University Senate

Proposed: April 29, 2022

Adopted: April 28, 2022

In favor-Abstained-Opposed: 52-0-0

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE AN ACADEMIC PROGRAM LEADING TO THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN POLITICAL ANALYTICS

(School of Professional Studies)

WHEREAS the explosive growth of data science early in the twenty-first century has had powerful applications to political campaigns, a change signaled by the decisive contribution of President Barack Obama's analytics team to his reelection a decade ago; and

WHEREAS the Columbia Political Science Department (Arts and Sciences) and the School of Professional Studies have joined forces to propose a new master's program to prepare students to work in this burgeoning field; and

WHEREAS the relative scarcity of master's programs focusing on political analytics in American universities offers exceptional opportunities for a Columbia program, and for its graduates in such as positions as research analyst, survey analyst, polling analyst, direct marketing data analyst, fundraising analyst, media analyst, and policy analyst for political campaigns, advocacy groups, government agencies, and lobbyists, or for the consultants and suppliers that serve these organizations;

WHEREAS the proposed program will enroll 30 students a year at steady state, and require 36 credits, to be completed over three full-time semesters (or up to six part-time semesters), and will teach 30 students a year at steady state; and

WHEREAS the curriculum will draw on a wide range of existing selective courses in Arts and Sciences, SPS, and SIPA, but will also include six new seven-week, two-point core courses (Introduction to Political Analytics, Campaign Management, Strategic Thinking, Field Experiments, Poll Analysis, and Leadership), three new selective courses, and a three-point capstone course; and

WHEREAS the University Senate Education Committee has favorably reviewed the program, with particular appreciation for the active involvement of senior Political Science faculty, both in the planning and after the launch;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the University Senate approve the establishment of the Master of Science in Political Analytics, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the University Senate Education Committee will review the program five years after its expected launch in the fall of 2023.

Proponent: Education Committee

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK

PROPOSAL FOR A NEW DEGREE, NEW DEGREE FROM AN EXISTING TRACK, NEW CERTIFICATE, OR NEW CERTIFICATION OF PROFESSIONAL ACHIEVEMENT (CPA) PROGRAM

Please insert the requested information in the table below:

Degree:	**Master of Science**
Program Name:	**Political Analytics**
If this program is currently a track in an existing program but has evolved as a stand-alone program, please indicate the program it's based on:	**Not Applicable**
Sponsoring School(s):	**School of Professional Studies** **Department of Political Science, Division of Arts & Sciences**
Proposed Start Date:	**Fall 2023**
Name and Email Address of the Primary Contact Person for this Proposal:	**Name: Dr. Steven Cohen** **Title: Senior Vice Dean** **School: School of Professional Studies** **Department: Academic Affairs unit** **Email address: sc32@sipa.columbia.edu**
Date of Proposal Submission:	**February 9, 2022**

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Please complete the questions below and submit this document and the external reviewer list (if applicable) through the APAS system (https://apas.provost.columbia.edu/) to begin the review process. *Please note: Firefox is the recommended browser for APAS; functionality may be less optimal when using Internet Explorer or Chrome.*

1) Purpose

A) Describe in 1-2 paragraphs the purpose of the proposed program, its target audience, its content, and its format/pedagogical approaches.

The purpose of MS in Political Analytics program is to prepare learners for professional data-oriented careers in politics, whether in government, NGOs, research organizations, consulting, lobbying, or other private sector organizations by providing the foundational knowledge, theoretical and empirical research skills, analytics capabilities, and applied practice.

Courses will be taught by Columbia full-time faculty and part-time scholar-practitioners who possess expertise and deep applied experience across various aspects of politics, including research, policy, marketing communications, media and advertising, finance, campaign management, and more.

B) How does the new program relate to ongoing programs? Will it replace any existing program(s)? Does the proposed program completely or partially duplicate (an) existing program(s) in any other unit of the University?

The MS in Political Analytics program represents a unique offering at Columbia University and within the larger marketplace of graduate degree offerings. While the proposed program draws upon existing coursework at GSAS, SPS, and SIPA to fulfill some of the core requirements, the specificity of the program's new introductory and four substantive political analytics courses render them distinct from courses offered at the University.

Given Columbia University's academic strength in the Social Sciences particularly Political Science and public policy, Statistics, mathematical modeling, and Applied Analytics, there is strong rationale to create academic offerings to meet the needs of learners aiming to build a career in political analytics and political consulting. Drawing from a wealth of already-existing graduate-level courses in the Graduate School of Arts & Science, the School of Professional Studies, and the School of International & Public Affairs provides a foundation for both core and elective courses for a Master of Science.

2) Need

A) Why is the proposed program needed locally, statewide or nationally?

Over the last decade, the pivotal role of data-driven decision-making in political campaigns accelerated with the rise of mobile technology, ecommerce, social media, and digital marketing. Barack Obama has been referred to as "the big data president" and his 2012 data team was credited with helping to deliver his re-election victory. With an analytics department that was five times larger than in 2008, the quant operation of the Obama campaign leveraged data-mining techniques to identify and micro-target swing state voters with surgical precision, design consumer-oriented messages to sway constituents, and raise record-setting sums of campaign cash.

In 2016, the Trump campaign exploited techniques developed by the Obama team and went a step further by hiring an outside firm, Cambridge Analytica. The firm claimed to possess thousands of data points on as many as 230 million adults across the U.S., aggregating information from digital transactions that included credit cards, loyalty cards, club and gym memberships, charity donations, and more. The firm also acquired social media data on 50 million Facebook members and then used sophisticated data modelling and optimization algorithms to fuel a massive micro-targeting advertising campaign on digital platforms including Google, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. It would later come to light that the data firm and Facebook gathered information without user's consent. The scandal that followed led to congressional hearings, FTC fines, a federal lawsuit, and the demise of Cambridge Analytics. Nevertheless, the big data techniques live on.

Although analytics and data-driven decision-making is playing an ever-larger role in modern political campaigns, there are very few academic programs that prepare professionals to enter the field. There appears to be a strong business case to develop academic offerings to meet the needs of learners aiming to enter the field of political analytics.

B) Have students at the University or elsewhere requested this program? How many?

There are a growing number of programs around the country that focus on the growing business of political consulting. The increase in campaign spending following the Supreme Court's Citizen's United decision has increased the size and scope of political consulting. Few of these programs prepare students to both consult and perform quantitative analysis needed to project public opinion and voting behavior. Many of the analytic staff in these firms are trained in quantitative analysis and modeling, but not in politics. This program would prepare students analytically and substantively.

C) If the program is career or professionally oriented, have persons in the profession or career requested establishment of the program? Have the employment needs of professionals in the field been taken into account when designing the program?

Please see above.

D) What other institutions in the metropolitan area and in the Northeast offer similar programs?

A review of the competitive landscape revealed just two Master's degree programs focused on applied political analysis (Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland) and two Certificate programs (Johns Hopkins University, University of Chicago). There are also half a dozen campaign management and political management degree programs in the market including those offered by Fordham University, Suffolk University, American University, and George Washington University. Moreover, none of the programs follow a scholar-practitioner model where students are afforded the opportunity to build their understanding of theory and research along with hands-on application in a professional setting.

3) Curriculum

- Provide a brief summary of the program, in the form of a one-paragraph catalogue or website description.

The proposed 36-credit Master of Science degree program comprises 12 credits of required core courses, 21 credits of selective courses, and a 3-credit capstone course . The core courses will be created in 7-week modules which will be taught on-line to provide the flexibility for the busy audience of students that we

will focus on for this MS degree. *(Please note- these modules could be taught face-to-face. 12 points of online coursework is below the state's 50% threshold for designation as an online program.)* The 6 core courses are designed to teach a set of integral skills that focus on the following topics: Introduction to Political Analytics, Strategic Thinking, Field Experiments, Campaign Management, Poll Analysis, and Leadership.

The 21 credits of selective courses will satisfy one of 3 field requirements: Quantitative Methods in Political Science (9 credits), Quantitative Methods in Social Science (6 credits), and Topics in Politics and Public Policy (6 credits). 3 selective courses will be designed for program launch and additional selective courses will be sourced from existing graduate level courses offered across the university to PhD and MA students.

The 3-credit capstone course will be a group project advised by a faculty member for a client. The project would be a piece of analytic work requested by a political campaign. An effort would be made to diversify the client's political party, ideology, location, and level of government.