

May [XX], 2025

Angela M. Eikenberry, Chair

Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation

Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA)

Subject: Response to COPRA Following Site Visit Team Report

Dear Chair Eikenberry and Members of COPRA,

On behalf of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at California State University, Fullerton, I want to thank the Commission for its thoughtful engagement throughout this reaccreditation cycle. The process has been both rigorous and constructive, offering a clear framework for reflection, accountability, and institutional learning. We are especially appreciative of the March 2025 Site Visit Team (SVT) Report, which affirms the substantial progress we've made in response to COPRA's July 2024 Decision Letter and November 2024 Interim Report.

As the SVT Report noted, the program has made meaningful advances in mission clarity, strategic planning, student support, and faculty culture. These developments reflect the collaborative work of faculty, staff, students, alumni, and administrative partners who are deeply committed to student success and the values of public service.

Highlights from the SVT Report include:

- A revised mission and vision, developed through a participatory planning process.
- Strengthened faculty culture and shared governance, with an emphasis on inclusion and collaboration.
- Improved academic advising, expanded alumni engagement, and more intentional student communication.
- A student body that is actively engaged and appreciative of the faculty's investment in their academic and professional growth.

We offer the following updates in alignment with the areas COPRA asked us to address.

1. Standard 1.1 – Mission Statement

COPRA requested an update on the mission review process, including stakeholder engagement and how the effort aligns with structural changes in the Division.

Response:

As the SVT confirmed, the program completed a structured, inclusive mission review process. Over the course of the fall and early spring, faculty, students, alumni, and advisory board members participated in facilitated retreats, feedback sessions, and working groups. The resulting mission, vision, and values statement reflects our shared commitment to ethical and effective public service leadership and is well aligned with NASPAA standards.

The SVT observed a positive shift in unit culture, including a more intentional strategic planning process and strong alignment across university, college, and program leadership. This shared vision has helped clarify goals, re-center our values, and support faculty and student engagement.

We anticipate continued alignment between our mission and program-level decisions as we finalize our strategic plan in spring 2025 and begin implementation in the coming academic year.

2. Standard 3.2 – Faculty Diversity and Inclusion

COPRA requested evidence of a formal DEI Plan and steps taken to improve the faculty climate, particularly for women faculty.

Response:

The SVT confirmed that we have developed and begun implementation of a formal DEI Plan that includes:

- Mentorship and support for underrepresented faculty.
- Inclusive recruitment and hiring practices.
- Ongoing climate assessment and faculty engagement efforts.

The DEI Plan was developed in tandem with our strategic planning process and has helped structure conversations around equity, representation, and faculty development. Since the site visit, we have continued to build on these efforts with concrete actions:

- A senior faculty member with deep experience in political science and public administration has been appointed Vice Chair of the Division. This decision reflects her long-standing contributions to the program and the broader composition of the Division's faculty. This appointment supports a more representative and collaborative leadership structure.
- Ongoing integration of DEI goals in faculty recruitment, mentoring practices, and workload planning.

While we recognize this work is ongoing, the SVT acknowledged our progress and noted a significant positive cultural shift within the program. Our next steps will focus on assessing the impact of these efforts over time and embedding DEI into our broader strategic implementation plan.

3. Standard 4.3 – Student Support and Alumni Engagement

COPRA asked for evidence of enhanced student advising and alumni engagement, especially as related to student access to career support, advising, and networking.

Response:

The SVT observed meaningful improvements in student support, with students expressing

appreciation for faculty mentorship, professional development opportunities, and clearer advising pathways. Alumni also shared constructive feedback that has informed our ongoing engagement strategy.

Student-centered highlights from the SVT Report include:

- Positive student experiences with faculty mentorship and career preparation.
- Increased access to advising, including flexible appointments and responsive guidance.
- A desire for deeper alumni connections, which the program is now cultivating through structured events and communication.

Recent improvements include:

- A rotating faculty advisor role, now held by a new colleague who offers flexible appointment scheduling.
- The MPA Director provides supplemental advising support during winter and summer breaks.
- Relaunch of in-person orientation with alumni participation and space for community building.
- Alumni panels, networking events, and the new *Titan Public Administration Review* newsletter to expand professional networks and student-alumni engagement.

We will continue to build on these efforts in the coming year, with particular attention to improving the visibility and accessibility of career development resources.

4. Standard 7.1 – Communications and Transparency

COPRA requested confirmation that the program’s public-facing materials meet transparency standards, including the publication of student outcomes.

Response:

The SVT confirmed that we are in conformance with Standard 7.1. Our new divisional website now provides timely and accessible information, including:

- Graduation and employment statistics.
- Program mission, goals, and curriculum information.
- Contact details for advising and student support services.

These updates improve stakeholder access to key information and reinforce our commitment to accountability and transparency.

Commendations and Future Priorities

We are especially grateful for the SVT’s commendations, which affirmed:

- A renewed sense of purpose and collaboration among faculty.

- A deep commitment to supporting the success of our diverse and often first-generation student population.
- Institutional support that positions the program for sustainable growth.

We will continue to strengthen our advising and alumni initiatives, refine DEI implementation, and explore program innovations—including new credentials and scheduling options—to meet the evolving needs of our students and communities.

Conclusion

We appreciate COPRA's thoughtful oversight and the opportunity to demonstrate the progress our program has made. The past year has been one of deep reflection and renewed purpose, and we are proud of the work accomplished in collaboration with our stakeholders and colleagues.

We welcome any further questions and look forward to COPRA's final review this summer.

Sincerely,

David P. Adams
MPA Director
California State University, Fullerton

No items listed in Interim Report

New Group

Standard 7. Matching Communications with the Mission

7.1 Communications: The program will provide appropriate and current information about its mission, policies, practices, and accomplishments - including student learning outcomes - sufficient to inform decisions by its stakeholders such as prospective and current students; faculty; employers of current students and graduates; university administrators; alumni; and accrediting agencies.

Standard 7.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 7.1 Comments

No items listed in Interim Report

SVT: Confirmed the implementation of a new Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice website that includes the MPA program to provide greater accessibility of information, including the required NASPAA disclosures of progress towards graduation and alumni employment trends.

Section 4 Commendations and Recommendations

In this section, the site visit team may commend the program on outstanding efforts and accomplishments and may recommend actions to strengthen the program. First, within the framework of peer review and accreditation (and without compromising the judgment to be made by COPRA), it is appropriate for the SVT to identify items that are well done or that are innovative in the field. This recognition of attainments and successes can add to the items covered in the review of standards.

Second, the site visit team may develop recommendations or suggestions which it believes will strengthen the program. These recommendations should flow from the mission of the program (and should avoid personal views of how things should be done).

Commendations

1. Alignment of the University, College, Division, and MPA program leadership to support an inclusive culture through participatory governance and formalization of governance policies to add transparency and active engagement to define and act on the MPA mission, goals, and shared responsibilities within the unit. Collectively, these efforts have generated a sense of renewed purpose for the MPA faculty, program leadership, students, and alumni.
2. Commitment of faculty to student learning experience, mentorship, and professional development, especially in light of the distinct first generation college student demographics. The MPA is commended for their careful attention to acknowledging and practicing a high degree of cultural awareness in integrating the full lived experience of students in their educational journey. This is illustrated by an MPA orientation that invites student's support system and building on their professional interests through class activities.
3. There is evident commitment from the University and College on the success of the MPA program as a critical professional graduate degree options building on the strength of the undergraduate enrollment at Cal State Fullerton and opportunities to grow graduate admission with the support of the Office of Graduate Studies and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Recommendations

1. The MPA program is actively developing a more robust communication strategy to leverage alumni networks to current student engagement. We recommend continuing to build on both the community building activities (such as mixers and professional workshops) with unit newsletters highlighting new faculty, student and alumni achievements, and opportunities to engage.
2. Recognizing that the MPA student population are either working professionals and completing the degree on a part time basis, usually, 2 or 3 courses a semester, the MPA program should continue to assess course availability and scheduling to ensure students can progress through the program in a timely manner with expected plans of study.
3. Explore with faculty input complementary programs to the MPA or delivery modality, such as 1) The development of "stackable" graduate certificate that utilize existing faculty and coursework that are consistent with the mission and vision statements. Potential certificate topics could be identified through alumni, the Advisory Board, students, and potential employer feedback, much like the processes used to develop the mission statement and strategic plan. 2) The program could test the online market by developing of a micro-credential first and then follow with an online stackable graduate certificate if there is demand. 3) The development of an accelerated MPA program that not only draws on existing undergraduate majors in the Division, but that would also appeal to undergraduate programs across the college (e.g., business, engineering, etc.). 4) Adopting a generic "concentration" (non-transcript visible) that allow students to design their own concentration instead of one of the now required concentrations to encourage the enrollment of students with other interests or wanting to combine some interests. This option may allow for more flexible course scheduling as well and might allow students to have more available course options in order to graduate at an earlier date.

September 19, 2024

Dear Dr. Billingsley and Members of COPRA,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Commission's feedback regarding the reaccreditation of our Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. We appreciate your recognition of our program's strengths and the constructive feedback provided to help us further improve. Below, we outline the initiatives we plan to implement this academic year to meet the Commission's expectations, as highlighted in the accreditation decision letter on July 12, 2024. We are committed to these initiatives and look forward to updating you on our progress at the end of Spring 2025.

1. Mission Statement (Standard 1.1)

We have initiated a comprehensive mission review process aligned with our strategic planning efforts, which actively engages faculty, staff, students, alumni, and our advisory board. On September 20, 2024, we will hold an initial mission and vision planning meeting for faculty to begin drafting mission and vision statements and identifying core values for the program. A smaller group will refine these drafts for further review.

This process will extend to our advisory board, with at least two meetings planned, as well as to current students and alumni through focus groups and surveys. We aim to finalize the mission and vision statements by the end of the fall semester. Aligning program components with these statements will be a key focus throughout the academic year.

Additionally, we are conducting a program review for the Public Administration BA, involving a day-long retreat, self-study, site visit, and administrative review. This departmental review will complement the strategic planning for the MPA program.

2. Faculty Diversity (Standard 3.2)

We have integrated Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) planning into our strategic planning process to ensure DEI objectives align with the program's mission and goals, fostering an inclusive climate for students and faculty. Addressing the Commission's concern about gender inclusiveness among faculty, we have developed strategies to improve the climate in the upcoming academic year.

As outlined in our Proposal for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives, we are focusing on actionable steps such as:

- Enhancing recruitment efforts to attract a diverse pool of candidates, with an emphasis on gender diversity.

- Developing support systems for underrepresented groups, including mentorship programs and professional development opportunities.
- Establishing student and faculty feedback mechanisms to continually assess and improve the inclusiveness of our environment.

We will utilize the university's resources and partnerships to advance DEI goals, including creating more inclusive hiring committees and supporting initiatives that prioritize diverse faculty recruitment.

3. Student Support (Standard 4.3)

In response to COPRA's feedback, we are enhancing student support services, particularly advising and alumni engagement. We successfully conducted the fall orientation for incoming students, held in person for the first time since the pandemic. New students were invited to bring a family member or friend and engaged with faculty, current students, and alumni to discuss program details and support systems.

The program director and advisor is pursuing a Certificate in Supporting Graduate Students of Color through the Project upGRADS program and has and will continue to attend relevant training to improve advising for our diverse student body. We plan to survey students to assess their needs and preferences for advising and support services.

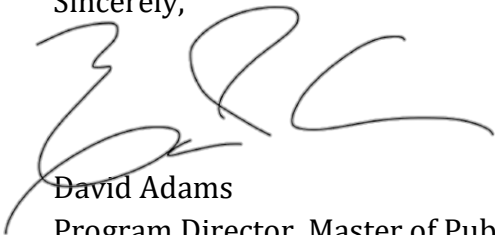
We are also considering several ideas as we expand our alumni engagement efforts, including:

- Distributing a semesterly newsletter.
- Hosting additional alumni networking events.
- Inviting alumni as guest speakers.
- Developing an alumni mentorship program.
- Continuing our annual Alumni of the Year Award.
- Featuring alumni spotlights on our website.

These initiatives aim to strengthen our community and provide enhanced support to our students.

We appreciate the Commission's guidance and remain committed to continuous improvement and collaboration. We look forward to demonstrating our progress in our Spring 2025 update.

Sincerely,



David Adams
Program Director, Master of Public Administration
California State University, Fullerton

CSUF MPA Program Accreditation Update 2024

Response to Site Visit Report

Introduction

The Master of Public Administration (MPA) program at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF) would like to thank the COPRA site visit team for their thorough review of our program and their insightful feedback, commendations, and recommendations. We appreciate the team's recognition of our program's strengths, as well as the constructive suggestions for areas where we can continue to improve and develop.

In this response, we will address the key findings and recommendations from the site visit report, organized by the NASPAA accreditation standards. For each standard, we will discuss our program's ongoing initiatives and future plans to build upon our successes and tackle identified challenges. We will also share our intentions to pursue the additional recommendations generously provided by the site visit team.

CSUF's MPA program remains deeply committed to the mission of preparing public service leaders and to the continual enhancement of our program. The COPRA peer review process has been invaluable for guiding our progress. We look forward to continued collaboration with COPRA as we implement our plans and strive for excellence in public affairs education.

Standard 1: Mission and Goals

- The site visit team wrote the program has a “strong commitment to participate in the process of developing and refining the mission statement and that the mission statement review remains an ongoing process.”
- The program will begin a strategic planning process in the fall of 2024 that involves faculty, staff, students, alumni, and our advisory board in various ways.
- The program will also engage in a review of the mission statement as part of this process, aligning its strategic planning process with the recently adopted university strategic plan and the college's developing strategic plan.
- Much of this work will place the program well ahead of universal academic program alignment with the university's strategic plan.
- The program will have a faculty retreat in the fall of 2024 to discuss the strategic planning process and the program's mission and goals, as well as engage in a program performance review process of the undergraduate Public Administration program.

Standard 3.2: Faculty Diversity and Climate

- The program is actively engaged in strategic planning for DEI and climate issues. The joint Public Administration and Political Science DEI committee is chaired by the program director, as outlined in the program's response to the interim report.
- The site visit team recognized several concerns, including the lack of diversity among faculty and the need for a more inclusive climate.
- The program neglected to highlight that in its most recent (2023-24) search for a new public finance faculty member an offer was made to a female-identifying candidate. In the end, the result was a failed search.
- Faculty Diversity
 - While not increasing faculty diversity directly, the program's most recent hire conducts community-engaged research in South LA and has a strong commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - The program's faculty recruitment and hiring process meet the standards of the university's goals and align with the procedures for faculty hiring.
 - Since the site visit, the program and Division have engaged in a Division-wide effort to make hiring committees more diverse and inclusive.
 - The program will follow the steps outlined in its diversity initiative for upcoming hires.
- Inclusive Climate
 - There is a Division-wide effort to address inclusivity and climate issues.
 - Since the site visit, the Chair has appointed a senior female-identifying faculty member to the position of Vice Chair.
 - The program has welcomed a female-identifying full-time faculty member after retreating from an administrative position.

Standard 4.3: Support for Students

- The site visit team noted the program's strong commitment to student support and significant progress in this area, while recognizing some areas for improvement in developing an alumni network and academic advising.
 - Alumni Network
 - * Working with program support staff, the program has developed a communication plan to maintain contact with and update information from alumni.
 - * The program plans to:
 - Hold two student-alumni mixers per year and a family day.
 - Develop engaging and informative e-newsletters and social media communication with alumni.
 - New staff support will facilitate these efforts and enhance the program's online presence through the website and social

- media.
- Advising and Support
 - * The program intends to return to in-person orientation in fall 2024, including family members, current students, and alumni.
 - * The program will develop a communication plan to improve communication with students about program requirements, course scheduling, and other important information.
 - * Since the site visit:
 - The role of faculty advisor has cycled to a different full-time faculty member.
 - With the guidance of the dean’s office, the program will develop guidelines for faculty advising and support for students, including attending advising orientation and retreats offered through Graduate Studies.

Standard 6: Matching Resources to Mission

- The site visit team noted the program’s strong commitment to matching resources to its mission and goals, while recognizing some areas for improvement in financial support, faculty travel, and marketing.
- Staffing and Responsibilities
 - An additional support staff member has been hired in the division to assist with online engagement and website development, as well as internal and external event coordination.
 - The program is clarifying roles and responsibilities of staff for accreditation, assessment, admissions, and other program needs.
- Alumni Engagement
 - The program is developing a communication plan to maintain contact with and update information from alumni.
 - We intend to develop a program brochure and other promotional materials to market the program and enhance our online presence through the website and social media.
 - We believe we can use our alumni in various ways to support the program, including student recruitment, classroom engagement, and strategic planning.
- Financial Support and Marketing
 - The dean’s office has agreed to provide additional travel funds for the program director to attend both the NASPAA and ASPA conferences each year.
 - The dean’s office will assist in developing marketing materials for the program, including a new program brochure and other promotional materials.
 - The program will continue to work with the deans’ office to support high impact programs including the City Management Fellowship Program.

Additional Recommendations

The program is grateful to the site visit team for their feedback, commendations, and recommendations. The plans to pursue these additional recommendations offered by the site visit team.

1. Start an ICMA student chapter
2. Revive our ICMA city manager in residence program
3. Incrementally move towards a revised capstone experience for students
4. Immediately develop a 4+1 program with the undergraduate program
5. Explore opportunities and develop curriculum for graduate certificates
6. Recognize opportunities and explore ways to regularly involve and utilize our advisory board including
 - a. alumni relations
 - b. classroom engagement
 - c. strategic planning committee
 - d. student/alumni mixers
 - e. student recruitment
7. Focus on areas of equitable program responsibility and workload distribution as part of the strategic planning process

Conclusion

The CSUF MPA program is grateful for the opportunity to participate in the COPRA peer review process and benefit from the site visit team's evaluation and recommendations. We are proud of our program's strengths and accomplishments, which the team has recognized, and we are committed to addressing the identified areas for improvement. Our plans, as outlined in this response, demonstrate our dedication to enhancing faculty diversity and climate, supporting our students, matching our resources to our mission, and pursuing additional opportunities to strengthen our program. We will engage in strategic planning, involve our stakeholders, and use our resources to continue providing high-quality public affairs education that prepares our graduates for leadership roles in public service. The CSUF MPA program looks forward to maintaining our NASPAA accreditation and collaborating with COPRA as we work towards our goals.

Site Visit Report

Draft Management

- Check the "Make Report Visible To School And COPRA (Draft Ready)" box when you are ready for the report to be viewed externally.
- Do not click the "Submit and Lock Site Visit Report" button until you are completely finished with the report; you will no longer be able to edit the report after this button is checked and the report is saved.

Make Report Visible To School And COPRA (Draft Ready) Yes

Submit and Lock Site Visit Report Yes

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION:

1. List Members of site visit team, with Title and University
2. Dates of the site visit
3. Upload of Site Visit Schedule

Names of Site Visit Team

NASPAA Site Visit Report
California State University Fullerton

Abraham David Benavides (chair) University of Texas at Dallas
Su Su Huyang, The University of Tennessee
Scott Lanzenby, Portland State University

Site Visit Start Date 03/11/2024

Site Visit End Date 03/13/2024

Site Visit Schedule

Download

SECTION 2 BACKGROUND AND MISSION

In Section 2, The Site Visit Team should indicate whether the program's mission and related activities are appropriate for providing professional education for leadership in public service. The Site Visit Team should provide COPRA with information about the particular mission of the program, the general approach to carrying out that mission, and the procedures for periodic self-evaluation and planning relating to the program's Universal Competencies. The Site Visit Team should provide COPRA with information on the program's progress on the Universal Competencies they did not choose to discuss in their Self-Study report as well as their Mission Specific Required and Elective Competencies.

(Due to the online nature of the format and to reduce on redundancy, SVTs will be asked to comment on Standards 1 and 5 in Section 2 and provide any information they would have under Section 3 in this section.)

Instructions:

For each Standard (in either Section 2 or Section 3) the Site Visit Team will check the appropriate box (Cited by COPRA; Cited by SVT; Have Concerns; Have No Concerns). Site Visitors are required to provide information in the text boxes below each Standard regarding any Standard that is cited by COPRA in the Interim Report. The SVT may have concerns regarding a Standard that were not cited by COPRA, if this is the case the SVT should indicate they have a concern with the Standard and provide information to COPRA regarding their concern. (If there is a

Standard not cited by COPRA and the program has no concerns with the Standard the SVT does not need to provide any commentary in the text box but should check the Have No Concerns box).

State the program's Mission

"To prepare our students for a career in public service by providing a core set of competencies anchored in the foundations of scholarly research and professional practice. Our students develop knowledge, skills, and public service values that equip them to be ethical and exceptional leaders in their communities who act with a commitment to public service, democratic values, accountability, social equity, and diversity."

Standard 1. Managing the Program Strategically

1.1 Mission Statement: The Program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including

- Its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy
- The population of students, employers, and professionals the Program intends to serve, and
- The contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy.

Standard 1.1 Status

Cited by COPRA
Have No Concerns

Standard 1.1 Comments

Item 1: Standard 1.1 - Mission Statement

Standard 1.1 states, "The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including:

- its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public service,
- the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and
- the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public service"

In its Self-Study Report, the program notes, "The mission statement has undergone multiple revisions since the program's inception, reflecting the dynamic nature of public service, the changing requirements of our stakeholders, and various internal and external factors. The program has initiated several strategic planning activities and meetings, using the mission statement as the basis for discussion. Although these discussions have occasionally proposed alterations or amendments to the mission statement, the consensus among the program faculty is that the current version is adequate. The mission statement was discussed during our latest advisory board meeting in March 2023, where the faculty noted comments and suggested revisions. The program is currently evaluating these suggestions." The Commission seeks further information as to why the mission statement was not revised, despite stakeholders proposing alterations and amendments. Why was the decision to keep the current version at sole discretion of the program's faculty? The Site Visit Team should explore this item with the program.

Program Response:

Overview of the Concern: The interim report raised a question about our current mission

statement, particularly regarding our decisions around revising it.

Context and Current Stance: Our Self-Study Report highlighted the adequacy of our current mission statement. This statement, while not without room for improvement, has effectively guided our program's objectives and pedagogical approaches. In recent years, we have engaged in several strategic planning activities, including SWOT analyses, to evaluate the potential for revising our mission statement. These discussions have been valuable but have also revealed a range of perspectives among our faculty, indicating the diverse viewpoints within our program.

Response to the Concern: The decision to retain our current mission statement was not taken lightly. It was based on a consensus that, at the time, it sufficiently encapsulated our core values and goals, particularly our commitment to ethical leadership, social equity, and diversity in public service. We recognize, however, the importance of having a mission statement that dynamically reflects the evolving landscape of public administration education.

Planned Future Actions: As part of our upcoming strategic planning activities, we are committed to a thorough and inclusive review of our current mission statement. This process will actively involve faculty, students, alumni, and employers, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered. Our objective is to critically assess whether our mission statement continues to effectively represent our core values and goals in the evolving field of public administration. Depending on the outcomes of this review, we may either reaffirm our commitment to the current mission statement or develop a revised version that more accurately reflects the current and future needs of our program and stakeholders.

SVT Site Visit Response

In addition to reviewing the program's response to the Interim Report, the Site Visit Team (hereafter SVT) had interviews with divisional chair, program coordinator, MPA faculty, staff, alumni, and stakeholders.

Our discussions indicated that all parties had a strong commitment to participate in the process of developing and refining the mission statement and that the mission statement review remains an ongoing process. Last year, the Advisory Board was invited to participate, yet the feedback was mainly on statement wording and format (wordsmithing) in lieu of content. In response to COPRA's request, faculty members have been engaged in discussions about the MPA's mission statement since last February and the process remains active. However, the Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice (of which the MPA program is a part) is currently undergoing structural changes and with that change, efforts are expected to align the MPA program's mission statement with the eventual divisional statement. There is consensus that more efforts will be dedicated to examining the mission statement from both faculty members and the advisory board. The administrative leaders all showed support for such future efforts. Awareness has been developed and the program director expressed strong commitment to involving all stakeholders to further improve the mission statement.

1.2 Performance Expectations: The Program will establish observable program goals, objectives and outcomes, including expectations for student learning, consistent with its mission.

Standard 1.2 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 1.2 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

1.3 Program Evaluation: The Program will collect, apply and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the Program's mission and the Program's design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven.

Standard 1.3 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 1.3 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

Standard 5 Matching Operations with the Mission: Student Learning - PART A

5.1 Universal Required Competencies: As the basis for its curriculum, the Program will adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and (to) public service values. The required competencies will include five domains - the ability:

- To lead and manage in public governance;
- To participate in and contribute to the public policy process
- To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
- To articulate and apply a public service perspective;
- To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

The SVT in this section should comment on any concerns relating to how the program has operationally defined each of the universal required competencies and their relationship to the program's mission.

Standard 5.1 Status

Cited by COPRA
Have No Concerns

Standard 5.1 Comments

Item 6: Standard 5.1 - Universal Required Competencies

Standard 5.1 states, "As the basis for its curriculum, the program will adopt a set of required competencies determined by its mission and public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability:

- to lead and manage in the public interest
- to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process;
- to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment;
- to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective;
- to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large."

In the Self-Study Report, the program indicates indirect assessment of several of its Universal Required Competencies (URC) are conducted by means of an exit survey. The Student Learning Outcomes Assessment attachment provided in the appendices note that these surveys had a total of seven respondents.

The Commission acknowledges that the program has completed a full cycle assessment on several URCs and has created associated improvement action steps. However, given the low response rate to the exit survey used as an indirect measure, the Commission seeks to understand whether the findings accurately reflect the program's assessment of the URCs. The Site Visit Team should explore this item with the program and collect evidence of the program's

assessment activities.

Program Response

Our recent AY 21-22 assessment report demonstrates a comprehensive evaluation of URCs through direct and indirect measures. While we acknowledge the lower-than-desired response rate for the indirect assessment, significant insights were still gleaned from direct assessment data. It is important to note that these surveys serve as a supplementary tool, providing additional insights into the comprehensive direct assessment data.

Direct Assessment Highlights: Proficiency in Competencies: The direct assessment revealed areas of proficiency among our students, especially in critical competencies such as ethical problem-solving and public policy analysis. **Areas for Improvement:** We identified specific areas needing improvement, including enhancing students' ability to synthesize public administration literature, and developing moral reasoning in ethical dilemmas.

Addressing Low Survey Participation: Impact of COVID-19: We believe the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected our survey participation rates.

Strategies for Improvement: To address this, we are implementing strategies like reducing survey fatigue and incentivizing participation to improve future response rates.

Action Steps and Program Improvements

Enhancing Writing and Analysis Skills: In response to the assessment findings, we have introduced a writing guide to strengthen students' literature review skills. This aligns with our commitment to nurturing critical analysis in public administration.

Curriculum Enhancements: We have integrated additional public policy components in foundational courses to address gaps in policy analysis competencies.

Expanding Assessment Scope: Future assessments will include responses from concentration-specific comprehensive exams and more diverse case studies, ensuring a holistic evaluation of student learning.

Innovative Approach: We have redesigned our assessment data collection by implementing a Qualtrics form that allows faculty to assess student work concurrently with grading. This integration significantly enhances the accuracy and validity of our assessment data.

Ease of Data Collection: This approach simplifies the data collection process for faculty, ensuring more consistent and comprehensive data.

Robust Data Collection Strategy: Over time, this method will enable us to accumulate a more robust set of data, providing deeper insights into student performance across different competencies.

Increased Participation: We have decided to revert to in-person completion of the exit survey during the last meeting of the capstone course. This strategy aims to significantly improve our response rates, providing a more representative sample of indirect data.

Pre-Post-Post-Post Test Design: We are considering implementing a longitudinal survey approach,

tracking student self-assessments at multiple points - at the beginning and end of the foundations course, and the beginning and end of the capstone course. This will allow us to measure student growth and development more effectively throughout their program journey.

Future for Continuous Improvement

Long-term Assessment Strategy: Our revamped assessment approach, combining innovative direct assessment methods and enhanced indirect strategies, signifies our commitment to a more dynamic and responsive assessment process.

Alignment with Program Goals: These changes are designed to align closely with our program's mission, ensuring that we effectively measure and support the development of competencies crucial for public service. **Commitment to Diversity and Public Service Values:** We are enhancing curriculum components that address diversity and public service values, ensuring these critical aspects are deeply embedded in our students' learning experience.

Site Visit Response

In addition to reviewing the program's response to the Interim Report, the SVT had intensive interviews with program coordinator and MPA faculty and talked with students and other stakeholders.

The MPA program has developed a quality infrastructure for assessing URCs, including drafting documents articulating student learning outcomes, building a MPA curriculum map linking each course to all student learning outcomes, setting up MPA assessment cycles and developing assessment rubrics assessing each learning outcomes. The program invested a great deal of effort in assessing student learning and universal required competencies. There has been very strong support from faculty, students, the advisory board, and university administrators.

Partly due to Covid, the assessment efforts in the past few years were hindered. The exit survey was conducted online, and the participation rates were low. Also, the assessment was conducted to a sample of students who work the sample sizes were limited. The program coordinator acknowledged the need for more assessment and showed commitment to do more in the future.

Faculty members were willing to participate and very much committed to more assessment.

Students acknowledged the value of program assessment and think those can be used to identify more needs for future admits and help to grow the MPA program. With the well-established assessment infrastructure, the MPA program holds a strong promise to deliver more assessment results.

5.2 Mission-specific Required Competencies: The program will identify core competencies in other domains that are necessary and appropriate to implement its mission.

The SVT in this section should comment on any concerns relating to how the program has operationally defined each of their mission-specific required competencies and their relationship to the program's mission (if applicable).

Standard 5.2 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 5.2 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

5.3 Mission-specific Elective Competencies: The program will define its objectives and competencies for optional concentrations and specializations.

The SVT in this section should comment on any concerns relating how the program has operationally defined each of their mission-specific elective competencies and their relationship to the program's mission (if applicable).

Standard 5.3 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 5.3 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

5.4 Professional Competency: The Program will ensure that students learn to apply their education, such as through experiential exercises and interactions with practitioners across the broad range of public

affairs, administration, and policy professions and sectors.

Standard 5.4 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 5.4 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

Standard 5.1-3 PART B: Stage of Assessment

The Site Visit Team should review in the program's SSR where the program indicated it thought it was in the stages of assessment for each competency. The Site Visit Team for this Standard should indicate after its review of the program's assessment practices where the SVT thinks the program is in the stages of assessment. Where the SVT differs from the program self analysis the team should provide information in the text box below on why they think the program is either further along or not as far as the program itself indicated.

Competency	Learning outcome has been defined	Evidence of learning has been gathered	Evidence of learning has been analyzed	Any Evidence used to make programmatic decisions	List what required courses cover this competency
1. To lead and manage in public governance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. To participate in and contribute to the public policy process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. To communicate and interact productively	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Competency	Learning outcome has been defined	Evidence of learning has been gathered	Evidence of learning has been analyzed	Any Evidence used to make programmatic decisions	List what required courses cover this competency
with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry					
6. Mission Specific Required Competency if applicable	No	No	No	No	No
7. Mission Specific Required Competency if applicable	No	No	No	No	No
8. Mission Specific Required Competency if applicable	No	No	No	No	No
9. Mission Specific Required Competency if applicable	No	No	No	No	No

Standard 5.1-3 PART B: Stage of Assessment Comments

 Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

Standard 5.1-3 Part C: One Assessment Cycle

The SVT in this section should comment on any concerns of the completed assessment cycle of the one universal required competency the program chose to highlight.

 Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

To lead and manage in public governance

 Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

To participate in and contribute to the public policy process

 Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions

 Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

To articulate and apply a public service perspective

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

Section 3 Standard By Standard Analysis

SECTION 3 STANDARD BY STANDARD ANALYSIS

Each item raised by the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation in its interim report to the program should be addressed in detail. The Site Visit Team should report the facts relevant to the questions raised by the Commission and provide an analysis of the program's relative performance with respect to the standard cited in each item. This assessment should assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program's performance with respect to the standard in question. However, the Site Visit Team should not reach final conclusions concerning conformity versus non-conformity with respect to the item and standard in question. Final decisions on conformity versus non-conformity should be made by the Commission based on clear assessments from the Site Visit Team.

In addition to addressing the concerns raised in the interim report, the Site Visit Team should here present its evaluation of the program's performance on any of the standards not specifically mentioned by the Commission that have risen to a point of concern for the team. The team in its report will indicate if a Standard not cited by COPRA has risen to a level of concern and provide information and facts to COPRA as to why the Site Visit Team feels this way. While evaluation and interpretation of "the facts" will be necessary and important, the Site Visit Team should **not reach final conclusions concerning conformity versus non-conformity with respect to the standard in question**. Final decisions on conformity versus non-conformity should be made by the Commission based on clear assessment from the Site Visit Team.

Standard 2. Matching Governance with the Mission

2.1 Administrative Capacity: The program will have an administrative infrastructure appropriate for its mission, goals, and objectives in all delivery modalities employed.

Standard 2.1 Status Have No Concerns

Standard 2.1 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

2.2 Faculty Governance: An adequate faculty nucleus - at least five (5) full-time faculty members or their equivalent - will exercise substantial determining influence for the governance and implementation of the program.

Standard 2.2 Status Have No Concerns

Standard 2.2 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

Standard 3 Matching Operations with the Mission: Faculty Performance

3.1 Faculty Qualifications: The program's faculty members will be academically or professionally qualified to pursue the program's mission.

Standard 3.1 Status Cited by COPRA
Have No Concerns

Standard 3.1 Comments

Item 2: Standard 3.1 - Faculty Qualifications

Standard 3.1 states, "The program's faculty members will be academically or professionally qualified to pursue the program's mission."

The Self-Study Report states that, "A lecturer is academically qualified by virtue of holding a Ph.D. (or achieving ABD status with an expected graduation date), D.P.A., J.D. or MA/MS in a field related to their specific teaching responsibilities and maintaining scholarship activities to support their teaching." The program later noted in the report that, "A lecturer can be professionally qualified by virtue of having a record of outstanding professional experience directly relevant to their teaching assignment. A professionally qualified faculty member will have a graduate degree as well as professional experience in a field related to their specific teaching responsibilities."

The Commission seeks additional information to support that the program mission drives the definition of academically qualified lecturers. The Commission also seeks additional information to better understand the definition of professionally qualified faculty. Based on the current description, it is unclear if PQ is defined by "having a record of outstanding professional experience" or if it is having a graduate degree, or a combination of the two. The Site Visit Team should explore this item with the program.

Program Response

Our Self-Study Report outlined the criteria for academically and professionally qualified faculty. These criteria ensure that our faculty possesses the expertise and experience to deliver high-quality education aligned with our program's goals. Here is a breakdown of how our criteria align with our mission:

Academically Qualified Lecturers

Ph.D., D.P.A., J.D., or MA/MS Requirement: This ensures that our faculty have a strong theoretical and research foundation in fields relevant to public administration and justice (PAJ). Scholarship

Activities: Continuous engagement in scholarship activities ensures that faculty members stay current in their fields and can bring the latest knowledge and research into the classroom.

Currency in the Field: For those with degrees earned more than five years ago, demonstrating currency in their field ensures that their knowledge remains relevant and applicable to today's public administration landscape.

Professionally Qualified Lecturers

Record of Outstanding Professional Experience: This criterion ensures that our faculty bring practical, real-world experience to their teaching, bridging the gap between theory and practice, which is crucial for preparing students for careers in public service.

Engagement in Professional/Community Service: This requirement aligns with our program's emphasis on public service values, as faculty members model them through their professional and community engagements.

Current Knowledge and Technique in Syllabi: Ensuring that syllabi reflect current knowledge and techniques guarantees that our curriculum is up-to-date and relevant, preparing students for the modern challenges of public service.

Site Visit Response

The Site Visit Team met with the program coordinator to better understand the program's definitions of and difference between professionally qualified and academically qualified faculty. All program faculty meet the standards to be either academically or professionally qualified faculty members teaching in an accredited NASPAA program. The SVT has no concerns. The SVT affirms that all

faculty are qualified to teach in the program.

3.2 Faculty Diversity: The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members.

Standard 3.2 Status

Cited by COPRA
Have Concerns

Standard 3.2 Comments

Item 3: Standard 3.2 - Faculty Diversity

Standard 3.2 states, "The program will promote equity, diversity, and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, retention, and support of faculty members."

In the Self-Study Report, the program includes the institution's DEI plan and an overview of the program's DEI Committee (established on 2/4/2023). The program does not, however, include evidence of DEI-related measures and progress on these measures. Furthermore, the program specified in its report that, "The faculty has not changed over the past five years."

The Commission requests further evidence of a DEI plan and DEI-related measures regarding faculty, as well as progress related to these measures. This is particularly important for the Commission as the program indicates the diversity of faculty "has not changed over the past five years".

The Site Visit Team will be responsible for reviewing the program's evidence related to the DEI plan. COPRA expects a diversity, equity and inclusion plan that links mission-based goals to measurable outcomes. The program should provide evidence regarding programmatic efforts to promote diversity, equity and a climate of inclusiveness, specifically demonstrable evidence of good practice, a framework for evaluating DEI efforts, and the connection to the program's mission and objectives.

Program Response

Current Efforts in Faculty Diversity

DEI Committee Initiatives

Diversity Recruitment Template: Our DEI Committee has developed a comprehensive template for recruiting diverse faculty. This template ensures that our job announcements are inclusive and appealing to a diverse range of candidates.

Recent Faculty Recruitment: We have actively sought diverse hires in our ongoing efforts to hire policy and finance faculty members. We utilized the DEI Committee's recruitment template in conjunction with university recommendations to ensure that the job announcements were structured to attract a broad range of candidates.

Advertising and Outreach

Diverse and Minority Sources: We have advertised these positions in diverse and minority-focused sources, extending our reach to a wider pool of candidates.

Professional Organizations: We leveraged networks within the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and American Political Science Association (APSA) sections related to diversity and a diverse range of additional professional organizations, further aligning with our commitment to enhancing faculty diversity.

Alignment with the University's Strategic Goals University's Strategic Goal: Our efforts align with our university's strategic goal of hiring diverse faculty, reinforcing our commitment to this objective at both the program and institutional levels.

Future Plans: Developing a Formal DEI Plan

As part of our upcoming strategic planning activities, we are in the process of developing a formal

DEI Plan. Preliminary plans and an implementation timeline are attached to this response.

This plan will include:

Clear DEI Objectives: Setting specific, measurable goals for enhancing faculty diversity.

Recruitment Strategies: Outlining strategies to continually improve our faculty recruitment process, ensuring it is inclusive and effective in attracting diverse candidates.

Progress Tracking: Implementing mechanisms to track and report our progress in faculty diversity.

Long-term Commitment: Ensuring our commitment to faculty diversity is sustained through ongoing efforts and institutional support.

Site Visit Response

The Site Visit Team met with administrators and faculty and verified the program response above. The program does have connections to minority serving institutions, has a recruitment plan which is required by the university, and they put together a very extensive list that resulted in a very diverse pool. Nevertheless, although all the final candidates were strong, they hired a white male because they felt that the characteristics that he brought to the table were more competitive than the others. They noted that it was a very close call because the top three candidates were all excellent. The candidates that were not selected were Asian females.

The program does not have a current functioning diversity plan either for faculty or students of for the program. They do, however, have a proposed plan that they share with us and COPRA and are working to implement it this fall semester.

The SVT feels that despite not hiring a minority candidate this time, that the program does have a good solid foundation on DEI type issues, has a good Diversity plan, and they expect to make a minority hire in the near future.

SITE VISIT TEAM ADDITIONAL CONCERN

The SVT found that there was not a climate of inclusiveness for women in the program. We spoke with both women faculty, independently of the full faculty, and corroborated this finding. We also note that the political science program was also cited for this same issue in their recent Accreditation Site Visit. We mention this only because the public administration program is in the same department as the political science program. Of note however, the criminal justice program which is also in the same department does not seem to have this issue. This could be because the majority of the faculty are women in this program. To be clear, public administration, political science, and criminal justice are all in the same department. The merger of these three units occurred in the 1990's as a cost-saving move. Nevertheless, they all are autonomous and have their own program heads and faculty governance systems.

The Program coordinator is aware of the situation and finds it a stumbling block for the program. He said: "The program can't grow unless the problem is address." There appears to be an unconscious bias toward women in PA and political science. For instance, woman faculty members putting on events and only women attending. The coordinator did visit. But no one else. There appears to be a lack of respect for all woman faculty members. They noted:

- Not being listened to in meetings.
- Lack of respect for women.
- Not being taking seriously
- Women don't want to serve on committees because it is difficult to work with certain men.
- One faculty member noted, - bluntly, he is a bully.

The Site Visit team is very concerned with the program and department environmental culture with respect to women, gender equity, and a climate of inclusiveness. Unfortunately, this situation is also affecting student advising.

3.3 Research, Scholarship, and Service: Program faculty members will produce scholarship and engage in professional and community service activities outside of the university appropriate to the program's mission, stage of their careers, and the expectations of their university.

Standard 3.3 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 3.3 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

Standard 4 Matching Operations with the Mission: Serving Students

4.1 Student Recruitment: The program will have student recruitment practices appropriate for its mission.

Standard 4.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 4.1 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

4.2 Student Admissions: The Program will have and apply well-defined admission criteria appropriate for its mission.

Standard 4.2 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 4.2 Comments

Neither COPRA nor the Site Visit Team had concerns.

4.3 Support for Students: The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to succeed or advance in careers in public affairs, administration, and policy.

Standard 4.3 Status

Cited by COPRA
Have Concerns

Standard 4.3 Comments

Item 4: Standard 4.3 - Support for Students

Standard 4.3 states, "The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to progress in careers in public service."

In the Self-Study Report, the program indicates that, out of 38 students initially enrolled in the program five years ago, 26 have graduated or are persisting to graduation. Additionally, the program noted, "As tallied in section 4.3.4b, the employment statistics for some of the SSY-1 cohort are unaccounted for. Tracking our graduates has been one of the program's challenges over the past few academic years. We have attempted to track our alumni in several ways, including, most recently, an electronic survey sent approximately six months following graduation. We follow standard survey protocol with an initial contact and two follow-up email reminders. Nevertheless, completion rates are low, hovering around 50% of recent graduates. This difficulty reflects a broader issue in higher education and indicates a need for enhanced communication and alumni engagement strategies."

The Commission seeks additional information regarding support for students to ensure such a gap persisting to graduation does not continue, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic becomes less of a direct impact.

Additionally, the Commission recognizes that the program has difficulty gaining access to employment information for graduates and program alumni. COPRA seeks additional information regarding the program's plan to close the gap in program alumni employment data in the future.

The Site Visit Team should discuss these items with the program.

Program Response

Enhancements in Information Accessibility and Curricular Changes

1. Documentation and Accessibility: We have made concerted efforts to document all essential program information and make it readily accessible to students. This includes clear guidance on program requirements, which aids in self-navigation through the program. This information is provided in the regularly updated and comprehensive MPA Handbook, which is distributed to all students upon admission.
2. Curricular Revisions: We've revised our curriculum to make it more student-friendly by adjusting prerequisites, refining concentration structures, and updating course names and descriptions. These changes have been integrated into various student resources like the Total Degree Audit (TDA), student handbook, and writing guide.

Improvements in Advising and Registration

1. Zoom Advising Sessions: Recognizing the need for flexible advising formats, we now offer sessions via Zoom, accommodating diverse student schedules and preferences.
2. Streamlined Registration Process: Collaborating with university administration, we've transformed the registration process for graduate students, resulting in a more efficient and less cumbersome experience.

Orientation and Continuous Engagement

1. New Student Orientation: Our comprehensive orientation program introduces students to a wide range of university resources, ensuring they are well-informed from the onset of their academic journey.
2. Canvas Platform Utilization: We utilize Canvas as a dynamic communication platform, regularly posting updates on job and internship opportunities, scholarship information, advising details, and other valuable resources.

Alumni Tracking

Formal Alumni Database: Acknowledging past challenges in tracking alumni, we are in the process of creating a formal, program-hosted database. This database will be updated with current contact information collected from students during their capstone course. This proactive approach aims to maintain accurate and updated information about our alumni's career progression.

Future Commitment

We remain dedicated to monitoring the effectiveness of these strategies and making further adjustments as needed to ensure our students' success in public service careers. The effectiveness of these efforts will be measured in new questions added to our exit survey administered to students and the end of the Capstone course.

Site Visit Response

The Site Visit Team met with students and was extremely impressed with the quality of students the program admits and mentors through the program. The SVT did ask about the program's response to the Interim report, and we were able to see that programmatic changes have been made to

ensure students are receiving the supports they need. The program might need to make some changes for the program to continue to grow. Nevertheless, in the short term it is somewhat of a concern. For instance, some of the student comments were:

- The Alumni Network is lacking, should build it as asset for the program to build connections and highlight of the program.
- Need to have more alumni mixers where students can reach 2nd year students and alumni.
- MPA class rotation was just updated yet students did not receive the email informing them of the change. Some students had to pay for an extra class to graduate.
- Advising - faculty do not respond to emails Dr. Adams does, however.
- Advising - experience was cold and intimidating.
- The program could have a stronger local government focus including counties.
- Not all instructors notify the bookstore of required texts for their course.

4.4 Student Diversity: The Program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and admissions practices and student support services.

Standard 4.4 Status

Cited by COPRA
Have No Concerns

Standard 4.4 Comments

Item 5: Standard 4.4 - Student Diversity

Standard 4.4 states, "The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, retention efforts, and student support services." In its Self-Study Report, the program provided a document that outlines its DEI committee. In this document, the program indicated the charges assigned for the Committee in the Fall 2023. The charges were listed as follows:

1. "Consider the appropriate role for the DEI Committee when it comes to student, staff, and faculty concerns about classroom and department environment
2. Create a model job ad aimed at recruiting diverse candidates
3. Research and create reading lists (relevant and rigorous) for interested faculty that teach POSC 100 and/or 300, 320, with reference to professional resources such as APSA and ASPA's work
4. Contact student groups to identify barriers to equity and build relationships with these groups
5. Examine existing department documents (e.g., manuals) to suggest improvements given DEI goals
6. Identify two to three barriers to equity for our students -- such as book costs, advising, major structure, etc. -- in particular ones that might inhibit graduation or encourage drop-outs - that we can change through our own efforts"

The program also noted, "The program intentionally integrates diversity into its curriculum's core topic. Core courses dedicate at least one week of scholarly readings to aspects of diversity, such as diversity management in human resources, active and passive representation in bureaucracy, and street-level bureaucracy. Faculty members engage students in discussions that weave together these theoretical frameworks with students' personal experiences in the workplace, fostering a richer understanding of the challenges and opportunities related to diversity."

While the program included the institution's DEI plan and an overview of the program's DEI Committee in the Self-Study Report, the program did not include information on how the program

promotes diversity and a climate of inclusiveness in its recruitment, admissions, and support services for students. The Commission requests further evidence of a DEI plan and DEI-related measures regarding students, as well as progress related to these measures.

Additionally, the Commission seeks further information regarding the mission-driven reason for the assignment of one week of DEI related reading in core courses, particularly as social equity is named within the program mission. How does this support build social equity knowledge, particularly as the program indicates in its mission that it seeks to "develop knowledge, skills, and public service values that equip [students] to be ethical and exceptional leaders in their communities who act with a commitment to public.

service, democratic values, accountability, social equity, and diversity"?

The Site Visit Team will be responsible for reviewing the program's evidence related to the DEI plan. COPRA expects a diversity, equity and inclusion plan that links mission-based goals to measurable outcomes. The program should provide evidence regarding programmatic efforts to promote diversity, equity and a climate of inclusiveness, specifically demonstrable evidence of good practice, a framework for evaluating DEI efforts, and the connection to the program's mission and objectives.

Program Response

Item Item 5: Standard 4.4 - Student Diversity Addressing DEI Integration in Curriculum

The program would like to clarify an oversight in our Self-Study Report. The reference to "one week of DEI-related reading" in core courses was erroneously included from an earlier draft and did not accurately reflect our current approach. We apologize for this error and appreciate the opportunity to correct it. Our faculty have integrated a diverse range of materials, scholars, and perspectives throughout their course curricula. This effort is a conscious and program-wide initiative, although it has not been formalized into a mandate. We believe this approach better represents our commitment to DEI, ensuring that these crucial themes are not isolated into a single week but woven into the fabric of our curriculum.

Strengthening Student Support and Inclusiveness

The attached DEI Plan that the program will consider as it develops a more robust effort in this area envisions several ways that we can take additional steps to enhance support for underrepresented groups:

1. Utilizing Campus Support Systems: We actively guide our students to existing campus resources, such as mentoring and peer-support programs, tailored specifically for underrepresented groups.
2. Scholarships for Underrepresented Groups: We are considering launching scholarships targeted at students from marginalized communities. This initiative will collaborate with donors and alumni to ensure sustainable financial support.
3. Student Advisory Board: We are considering a Student Advisory Board, with one of their key roles being to contribute to DEI initiatives. This board will provide a valuable platform for student voices, particularly from diverse backgrounds, to influence program development and DEI efforts.

Future Directions

We are committed to continuous improvement and responsiveness to evolving DEI needs, ensuring our program fosters an inclusive and equitable environment in public administration education. Feedback and communication from students will be key to understanding our efforts here. Such information can be gathered by expanding the DEI-related questions on the exit survey and communicating with students and student groups.

Site Visit Response

The Site Visit Team had no concerns with this particular standard. It recognizes that it was an error

in stating the facts about the program and not the reality. The SVT reviewed syllabi, spoke with students, confirmed the changes the program has put in place and looked at the diversity plan. The student body is very diverse and our conversations with students were delightful.

Standard 6. Matching Resources with the Mission

6.1 Resource Adequacy: The program will have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission, objectives, and continuous development.

Standard 6.1 Status

Have Concerns

Standard 6.1 Comments

Not cited by COPRA but a Site Visit Team Concern
Standard 6 - Resources

Administrative staff are shared with two other programs, political science and the much larger criminal justice undergraduate program (1,500 students). One part time (student) admin helps with MPA-specific tasks (e.g., updating the web site).

The program chair seems to have too much on his plate and might be able to delegate some administrative tasks to other faculty or faculty teams/committees (e.g., admissions).

The program could use additional staff support resources for building and maintaining a strong alumni network. This would serve those graduating from the program, provide a selling point for prospective students, and increase the visibility and stature of this excellent graduate program.

The small (\$1,100 per faculty member per year) travel budget must accommodate two purposes for this professional degree program: 1) professional development for faculty members themselves (e.g., attendance at NASPAA or ASPA conferences) and 2) staying connected with actual public administration professionals (e.g., attendance at ICMA, League of California Cities, GFOA, APWA, and other conferences, etc. depending on faculty member area of expertise).

New Group

Standard 7. Matching Communications with the Mission

7.1 Communications: The program will provide appropriate and current information about its mission, policies, practices, and accomplishments - including student learning outcomes - sufficient to inform decisions by its stakeholders such as prospective and current students; faculty; employers of current students and graduates; university administrators; alumni; and accrediting agencies.

Standard 7.1 Status

Cited by COPRA
Have No Concerns

Standard 7.1 Comments

Item 7: Special Note on Identifiable Student Data

As part of the response to Standard 4.4, the program provided an attachment in the appendices with examples of reasons why students have withdrawn from the MPA program. The information was in the form of emails between faculty and emails between faculty and students.

The Commission requests that the program resubmit this attachment without identifiable student information. As a reference for the program, it is common for programs undergoing accreditation review to share the information in summarized written form. For example, "out of the five students that withdrew, two left to enroll in other programs, two left due to family issues, one left to focus on a full-time job." The Commission simply seeks to understand whether there are any patterns to the withdrawals and how the programs seek to address such patterns.

The Commission requests the program include the updated information in its response to this Interim Report due January 15, 2024.

Program Response

Graduation Rates for MPA Students (fall cohorts) from Institutional Research

Reasons for Leaving the Program Collected from Email Correspondence

3 for family commitments

2 for departure for a different program

Site Visit Response

Standard 7.1

7p) Distribution of placement. Shown graphically (better than a table) on "alumni" page (one click away from MPA landing page). The graph shows results for 2022-23 rather than 2021-2022, this is fresher data for current potential applicants.

7r) Completion rates also shown graphically on alumni page for 2017-18 academic year. The web site is slated for complete replacement in the near future. At that time, it might be good to change the navigation structure (or page title), since the "alumni" page could be interpreted by prospective applicants as a page targeted to alumni as users of the website. The information on the page is really most relevant to prospective students.

Section 4 Commendations and Recommendations

In this section, the site visit team may commend the program on outstanding efforts and accomplishments and may recommend actions to strengthen the program. First, within the framework of peer review and accreditation (and without compromising the judgment to be made by COPRA), it is appropriate for the SVT to identify items that are well done or that are innovative in the field. This recognition of attainments and successes can add to the items covered in the review of standards.

Second, the site visit team may develop recommendations or suggestions which it believes will strengthen the program. These recommendations should flow from the mission of the program (and should avoid personal views of how things should be done).

Commendations

Commendations

We applaud the program on its local government fellowship program. From hearing the alumni at dinner to the information on the website, it is a top-notch program. Alumni supported and

community engaged. Care should be taken to assure its continuance in the future.

Practitioners as guest lecturers

Advisory Board. We commend you for having one and utilizing their services and advise.

Excellent faculty. The dedication they provide to students with a high course load and on a limited budget is commendable.

We met with the students, and we were very impressed with their knowledge of the program and excitement for the profession. The program has a very diverse student population.

Recommendations

Recommendations

Create an ICMA student Chapter. Components for a local government specialization are already in place. Some students requested additional mixers and such.

Formalize the ICMA "Manager in Residence program." The manager could provide guest lectures, mentoring, etc.

Gradually move to a capstone type exit format requirement versus a comprehensive exam.

Create an alumni type directory so that the program will have more control over the alumni from the program.

Explore 4+1 or 3+2 programs to take advantage of the 150 undergraduate students and from other programs on campus.

The provost suggested a certificate type program. He is in favor of supporting these type programs.

Alumni Advisory Board. We recommend that you take advantage of their specializations and use them more in your program.

Shared government and shared responsibility for program coordinator. To avoid burn-out.

Shared governance and shared responsibility. David has a lot on his plate. The advisory board needs to be used. Valuable feedback yet not taking advantage of the feedback and willingness to serve that they could provide.

With respect to modalities of teaching, the program has already voted to move forward with in-person classes and follow university modality guidance. We recommend that the program do so and table debates for other modalities until the program grows and received additional resources. The continued debate between in-person and online modalities is unproductive and detracts from the mission of the program.

Faculty travel should be increased from \$1,100 a year to at least \$3,000 a year. The professional development gained in terms of staying current in their field by attending academic conference is crucial to further strengthen the program.

Program coordinator should be provided travel funds to attend NASPAA every year (this should be in addition to his regular faculty travel). This is essential for his professional development with respect to accreditation and staying current with NASPAA.

More should be done to promote and enhance the program at the Deans and Provost Level. Many prominent leaders in Southern California have their degrees from this school, but the school does not capitalize on this advantage.

Site Visit Report

Draft Management

- Check the "Make Report Visible To School And COPRA (Draft Ready)" box when you are ready for the report to be viewed externally.
- Do not click the "Submit and Lock Site Visit Report" button until you are completely finished with the report; you will no longer be able to edit the report after this button is checked and the report is saved.

Make Report Visible To School And COPRA (Draft Ready) Yes

Submit and Lock Site Visit Report No

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION:

1. List Members of site visit team, with Title and University
2. Dates of the site visit
3. Upload of Site Visit Schedule

Names of Site Visit Team

Maja Holmes, Director and Professor, University of Kansas

Brent Steel, University Distinguished Professor, Director, Public Policy Graduate Program, Oregon State University

Site Visit Start Date 03/03/2025

Site Visit End Date 03/05/2025

Site Visit Schedule

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SECTION 2 BACKGROUND AND MISSION

In Section 2, The Site Visit Team should indicate whether the program's mission and related activities are appropriate for providing professional education for leadership in public service. The Site Visit Team should provide COPRA with information about the particular mission of the program, the general approach to carrying out that mission, and the procedures for periodic self-evaluation and planning relating to the program's Universal Competencies. The Site Visit Team should provide COPRA with information on the program's progress on the Universal Competencies they did not choose to discuss in their Self-Study report as well as their Mission Specific Required and Elective Competencies.

(Due to the online nature of the format and to reduce on redundancy, SVTs will be asked to comment on Standards 1 and 5 in Section 2 and provide any information they would have under Section 3 in this section.)

Instructions:

For each Standard (in either Section 2 or Section 3) the Site Visit Team will check the appropriate box (Cited by COPRA; Cited by SVT; Have Concerns; Have No Concerns). Site Visitors are required to provide information in the text boxes below each Standard regarding any Standard that is cited by COPRA in the Interim Report. The SVT may have concerns regarding a Standard that were not cited by COPRA, if this is the case the SVT should indicate they have a concern with the Standard and provide information to COPRA regarding their concern. (If there is a Standard not cited by COPRA and the program has no concerns with the Standard the SVT does not need to provide any commentary in the text box but should check the Have No Concerns box).

State the program's Mission

We prepare leaders to address complex social issues, uphold democratic values, and foster a commitment to ethical, equitable, and inclusive public service in Orange County and beyond.

Standard 1. Managing the Program Strategically

1.1 Mission Statement: The Program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including

- Its purpose and public service values, given the program's particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy
- The population of students, employers, and professionals the Program intends to serve, and
- The contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy.

Standard 1.1 Status

Cited by COPRA
Have No Concerns

Standard 1.1 Comments

Interim Report Requested:

The Commission continues to seek a detailed update on the comprehensive mission review process's progress, as the program's initial mission and vision planning meeting (September 20, 2024) was not held until after the Accreditation Decision Response (ADR) was submitted. COPRA seeks an update on the current status of the mission and vision development, including the engagement and participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as the program's anticipated completion date for the mission revision process. The Commission noted that the program did not provide any information in its ADR on the ongoing structural changes within the Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice and how that process is impacting the program's mission revision efforts. COPRA seeks an update on these changes, and how these changes align with the MPA program's mission statement. The program should discuss these changes with the Site Visit Team.

SVT Observed:

Following the site visit to California State University, Fullerton's Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program, the team has reviewed and confirmed the program's response to the concerns outlined in the Interim Report. The visit validated the program's progress in key areas. One common theme evident from the site visit is that new leadership in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, the Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice, and Director of the MPA program, along with a new member versed in strategic planning has greatly contributed to the new mission statement and vision of the program. Faculty also talked about "cultural change," improved climate," "positive and successful processes leading to a new strategic plan and DEI plan," and "better student and alumni engagement."

The site visit team confirms that the program has successfully revised its mission statement through a structured and inclusive process. Faculty, students, alumni, and the advisory board were actively engaged in multiple meetings, retreats, and feedback sessions, leading to the final adoption of the mission, vision, and values statement. The new mission statement aligns with NASPAA standards, emphasizing ethical leadership, democratic values, and public service. Stakeholder interviews indicated broad support for the updated mission and a clearer sense of direction within the program.

Based on conversations with MPA program faculty members, students, and alumni, the SVT affirmed the participatory strategic planning process that encompassed a strategic planning committee and several facilitated sessions with faculty, advisory board members, alumni, and current students. The process yielded both substantive strategic direction and generated a cultural shift in the unit acknowledging a more inclusive and productive climate.

1.2 Performance Expectations: The Program will establish observable program goals, objectives and outcomes, including expectations for student learning, consistent with its mission.

Standard 1.2 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 1.2 Comments

No items noted in Interim Report

SVT Observed: Based on conversations with MPA faculty and document reviews, the SVT affirms the MPA program engaged in a robust strategic planning process that generated several outcomes, including a revised mission, vision statement, core values, and seven strategic goals. The goals align with Cal State Fullerton strategic plan and represent one of the first units on campus to adopt program level goals. This illustrates the MPA programs commitment and demonstration of strategic implementation in concert with the University and College goals.

1.3 Program Evaluation: The Program will collect, apply and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the Program's mission and the Program's design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven.

Standard 1.3 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 1.3 Comments

No item reported in Interim Report

SVT observed that program was collecting, applying and using the programmatic performance measures to guide MPA program improvements. For example, the new Strategic Plan sets ambitious faculty goals for access including increasing new Fall cohorts to 45 students, developing "a pipeline for admission through programs and partners (certificates, blended program, change of modality, etc.)," and "improve access to educational advancement through non-degree alternatives like graduate certificates." The SVT believes these areas represent areas the program can take the initiative if resources are available.

Standard 5 Matching Operations with the Mission: Student Learning - PART A

5.1 Universal Required Competencies: As the basis for its curriculum, the Program will adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and (to) public service values. The required competencies will include five domains - the ability:

- To lead and manage in public governance;
- To participate in and contribute to the public policy process
- To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
- To articulate and apply a public service perspective;
- To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.

The SVT in this section should comment on any concerns relating to how the program has operationally defined each of the universal required competencies and their relationship to the program's mission.

Standard 5.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 5.1 Comments

No item noted in Interim Report

SVT reaffirmed that MPA program has completed the full cycle of evaluation for the 5 universal competencies.

5.2 Mission-specific Required Competencies: The program will identify core competencies in other domains that are necessary and appropriate to implement its mission.

The SVT in this section should comment on any concerns relating to how the program has operationally defined each of their mission-specific required competencies and their relationship to the program's mission (if applicable).

Standard 5.2 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 5.2 Comments

No items noted in Interim Report

5.3 Mission-specific Elective Competencies: The program will define its objectives and competencies for optional concentrations and specializations.

The SVT in this section should comment on any concerns relating how the program has operationally defined each of their mission-specific elective competencies and their relationship to the program's mission (if applicable).

Standard 5.3 Comments

NA

5.4 Professional Competency: The Program will ensure that students learn to apply their education, such as through experiential exercises and interactions with practitioners across the broad range of public affairs, administration, and policy professions and sectors.

Standard 5.4 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 5.4 Comments

No item noted in Interim Report

Standard 5.1-3 PART B: Stage of Assessment

The Site Visit Team should review in the program's SSR where the program indicated it thought it was in the stages of assessment for each competency. The Site Visit Team for this Standard should indicate after its review of the program's assessment practices where the SVT thinks the program is in the stages of assessment. Where the SVT differs from the program self analysis the team should provide information in the text box below on why they think the program is either further along or not as far as the program itself indicated.

Competency	Learning outcome has been defined	Evidence of learning has been gathered	Evidence of learning has been analyzed	Any Evidence used to make programmatic decisions	List what required courses cover this competency
1. To lead and	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Competency	Learning outcome has been defined	Evidence of learning has been gathered	Evidence of learning has been analyzed	Any Evidence used to make programmatic decisions	List what required courses cover this competency
manage in public governance					
2. To participate in and contribute to the public policy process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
4. To articulate and apply a public service perspective	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
5. To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
6. Mission Specific Required Competency if applicable	No	No	No	No	No
7. Mission Specific Required Competency if applicable	No	No	No	No	No
8. Mission Specific	No	No	No	No	No

Competency	Learning outcome has been defined	Evidence of learning has been gathered	Evidence of learning has been analyzed	Any Evidence used to make programmatic decisions	List what required courses cover this competency
Required Competency if applicable 9. Mission Specific Required Competency if applicable	No	No	No	No	No

Section 3 Standard By Standard Analysis

SECTION 3 STANDARD BY STANDARD ANALYSIS

Each item raised by the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation in its interim report to the program should be addressed in detail. The Site Visit Team should report the facts relevant to the questions raised by the Commission and provide an analysis of the program's relative performance with respect to the standard cited in each item. This assessment should assess the strengths and weaknesses of the program's performance with respect to the standard in question. However, the Site Visit Team should not reach final conclusions concerning conformity versus non-conformity with respect to the item and standard in question. Final decisions on conformity versus non-conformity should be made by the Commission based on clear assessments from the Site Visit Team.

In addition to addressing the concerns raised in the interim report, the Site Visit Team should here present its evaluation of the program's performance on any of the standards not specifically mentioned by the Commission that have risen to a point of concern for the team. The team in its report will indicate if a Standard not cited by COPRA has risen to a level of concern and provide information and facts to COPRA as to why the Site Visit Team feels this way. While evaluation and interpretation of "the facts" will be necessary and important, the Site Visit Team should **not reach final conclusions concerning conformity versus non-conformity with respect to the standard in question**. Final decisions on conformity versus non-conformity should be made by the Commission based on clear assessment from the Site Visit Team.

Standard 2. Matching Governance with the Mission

2.1 Administrative Capacity: The program will have an administrative infrastructure appropriate for its mission, goals, and objectives in all delivery modalities employed.

Standard 2.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 2.1 Comments

No items noted Interim Report:

SVT Observation:

The site visit verified significant structural improvements within the Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice, aimed at increasing program autonomy and streamlining governance. The program's strategic plan includes:

- Recruitment targets
- Program development initiatives

- Faculty engagement strategies

Interviews with faculty and administrators confirmed a clear roadmap for implementation, with progress on bylaws and program oversight improvements.

The MPA program is part of the Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice. The MPA program leverages faculty assignments to provide administrative support with a MPA Program Director who responsible for admission and assessment and MPA Student Advisor, who manages plans of study, graduation requirement confirmations, and students course questions. Within the PAJ Division, there is administrative support provided by 4 staff members that address travel, HR, budget, event planning, communications (including website development), and general student support.

2.2 Faculty Governance: An adequate faculty nucleus - at least five (5) full-time faculty members or their equivalent - will exercise substantial determining influence for the governance and implementation of the program.

Standard 2.2 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 2.2 Comments

No items noted Interim Report.

SVT Observation: Confirmed a MPA faculty nucleus of 9 tenure or tenure track faculty members. In addition the SVT affirmed that the Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice passed updated bylaws for division governance that included substantive delegation of degree program responsibility. This is characterized as positive development in clarifying the faculty governance structure within the division and the substantial determining influence for the governance and implementation of the MPA program.

Standard 3 Matching Operations with the Mission: Faculty Performance

3.1 Faculty Qualifications: The program's faculty members will be academically or professionally qualified to pursue the program's mission.

Standard 3.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 3.1 Comments

No items noted in Interim Report.

SVT: Confirmed the MPA faculty nucleus are academically or professionally qualified to pursue the program's mission based on the R2 institution faculty expectations.

3.2 Faculty Diversity: The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members.

Standard 3.2 Status

Cited by COPRA

Have No Concerns

Standard 3.2 Comments

Interim Report Notes:

Given that the strategic planning processes began after the submission of the program's ADR, the Commission requests a comprehensive update on the current status of its DEI plan development, including details on the program's efforts and progress in this area. Furthermore, while the Commission acknowledges the program's initiatives to enhance faculty representation and inclusion, COPRA requests specific details regarding these plans and the processes guiding their implementation. The Site Visit Team should review the DEI plan with the program.

SVT Observed: The team verified the program's implementation of its Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Plan, which includes:

- Mentorship opportunities
- Recruitment of diverse faculty
- Climate assessment procedures

Further, the Division Chair for Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice and faculty affirmed the inclusive hiring practices and ongoing collaborative initiatives to support faculty development. The DEI Plan was developed through a participatory process in conjunction with the MPA strategic planning process. The SVT also observed that implementation evidence still developing. While many initiatives are well-documented, the site team found that full assessment and impact evaluation of these initiatives remains ongoing. The program intends to finalize its strategic plan by the end of Spring 2025, meaning some areas-particularly student and alumni engagement-are still evolving. While the DEI Plan is well-structured, full implementation is still in progress. Faculty hiring improvements are evident, but long-term measures-such as curriculum integration and sustained mentorship initiatives-will require further assessment over multiple cycles.

Responding to information shared by faculty documented in the 2024 site visit report regarding challenging departmental culture, the SVT affirmed based on conversations with faculty that there has been a significant positive culture shift in the unit based on the active engagement of the College Dean, Division leadership, and MPA Director leadership.

3.3 Research, Scholarship, and Service: Program faculty members will produce scholarship and engage in professional and community service activities outside of the university appropriate to the program's mission, stage of their careers, and the expectations of their university.

Standard 3.3 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 3.3 Comments

No items noted in Interim Report

Standard 4 Matching Operations with the Mission: Serving Students

4.1 Student Recruitment: The program will have student recruitment practices appropriate for its mission.

Standard 4.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 4.1 Comments

No items noted in Interim Report:

SVT Observed:

The program has traditionally aimed for 25 students admitted in both Spring and Fall semesters respectively to strive for a total enrollment in the MPA program of around 100 students. The MPA Program Director noted that the 2024 entering class was especially small. This has rebounded in the Fall 2024 and Spring 2025 admission cycle.

4.2 Student Admissions: The Program will have and apply well-defined admission criteria appropriate for its mission.

Standard 4.2 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 4.2 Comments

No items noted in the Interim Report

4.3 Support for Students: The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to succeed or advance in careers in public affairs, administration, and policy.

Standard 4.3 StatusCited by COPRA
Have No Concerns**Standard 4.3 Comments**

Interim Report Noted: The program's ADR does not provide evidence of implementation of its communication plan, much of which is still in the consideration process. As the ADR largely focuses on future-oriented ideas, the Commission requests specific updates on the implementation of the program's communication plan, including evidence of engaging alumni, enhanced communication with students, and responsive advising.

As stated in the Decision Letter, prior to the final accreditation decision in Summer 2025, the Commission expects: 1) evidence of implementation of the communication plan, including any improvement of available alumni employment data, and 2) evidence of efforts to improve the areas of student support, including students' need for an established alumni network, improved communication, and improved advising. The Site Visit Team should discuss these items with the program.

SVT Observation: Based on conversations with the MPA program advisory board, current students, and alumni, the SVT affirms that the program has expanded student advising and alumni engagement, with confirmed implementation of:

- A new designated graduate advisor
- "Coffee with the Director" sessions
- An in-person orientation with family and friends engagement component
- Alumni career panels, networking events, and a mentorship program

Additionally, the launch of the Titan Public Administration Review newsletter and active social media presence (LinkedIn and Facebook groups) supports enhanced student and alumni communication. Career development workshops on resume building, public speaking, and grant writing were also confirmed as beneficial resources for students.

4.4 Student Diversity: The Program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and admissions practices and student support services.

Standard 4.4 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 4.4 Comments

No items listed in Interim Report

Standard 6. Matching Resources with the Mission

6.1 Resource Adequacy: The program will have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission, objectives, and continuous development.

Standard 6.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 6.1 Comments

No items listed in Interim Report

New Group

Standard 7. Matching Communications with the Mission

7.1 Communications: The program will provide appropriate and current information about its mission, policies, practices, and accomplishments - including student learning outcomes - sufficient to inform decisions by its stakeholders such as prospective and current students; faculty; employers of current students and graduates; university administrators; alumni; and accrediting agencies.

Standard 7.1 Status

Have No Concerns

Standard 7.1 Comments

No items listed in Interim Report

SVT: Confirmed the implementation of a new Division of Politics, Administration, and Justice website that includes the MPA program to provide greater accessibility of information, including the required NASPAA disclosures of progress towards graduation and alumni employment trends.

Section 4 Commendations and Recommendations

In this section, the site visit team may commend the program on outstanding efforts and accomplishments and may recommend actions to strengthen the program. First, within the framework of peer review and accreditation (and without compromising the judgment to be made by COPRA), it is appropriate for the SVT to identify items that are well done or that are innovative in the field. This recognition of attainments and successes can add to the items covered in the review of standards.

Second, the site visit team may develop recommendations or suggestions which it believes will strengthen the program. These recommendations should flow from the mission of the program (and should avoid personal views of how things should be done).

Commendations

1. Alignment of the University, College, Division, and MPA program leadership to support an inclusive culture through participatory governance and formalization of governance policies to add transparency and active engagement to define and act on the MPA mission, goals, and shared responsibilities within the unit. Collectively, these efforts have generated a sense of renewed purpose for the MPA faculty, program leadership, students, and alumni.
2. Commitment of faculty to student learning experience, mentorship, and professional development, especially in light of the distinct first generation college student demographics. The MPA is commended for their careful attention to acknowledging and practicing a high degree of cultural awareness in integrating the full lived experience of students in their educational journey. This is illustrated by an MPA orientation that invites student's support system and building on their professional interests through class activities.
3. There is evident commitment from the University and College on the success of the MPA program as a critical professional graduate degree options building on the strength of the undergraduate enrollment at Cal State Fullerton and opportunities to grow graduate admission with the support of the Office of Graduate Studies and the College of Humanities and Social Sciences.

Recommendations

1. The MPA program is actively developing a more robust communication strategy to leverage alumni networks to current student engagement. We recommend continuing to build on both the community building activities (such as mixers and professional workshops) with unit newsletters highlighting new faculty, student and alumni achievements, and opportunities to engage.
2. Recognizing that the MPA student population are either working professionals and completing the degree on a part time basis, usually, 2 or 3 courses a semester, the MPA program should continue to assess course availability and scheduling to ensure students can progress through the program in a timely manner with expected plans of study.
3. Explore with faculty input complementary programs to the MPA or delivery modality, such as 1) The development of "stackable" graduate certificate that utilize existing faculty and coursework that are consistent with the mission and vision statements. Potential certificate topics could be identified through alumni, the Advisory Board, students, and potential employer feedback, much like the processes used to develop the mission statement and strategic plan. 2) The program could test the online market by developing of a micro-credential first and then follow with an online stackable graduate certificate if there is demand. 3) The development of an accelerated MPA program that not only draws on existing undergraduate majors in the Division, but that would also appeal to undergraduate programs across the college (e.g., business, engineering, etc.). 4) Adopting a generic "concentration" (non-transcript visible) that allow students to design their own concentration instead of one of the now required concentrations to encourage the enrollment of students with other interests or wanting to combine some interests. This option may allow for more flexible course scheduling as well and might allow students to have more available course options in order to graduate at an earlier date.

Response to COPRA Interim Report

CSUF MPA Program Self-Study

Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program at California State University, Fullerton

Interim Program Director: David P. Adams, Associate Professor of Public Administration

Date of Response: 2023-01-15

Contact Information: dpadams@fullerton.edu

Introduction

We want to express our sincere thanks to COPRA for their comprehensive review and insightful feedback in the interim report. The observations and recommendations we've received are not just valued; they are crucial in steering our MPA program toward higher levels of academic excellence and a deeper commitment to public service.

We recognize the thoroughness and dedication COPRA brings to the accreditation process. This is a golden opportunity for us to introspect, grow, and improve our program. The feedback has sparked deep reflection on our practices, goals, and the overall impact we aim to make in public administration education.

As we proceed with our response, it's important to emphasize our program's dedication to this process, marked by transparency, a willingness to adapt, and an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement. This response is crafted in a spirit of cooperation, acknowledging COPRA's critical role in enhancing the quality and relevance of public affairs education both nationally and globally.

In the sections that follow, I'll address each point raised in the interim report, outlining our current initiatives, future plans, and our ongoing dedication to aligning with NASPAA standards and the best practices in public service education.

Response to Item 1: Standard 1.1 – Mission Statement

Overview of the Concern

The interim report raised a question about our current mission statement, particularly regarding our decisions around revising it.

Context and Current Stance

Our Self-Study Report highlighted the adequacy of our current mission statement. This statement, while not without room for improvement, has effectively guided our program's objectives and pedagogical approaches. In recent years, we have engaged in several strategic planning activities, including SWOT analyses, to evaluate the potential for revising our mission statement. These discussions have been valuable but have also revealed a range of perspectives among our faculty, indicating the diverse viewpoints within our program.

Response to the Concern

The decision to retain our current mission statement was not taken lightly. It was based on a consensus that, at the time, it sufficiently encapsulated our core values and goals, particularly our commitment to ethical leadership, social equity, and diversity in public service. We recognize, however, the importance of having a mission statement that dynamically reflects the evolving landscape of public administration education.

Planned Future Actions

As part of our upcoming strategic planning activities, we are committed to a thorough and inclusive review of our current mission statement. This process will actively involve faculty, students, alumni, and employers, ensuring that diverse perspectives are considered. Our objective is to critically assess whether our mission statement continues to effectively represent our core values and goals in the evolving field of public administration. Depending on the outcomes of this review, we may either reaffirm our commitment to the current mission statement or develop a revised version that more accurately reflects the current and future needs of our program and stakeholders.

Response to Item 2: Standard 3.1 – Faculty Qualifications

Overview of the Concern

The interim report seeks further information on how our program's criteria for faculty qualifications align with and contribute to the mission of our MPA program.

Explanation of Faculty Qualification Criteria

Our Self-Study Report outlined the criteria for academically and professionally qualified faculty. These criteria ensure that our faculty possesses the expertise and experience to deliver high-quality education aligned with our program's goals. Here is a breakdown of how our criteria align with our mission:

Academically Qualified Lecturers

- **Ph.D., D.P.A., J.D., or MA/MS Requirement:** This ensures that our faculty have a strong theoretical and research foundation in fields relevant to public administration and justice (PAJ).
- **Scholarship Activities:** Continuous engagement in scholarship activities ensures that faculty members stay current in their fields and can bring the latest knowledge and research into the classroom.

- **Currency in the Field:** For those with degrees earned more than five years ago, demonstrating currency in their field ensures that their knowledge remains relevant and applicable to today's public administration landscape.

Professionally Qualified Lecturers

- **Record of Outstanding Professional Experience:** This criterion ensures that our faculty bring practical, real-world experience to their teaching, bridging the gap between theory and practice, which is crucial for preparing students for careers in public service.
- **Engagement in Professional/Community Service:** This requirement aligns with our program's emphasis on public service values, as faculty members model them through their professional and community engagements.
- **Current Knowledge and Technique in Syllabi:** Ensuring that syllabi reflect current knowledge and techniques guarantees that our curriculum is up-to-date and relevant, preparing students for the modern challenges of public service.

Justification for Qualification Criteria

Our qualification criteria are carefully designed to support our program's mission of preparing students for a career in public service. By ensuring that our faculty are either academically or professionally qualified, we balance theoretical knowledge and practical application, which is essential for a comprehensive education in public administration.

Response to Item 3: Standard 3.2 – Faculty Diversity

Overview of the Concern

The interim report requests further evidence of a DEI plan and DEI-related measures regarding faculty diversity and progress in these areas.

Current Efforts in Faculty Diversity

DEI Committee Initiatives

- **Diversity Recruitment Template:** Our DEI Committee has developed a comprehensive template for recruiting diverse faculty. This template ensures that our job announcements are inclusive and appealing to a diverse range of candidates.
- **Recent Faculty Recruitment:** We have actively sought diverse hires in our ongoing efforts to hire policy and finance faculty members. We utilized the DEI Committee's recruitment template in conjunction with university recommendations to ensure that the job announcements were structured to attract a broad range of candidates.

Advertising and Outreach

- **Diverse and Minority Sources:** We have advertised these positions in diverse and minority-focused sources, extending our reach to a wider pool of candidates.
- **Professional Organizations:** We leveraged networks within the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) and American Political Science Association (APSA) sections related to diversity and a diverse range of additional professional organizations, further aligning with our commitment to enhancing faculty diversity.

Alignment with the University's Strategic Goals

- **University's Strategic Goal:** Our efforts align with our university's strategic goal of hiring diverse faculty, reinforcing our commitment to this objective at both the program and institutional levels.

Future Plans: Developing a Formal DEI Plan

As part of our upcoming strategic planning activities, we are in the process of developing a formal DEI Plan. **Preliminary plans and an implementation timeline are attached to this response.**

This plan will include:

- **Clear DEI Objectives:** Setting specific, measurable goals for enhancing faculty diversity.
- **Recruitment Strategies:** Outlining strategies to continually improve our faculty recruitment process, ensuring it is inclusive and effective in attracting diverse candidates.
- **Progress Tracking:** Implementing mechanisms to track and report our progress in faculty diversity.
- **Long-term Commitment:** Ensuring our commitment to faculty diversity is sustained through ongoing efforts and institutional support.

Item 4: Standard 4.3 – Support for Students

Overview of the Concern and Actions Taken

In response to COPRA's concerns regarding Standard 4.3, our program has undertaken significant measures to enhance student support services, streamline administrative processes, and improve alumni tracking and engagement. Our initiatives are detailed below:

Enhancements in Information Accessibility and Curricular Changes

1. **Documentation and Accessibility:** We have made concerted efforts to document all essential program information and make it readily accessible to students. This includes clear guidance on program requirements, which aids in self-navigation through the program. This information is provided in the regularly updated and comprehensive MPA Handbook, which is distributed to all students upon admission.
2. **Curricular Revisions:** We've revised our curriculum to make it more student-friendly by adjusting prerequisites, refining concentration structures, and updating course names and descriptions. These

changes have been integrated into various student resources like the Total Degree Audit (TDA), student handbook, and writing guide.

Improvements in Advising and Registration

1. **Zoom Advising Sessions:** Recognizing the need for flexible advising formats, we now offer sessions via Zoom, accommodating diverse student schedules and preferences.
2. **Streamlined Registration Process:** Collaborating with university administration, we've transformed the registration process for graduate students, resulting in a more efficient and less cumbersome experience.

Orientation and Continuous Engagement

1. **New Student Orientation:** Our comprehensive orientation program introduces students to a wide range of university resources, ensuring they are well-informed from the onset of their academic journey.
2. **Canvas Platform Utilization:** We utilize Canvas as a dynamic communication platform, regularly posting updates on job and internship opportunities, scholarship information, advising details, and other valuable resources.

Alumni Tracking

Formal Alumni Database: Acknowledging past challenges in tracking alumni, we are in the process of creating a formal, program-hosted database. This database will be updated with current contact information collected from students during their capstone course. This proactive approach aims to maintain accurate and updated information about our alumni's career progression.

Future Commitment

We remain dedicated to monitoring the effectiveness of these strategies and making further adjustments as needed to ensure our students' success in public service careers. The effectiveness of these efforts will be measured in new questions added to our exit survey administered to students and the end of the Capstone course.

Item 5: Standard 4.4 – Student Diversity

Overview of the Concern

The interim report sought further details on how our program promotes diversity and a climate of inclusiveness, particularly in the realms of student recruitment, admissions practices, retention efforts, and student support services. It also requested information on the integration of DEI content throughout our curriculum.

Response:

Addressing DEI Integration in Curriculum

The program would like to clarify an oversight in our Self-Study Report. The reference to "one week of DEI-related reading" in core courses was erroneously included from an earlier draft and did not accurately reflect our current approach. We apologize for this error and appreciate the opportunity to correct it. Our faculty have integrated a diverse range of materials, scholars, and perspectives throughout their course curricula. This effort is a conscious and program-wide initiative, although it has not been formalized into a mandate. We believe this approach better represents our commitment to DEI, ensuring that these crucial themes are not isolated to a single week but woven into the fabric of our curriculum.

Strengthening Student Support and Inclusiveness

The attached DEI Plan that the program will consider as it develops a more robust effort in this area envisions several ways that we can take additional steps to enhance support for underrepresented groups:

1. Utilizing Campus Support Systems: We actively guide our students to existing campus resources, such as mentoring and peer-support programs, tailored specifically for underrepresented groups.
2. Scholarships for Underrepresented Groups: We are considering launching scholarships targeted at students from marginalized communities. This initiative will collaborate with donors and alumni to ensure sustainable financial support.
3. Student Advisory Board: We are considering a Student Advisory Board, with one of their key roles being to contribute to DEI initiatives. This board will provide a valuable platform for student voices, particularly from diverse backgrounds, to influence program development and DEI efforts.

Future Directions

We are committed to continuous improvement and responsiveness to evolving DEI needs, ensuring our program fosters an inclusive and equitable environment in public administration education. Feedback and communication from students will be key to understanding our efforts here. Such information can be gathered by expanding the DEI-related questions on the exit survey and communicating with students and student groups.

Response to Item 6: Standard 5.1 – Universal Required Competencies (URCs)

Overview of the Concern

The interim report has raised concerns about assessing our Universal Required Competencies (URCs), particularly highlighting issues related to low survey participation for indirect assessment data.

Assessment Report for AY 21-22: Key Findings

Our recent AY 21-22 assessment report demonstrates a comprehensive evaluation of URCs through direct and indirect measures. While we acknowledge the lower-than-desired response rate for the indirect

assessment, significant insights were still gleaned from direct assessment data. It is important to note that these surveys serve as a supplementary tool, providing additional insights into the comprehensive direct assessment data.

Direct Assessment Highlights

- **Proficiency in Competencies:** The direct assessment revealed areas of proficiency among our students, especially in critical competencies such as ethical problem-solving and public policy analysis.
- **Areas for Improvement:** We identified specific areas needing improvement, including enhancing students' ability to synthesize public administration literature and developing moral reasoning in ethical dilemmas.

Addressing Low Survey Participation

- **Impact of COVID-19:** We believe the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affected our survey participation rates.
- **Strategies for Improvement:** To address this, we are implementing strategies like reducing survey fatigue and incentivizing participation to improve future response rates.

Action Steps and Program Improvements

- **Enhancing Writing and Analysis Skills:** In response to the assessment findings, we have introduced a writing guide to strengthen students' literature review skills. This aligns with our commitment to nurturing critical analysis in public administration.
- **Curriculum Enhancements:** We have integrated additional public policy components in foundational courses to address gaps in policy analysis competencies.
- **Expanding Assessment Scope:** Future assessments will include responses from concentration-specific comprehensive exams and more diverse case studies, ensuring a holistic evaluation of student learning.

Redesigned Data Collection Methodology

Implementation of Qualtrics Form for Direct Assessment

- **Innovative Approach:** We have redesigned our assessment data collection by implementing a Qualtrics form that allows faculty to assess student work concurrently with grading. This integration significantly enhances the accuracy and validity of our assessment data.
- **Ease of Data Collection:** This approach simplifies the data collection process for faculty, ensuring more consistent and comprehensive data.
- **Robust Data Collection Strategy:** Over time, this method will enable us to accumulate a more robust set of data, providing deeper insights into student performance across different competencies.

Enhanced Indirect Assessment Strategies

In-Person Completion of Exit Surveys

- **Increased Participation:** We have decided to revert to in-person completion of the exit survey during the last meeting of the capstone course. This strategy aims to significantly improve our response rates, providing a more representative sample of indirect data.
- **Pre-Post-Post-Post Test Design:** We are considering implementing a longitudinal survey approach, tracking student self-assessments at multiple points – at the beginning and end of the foundations course, and the beginning and end of the capstone course. This will allow us to measure student growth and development more effectively throughout their program journey.

Future Plans for Continuous Improvement

- **Long-term Assessment Strategy:** Our revamped assessment approach, combining innovative direct assessment methods and enhanced indirect strategies, signifies our commitment to a more dynamic and responsive assessment process.
- **Alignment with Program Goals:** These changes are designed to align closely with our program's mission, ensuring that we effectively measure and support the development of competencies crucial for public service.
 - **Commitment to Diversity and Public Service Values:** We are enhancing curriculum components that address diversity and public service values, ensuring these critical aspects are deeply embedded in our students' learning experience.

Looking Forward

We look forward to sharing the findings and insights from our comprehensive assessment processes with the site team, demonstrating our ongoing efforts to maintain and enhance the quality and relevance of our program.

Item 7: Response to the Special Note on Identifiable Student Data

The updated coversheet for the Self Study appendix attachment for item 4a is attached to this document.

Conclusion

We want to emphasize our program's steadfast commitment to excellence and ongoing improvement in every aspect of our curriculum, student support, and engagement with the community. Our actions are a testament to our deep commitment to creating an educational environment that is not only inclusive but also adaptive to the changing needs of our students and the wider community we serve.

The feedback from COPRA is invaluable to our growth and development. We are fully dedicated to a transparent and productive dialogue with COPRA throughout this accreditation journey. Our team is ready to implement the insights and recommendations from COPRA to elevate our program's effectiveness and better align with NASPAA standards. We view this process as a collaborative effort that will undoubtedly enhance our program and, most importantly, improve the quality of the public service education we provide.

Looking forward, we are excited to share our advancements and learnings with the site team. We believe that our current initiatives, along with COPRA's insightful feedback, will steer us towards fulfilling our vision of nurturing ethical, informed, and diverse leaders in public service, equipped to tackle both today's and tomorrow's challenges.