

RESPONSE TO REVIEW COMMITTEE'S REPORT ON THE EVANS SCHOOL'S DEGREE PROGRAMS

To: David L. Eaton, Dean and Vice Provost, Graduate School
CC: Rebecca Aanerud, Associate Dean, Graduate School
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From: Sandra O. Archibald, Dean, Evans School of Public Affairs
Date: 06/12/2015
Re: Evans School Ten Year Graduate Program Review

INTRODUCTION

The entire Evans School of Public Affairs wishes to express its appreciation to the review committee and to the Graduate School leadership and staff for the time and thoughtful consideration they have dedicated to this review process. We are proud of the committee's consensus recommendation that the School's graduate programs be continued as well as its recognition of the tremendous progress the School has made over the last ten years.

As the review committee noted, its charge was to review the Evans School to provide the deans and the faculty with constructive recommendations to strengthen the programs as well as to provide the University with a clear understanding of each program's quality, educational value, role within the University and community, role within the academic discipline, and resources requirements. Although the focus of the charge was on assessing each program, the committee's report addresses many issues at the School level. This is fitting given the structure of the School and, when appropriate, this response takes this approach as well. The committee also addressed the School's unit-defined questions throughout their report. The following response addresses the key findings and conclusion of the committee and provides clarification on certain issues raised within its report when necessary.

QUALITY OF THE SCHOOL AND ITS PROGRAMS

The School

The committee noted significant strengths in both the School as a whole as well as within our degree programs. We appreciate the committee's recognition of the School's "excellent leadership" and its contributions to the School's stability and improved quality over the last ten years (p. 2 of the report). Our ability to grow the scope and scale, as well as the quality, of our MPA program; emerge as a nationally ranked top-ten school, 4th among public institutions; launch a successful PhD program, Masters of Science in Public Policy and Management degree, and Executive MPA program; and build a robust research culture during a period marked by reduced funding have all depended greatly on the leadership of *many* dedicated faculty and staff. We are especially encouraged that the committee observed "growth in the quality of the faculty at both the senior and junior levels," and an increase in the quantity, quality and influence of their research (ibid). Establishing a stronger research culture was a key recommendation from our last Graduate School program review and the committee's assessment attests to the progress we have made on this front.

We are pleased that the committee commended the quality of our staff as well. Top tier professional schools require a highly competent staff to be competitive at the national level and to ensure the professional development of their students. The quality of our staff reflects this imperative and we are grateful for their dedication to the success of the School. We also wish to thank the committee for its praise of the School's Alumni Council and Advisory Board, whose contributions help guide the School and keep it closely connected with the communities it serves.

The committee also pointed to a few opportunities to improve the overall strength of the School and its faculty. First, it encouraged the School to clarify the scope and nature of its global ambitions. As we address in greater detail below, we believe the most clear opportunities to grow our global influence is through expanding our programmatic offerings to new international audiences and by adding international dimensions to our faculty. The committee also encouraged us to continue to increase the diversity of our faculty and students and institute a requirement for faculty and students related to diversity training. We agree with this assessment and only add that we believe multiple avenues for satisfying a diversity training requirement must be available.

MPA Program

The School's MPA program has grown considerably over the last ten years. We are pleased to hear that during a period of such growth students continue to report a great deal of satisfaction with the program. As the committee noted, students identify with the School and appreciate the faculty, staff, and leadership. Maintaining strong student satisfaction during a period of constrained resources has been some of our most challenging and rewarding work. It reflects the strong commitment our faculty, staff, and leadership have to student success and building meaningful relationships that allow us to be responsive to students' evolving needs.

The School regularly assesses student satisfaction with the program through numerous feedback mechanisms and we are grateful for the opportunity this program review process has provided to further explore opportunities for continued improvement. In particular, we appreciate that our self-study report, the site visit, and our students brought the issue of unfunded internships to the attention of the School's leadership. Our Advisory Board responded immediately and have embraced an initiative to raise a significant amount of money to address this important issue so students can to pursue intellectually and professionally meaningful internships without significant financial hardship.

To ensure the School continues to make progress with regard to diversity, we asked the review committee to help us identify opportunities to increase access to graduate public affairs education, noting that diversity was an especially important aspect of this goal. Fostering a diverse student body is challenging and important work and we are committed to the values and actions outlined in our diversity plan. We agree that we need to update our diversity plan to reflect the on-going work in which the School has engaged since its adoption and that has yielded measureable results. For example, during a period of rapid growth in student headcounts, we have maintained, and recently grown, the diversity of our student body. Although the upcoming academic year was not within the scope of the review, our most current records indicate that 24% of the incoming class of students in the program self-identify as US minorities. This is the largest proportion of US minorities in an incoming class in well over a decade. To build on this success we have made increased funding for student fellowships a fundraising campaign priority and gained broad support for this within our network of stakeholders. Increasing the number and strength of our student fellowship opportunities will grow our capacity to compete for the nation's most promising and diverse students. Although we have been committed to our diversity plan since its adoption, we are grateful that our students and faculty have pushed diversity to an even higher level on the School's agenda this year and the committee's emphasis on diversity is consistent with our goals.

We also asked the committee to help us explore opportunities to increase the impact we can have locally, regionally, nationally, and globally in the future. The School has been increasingly successful in recruiting students nationally and internationally as it has shifted from an important regional school to a school of national significance with clear aspirations to increase its global impact. As we noted in our self-study, "the growth in applications [to our MPA program] from out-of-state residents and international students has increased by 239%, from 190 in AY2005-06 to 644 in AY2013-14" (p. 3). Our self-study also highlights that "out-of-state and international student enrollment have increased from 38% of total enrollments in AY2005-06 to 46% of total enrollments in AY2013-14" (ibid). Our most current records indicate that out-of-state and international students comprise over 62% of our incoming

class for next year, further demonstrating the School's growing success in recruiting on a national and international level. The committee's suggestion that we increase national and international recruitment of students as a way to broaden our global reach seems to ignore the tremendous progress we have made and continue to make in this area.

We agree, however, with the committee's assessment that there is room for growing the School's national and international influence through post-graduation placements. While national and international placements are strong for our PhD graduates, we believe we could increase such placements among graduates from our MPA program. As the committee noted, there are many reasons why Washington state remains very appealing to our graduates, including to those who came from out of state. Increasing national and international placements among our MPA graduates will require us to improve how we identify and promote job opportunities outside Washington state.

We also agree with the committee's suggestion that we could further our global influence through strategic hiring of faculty with international expertise. We are proud of our faculty's contributions to the global influence of the School and have continued to grow in this area, especially through several recent hires – Maria Perez, a Chilean with expertise in program review and who focuses on education internationally; Sharon Kioko, a Kenyan nationally recognized for her work in public budgeting and finance; and Scott Fritzen, a former associate provost at NYU Shanghai and vice dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy in Singapore.

Finally, feedback from students suggested that there are a few specific opportunities to build on our curriculum by increasing the degree to which it addresses technology, politics, social enterprise and entrepreneurship, and diversity. The School has been and continues to be committed to continuous improvement in its curriculum. The faculty is finalizing a targeted curriculum survey that will inform our current efforts to systematically coordinate and update our second-year curriculum. This initiative will result in a curriculum that better incorporates issues that are increasingly important within the field of public policy and administration and that is responsive to students' evolving interests.

Executive MPA Program

The School's Executive MPA (EMPA) program has successfully served mid-career working professionals for over a decade. Consistent with our own observations, the committee noted that there is a great deal of satisfaction among our EMPA students. We appreciate and agree with the committee's assessment that the EMPA cohort is particularly impressive in its professional diversity and that that is of great value to the students. We also appreciate the committee's input regarding opportunities to further strengthen the program. For example, the committee's report notes that some EMPA students would like to interact more with other groups on campus, that enhanced mentoring would contribute to students' professional development, and that in some cases students expressed needing greater responsiveness in receiving feedback. We have already begun the process of addressing these issues. For example, we plan to enhance EMPA student mentoring through increased engagement with our extensive network of senior practitioners. We are also considering a range of creative ideas to promote greater interaction with other campus groups, which has been somewhat constrained due to the limited time during the week that our EMPA students are on campus.

We are encouraged by the committee's enthusiastic support for expanding our executive program offerings internationally as a means of serving new communities and increasing our global influence and impact. The committee's suggestion that "opportunities in Asia seem most promising" is consistent with our current plans (p. 6). We have been and continue to be mindful of how our programmatic offerings strategically support our global ambitions. We believe our new Global EMPA track that will serve mid-career professionals largely from Asia will contribute to the School's and University's influence in a critical region of the world. And because of the interconnectivity and mutually-supporting design of our degree programs, we anticipate this new global dimension to our programmatic offerings will function

as a means to increase international content within the curriculum of our domestically-based degree offerings. We appreciate the committee's assessment that our proposed Global EMPA track is "well conceived and a smart strategic next step, well-aligned with the University's priorities and the School's global ambitions" (p. 9). Our recent hire of Scott Fritzen to lead this initiative puts us on a strong path to its successful implementation.

PhD Program

The review committee highlighted the successful launch of our PhD program in AY2006-07 as a "notable achievement," echoing the very positive Graduate School program review the program received in 2012 (p. 2). The program's goal is to prepare our graduates "for careers as faculty in university programs in public policy and management and for *research positions in the public and nonprofit sectors*" (p. 4 of self-study). Of the 11 students who have graduated, 6 have secured tenure-track faculty positions within top academic institutions and 5 are employed by nationally and internationally-renowned public and nonprofit organizations and are engaged in research initiatives of significant public value. The comments in the committee's report regarding placements suggest that it may have misunderstood this dual purpose of the program. Our interdisciplinary program provides doctoral-level education that allows our graduates to make impactful contributions to the research missions of a broad array of institutions on a wide range of issues.

In addition to the program preparing future researchers for successful careers outside the School, it has also been critical to our efforts to build a robust research culture within the School. We appreciate the committee's recognition of the contributions our PhD students have made to our efforts to improve the School's "active and influential collective research portfolio" (p. 2).

Responding to our request for insights as to the best scale and scope of our programs, the committee addressed our current plans for growing the PhD program. The committee recommended that we consider three interrelated issues as we move forward - the demand for public policy and management PhD graduates, current trends in the size of other social science fields, and student perceptions about their professional opportunities after they graduate. We are keenly aware of the demand for public policy and management PhD graduates. Our PhD program is leading in many ways, shaping the discipline as a distinct field of study and producing the next generation of public policy and management researchers who will define the future of the field. Given current and projected retirement patterns within top public policy programs in the country, as well as increasing demand for highly capable researchers among non-academic organizations, we are confident there is and will continue to be sufficient placement opportunities for our graduates. Nonetheless, our faculty will continue to keep this important issue at the forefront of our on-going conversations about growing the program.

The committee also suggested we further clarify expectations regarding time-to-degree and recommended that the School consider streamlining some of the requirements in the program. Our program's average time-to-degree and completion rate compares very well to other social science programs nationally. Rather than further streamlining the requirements, which has recently been done, the dean has committed to fund a full fifth year to align funding with the expected time-to-degree.

ROLE OF THE SCHOOL AND ITS PROGRAMS WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY

Another question we asked the committee to consider was how the School can expand its engagement with the University, city, region, nation, and world. We are grateful for the considerable thought the committee dedicated to this issue. We appreciate the committee's acknowledgment of potential obstacles that the use of the ABB system may pose for improved collaboration and agree with its recommendation that "the University work with the School to analyze the system's impact on the School" (p. 4). The dean was recently appointed co-chair of the ABB Steering Committee, which is charged with reviewing and making suggestions for improving the University's ABB policies, and will be

helping the committee explore the impacts of the ABB system on not only the Evans School but on academic units across the Seattle campus.

Regardless of the University's budgeting model, we remain committed to maintaining and expanding our collaborative engagement across the University. As we expressed in our self-study, "collaboration and interdisciplinary work are central to the School's identity" (p. 27), which is evidenced through the numerous partnerships we highlighted including faculty and student affiliations with the Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, Center for Statistics and Social Sciences, and the West Coast Poverty Center as well as joint initiatives and research projects with faculty from the School of Social Work, the Department of Urban Design and Planning, the School of Public Health, the College of the Environment, and several other schools, colleges, departments, and programs across campus. Our commitment to collaboration is further evidenced by the joint appointments our faculty hold in the Jackson School, the College of Education, and the departments of Sociology and Philosophy where they contribute to many collaborative research and teaching efforts. Our faculty also serve on PhD committees throughout the University. Lastly, the several formal and informal concurrent degree programs offered through the School in partnership with the College of Built Environments, the College of Environment, the Jackson School, the School of Public Health, the Foster School, the Information School, the School of Law, and the School of Social Work also demonstrate our commitment to collaboration.

We are enthusiastic about building upon these and many other strong collaborative relationships across campus. It is clear that as the School has grown, so have expectations about its role within the University. We are confident that our continued growth will lead to a better understanding of our current engagements as well as exciting new opportunities for collaboration. The committee suggested we consider exploring dual-degree PhD programs and building a collaborative undergraduate program with other units as potential opportunities to expand our collaboration on campus. These are worth considering and our faculty have already begun to explore dual-degree PhD program concepts with the departments of Economics, Political Science, and Sociology being possible partners.

ROLE OF SCHOOL WITHIN THE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

The School has worked hard to improve its national position. The committee's praise for our improved reputation and standing within the academic discipline, noting that "Outside of the UW the Evans School is seen very positively with respected faculty and [a] high quality research portfolio," affirms the effectiveness of our efforts (p. 3). The committee also commented on the high regard in which our programs and graduates are held at the national level. These observations reflect the strategic investments in resources and attention we have made in these areas. We agree with the committee's recommendation that we better communicate our considerable strengths to the University community to convey the contributions we can make to its mission and enrichment. We also appreciate the committee's suggestion that we continue to develop ways to communicate our competitive advantage to other internal and external partners. This is a challenge that schools of public affairs face across the country as the field of public policy and management has emerged as a new distinct discipline. Our continued growth in scope and scale will lead to a better understanding of our comparative strengths among those outside the University as much as it will among those inside the University. The dean is engaged in conversations at the national level about how best to tell our story within this context.

RESOURCE REQUIREMENTS

Space and Infrastructure

The issue of space has been a growing concern that was a prominent feature of our self-study and a reoccurring theme throughout the site visit. We believe that improving our learning infrastructure is critical both to delivering a high quality education to our students and to the School advancing its

national reputation and standing as a leading school of public affairs. We fully support and agree with the committee's finding that, "While the architecture and history of the building are noteworthy, the interior space is not conducive to learning environments appropriate to support the School's current and evolving pedagogy" (pp. 11-12). We also agree with its assessment that the building "lacks the space needed to accommodate the growing number of graduate (both Masters and PhD-level) students and faculty" (p. 12). We are pleased to have been recently put on the list of the University's potential projects, which will allow us to formally explore options to renovate the building and address these concerns. The committee's specific suggestions related to physical flexibility of space, technological adaptability that aligns with our residential needs and global aspirations, the number and size of classrooms, and the furnishings in our classrooms, offices, and collaborative spaces will all be of great value as we move forward with renovation discussions and we appreciate the committee's thoughtful input on the matter.

Undergraduate Program

In response to the goals and preliminary planning we discussed during the site visit regarding the development of an undergraduate degree program, the committee encouraged close consideration of several important issues related to resources such as potentially unforeseen costs associated with establishing an undergraduate program, the extent to which the School's current space constraints would impact the feasibility of the program, and the impact of a new undergraduate program on the School's own MPA program. We are mindful of each of these issues and agree that a program proposal must adequately address each of these issues before it can move forward. We believe that if it is pursued carefully and collaboratively, an undergraduate program can be both financially viable and an opportunity to positively engage with and contribute to the University community.

GPSS SURVEY RESULTS AND PROCESS

On a final note, although the GPSS survey process is beyond the control of the unit being reviewed, we share the concerns expressed by the review committee with regard to the reliability of the current process. We agree with the committee's suggestion that GPSS work with the Graduate School to establish practices that take advantage of the administrative expertise within the University to ensure the results of the survey are systematically available to review committees prior to site visits. We also agree with its suggestion that GPSS develop a survey designed specifically for masters programs. These process and survey design issues, as well as the low response rate, give us reason to question whether the all results highlighted by the committee, particularly regarding the encouragement students receive, reflect the perspectives of the larger student population. In fact, results from the Graduate School's exit survey of master's students, which has a response rate greater than 90% over the last two years among Evans School students, indicate that over 84% of graduating students feel that the encouragement and support they received from the degree program was Good, Very Good, or Excellent. However, results from the same survey indicate that academic advising does continue to represent an opportunity for further growth with only 74% of respondents rating the academic advising the received as Good, Very Good, or Excellent. We are committed to working with students and faculty to identify ways to improve academic advising.

CONCLUSION

We wish to reiterate our gratitude to each of the members of the committee. Our continued success relies on constructive and candid feedback from our peers and colleagues and we have benefited greatly from this process. We echo the committee's appreciation for Augustine McCaffery's coordination efforts and work to make the process efficient and effective. This process will contribute significantly to our future success and we look forward to another decade of tremendous growth and development.