

**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY AND  
ADMINISTRATION**

**External Consultant Report**

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**Report of the External Evaluator on the California State University, Sacramento,  
Department of Public Policy and Administration**

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This report is based, in part, on a series of interviews and informal conversations, both within and outside of the Department of Public Policy and Administration. The site visit occurred April 25-26, 2006.

I spoke with the following individuals outside of the Department:

Will Vizzard  
Fred Baldini  
Mike Lee  
Otis Scott

I spoke with the following individuals within the Department:

Ted Lascher  
Bob Waste  
Mary Kirlin  
Nancy Shulock  
Rob Wassmer  
Miguel Ceja  
Don Gerth  
Betty Moulds  
David Booher (Adjunct Faculty)  
Peter Detwiler (Adjunct Faculty)  
Students in Mary Kirlin's Tuesday night class (Professor Kirlin was not present for the discussion)  
Suzi Boyd (PPA Administrative Support Assistant)

I also had access to the Department's self-assessment and appendices, the 2000 evaluation report for the Department, the University catalog, and selected evaluation reports for other departments in the University.

In all aspects, the hospitality of the University and the Department was exceptional.

**Executive Summary**

The Department is an energetic, collaborative, and scholarly group of faculty. They are outstanding in research, teaching and service. They demonstrate a superb mix of policy and administration—thereby refuting the claim that politics and administration should be separate. This report is based on the assumption that the Department is positioned to take full advantage of the President's 2010 Initiative, so that the

recommendations are such as to build on a splendid Department and take it to the next level of greatness.

### Commendations

1. This is a collaborative, supportive, collegial and very hard working faculty
2. The Department has an excellent staff—one part time person does it all!
3. The self-study and ancillary reports are nicely done.
4. There is an extremely high level of scholarship, community and university service, and focus on teaching.
5. The Department's The Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy is nationally recognized as definitive on California higher education.
6. The Department demonstrates a solid awareness of the necessity of effectiveness appraisal; the results of the surveys and measures are taken seriously.
7. The Department was very responsive to the suggestions of the previous review committee
8. The Department has developed an innovative criteria; for example, it is now involved with:
  - i. The Collaboration Policy coursework
  - ii. An Ed.D with UC Davis and Sonoma State; as well as an Independent Ed.D.
  - iii. The Urban Land Development program
9. The Department is not afraid to eliminate programs that did not reach expectations. An example of this is the abandoned minor.
10. There is high student satisfaction, particularly concerning the policy courses
11. The faculty commends the Dean for support

### 2010 Recommendations

1. Re-write the mission statement to explicitly address 2010 destination goal.
2. Develop a vision statement that addresses steps to implement the mission statement
3. Emphasize that the Department is an underutilized resource for University and that it is already a destination program.
4. The Department should carefully analyze and then select a package of future activities to reinforce the three above recommendations. Some examples might be:
  - a. Develop a California state government as a destination for international scholars (visiting scholar program).
  - b. Analyze the feasibility and then potentially implement a DPA program.

## General Recommendations to the Department

The Department should:

1. Attempt to decrease the uncertainty in the environment for assistant professors.
2. Establish a mentoring program for assistant professors.
3. Clearly delineate measurable program learning objectives for the program.
4. Continue the analysis and potential implementation of a Judicial Administration program
5. Incorporate international case studies in classes (Canada, Mexico, New Zealand).
6. Seriously analyze how it will be presenting specific administrative skills in the future, particularly in the human relations (HR) and budgeting related curriculum.
7. Consider using more adjunct faculty to increase curriculum offerings. Note that the students would not object to increasing the length of the program by one elective, if this new requirement is applied to incoming students.
8. Add at least one private sector businessperson to the Department's Advisory Committee.
9. Explicitly recognize the career mobility of students; in particular include study of non-profit administration.
10. Recognize that if the above recommendations are implemented, augmenting the staff must also be considered.
11. Seriously consider applying for NASPAA accreditation for the MPPA

## Recommendations to the College:

1. Develop crosscutting programs
2. Keep faith with department and revise financial system to reward entrepreneurship activities.

## Detailed Analysis

### **Some general comments concerning the “Guidelines for Program Review External Consultant Reports”:**

1. Program Introduction and History: The department has made more than reasonable responses to previous curricular and programmatic recommendations and is conversant with national trends. This is a unique program that is melding administration and policy together—a very good idea. I believe that the program clearly meets the implicit standards of this section.

2. Academic Programs and Assessment: With minor exceptions (see recommendations 3, 6 and 7 in the General Recommendations section), the self-study and interview process indicate that all of the relevant specific issues are well-addressed. The academic program here is very strong.
3. Students: The self-study and other documents competently address these questions. In particular, the students do feel socialized into the discipline and are very grateful for the accessibility of the faculty. This is the only program that I have ever encountered in which the students enjoy the program so much that they would, under some conditions, entertain an expansion of the total units necessary to graduate so that they could take additional electives in the administrative course work. (Of course, these are students already in the program so this is a costless piece of advice from their perspective).
4. Faculty: These issues are also addressed in the provided material and were intensively discussed in my interviews with each of the faculty. With the exceptions addressed in recommendations 1 and 2 in the General Recommendations section, there are strong positive answers to each of these issues.
5. Institutional Support: The questions are all affirmatively answered. However, see recommendation 2 in the Recommendations to the College section.

#### **Details on commendations:**

1. This faculty demonstrates all of the benefits that can accrue to a small, mutually respectful group of scholars who have a common general goal and are willing to put aside some of their personal motivations to achieve that goal. They compare syllabi to attempt to ensure consistent coverage of topics, they are supportive in encouraging community and university service, and they respect each other's activities. Adjunct faculty are invited to participate in faculty meetings and retreats. This is not saying that they always agree or are successful in their attempts to be consistent, but they appear to be professional in their disagreements and in their attempts to coordinate their teaching. It should also be noted that the faculty has received major awards for teaching, research and service; since 1999, this faculty has won nine major awards and one member of the faculty has been nominated for the Wang Family Excellence Award three times.
2. Suzi Byrd is able to handle her tasks and keep the majority of the faculty happy most of the time. She utilizes available technology to increase her efficiency. She has also encouraged the faculty to be independent in such activities as ordering books.
3. The self-study, ancillary reports and appendices are nicely done and show thoroughness. There is a wealth of data in the formal evaluations that are linked

to some of the attachments, particularly the student, faculty and alumni assessments.

4. All of the faculty publish in journals and in other venues that have an impact on either public policy, public administration, or both. All of the faculty have extensive service records in the community and the university. All of the faculty have prepared substantive syllabi and generally receive high student evaluations. There are no weak links.
5. Nancy Shulock reports that she is often the only California representative during national conferences that focus on higher education policy. Her Institute's research is grant funded, which implies that it is producing credible work. She is replacing much of the work done by Pat Callen (National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education) and by the California Center for Postsecondary Education.
6. The results of student and faculty feedback are taken seriously. They are discussed at faculty meetings, the annual retreat, and further discussed at the Advisory Committee meetings. Some examples of changes that have been instituted: new cases have been developed for classroom use to reflect the changing level of experience demonstrated by the increasing amount of pre-service students; and, the change in the requirements of the final project that occurred in an attempt to increase the graduation rate. I would also like to commend the CSUS Office of Instructional Research for their detailed questionnaires for students, faculty and alumni.
7. The 2000 program review report suggested seven specific activities. The Department delineates its responses to each of these activities in part I.B. of their self-study. The Department also recognizes that, with respect to response 5, they are still facing a challenge of achieving excellence in a number of areas. This challenge will become even more difficult as the two members of the faculty are taking advantage of the FERP program. The Department also recognizes, in response 6, that the minor idea was not successful and they are reworking the program.
8. The offered curriculum shows a willingness to examine the application of both policy and public administration to a broad range of topics. The three-course collaborative governance specialization has the potential for being a destination center because the formal course work sequence in this area is very rare. The Urban Land Development M.S. involves economics, management, management information systems, and public policy and administration. This is a remarkable interdisciplinary partnership and, once fully operative, should also be a destination program. Finally, the Department is involved with two Ed.D. programs. Although I do not have enough data to determine what should be the efficient number of programs in this region that give an Ed.D., the fact that the Department was willing to step up and cooperate with other universities as well as

other schools within CSUS demonstrates a robust degree of intellectual curiosity as well as a willingness to be a leader in the area.

9. The faculty should be especially commended for their willingness to change a program (the minor) and then attempt to reinvigorate it with a new set of opportunities.
10. Interviews with the students as well as data from the CSUS Office of Institutional Research indicate that the students are generally quite pleased with the program. This is particularly true for the policy courses. However, see recommendation 7 in the General Recommendation section. The students are aware of the student handbook (they indicated this during the class discussion). This handbook is of high quality and available on-line.
11. The faculty clearly has a good relationship with the Dean—I was explicitly asked to note that the faculty commends the Dean for his support.

Although the following two sections are entitled “recommendations”, they are really more correctly entitled “suggestions.” Most of them are designed to improve an excellent department. Further, not all of these suggestions must be undertaken; it is a menu from which the faculty should carefully choose.

#### **Details on Recommendations for the 2010 Destination Policy of the University**

1. The mission statement in the self-study is a full page long. To capture the attention of the relevant community, the statement should be dramatically shortened. It should emphasize the uniqueness of the program.
2. It should then develop a vision statement that discusses increasing access to the capital, through its teaching, exemplary public service orientation, and the high quality of its research. These could be described as future steps that the Department will undertake to fulfill its mission.
3. With a strong mission and vision statement, it should then become obvious that the Department is an underutilized resource for the University.
4. Carefully analyze and determine a package of future activities that are non-incremental. Some examples:
  - a. Develop a program oriented toward utilizing the State Capital as a destination for the many international visitors that come to observe the state. This program could involve seminars, co-authored publications, and tours of the state and local governments.

- b. Develop a DPA program, based on the intensive semester and utilizing course work throughout the College. The goal of this program should be a nationally recognized program that because of the intensive nature of the courses should attract a national student body. The necessary analysis for this program should include additional faculty needs, determination of the course work, and a study of the potential differentiation of workloads that might occur because of thesis advising.

### **Details on the General Recommendations to the Department**

This section contains a long list of recommendations. I encourage the Department to consider all of them, although adoption should be carefully staged. After analysis, some might not prove to be feasible and these should be ignored.

1. As is traditional in high-powered programs, the untenured professors feel uncertainty concerning their future. According to the tenured faculty, both of the untenured professors in the Department are doing fine work; yet both assistants feel the need for some additional certainty as they attempt to schedule future activities. In particular, they should know their travel budget and any other research assistance that might be available at the beginning of each academic year. If this can be done, they will be able to more strategically schedule attendance at professional conferences as well as plan their research agenda. In addition, if it is possible, they should know at least a semester in advance what their teaching load (both in subject matter and the total load) will be. Obviously, there will always be uncertainty in scheduling, but the Department should attempt to minimize this.
2. The department should establish a mentoring system for the assistant professors so that they can have a specific individual to approach in order to ask process questions. This will become a two-way benefit because it ensures that one of the tenured members will have knowledge as to what the particular assistant is doing. Note that in the commendations above, the Department is recognized as being very supportive. These first two suggestions are in that spirit.
3. Although the Department has generalized learning objectives of “proficiency in the areas of critical thinking, effective communication, integrative thinking and practical applications” (page 9 of self-study), the Department should attempt to specifically delineate a measurable set of outcomes to ensure that these objectives are being met. There is a final project necessary to conclude the program in PPA 500 which might be used to measure these objectives. However, in the skill matrix provided by the Department, there are no administrative skills as desired outputs (even as a secondary output) for this course. These could be easily included as part of a “problems of implementation” phase of the project.
4. The Department is discussing additional course work—perhaps leading to a Certificate in Judicial Administration. This is an excellent idea and the discussion

should be pursued. There are very few judicial administration programs in the United States and this is a good niche.

5. If the Department believes the international dimension mentioned in the Destination Recommendations is a worthwhile extension, then it would be useful to incorporate international case studies in each of the classes. Even if the Department decides that an international program is not the correct allocation of resources, international case studies are still useful for today's students who will be setting policy or managing that policy in a global arena.
6. The program responded to the recommendations of the 2000 Program Review by hiring an assistant professor with outstanding public administration skills. However, after examining the curriculum and listening to the students, it is apparent that additional HR material should be covered. To further complicate matters, two professors that teach public management skills are taking advantage of the FERP program, which will further diminish the Department's teaching capacity in the administration area. The Department should consider ways of meeting this need, possibly through hiring a tenure track faculty member or through hiring specific adjunct faculty.
7. The faculty should consider hiring additional adjunct faculty to increase the course offerings. The students seriously suggested lengthening the program by one course elective, although they did argue that this additional requirement should start in the future.
8. The Department should consider adding one or two private sector individuals to their advisory board. This recommendation stems from their new curriculum in collaborative policy and urban land development. This will further identify the Department as unique because it is combining policy, administration, as well as the public and private sectors.
9. Recent research indicates that many MPA students ultimately often work in all three sectors—the public sector, the non-profit sector, and the private sector. The Department should consider incorporating some discussion of the non-profit management in the course work.
10. If the above recommendations are adopted, there will need to be additional staff support. This should be feasible because of enrollment growth.
11. The Department should consider obtaining NASPAA accreditation. Since there are many competitors in this market, an accredited MPA may make a difference in attracting enrollment (I would also argue that an accredited MPA will make recruitment for a DPA more successful). I have put this recommendation at the end of the list, because a decision not to attempt accreditation should not mitigate the need for many of the recommendations noted above.

## **Recommendations to the College**

Although not mandated by the charge, I would encourage the College to at least consider the following recommendations:

1. The College has a remarkable opportunity to develop a series of cross cutting programs that can be used to generate a level of distinction that would stand out throughout the entire state system. This is especially true with respect to potential state capital focused programs. There can be substantive contributions from all of the Departments within the College in both degree work and community involvement. The multidisciplinary aspects should be recognized and encouraged. An East Coast example of this type of integration is the very new School of Social Science, Urban Affairs, and Public Policy at Northeastern University
  
2. The College should make every attempt possible to reward Departments that are willing to take risks in developing new programs. The College should invite Departments to advance pro-forma plans for new projects and then “invest” in those plans that make substantive as well as financial sense. Departments should then be rewarded for success, with the reward for success being large enough that the risks of failure can be overcome. Entrepreneurial activities should be encouraged as much as possible.