaders of several communication- and engagement-focused committees reported little or no sustained follow-through by the APSA. Although many APSA members and staff voiced support for improved communication and more expansive engagement, at the time that this task force was commissioned, the APSA had not committed to systematic evaluations of the effectiveness of current or planned communicative activities. Without tangible evidence, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of communicative activities. Without such evidence, plans for new publications, websites, and so on may not produce desired engagement outcomes. This special issue seeks to enhance the discipline's communicative effectiveness by increasing its ability to design communication strategies that take diverse audiences' needs into account and to encourage tangible evaluations of these strategies effectiveness.

With these goals in mind, we must guard against complacency when looking for ways to more effectively engage important publics. When examining their communicative effectiveness, other organizations often fall back on premature self-congratulation instead of actively pursuing available and more effective alternatives.[14] We do not want to repeat these mistakes. The APSA and other organizations devote resources to journals, conferences, and websites because they believe them to be effective means of communication. If we want to claim to be an organization that provides knowledge of real value to diverse constituencies, then we should rigorously and continuously evaluate the validity of those beliefs.

At the same time, we understand that proposing significant changes to entities such as journals and conferences will be controversial. This is why it is important to state that our purpose is not to ignore or underappreciate the substantial efforts that have been made on behalf of the discipline by current journal editors and past APSA staff. Instead, our goal is to make these types of efforts more valuable to more people. The task force seeks to help the APSA, its members, and similarly situated organizations produce communication that is more memorable, more meaningful, and more valuable to more audiences.

We asked our ideologically and culturally diverse group to clarify how the politicized environments in which we work as scholars, as well as the politicized environments in which our work is interpreted, affect public perceptions of the value of political science.

As the NAS recently emphasized, scholars often do not present what they know in optimal ways (see www.nasonline.org/programs/sackler-colloquia/upcoming-colloquia/science-communication.html). We contend that there is a better way forward. Political science can improve people's lives. It can help us better understand causes and consequences of our collective decisions. It can complement and energize the public sphere by integrating advanced forms of logic and evidence with well-documented experience to inform rigorous evaluations of crucial matters. Political science can help decision makers around the world recognize courses of action that will allow them to more effectively achieve personal, community, and national aspirations. A greater emphasis on effectively conveying the current and possible future impact of our work is essential to the discipline's continuing relevance and public support. Political science is not an entitlement. It is an endeavor that must continually demonstrate its value if it wants others to support it.

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So, let's be heard. Let's not be heard because we want attention for its own sake. Rather, let's be heard because we have statements to make that can improve others' lives. This is the bet that the task force is making in working to improve political science's communicative effectiveness. In this effort, the APSA can lead. Universities can innovate. Individuals can create. Anyone can participate. The time to act is now. Let's be heard. ■

NOTES

1. Note that as this special issue was being prepared, the APSA has already hired several people to assume many of the responsibilities listed here.
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CONTRIBUTORS



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Cheryl Boudreau *is associate professor of political science at the University of California, Davis. Her research examines whether and when different types of political information help uninformed voters to make political decisions that improve their welfare. Using laboratory and survey experiments, Boudreau's research sheds light on when information such as endorsements, political debates, public opinion polls, and voter guides helps uninformed voters to behave as though they are more informed. Boudreau's articles have appeared in the* American Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics, Political Behavior, Political Communication, *and other journals. She can be reached at* clboudreau@ucdavis.edu.



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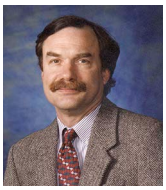
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