ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW REPORT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION

College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies

Spring 2006

SUMMARY OF COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMNDATIONS

Commendations to the Department

1. Programs offered in PPA are of high quality and fill an important need in the community.
2. There is a real spirit of cooperation, consultation, and collaboration in the PPA Department.
3. The department chair has done an excellent job leading the Department and helping to create the spirit of cooperation mentioned above.
4. Department culture is very collegial and open.
5. Department communication is excellent.
6. Department website is a useful tool for students, faculty, etc.
7. The Self-Study was well written and informative.
8. The faculty are very active in scholarship and in the community.
9. There is a strong emphasis placed on teaching effectiveness.
10. The faculty actively solicit and discuss student feedback concerning the program.
11. The faculty have been extremely active in program initiatives and have made real progress and changes to the curriculum.
12. The staff support for the PPA Department is excellent.

Recommendations to the Department

1. The Department should create a mentoring system for the junior faculty with regards to RTP and look at other ways to help clarify the RTP process and the expectations of junior faculty.
2. The Department should phase out the undergraduate minor and look at other ways of attracting undergraduate students (i.e., GE courses).
3. Continue to work with dean, provost and president and make a more visible role for the Department in Destination 2010.
4. Create an assessment program that objectively measures whether students are meeting the learning expectations for each class.
5. Develop a long-range hiring plan which takes into consideration the current needs and long-term projected needs of the Department.

Recommendations to the Dean of SSIS

1. The College should consider creating a mentor program for junior faculty with regards to RTP and look at other ways to help clarify the RTP process and the expectations of the junior faculty.
2. Work with the Department, the provost, and the president to help give the PPA program a bigger, more visible role in Destination 2010.
3. Request an additional faculty position for PPA so that an expansion of elective offerings can be made.
4. Work with the PPA Department on its short-term and long-range hiring plan.
5. Work with the PPA Department to find more storage space.

Recommendations to the Provost

1. Work more closely with the PPA Department in increasing its role in Destination 2010.
2. Address issues related to the quality of service and support given by the Graduate Center.
3. Approve an additional faculty position for PPA so that an expansion of elective offerings can be made.

Recommendations to the Faculty Senate

The PPA Program Review Team recommends that the Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration be approved for six years or until the next program review.

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<u>**Review Team Members**</u>:

Fred D. Baldini, Kinesiology and Health Science (Chair)
Mary Botkin, Family and Consumer Science
Jordan Halgas, College of Business
Rosalind Van Auker, Library

<u>**Documents Consulted**</u>:

The Department of Public Policy and Administration: Department Self-Study, Summer 2005
PPA Program Review Recommendations from the 2000 Report
Report of the External Consultant Dr. Jeffrey Chapman (Arizona State University)
CSUS Catalog
PPA Department Website

<u>**Persons Interviewed**</u>:

<u>Department Chair</u>

Edward Lascher

<u>Faculty (tenured)</u>

Donald Gerth
Tim Hodson
Cristy Jensen
Edward Lascher, Chair
Nancy Shulock
Robert Wassmer
Robert Waste

<u>Faculty (probationary)</u>

Miguel Ceja
Mary Kirlin

<u>Faculty (part-time)</u>

Peter Detwiler

Staff

Suzi Byrd

External Consultant

Jeffery Chapman, Arizona State University

Dean

Otis L. Scott

Overview

THE REPORT

The writing of the Self-Study for the Department of Public Policy and Administration (PPA) was a collaborative effort. While the Department Chair, Edward Lasher, took the lead in writing the Department's Self-Study, all the faculty in PPA were involved is some way. As part of ongoing discussions and a retreat held in the summer of 2005, the creation of the Self-Study began. Various sections of the Self-Study were addressed by different faculty and drafts of the document were circulated for comment. In the end, the final document was a result of much consultation within the Department including faculty, staff, students and alumni.

Based on the Self-Study and the 2000 Program Review, the PPA faculty began work on five major initiatives designed to improve the program. These include:

1. Develop a graduate certificate in collaborative policy and decision-making.
2. Collaborate in implementation of a joint doctorate (EdD) program.
3. Collaborate in the continued implementation of the new Master's of Science in Urban Development.
4. Abandon the PPA minor, but maintain PPA 100 and add a new undergraduate course in collaborative decision making in conjunction with the Center for Collaborative Policy Making.
5. Seek general education status for the two PPA undergraduate courses.

INTRODUCTION/HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The current Graduate Program in Public Policy and Administration (PPA) was approved by the CSU Chancellors Office in 1989 and began offering courses that same year. At that time, the program was administratively housed in the College of Arts and Sciences. Following a campus-wide reorganization of the colleges, the PPA program was moved to the newly formed College of Social Sciences and Interdisciplinary Studies. This was done because of the interdisciplinary nature of PPA. In January of 2002, PPA was designated as a department at the request of the

faculty in PPA.   The current PPA Program/Department has gone through two previous program reviews with very positive results both times.

The mission of PPA as described in their Self-Study is as follows:

"The study of public policy and administration is inherently multi-faceted and interdisciplinary. As a department and an academic field of study, we draw upon the traditional fields of political science, economics, and public administration as well as the more recent fields of public policy studies and collaborative decision-making. We also place great emphasis on the role and would of the public policy/administration practitioner, notably the work of that practitioner in the Capital region served by Sacramento State University, throughout California state and local governments, and in the growing non-profit sector."

The programs offered and the catalog information on PPA follows this mission well. The program is meeting a critical need in the community and its focus on California state and local government makes it unique. The location of the program in the state capital is a big advantage for attracting graduate students interested in state and local government. It also provides opportunities for the faculty and students to interact with government officials and programs. The only issue with the offerings of PPA has to do with the undergraduate minor. As a result of the last Program Review, PPA formed an undergraduate minor with the goal of exposing the graduate program to undergraduate students. Based on the current Self-Study and the brief history of the minor, PPA should look at other ways of attracting undergraduate student interest by offering courses in the General Education Program.

The PPA Department has responded to the seven departmental recommendations appearing in the 2000 PPA Program Review in a systematic and considered manner. The 2000 Program Review recommended that "PPA faculty members continue efforts to revitalize the community advisory group". A community advisory group was formed in 2003 and appears to be functioning well; the charge to this group was included in the 2005 PPA Department Self-Study. Members of this group are drawn from a variety of local public agencies and nonprofits (one recommendation from the 2005 consultant's report was to include private sector representation as well).

The 2000 Program Review recommended that PPA Program faculty members "continue to explore strategies to facilitate recruitment and retention of a diverse group of students." The Department increased its involvement in a number of general campus outreach efforts and maintains an attractive and substantial departmental newsletter linked from their home page. As an interdisciplinary graduate program, the typical stream of undergraduate majors moving into the graduate program is not as direct, so the Department has been developing other strategies to engage potential students, including publication of a brochure, departmental representation at relevant events, direct contact with participants in the Capital Fellows Program, and organized presentations to on-campus undergraduate classes.

The 2000 Program Review contained a recommendation encouraging "PPA faculty members to continue to examine and improve advising efforts." In response to this recommendation, the Department implemented some specific procedures that have brought more clarity to the student

advising process. Strategies used include small group information sessions, as well as centralizing academic advising for first year students with a single faculty advisor, making for consistency and responsiveness to student needs as they begin their program. In addition to the extensive information on the departmental web page, students have access to faculty advising throughout their program and in particular are advised to discuss possible thesis topics well ahead of time.

The 2000 Program Review report encouraged PPA faculty members to "continue to explore strategies for increasing students' participation in professional activities." This is a small department with a highly involved faculty. In addition to faculty advising, class interaction, and bulletin board postings, students in the program have been kept abreast of research, internship, and job opportunities by listings in the departmental newsletter. The Department's alumni group has also sponsored social and information events for students, faculty, and alumni.

The 2000 Program Review report suggested that the PPA Program should "reflect on strategies that can provide a balance between opportunities for faculty involvement in activities resulting in local, state, national, and international contributions to the field and other programmatic needs." The interdisciplinary nature of the PPA Department and the fact that departmental faculty are very involved in a range of research projects and institutes, made this recommendation a continuing challenge. The addition of two new tenure-track faculty along with the involvement of two emeritus faculty may make more resources available for other departmental responsibilities.

The 2000 recommendations resulted in the establishment of an undergraduate minor. The minor that was implemented in 2003 was deleted from the university course catalog in 2006, though two undergraduate courses remain. These undergraduate courses are not included in campus GE requirements at present; the Department has been working on integrating these courses into the GE course requirements listing.

The 2000 Program Review recommended continuation of "efforts both in development of assessment measures and in utilizing results of student learning outcomes for program improvement." Since the 2000 Program Review, considerable departmental effort has been put into student surveys and other assessment projects. Several strategies have been used to generate feedback from students, alumni, and faculty in order to bring data to bear on program design and effectiveness. One example of this is the thesis review that was done in 2003-04; analysis of the information developed during that review led to a revision of the departmental culminating project guidelines.

STUDENTS

A. Characteristics

The PPA Department is small, with a focused graduate program. The student diversity profile for PPA is very similar to the College and University student population profile. There is a large majority of women in the program (72%) which reflects trends for the College and University.

Student enrollment patterns have shown a stable, slightly upward trend since 2001. Retention and graduation rates go up and down from semester to semester due to the relatively small size of the Department. However, the patterns indicate rates near the College averages and slightly below University averages for 7-year graduation rates. The PPA faculty monitor enrollment patterns, diversity profiles, and retention and graduation rates. In the self-study, these issues are addressed and there is a clear indication that the PPA faculty are monitoring these trends.

The average GPA for students in PPA during the fall of 2004 was 3.28 which is very similar to the College (3.27) and University averages (3.23). Grade distribution is very similar to College and University trends. Students in PPA must score a B- or higher and maintain a 3.00 GPA to stay in the program. 99% of the students are in good academic standing and 100% of the students pass the WPE. The student performance data is very appropriate for this type of graduate program and there appear to be no major issues in this area.

The scheduling of courses in PPA is responsive to the needs of students served by the program. PPA is a graduate program taught in the evening hours. Seventy percent of the students in the program work full-time, and are part-time students in PPA. In 2004, 30% of the students in PPA were full-time; this is up from 25% in 1999. The average age of the student population has dropped somewhat during this time period.

     B. **Academic Support**

There appears to be good academic support for students in the PPA Department. Every summer there is a mandatory orientation/advising session for new incoming students. The chair and other faculty participate in this event. Students are not assigned an official advisor. Their initial advising takes place in PPA 200, the first required course they take. The instructor for this course acts as a cohort advisor for the students in the class. Students can get additional advising from any of the faculty and over time tend to develop an advising relationship with an individual member of the faculty. In 2003, a survey of students reported that 65% of the students rated the quality of advising from faculty either "good" or "excellent" with only 8% reporting "poor" or "very poor" advising. A recent student survey (2004) indicated that 80% of the students are "very satisfied" or "satisfied" with faculty availability and faculty relations with students. Based on the academic success of the students in PPA, there doesn't appear to be an issue with advising or tutoring. General University support (library, computer labs, etc) appears to be adequate to meet the student's needs.

The PPA Program helps students socialize to the discipline in a number of ways. The PPA Program is somewhat unique in that most of the students are working professionals in the field. This, along with the faculty experiences, makes the classroom a very active and "real life" place to discuss issues related to the profession. Practitioners are brought into the classroom as well to participate in discussions with the students. There is a PPA Alumni Chapter which sponsors events, and during the fall of 2004, the PPA Advisory Committee sponsored a series of dinners for student, faculty, and local professionals.

FACULTY

A. Characteristics

The PPA Department has 6 full-time faculty, 2 part-time faculty, and 4 current or former full-time administrators that teach classes or participate in the governance of the Department, but they are not considered instructional faculty. When compared to the College and University data, the PPA Department has more full-time faculty, more tenured faculty, and less ethnic and gender diversity among its faculty. There are two factors to consider when looking at this issue; the size of the Department and the lack of recent hires. There have been two faculty hires in the last eight years, both of which have increased the ethnic and gender diversity of the program. The current faculty profile for the Department (full-time to part-time) is appropriate, and the issue of the diversity of the faculty should be considered during future faculty searches.

B. Faculty Preparation, Scholarly and Creative Activity and Currency in the Field

The current size of the faculty seems to be adequate in meeting the current needs of the Department with one exception. There is a general concern that due to the lack of recognition of the demands of offering a graduate program, workload expectations of faculty make it difficult to offer electives and other innovations in the program which would have a positive impact on the quality of the student's experiences. This may have been somewhat addressed now that there is a new formula for calculating FTE for graduate courses. One other change that would be beneficial to the program is the ability to teach year-round; another issue currently under review. The PPA Program Review Team recommends that an additional faculty position should be given to PPA so that an expansion of elective offerings can be made. This would further enrich an already excellent curriculum.

The faculty in PPA are well qualified to teach a graduate program in this field. In addition, the faculty in PPA have generated an outstanding record of scholarship and creative activity. The PPA faculty places a high value on scholarship and they believe that participation in scholarly and creative activity is critical in maintaining currency in their field. They have adopted a broad definition of scholarship and they believe that dissemination is an essential element of effective scholarship. In the self study, there is an extensive list of the scholarly and creative activities of the PPA faculty. This is an impressive record of activity and the faculty should be commended for their activities. One note needs to be mentioned with regards to the junior faculty in PPA. Based on interviews with the junior faculty, senior faculty, and the dean, it became clear that there is some confusion on the expectation for the junior faculty with regards to the RTP process and expectations. This may be due to the lack of hiring faculty over the past few years which eliminates "role models" or individuals that have just gone through the process. The junior faculty get RTP information primarily from the department chair, which has been useful. However, confusion still exists and should be addressed both at the department level and the college level. Mentoring, orientation meetings, etc. should be looked at. Deadlines should be

published and available to the junior faculty and workshops on the RTP process would be very useful.

Another area that impressed the PPA Program Review Team was the incredible number of contributions the PPA faculty are making in service to the University and service to the community. PPA faculty are very involved at all levels of University service and self-governance. In addition, the faculty are heavily involved in local, regional, and state policy work. Significant contributions are being made in the areas of civic education, regional planning and development, higher education policy, and state governmental relations and policy. The PPA faculty are directly involved in a number of "capital campus" activities. In looking at this involvement and in discussion with the PPA faculty, the program review team believes that PPA should be more directly involved in Destination 2010. It is our opinion that the PPA faculty and their programs are being underutilized by the President and the campus. More direct involvement and a much bigger role should be played by the PPA Department. The department chair, the college dean, and the provost should work together in this effort to increase PPA direct participation in Destination 2010.

C. Teaching Effectiveness

The PPA Department places a high priority on teaching effectiveness; it has the highest weight in their RTP document. There is strong evidence that the Department involves students in the evaluation of teaching and that effective teaching is reviewed and recognized during the RTP process. All courses taught by all faculty are evaluated by students each semester. In addition, when a member of the PPA faculty is up for promotion, tenure, or post-tenure review, they are required to participate in an in-class evaluation of teaching skills conducted by one or two departmental faculty members.

ACADEMIC PROGRAM GOALS/STUDENT OUTCOMES

A. Academic Program Goals

The programs and curriculum offered in PPA are sound and appropriate for this field. Over the past few years, the faculty in PPA have reviewed and discussed the programs during a series of departmental retreats. As a result of these discussions, programs have been modified and new programs have been created. The two recent hires in the Department were a result of program planning meetings and new initiatives in the Department. In addition, recommendations for changes to the program/curriculum during the last program review were addressed by the Department. These changes are described above. Some issues included placing a greater emphasis on method and applied economics and strengthening the administrative side of the program. This has been achieved by balancing the curriculum and the recent hire of Dr. Mary Kirlin. Three additional changes to the curriculum have been made since the last program review. The first was the addition of courses in collaborative policy making, and in fact, the establishment of a graduate certificate in collaborative policy and decision-making. The second was the development of a specialization in higher education. This was supported by the hire of Professor Miguel Ceja and collaboration in the implementation of a joint doctorate program. The third change was the implementation of a new interdisciplinary Master of Science Program

in Urban Land Development. The first cohort of students entered this program in the fall of 2005.

Two other program changes have to do with the undergraduate curriculum. Based on a recommendation from a previous program review, an undergraduate minor in PPA was developed and implemented. The Department has not gained much interest from students despite departmental attempts to recruit students. As a result of many discussions, the PPA Department has decided to abandon the minor. The new plan is to keep a presence in the undergraduate curriculum by collaborating with other departments/programs and by gaining GE approval for two courses. At this time, PPA 100 is well on its way to being approved as part of the GE Program. The program review committee is impressed with the efforts of the PPA faculty in developing these changes to the curriculum and adding new programs. They are to be commended for their efforts and their constant search for new ways to meet the needs of our students.

B. **Assessment**

The PPA Department administers a survey to students to measure their overall satisfaction with the program. In general, the survey inquires as to whether or not the students feel like they can enter the workforce and be competent administrators. In addition, student theses are reviewed to determine the level of quality of a student's work—thereby measuring the effectiveness of the program. To the Department's credit, the faculty have taken the survey results and made class and program changes based upon the student's perceptions and overall impressions of the effectiveness of certain classes or of coverage of certain topics.

The PPA Department faculty state that they gather prior to each academic year at a faculty retreat or at a faculty meeting. At the retreat or meeting, through faculty consensus, they set learning objectives for the program and/or for specific classes. The learning objectives are known to faculty, but it is not clear whether they are consistently communicated to students prior to the start of a course.

The incorporation of student feedback into the assessment plan is commendable and an important part of assessing learning outcomes. In addition, the plan could be improved in the following ways. First, the learning objectives could be restated in more measurable terms. Second, the assessment survey is not designed to measure whether or not the learning objectives are actually achieved and to what degree. These objectives appear linked to outside guidelines that could serve in developing rubrics for assessing student attainment of them. Third, if theses reviews are seen as a suitable culminating experience for evaluating overall learning outcomes then they should be reviewed with a rubric that identifies these important outcomes and what level of performance meets specific standards. An alternative to using theses for the program measure is to incorporate data from student performance in key courses specific to each objective. Such an embedded approach requires the development of signature assignments that are scored with a common rubric across sections.

Thus, it is recommended that the PPA Department do the following in regards to assessment:

1. Define the learning outcomes/expectations for students. Ensure that they are relevant to the mission of the Department, and communicate them in a systemic, consistent way to students.
2. Develop objective standards to measure how well students are meeting the expected learning outcomes.
3. Develop a scoring rubric reflecting the identified learning outcomes and describing a continuum of levels of performance for reviewing theses.
4. Should the Department wish to use a course embedded approach to collect data on how well students are attaining their identified learning outcomes they will need to do the following for identified courses:
   a. Develop a scoring rubric for the objective standards. This rubric will explain what a particular score on a measurement means. For example, scoring 85% on an objective exam might mean that the student has achieved a competency level of "3" on a scale of one to five for a particular learning objective.
   b. Determine what an "acceptable" level of student performance is on the objective measurements. Indeed, the Department may determine that students must score a "3" on each of the learning objectives. For any score that is below a "3," the Department would follow through and attempt to remedy the low score. For example, the Department could decide to give an additional lecture on a particular topic or have students participate in an additional group activity. This remedy would demonstrate that the Department is "closing the loop" on its assessment plan and following through in the classroom to ensure that learning objectives are met.
5. Develop an assessment schedule. Determine what year(s) the assessment will be given and what year(s) program changes would be implemented. The assessment, scoring, and program changes do not have to be done at one time. In fact, it is more logical for the activities to occur over a two to three year period.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT FOR THE PROGRAM
(Evaluate the extent to which the following resources and services adequately support the program.)

A. Library, Information and Computer Technology

In general, the library collection is supportive of the PPA curriculum. More access to electronic journals is needed and should be addressed. The departmental faculty and students have an excellent working relationship with the liaisons in the library and are very pleased with the personal support they are given. The PPA Department wants to go on record supporting the library's efforts in getting more support for its services. The library is a critical part of the University and should be supported at a higher level.

Computer technology support is adequate and has been improving for PPA. The extension of hours for computer labs has been very beneficial for the students in this Department. Recent access to data from the Inter-University Consortium and Political and Social Research and other data bases has been very useful for the PPA Department. Continued support of these types of data bases is important.

B. **Student Support Services**
     (e.g. Admissions and Records, Advising Center, Learning Skills Center)

The most important student support service for the PPA Department is the Graduate Center. This is where admissions, degree evaluations, and thesis oversight takes place. In general, the PPA program has a good relationship with the Graduate Center. However, there appears to be an issue developing related to the time it takes for services to be provided. Recently, some students have experienced delays in admissions and other services. These problems were discussed during interviews with students and faculty and it was the only major complaint students had. PPA continues to work with the Graduate Center, but staffing and other issues should be addressed by the University.

One other area that PPA would like to see the Acting Dean of Graduate Studies address is writing support for graduate students. This would be very useful for the students and have a positive impact on their writing ability.

C. **Physical Facilities and Equipment**
     – note adequacy and currency

Current physical facilities and equipment are adequate with one exception. The main departmental office used for a number of activities (space for a student assistant, storage of office supplies and files, meeting space for part-time faculty and students) is small. If storage space for the office supplies and files could be found elsewhere, this would be very helpful

D. **Financial Resources**
     (faculty, staff, operating expenses)

As mentioned above, there is an adequate number of faculty and enrollment to support the curriculum offered in PPA with one exception. Current faculty numbers do not allow for the offering of electives and other innovations in the program, which would have a positive impact on the quality of the student's experience. An additional faculty position for PPA would address this need. There were also concerns expressed by a number of individuals interviewed concerning the Department's ability to maintain the existing programs over the long term. The PPA faculty should develop a short-term and long-term hiring plan. This plan should consider the immediate needs of the PPA Department and how the Department can maintain the existing and future programs as faculty retire. The current faculty are very dedicated and work very hard to offer a rich variety of excellent programs. There will need to be a plan in place to guarantee the long term survival of these programs.

The needs of the Department are being met with the current staff levels. There appears to be excellent communication between the departmental administrative coordinator (Ms. Suzi Byrd) and the faculty. There is also an excellent working relationship between the chair and the

Department's administrative coordinator. Ms. Byrd stated that her responsibilities are clearly defined and that the Department gets excellent support from the College's Deans Office.

> **1. Is the total operating expense budget adequate? Is it used effectively to support the program?**

OE support and facilities are adequate in meeting the departmental needs at this time. Again, the Dean's Office is responsive to requests made from PPA.

> ### E. <u>Governance Processes at the Program, College and University Levels</u>

As stated earlier, there is a very collegial and cooperative culture in the PPA Department. Faculty are involved in all aspects of decision making and the department chair has done an outstanding job in facilitating the activities of the Department. Due to the size of the Department, there isn't an extensive committee structure; rather most issues are discussed by the entire faculty. Committees are formed as needed (RTP, search, etc.). The Program Review Team was very impressed with the commitment of the faculty to the program and with the leadership of the department chair.

Student involvement is primarily achieved by student interaction with faculty and with the chair. The nature of the program (small graduate courses) allows students the opportunity to discuss issues with the faculty. The chair and the faculty appear to be very interested and very open to student input.