

UNLV Graduate College  
New Programs & Program Revisions Committee

March 10, 2016

Dear Colleagues:

On behalf of Dean Hudgins and myself, I am writing to express my strong support for the proposed Social Science Methods Certificate to be housed in the College of Liberal Arts. Professor Rebecca Gill of the UNLV Department of Political Science is an expert in advanced social science research methods and has drafted an impressive and extensive proposal for this certificate program. The overall goal is to facilitate training graduate students in Liberal Arts and in social science disciplines across the University in advanced research methods.

Dr. Gill has vetted the proposal through various stakeholders linked to the SSMC including social science faculty and graduate coordinators in Liberal Arts. In addition, she submitted an earlier draft of the proposal to the Graduate College for feedback and conducted an informal exploratory survey of graduate students in order to gauge interest in such a certificate. Feedback from these groups was very helpful, informing and improving the proposal over the past year.

Researched extensively and modeled on other similar certificate programs at peer-aspirant universities, the SSMC will, in my view, achieve three specific goals. First, it will improve graduate student access to advanced courses across the social science departments and grant a certificate giving students a competitive edge in a very tight job market while requiring only a few additional credits in advanced methods courses. Second, it will facilitate collaboration and communication among our methods-intensive graduate faculty across the social sciences, creating community and networking possibilities among faculty that would be good for morale and advancement. Third, facilitating students' ability to take courses outside their department will help address Graduate Enrollment Management challenges facing departments seeking to offer advanced graduate methods training to their students, especially departments that may not have enough demand to merit offering a small specialized course.

One aspect of the SSMC I particularly appreciate is the Colloquium and Research requirement, the goal of which is to encourage students to use their methods skills in their dissertation work and to practice presenting to an internal audience. The strength of the SSMC, then, is that it requires only a few additional courses but can foster community, collaboration, and support for students before and while they are on the job market.

In its current conception, the SSMC would require few resources other than possibly a course release for the coordinator and the expertise of our methods-intensive faculty. Once the certificate is established and ongoing, I envision it will extend more broadly across the university community and meet growing student demand for advanced methods training. I also foresee that it will encourage faculty to continue to strengthen their methodological skills by attending methods workshops and trainings and bringing their new skills home to UNLV to pass on to students and colleagues.

In short, I strongly support the Social Science Methods Certificate proposal in Liberal Arts. I am confident that our graduate students and faculty will benefit from the certificate and that we can help it grow to include other students and faculty across the university. If you have questions or need further information please feel free to get in touch.

With Gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jennifer Keene". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jennifer Keene, Ph.D.  
Associate Dean  
Professor of Sociology