

Wilkes University
Annual Faculty Evaluation
Academic Year 2024-25

Name: Dr. Ben Toll

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

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

This past year, Dr. Toll taught five (5) different courses for the department.

1. **PS111 (Introduction to American Government):** Each fall, Dr. Toll teaches two (2) sections of this course, a survey course that is filled, primarily, with first-year students. Dr. Toll taught one section of this course in the spring. While the response rates were somewhat lower than usual, Dr. Toll's SRS scores remained solid. For Question 19, Dr. Toll earned a **4.71 and 4.67**. For Question 20, Dr. Toll earned a **4.57 and 4.60**. Generally, with 100-level General Education courses, students are not especially thrilled to be there (unless they are a PS major) and SRS scores tend to be *generally* lower. Dr. Toll's scores remain solid, however, and students continue to write positive reviews of his teaching; including that he is a fair grader, he's fun, and he remains positive with his student interactions. I've often wondered if professors earn higher or lower evaluations for PS111 during election years but I do know that taking PS111 during election season would be extra fun! I know that Dr. Toll does an excellent job with this class.
2. **PS213: Political Parties and Elections:** Dr. Toll teaches this every other fall, during election season (mid-terms or presidential elections). Dr. Toll earned a **5.00** for the two (2) universal questions, 19 and 20. As part of this class, Dr. Toll's students teamed up with students from other Pennsylvania universities to run an exit poll on the election. The student comments were also overwhelmingly positive (no surprise!).
3. **PS265/SOC370: Quantitative Reasoning:** For the past few years, Dr. Toll has the "beast." What's the "beast," you ask? It is **QUANTITATIVE REASONING**. In this class, there are numbers . . .dreaded statistics . . .and students lose their collective minds. Students deal with numbers all the time . . .baseball batting averages or average yards after catch (football) or a 25% off sale at the local store . . .but when you mix numbers with politics, you get eyes glazed over and a collective academic paralysis. Dr. Toll, however, is exceptionally good at simplifying this course and explaining to the students *what* they are doing, *why* the analysis is important, and *how* to do the various analyses. Understandably, Dr. Toll is frustrated (more on that later) but he is "happy with how [he] is teaching th[e] course at the moment" and he is looking forward to moving from SPSS to R for the analysis (for this, he needs a broader agreement from Division faculty).
4. **PS311: American Presidency:** Dr. Toll continues to do a *great* job with this class. Due to the norm-busting behavior of President Trump, teaching this course has turned into something more akin to building a plane as you are flying it because what was once true no longer seems to be true. Dr. Toll used the new SRS format for his spring courses but students continued to rate him highly and speak highly of his knowledge of the material and his method of instruction.
5. **PS298: The Politics of Conspiracies (co-taught with Dr. Wilczak):** Students *loved* this class. Whenever I would walk into my class or interact with students outside of class, they were not

talking about my class; they were talking about this one. They talked about what Dr. Toll said that day and what Dr. Wilczak said that day. I was a bit jealous because I would love to have my students as interested in my material as they were for this class. The most important benefit of this class seemed to be getting students to think *critically* about a wide array of issues. There was a lot of reading and a lot of different perspectives thrown out to the students. The class turned into one based on discussions and debates and students responded positively.

In his SER, Dr. Toll wrote that he is a part of a group that will be reading a few books this summer on teaching and pedagogy. Dr. Toll noted that he hopes that one outgrowth of this group is to have it “reinvigorate [his] teaching.” I get it, I really do. Teaching students can drain one’s soul at times because the lack of interest and passion can take a toll (no pun intended). It can be easy to think that you are not making a significant impact on student lives. I would encourage Dr. Toll, however, to remember two things. First, most students will not understand and appreciate the import of Dr. Toll’s classes until *after* they graduate. They may be too busy to email their thanks but enough of them do reach out and positively comment and this provides some new life into teaching. Second, this is going to sound strange and random but I do not remember what I ate for dinner on October 16, 2017 but I know that it helped move me forward to do the next thing I had to do on that day. It was nutritious and provided me some sustenance. I think this is similar to teaching in that students may not remember what exactly they learned on any particular day but what Dr. Toll taught them prepared them for whatever was next in their life. Many students don’t even understand how that works but I can guarantee Dr. Toll that he is having a positive impact on the lives of his students. I encourage Dr. Toll to continue doing what he is doing. I will continue to support him in any way possible.

Lastly, I believe that Dr. Toll is a prime candidate for a sabbatical. He won’t be able to take one until the 2026-27 academic year but he is exceedingly deserving of one and I will support him 100% in his application.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

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

Dr. Toll remained active in this area of professional life.

- Book chapter on “Religion and Congress”: <https://www.routledge.com/The-Routledge-Handbook-of-Politics-and-Religion-in-Contemporary-America/Haynes/p/book/9781032374802>
- Served as an external reviewer for two (2) books;
- Presented a paper at the Southern Political Science Association annual meeting. This paper will be sent out for review this summer (2025);
- Served as reviewer for two journals: *Politics and Policy* (2) and *American Politics Research*;
- Completed more than 50 interviews with journalists regarding the 2024 election;
- Served as a reader for the AP US Government Exam online;
- Maintains members in national and regional Political Science associations.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

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

Dr. Toll advised approximately 30 students this year and continues to do a fantastic job. Dr. Toll spends a great deal of time with each of his advisees. In this capacity, Dr. Toll meets with his advisees to review

scheduling but he also writes letters of recommendation (6 this year) for graduate school, law school, or employment opportunities.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

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

Dr. Toll remains busy in this area of professional life as well and it will only get busier. Dr. Toll serves on various boards, including the Barre Scholars Program Advisory Board and the Honors Advisory Council. He also serves on the Strategic Planning and Long Range Committee. Dr. Toll was also an extremely active member of the FAC this past year and will be transitioning to FAC Chair in August.

Dr. Toll helped to write the survey instrument used in the FAC Climate Survey (2025) and wrote up the results for popular consumption.

Dr. Toll also served on the Anthropology search committee, which resulted in the successful hire of Dr. Kailey Rocker. Dr. Toll took on a leadership role for a portion of that search.

On p. 5 of his SER, Dr. Toll provides a *detailed* list of all of his University service. It is extensive and speaks to Dr. Toll's growing participation in this area of University life and it speaks to how much his colleagues value his voice and expertise in a number of different areas. People ask him to serve in various leadership roles because they know the work product that Dr. Toll produces. This work will ratchet up next year as he takes on a new role as FAC Chair. I will do my best to support Dr. Toll in this new endeavor.

One final note: On February 24-25, Dr. Toll and I took ten (10) students to Washington, D.C. to visit Congress (including a visit with our own Representative, Rob Bresnahan) and the Supreme Court. This was a lot of work but one that students will never forget.

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

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

Dr. Toll also continues to be actively involved in community service. He continues to serve on the Care Portal Advisory Board, which provides resources for families that face losing custody of their children when the problem is need. Dr. Toll is also a well-known face on WNEP, WBRE, and other local media outlets. In many ways, he is the "face" of Wilkes University on local TV. He also serves as a baseball coach for little league and serves as a Project Vote Smart Political Research Advisor for the 2024 campaign.

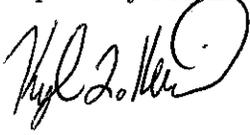
Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Summary:

Whenever our Division hires a new faculty member and we start the mentoring process, I feel like simply saying, "Go talk to Dr. Toll to find out what it means to be a successful faculty member." In his six (6) years at Wilkes, Dr. Toll continues with his excellent work and productive output. His goals for 2025-26 are as follows:

- Continue strong teaching evaluations and work with others in division/department to build curricula that matches our student's needs. Work with others around the university on the creation of a teaching and learning center.
- Chair the FAC at least somewhat successfully.
- Have a successful application for a sabbatical.
- Get at least two papers under review so I can start laying the groundwork to apply for full professor as soon as I am able to do so.

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, prominent loop at the end.

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

Annual Faculty Evaluation

Signature and Rating Page

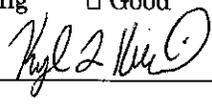
1. Name: **Dr. Ben Toll**

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: May 28, 2025

4. Dean's rating and signature:

Outstanding Good Satisfactory Needs Improvement Unsatisfactory

Signature: _____ Date: _____

5. Provost's signature:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

