

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Academic Program Review
College of Arts and Sciences

DEPARTMENT/PROGRAM

**Master in Public Affairs (MoPA) &
Master Arts of Urban Affairs (MAUA)**

EXTERNAL REVIEWERS

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CAMPUS VISIT

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The review team read the self-study written by the faculty in USF's Master in Public Affairs (MoPA) & Master of Arts in Urban Affairs (MAUA) programs, reviewed the curriculum, course syllabi and evaluations; interviewed faculty, students and staff; and met with the Dean, Associate Deans and other relevant members of the campus community. Prior to their visit, the reviewers were provided with USF's Vision, Mission, Values Statement, the program's self-study and other university materials.

- 1. How did the external review committee rate the quality of the program – excellent, very good, good, adequate, or poor? How does the program compare with benchmark top-tier programs nationally? Please provide a brief rationale for the external review committee's rating.**

The reviewers gave the MoPA and MAUA programs an overall rating of GOOD. They noted "definite strengths including the current program director, the quality and commitment of the faculty (both full- and part-time), the quality of the students, and the programs' placement successes." The reviewers also noted the programs' "rootedness in the Greater San Francisco Bay" as an additional strength.

- 2. What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process?**

MOPA and MAUA are currently in the midst of planning for a merger, and so the details of how this might work were a central focus of the review. The reviewers stated that "the programs lack focus." The committee highly encouraged the College to use the upcoming program merger "as an opportunity to develop a unique master's degree program, which promotes a coherent message/mission, and a curriculum that supports the potential interdisciplinary nature of the new

program” and they offered three different potential models for moving the program forward.

The recent growth of MA programs in the College of Arts and Sciences has produced a flurry of new MA programs beyond MoPa and MAUA, many of which are related to public affairs, broadly defined (e.g., Environmental Management, International Development and Economics, International Studies, Migration Studies, and Professional Communication); each of these programs is a stand-alone independent program and university budget practices and administrative obstacles make it difficult for MoPA/MoUA students to move seamlessly from their home program to another related program in order to take related courses.

There are clearly unexplored and undeveloped synergies between MoPA/MAUA, the MPA in Public Administration and the MNA in Non-profit Administration programs offered in the School of Management, and the Masters Degree in Public Health (MPH) offered in the School of Nursing and Health Professions.

Graduate programs similar to MoPA and MAUA at other institutions have more administrative support.

The level of faculty support needs to be considered and stabilized.

3. What specific recommendations for improving the program’s quality has the external review committee made to the Dean?

The committee offered three potential models for merging the programs and provided ten recommendations regardless of the nature of the merger between programs:

- A. The restructured program should be reviewed in three years. Expect to make additional incremental changes over time once the programs are merged.
- B. The program needs to focus on the unique aspects of the curriculum.
- C. Prioritize administrative resources for the program; minimum support should include a new Administrative Director and a Program Assistant.
- D. Maintain commitment to community engagement and community partnerships.
- E. Be willing to make hard choices, which may include terminating parts of the merged program, which may alter the existing strengths and projected goals.

- F. New recruitment strategies will be needed for the merged program.
- G. Develop closer relationships with the McCarthy Center to reach out to local education leaders to create a stronger interest in broader political advocacy skills and the interconnections of urban issues, to help increase visibility and support for the merged program.
- H. Establish an external advisory board in order to assist in the identification of local and regional educational needs in the field and support the applied side of the curriculum.
- I. Systemically address the reasons for the lack of stability of leadership for the Program and shift away from historical dependency on specific persons.
- J. Support the current Program Faculty Director, Rachel Brahinsky.

4. In the opinion of the external review committee, is the program following the University's strategic initiatives?

No comments provided by the reviewers, who were asked specifically to address questions around the proposed merger of the two programs.

5. In what way is the program contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit, Catholic urban university with a global perspective that educates leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?

The reviewers state that "the ability of the program to bring academic rigor to community issues in the Bay Area is a major, if not the major strength of the program... This further highlights the alignment of the program's mission with the university's Jesuit tradition and commitment to social justice."

6. What is the timetable for the response to the external review committee's recommendations for program improvement? What can the Office of the Provost do to appropriately respond to the review?

The next step is for the Dean and Associate Deans to meet with the Program Faculty Director and the MoPA/MAUA Advisory Board and discuss the action plan based on the *Self Study* and the *External Reviewers' Report*. Based on the reviewers' suggestions, the Office of the Provost can assist the program by providing necessary resources to implement those actions.

7. What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understanding the reviewers report?

The committee provided three possible models for the MoPA/MAUA merger:

Model 1—A New Program With a Narrower Unified Focus

In this Model the merged program will have a focus on the bay area region.

Advantages of a program focused on the region

- The current programs already have a focus in San Francisco, the transition to a regional focus may not require significant shifts
- Unique focus, well-defined the marketing and recruitment “niche.”
- Given the size and significance of the Bay Area, the issues addressed will be transferable to other major metropolitan areas. This can serve as a selling point - “Bay Area” is our campus
- Many of the students live and work in cities in the Bay Area, other than San Francisco

Disadvantages of a program focused on the region

- This model would force the program director and faculty to scrutinize current program courses and faculty. Therefore, some faculty who contributed to the MoPA and/or MoUA programs may no longer be appropriate. A purely local perspective on campaign management and advocacy issues would eliminate the Washington D.C. program and potentially Dr. Ken Goldstein’s role in the program. This would be lost with the regional focus. Adjunct faculty do currently teach local campaigns or advocacy courses.
- New faculty (full-time or adjuncts) may have to employ to address a regional focus curriculum. New community, non-profit and governmental contacts in the Bay Area outside of San Francisco will have to be established and nurtured.
- The core courses will have to be redeveloped. Courses with substantive content (course on regional politics/inter-local relations), and methods and skills classes will have to be rethought.
- The USF-Sacramento link may become more significant to a program with a regional focus than the USF-Washington, DC link.

Model 2--Merge the two programs with minimal change in program direction

This model assumes that recent declines in enrollment were not due to problems with the focus of the two programs; and this very well may be the case. The brochure promoting this type of merger has already been printed. According to the self-study a common set of core courses would be established. And most elective and existing tracks would be kept as part of the new merged program.

Advantages of the merged program with minimal change

- The new program would continue to use all existing faculty.

- The program would continue to occupy the niche of an urban oriented applied social science program that brings academic rigor to social justice and community engagement issues with an (overall) San Francisco orientation.
- Aside from the new name, the program could continue to recruit and be marketed similar to recruitment and marketing prior to the merger.
- All of the current elective tracks and courses would remain giving students maximum flexibility and choice.

Disadvantages of the merged program with minimal change

- Core courses will need to be developed to serve the needs of all students regardless of what electives they will pursue after the core.
- The current crisis necessitates rethinking what the program(s) should be. Both programs lack clarity in their articulated focus. Merging the programs just creates a larger program that lacks clarity in its articulated focus.
- Failing to think of the longer-term impacts of a simple merger could lead to losing dimensions of the programs that have made them unique and driven past demand. Without a well-articulated niche and plan to reach that niche, the program will not be sustainable.

Model 3--Merge the two programs with a smaller number of well-articulated advanced elective tracks

This model would encourage the program director and faculty to adopt a number of coherent themes around which the merged program would be restructured. This merged program would have a smaller number of elective tracks, directly linked to themes around which the restructured/merged program is built.

Advantages of the merger with a smaller number of well-articulated tracks

- While this change requires something more than an incremental restructuring of the curriculum, it appears that this is already taking place informally.
- The merged program could continue to use most existing faculty resources.
- A coherent and better articulated multiple themes would give the program more marketing/recruitment breadth. Resources and a commitment to offering the courses necessary to complete the tracks would be necessary.

Disadvantages of a merger with a smaller number of well-articulated tracks

- Challenging and may need to take place over time. If this model is used, the program director and faculty will require even greater discussion and effort than simply moving to a merged program with a single focus
- Depending on the substance of the remaining/new elective tracks, some faculty may no longer be appropriate and some new faculty resources might have to be hired.