ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY DOCUMENT

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION
Prepared Spring 1992

PREFACE:

During the 1984-85 academic year a group of faculty began to meet under the leadership of Dean Elizabeth Moulds, then Chair of the Government Department, to discuss a growing interest in establishing a graduate program which drew together the fields of government, economics, and organization theory/behavior. The membership of that group included: John Rehfuss, Anne Cowden, and Allen Putt, Department of Organization Behavior and the Environment; Elizabeth Moulds, Richard Krolak, Lou Cohan, and Jean Torcom, Department of Government; Peter Lund and Terri Sexton, Department of Economics; and Nancy Shulock, Assistant Vice President, Academic Affairs. The program proposal which emerged from their efforts is included in the Appendices of this document.

We have completed the traditional format requested for the self study document and included the requested supplementary information. It seems important, however, to add a narrative overview which discusses issues important to the success of interdisciplinary programs.

Multidisciplinary vs. Interdisciplinary

Any discussion of academic coherence must acknowledge the decades of debate between the traditional disciplines of political science and economics and the emerging fields of management, public administration and public policy about core values and assumptions. We have included several articles which consider the debate in the 90's. The defining issues revolve around (1) the action-theory continuum, i.e. what is the locus of concern? is the field of public policy and administration defined by its applied nature?, and (2) the interdisciplinary nature, i.e. from what disciplines does public policy and administration draw its core values, assumptions, and methodologies? Are there core values, assumptions, and methodologies?

It is important to note that these debates have been pursued during the more than one hundred years since the articulation of a field of public administration by Woodrow Wilson in 1887. The disciplinary interests in public administration had been limited to political science and organizational sociology/social psychology as it was emerging in the field of business administration. The evolution of the policy sciences in 60's focused greater attention on quantitative methodologies from the discipline of economics and the evolving quantitative technologies. The academic programs nation wide display remarkable diversity in the incorporation of the differing disciplinary perspectives and technologies.

This tremendous diversity in academic design and placement within the university’s academic structure is evident in the history at CSUS. The first public administration program grew out of the criminal justice/police science concentration in the Government Department. In
the early 1970's the program was transferred to the School of Business and Public Administration where it continued into the mid 80's.

The Graduate Program In Public Policy and Administration at CSUS was authorized by the Chancellor’s office to begin offering coursework in the Fall 1989. Administrative location in the School of Arts and Sciences reflects a strong commitment to the interdisciplinary aspect of the program. The participating departments form the Governing Committee for the Program ( the Departments of Government, Economics, and Organization Behavior and the Environment in the Business School). Despite the grim resource outlook, it is important for planning purposes to identify the powerful potential for an undergraduate program in this field. The Business Schools bachelor’s degree in public administration is not operative.

The interdisciplinary history is important for appreciating the challenges of beginning a new program. Some observers make a distinction between a multidisciplinary and an interdisciplinary program. That distinction may be a valid one for the situation at CSUS. There is a difference between a department offering an interdisciplinary academic program which draws faculty from differing disciplinary preparation, but with an academic commitment to the interdisciplinary field and the essentially voluntary involvement on a course by course basis of a multidisciplinary team of faculty from varied departments.

Faculty Issues:
The CSUS program is fortunate to have the active participation of a committed faculty. These faculty are loaned to the program on a course by course, semester to semester basis. In exchange for the three unit teaching commitment, these faculty take on additional responsibilities in governance, admissions, advising, thesis/project supervision, program development -- all without any formal institutional recognition or reward. This "dual citizenship" with regard to faculty responsibilities is an issue for the program and will undoubtedly increase in significance as the CSU continues to struggle with resource reductions.

The current program design also presents creative challenges for the faculty in articulating an academic coherence in course content, in mutual support of course offerings, and in applying criteria for admitting students! If these challenges are seen as part of an evolutionary process for the program, we are making steady progress.

Student Issues:
The multidisciplinary dimension also presents issues for admission and pre-requisites. This program accepts students from a wide variety of undergraduate academic backgrounds. We have admitted 25-30 students in each of the first three years, and have admitted 15 for the Fall of 1992 (due to resource problems which have created an unmanageable seminar size). The application rate has grown from approximately 45 the first year to 60-65 in subsequent years. Admitted students have generally been drawn from political science or economics undergraduate majors, however we have an increasing number of applicants from fields as diverse as journalism, civil engineering, biological sciences, criminal justice and english. In order to develop some common intellectual base, we have established four prerequisites (all
lower division, undergraduate intro courses) in microeconomics, macroeconomics, statistics, and american governments. Our economics faculty, in particular, experience the tremendous unevenness in preparation for the economic analysis coursework. We have attempted to strengthen the preparation by adding a series of summer workshops (15 hours of microeconomics, 10 hours of statistics) for newly admitted students.

Governance Consequences:

As noted above, the "dual citizenship" status for the faculty has consequences for the governance and overall faculty involvement in the program. Options which might ameliorate these problems include: a system of joint appointments; additional faculty fully appointed to the program.

Internal Program Linkages:

The program has a strong, rigid core of 8 courses, with the expectation that the student will complete 3-4 elective courses for the policy area specialization in other departments and schools. We have decided in the short run to allow students a lot of flexibility in selecting their elective coursework. Students interests are fairly diverse, but seem to concentrate in two areas: land use, transportation, environmental planning, regional governance; and health and human service policy. We have approached this issue in two ways. More informally, we have sent memos to departments and sought to establish personal relationships with faculty in other departments and schools who are teaching in areas of interest to our students. We maintain a list of courses for student information.

On a more formal basis, we have been talking with the Urban Land Development specialization faculty in the School of Business about a common core of elective classes to which would integrate environmental science, geography, and economics into the coursework. Our Visions for California series, cosponsored with the School of Health and Human Service, has laid the groundwork for more academic collaboration with faculty in social work, criminal justice, etc. We have begun to explore possibilities such as a crosslisted course in Welfare Policy which would focus on the development and application of policy analysis tools. The Department of Management and the Department of Health and Safety Studies has also asked us to be part of a group which will meet next year to consider a Health Policy and Management concentration.

External Program Linkages:

The vast majority of students in this program are full time public service professionals working in state and local governments, at the legislative and executive level. Others work for consulting firms, public interest lobbying interests, and community based organizations. Their career links along with the research and professional interests of our faculty present many opportunities for external program development. To date this development has taken three directions. The first is the development of an internal capacity through our course structure to conduct public service research/analysis for public sector clients, at either no cost or modest cost to the client. We have just completed a two year project, "An Assessment
of Benefits of Scattered Site Public Housing in Sacramento County", which utilized two semesters of the Applied Economic Analysis course sequence, supplemented by independent study under faculty supervision.

The second external program model is associated with the Visions for California Series referenced earlier. In this case, we drew together political decision-makers, community expertise, and CSUS faculty and students to discuss various policy options/directions facing the state of California in the area of Social Welfare Policy. By formatting these in 3-4 hour afternoon programs (with no lunch, expensive programs, etc.), we were able to avoid charging fees, etc. These programs could be expanded usefully to one-to two day symposia.

The third external model is the more traditional one where faculty research and professional interests establish the relationship. In this case, the director is involved in two activities. First, she is working with local city planning officials and citizen groups to review planning efforts for the Sacramento Downtown with an eye toward recommending planning and decision-making process changes. The second activity is a consideration of potential reforms in the state civil service structure during times of fiscal stress. This work is being completed initially for the National Commission on State and Local Public Service at the Rockefeller Institute at SUNY Albany.

There are many opportunities.