



**NASPAA
ACCREDITED**

The Commission on Peer
Review & Accreditation

National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. LeAnn Beaty
Department of Government
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CC: Dr. Janna Vice
Provost
Eastern Kentucky University

FROM: Michelle Piskulich, Chair
Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation,
National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration

DATE: July 22, 2011

SUBJECT: NASPAA Accreditation Review

On behalf of the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA), I am pleased to inform you that the Commission found your Master of Public Administration program to be in conformity with NASPAA Standards, subject to the monitoring provisions outlined below. Your program is accredited for a period of seven years and will be included on the Annual Roster of Accredited Programs.

The Commission will monitor your progress annually on the following specific standard(s): 3.2, 4.2/4.3, 4.3, 5.3. The Commission asks that you report your progress on these particular standard(s) explicitly each year in your annual report and that you provide the information or data related to the standards that the Commission has noted below.

Standard 3.2 Faculty Diversity

Standard 3.2 states “The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members.”

The Interim Report states, “The program describes various activities they engage in to promote diversity. However, it is unclear whether the program has implemented program-specific plans to assure the diversity of the composition of the faculty with regard to its mission. The Commission requests more specific information regarding the program’s efforts to promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness.”



The Site Visit Report states, “The State has recently revised and significantly expanded its definition of diversity and developed a new diversity plan. Consequently, along with all other campuses in the state, ECU is now in the process of revisiting its policies, actions, and strategies regarding diversity to ensure alignment with the new, more inclusive diversity plan of the State, under the direction of the Associate Provost for Diversity Planning. The College of Arts and Sciences will in turn develop its plan, and then the Department of Government and the MPA program will subsequently revisit their policies and practices regarding diversity and inclusion, and revise as appropriate.”

The Commission requests the program provide updated information regarding its review of its policies and practices regarding diversity and inclusion, specifically the documentation of the program’s ongoing efforts to promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness.

□ **Standard 4.2 Student Admissions /Standard 4.3 Support for Students**

Standard 4.2 states, “The Program will have and apply well-defined admission criteria appropriate for its mission.”

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 affairs, administration, and policy.”

The Interim Report states, “The Self Study Instructions request that the program provide graduation completion data for its students. Table 4.3.3a in the SSR indicates that of the 22 students initially enrolled in the program in SSY-5, 13 graduated, for an overall completion rate within five years of 59 percent. The graduation rate within the five year time frame was 89 percent for full-time students and 39 percent for part-time students. The SSR report also indicates that part-time students are primarily in-service students, are the students that struggle to complete the program in a timely fashion, and also struggle to succeed in their coursework. The SSR indicates that a Spring 2010 survey of current students in the MPA program indicated that more than 50% of the students did not feel that they received the information needed to make the decision about enrolling in the program. The Commission requests information on the support system that the program has in place to assist students in completing the program. The Commission requests that the site visit team explore this issue.”

The SVR states:

While the program’s graduation rates are about average for part-time (in-service) ECU graduate students, these rates are lower than desired and are of particular concern for MPA faculty. The SVT discovered that the crux of the problem lies with the timing and/or requirements of the comprehensive written exam and oral defense, internship, internship portfolio (including a journal), and the final applied research project – all required as

students near the end of the program. During these last months, MPA students transition from a more structured campus-based experience to a less-structured experience where they largely work on their own. In addition, faculty may take on the comprehensive exams, internship supervision, and final paper guidance (as chair or part of a three-person committee) as an uncompensated overload on top of the four-course per semester teaching load. This is why the MPA Program Director tries to shoulder much of these responsibilities herself... Nevertheless, the SVT found that program faculty are aware of these problems, have been seeking alternative solutions, and are open to suggestions. The faculty have been discussing the possibility of redesigning the nature and/or timing of the written comprehensive exam and oral defense, internship, internship journal (portfolio), and final project. As noted in the SSR, initial discussions centered on developing a comprehensive review plan to aid students preparing for comprehensive exams. However, the scope of the problem is now better understood, resulting in postponing development and implementation of this review plan until decisions are made about the design and/or timing of the currently required comprehensive exam, internship, and final project.

The Commission requests the program provide updated information regarding the procedures put in place to monitor student progress.

□ **Standard 4.3 Support for Students**

Standard 4.3 states that “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 affairs, administration, and policy.”

The Interim Report states, “The Commission requests further information on the assessment of students’ internship experience. What role if any does the internship supervisor play in the assessment of students’ performance?”

The SVR states, “Policy indicates that in-service students may complete MPA internships at their current places of employment, but must undertake tasks or projects outside the scope of their regular daily activities. However, SVT review of a random sample of documents that indicate proposed and approved in-service internships suggest the policy may not be consistently applied in practice. That is, a relatively high number of in-service internships appear to be directly related to these students’ daily work activities. When asked about this issue, the MPA program director stated that she will be looking at proposed internships for in-service students more closely to ensure policy compliance and will explore the possibility of substituting an elective course for the internship for students with appropriate professional experience.”

The Commission requests the program provide updated information regarding the enforcement of its policies regarding internships for in-service students. Should the program make any changes to the internship such as “substituting an elective course

for the internship for students with appropriate professional experience” they should provide updated information to the Commission.

□ **Standard 5.3 Mission Specific Elective Competencies**

Standard 5.3 states, “The program will define its objectives and competencies for optional concentrations and specializations.”

The Interim Report states, “The Commission requests that the SVT engage in a discussion of the program’s mission-specific elective competencies, and the relationship between the elective and universal competencies. The Commission requests further information on how the ‘mirrored’ competencies operate in reality and the program’s ongoing development of this strategy. The Commission requests that the site visit team explore how the program is working to develop competencies in specialization areas where classes are offered outside the program.”

The SVR states, “At first, the program believed that the elective tracks could be assessed based on how students applied the universal required competencies to the specific field of the track (e.g., to lead and manage in community development, to lead and manage in environmental health, etc.). However, as noted in its response to the Interim Report, the MPA program at ECU has now recognized the need to develop additional, track-specific (elective) competencies to supplement to the universal required competencies. The first track, Community Development, relies primarily on courses taught by the MPA program, and so the MPA faculty will be developing the appropriate competency(s), evidence of student learning, and assessment processes, in consultation with appropriate stakeholders.

The other two tracks, Community Health Administration and Environmental Health Administration, involve the Masters of Public Health program within the ECU College of Health Promotion and Administration, which is accredited by the Council on Education for Public Health (CEPH). The MPA program intends to consult with the MPH faculty to arrive at appropriate competencies for the two tracks, to identify student artifacts that provide evidence of learning, and to coordinate on assessment processes.”

The Commission requests the program provide updated information regarding the development and implementation of mission specific competencies for its health related tracks. This information may be communicated through a logic model or other similar supplement to the annual report.

The Commission would like to thank the program for voluntarily participating in the pilot group for the new 2009 NASPAA Accreditation Standards. The Commission applauds your efforts and appreciates your enthusiasm to experience the new accreditation standards and processes firsthand. Over time, the Commission expects that its understanding of the Standards and the expectations of what it means to be in compliance will advance and evolve, as programs (and COPRA) become more familiar with the competencies-based approach to accreditation. The Commission will expect accredited programs to continue to develop their competency measures

and use of assessment tools, and that this maturation should be evident in the program's annual maintenance reports.

Please note that the Commission will review each of your annual reports to determine ongoing conformity with NASPAA Standards, including progress in the areas noted above. Your annual reports and COPRA's actions in response to your reports will become a permanent part of your record for your next accreditation review. COPRA's acceptance of the Program's annual reports is contingent on receiving satisfactory responses on the issues noted. If the program does not submit the information requested regarding the monitored standards in annual reports, the Commission may require the program to re-enter the accreditation cycle with an updated Self Study Report. Monitoring provisions remain in effect and must be addressed each year until the program is notified by COPRA that the provisions have been removed. We look forward to receiving your annual report in September 15, 2011. If you have any questions, please contact me via telephone (248.370.2190) or email at (piskulic@oakland.edu). You may direct questions about next year's annual report to COPRA at copra@naspaa.org.