

To: Dean Stern and Associate Dean Wendt

CC: PAJ Chair Phil Kopp, Public Administration Faculty, Political Science Coordinator

From: David P. Adams, Ph.D., Public Administration Coordinator

Date: March 25, 2025

Subject: Response to BAPA External Review Report

Introduction

The external review team provided a thorough and thoughtful evaluation of the B.A. in Public Administration (BAPA) program. Their assessment affirms the program's strengths, particularly its alignment with CSUF's strategic plan, dedicated faculty, engaged students, relevant curriculum, and systematic assessment strategy. At the same time, they identify areas for growth, including the need for a clearer program identity, increased faculty and staff support, and enhanced curricular and outreach initiatives. This response addresses these recommendations, highlighting agreement with many of their observations while underscoring the resource limitations that shape the program's capacity to implement changes.

The department thanks the ad hoc PPR committee—Drs. Sarah Hill (Chair), Shelly Arsneault, and Yuan Ting—for their work on the self-study and their contributions to the early drafts of this response. Appreciation is also extended to the broader Public Administration faculty and Chair Kopp for their thoughtful feedback and support during the development of the subsequent and final drafts.

Program Identity and Outreach

The reviewers emphasize the need for a more distinct identity for the BAPA program. This was a central theme in our self-study, and we concur that further differentiation between the BAPA and MPA programs is necessary. The MPA program emphasizes leadership and management for mid-career professionals. In contrast, the BAPA program is designed to provide students with foundational knowledge and skills for entry-level positions in public service, nonprofit management, and applied policy work. To clarify this distinction, we are open to revising the BAPA mission statement to reflect its unique purpose more explicitly. Faculty discussions will be essential in refining this statement to ensure it effectively captures the program's goals and direction.

We agree that increased outreach is necessary to attract more majors and minors. The program coordinator is already working with the College's graphic designers to develop promotional materials that can be shared with community colleges, distributed at Experience Fullerton

events, and provided to tandem advisors across campus to attract new majors and second majors. However, sustaining and expanding these outreach efforts requires institutional support. We welcome discussions with the College on additional strategies and resources to enhance recruitment efforts and strengthen the program's visibility, as faculty have noted that comprehensive outreach activities require dedicated personnel and time commitments that exceed our current capacity.

Faculty and Staffing Needs

The report highlights the need for a faculty “champion” dedicated to the BAPA program. While we fully agree with this recommendation, we are concerned that assigning this role to a new tenure-track hire at the assistant professor level is impractical and potentially problematic. Assistant professors typically have protected time for research and professional development, and assigning them significant administrative responsibilities would be counterproductive to their tenure progress and create unfair service expectations. Instead, this role should be filled by an Associate or Full Professor with the necessary experience and institutional knowledge. A new hire at the Associate or Full Professor level could either serve directly as this champion or free up current faculty to take on this role by absorbing some of their other responsibilities.

In addition, given the scope of the recommended changes, a single faculty member would be insufficient. At a minimum, we need to replace the retiring faculty member and hire one additional tenure-line faculty member. While this additional position would not need to be exclusively dedicated to the BAPA program, it would be necessary to implement the recommendations in the external review report. It is important to note that the replacement for the retiring faculty member must teach in the MPA program because of pressing needs, so an additional hire beyond this replacement would be necessary to support BAPA initiatives properly.

The review also highlights the high reliance on lecturers in the program. While we recognize the critical role that lecturers play, the realities of the field make it challenging to recruit a stable group of lecturers who teach multiple courses each semester. Most PA lecturers are working professionals who typically teach one or two courses per term in the evening, making it challenging to establish the “core group” of lecturers suggested in the report. It is worth noting that we already include and invite lecturers to PA functions, including alum panels, MPA student/alum mixers, and student club activities. Expanding the tenure-line faculty remains the most viable long-term solution to maintaining instructional continuity and supporting student success.

Curriculum and Program Development

We support the recommendation to review and enhance the BAPA curriculum, including developing a capstone course and a 300-level PA course specifically for BAPA majors. However, these initiatives require faculty resources. Without additional tenure-line hires, our ability to develop and sustain new courses will be severely limited, particularly since we cannot add organizational theory or an undergraduate budgeting course or implement more high-impact

practices without an additional tenure-line hire beyond the replacement for the retiring faculty member.

The program is open to exploring its own course prefix to strengthen its identity. This transition is more feasible for our 500-level MPA courses, select 400-level courses that serve both BAPA and MPA students, and a few 400-level courses primarily targeted to the BAPA program. However, some faculty have noted that implementing a PADM catalog prefix could increase administrative complexity and require additional coordination for faculty and staff in creating schedules and submitting grades. Others have recognized potential efficiencies in these areas. We will evaluate this option further in consultation with faculty, the College, the Political Science program, and the Dean's Office, as this change may affect budgeting and tenure density. While tentatively supportive of the idea in principle, we must thoroughly assess the practical and administrative implications before moving forward.

The recommendation to reduce the related fields requirement from nine to six units or eliminate it entirely raises important considerations. As General Education requirements have been reduced across the CSU system, further reductions in curricular breadth could leave graduates less well-rounded and potentially less prepared to serve diverse populations. Faculty have suggested different approaches to the related fields requirement, including reductions to six units or potentially eliminating it. These proposals reflect concerns about unit load, scheduling constraints, and student equity. Because these changes would affect the program's structure and outcomes, we will bring this issue to an upcoming faculty meeting or retreat for discussion and deliberation before making any decisions.

Before moving forward with any substantive curricular changes—including adding a capstone course or reducing the related fields requirement—faculty will consider how these changes support or shift existing program learning outcomes. Each program requirement should serve a clear and measurable purpose in the curriculum, and any revisions will be evaluated in relation to their contribution to student learning and success.

Student Support and Engagement

We recognize the need to strengthen student engagement and build a stronger sense of community within the BAPA program. To this end, we are committed to establishing the Public Administration Student Association (PASA), which will serve undergraduate and graduate students starting Fall 2025. PASA will provide a structured organization for student involvement, professional development, and networking opportunities. Additionally, we will explore attaching a new International City/County Management Association (ICMA) student chapter to PASA to further integrate students into the field of public administration and connect them with practitioners at the local and state levels in government service in Orange County and beyond. We anticipate these initiatives will help foster student identity within the program while creating lasting engagement opportunities.

Similarly, while we support the idea of a dedicated BAPA faculty advisor, we would need support to identify a feasible way to integrate this role into the existing faculty workload, considering the current constraints on faculty time and resources.

We want to note that in January 2025, the program expanded the MPA Advisory Board into a broader Public Administration Advisory Board that includes undergraduate representation. This change reflects our commitment to integrating perspectives from both BAPA and MPA students in discussions about curriculum, professional development, and external engagement.

Assessment, Alumni Relations, and Communications

We fully support the recommendation to implement a graduation exit survey to enhance program assessment. This exit survey will help us capture valuable data on students' self-assessment of learning objectives achievement, satisfaction with their learning experience, and plans. We will work to implement this assessment tool as part of our ongoing program evaluation efforts.

The recommendation to expand alum engagement is also well-founded. Strengthening relationships with alums can provide valuable networking opportunities for students and increase program visibility. However, initiatives such as maintaining an alumni list, developing service-learning opportunities, organizing "Professor for a Day" events, or hosting an annual symposium require dedicated faculty and administrative support. The alum tracking components, in particular, will require additional staff support to be implemented effectively and sustainably.

As part of our recent MPA strategic planning efforts and preparation for our site team visit, we are developing a Public Administration program newsletter to serve both current students and alums of the BAPA and MPA programs. The first edition is forthcoming, with subsequent issues planned for release during the fall and spring semesters. To effectively manage this outreach and engagement initiative, we request College support for a MailChimp or similar platform to facilitate distribution and analytics tracking.

Administrative and Staff Support

The report incorrectly identifies that one staff member is assigned to the BAPA program. Only the MPA program has dedicated staff support, while the BAPA program does not have any specifically assigned staff resources. This further underscores the staff-related challenges identified in the report, including workload distribution, space constraints, and the need for updated technology and training. We fully support the need for additional staff resources, including dedicated support for the BAPA program, and request that the College consider ways to enhance support in these areas, including ongoing training for university software, more scheduling flexibility with virtual workdays, increased storage space, and technology upgrades as identified by staff.

Conclusion: Moving Forward with Resource Considerations

The external review team has provided thoughtful and constructive recommendations, many of which align with our goals for the BAPA program. However, the feasibility of implementing these recommendations is contingent on securing necessary resources. At a minimum, the program requires:

1. Replacement of the retiring faculty position with a tenure-line faculty member who can contribute to both the MPA and BAPA programs.
2. One additional tenure-line hire to address instructional and administrative needs necessary to implement the review recommendations.
3. Institutional support for outreach, advising, and student engagement initiatives.
4. Additional staff resources to manage increasing administrative demands, particularly for alum tracking and engagement.
5. College support for a MailChimp or similar platform to distribute the new Public Administration program newsletter effectively.

Before proceeding with curriculum changes, faculty retreats, or program restructuring, we must determine the level of institutional support available. As faculty have emphasized, if significant resources are not forthcoming, the program cannot implement the suggested changes, and we need to develop alternative strategies that align with our existing capacity. If the program is not going to receive adequate resources, we need clarity on how to proceed within current budget constraints to best serve our students and fulfill our mission.

We look forward to working collaboratively with the College to address these challenges and advance the program's mission.