COMMITTEE PROCESS

This Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) Report is based on the following source material:


3. NASPAA Site Visit Team Initial Report.


5. NASPAA Site Visit Team Final Report.


7. The APRC Interview with Department Chair, Genie Stowers; Associate Dean Dawn Terrell; October 3, 2007.

8. Guidelines for the Sixth Cycle of Academic Program Review.

9. The APRC customary evaluative procedures.

These sources were employed to construct an integrated view of the Public Administration Program’s present strengths, aspirations, and possibilities for future development.

REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Public Administration Program is an accredited, nationally-ranked program offering a Master of Public Administration (MPA). The APRC is proud to note that the Program was recently ranked as the number one MPA program in the CSU (*U.S. News and World Report* xxxx). With more than 120 students
enrolled in the program, it is the largest professional graduate program in the College of Behavioral and Social Sciences.

One issue stands out and affects all aspects of the Public Administration Program--students, faculty, curriculum and resources. That over-arching issue is the move to the downtown campus.

**MOVE TO THE DOWNTOWN CAMPUS**

The APRC notes the effort and energy expended in planning for the move to the downtown campus. Issues such as the need for access to a library have been addressed and solutions found. Other issues remain and yet others may emerge over time. These issues include:

a) The physical separation of faculty, staff, and students from the broader SF State community;

b) Student access to materials at the SF State library;

c) Additional expenses (e.g., parking and commute time) arising from the use of multiple locations;

d) Safety concerns as classes are taught during the evenings; and,

e) Coordination with the San Mateo cohort program.

The APRC recommends the Program conduct a comprehensive evaluation by students and faculty of the move to the downtown campus.

On the positive side, the move offers tremendous promise for the faculty to engage in community building as they acquire additional space and work in closer proximity with each other. This spatial arrangement provides the opportunity for senior faculty to engage with and mentor junior members in both formal and informal ways. Faculty also has more opportunities to engage in communication with agencies that are located near the downtown site.

**UNIVERSITY-WIDE STANDARDS**

The Public Administration Program has met, if not exceeded, University-wide standards relating to admission requirements, program requirements and faculty requirements. Well done!
**PROGRAM-SPECIFIC STANDARDS**

**Program Planning and Quality Improvement Process**

The Program has established a thorough and effective planning process that involves faculty, students, and alumni. Changes considered and implemented over the past decade have expanded and strengthened the Public Administration Program and are indicative of the viability and effectiveness of the program planning process. The Program is encouraged to continue this process as the 2006 strategic plan is implemented in the coming years.

The Program changed its culminating experience requirements as a result of the planning process, providing additional options to students that fit the changing practice field for public administration. One notable strength of the Program is its ability to adapt to the changing nature of Public Administration, which requires periodic evaluation and adaptation of culminating experience requirements to ensure currency and appropriateness. This is especially important as the Program expands into other geographies and student populations, such as China. Therefore the Program is encouraged to continue its process of periodic review of the culminating experience requirements, including assessing employer evaluations of graduates’ readiness and preparation for work in the field.

**The Student Experience**

The student experience in the Public Administration Program appears to be positive. The faculty has thoughtfully incorporated an array of activities and mechanisms designed to enhance the graduate experience beyond the requirements of the program (e.g., student representation at faculty meetings, orientation, and subsequent student-faculty informal get-togethers).

**Portfolio Exercise.** The portfolio exercise and the move to an e-portfolio are part of a solid plan that is in accord with portfolio activities in similar Public Administration programs around the country. The option of a capstone course as an alternative to a thesis culminating experience seems to be successful and particularly suited for the student clientele.

**Evening-Only Program.** The Program has been successful in managing an evening-only program. Because most of the graduate students are also in the workplace, they may pursue their degree and continue full-time work. The constraints of an evening program, however, are apparent. Scheduling classes over this shorter time period could limit course offerings, and ultimately program growth. The APRC recommends a continued exploration of alternative course delivery options (e.g., weekends, hybrid, and online).
**Internship.** The Program requires students to complete a professional internship in the field, or substitute extensive professional experience. The recent changes to the internship program, which have been made in order to more effectively align the program with the requirements of NASPAA, the accrediting agency, are commendable.

In the 2007 accreditation memorandum, NASPAA recommends two specific modifications of the Public Administration internship: expanding the hours required of the student to approximately 300 (20 hours per week for 15 weeks) and implementing a comprehensive evaluation process using criteria established by public administration professional organizations, such as the International City Management Association (ICMA).

The Program reports that the time requirement for student internships has been changed to meet the established NASPAA guidelines and the goals of the internship experience. The APRC recommends the Program develop a comprehensive internship performance evaluation process assessing student achievement and providing evidence of the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required by the public administration profession. This process should include a variety of perspectives, including those of the student, the internship sponsor, and the program faculty.

**The Program and the Community**

**Professional Engagement of Students and Alumni.** The APRC recommends the Program reinstitute their community advisory board. This board can continue to strengthen the Program’s ties to diverse communities and provide a network for students and alumni to advance their careers.

**Equity and Social Justice.** The Program’s mission of providing scholarship, training, and advancement of non-profit/public administration strongly adheres to the University’s mission of equity and social justice. Faculty scholarship and grants likewise reflect the Program’s commitment to support communities in the San Francisco Bay Area.

**Internationalization.** The internationalization of the program, specifically projected activities with Chinese universities, is consistent with the University Strategic Plan and responds well to opportunities afforded by the world’s largest population. Some issues to consider include:

  a) While it appears that the current sentiment on the part of the Chinese programs is to learn as much as possible about specific institutions of U.S. public administration, attention should be directed at emerging trends that require the inclusion of local context relating to China’s culture, economy, demography, political structure, and legal environment.
b) Program expansion should be consistent with current and future resources allocated to Public Administration. The expansion of the Program to include possible Chinese student and/or faculty exchanges may entail more resources and administrative time.

**The Faculty Experience**

The Public Administration Program has been successful in providing its faculty with a positive and rewarding experience. The transition from a program comprised exclusively of faculty from other departments, to one consisting of a mix of core and “borrowed” faculty, to the current five-person core faculty has been smooth. The Program is also to be applauded for its efforts and success in increasing gender diversity among the core faculty. The APRC endorses the proposed hiring of an additional faculty with expertise in non-profit organizations, which would increase the breadth of the program.

**The Curriculum**

The Program’s curriculum reflects many positive responses to the detailed and substantive evaluative processes that they have undertaken on their own initiative as well as the attention that they have paid to the suggestions of their External Reviewers.

The curriculum has held to its academic mission as well as the interdisciplinary approach to the teaching of public administration. The graduate coursework maintains a very good balance between theory and praxis that is patent in individual courses and in the curriculum overall. Together with the internship element of the Program, the curriculum is a well-planned encouragement to the students to be even more actively engaged in political life and community problem-solving.

The very clear emphasis on development of writing skills throughout the Public Administration curriculum is consistent with the needs of SF State students as identified in the University Strategic Plan and praxis intended to address those needs.

Given the budgetary constraints that the CSU has endured over the past three decades, on one hand, and the high standards required by NASPAA on the other, the growth in student demand for admission to the Program evidences strong positive qualities in both curriculum management and teaching.

The organization of the Program coursework into the two categories “Essential Theories and General Skills” and “Essential Management Skills” is a logical association that serves students well by clarifying the content and objectives of the core curriculum. The APRC is particularly impressed with the interdisciplinary portion of the Program where students are offered options in
five elective emphases: Integrated and Collaborative Service Delivery, Nonprofit Administration, Public Management, Public Policy Analysis, and Urban Administration.

Coverage of leading ethical issues in the contemporary and increasingly global political environment is an essential element of the Program’s curriculum. The Program’s attention to ethics supports individual and institutional values that should inform and imbue current political praxis in government, business, and non-profit settings.

One matter of concern is that negotiation is not explicitly addressed in the curriculum. The department chair has recognized the centrality of negotiation in virtually all political processes and particularly in the public administration environment. Budgetary and faculty availability were cited as obstructions to inclusion of this crucial factor in actual practice. (Interview) The APRC recommends the Program consider modifications to increase the curricular focus on the role of negotiation and conflict resolution in public administration.

The Program is also encouraged to develop curricular content that addresses international perspectives in public administration. Such content may advance knowledge and training about the intersection of public administration with cultures and social systems. With such advancement, the Program can truly distinguish itself for having global perspectives.

**Resource Support for the Program**

The operating budget available to the Program is limited. This bare-bones budget is supplemented by department and faculty entrepreneurial efforts, concurrent enrollment (funds from the College of Extended Learning for Open University students), and looking to College and University sources for faculty travel before expending department funds.

The APRC recommends that the Program work with their advisory board and University Development to obtain long-term external funding.

**Future Outlook**

Public Administration is projected to be a fast-growing area, and it is appropriately described as “the new business model.” Key trends include devolution (from Federal to State to NGOs), new organizational arrangements to accommodate the retirement of the baby boomers, globalization, and imperatives for more accountability. Some issues to consider include:

a) The program might consider identifying distinctive niches in its strategic planning in the future because it’s unlikely that its relatively
small faculty will be able to cover all these trends in a comprehensive manner.

b) Future growth through non-degree, certificate programs, perhaps in collaboration with the graduate business school (also at the Downtown Campus), can provide additional financial resources and synergy with a broader constituency.