

School of Marine and Environmental Affairs (SMEA) Program Review Report Site Visit -- January 2017

Review Committee:

Sarah Curran, Professor, Jackson school of International Affairs

Thomas Dietz, Professor of Sociology and Environmental Science and Policy, Michigan State University

Jeremy Firestone, Professor and Director, Center for Carbon-free Power, University of Delaware

Stephen Gardiner, Professor, Philosophy

David Layton (Chair), Professor, Evans School of Public Policy and Governance

Executive Summary:

1. The committee recommends continuation of the Master of Marine Affairs program for 10 years.
2. The committee recommends that in the event that SMEA initiates a new doctoral program within the next few years, SMEA should provide a self study of the Master of Marine Affairs to the Graduate School concurrent with a review of the new doctoral program so as to ensure the continued success of the Master of Marine Affairs program.
3. The committee congratulates the faculty of SMEA for the growth and continued success of this very important, valuable, and unique program at the University of Washington.
4. The committee recommends that the faculty should grow by 1 or 2 positions so as to ensure the sustained excellence of the program.

Process:

The committee was provided with detailed information in the form of the unit's self-study document along with previous Graduate School review reports and responses. During the two day site visit the committee met with Terrie Klinger, Professor and Director of SMEA; Lisa Graumlich, Dean, College of the Environment (via Skype) and Stephanie Harrington, Associate Dean, College of the Environment; all of the SMEA faculty; all of the SMEA

support staff; many SMEA students from both years of the program; and a large selection of SMEA alumni.

The discussion with faculty in groups of two was extremely beneficial and conducive to an informed discussion between the committee and the faculty. There was generally good agreement about the state of the school and its MMA program and where it is headed. The committee met with students in three different groupings (first year, second year, students in the new capstone option). It was a pleasure to be able to meet with so many students at different stages of degree completion. It was notable that the committee had the opportunity to meet with 6 alumni who graduated in the last 10 years. This was both extremely useful to rounding out our review of the MMA and a testament to the continuing impact of the program and its ongoing connection to its alumni and the marine policy community more broadly.

Detailed Review:

Graduate School Questions

1) Are they doing what they should be doing?

Yes they are doing what it should be doing. SMEA (and its MMA) is a science-based policy program that is well known for its traditional emphasis on Marine Affairs. It is very important and valuable. It has witnessed an overall improvement in its pool of applicants and it has an excellent growth trajectory. It has strong alumni placement. It is a nexus for College of Environment outreach and solutions-based approaches and has a an energetic and ambitious faculty.

With the above in mind and in recognition of the smaller size of the program we encourage future growth from strength and would discourage them from trying to be everything. Continuing focus is important. The strengths of this unit that are and should continue to be reflected in the graduate programs are:

Policy grounded in science.

Engagement not only with real world problems but with decision makers, including state, local, federal and tribal government, the private sector and NGOs.

A reputation for leadership in marine affairs now complemented with environmental affairs.

2) Are they doing it well?

Yes. And, it's on an upward and good trajectory. We are impressed by their ongoing reflection on how to move forward, their experimentation with changes in the program and their commitment to evaluate and revise their innovations. For instance, there was some

mention by students over some of the new 500 level courses. However, between just the two years of students who experienced the new courses, successful changes were made by the faculty and acknowledged by both faculty and students. The students' assessment of the need for particular changes was well understood and similar to faculty member's own assessment. The level of faculty commitment to delivering on each change they make is very high.

3) How can they do things better?

Several of the following points include items in which SMEA is doing well, yet we wish to highlight them so as to encourage the unit to remain focused on them as they continue to grow and change.

First, we note that the unit is at a size that normal sabbatical and other forms of leaves can have a substantial impact on the ability to provide required courses and mentor students. So it seems important that a few more faculty hires provide stability.

Given the wealth of course resources at UW, it would be helpful to identify courses that would match student needs and when appropriate to negotiate with the instructors and units offering those courses.

They should maintain careful attention to core course content as a foundational platform for outstanding training. Their thoughtful consideration of how best to structure the 500 series should continue.

Think carefully about how to add the 'e' (environmental) content on the science-based policy side.

Hue growth and new changes closely to program strengths. In short, grow from your strengths.

There is likely a substantial demand outside the US for their degree. Often many of these students can come with funding and bring interesting perspectives to the program. While we recognize that the terrain surrounding international recruitment may have changed recently and so one must tread judiciously, we suggest the program become proactive in recruiting international students.

Think about how to reward faculty for the capstone and thesis work. Make the capstone work easier for faculty while maintaining a high quality student experience. Consider assigning a TA to the overall capstone effort. This could be a TA in science communication. This could be an excellent career development opportunity for the TA as well.

Space was regularly mentioned by students, faculty, and staff. In the event that they don't get more space and they continue to grow then they may have to re-think the current

allocation of space to graduate students on behalf of faculty and students. We recognize that these are challenging decisions, but note that larger professionalized master's programs appear to have less space per student than SMEA.

4) How should the University assist them? ^[1]_{SEP}

Faculty Growth

Faculty growth of 1-2 lines, along with bridge hires (if not already provided) for replacing retiring faculty would be very beneficial to the program.

As in all programs, but especially in those of smaller size such as SMEA, stability is greatly enhanced with more faculty. It is critical to replace retiring faculty with needed policy, planning, management specialties. SMEA should consider carefully which additions to the faculty add the critical breadth needed for an MMA in this day and age as well as leverage the unique aspects of SMEA. Important avenues of potential growth that were identified during our review include expertise with regard to the Arctic, decision sciences, ethics and human geography.

This growth could/should be linked with an expected concomitant growth of the MMA to 50 entering students per year, strengthening both the school and the MMA.

Additional Funding for MMA Students and for Diversity

Student funding and recruitment of students is challenged by lack of funding. Students mention concern over the constant struggle to find funding. Faculty mentioned the fear of losing the best students.

Funding is also inextricably linked to efforts to enhance diversity. SMEA has increased its entering students by approximately 50% between 2006/2007 and 2016/2017 (from 22 to 32). It has also increased its students who are under-represented minorities from about 1.2 to 3 entering students per year during the period of 2006/2007 through 2010/2011 and the period covering 2011/2012 through 2016/2017. While the numbers are not large, they have nearly doubled the enrollment of under-represented minority students. SMEA is clearly committed on this front and has made improvements. Improvements that are challenging to make elsewhere on campus and across higher education in general. We sense that SMEA may be among the best placed units within the College of the Environment to make continuing gains. We believe that targeted resources for diversity provided to SMEA will be well made.

Potential Doctoral Program

We think that the University could provide assistance with the development of their doctoral program. We should be clear that our review does not officially cover the potential

doctoral program and that our review took place at an intermediate and parallel step of the doctoral program development process. We feel that we should state some of our initial thoughts regarding it as it bears on our primary charge of reviewing the MMA, yet acknowledge that this new potential program is not yet in existence. With this in mind, our committee had the following reactions.

a) It is clear that it would be beneficial to the University and to SMEA and its active and engaged faculty to have the opportunity to train doctoral students. As one faculty member noted, they often train great master's students only to see them move onto other doctoral programs – sometimes on this same campus. Continuing to hire the best new faculty will require some doctoral educational opportuneness to support their scholarly enterprises. The University should support this somehow.

b) Give the smaller size of the faculty and the costs (both financial and time) of developing and establishing a new doctoral program, could SMEA be supported in partnering with other units – at least initially? Perhaps QERM, or the School of Forestry?

c) It is unclear why the PhD proposal is/was labeled 'Environment and Society'. Why not a PhD in Marine and Environmental Affairs in keeping with the School's name? What is the rationale for a different name? What does that name mean, and what professional status and resonance does it have? In particular, does it resonate with SMEA's traditional stakeholder's, or is it intended to connect with new ones? What issues does a wider name create with other units on campus? If there is a case for a PhD in Environment and Society, it is not clear that SMEA is the correct sole home. SMEA should consider a more narrowly defined PhD program that builds directly from MMA – SMEA, and/or increase their outreach to potential collaborators across the campus.

Other Support

SMEA would benefit from increased IT support.

An RA for academic services which could provide support for career, alumni networking, supporting information regarding curriculum, and especially outside the unit crowdsourcing. We believe that such a position could successfully leverage the uniquely committed professional alumni community.

Unit Defined Questions

1) What is the most efficient and effective way to offer our revised MMA curriculum, taking into account 1) the size of the student body and potential for growth, 2) the size of the faculty, and 3) the two tracks offered (thesis and professional tracks)? Is there an optimal allocation of students across tracks?

The capstone program is exciting and valuable. It is going to take some staff/faculty effort to grow and maintain. The faculty have already demonstrated their creativity and commitment to developing and offering this new track. The effort is in excellent hands.

The thesis track is valued greatly by students. It was clearly a key recruitment feature for a number of the students and alumni we met with. The balance between thesis opportunities and capstones needs to be considered carefully. Perhaps a 50-50 emphasis on each is warranted until further experience by students (and then alumni) and faculty is acquired.

In the short term, consider offering third year RAships for MA thesis track students - this could work especially well if the potential PhD were to launch directly from the MA.

2) How can we best use research and outside engagement to enrich student learning? What opportunities exist to strengthen research portfolio and partnerships within and outside UW to add value to our program, for example through formal and informal arrangements with other academic units, federal agencies (e.g. NOAA), and non-governmental entities?

More active engagement with alumni - one of the alumni during our interviews mentioned having done a Program on the Environment (POE) capstone that worked really well and was excited about the new SMEA option (which did not exist at the time they were enrolled). Another alum reacted with surprise when hearing about the capstone and was excited to see the possibility for capstone collaboration for her organization.

Some other possibilities for more alumni engagement include:

- An annual alumni award

- An annual event that brings together alumni, current students and prospective students.

3) What emerging trends in marine and environmental affairs offer new opportunities with respect to student training and professional preparation? How can we best prepare our graduates to enter the workforce in the coming 5-10 years?

When it comes to the capstone versus thesis question, a labor market analysis may be beneficial. On the one hand there are labor market signals that suggest that people need master's degrees and that thesis options send strong signals back to the labor market. On the other hand, we suggest increasing/developing the number of non-governmental employment pathways – this could dovetail nicely with the on-going development of the capstone pathway. In either or both cases, as one alum said, there are just not that many jobs for PhDs, even in the non-academic world. This suggests that the School's continued commitment to their growing MMA program is important and well-placed.

Conclusion

It was a pleasure to conduct this review. The faculty's commitment to their educational program was impressive. They are making well thought out and timely changes with a clear eye on how to deliver more and better. Their alumni are successful and want to engage even more. This is a unit worthy of University respect and support.