

**BACHELOR OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
AND  
MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION  
ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW**

College of Professional Studies  
Larry Brewster, Dean  
Spring 2005

Drs. Ramon Del Castillo and Tim Hodson reviewed the Bachelor and Master of Public Administration programs during a campus visit from April 15 to April 19, 2005. Dr. Castillo is Professor and Chair of Public and Non-Profit Administration at Regis University. Dr. Hodson is Professor of Public Administration and Executive Director of the Center for Professional Studies at California State University, Sacramento. A family crisis prevented a third reviewer, Dr. Genie Stowers, Chair of the Public Administration department at San Francisco State University, from participating in the program review.

Prior to their visit, the program self-study was mailed to them for their review. To further assist the team in their work, they were provided documents that included, in part, an overview of the College of Professional Studies, the University Mission and Values statement, the USF catalog, student and alumni survey instruments, faculty evaluations, a sample of student papers and exams, registration statistics and financial data on the two programs. The team met with the Dean, Associate Dean, the Program Director and Associate Program Director, members of the full- and part-time faculty, and graduate students. Unfortunately, we were unable to arrange a meeting with undergraduate students.

**1. How did the external review team rate the quality of the Public Administration programs? How do the programs compare with top-tier programs nationally?**

The reviewers rated both programs as **Very Good**. I agree with their rating. They wrote, "The review team found the BPA and MPA programs to be successful in many areas with suggestions on how to improve and/or enhance operations." They reported that "the curriculum is sound and, with one exception [a required quantitative analysis course], is comparable with that of similar undergraduate and graduate programs in California and elsewhere (p.1).

The reviewers were impressed with the full- and part-time faculty teaching in the two programs, noting that they bring considerable energy, enthusiasm



and commitment to the programs. They were particularly taken with “the willingness of the faculty to exchange ideas and cooperate so they could better serve the students (p. 2).”

They complimented the program director and associate director for their dedication and hard work. The faculty and students reported that they feel supported by the administration and that they are well served by the College and University.

2. **What are the most important general issues that emerged from the external review process? What specific recommendations for improving the program’s quality has the external review committee made to the dean?**

**Curriculum:** One of the most important recommendations is to require a **quantitative methods** course in the MPA program. In particular, they recommend incorporating standard statistical and econometric techniques into the Masters curriculum.

Dr. Maury Penner, Program Director, agrees with the external reviewers’ recommendation. He plans to work with Dr. Catherine Horiuchi to develop a quantitative methods course in fall 2005. Dr. Horiuchi will join the full time faculty in public administration this academic year and one of her areas of expertise is statistics and quantitative analysis.

The reviewers also expressed concern about the **Emerging Technologies for Public Managers** course offered in the MPA program. A few of the students on the San Francisco campus who met with the reviewers thought the learning objectives for the course were unclear and they did not understand how the course fit with the curriculum. The reviewers wrote, however, that they were unable to determine if the problem was the instructor for the course, or the course itself.

Dr. Penner believes the problem may be the instructor that taught the course for the first time in San Francisco. The experiences of students from other sections of the course have been positive. He looks forward to assigning this course to Dr. Horiuchi who has extensive background in managing government information systems and in teaching e-government and technology-related courses. She will be asked to review the curriculum, including the learning objectives.

**Length of courses:** CPS adopted a uniform 7-week format for all undergraduate and graduate courses offered in the College. In the past,



undergraduate courses were 6-weeks and graduate courses were 8-weeks. Every course in CPS is augmented with online modules—this is particularly important at the graduate level with the loss of one week in-class time. We are in the process of evaluating the impact of this change on the academic quality of our graduate programs. The reviewers strongly encouraged us to seriously reevaluate the “recent shift from 8 to 7 class meetings” based on their conversations with the faculty. They wrote:

The recent shift from 8 to 7 class meetings appears to have had decidedly mixed results. The clear majority of the faculty we met with were unhappy with the shift and when we asked if given a magic wand what would be one thing they would do for the program, several immediately said a return to 8 classes (p.3).

**Diversity & Service Learning:** The reviewers recommended that “the service learning requirements be used to strengthen diversity (p. 3).” We assume they were referring to the BPA program insofar as service learning is required only in undergraduate programs. We agree that diversity is an important element in both the MPA and BPA programs, and will be further reviewed in making changes to the course learning objectives across both curricula, as discussed in the self-study report.

**On-Line courses:** The reviewers found that the quality of the on-line components of the BPA and MPA courses “varies considerably among classes and faculty members (p. 3).” They go on to say that “this, in turn, has created a certain level of confusion among both students and faculty (e.g., both groups disagreed whether the program had “on-line” courses).” They recommend that

- Individual course descriptions should include clear statements regarding how much of the course will be on-line, and
- The development of written procedures and explanations regarding on-line courses and expectations to clear up any confusion regarding this matter. (p. 3)

Neither program offers completely on-line courses. The Program Director, Associate Program Director, and the full-time faculty will continue to work with the adjunct faculty to provide additional training and feedback on quality and quantity of on-line work.

**Adjunct faculty:** The adjunct faculty expressed a desire for additional technical training on Blackboard (the on-line platform adopted by the University) and that these workshops be scheduled in the evenings and on



weekends to accommodate their work schedules. They also want assistance in identifying the most current texts and articles for their courses. They often do not have the time to remain current in the literature given the demands of their full-time, non-teaching positions.

One of the recommendations related to the adjunct faculty was to require them to submit “an analysis of written materials...including but not limited to (a) a paper on the mission of the university and how new faculty members would incorporate this into his or her facilitation style; and (b) the grading of a paper with criteria laid out (p. 4).”

The reviewers found the BPA and MPA faculty to be less diverse than the student population. They recommend that the College develop “a plan to work toward a more diverse faculty (p. 4).” We take very seriously the goal to recruit a diverse faculty that more closely represents the student and greater community populations. We have made some progress in this direction in the past few years, increasing female instructors by 10 percent and faculty of color by nearly 20%. Clearly, more needs to be done however.

Communication among adjunct faculty and between adjunct faculty and program and College administrators needs to be improved. CPS plans to publish a newsletter to improve communication between administration, faculty and students this academic year. The BPA and MPA faculty and administration will continue to increase the number of adjunct faculty attending course-specific meetings, and will continue updating the Public Administration faculty websites—curriculum forums on Blackboard for sharing ideas—best practices, and learning resources.

**Student writing skills:** Writing skills among our undergraduate students remains a serious concern among the faculty. The reviewers identified two areas of concern: “international students and students whose primary language is other than English (ESL).” The four recommendations offered centered on reviewing the TOEFL standards (a University policy); develop ESL programs specifically tailored to the BPA program; facilitate focus groups consisting of students to identify their needs and possible remedies; and assisting students in identifying campus resources to help students with their specific writing issues (p. 6).

CPS has a policy of not allowing students to continue in their program (including the BPA) if their writing course grades are C- or below. Every undergraduate must take 7 units of writing before they can begin course



work in their major. This policy has helped in addressing this very serious issue. More needs to be done however.

**3. In the opinion of the external review team is the program following the University's strategic initiatives in that it is:**

- **Recruiting and retaining a diverse faculty of outstanding teachers and scholars.**

The BPA and MPA programs only have two full time faculty dedicated to the programs. There are two faculty assigned to the Masters in Non-Profit Administration who teach one course each in the MPA program. The two BPA/MPA faculty are diverse in gender (one male and one female), but neither are faculty of color. As we mentioned, the adjunct faculty, while more diverse than the full-time faculty, do not match the diversity of our student body.

- **Enrolling, supporting and graduating a diverse student body.**

The reviewers did not specifically address this issue. However, they noted that more than half of the students are female, and a third are students of color. We know that the greater Bay Area is more racially and ethnically diverse than our student population. We continue to develop strategies to further diversify our student body. However, the closure of the Oakland campus (our most diverse campus) will make this goal more challenging.

- **Providing the environment necessary to promote student learning in the programs.**

The visiting team applauded the program and College administrators for their efforts in delivering a quality curriculum, with "energetic and committed" faculty. The reviewers were "especially impressed with the willingness of the faculty to exchange ideas and cooperate so they could better serve their students (p. 2)." They also commented on the service to the regional campuses, quoting one faculty who said, "administrators have traveled out to the extension campuses to problem solve issues and concerns (p. 2)."

- **In what way are the programs contributing to the goal of making the University of San Francisco a premier Jesuit Catholic urban university?**



The reviewing team specifically commented on how the BPA and MPA programs incorporate the values of a Jesuit University. The wrote, "The MPA program, for example, requires a course in Administrative Ethics (PA 620) and the basic introductory courses for both programs include component on ethics (PA 361 and PA 611)." They go on to say, "Program and course goals and objective also include appropriate references of public service, ethical reasoning and understanding and using ethical principles as a foundation for managerial decisions (p. 1)."

- **What is the timetable for the implementation of the external review committee's recommendations for the program improvements?**

Dr. Maury Penner, director of the BPA and MPA programs, is currently working with his associate program director and faculty to address many of the issues raised in the program evaluation. He looks forward to Dr. Horiuchi joining the full time faculty in the fall. Dr. Penner, with the assistance of Dr. Horiuchi, will develop a quantitative analysis course for the MPA program that will be implemented in fall 2006. We anticipate that many of the other issues raised in the program evaluation will be addressed in this academic year. We remain committed to further diversifying the faculty and student body and will continue to do everything possible to attract people of color.

Additional faculty resources are dependent upon enrollment and increased revenue. Enrollments in the BPA and MPA programs have increased even as the overall enrollments in CPS have declined.

- **What general comments or issues, if any, are crucial to understand the reviewer's report?**

We are pleased with the overall tone and content of the report. The evaluation is helpful in providing an objective review of the two programs, and we appreciate the reviewer's insights and commitment to the evaluation process. Our only regret is that we were unable to schedule student meetings at one or more of the regional campuses.