



UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
The Graduate School
G-1 Communications
Box 353770
Seattle, Washington 98195-3770

Telephone: (206)543-5900

Fax: (206)685-3234

April 26, 2002

To: Lee Huntsman
Provost

From: Marsha Landolt 
Dean and Vice Provost

Re: Master of Health Administration Program review

Summary and recommended action

At its meeting of April 25, 2002, the Graduate School Council met with members of the Master of Health Administration review team, the director of the Program, and the Associate Dean of the School of Public Health and Community Medicine. The Program was recognized for 30 years of excellence during which it has not only maintained a key position in the Northwest region's health care industry but has gained an outstanding national reputation as well. The Council recommended continuation of all degree programs, with its next review in 10 years (2011).

I concur with the Council's findings and recommendations. The self-study, review committee report and program response are enclosed.

Background

The Master of Health Administration was created in 1972. It is a group degree that is offered through the Graduate School. Its administrative offices are housed in the Department of Health Services in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, but its governance structure includes the Schools of Business, Nursing, and the Evans School of Public Affairs. In 2001, the Program graduated 16 students from its 2-year, full-time "day" program and 13 students in the Executive MHA, a program designed for working professionals. The Program also offers four dual degrees: the MHA/MBA, MHA/MD, MHA/MN, and MHA/MPA. Two-thirds of the Program's 21 regular faculty have primary appointments in the Department of Health Services, with the remaining third coming from Business, Law, Public Affairs, Nursing and Medicine. The Program

also works with a number of clinical professors and professionals from the Seattle health services community. Of approximately 80 programs nationwide, the MHA Program ranks among the top five.

The tenor of the review and of the Council discussion was overwhelmingly positive. The Program has begun to institute what the external experts on the review team called an exciting and innovative new curricular plan. The plan is the result of Program-wide discussion and evaluation. Currently, the faculty are engaging in systematic discussions of structural and fiscal questions. These discussions will address some of the weaknesses that were identified by the review team, especially in the area of the Program's long-term intellectual and budgetary viability.

A point of particular concern raised in the review was the dependence of the Program on soft money. This problem is shared throughout the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, but it is particularly acute in a non-clinical field such as Health Administration. The pressure is expected to increase with faculty turnover. Since the area of management has fewer grant opportunities than do other areas of scholarly activity, there is concern about the ability to attract top junior faculty candidates if they are required to generate a large fraction of their own salary. Some fiscal strains could be lessened if the Program made better use of a local alumni base in fund-raising efforts (for endowed chairs, for instance).

The option of offering the MHA degree on a self-sustaining basis was discussed; however the committee and Council agreed that it would be premature to push the Program in that direction at this point. The Program has recently faced challenges in meeting its enrollment projections and should not be asked to shoulder any extra burdens that might further inhibit its recruitment efforts. The difficulties in recruitment seem to stem mostly from marketing. The Program needs to articulate to prospective, and indeed to current, students how the MHA differs from other alternative degrees and how its offerings are distinctive. This suggestion, as well as comments regarding fund-raising, were well received by the Program and are being addressed in its current planning discussions.

The team was asked to address the appropriateness of the Program remaining in the Graduate School as opposed to being transferred to the Health Services Department, from which come most of its faculty. The Program faculty argued that the current administrative structure facilitates collaboration with other schools by providing visibility and flexibility. Its interdisciplinary footing is also symbolically important in that it mirrors what graduates will encounter in the field. The review team and the Council recommended that the Program remain in the Graduate School. The Program is currently having discussions that will address ways to strengthen the relationships with the Schools of Business and Nursing in particular. All four partnering schools should be encouraged to support these efforts.

The Master of Health Administration is a vibrant and highly respected program. I am pleased to forward these recommendations to you.

c: Richard McCormick, President
Pat Wahl, Dean, School of Public Health and Community Medicine
Fred Connell, Associate Dean, School of Public Health and Community Medicine
Debra Friedman, Associate Provost for Academic Planning
John Slattery, Associate Dean for Academic Programs
Will Welton, Director, MHA Program

Members of the Review Committee:

Chair: Associate Professor Debbie Ward, Department of Psychosocial and
Community Health, Box 357263

Professor Robert Higgins, Department of Finance and Business Economics, Box
353200

Professor Robert Plotnick, Evans School of Public Affairs, Box 353055

Eugene Schneller, Director, School of Health Administration and Policy, Arizona
State University, 318H BA, Tempe, AZ 85287-4506

Professor Stephen S. Mick, School of Allied Health Professions, Medical College
of Virginia Campus, Virginia Commonwealth University, PO Box 980203, 1008
East Clay Street, Richmond, VA 23298

Graduate School Council

Augustine McCaffery, Assistant to the Dean

Heidi Tilghman, Assistant to the Dean