ONE YEAR LATER

The Perspective of the First Students of the Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration

California State University, Sacramento

August 1990
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**Public Policy and Administration Student Association**  
**Academic Affairs Committee**

Christopher Cabaldon, Chair  
Phyllis Bramson, Vice Chair  
Roxann Middleton  
Peggy Richardson  
Michael Sigsbee
This report is designed to provide constructive feedback to the PPA governing committee about the experiences of the first class of students in the first year of the program. We summarize and analyze our own experiences, covering every aspect of being a student in this program. This report represents an effort at thoughtful reflection and introspection by many of the pioneering students — an effort that we hope will inform the continuing dialogue among students and faculty about the future of this young program.

Perhaps most important to note is the widespread satisfaction with the PPA program at the close of its inaugural year. While, in order to conserve both energy and space, we focus here on potential areas of improvement or further investigation, we are pleased to report that nearly all students appear content, in general, with their first-year experience. Given the initially high expectations and diversity of the first class, we find this level of satisfaction to be commendable.

One of the many pervading themes of this report is that the PPA program must be an intellectual and practical partnership between the twin disciplines of public administration and public policy. We are fortunate in that several of the present core faculty have their academic training in public administration. Unfortunately, none of the faculty has been schooled in the newer field of public policy.

First, a note on what we believe public policy is not. It is not a deviant branch of mainstream public administration thought perpetuated by positivist economists. And it is not simply a peaceful coexistence between two distinct disciplines — political science and economics. The field of public policy is foremost an interdisciplinary approach to analyzing public policies, a perspective separate from but no less legitimate.
than public administration. While we recognize the
disciplinary tension that has characterized the history of the
two fields, we believe that the PPA program represents a
precious opportunity to find common ground and to instruct
students in the skills and assumptions of both.

Two other themes of this report merit brief mention here.
First, the challenges and context of public policy at the local
level need to be explored more fully throughout the required
and elective curriculum. The PPA brochure promotes the
program as “unique in its focus on California state and local
government” and gives equal emphasis to both the state and
local levels of California government as potential career
options for program graduates. With respect to local
government, this dual promise has yet to be entirely fulfilled.

Second, the program’s asserted focus on praxis — the linkage
of theory and practice — should be better articulated in both
the content and instructional approach of the core curriculum.
Again we quote the PPA brochure: “The location of CSUS in
California’s capital permits interaction with policymakers and
key administrators, direct observation of and participation in
the policy and administrative processes and creates special
opportunities for research and future employment in the
many governmental organizations of the Sacramento region.”

This report begins with a brief review of methodology and a
profile of the first PPA class of students. The heart of the
report follows with recommendations on the core curriculum
and the content of individual core courses, prerequisites and
admissions, the policy specialization, the internship and
culminating activity, faculty and instruction (both generally
and for specific core courses), and course scheduling. It ends
with a short conclusion. This document is a discussion guide
rather than an action plan; accordingly, our recommendations
are embedded in our analysis.
Methodology

This report was prepared by the Academic Affairs Committee of the Public Policy and Administration Student Association during the summer of 1990. From the outset, the committee has been committed to maximizing the participation of all PPASA members by providing multiple forums through which input could be furnished.

The committee began by outlining major topic areas and issues through focused brainstorming. Using the outline developed through this process, the committee prepared a Student Opinion Survey (see Appendix), which was sent to all 16 PPA student members of PPASA, of whom 14, or 87.5%, responded. Although surveys were also sent to non-members, little effort was placed on encouraging response since the primary intent of the survey was to develop a report and position statement for PPASA; not surprisingly, none of these additional eight surveys sent was returned.

In addition to the survey, the committee conducted statistical and econometric analyses of student information data furnished by the PPA program director. Individual-level data was provided for each student without names or other unique identifiers. Finally, the committee utilized other documentary information, including brochures and bulletins from other public policy and administration programs, a recent California State University report on graduate education, and the original PPA program proposal developed by an interdepartmental steering committee.

Following data collection and analysis, the committee held two intensive four-hour meetings to develop the conclusions and recommendations of this report. The committee then invited each PPASA member to attend a special four-hour discussion session on the initial draft. Finally, the committee conducted a phone poll of students who had been unable to attend the discussion session to elicit any remaining input.
We appreciate the cooperation of the PPA program in providing student data and other relevant documents, as well as the effort of individual PPASA members in completing the lengthy Student Opinion Survey in a short timeframe. Although each conclusion or recommendation presented in this report does not represent a consensus of every PPA student, or even necessarily of the authors, we are confident that the participatory methodology utilized by the committee makes this report a valuable barometer of students' perspectives on their first year.

A Profile of the First Class

The first class is diverse in terms of both undergraduate institution of origin and undergraduate major field of study (see Displays 1 and 2). Half of the entering class completed their baccalaureate training at campuses of the California State University, with most at CSU Sacramento but others at CSU Chico and the polytechnic campuses at Pomona and San Luis Obispo, while one-third of the students were educated at the University of California and one-sixth outside of California. Although a slight majority of the PPA pioneers' major field of study was one of the core disciplines (political science, economics, and public administration), nearly half earned degrees in other social sciences, the humanities, and other fields.

Survey respondents cited a variety of reasons for enrolling in the PPA program, the two most common being simple earning of a graduate degree and intellectual challenge and fulfillment. Several mentioned professional goals, including career advancement and skills development. Overall, it is a class of students committed to graduate education; had the PPA program not existed, half of the respondents would have enrolled in another CSUS graduate program and half would
have sought a public policy or public administration degree at another institution (see Display 3).

The first class is comprised primarily of part-time students already in professional public sector employment. Eighteen of the 24 PPA students are employed full-time. Of these 18 students, at least 15 are in professional positions.
appropriate for a person holding an advanced degree in public policy or administration, including two in municipal government, six in the Legislature, and four in state agencies.

As noted in Display 4, part-time students generally took fewer units in the Spring Semester than in the Fall, due perhaps to professional workload and/or the course schedules. While part time study in conjunction with full-time professional employment creates many difficult challenges for both students and faculty, it has been one of the most important factors contributing to the success of the program, for student-professionals have helped forge the link between academic theory and practical reality.

Core Curriculum

The program draws together the diverse perspectives, technologies and skills now essential to a successful career in public management or in one of the many fields within the public policy arena. Unlike programs with a more limited focus, the MPPA will equip its graduates with both management skills necessary for budgeting, personnel administration and management analysis, and analytical tools and research methods necessary for economic analysis and policy analysis and evaluation.

— PPA Program Brochure
In the survey of PPASA members, respondents were asked to note, for each of 22 subject areas, how much emphasis the subject should receive in the core curriculum. The results are presented in Display 5. For all but few of the subject areas, survey respondents were, in general, satisfied with the current emphasis within the core.

**The Ensemble of Courses and Subjects**

We recommend that segments on the legal aspects of public policy, applied policy analysis, administrative law and procedures, and the mechanisms of public finance be added to the core curriculum, either within current courses or new courses developed specifically for that purpose. Less

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**Display 5**

**Support for Core Subject Areas**

Survey respondents were asked whether they would prefer more, less, or the current emphasis on each subject. The Support Index was constructed by assigning a score of 1 to each "more", -1 to each "less", and 0 to each "current", and then averaging the scores of all respondents.
emphasis should be placed on teaching pure microeconomic theory without clear connections to professional application.

Perspectives on policy and politics at the local level should be given greater attention throughout the core curriculum. As we note under our discussion of specific core courses, the political environment, budgeting and finance, and management courses would be much improved by increased discussion of local issues, processes, and politics.

Faculty teaching in the program should strive to integrate the concepts, theories, and applications of the core curriculum. A recent CSU report on graduate education noted a common criticism of master’s programs, that “the master’s degree is often little more than a collection of courses, without integrative experiences or capstone requirements.” (Graduate Education in the California State University, page 5) Overlap among PPA 200, PPA 210, and PPA 240 is a common complaint, but all of the core courses should be constructed and taught as components of an integrated whole, with clear articulation of concepts, assumptions, and debates among the various courses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Core Courses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPA 200 - Introduction to Public Policy and Administration</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>This course should serve as a roadmap for the twin disciplines of public policy and administration, and for the remainder of the graduate program. It should introduce and link together the various academic disciplines — political science, economics, and organizational behavior — and the various methodologies which underpin the study of public affairs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We recommend that this course focus less on an exhaustive survey of the history and debates of public administration and more on those of public policy in order to provide intellectual
balance. We also believe that the introductory course should provide students with their initial exposure to integrated and interdisciplinary policy analysis. In addition, this course is an ideal forum to place the quantitative and economic components of the PPA program in context and help students understand their applicability in the professional world.

The research course should seek to build the critical analytical skills necessary to develop and evaluate public policy, and make students familiar with the assumptions, use, advantages, and disadvantages of particular methodologies.

In general, students expectations for this course were met with respect to how to gather information, but not with respect to how to analyze information. Exposure to individual analytical methodologies (such as linear programming and systems analysis) should be incorporated into the course, rather than left to the individual students’ final papers. Program evaluation, for example, was offered as an option for students interested in immersing themselves in a supplemental text; we believe that such an important skill as program evaluation deserves greater attention. Comparable programs at other universities immerse their students more deeply into quantitative methods of analysis, and graduates of both public policy and public administration programs are expected in the professional world to have some familiarity with these methodologies. Students interested in further graduate work also need exposure to major social science research methods.

This course should be fully integrated with the econometrics course. We see no justification for the stark artificial separation of the two courses. PPA 205 focuses on collecting data and ensuring that the results of the researcher’s analysis are used in the policy process. Economics 296A, on the other
hand, seeks to provide students with the tools for creating the researcher’s analysis. Instead, we recommend that data
collection, analysis, and use be viewed as a continuum in an
integrated course that explores several methodologies
(including, but no longer limited to, econometrics).

PPA 210 - Political
Environment of
Policymaking

The goal of this course should be to develop students’ ability
to identify political and ethical factors affecting policy and to
manage political environments.

For most students, especially those with professional policy
experience in the public sector, this goal was not achieved in
the first year. We recognize the challenges inherent in
constructing a course for a set of students with a wide range
of familiarity with politics and government. Without
question, this sort of arrangement makes a common
instructional strategy difficult to construct.

We considered various options for overcoming this
pedagogical obstacle, including:

1) Establishing two separate sections, one for students
with professional experience in politics and one for
students without such experience.
2) Waiving this course entirely for students with relevant
professional experience.
3) Ensuring that all students share a minimum level of
familiarity with governmental institutions and political
processes, perhaps through expanded admission
prerequisites.

We rejected options #1 and #2 outright, because students
lacking substantial prior exposure to real-world politics would
suffer greatly without the benefit of links drawn between
course concepts and the professional life by more experienced
students. While option #3 might be attractive in an ideal
world, we doubt that “political sense” could be demonstrated
simply by completing an undergraduate course.

After rejecting these external solutions to an admittedly difficult quagmire, we can only express hope that the instructor can restructure both the course and pedagogical strategy to retain the basic concepts of government and politics, but in a less elementary fashion. We also recommend a significant increase in the use of applications to make even basic concepts more interesting to more experienced students. As we note in the Faculty and Instruction section, for example, students could follow an actual policy as it evolves through various political arenas.

The expressed mission of this sequence is to apply economic principles to public policy. Microeconomic analysis represents one of the cornerstones of the public policy discipline. This sequence should also explore the economic aspects and underlying theory of public finance mechanisms such as taxes, bonds, and developer fees.

We recommend that the two courses of this sequence be better integrated. The first semester focused almost exclusively on microeconomic theory, with very few links to real-world applications. Many students completed the first semester questioning the value of the course or its place in the core curriculum. The second semester, on the other hand, was devoted primarily to a single real-world economic analysis project, with few links to the theoretical explorations of the first semester. We believe that theory and application should instead be examined together throughout the sequence. In addition, economic theories regarding specific mechanisms of public finance should be studied, rather than exclusive attention devoted to general consumer choice theory and benefit-cost analysis.
This course's title implies twin goals. First, it should enable students to understand, analyze, and evaluate state and local budget processes. Second, it should examine the policy and political aspects of the various tools of public finance, such as taxes, bonds, developer fees, redevelopment areas, and user fees.

In the first year, this course focused almost entirely on the state budget process. We suggest greater attention to the mechanisms of public finance (similar to the public financial management components of comparable programs at the LBJ School of Public Affairs and the University of Southern California), as well as to local government budgeting and finance.

We encourage the governing committee to consider one of two options:

1) Designate a modified PPA 220A as a prerequisite for PPA 230. It would seem appropriate for a student to learn what finance mechanisms are available, how they work, and their possible implications prior to studying the politics surrounding their use.

2) Devote PPA 230 to both the mechanics and politics of public finance, with a critical evaluation of the financial, social, and political advantages and disadvantages of various finance tools. The basic economic theory of the tools would still be a component of PPA 220A.

Many students enroll in the PPA program seeking to prepare themselves for responsible, often managerial, positions in the public sector. Accordingly, this course should impart administrative and personnel management skills, as well as develop an understanding of the environment of public organizations and their constituencies, clients, and employees.
While students, in general, were quite satisfied with this course, we would recommend increased attention to practical management techniques, information systems, program and budgetary implementation, and personnel administration while retaining presentation of issues of ethics, accountability and responsiveness, and authority and control. Less consideration should be devoted to public administration disciplinary and political theory which can be more appropriately explored in PPA 200 and PPA 210, respectively.

**ECON 296A - Applied Econometrics**

As discussed more fully under the PPA 205 section, we strongly believe that this course should be integrated with PPA 205 into a one-year sequence that links preparation, production, and end use of policy research using other methodologies (e.g. decision analysis and program evaluation) in addition to econometrics. We emphasize again the graduates of public policy and administration are expected to be conversant in at least some (and certainly more than one) of the major methodologies. We also suggest that basic statistics be reviewed more quickly.

**Prerequisites, Admission, and Preparation**

We believe that the admissions review of applicants must be qualitative, and we urge the governing committee to avoid making any admission decision based solely on test scores and grades in specific courses, such as economics or statistics. The education of all students is enhanced by admitting classes that are diverse in race, ethnicity, gender, political orientation, and profession, and achieving such diversity should be a prime objective during the admissions review. We also believe that aptitude in areas other than economics, mathematics, and statistics, such as experience in politics or public management, is just as important as more easily measured quantitative skills.
**Factors Influencing First-Semester PPA Grade-Point Average**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Admission Criteria</th>
<th>Estimated Coefficient</th>
<th>Standard Error</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GPA in last 60 undergraduate units</td>
<td>.4383*</td>
<td>.1868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Record Examination - Verbal</td>
<td>.0033*</td>
<td>.0012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Record Examination - Quantitative</td>
<td>-.0004</td>
<td>.0009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Record Examination - Analytical</td>
<td>.0007</td>
<td>.0011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other Factors</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year of Graduation</td>
<td>-.0507*</td>
<td>.0212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-Time Employment</td>
<td>.3313</td>
<td>.1978</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Denotes a statistically significant coefficient at the .05% level of significance.

R² = 65%  
N = 22  
df = 15

The factors listed above explain approximately 65% of the variation in the first-semester GPA of students in the PPA program. Of the six factors, only undergraduate GPA, Verbal GRE score, and year of graduation were found to have a statistically significant relationship to PPA grade-point average. Undergraduate GPA and Verbal GRE were found to have a positive relationship with PPA GPA; in other words, a 100 point higher-than-average Verbal GRE score would be associated with a PPA GPA that is .33 grade points higher than average, at the margin. Statistical significance (and thus predictive validity) was determined by dividing the estimated coefficient of the factor by its standard error. If the result of division exceeded 2.074 (the threshold t value), the coefficient was judged to be statistically significant and the factor to have predictive validity.

The committee conducted a rough econometric analysis of the relative value of the easily quantified admission criteria in predicting the performance of PPA students once admitted. Although the model is too incomplete and the sample size is overly small to draw definitive conclusions, these preliminary results, presented in Display 6, reinforce our skepticism of the dominant use of quantitative criteria to make admission decisions. Of the six independent variables which we hypothesized might be indicators of actual performance in the
program (as measured by first-semester grades in PPA courses), only three were found to have statistically significant predictive validity: undergraduate grade-point average, verbal score on the Graduate Record Examination, and the number of years since earning the baccalaureate degree. The quantitative and analytical portions of the GRE, on the other hand, were not found to have value as predictors of program performance.

**Display 7**

**Support for Admission Prerequisites**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Number of Respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essentials of Government</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Theory</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Statistics</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Statistics</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Microeconomics</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Microeconomics</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introductory Macroeconomics</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate Macroeconomics</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although our analysis did not include the predictive value of the various admission prerequisites, the survey results, presented in Display 7, indicate strong support for the current set of prerequisites, with mixed support for additional requirements in political theory and intermediate microeconomics. We are concerned, however, that the current
prerequisites of four introductory lower-division courses are insufficient preparation for a graduate program. Although all seven survey respondents who fulfilled all admission prerequisites felt adequately prepared for first-year core coursework, we recognize the feeling expressed by some faculty and students that, in a few instances, the level of core work had to be modified to more adequately match the level of preparation of the students, particularly in political theory and economics.

Four of the eleven respondents voiced support for requiring a microeconomics course at the intermediate level. All four of these students, however, have completed the economics component of the core curriculum. We concur with those who have completed the economics series that an intermediate microeconomic course should be required for admission. PPA 220A was difficult enough for students with such background; otherwise, we fear that either students without training beyond the introductory level will be unable to satisfactorily complete the course or that the instructor will be forced to scale the course down to a level unsuitable for a graduate program.

On the other hand, we believe that an introductory macroeconomics course need not be required of entering students. While the concepts of macroeconomic theory are undoubtedly useful to any student of government and its policies, they are not critical preparation for any of the core courses, nor are they absolutely necessary in a program that focuses on state and local policy.

Support for requiring an upper-division course in political theory was mixed; of the eleven respondents, four favored such a requirement and one preferred “any upper-division political science course.” We favor the approach suggested by the latter respondent. Students should be expected to have
more familiarity with politics and government than is imparted in an introductory political science course. Although students would ideally be knowledgeable about political theory and history, government institutions and structure at all levels, and the politics of public policy, we think it sufficient to require an upper division course in any of these subjects as a basic admission prerequisite. Competency beyond this minimal requirement can then be appropriately considered in the admission review in the context of the entire applicant pool.

With the diverse set of admission prerequisites, we are concerned that students admitted under the condition that they complete more than one prerequisite course will be unlikely to enroll or forced to devote several additional semesters to complete the degree. This problem might be compounded if an intermediate microeconomics course were added as a prerequisite. A single course to satisfy, at a minimum, the quantitative prerequisites of the program would help to minimize the additional required coursework. We therefore recommend that a special summer quantitative course be developed for conditionally-admitted students who lack preparation in statistics or intermediate microeconomics. Successful completion of the course would satisfy the unmet admission prerequisites and no further supplementary coursework would be required.

All of the survey respondents who fully satisfied the admission prerequisites felt adequately prepared for the first year of coursework. Nevertheless, many students have expressed trepidation about the economics and econometrics courses, and others have felt insufficiently schooled in some aspects of political theory. We recommend that a summer program reviewing the major relevant economic, quantitative, and political concepts necessary for the core curriculum be made available to all interested students.
We urge the governing committee to distribute a list of acceptable courses for each of the major policy specialty areas. Although we recognize the difficulties involved in reaching permanent and formal agreements with the other departments which offer the courses, students (and applicants) deserve to know which courses are potentially available prior to enrolling or selecting a specialty area. To the extent possible, the list should indicate the frequency and scheduling pattern of the available courses so that students can more accurately plan their elective coursework. Admission to a specific course in another department could then be arranged on an individual basis.

Students have found an insufficient number of courses for their intended policy specialities, and many have been forced to select more undergraduate courses than they believe to be ideal for a graduate program. The CSU graduate education report recommends that:

Means should be sought to increase graduate course enrollments to economically justifiable levels while increasing the availability of graduate level coursework. Such means might include "pooling" graduate courses between related departments, encouraging cross-registration, or coordinating graduate offerings in a region with other campuses and institutions.

The interdisciplinary nature of the PPA program and its specialization requirement necessitate special attention to this imperative. It should also be easier for the program to work closely with its core departments to implement the CSU report's recommendation, and we appreciate the efforts of the governing committee to increase the number of available policy courses through interdepartmental cooperation. We are intrigued, however, by the CSU report's suggestion of coordinating offerings with other institutions of higher education in the region, and we encourage the governing committee to examine the possibility for this program.
Urban and local planning deserves special support as a priority for development of policy-relevant coursework, given the popularity of this specialty area (see Display 9). In the short-term, the governing committee and campus administration should work with other departments to offer courses in this area, as well as other fields in which CSUS offerings are deficient such as health, public finance, transportation, and science and technology policy. In the long-term, we believe that the PPA program should offer its own courses in the major specialty areas. At least one course in each student’s specialty would thus be taught as an integrated, interdisciplinary exploration of the specialty area.

**Internship and Culminating Activity**

Students perceive a lack of clarity with respect to the internship requirement and its alternatives. The survey revealed some confusion about which students are required to complete the internship, and, for those that are exempt, what is expected in place of the internship. We urge the governing
committee to provide more formal and explicit guidelines to each student in order to resolve these misunderstandings.

We believe that an internship should be served in a position with responsibilities appropriate for a graduate of the PPA program. Similarly, the internship requirement should be waived only for experience of sufficient duration in a position appropriate for a person holding a master's degree in public administration or public policy.

We understand that students for whom the internship requirement is waived must complete an additional course. The apparent purpose of this arrangement seems to be no more than to ensure that all program graduates complete an identical number of units, regardless of the content of those units. While the coursework substitution approach is used at the Martin School of Public Administration (University of Kentucky), many other nationally-recognized programs, including the LBJ School of Public Affairs (University of Texas at Austin), the University of Southern California School of Public Administration, and the JFK School of Government (Harvard University) exempt in-service students with relevant professional experience from the internship without requiring any additional work or units.

We envision three options for in-service students:

1) Grant three units for relevant professional service without any additional work.
2) Require completion of a paper linking a student's professional service to PPA theory and concepts, and grant one academic unit for the paper.
3) Reduce the total number of units required of in-service students so that they may graduate with 36, rather than 39 units.

As with the internship requirement, the parameters of the culminating project need clarification. If students are to be
able to integrate their elective courses, internship, and culminating project into a meaningful and unified experience, they must be fully cognizant of the expectations and guidelines for each of these components.

**Faculty and Instruction**

Public policy and administration is an interdisciplinary field. "Interdisciplinary", which describes a blending of concepts from different disciplines to create unique approach separate from the component disciplines, should be distinguished from "multidisciplinary", which implies little more than a collection of perspectives from various disciplines. Public administration, in some respects a mature discipline in its own right, is an interdisciplinary field incorporating paradigms from both political science and organizational theory. Public policy is an interdisciplinary blend of political science, economics, and organizational theory with a variety of social science quantitative methods.

An interdisciplinary program should have at least a cadre of faculty trained in the program's field of inquiry. We value the instructors from the core departments of government, economics, and organizational behavior, but they alone cannot adequately guide us through the study of public administration and public policy. A public policy economist (such as those on the faculty of the Berkeley, Harvard, and Texas schools of public policy), for example, is of a different breed than the traditional economist, for she or he also has some training in the political and organizational aspects of public policy. Without interdisciplinary faculty, links between the various disciplines may not be made and the integrated whole that is public administration and public policy may not emerge. In the first semester, on the other hand, disciplinary loyalties and perspectives occasionally led to tension about the value of other disciplines, so that political scientists questioned the role of economics in the PPA.
program, and vice versa. As a result, the overarching meaningfulness of the PPA program was cast in doubt for some students as the integrated interdisciplinary whole was obscured by turf wars.

As a long-term objective, the PPA program should seek to hire a core of its own regular faculty. At least some of these faculty should have public policy as their academic background as well as professional experience in policymaking and evaluation. We noted earlier that several of the current faculty are already trained in the discipline of public administration. In addition to public policy and administration faculty, the program should sponsor special courses taught by guest practitioners and visiting faculty from other colleges and universities.
We are concerned about the lack of diversity among the faculty teaching the PPA core curriculum. All seven of the first-year core instructors were White (four women and three men). No program poised for the California of the 21st Century (indeed, even for the California of today), can succeed without substantial representation of the perspectives of California's growing communities of color. It may also prove difficult to attract and retain students of color into the program without faculty to support and serve as disciplinary icons for such students. To remedy the present imbalance, we again suggest inviting guest practitioners and hiring new PPA faculty with an eye toward diversification. We also urge the governing committee to pay attention to these issues when borrowing faculty from other CSUS departments.

Survey respondents expressed general satisfaction with the core instructors' use of lecture, in-class student presentations,
and films. There is some sentiment, however, that less emphasis should be placed on lectures, and many students who took PPA 210 (Political Environment of Policymaking) would like to see fewer in-class student presentations. In-class debates, to which all respondents were exposed in the beginning of PPA 200 (Introduction to Public Policy and Administration), generated the most variance in opinion, with five students asking for more and two for fewer and the remaining six satisfied with the faculty's current use of this tool.

We encourage the faculty to experiment with other creative approaches to learning. Two thirds of the survey respondents suggest increased use of small-group discussions, group projects, and guest lecturers (these are general observations for the core curriculum, some courses already use these and other tools). Creative class activities are especially crucial in late-night courses that last three hours (but seem much longer).

*The Chronicle of Higher Education* recently reported that increasing enrollment of older, re-entry students is causing many faculty across the nation to reexamine their teaching strategies. As one instructor noted in the article, students returning to academic study after experience as professionals may learn better when applications either precede theory or when theory and application are taught in concert. We encourage the core faculty to expand the use of real-world applications in each of the courses, and to link explicitly theories and concepts to these applications.

An important and valuable component of each PPA core course is peer discussion through which students can share real-world experiences and perspectives. These benefits are best fostered by a grading system that rewards in-class participation. In a program where three-quarters of the
students are employed full-time (often in professional public affairs positions which do not always conform to the standard eight-hour day), however, students should not be penalized for unavoidable work-related absences. We do not support mechanistic attendance policies; rather, we urge faculty to judiciously evaluate the circumstances of attendance and participation and, in any case, discuss each situation with the individual student.

We understand that several faculty have been disappointed with the writing skills of PPA students; we therefore decided to query the students on their understanding of faculty writing expectations. Of the survey respondents, roughly half feel that they understand the writing expectations of PPA faculty, while the remaining half do not. Clearly, there is inadequate articulation of the faculty's expectations with respect to writing, to the dismay of both students and faculty.

Finally, we report a few comments from the surveys on the teaching of individual core courses.

**PPA 205 - Research for Public Policy and Administration**

More real-world applications and critiques of policy research and studies used (and not used) by public decisionmakers would greatly strengthen this course.

**PPA 210 - Political Environment of Policymaking**

Survey respondents suggested that this course be less dependent on the students themselves by inviting guest speakers and by more clearly articulating the goals and objectives of the course. Small-group presentations might also be more productive and interesting than weekly individual presentations by six or seven students. We would also suggest more applications to real-world issues, perhaps by following an actual policy through various political environments.
**PPA 220AB - Applied Microeconomic Analysis**

The microeconomics sequence (PPA 220AB) should be more like the 220A midterm, in which students were asked to solve economic components of policy issues. Students also felt that critiques of microeconomic applications in public policy (such as the Sacramento Raiders cost-benefit study) should be a central instructional tool used throughout the two-course sequence.

**PPA 230 - Public Budgeting and Finance**

More than one student in PPA 230 (Public Budgeting and Finance) would have preferred at least one opportunity for feedback from the instructor prior to the final paper (which was the only graded assignment). Even one short paper during the semester would help a student understand both the instructor’s expectations as well as whether the student is on track.

**PPA 240 - Public Management and Administration**

There were several glowing comments about PPA 240 (Public Management and Administration), in which a variety of instructional activities were utilized. Students were also appreciative of the instructor’s ability to focus discussions without intimidating students or alienating students with differing viewpoints.

**ECON 296A - Applied Econometrics**

In ECON 296A, students found the critiques of real-world studies and the group projects to be the most valuable components. We recommend that these activities be intermingled with instruction in econometric theory throughout the semester, rather than reserving them until the final weeks of the term.

**Scheduling**

We appreciate the attention that the governing committee has devoted to ensuring that core classes are scheduled, for the most part, in such a manner as to minimize the number of nights each week that attendance is required of part-time students. We also commend the core faculty for teaching all
courses in the evenings; without this accommodation, few students could pursue the master's degree.

Nevertheless, the university's course scheduling pattern can be a barrier to access and success for many students, especially those with particularly demanding or irregular professional work schedules. When asked the worst days and times for classes, half of the survey respondents identified the 5:30 p.m. starting time as impractically early. The survey also asked respondents to rank eleven course times; the results are summarized in Display 12. Single-night courses beginning no earlier than 6:00 p.m. were clearly the most popular. The message is quite clear: Students employed in professional
positions have great difficulty arriving at class as early as 5:30 p.m. The governing committee and individual faculty should seek creative approaches to course scheduling, including approaches that do not conform to the standard university course and room schedule.

Conclusion

We close as we began, by stressing that the nascent Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration is serving its students well. While we suggest several adjustments and fine-tuning modifications, the program has been both rigorous and user-friendly. The program director and governing committee have been receptive to our ideas and responsive to our needs, and individual faculty have made praiseworthy efforts to resolve student concerns whenever they arise. We now hope that this report will serve as a guide for ongoing discussion of the future direction of the program, and we look forward to engaging faculty in productive dialogue.
APPENDIX

Public Policy and Administration Student Association

Student Opinion Survey

A Project of the Academic Affairs Committee

Part I - General Questions

The questions in this part are intended to elicit information about you and your perceptions of the PPA program as a whole. Your perceptions about individual courses are solicited in Part II.

1) When did you complete your bachelor's degree?
2) In what subject did you earn your bachelor's degree?
3) For how many, if any, years have you worked in the public sector?
4) Are you a full-time or part-time student?
5) Why did you enroll in the PPA program?

6) If you had not enrolled in the PPA program, which of the following would have been your most likely alternative:

___ Enrollment in another CSUS graduate program
___ Pursuit of a public policy or administration degree at another institution (please specify____________________)
___ Pursuit of another degree (specify____________________) at another institution (specify____________________)
___ No additional higher education at this time
___ Unknown

Core Curriculum

1) What do you feel should comprise the core curriculum of the PPA program, and what should we reasonably expect its outcomes (e.g. knowledge or skills) to be?
2) For each subject listed below, please note whether you feel the PPA program should place more (M) or less (L) emphasis on the subject within the core curriculum required of all students, or whether the current (C) emphasis is appropriate.

- Legal aspects of public policy (e.g. interpretation, courts)
- Administrative law
- Political structure and process
- Political theory
- Applied policy analysis
- Microeconomic theory
- Microeconomic applications (e.g. cost-benefit analysis)
- Public finance theory and implications
- Public finance mechanisms (e.g. bonds, taxes, Mello-Roos)
- Budget process and politics
- Local government policy
- State government policy
- Federal government policy
- Organizational theory
- Personnel management
- Professional ethics
- Research & quantitative methods
- Methodological applications
- Applied statistics
- Oral communication
- Written communication
- Computer literacy
- Other

**Prerequisites and Preparation**

1) Which of the following subject prerequisites should be required for admission (check all that apply)?

- Essentials of Government (lower division)
- Political Theory (upper division)
- Introductory Microeconomics
- Intermediate Microeconomics
- Introductory Macroeconomics
- Intermediate Macroeconomics
- Introductory Statistics
- Intermediate Statistics
- Other

2) Did you fully satisfy all admission prerequisites?

2a) If you answered "yes" to question #2, do you feel that you were adequately prepared for all PPA core coursework?
2b) If you answered "no" to question #2, would you have preferred to take a special summer course to satisfy all subject deficiencies, in lieu of additional undergraduate coursework to fulfill prerequisites?

Specialization, Internship, and Culminating Project

1) If unlimited courses were available, in what policy area would you like to specialize?

2) In what policy area do you intend to specialize?

3) Have you reviewed the catalog and/or the course schedule to begin planning your electives?

3a) If yes, have you identified a sufficient number of available courses?

3b) How many, if any, undergraduate courses do you intend to include in your specialty?

3c) Are you considering including courses at other colleges? If so, please identify the (tentative) institution(s) and/or the course subjects.

4) If an adequate selection of graduate-level courses were available in major specialty areas, how many, if any, undergraduate courses should students be permitted to include in their specialty electives?

5) Have you completed or planned your internship?

5a) If yes, is your internship related to your area of specialization?

5b) If you do not intend to complete an internship, what alternative do you expect to substitute?

Faculty

1) In general, what types of faculty would you like to see teach PPA core courses? For each type, please identify whether you would prefer to see more (M), less (L), or the current (C) emphasis.

_____ Regular faculty from other departments, such as Government, Economics, and Business
_____ Faculty hired to teach exclusively within the PPA program
_____ Visiting practitioners in the public policy field
_____ Visiting scholars from other colleges and universities
_____ Other
2) What types of feedback and evaluation from instructors have you found the most useful?

3) Do you believe that class attendance is an appropriate factor in course grades?

4) For each of the teaching methods and classroom activities listed below, please identify whether, in general, you would like to see more (M), less (L), or the current level (C) of that method or activity in your classes.

   ___ Lecture
   ___ Small-group discussions
   ___ Group projects
   ___ Guest lecturers
   ___ In-class student presentations
   ___ Films
   ___ In-class debates
   ___ Other

5) Do you feel you understand the expectations of the faculty with respect to the type and style of writing?

Scheduling and Advising

1) Please rank the following course schedule formats in order of preference:

   ___ Monday or Wednesday: 5:30-8:20 p.m.
   ___ Monday or Wednesday: 6:00-8:50 p.m.
   ___ Monday or Wednesday: 7:00-9:50 p.m.
   ___ Monday and Wednesday: 5:30-6:50 p.m.
   ___ Monday and Wednesday: 7:00-8:20 p.m.
   ___ Tuesday or Thursday: 5:30-8:20 p.m.
   ___ Tuesday or Thursday: 6:00-8:50 p.m.
   ___ Tuesday or Thursday: 7:00-9:50 p.m.
   ___ Tuesday and Thursday: 5:30-6:50 p.m.
   ___ Tuesday and Thursday: 7:00-8:20 p.m.
   ___ Saturday and Sunday: 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. (once per month)
   ___ Other
2) What days and times are worst for classes?

3) Who is your faculty advisor (optional)?

4) How many times have you met with your advisor?

5) What benefits do you expect from your advising relationship?

6) Are your expectations regarding advising being met?

Part II - Questions Regarding Specific Courses

These questions are designed to elicit your thoughts about the strengths, weaknesses, and relationships of the PPA courses.

1) Which core courses have you taken in the PPA department?

   ___ PPA 205 (Research for Public Policy and Administration)
   ___ PPA 210 (Political Environment of Policymaking)
   ___ PPA 220A (Applied Economic Analysis I)
   ___ PPA 220B (Applied Economic Analysis II)
   ___ PPA 230 (Public Budgeting and Finance)
   ___ ECON 296 (Applied Econometrics)

2) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of PPA 200?
3) Were your expectations satisfied?

4) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

5) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

6) How did you perceive the relationship between PPA 200, PPA 210, and PPA 240, if you took two or three of these courses?

7) Other comments on PPA 200:

Answer the following questions only if you took PPA 205 (Research for Public Policy and Administration)

1) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of PPA 205?

2) Were your expectations satisfied?

3) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

4) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

5) Other comments on PPA 205:
Answer the following questions only if you took PPA 220A (Applied Economic Analysis I)

1) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of PPA 220A?

2) Were your expectations satisfied?

3) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

4) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

5) Other comments on PPA 220A:

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Answer the following questions only if you took PPA 240 (Public Management & Administration)

1) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of PPA 240?

2) Were your expectations satisfied?

3) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

4) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

5) Other comments on PPA 240:
Answer the following questions only if you took PPA 210 (Political Environment of Policymaking)

1) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of PPA 210?

2) Were your expectations satisfied?

3) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

4) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

5) Other comments on PPA 210:

Answer the following questions only if you took PPA 220B (Applied Economic Analysis II)

1) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of PPA 220B?

2) Were your expectations satisfied?

3) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

4) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

5) Other comments on PPA 220B:
Answer the following questions only if you took PPA 230 (Public Budgeting & Finance)

1) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of PPA 220B?

2) Were your expectations satisfied?

3) If you took PPA 220A and/or PPA 220B, how did you perceive the relationship between these courses and PPA 230?

4) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

5) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

6) Other comments on PPA 230:

Answer the following questions only if you took ECON 296 (Applied Econometrics)

1) What were your expectations regarding the content, workload, and outcomes of ECON 296?

2) Were your expectations satisfied?

3) If you took PPA 205 (Research), how did you perceive the relationship between the two courses?

4) Should PPA 220A be a prerequisite for ECON 296?

5) Should PPA 205 be a prerequisite for ECON 296?
6) What changes, if any, would you like to see in subject matter, class structure, teaching methods and activities, faculty expertise, or other characteristics of this course?

7) Should this course continue to be a required component of the core curriculum?

8) Other comments on ECON 296:

Part III - Additional Comments

Please return completed survey by Friday, July 6, to:

Christopher Cabaldon
1324 G Street, Apt. 9
Sacramento CA 95814

Thank you for your participation.