

**PROGRAM REPORT
SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY**

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Program Review Report on the public administration programs in Florida Atlantic University's School of Public Administration is based on a Self-study Report and a site visit on February 26 and 27, 2014. This Program Review Team (PRT) was asked to review three degree programs: the Bachelor of Public Management; The Master of Public Administration; and the Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) in Public Administration. The School of Public Administration (SPA) offers two other programs, the Master of Nonprofit Management and Bachelor of Public Safety Administration.

A separate Program Review of SPA's Master of Nonprofit Management program was conducted almost simultaneously with this Program Review, and membership of the two review teams partially overlapped. Portions of the two Program Review Reports are quite similar, especially portions that address issues at the School, College, University, and System level.

As stated in the February 3, 2014 letter to the PRT members from Associate Provost Michelle Hawkins, this Program Review is to serve as a vehicle for helping take the SPA programs "to the next level" by recommending approaches and strategies for strengthening the School of Public Administration and its programs over the next five years – not to assess its programs as in an accreditation or certification site visit.

The Bachelor of Public Management program (BPM) and the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program provide professional education for leadership and management by offering a broad-based core curriculum that covers the essentials of both leadership and management in social, economic, political, local, national, and international contexts. The BPM and MPA programs require students to cover a broad-based core curriculum that highlights the management and leadership requirements tailored to different types of public organizations; and they include elective courses that build upon the core and introduce new intellectual dimensions. The Ph.D. in Public Administration with its focus on scholarship, includes a

substantial amount of formal course work in which students are required to demonstrate the capacity to be problem-solvers in the form of independent research and writing.

Florida Atlantic University's SPA is ranked sixth nationally with its faculty publications and third with its student publications. The MPA program is accredited by NASPAA/COPRA.

In the Self Study report the following areas were covered:

1. Mission and Purpose of the School of Public Administration
2. Faculty and School Organizational Structure
3. Faculty Collaboration with Internal and External Partners
4. Service/Community Engagement
5. Other Program Goals for the School of Public Administration
6. Strengths and opportunities that support achievement of program goals for the School of Public Administration
7. Weaknesses and Threats That Impede Program Progress for the School of Public Administration
8. Resource Analysis for the School of Public Administration
9. Future Direction for the School of Public Administration
10. Overview of the Bachelor of Public Management Program
11. Overview of the Master of Public Administration Program
12. Overview of the Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration Program

The Preview Review Team began work on Wednesday night, and on Thursday beginning at 9:15 AM and continuing throughout the day, the review team met with various individuals and groups including:

1. Dr. Edward Pratt, Dean of Undergraduate Studies
2. Dr. Deborah Floyd, Dean of the Graduate College
3. Dr. Diana Alperin, Vice Provost
4. Dr. Rosalyn Carter, Dean of the College for Design and Social Inquiry

5. Drs. Hugh Miller and Skip Cory-Scruggs, Associate Deans for the College of Design and Social Inquiry
6. SPA Director, Program Coordinators and all regular Faculty in SPA
7. Students, alumni, community partners, and members of the School of Public Administration's Community Advisory Board.

II. MISSION AND PURPOSE

The mission and purpose of the School of Public Administration is to provide intellectual, analytical, technical, and practical education to advance the state of knowledge in public administration and to enhance ethical and other public service values within our service region. SPA's mission is linked to the State University System mission and goals that seek to provide undergraduate, graduate and professional education, research, and public service of the highest quality through a coordinated system of institutions of higher learning. The Missions of the Bachelors, Masters, and Ph.D. programs in SPA are identified in the SSR and are linked to the missions of FAU.

Current Status

The School of Public Administration provides access to its programs in various ways including traditional daytime courses, evening courses, weekend courses, and online/hybrid courses. Students are provided ample opportunities to complete their academic degree based on their particular time demands, especially those students who are working full time. This has resulted in annual growth in the numbers of degrees awarded, headcount enrollments and student credit hours (SCHs), as well as a higher student-faculty ratio.

SPA prepares students for careers in government, nonprofit management, and non-governmental organizations, and is helping to meet statewide professional workforce needs. The faculty provides relevant and timely courses designed to enhance critical thinking, and develop and reinforce the skills and knowledge necessary for students to serve their communities and improve public service.

Beyond the broad mission statements of SPA and the programs, there is minimal guiding strategic focus for programs in SPA. SPA and its public administration programs are attempting to serve a wide array of purposes and students with five distinct degree programs. The PRT admires the energy and enthusiasm the faculty and staff bring to SPA and its students. The importance of having a clear guiding mission and strategic focus, however, is higher now in SPA than ever before because of the unsettled future directions of FAU. FAU is undergoing significant leadership changes at a time when there also is an emerging strong statewide emphasis on undergraduate student retention and graduation, and the sudden formation of a statewide system of state colleges. The “place” of SPA and its programs are unclear to many in administration at FAU. The overall need for additional resources in SPA makes a clear mission and a strategic focus imperative. We are concerned about the likelihood of faculty burn-out if it continues attempting to provide “everything for everyone.”

Recommendation

As will be repeated throughout this report, SPA and its programs need to be more mission-driven, and the faculty and staff need to focus strategically on fewer, clearer purposes. Toward this end, we recommend that SPA should engage in an off-site retreat with professional facilitation to work toward agreement about sharpening the strategic focus of its programs and bringing them into better alignment.

III. THE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Current Status

The most glaring issue is that SPA is severely under-resourced especially in faculty and staff for the number of programs it offers and the number of students it serves. Stated simply, SPA has approximately two regular faculty members for each of its five programs. Although there are obvious synergies among the programs, the human resources are stretched beyond their ability to maintain a level approaching excellence and, in the professional opinion of the PRT, are at high risk of burnout.

After careful consideration, the Program Review Team concludes that at least five additional

faculty positions are needed simply to maintain the current trajectory of SPA's five degree programs (of which this review addresses three). This is in addition to retaining several anticipated upcoming vacant positions from retirement or other unanticipated reasons. Likewise, at least two more staff support persons will be needed unless major changes are made to decrease the number of programs and students.

Recommendations

There are two obvious basic strategies available for SPA: (1) Increase resources and/or (2) sharpen its strategic focus and streamline its programs while carefully and thoughtfully limiting the number of students served.

1. ***Increase resources.*** The PRT urges FAU administration to support and, in some cases, remove barriers to increasing resources that are available to schools and programs at many other universities. Examples include: different forms of market-based tuition differentials on programs with relatively high student demand, contract training programs (in person and/or via web), and applied research centers that provide contract services in the region. The PRT also recommends greatly increased efforts at raising private support, especially from businesses, foundations, and individual graduates.

Although the PRT recognizes and appreciates the overall shortage of new faculty lines at FAU and in the College, we are professionally obligated to strongly recommend the addition of at least five new faculty lines in SPA over the next five years. The PRT believes these five additional faculty positions be a mix of tenure track faculty and instructors. These lines are in addition to replacements for anticipated faculty departures.

The PRT does not want to recommend specific staff support positions that should be added. We did not have enough time on-site to be confident with specific recommendations. It appears, however, that the greatest needs are in general student support/administration, applied research to support decision making, relations with

graduates, and development.

Another approach to increasing resources is to continue expanding the roles of the newly-activated Community Advisory Board. The CAB can become an important step forward for SPA in community relations and engagement generally and as the means for strengthening development, opening high quality internships and job placements, aiding student recruitment and hopefully, as a source of adjunct instructors in the master's degree programs. The PRT urges SPA to consider connecting the activities of the Community Advisory Board with its chapter of Pi Alpha Alpha, the national honor society in public affairs and administration. The two organizations have high potential for positive synergies.

2. ***Sharpen the mission and the strategic focus of SPA and its programs.***

The PRT recommends reducing the number of degree programs offered by SPA from five to three, resulting in one at each degree level. Although the PRT has opinions about the best configuration of degree programs, the one-day review process does not leave us in a position to make well-informed recommendations. This decision-making needs to be done by the faculty with full administrative support. Decisions of this importance need to reflect faculty capabilities and interests, demand for programs, competitive programs, potential linkages with programs in other colleges and state colleges, and the needs of the communities served by FAU. The PRT again recommends an off-site retreat (Section II) with professional facilitation as a starting point.

The PRT also recommends geographically strategically focusing SPA's program offerings. Courses with instructors physically in the classroom should be offered where there is very high demand, mostly on the Boca Raton campus. Other campuses may continue to receive courses through mostly interactive electronic delivery systems. The efficiency increases should be significant.

IV. THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS IN SPA

SPA offers five degree programs. Although this PRT was charged with examining only three of the programs, the other two programs are integral parts of SPA and represent important parts of the context that influence and affect the three programs being reviewed. Thus, they cannot be completely ignored. (A separate Program Review of the Master of Nonprofit Management program, also in SPA, was conducted on February 25 and 26, 2014.)

Ph.D. Program in Public Administration

Current Status

The Ph.D program in Public Administration has brought national and international attention to FAU. Several faculty members and many Ph.D. students and graduates have been highly productive with refereed research published in highly ranked academic publications. A number of Ph.D. graduates are now in academic and administrative university positions at other universities. Five academic journals are edited by SPA faculty members. There are approximately 45 active Ph.D. students in SPA. Many of the full-time and a few part-time Ph.D. students teach undergraduate courses in SPA which greatly benefits SPA and also helps prepare them for the academic job market. On the other hand, Ph.D. students are highly faculty labor intensive and require offering small courses. Although Ph.D. students are resources, especially in the undergraduate programs, they are also large consumers of faculty resources. The \$12,000 (9 month) - \$16,000 (12 month) Ph.D. stipends are not competitive with other major university programs in this field.

Recommendations

Slowly but steadily reduce the number of students in the Ph.D. program and thereby increase the quality of the Ph.D. students and program. The primary purpose for this recommendation is to reduce faculty time spent serving on Ph.D. committees. A second purpose is to allow SPA to increase its graduate stipends to at least \$18,000 for 9 months (with tuition waiver). The PRT is reluctant to recommend a specific strategy for

decreasing the number of Ph.D. students because of its short time at SPA, but we believe SPA should seriously consider admitting only full-time Ph.D. students. This would increase the probability of successful degree completion while improving the socialization process of students into the academic profession. It would also guarantee a regular flow of instructors and teaching assistants for the undergraduate programs in Public Management and Public Safety. The PRT is aware that many part-time Ph.D students are not teaching in the undergraduate programs. The reduction in time that regular faculty members spend serving on committees should be significant.

Masters of Public Administration (MPA) Program

Current Status

The MPA program is the most visible program of SPA in southeastern Florida. Many current public and nonprofit managers and officials earned MPAs at FAU and are “ambassadors” or potential ambassadors for this highly recognized program. All evidence available to the PRT indicates high student and graduate satisfaction with the program and faculty, and with their employability. Few complaints were received from students and graduates beyond the expected, “more courses, offered more often, with more delivered on line, and more offered closer to (my) home or office.”

The PRT commends SPA for the diversity of its student body and for the amount of systematic attention paid to developing its students’ cultural competencies. Neither of the master’s degree programs in SPA has any joint degrees or 3-2 or accelerated master’s-type degree options with undergraduate programs outside of SPA.

SPA also offers a Master’s of Nonprofit Management (MNM) degree. Although the number of MNM programs nationally has increased to about 31, there are far more nonprofit organization/management concentrations in MPA, MBA, and social welfare programs.

The PRT was surprised to learn that all master’s degree courses at FAU must be taught

by persons with Ph.Ds. (there are other stipulations). The outside members of the PRT – with many years of administrative and academic program review experience in the field of public administration – do not know of any other MPA program in the U.S. that do not permit the use of adjunct instructors with master’s degrees and significant professional experience in the field. This restriction denies students in professional master’s degree programs access to instruction by highly experienced practitioners who are superbly qualified to teach in their areas of expertise. The PRT was informed that this requirement is needed because some Ph.D. students may take courses also taken by master/s degree students. The PRT does not believe this is a convincing argument against using well qualified instructors without Ph.Ds. in master’s level courses.

Recommendations

SPA needs to sharpen its mission and strategic focus, and use these as guides for streamlined reductions in the number of programs in SPA. The reductions must take into account the complex environment affecting all programs in SPA. Therefore, the PRT tentatively recommends that SPA should reduce from five degree-granting programs to three. A possibility is to reduce from two master’s level programs to one, perhaps merging the Master of Nonprofit Management program into the MPA program as a strong, vibrant concentration. This action would (1) help focus the strategic directions of SPA, (2) reduce concerns about the viability of the NMN program, and (3) increase the likelihood of successfully tenuring future faculty members in the NMN program. In the professional opinion of the PRT, it would also improve the long-term competitiveness of MNM graduates for employment.

After considerable debate, the PRT strongly recommends against further growth in the number of students in the MPA program. Without significant new faculty lines in SPA, the PRT recommends a carefully planned reduction. The PRT recommends raising the MPA program’s entrance requirements but urges extreme care that when raising requirements it does not reduce the diversity of the student body – a distinctive strength of FAU’s MPA program.

As a key element of this Program Review's emphasis on sharpening mission and strategic focus in SPA, the PRT recommends exploring linkages with an array of undergraduate programs in FAU and in other institutions of higher learning such as the state colleges – and possibly with some for-profit schools. Accelerated master's degree programs, bridge programs, and 3-2 programs that are well aligned with the purposes/mission of the MPA program can create natural pipelines as competition for undergraduate students continues to intensify, including from the proprietary master's level programs. The PRT particularly notes the importance of developing strong relations and programs with the on-campus state college in Boca Raton.

It appears that SPA and its master's degree students would benefit from the creation of joint degree programs, such as MPA/MSW, MPA/MPH, MPA/JD (with a JD program at another university), and possibly MPA/RN and MPA/MNM (if retained). Students would benefit, and collaborative relations could be built among faculty members in different schools and colleges. In most cases, the primary drain on resources is administrative.

The PRT urges the Dean and Director to form a multi-college coalition of deans and directors in other graduate professional degree programs to advocate for the use of experienced practitioners with master's degrees as instructors of selected master's level courses. Obviously, adjunct instructors without Ph.Ds. should be selected, supervised, and assessed regularly.

Bachelors of Public Management (BPM) Program

Current Status

There are two bachelor's degree programs in SPA, the BPM and the Bachelor of Public Safety Administration. Once again, the need to tighten the mission and sharpen the strategic focus within SPA is obvious. Without question, SPA should continue to offer a bachelor level degree. Undergraduate programs are central to the mission of FAU and often are the "bread and butter" programs. The BPM program provides teaching training for Ph.D. students who aspire to academic careers. It also opens the door for graduates of

SPA's master's degree programs to reconnect with SPA as adjunct instructors. It serves as a potentially essential program with the anticipated statewide funding approach that focuses almost exclusively on undergraduate metrics.

Recommendations

Once again, the PRT recommends that SPA should streamline its mission and strategic priorities. The specific directions taken must be decided locally because the future directions for SPA's undergraduate programs must consider many complex circumstances and pressures including, for example, the state colleges. That said, the PRT believes SPA might benefit from negotiating for the relocation of its BPSA program to another school or perhaps to a nearby state college as part of a larger strategic alliance.

The PRT also recommends more closely aligning the BPM program with the graduate programs in SPA. Perhaps consider eliminating "public management" in favor of a degree program such as "civic engagement," a bachelor's degree program that introduces students to active participation in civic life and community leadership through, for example, engagement with nonprofit organizations and/or government agencies. This program should include degree requirements that include undergraduate research opportunities and that have the students out in communities such as through service learning, internships, and/or course projects. Better alignment of the undergraduate with the graduate programs should help develop a "pipeline" into the graduate program(s) and also stimulate more faculty involvement with the undergraduate program which, in turn, should help improve retention and graduation rates.

V. COMMENDATIONS

This Program Review Report necessarily focuses on areas and strategies for improving the public administration programs in SPA. When focusing on improvements, an inevitable side consequence is a report that dwells on problems and needs for change. Therefore, we conclude this PRR with a few commendations. Obviously, we can't address everything that warrants commendation, but several areas warranting special

words.

1. The SPA faculty is to be commended for its rather amazing productivity in teaching and research/publications despite high demands on its time and energies. The faculty truly is producing “more and more” with steadily declining resources. The College and FAU should be proud of the quality and quantity of the faculty’s outputs and outcomes.
2. The PRT commends SPA for activating its Community Advisory Board. As is mentioned in Section III, School of Public Administration (1) above, an active CAB can be a valuable resource that aids faculty and staff in many ways.
3. SPA is becoming more entrepreneurial. In the current fiscal environment for higher education in Florida, strategically aligned academic entrepreneurship is essential. Initiatives such as externally funded research and service centers, leadership development programs, certificate programs, and market based tuition programs are potential sources of short term and on-going funding. It should be noted that in 1999, SPA created the Public Procurement Research Center in partnership with the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, which has provided modest annual funding support. This center is well known nationally and internationally in the field of government contracting. Two years ago, SPA created the International Leadership and Management Institute, which has brought sufficient revenues to support SPA conference expenses. SPA has developed a global market-based tuition MPA and if the University approves this proposal, it is expected to raise sufficient income to support a good number of non-tenure track instructors.
4. The SPA Director and the program coordinators deserve commendation for building and maintaining quality programs with few resources. They should feel proud of what they and their faculty and staff are achieving.
5. Finally, we commend the faculty members and administrators we met for their openness to our suggestions and criticisms. We appreciate that our ideas have been formulated hastily and may not always be well grounded. Yet, we were pleasantly surprised by how willing people were to consider our comments.