

Increasing Enrollment in Political Science Majors: Opportunities and Challenges

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Four Potential Adjustments

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Curriculum Adjustments

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Community Building

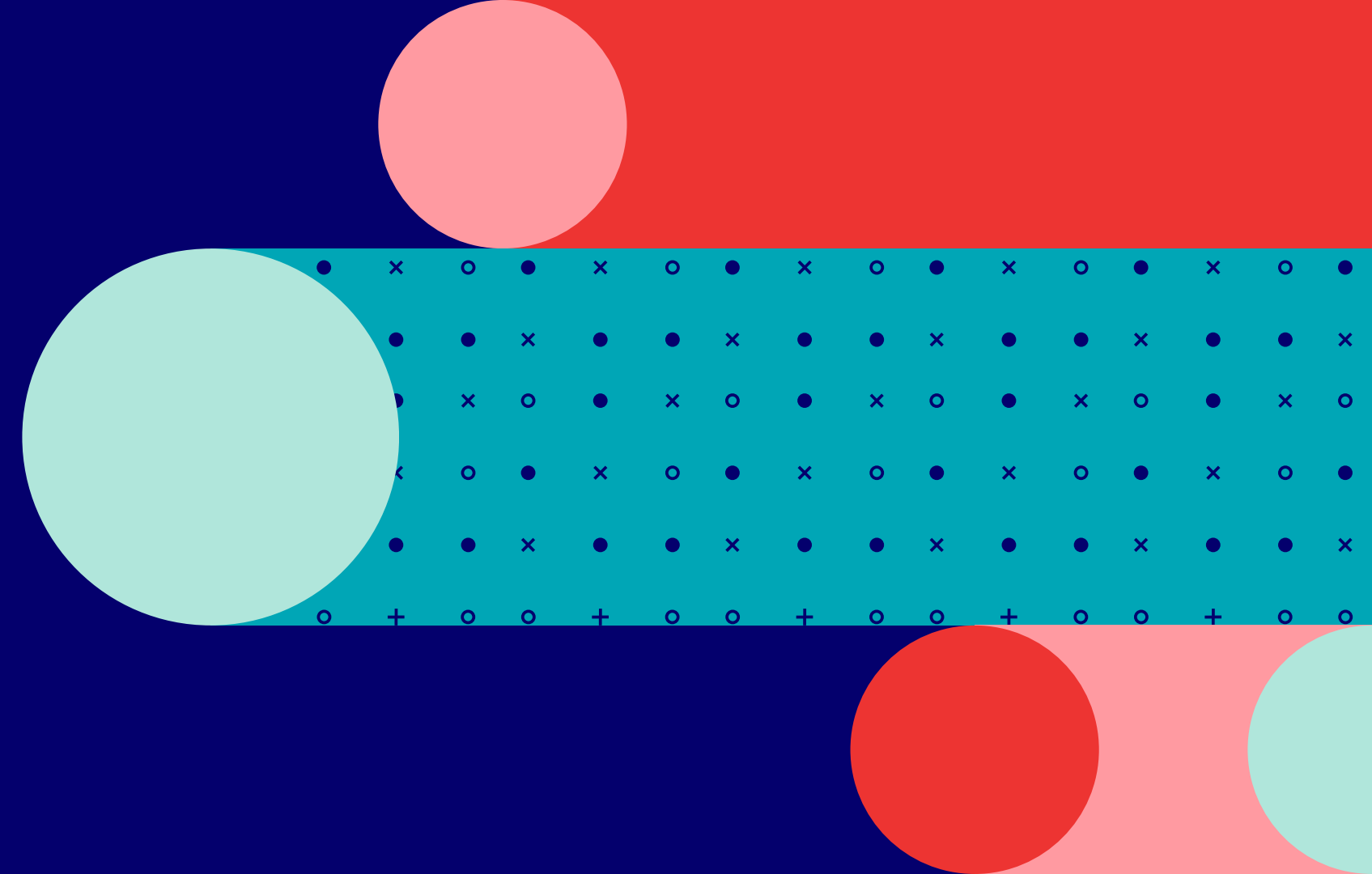
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Promoting the Product

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Strategic course delivery

The information from this presentation comes from....



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APSA's 2022-2023
Departmental
Services Committee

2

APSA's Presidential
Task Force on
Rethinking Political
Science Education

3

Both led a joint presentation
during APSA's Department
Chairs Luncheon at our 2023
Annual Meeting



Curriculum adjustments

- 1 Adding minors, including working with other programs to create interdisciplinary minors with political science component.
- 2 Adjusting concentrations within the major or adding alternative majors to move away from traditional fields that make sense in political science, to fields that make more sense in real world, such as non-profit leadership; campaign & election management; data sciences; REP.
- 3 Adding capstone courses to help keep students connected and challenged.

Community Building

Many students are looking for more than just a major; they are attracted to departments where the major offers community and an identity. Doing that means promoting your specific department, not just the discipline of political science

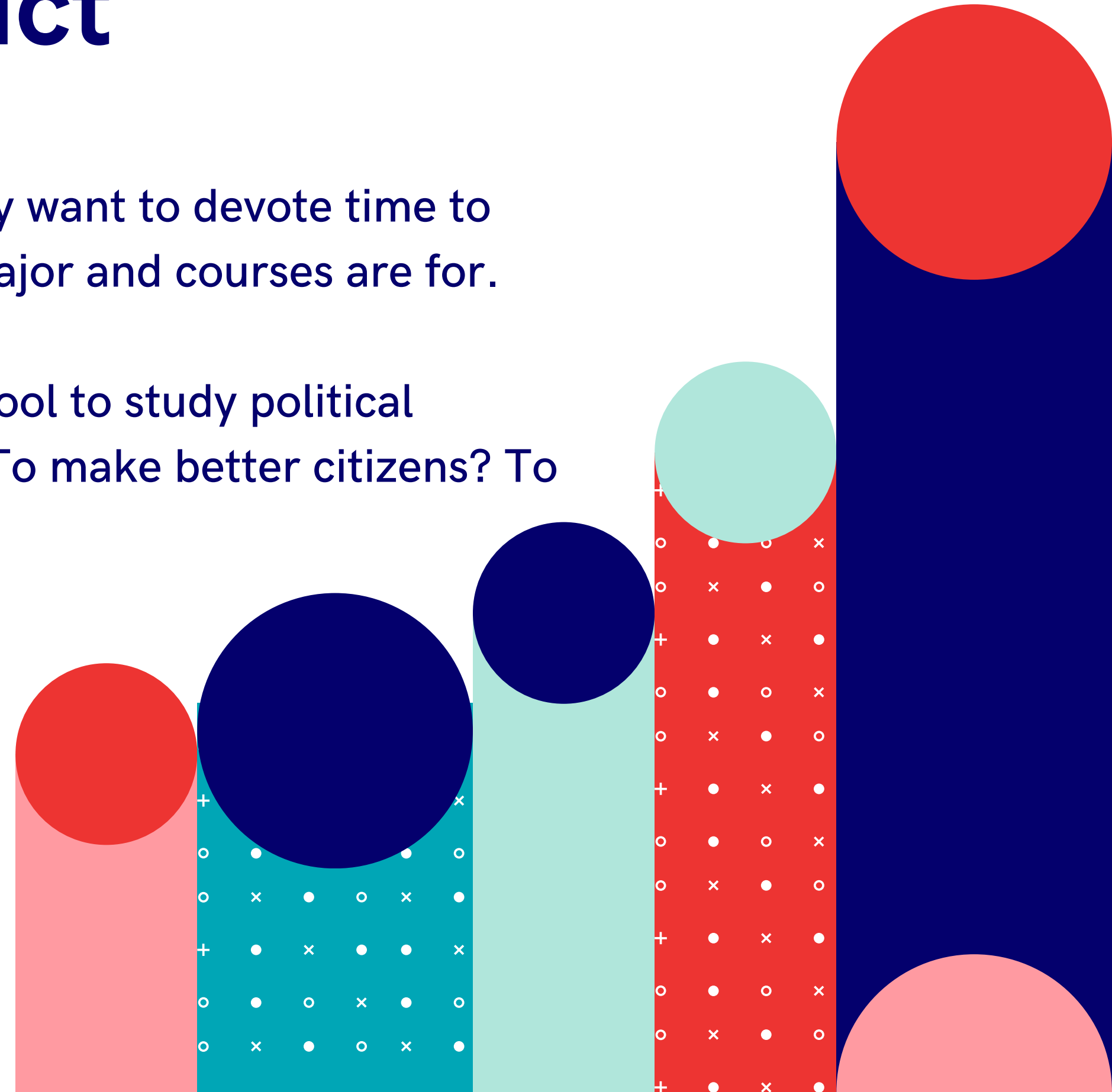
- Build Strong Cohorts through first years programming
- Department Branding on swag: chains, pens, etc.
- Department faculty recruit from relevant campus clubs
- Hold regular events for majors
- Assign faculty to mentor students

Promoting the Product

One overall suggestion was that departments may want to devote time to discussions of what/who their political science major and courses are for.

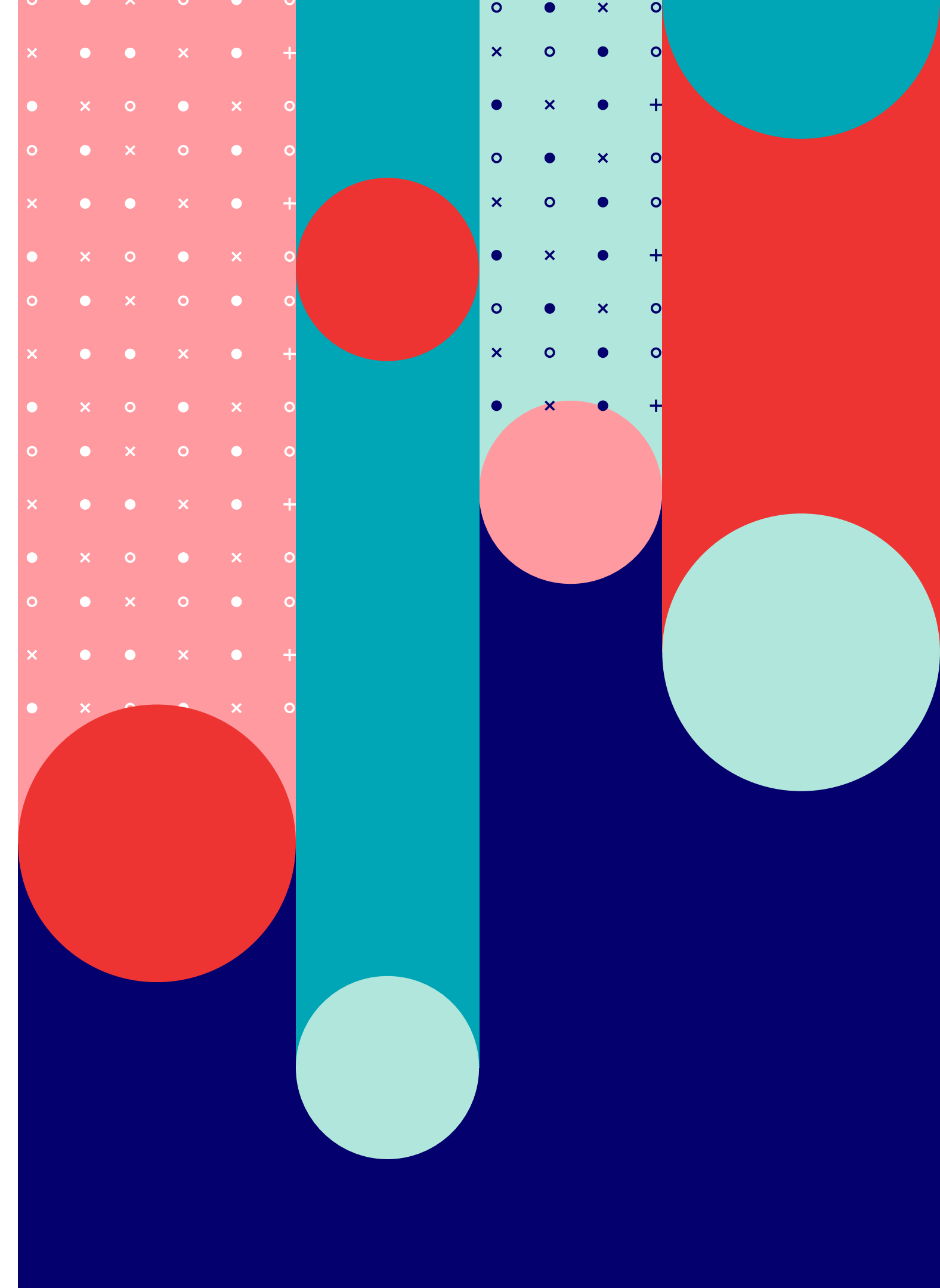
Most of our majors are not going to graduate school to study political science. So what is the value of our curriculum? To make better citizens? To improve skills in writing and data analysis?

The value of our degrees does not speak for itself – it is up to us to figure out what we want to emphasize, and then to message this to our current and future students (and their parents). Some suggested ways to do this:



Promoting the Product

- 1 Alumni/student lunches to highlight what recent graduates are doing with their degrees, taking care that participants include alumni who are not just in the obvious fields of law and political staffing
- 2 Building selected offerings that appeal to specific career trajectories, such as offering strong pre-law advising, or sponsoring courses connected with Moot Court.
- 3 Offering certificates that attest to certain skills that students may acquire. The examples given were certificates in diplomacy
- 4 Use surveys of recent alumni (or do your own survey using Linked In) to more systematically document what students are doing with your degree.

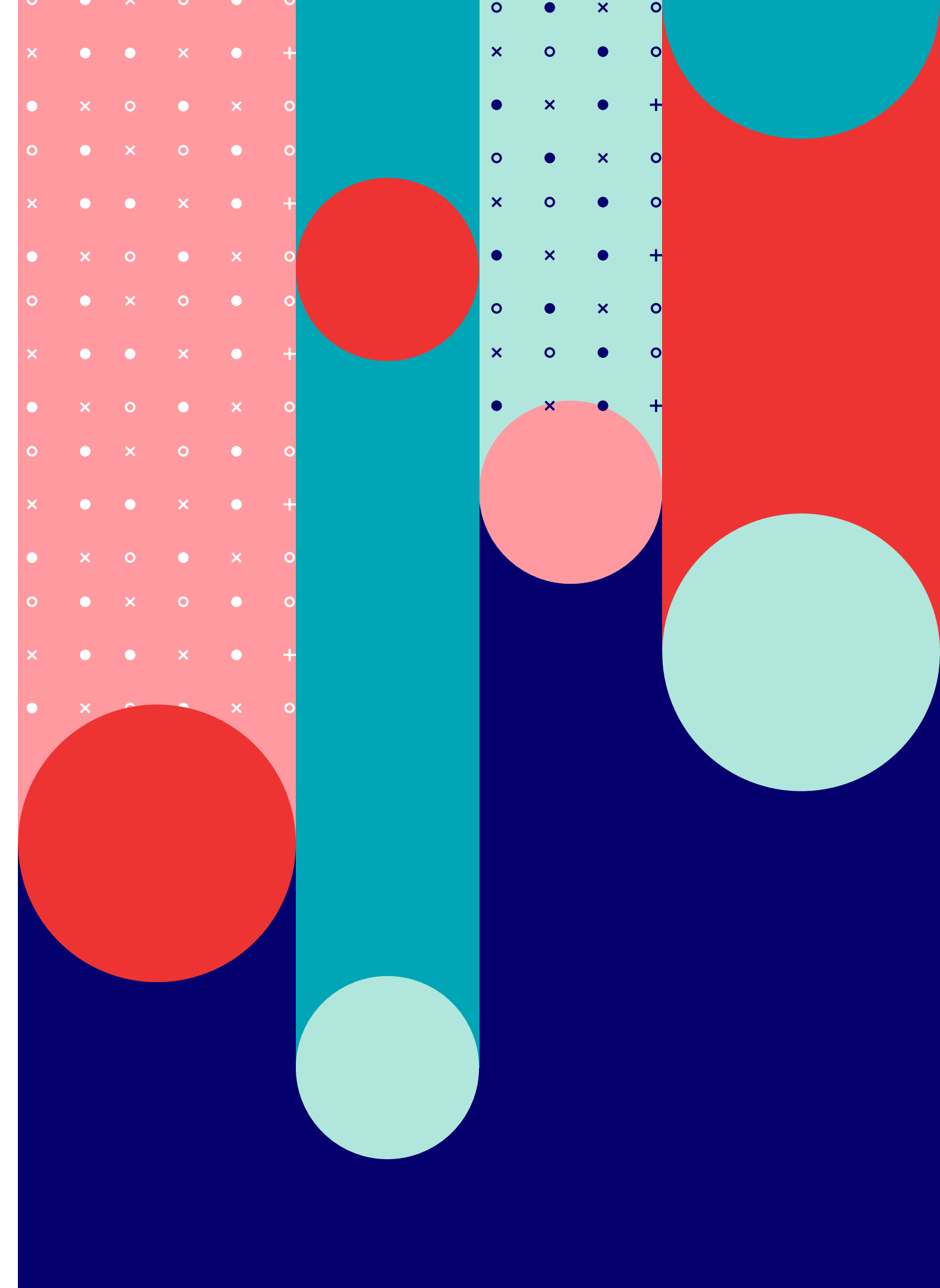


Strategic Course Delivery to boost enrollments (majors and otherwise)

Be strategic about offering and adding courses that count for any distributional or general education requirements.

Strategic Course Delivery

- Offer topical courses.
- Focus on retaining the majors who sought you out to begin with. Retention is a fundamental part of the recipe for building a strong major.
- Club-related courses like those related to Model UN or Model Arab League or Moot Court can attract healthy enrollments. Many of those students won't (yet) be political science majors.
- Courses that deal with tough issues from a normative perspective (justice, representation, democracy) can be good gateway courses to hook students.
- Work with other departments to build inter-disciplinary majors or minors with a political science component.



Additional and Forthcoming APSA Resources

APSA's Departmental Portal contains a 4 page Pdf report with complete information from this PowerPoint.

This includes additional citations to APSA's journals, APSA's PrePrints and other Departmental resources.

APSA's Rethinking Political Science Education report is forthcoming Spring/Summer 2024 / will include an APSA Educate collection with associated teaching resources.

Questions? More information?
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