

To: Su Swarat, Senior Associate Vice President for Institutional Effectiveness and Planning, Accreditation Liaison Officer

From: Jessica Stern, Dean, College of Humanities and Social Sciences; Associate Dean, Carl Wendt; and incoming Associate Dean, Gabriela Nuñez

Subject: Dean's Summary and Evaluation of the B.A. in Public Administration (BAPA) program

Date: May 22, 2025

Program Overview

The BA in Public Administration (BAPA) is one of three undergraduate degrees housed in the Division of Politics, Administration and Justice (the Division of PAJ). The program began as a concentration within the Political Science major and became a major in 2001. BAPA (48 units) is a mid-sized program that offers students with foundational knowledge of and impactful work in entry-level positions in public service, nonprofit management, and applied policy work.

The program's learning objectives are designed to provide students with a comprehensive understanding of key concepts and theories, examining the roles of personnel administration, budgeting, finance and analyzing the administrative functions within political systems. The program prioritizes the development of skills in applying quantitative research methods, evaluating public organization data, and demonstrating effective written communication. BAPA supports the University's mission by fostering critical inquiry, promoting social justice, and equipping students with the tools to advocate for equity and inclusion in their professional careers. The program places particular emphasis on local government and engages students in high-impact practices, such as an internship requirement and participation in the Cal State DC program to ensure they make a meaningful contribution to their local communities.

Faculty teach in both the Political Science program and in the Public Administration (PAP) program and are responsible for service activities in the MPA program and the PAJ division. Since there is significant overlap there is not a way to separate the PAJ faculty, yet core faculty include one assistant professor (Dr. Sean Angst), two associate professor (Dr. David Adams, Dr. Meriem Doucette), five professors (Dr. Shelly Arsneault, Dr. Elaine Frey, Dr. Sarah Hill, Dr. Myungjung "MJ" Kwon, Dr. Sam Stone) and one faculty in FERP (Dr. Yuan Ting). Students in the PA program express positive experiences with faculty and the curriculum, and express that faculty are passionate and provide "real-world experience" into the classrooms.

Since the 2017-18 academic year, the program has awarded an average of 32.8 B.A.s per year. There is a pattern of fewer each year (48 majors in 2017-28 to 21 in 2022-23) with a small rise in 2023-24 (24 majors). Graduation rates for first time freshman have fallen from 100% in 2017 and 2018 to 28.6% in

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2020 (in four years), and 50% on transfer students in 2017 to 42.9% in 2022 in two years (PAJ Self Study).

PPR Committees and Meetings

The PPR committee included Drs. Sarah Hill (Chair), Shelly Arsneault and Yuan Ting. The committee conducted the self-study and contributed to early drafts of the Response to the BAPA External Review Report.

The external review of the B.A. in Public Administration was conducted on March 3, 2025 by two external reviewers, Dr. Cecilia Ayón, Professor, and Director of Undergraduate Studies, School of Public Policy, University of California, Riverside and Dr. Charles C. Turner, Professor of Political Science and Criminal Justice and MPA Coordinator, California State University, Chico, and one internal reviewer, Dr. Mark Drayse, Professor, Department of Geography & the Environment, California State University, Fullerton. On April 15, 2025, Dean Jessica Stern, Associate Dean Carl Wendt, and Gabriela Nuñez, Associate Professor of Chicana/o Studies met with Philip Kopp, Associate Professor of Criminal Justice and PAJ Chair, Public Administration Faculty, Political Science Coordinator, and David P. Adams, Associate Professor of Public Administration and Public Administration Coordinator.

Reviewers note that the program's strengths include its alignment with CSUF's strategic plan, dedicated faculty, engaged students, relevant curriculum, and systematic assessment strategy.

Opportunities for Development/Growth

The PPR committee identified the following opportunities for growth:

1. The need for a clearer program identity in contrast to the MPA program.
2. Increased outreach to recruit more majors and minors
3. Enhanced curricular and outreach initiatives.
4. Increased faculty and staff support. Need for faculty "champion" dedicated to the BAPA program
5. A capstone course and 300-level Public Administration course specifically for BAPA majors.
6. Create BAPA course prefix to strengthen its identity. Reduce the related fields requirement from 9 to 6 units or eliminate it entirely. Further reduction in General Education requirements "could leave graduates less well-rounded and potentially less prepared to service diverse populations. Reflects concerns about unit load, scheduling constraints and student equity, and affecting the program's structure and outcomes
7. Build a stronger sense of community within the BAPA program
8. Implement a graduation exit survey to enhance program assessment

9. Expand alum engagement. Would require faculty and administrative support to implement and sustain
10. Recommendation for a “core group of lecturers”

BAPA response to the PPR recommendations are the following:

The program is committed to revising the BAPA mission statement to reflect its unique purpose more explicitly in collaboration with faculty. BAPA is currently working on promotional materials in anticipation to share at future campus events and with tandem advisors. Faculty will further discuss the creation of a BAPA course prefix at a meeting or retreat. BAPA is committed to establishing the Public Administration Student Association for undergraduate and graduate students in Fall 2025. BAPA will provide a structured organization for student involvement, professional development, and networking opportunities, and attach a new International City/County Management Association (ICMA) student chapter to PASA to support students with professionalization. BAPA will explore the idea of a dedicated BAPA faculty advisor in a way that integrates the role into the existing faculty workload. BAPA will implement a graduation exit survey to enhance program assessment. The program is currently developing a newsletter to serve current students and alumni of the BAPA and MPA programs.

Challenges

The realities of the field make it challenging to recruit a stable group of lecturers. Most PA lecturers are working professionals who typically teach one or two courses per term in the evening. There is a need for institutional support, dedicated personnel to support recruitment efforts and strengthen the program’s visibility.

Needs

BAPA expresses a need for a new hire at the Associate or Full level with experience and institutional knowledge to take this role or to free up a current faculty to act as faculty “champion,” to support the creation and sustainability of new courses. A single faculty member would be insufficient in this role. The BAPA program does not have any specifically assigned staff resources and is greatly needed, especially for BAPA to consider and implement the creation of its own course prefix. This would take additional staff time to create schedules and may have larger implications in the college, affecting budgeting and tenure density. Ongoing staff training is requested for university software, more scheduling flexibility with virtual workdays, increased storage space, and technology upgrades as identified by staff.

BAPA Requests the following support:

1. Replacement of the returning 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 alumni tracking and engagement.
5. College support for a MailChimp or similar platform to distribute the new Public Administration program newsletter effectively.

Dean's Response

The Dean commends PA faculty in designing and sustaining a thoughtful, impactful program, and appreciates how seriously they invested in refining their mission and goals for the PPR.

The Dean recognizes the need for PA to hire a new faculty member and has identified a PA search as critical in the Provost's search request call for 25-26 for faculty who will start in Fall 2026. Until a new faculty member is hired and onboarded, the Dean encourages PAJ to implement stopgap strategies to slowly grow the offering of lower division courses and develop their current High Impact Practices to promote steady growth over the next few years.

The Dean notes that she did just add a staff line to PAJ, and urges the department leadership to ensure that PA has ample access to that staff person. The Dean will commit to more training for staff and investigate the possibility of MailChimp or a comparable platform to assist with student recruitment, depending on budgetary availability.

The Dean recognizes that graduation rates are down across the college, especially since the Covid-19 pandemic, but asks that the program be very attentive to the slipping graduation numbers. As a college we now aim to grow our majors and minors. The Dean encourages PA to pursue the recruitment and retention strategies that articulated in their PPR Response, such as the 4+1 blended program, certificate program, growing the minor, strengthening alumni relations, working with donors, creating a newsletter, creating a student club and energizing Student Ambassadors to help promote the major. The Dean's office is attentive to the staffing needs for the PA program, and the burden that has fallen on the coordinator, and is investigating ways to ensure that the program has enough committed assign time and necessary summer hours to complete the work needed to build and sustain this crucial program.