

Wilkes University
Annual Faculty Evaluation
Academic Year 2023-24

Name: Dr. Ben Toll

Dept/Div: Political Science (Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences)

Section I: Teaching Effectiveness (40-50%):

This year was Dr. Toll's fifth year at Wilkes University and was marked by enormous success. Specifically, Dr. Toll was awarded tenure and promoted to Associate Professor. Dr. Toll also was selected by students to receive the Honors student award for Mentorship and Teaching

Dr. Toll did a very good job with teaching this year. Consistent with a larger trend, however, his SRS scores dropped a little from the previous year. Nevertheless, his nonweighted average across all classes for Question 19 was a 4.57; for Question 20, 4.54. I am still extremely pleased with Dr. Toll's performance in the classroom and his dedication to his students.

Dr. Toll taught an online section of PS111 in the summer. He received a 5.0 for Questions 19 and 20. In the fall, Dr. Toll taught PS111: *Introduction to American Government*, PS224: *Public Policy*, and PS265/SOC370: *Quantitative Reasoning*. It was in the PS111 sections that Dr. Toll saw a drop in his SRS scores (to be clear, they were still very good scores). I visited two (2) of his PS111 classes in the fall semester as part of his tenure evaluation and his lectures were engaging and flawless. Students participated at very high rates and seemed to enjoy how Dr. Toll was able to draw lessons and connections between the material. On one of the days of my visit, Dr. Toll was teaching *federalism*, which just so happens to be one of the more difficult concepts to teach in an *Intro* course. To make his points, Dr. Toll used three (3) examples, including marijuana policy. Students perked up and were very interested in *how* marijuana policy worked and *why* (surprise, surprise). It was a clever choice of examples. Dr. Toll received a 4.25 and 4.33 for Question 19 ("Instructor was an effective teacher") and a 4.30 and 4.00 for Question 20 ("Overall quality of the course was high"). These were lower than usual scores for Dr. Toll but I am not worried at all. Dr. Toll has high standards for his students and implements strict policies regarding exam make-ups, etc. While Dr. Toll bends over backwards for his students and gives them the benefit of the doubt, he does not like to be lied to or taken advantage of. Some students try to push the envelope. I should also point out that in the fall semester, some individuals (one local and one from Peru) were calling in bomb threats to NEPA school districts. When school districts received the threats, they would cancel school for that day. This happened quite frequently and I know that it caused some problems for Dr. Toll's ability to find a rhythm early in the semester.

Dr. Toll also taught PS224: *Public Policy*. Dr. Toll earned a 5.0 for Questions 19 and 20. Students appreciate that Dr. Toll communicates very effectively (and often) and that he has positive interactions with the students. The students clearly feel that they can approach Dr. Toll about classwork or whatever is going on in their lives.

Lastly for the fall, Dr. Toll taught the *Quantitative Reasoning* (PS265/SOC370). This is a difficult course to teach for many reasons but the primary reason being that our students tend to be math-phobic. To help allay some of that fear, Dr. Toll uses SPSS (the easiest and least frightening statistical package for undergraduates). A pattern, however, that is forming in the past years is that when students get discouraged about not understanding something, they often just don't come to class rather than reach out to the professor; in this case, Dr. Toll. To rectify this problem, Dr. Toll stayed in constant contact with the

students (weekly emails) and utilized the Supplemental Instructor effectively. Dr. Toll earned a 4.25 for Questions 19 and 20.

In the spring, Dr. Toll taught two (2) sections of PS111, PS312: *U.S. Congress*, and PS265/SOC370: *Quantitative Reasoning*.

Based on his experiences in his classes in the fall, Dr. Toll decided to change PS111 for the spring. Rather than place so much emphasis on the course content, Dr. Toll wanted to place more emphasis on the *skills* that students need to be successful in college and in their careers. Specifically, Dr. Toll wanted to hone the students' research, writing, and group work skills. Dr. Toll had to take baby steps in this regard, as he faced some pushback from students. Nevertheless, Dr. Toll did very well in these two (2) sections, earning a 4.90 and 5.00 for Question 19 and a 4.90 and 5.00 for Question 20.

Dr. Toll also did very well with PS312: *U.S. Congress*. While 20 students enrolled in the course, Dr. Toll did his best to teach this course as a seminar, with much emphasis on participation. Dr. Toll used the Congress Simulation, which has historically been a success in this class. Dr. Toll earned a 4.88 for Question 19 and a 4.75 for Question 20.

Also, Dr. Toll taught *Quantitative Reasoning* once again in the spring. He had the normal struggles that go with teaching this course but he did an excellent job with this course. I am extremely pleased that Dr. Toll has taken over *Quantitative Reasoning*, as he is the best professor for this job.

Last but not least, we asked Dr. Toll if he would be willing to teach an overload (PS111 online) because I was asked by Kim Curran if we could offer another section in our Division to help those students who dropped a class but needed additional credits for financial aid. Dr. Toll agreed to do it and I want to thank him for helping out the University in this regard.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Section II: Scholarship and Other Professional Activities (20-30%):

- At this time last year, Dr. Toll had a "revise and resubmit" on an article submitted to *American Politics Research* (with Courtney Corona). That manuscript was eventually accepted for publication in September. Please see Dr. Toll's SER for the citation and link.
- Book chapter on "Religion and Congress" is set to be published in December, 2024.
- Dr. Toll is working on a paper that analyzes the effects of split-ticket voting in the 2020 election in Luzerne County. It is likely to be accepted to the journal, *Commonwealth*.
- Presented at the American Political Science Association's annual meeting in Los Angeles, CA in September, 2023.
- Served as a discussant at APSA.
- Reviewed papers for three journals this year.
- Completed more than 20 interviews without journalists about various current events.
- Served as a reader for the AP US Government Exam online.
- Maintains memberships with the national and some regional PS associations.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Section III: Student Advising and Mentoring (10-20%):

This year was Dr. Toll's fourth year advising PS and Criminology students. He advised 37 students, an increase from last year. I'm working on it but we need to reduce his advising load and hand more of them off to Dr. Maieran and Dr. Miller. Dr. Toll will be doing one date for first-year orientation in July, but he will be giving those students to Dr. Miller (who is out of the country during the orientations). He was co-advisor to the Sigma Pi and Political Society groups (clubs) and he coordinated the AICUP Day on the Hill. He also advised two (2) students through capstone/independent study. Dr. Toll also wrote numerous letters of recommendation (8).

Dr. Toll is an excellent advisor and mentor. He is heavily involved with the Honors Program as well.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Section IV: University Service (10-20%):

Dr. Toll is extremely active in his University Service. Dr. Toll chaired the Academic Standards Committee, which is a lot of work. Dr. Toll participated in open houses and the Accepted Students Day (April, 2024). He also served on the Barre Scholars Advisory Board and the Honors Advisory Committee. Please review his SER (p. 6) for a very detailed list of everything he has accomplished in this area of work life. It is very clear that Dr. Toll does a lot for this University and wants it to be as successful as possible.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Section V: Community Service (10-20%):

Dr. Toll serves on the Care Portal Advisory Board (Care Portal provides resources for families that face losing custody of their children when the problem is need and not other factors.).

Dr. Toll also works very closely with WBRE, WNEP, and the local newspapers (*Citizens Voice* and *The Times Leader*) when they are looking for political analysis.

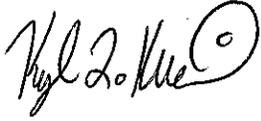
Dr. Toll also serves as youth softball coach and youth baseball coach for his children. He was also a Northeast PA representative to the Citizens Review Panel for the Office of Children, Youth, and Families. This group meets with state leaders about child welfare policy and writes white papers to bureaucrats who legally must respond (I learned something new!).

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Summary:

This year, Dr. Toll was awarded tenure. This is what they call a "slam dunk." Dr. Toll is more of a baseball fan so I guess I should say this was like Elly De La Cruz stealing a base on the Chicago Cubs (a given, in other words). I am extremely pleased by this and I know that Dr. Toll will make an excellent Associate Professor. I encourage Dr. Toll to continue doing what he is doing: strong teacher, a self-directed research agenda, and passionate, individualized care for our students and University.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kyle L. Kreider". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, circular flourish at the end.

Kyle L. Kreider, Chair, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences

Annual Faculty Evaluation

Signature and Rating Page

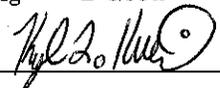
1. Name: **Dr. Ben Toll**

2. Faculty member's signature indicating receipt of evaluation:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

3. Chair's rating and signature:

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Signature:  Date: 5/21/24

4. Dean's rating and signature:

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Signature: _____ Date: _____

5. Provost's signature:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

