

Academic Program Review

Department of Public Policy and Administration

Review Team

Dr. Kimo Ah Yun, Review Team Chair, Associate Dean, College of Arts and Letters

Dr. Lisa Bohon, Professor, Department of Psychology

Dr. David Mandeville, Assistant Professor, Department of Kinesiology and Health
Science

External Consultant

Dr. Michelle A. Saint-Germain, Professor, Department of Public Policy and
Administration, California State University, Long Beach

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Introduction

In fall 2012, we reviewed the Department of Public Policy and Administration for their scheduled Program Review. This program review is part of a “Pilot Study” for the University Program Review process and emphasizes the collaboration between the review team, Department, College, and University. A central goal of the program review presented here is to allow a department to select a focused area of inquiry that is important to the department, which was to explicitly review student-learning assessment as part of the program review process.

As a foundation for understanding the Department, the review team carefully examined the following documents:

Public Policy and Administration 2012 Self-Study Proposal

Public Policy and Administration 2012 Self-Study Report, including the appendices:

Table 1: PPA Learning Objective Matrix by Core Objectives and Courses

Table 2: PPA Student Assessment of Core Learning Objectives by Course

Table 3: PPA Policy Memo Description and Evaluation Rubric

Table 4: Summary of Faculty Assessment of Student Pre and Post Policy Memos

Table 5: Survey Monkey Exit Survey of 2010-11 PPA Graduates

Table 6: Alumni Survey Results for Five Broad PPA Learning Objectives

Table 7: Alumni Survey Results for PPA Specific Learning Objectives

Table 8: Alumni Survey Results on PPA Core Courses and Professional Competence

Table 10: Proposed 2012-13 Mapping of PPA Specific Learning Objectives to PPA Core Courses by Primary and Secondary Coverage

Table 11: PPA 200 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 12: PPA 205 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 13: PPA 207 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 14: PPA 210 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 15: PPA 220A Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 16: PPA 220B Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 17: PPA 230 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 18: PPA 240A Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Table 19: PPA 240B Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives

Public Policy and Administration Summer 2005 Self-Study Report

The Department of Public Policy and Administration website:

<http://www.csus.edu/ppa/>

The Department of Public Policy and Administration Program Review website:

<http://www.csus.edu/ppa/about/programreview/>

In the process of this review, the Public Policy and Administration Review Team also interviewed faculty, staff, students, and other related individuals, including:

Dr. Michelle A. Saint-Germain, Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration, California State University, Long Beach, External Consultant

Don Taylor, Interim AVP, Academic Programs and Global Engagement, Academic Affairs

Amy Liu, Director, Director, Office of Academic Program Assessment

Suzi Byrd, Administrative Assistant, Department of Public Policy and Administration

Robert Wassmer, Chair, Department of Public Policy and Administration

Nancy Shulock, Director, Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy

Mary Kirlin, Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration

Ted Lascher, SSIS Interim Dean and Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration

Su Jin Jez, Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration

Peter Detwiler, Adjunct Instructor, Department of Public Policy and Administration

Steve Boilard, Director, Center for California Studies

PPA students and alumni

Christy Jensen, Professor Emerita, Department of Public Policy and Administration

Susan Sherry, Director, Center for Collaborative Policy

David Booher, Center for Collaborative Policy, and Adjunct Instructor, PPA

Adam Sutkus, Mediator, Center for Collaborative Policy

Donna Hoenig-Couch, Administrative Staff, Center for California Studies

Carlos Nevarez, Director, Ed.D. program, College of Education

Bob Pritchard, Professor, Ed.D. program, College of Education

Executive Summary of Commendations and Recommendations

Commendations to the Department of Public Policy and Administration

1. The Department is commended for the creation of a website that organized their program review self-study materials in a logical and coherent manner that was easy to follow by review team members and the external consultant.
2. The Department is commended for their ability to sustain a quality program that is known in the system for being a model program.
3. The Department is commended for fostering excellence in their own program and in other university programs as well.
4. The Department is commended for being a campus leader in engaging their entire faculty in their assessment efforts.
5. The Department is commended for developing a solid assessment plan that is guided by the principles and recommendations offered by their program's accrediting body.
6. The Department is commended for their decision to embed direct measures in their efforts as a cornerstone of their assessment plan.
7. The Department is commended for using the Focused Inquiry option in the Program Review process to direct their assessment changes in a purposeful manner.
8. The Department is commended for their continued relationship with the Center for California Studies and the rigor that they bring to the Program.
9. The Department is commended for their role in adopting and maintaining high expectations for faculty members in the Ed.D. program.

Recommendations to the Department of Public Policy and Administration

1. The Department should pursue NASPAA accreditation when resources become available.
2. The Department should discuss the amount of yearly effort that is put into collecting direct assessment data from the memo assignment. Should the workload exceed the value of having yearly data, an alternative schedule of assessing different learning objectives over a longer period of time should be adopted.
3. The Department should evaluate the merits of using non-faculty reviewers to score the memo assignment on a trial basis.

4. The Department should reduce the amount of indirect assessment data in their general assessment plan.
5. The Department should find ways to have a more formal connection with the Center for California Studies Program that best meets the needs of both programs.
6. After GE/GR reform is completed by the Faculty Senate, the Department should identify a high demand, low cost class that they can add to the GE/GR curriculum to lower their overall teaching cost per student to the College.

Recommendations to the Dean and the College

1. The Dean continues to actively support the Department at its current levels.
2. The Dean works with the Department to find appropriate ways for them to replace and grow their faculty as resources become available.
3. The Dean procures necessary resources for the Department to pursue NASPAA accreditation.

Recommendations to the Provost and the University

1. The Provost continues to support University assessment in Academic Affairs and continue to work with the Deans to develop comprehensive and sustainable assessment plans.
2. The Provost support the distribution of resources based on the ability of programs to show that they are collecting meaningful assessment data and demonstrate an ability to use assessment findings to make curricular changes that enhance student learning.
3. The Provost supports the Dean in procuring necessary resources for the Department to pursue NASPAA accreditation.

Recommendation to the Faculty Senate

The review team recommends that the MA program in the Department of Public Policy and Administration be approved for six years or until the next schedule program review.

Department Overview

The Department of Public Policy and Administration (PPA) is comprised of a small cadre of hardworking faculty that excels at research and has the interests of their students at the forefront of their decision-making. Even with limited resources, they have managed to maintain a strong and vibrant graduate program matriculating students in a timely manner. In general, the program review team was impressed with the accomplishments of the program and is excited to see the new directions that the Department plans to take the program in the coming years.

At face value, what the review team found to be most impressive is the seriousness with which the Department of PPA took the program review process. I (Kimo Ah Yun, Chair of the present review team) have been involved with Program Review for a decade. During this time, I served as a member of a program review team and then as chair for two other program reviews. By far, the Department of PPA provided the most accessible and easiest to understand organization of their data. In particular, the website that was created for this program review (see: <http://www.csus.edu/ppa/about/programreview/>) provided complete transparency and a well-organized catalog of information. This made the Department's review focus clear and provided the needed evidence to ascertain the Department's ability to achieve their goals. In fact, as chair of this program review team, I made sure to report to the Program Review Oversight Committee that this website was an exemplar; and I have encouraged other departments to follow a similar format. I know of at least one department that has adopted the program review website approach as a result of my recommendation.

Given the Department's commitment to program review and their adoption of a website to streamline the process, we commend them for their efforts. More formally, we offer:

Commendation 1: The Department is commended for the creation of a website that organized their program review self-study materials in a logical and coherent manner that was easy to follow by review team members and the external consultant.

Many individuals interviewed reaffirmed the notion that the Department of PPA is one of the stronger programs on our campus and in the system. For example, the external consultant noted in her report that the Department of PPA is "well known and highly respected" and that the degree program is "an under-appreciated gem, a green spot on the campus." The review team concurs with this assessment and note that the Department's ability to hold their own faculty and other faculty as well to high expectations is noteworthy. For example, Carlos Nevarrez, Director, Ed.D. program stated that, "PPA has helped the Ed.D program by having a strong structure in place and bringing rigor to the program."

The reviewers were impressed with the overall quality of the PPA program and were even more impressed that they are able to “raise the bar” for programs beyond their own department. Given that the Department of PPA continues to foster excellence at Sacramento State and beyond, we offer the following:

Commendation 2: The Department is commended for their ability to sustain a quality program that is known in the system for being a model program.

Commendation 3: The Department is commended for fostering excellence in their own program and in other university programs as well.

National Association of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA)

As indicated in the Department’s self-study proposal, “The design of the Department of PPA’s curriculum is purposefully interdisciplinary, drawing upon the theoretical and applied knowledge of political science, economics, public administration, and applied statistics. We designed the PPA curriculum to be consistent with the rigorous standard of the National Association of Public Affairs and Administration.”

Whether or not the Department of PPA should pursue NASPAA accreditation was discussed in most meetings that the review team had during the program review process. An obvious concern is how the accreditation fees would be funded. During her visit, the external consultant noted that the Department could expect to pay about \$7,000 - \$10,000 to become accredited. As Interim Dean Lascher noted in our interview with him, the Department has been discussing the merits of being NASPAA accredited for over a decade. The largest concern is finding the funds, which do not appear to be available at the College level. In addition, the benefits that the Department would realize as a result of being NASPAA accredited are unclear.

Given the interest around this topic, our interviews focused on getting a better sense of the merits of pursuing accreditation. In our meeting with current and former students of the program they universally supported pursuing NASPAA accreditation. In terms of the local area, students believed that the degree is well respected and that employers know the value of the degree in PPA. It was also the students’ belief that accreditation would be worth the monies to enhance the value of the degree beyond the local area. Therefore, students thought that accreditation would increase the value of the degree and help to strength the cache associated with the degree beyond the local area.

Our experience with the external consultant, Dr. Michelle Saint Germain on NASPAA accreditation was an interesting one. In our opening session, she indicated that it was important for the Department to pursue NASPAA accreditation and that the dollars to do so would be well spent. However, in her exit interview she backed off on this position and in her report she did not take a position. Instead, she merely

provided a guide to assist the Department if they should pursue accreditation in the future.

The review team was curious of the value of NASPAA accreditation. Through our research, we found 13 NASPAA accredited programs in the CSU system, suggesting that accreditation is more typical than not. Information from NASPAA on the merits of accreditation is found below and is demarcated by broken lines.

Why Should My Program Seek NASPAA Accreditation?

Seeking accreditation is a substantial process of self-reflection and requires a sustained commitment from a program and its host university. However, because of the depth of this self-inquiry and commitment to quality, NASPAA accreditation has meaning. There are a number of benefits associated with NASPAA accreditation that make this commitment worthwhile for many programs.

VALUE

- NASPAA accreditation provides a reliable and trustworthy indication of value and quality to potential STUDENTS. Accreditation assures to potential students that programs meet a baseline level of quality, seek to improve their operations, and practice truth in advertising. Students can be reasonably assured that, at a NASPAA-accredited program, they will be provided the resources to complete their program, achieve established learning objectives, and obtain public service employment.
- NASPAA accreditation is a signal of quality and reliability to potential EMPLOYERS that seek to hire graduates with the skills they need and to partner with academic institutions.

REPUTATION

- NASPAA accreditation ensures that accredited programs are visible to their PEERS, through achievement of accreditation status, and as participants in the peer review process. This baseline validation of quality assists in the creation of partnerships, exchanges, and student transfer.
- NASPAA accreditation is an external stamp of program quality respected at the level of the UNIVERSITY. An accredited program is typically a highly valued component of the institution.

IMPROVEMENT

- NASPAA accreditation supports program improvement by requiring programs to demonstrate their contributions to advancing the knowledge, research, and practice of public service. At a NASPAA-accredited program, it is essential for faculty members to produce research and engage in service activities, appropriate to the mission of the program.

COMMITMENT TO QUALITY IN PUBLIC SERVICE EDUCATION

- NASPAA accreditation is an expression of a program's commitment to public service education as a discipline. The NASPAA standards and accreditation process serve to maintain and enhance the recognition and reputation of graduate public service degrees.

The review team realizes that the commitment to become accredited is an important one and that it assumes that resources are available. We believe that the value of accreditation seems great enough to pursue accreditation should resources become available. As such, the following recommendation is proposed:

Recommendation 1: The Department should pursue NASPAA accreditation when resources become available.

Assessment

The review team's meeting with the Dr. Amy Liu, Director of the Office of Academic Program Assessment, confirmed what we thought about the Department's assessment efforts after reading their self-study. Because Dr. Liu has a good understanding of how well departments are progressing with their assessment efforts, we asked her to compare PPA to other programs. While she did make some recommendations for assessment improvement for the Department, she noted that they are ahead of the curve and complimented the Department by noting the following:

1. Faculty members in PPA have higher levels of engagement than other departments. As a result of their commitment to assessment and engagement, it is clear that individuals move as a single unit, have a good grasp of their objectives, and work together to the benefit of the Department.
2. The Department does an excellent job of aligning their learning outcomes with course content. For example, the practice of putting learning outcomes in syllabi clearly flag to students what is expected of them in their classes and in their degree program.
3. The Department does a good job of aligning their learning outcomes with accreditation standards.

There is no doubt that the Department has put considerable time and thought into their assessment plan. Further, their commitment to "up front" work has helped them to build a system that is efficient, effective, and supported by the whole (see: <http://www.csus.edu/acaf/ProgReview/prgmrevrpts.html>).

Given the glowing commentary provided by Dr. Liu and the obvious commitment to assessment that is found by reading the Department's self-study, the review offers the following:

Commendation 4: The Department is commended for being a campus leader in engaging their entire faculty in their assessment efforts.

Commendation 5: The Department is commended for developing a solid assessment plan that is guided by the principles and recommendations offered by their program's accrediting body.

The Department uses both direct and indirect assessment tools in their assessment approach. As a form of direct assessment, students are assigned to write a current event memo for a class in their first few weeks of starting the program that is related to a governmental issue. This memo is used as a baseline test, which is then compared to a second similar memo that students complete at the end of their program. With a program pre-test and post-test memo, the Department has wisely embedded materials for assessment into ongoing classes. In this way, faculty members create minimal additional work and are able to collect good data on how students grow between the time of entering and exiting the program.

Given their wise direct assessment choice, the review team offers the following:

Commendation 6: The Department is commended for their decision to embed direct measures in their efforts as a cornerstone of their assessment plan.

A concern of the external consultant was the amount of work that the Department puts into their program assessment process. However, the review team did not share the same concern. While it is understandable that the Department's assessment plan is to collect data on an annual basis, it does raise the question of whether such a plan is sustainable for the life of the program. Obviously, the Department is the only one that is able to answer this question. As such, the Department should have a discussion about the sustainability of their yearly direct assessment strategy. As suggested by Amy Liu, Director of the Office of Academic Program Assessment, the department might consider a 3-5 year assessment strategy that could be used to reduce the number of total learning outcomes that are reviewed annually. With a multi-year approach, the Department would lose the ability to track all of their selected learning outcomes in a given year. However, the Department could reduce their yearly workload requirements. Given the potential benefit of adopting a long-term sustainable assessment plan, the following is proposed:

Recommendation 2: The Department should discuss the amount of yearly effort that is put into collecting direct assessment data from the memo assignment. Should the workload exceed the value of having yearly data, an alternative schedule of assessing different learning objectives over a longer period of time should be adopted.

The Department's model for analyzing the memo assignment is to have faculty evaluate them. As noted by the external consultant, "The Department should enlist

the help of non-faculty who did not assign the work to review and evaluate the student's work." The review team sees real merit in using local professionals and former students to assist in the review team. While seeking external reviewers would require the Department to solicit and train volunteers, that work to do these tasks would pay great dividends.

To determine whether there would be interest in the part of former graduates to serve as external memo reviewers, the review team asked program graduates whether they would be willing to volunteer to do this task when we met with them. Program graduates responded with great interest and a seemingly genuine desire to help the Department. Including external reviewers, even only on occasion would add a new and valuable piece to the assessment process. As such, the following is proposed:

Recommendation 3: The Department should evaluate the merits of using non-faculty reviewers to score the memo assignment on a trial basis.

In addition to undertaking direct assessment through the memo assignment, the Department also engages in considerable indirect assessment through a variety of survey data that is collected. Assessment research often point to a high correlation between student evaluation data and similar indirect assessment data that is being collected by the Department. As such, the national assessment trend is to rely less on indirect assessment data. The review team recommends that the Department follow a similar path. Therefore, the following is proposed:

Recommendation 4: The Department should reduce the amount of indirect assessment data in their general assessment plan.

Focused Inquiry

The Department has opted to shift their learning outcomes and has used this as their focused inquiry. Initial learning outcomes included:

- Critical thinking
- Integrative thinking
- Effective communication for policy audiences
- Understanding the professional role
- Practical application.

The revised outcomes include:

- Synthesize, analyze and offer solutions
- Integrate the knowledge and skills of multiple dimensions
- Apply knowledge and skills in multiple settings

- Recognize your professional role
- Recognize the role of public policy and administration in public governance
- Communicate publicly relevant topics to multiple audiences

The review team is able to see the relations between the former learning outcomes and the new ones. Likewise, we are able to see that the Department has expanded their expectations of their students. For example recognizing the role of public policy and administration in public governance is important for PPA graduates. Currently, there is an assumption that it has been developed in students. With this explicit learning objective in place, however, students will be assessed and the Department will be held accountable.

Given the Department's willingness to change and adapt their assessment objectives, the following is offered:

Commendation 7: The Department is commended for using the Focused Inquiry option in the Program Review process to direct their assessment changes in a purposeful manner.

External Relationships

Although the Department of PPA is small in numbers, it has not reduced their ability to be active in campus life through service opportunities or to engage in campus programs that are relevant to their discipline. The review team was impressed with the Department's relationship with the Institute for Higher Education and Leadership Program (IHelp), Center for California Studies, and the campus Ed.D. program.

IHelp is located on Sacramento State's campus and is led by PPA Professor Nancy Shulock. With the goal to enhance leadership and policy for higher education in the State of California, it seems appropriate that it be housed in proximity to the Department of PPA and that it be directed by one of their faculty members. Dr. Shulock, who had high praise for the PPA program and looks forward to a continued relationship.

In addition to having a close relationship with IHelp, the Department is also housed on the same floor as the Center for California Studies. The mission of the Center for California Studies is to strengthen democratic governance and prepare citizens for public service in California. Again, the relationship between the Department and this program is a natural fit.

In the review team's meeting with Steve Boilard and Donna Hoenig-Couch they gave considerable praise to the Department. In particular, they noted the Department of PPA has rigorous academic standards and that they receive high marks from

Fellows. Given their work with the Center for California Studies, the following is offered:

Commendation 8: The Department is commended for their continued relationship with the Center for California Studies and the rigor that they bring to the Program.

While the Department has received great praise, there is some room for a stronger relationship between the Department and the Center for California Studies Program. As discovered in our meeting, there are considerable opportunities to have impromptu informal meetings with the chair and faculty and the Center for California Studies staff since they share the same hallway. However, a more formal relationship would likely lead to a stronger relationship. While not limited to specific activities, the review team suggests that the department considers first steps, such as inviting the Director of the Center for California Studies Program to faculty meetings, having lunch brown bag discussion sessions, and holding regularly scheduled meetings with the Director and the Chair.

The review team realizes that the Department should balance other university commitments with the desire of the Center for California Studies Program to have a more formal relationship. A discussion about ways to find a more formal relationship could benefit the Department and Center for California Studies Program. As such, the following is offered:

Recommendation 5: The Department should find ways to have a more formal connection with the Center for California Studies Program that best meets the needs of both programs.

Carlos Nevarrez, Director of the Ed.D. program noted that Chair, Rob Wassmer was one of the five campus members who created the campus Ed.D. program and that his contribution remains an important part of the DNA of the program. As indicated in the opening of this document, PPA faculty members play an invaluable role in maintaining rigor in the Ed.D. program, which is a recurring theme in our interviews across a variety of contexts.

It was also noted by Dr. Nevarrez that PPA faculty have contributed to integral aspects such as: transformative leadership, data-driven decision making, and teaching PPA policy in general. In Addition, PPA faculty members integrate quantitative data for admissions to the Ed.D. program, thus creating a more thoughtful admissions process.

Finally, it was also made very clear that PPA has been instrumental in maintaining the rigor of the Ed.D. faculty research standard to generate original and relevant research. Given the important role that the PPA faculty members continue to play in the Ed.D. program, the following is offered:

Commendation 9: The Department is commended for their role in adopting and maintaining high expectations for faculty members in the Ed.D. program.

Trials of a graduate program only department

When resources become tight at a university, programs that have smaller class sizes receive greater scrutiny. In our interviews, it became apparent that eyes are on the Department of PPA. As one of the few graduate only programs at the university, it is reasonable to expect that their overall class sizes will be smaller than those programs that have undergraduate programs as well, because other departments will use their larger undergraduate classes to offset their smaller graduate classes.

The review team recommends that the Department of PPA not be compared to departments in general with respect to their efficiency, but instead, be compared to similar graduate programs. When this appropriate comparison is made, the Department is quite efficient in the use of their resources as their graduate courses are on average larger than other graduate programs. Somehow, with few faculty and many students, PPA manages to offer a top-notch education.

However, the review team recommends that the department, as good citizens of the University, pay careful attention to the ongoing GE/GR revision debate. Once the dust settles and the landscape of GE/GR reform is realized, the Department should look for a high demand, low cost GE/GR course. More than one of our interviewees suggested that there would be space in American Institutions as part of the GR at the university. As such, the following is offered:

Recommendation 6: After GE/GR reform is completed by the Faculty Senate, the Department should identify a high demand, low cost class that they can add to the GE/GR curriculum to lower their overall teaching cost per student to the College.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE DEAN AND THE COLLEGE

The Department of Public Policy and Administration, by any metric, is a quality program. Faculty members serve the University in varied and important ways and they regularly publish quality research. Because of the skills that Department members possess, they are tapped to engage in activities that take them out of the classroom. It is important that the College continue to support the Department and provide the needed resources to help them to continue to meet their full potential.

While the review team realizes that the College must balance a tight budget, it is important that budget decisions are made with an understanding of the value that the program brings to the College. Given the ability of the Department of PPA to continually hold to rigorous standards, they should be recognized and lauded for their accomplishments.

Given the value added to the University by the program and of the ability of the faculty to find useful spaces to contribute to the University, the following is offered:

Recommendation 1: The Dean continues to actively support the Department at its current levels.

Recommendation 2: The Dean works with the Department to find appropriate ways for them to replace and grow their faculty as resources become available.

Recommendation 3: The Dean procures necessary resources for the Department to pursue NASPAA accreditation.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PROVOST AND THE UNIVERSITY

The University has made great strides in supporting assessment and in providing departments with guidance to construct appropriate learning outcomes, assessment measurement tools, and in closing the loop between assessment data and program change. Given the work that has already been done by the University to better promote assessment on the campus and the value in connecting assessment to how resources are allocated, the following is offered:

Recommendation 1: The Provost continues to support University assessment in Academic Affairs and continue to work with the Deans to develop comprehensive and sustainable assessment plans.

Recommendation 2: The Provost support the distribution of resources based on the ability of programs to show that they are collecting meaningful assessment data and demonstrate an ability to use assessment findings to make curricular changes that enhance student learning.

Recommendation 3: The Provost support the Dean in procuring necessary resources for the Department to pursue NASPAA accreditation.

RECOMMENDATION TO THE FACULTY SENATE

Our conversations with individuals relevant to this program review consistently laud the actions of the Department of PPA. The Department contributes to the University in important ways and their work should be recognized. As such, the following is offered:

Recommendation: The review team recommends that the MA program in the Department of Public Policy and Administration be approved for six years or until the next schedule program review.