

October 31, 2013

Jo Ann Ewalt
MPA Program Director
College of Charleston
66 George Street
Charleston SC 29424

Dear Professor Ewalt,

The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) has completed its initial examination of your Self-Study Report. We appreciate your efforts in reviewing your program mission and accomplishments and hope that this review has been beneficial to you.

The Commission recommends you proceed to a site visit. The COPRA initial examination raises questions and concerns about the conformity of programs with the NASPAA "Accreditation Standards for Master's Degree Programs," and the questions and concerns specific to your program are outlined in the attached Interim Report. Please read this report carefully so that you can respond to each of points listed.

If you decide to proceed, a Site Visit Team will be appointed. In evaluating your program, the Site Visit Team will review the program mission and conformity with all the standards. In particular, the team will be directed to address the items listed in the Interim Report. Please review the Site Visit Manual on the NASPAA website at <http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/NS/manual.asp>.

A member of the Commission, Abraham Benavides, has been designated to serve as liaison to your program. I urge you to contact your liaison via email at Abraham.Benavides@unt.edu to discuss any questions and concerns raised in the Interim Report and to answer any questions you may have about the process. As Chair of COPRA, I would also be pleased to respond to your questions about this letter or the review process at rmberryj@ncsu.edu.

Please notify NASPAA Chief Accreditation Officer Crystal Calarusse via email at calarusse@naspaa.org of your decision to proceed and submit your response to the specific points addressed in your interim report by uploading a single PDF file to the Documents tab in the online system. Your program response and decision to move to a site visit are due no later than **December 20, 2013**.

We look forward to working with you throughout the remainder of the accreditation cycle. Please do not hesitate to contact NASPAA staff or me if you have any questions.

With warmest regards,



Rajade M. Berry-James, Chair
Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation

ATTACHMENT: Interim report: *response requested*

COMMISSION ON PEER REVIEW AND ACCREDITATION

Interim Report to the

Master of Public Administration Program College of Charleston

October 31, 2013

The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation has reviewed the Self Study Report (SSR) for the Master of Public Administration Program at College of Charleston. The Commission commends the program for strengths evident in the Self Study Report and requests further information on the following points for its review. If the program proceeds to a site visit, particular attention should be paid to the items listed below. Please relate any responses to the program's specific mission and goals.

Program Mission Statement (as reported in the SSR):

Our mission is to prepare public service leaders. Upon graduation our students will have the ability to think critically and creatively about public issues, the dedication and capacity to serve a diverse community and the skills to enter a professional position in a public organization. To accomplish our mission, our program provides the following:

- A rigorous core curriculum that examines the theoretical underpinnings of public service and provides concentrated areas of study in arts management, environmental policy, nonprofit management, and urban and regional planning;
- An environment that nurtures a commitment to public service;
- Opportunities to support collaboration and the creation of partnerships among communities and public service organizations.

Item 1: Standard 1.1 – Mission Statement/Standard 1.2 – Performance Expectations

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 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 1.2 states, "The program will establish observable program goals, objectives, and outcomes, including expectations for student learning, consistent with its mission."

In its Self-Study Report, the program notes it is in the midst of revising its mission: "The revised mission has not yet been formally adopted because the program faculty will consider it at a faculty retreat in August 2013 as part of the program's ongoing strategic planning efforts, and will seek feedback from students during the first week of the fall

semester. Assuming approval from faculty and support by students, the Advisory Board will formally vote on this change at its November 2013 meeting. Thus, the mission above is our official mission but it will likely be amended as specified.”

The program states that the revised mission provided for COPRA review has not yet been formally adopted; the program is still seeking input from stakeholders (students, advisory board). The Commission requests that the program provide updated information on the revised mission statement (advisory board vote: November 2013) and the revisions’ impact on the goals stated in Standard 1.2. The Commission requests that the Site Visit Team explore the mission development with the program and review records showing the formal adoption of the program's mission statement.

Section 1.1.1 of the Self-Study Report details the extensive reorganization the MPA program has undergone in recent years, most recently as a stand-alone program and the creation of the dual MPA-Master of Environmental Studies program.

The Commission requests that the site visit team obtain clarification on the current organizational structure of the program. Is it a self-standing program within the college, department? The Commission requests that the site visit also explore the relationship between the MPA and MES programs.

Item 2: 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.”

Table 3.2.3a of the Self-Study Report indicates that the MPA program faculty is primarily comprised of white faculty members. The program notes advances in faculty diversity coming after the completion of the Report in August 2013, and the involvement of adjunct faculty and curricular aspects to enhance program diversity.

The Commission requests more information regarding the program's efforts to promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness, specifically demonstrable evidence of good practice, a framework for evaluating diversity efforts, and the connection to the program’s mission and objectives.

The Commission also requests that the Site Visit Team collect information on the program's overt efforts to promote diversity and cultural awareness and how it fosters a climate of inclusiveness for faculty and students. The team should discuss with the program how it demonstrates its commitment, to the extent it is possible within the legal and institutional framework, to public service values in the processes used to recruit and retain faculty, and in the ways it assures students are exposed to people with diverse views and backgrounds.

Item 3: Standard 4.4 – Student Diversity

Standard 4.4 states, “The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment, admissions practices, and student support services.”

In its Self-Study Report, the program acknowledges the struggles it has faced recruiting underrepresented populations: “We were also unable to "work" the student recruitment portion of our diversity plan to any great extent during the self-study year, because we were working without a program coordinator and many regular

activities had to be postponed. We expect this problem to be rectified shortly because the staff line has been restored to the program and we will initiate a hiring process shortly.”

As such, the Commission requests updated information on student diversity recruitment. In what ways is the program working to increase diversity recruitment? The Commission asks that the site visit team explore with the program the methods it is employing to enhance student diversity within its program.

Item 4: 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 related to its mission and 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 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.”

In Section 5.1 Part C, the program details the learning outcome, assessment results, and use of results to impact the program, including faculty evaluation of each outcome.

The Commission requests that the site visit team verify the evidence of “closing the loop” with respect to the universal required competencies, as well as how the faculty determined appropriate actions to take as a result of assessment data analysis.

Item 5: Standard 6.1 – Resource Adequacy

Standard 6.1 states, “The program will have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission, objectives, and continuous improvement.”

Throughout the report, the program notes that the program coordinator position is currently vacant. The program also indicates that it does “not have a clerical support person, and we all do our own clerical duties, which is adequate but not ideal... Janet Key, the Program Director, and all program faculty assist in placement of graduates, which is also adequate but not ideal (however, we have quite a good track record because our faculty -- and especially Ms. Key -- have a wide network of contacts in the community). We expect that when we hire a new Program Coordinator he or she will provide great assistance in enhancing our alumni relations, and in student recruitment. However, as noted below, at present alumni relations are handled by the Program Director.”

The Commission requests clarification with respect to the adequacy of the supporting personnel available to the program and the current vacancy of the program coordinator position. In what ways is the program ensuring sustainability in personnel resources moving forward?

Section 6.1g indicates that meeting and classroom space is “adequate”: “The primary issue with the MPA office is that it lacks meeting space for larger groups of faculty and/or students to collaborate. The Graduate Assistants have access to offices in the Robert Scott Small building, but there is only one room for them in the MPA office building.”

The Commission requests that the site visit team visit the various classrooms, offices, and meeting spaces, and discuss the adequacy of the spaces with the program.