

## **School of Marine Affairs Program Review, November 2005**

### **Review Committee:**

Alison Cullen, Associate Professor, Evans School of Public Affairs

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### **Executive Summary:**

1. The committee recommends continuation of the Master of Marine Affairs program with review in ten years.
2. We congratulate the School of Marine Affairs for the success of its professional masters program and for the contribution made by members of the SMA faculty in the formulation of marine policy around the world.
3. SMA should be authorized a minimum of two faculty bridging appointments in anticipation of near-term retirements. More specific recommendations appear below.
4. The SMA faculty needs to more effectively highlight its accomplishments to the greater University community. The SMA program has a legacy of training and placement of high-level resource managers that both the COFS and the University might capitalize on.
5. The SMA program fulfills functions and is engaged in activities that are different from those associated with other parts of the COFS. This different mission clearly creates conflicts within the COFS. One solution is to make appropriate new hires that tilt the SMA in the direction of the rest of COFS. The other solution that the SMA, the Provost, and the appropriate deans should give consideration is as to whether the SMA would be better housed elsewhere in the University.

### **Process:**

The Committee was provided with an extensive and detailed self-study prepared by SMA. Prior to the site visit, the chair of the committee met privately with Dean Nowell, the internal members of the committee attended the charge meeting, and internal members met the Director of SMA, Professor Thomas Leschine. At this last meeting, the committee provided Prof. Leschine with a list of questions arising from the charge meeting and from reading the self-study.

During the site visit, the committee met individually with SMA faculty, with other COFS faculty, with the Director of the Alaska Fisheries Science Center, jointly with three SMA staff members, and with current SMA graduate students as a group. We received written comments from individual graduate students as a follow-up to this last meeting. We solicited input by email from alumni and received a number of thoughtful comments following the site visit.

The Committee appreciates the thoughtful and frank, but never rancorous, discussion from all participants. While not a formal finding of the review, we would like to note that we were highly impressed with the SMA students. They were articulate, knowledgeable, passionate

about their field, and clearly very positive about the program. The same can be said about alumni who commented on the program.

### **Accomplishments:**

SMA was formed in 1972 in an era of national and world attention to marine issues, perhaps best exemplified by the United Nations Law of the Sea Conference. In the last three decades, SMA has been a leading participant in the training of masters level professionals in marine affairs, in research on a wide variety of marine policy questions and in the area of the impact of climate change, and in direct participation in management agencies consultancies and on committees charged with formulation of marine policy. SMA is particularly noted for its focus on the “human dimension” of the marine environment, i.e. understanding how marine policies impact humans as well as understanding how human behavior affects marine ecosystems. The human/ecosystem/policy interface is probably the most critical and the most understaffed component of the marine policy process around the world, and the SMA fills an important niche by contributing to capacity in this area.

### **Master of Marine Affairs degree:**

The SMA has long had an excellent reputation as a professional program for marine resource managers. The program has a national, if not global, reputation for training that is an important component of the University of Washington’s identity as one of the strongest institutions in the world in ocean science and training. Our review confirms that this reputation is earned. SMA recruits excellent students and maintains a consistent enrollment of around 20 incoming students per year. Trends in student applications and final acceptance are similar to those of peer programs, as are program-completion and non-completion rates. There is continued strong employer demand for graduates of the program, and alumni from the program are successful and rise quickly to positions of influence and importance in federal and state agencies, private industry and not-for-profit organizations. The placement list of SMA graduates is truly impressive. SMA alumni hold director positions in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, California Sea Grant program, EPA, the European Commission, the NMFS Alaska Fisheries Science Center, various divisions at NOAA, as well as managerial positions for state marine conservation agencies and many NGOs, to name just a few. This is an exceptional legacy in our view, and an attribute of the program that may not be fully appreciated within the COFS and the University.

Our impression, after reviewing student, alumni, and employer comments is that the curriculum is well regarded by current students and alumni and employers. They particularly commend the breadth of training and the value derived from a program that covers everything from marine ecology, to law, to economics, to institutional analysis and social organization. At the same time, the curriculum is what it is largely because it reflects the current (quite broad) disciplinary mix of existing faculty rather than a specific formulation of what future marine managers ought to know. The fact is that a small training program like this one cannot cover all possible desirable topics and hence must ultimately restrict the portfolio of disciplinary topics and skill development covered. Our impression is that the SMA program has been responsive to changes in emphases in the field of Marine Policy and to requests to engage in a number of additional teaching and research initiatives in recent times. But some of these changes in focus appear

reactive rather than purposeful. The SMA faculty need to gather as a group and craft a forward looking vision for both research and training in the marine policy area. This vision should be guided by questions about the most likely critical marine policy issues of the next decade, and a frank discussion about what kinds of disciplinary skills, research and training are going to be most helpful to addressing those policy needs.

### Research .

The research record of SMA is good, but overall, it is not realizing a research potential that matches the group's legacy in training and service. The increasing number of peer reviewed publications is encouraging. Nevertheless, a review of faculty CVs demonstrates a patchy record of publications in recent years. Given the relatively small classes in the SMA program, some outside critics have expressed the expectation for greater research output in terms of publications and grants. We discussed this and conclude that there are two sides to the problem. On the one hand, classes in SMA are not large undergraduate classes that are typical of many faculty in other units at the University of Washington. But on the other hand, few faculty in other programs have the responsibility to supervise and mentor as many graduate students on a continuous and relentless basis as is average in the SMA program.

SMA must address research output criticism, because research is a core benchmark against which any program in a top flight university will be judged. We see three useful avenues to pursue. First, it is important to attempt to exploit complementarities between supervision and research effort by directing students toward projects that provide both useful training experience but also potentially publishable research output. Second, in addition to directing students to topics that are **potentially** publishable, it is important to develop some internal mechanisms and incentives that increase the probability that some publishable product **actually** emerges from the thesis process. Often students are not inclined or are otherwise distracted after starting new jobs to spend the extra time it takes to craft a journal article out of work they have just completed. It is in the interest of faculty mentors and to the benefit of the program as a whole that research visibility be enhanced. Third, some thought should be given to other outlets or measures of achievement that might emerge from thesis work that does not ultimately end up in a peer reviewed journal. Some options for alternative outlets include reports to agencies or sponsors of research, a working paper or occasional publication series, or electronic publication. These alternative outlets would help demonstrate the range and quantity of research outputs from SMA, and make faculty and student research far more accessible to a range of marine affairs stakeholders.

In addition to making the supervision/mentorship/teaching and research functions more complementary, the SMA needs to give some thought to enhancing research collaboration between policy faculty and other marine and policy scientists in the COFS and elsewhere on campus. We observed important communication problems and expectation mismatches between SMA faculty and COFS leadership which we believe emerge because SMA is fundamentally different than the traditional science-based programs in COFS. SMA's legacy is clearly most related to its professional training and placement of alumni in management agencies, its faculty

service on panels, committees and decision-making agencies, and to a lesser degree on science-oriented peer journal output. Other components of COFS have in contrast earned their legacies from science-oriented journal output and research programs funded by large grants. The bottom line is that different groups within COFS do different activities well. But harmony would be enhanced by moving each group a step in the direction of the other group. This would entail more SMA faculty (perhaps new faculty hired explicitly to do this) working collaboratively with fisheries scientists, and more fisheries scientists engaging policy experts in their work. The University of Washington has always had highly recognized expertise in both the marine policy sciences and the marine natural sciences, and there was a time when scientists from both groups engaged more. It would be helpful to discuss new mechanisms to revive and encourage such collaboration again.

### Participation in Policy Making Councils

Without question the service record of SMA is excellent. Faculty have outstanding records of service at an international, national and regional level. Their international and national peers recognize this. There are few if any major national and Pacific Northwest reviews/reports/commissions in the field of marine affairs in the last 20 years in which SMA faculty have not played a significant role.

SMA faculty have contributed in an integral and exemplary manner in policy making councils with national and international impact and prominence. Some examples include:

Fluharty's appointment to the NOAA Science Advisory Board

Fluharty's appointment to the North Pacific Research Board

Herschman's appointment to the U.S. Commission on Ocean Policy

Herschman's appointment to the Washington Ocean Policy Working Group

Huppert's appointment to the National Research Council, Ocean Studies Board

Huppert's participation on the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's Independent Economics Analysis Board

Miles' election to the National Academy of Sciences

These activities are evidence of the high regard in which these faculty are held by their peers, as well as serving to enhance the reputation of the SMA program outside of the University.

### **Issues Looking Forward**

**SMA has had some three decades of success. Continuation of this success is at some risk. In part, this reflects the fact that retirements of some of SMA's most successful faculty are anticipated over the next several years and there is no firm vision for**

continuation of the legacy. In part, it also appears that SMA has broadened, perhaps in an unplanned manner, and that it no longer has the unity of mission it once had. Finally, like most of the University, SMA has been pressed for resources in recent years.

SMA and COFS have fallen into a negative feedback cycle with regard to resource management and allocation. This is true despite personal good will on both sides. SMA believes that efforts to make changes will not elicit further resources. COFS believes that SMA has developed an “entitlement mentality,” and cannot focus sufficiently to make efficient use of new resources.

This deadlock is most critical with regard to faculty appointments. Because of anticipated faculty retirements, a more positive *modus vivendi* needs to be developed. The likely alternative is that SMA will gradually shrink and eventually fade away—an outcome which COFS, SMA, and this Committee all view as a very bad outcome.

Recommendation 1:

- a) COFS (with support from the Provost) should make a contingent commitment to at least two tenure-track faculty lines bridging to upcoming retirements. One line should be at the Associate professor level, with the aim toward hiring someone with vision, energy, and a demonstrated potential to interact with COFS and other policy faculty on campus.
- b) SMA should be tasked to use its discussion over hiring to decide what SMA will look like in the future. Specifically, SMA needs to articulate a specific vision that identifies how proposed hires will be central to its future research, teaching, and outreach focus. The committee believes that discussion of hiring named individuals or a specific programmatic area will lead to more outcome-oriented planning than has been the rule in recent years. A successful proposal would identify high priority disciplinary fields and might even name potential candidates that would be desirable targets of the University of Washington’s attention.
- c) Following a successful SMA vision for the future—one satisfactory to both SMA and COFS—the contingency should be removed and both hires should be made promptly.
- d) In addition to the usual academic skills, the person hired in the tenured line should evidence good “peer leadership” skills. She or he should be someone whom faculty inside and outside SMA would like to collaborate with.
- e) Because of the importance of SMA connections outside the school, the SMA search committee should be augmented by two faculty appointed by the Dean, probably one from COFS and one outside COFS.
- f) Opportunities should be explored to open up additional hiring opportunities that might emerge by collaborating with colleges, schools, and departments outside of COFS. The Evans School mission has much in common with the SMA mission, for example, and the possibility for

joint positions that bring new blood to both groups and collaborations that might not otherwise occur, should be encouraged.

**The location of a professional and policy school inside a natural science college offers special opportunities, but also leads to inevitable tensions over culture and values. It is notable that the reputation of SMA is in some ways higher off-campus than it is in COFS. The Committee has several recommendations aimed at ameliorating the natural tensions.**

Recommendation 2:

- a) COFS should recognize that metrics of excellence for SMA will frequently be more similar to metrics in the Evans School or the social science units of A&S than to those appropriate for Fisheries or Oceanography.
- b) SMA should propose metrics of excellence on which it is appropriate to be judged. These might include:
  - i. Contributions to formulation of marine policy through service on public and private councils and commissions.
  - ii. Evidence on the scientific and policy contribution of masters theses research. Specifically, how many theses result in publication or lead to identifiable policy changes in public or private organizations.
  - iii. In measuring the production of degrees, student credit hours, etc. relative to state funded positions, SMA should identify comparable units within the University as gauge for its performance relative to peer units.
- c) SMA should accept responsibility for highlighting its accomplishments to COFS and the University, particularly its accomplishments in training and placement of alumni and its accomplishments in forming marine policy. Having identified what it does well, SMA should have a specific action plan for trumpeting its success at meeting its goals. With help from SMA in articulating this message, the COFS can and should then place emphasis on advertising the success of SMA; in our view SMA could be the “poster child” for responsible service of the State university to important State goals – economic, environmental, etc.

Recommendation 3:

In the long run, the Provost and the relevant Deans should give consideration as to whether COFS is the best home for SMA. Perhaps it would be better located in the Evans School or being a joint COFS/Evans program. Perhaps it would form part of the core for a new campus organization centered on environmental or science policy. It is the Committee’s view that while a move might be appropriate at some future date, consideration of this difficult question should not become a barrier to the changes needed in the short term to secure SMA’s future.

**SMA has a strong message which should resonate outside the University. This has been underexploited. Much of the benefit of trumpeting SMA's achievements would accrue to COFS and the University, not only to SMA.**

Recommendation 4:

- a) The work of SMA in training professionals for the Pacific Northwest and in improving marine policy should be used by the University as “bragging points” in communicating to the legislature. This legacy is a unique and important feature of this program, and one that would resonate with critics who sometimes misunderstand the broad mission of the University.
- b) Alumni feedback suggests that there are solid opportunities for fundraising from the marine community, even though few alumni are in a position to make substantial personal contributions. SMA is too small to run its own development effort. COFS should take the lead on structuring a development effort for SMA. Because SMA has an easy to understand message, such effort is likely to benefit COFS relations with donors in general.

**Points of Communication**

There are several other issues on which we have no recommendation, but which the Committee wishes to draw greater attention.

Focus of SMA:

There is a strong feeling on the part of COFS that SMA has too many different directions for a unit of its size. This belief applies both to the research mission and to the curriculum. We have some sympathy with this view. We would encourage, during the formulation of a new vision, some bold thinking (not bound by the current faculty configuration) about what disciplinary fields and research foci are consistent with the teaching/training mission of SMA but also most likely to lead to collaboration and a better “fit” with COFS. This new vision needs to realize that a small size group cannot do everything, and that some fields currently covered may need replacement with others or with more depth in certain fields already represented.

Science orientation:

One suggestion has been made is that SMA should have a greater “science orientation.” The committee is dubious about this suggestion, because SMA's strength is in fact in the human dimension. We suspect that the best model is to encourage more SMA faculty to collaborate with COFS and other external faculty on multidisciplinary marine policy analysis. Certain quantitative fields (eg bioeconomics) might be more compatible with the COFS mission than others and discussions about these possibilities should be conducted within SMA. In any event, this issue should be an internal SMA decision and should not be externally imposed. We reiterate our belief that the articulation of a clear

vision (in terms of future faculty configurations) is the best way to help SMA achieve greater focus of purpose.

## **Other Issues**

There are several other issues that are smaller, although not necessarily less important.

### Legal training:

We heard repeatedly that the legal training provided by SMA is invaluable to its graduates. The law school no longer provides faculty capable of providing such training. (The issue of legal training outside the law school is an issue not limited to SMA, and should probably receive attention from the Provost's Office.) Coursework in this area is currently being supported by soft money. This long term suitability of this temporary and tenuous situation needs to be addressed.

### Great diversity of the student body:

Greater diversity of the student body would be desirable. Perhaps greater attention should be given to marketing the program in general and to marketing it specifically to communities who have not been well-represented in marine affairs.

### Greater linkages with ports and marine transit:

SMA does less in this area than it did in the past. We heard from alumni and current students that this is an area of great potential. Mindful of our recommendation to narrow the focus, we pass this on as information only.

### Regularize the position of Assistant Professor Patrick Christie:

Putting a junior faculty member in a half-time position and then splitting the position between two homes is unwise, and perhaps unjust. Despite the evident high-energy level of Professor Christie, the Committee feels that some better arrangement should be found. At a minimum a six-month hard money appointment is much easier to manage than a 4.5 month appointment, given that the University is on the quarter system.

### More convenient cross-registration:

SMA students report some difficulty in registering for non-SMA classes, particularly in the Evans School, because they register with low priority. It would be good to lessen this difficulty, if it can be done without unduly impacting the missions of other units.