

Executive Summary for the Masters in Public Administration Program

The Masters' Degree in Public Administration is one of the largest graduate degree programs at Columbus State University. Two main programmatic goals need to be met. 1) How to better service the Columbus community and beyond? and 2) How to assure national accreditation? This report details the challenges and opportunities to satisfy these goals. While the MPA program is a large program, there are several areas where it can be refined. 1) Full time faculty should not be teaching 4-4 graduate course loads. This was the operational structure for the past several years. This is a poor design for both teaching and academic research. 2) The course rotation is part of the challenge. The program seeks to offer all core classes in house and online for both fall and spring semesters. This becomes a challenge because some full time faculty have political science teaching obligations as well. MPA faculty are spread too thin to be able to cover the core classes effectively. 3) Some faculty received their training from online institutions. The National Accrediting Association for Public Administration does not have a policy about faculty who have obtained their degrees from online institutions. However, there are concerns whether such institutions academic rigor is sufficient for a graduate program seeking national accreditation. 4) Faculty research publication achievements are below average. The main challenge is that faculty have been over extended making it difficult to produce credible publications. This becomes a challenge in terms of seeking national accreditation. 5) MPA faculty are also presented with the same challenges of presenting their research at conferences. There needs to be adequate funding so faculty particularly graduate ones will have the opportunity to present. Admittedly, the Domin Conference is helpful, but faculty need share and collaborate ideas with scholars around the country.

There are several strengths to the MPA program. 1) It is one of the largest programs at Columbus State University. 2) It is tightly connected to the MCCC Captains Career Course Program connected to Fort Benning. This means military captains can complete the MA with just 27 credits plus comprehensive exam. The development of the Capstone Class has been very successful. Graduate student success rate on the comprehensive exams has jumped from 55-80% first time success rate. The main reason is that Capstone offers students the chance to go through a series of practice exams. This is particularly beneficial to the students. 3) MPA students are likely to complete the program. 4) There has been three traditional tracks, government, healthcare, and justice tracks. The majority of the students are governmental track. However, there are new initiatives and three new tracks have been added. They are Environment, Campaigns, and Urban Policy. Additionally, the Philosophy part of the Department is also being integrated into the teaching Ethics of Public Administration classes. Questions do remain about whether there are enough qualified faculty to adequately cover these tracks. 5) There is a concentrated effort to integrate other university departments to teach for the program, though this has yet to be tested. 6) There is a very strong rapport between faculty and students and this can serve both as a recruitment tool and a conduit to hear new ideas to strengthen the program.

Overall, the MPA program is viable. **The main challenges are satisfying the national accreditation requirements of 50% all MPA core classes to be taught by full time faculty. This can be done, but it has to be done on a rotating method. This means that all core classes should not be taught both online and in class each semester. It is not sustainable since MPA faculty have undergraduate teaching commitments as well.** The Department hired four new professors from nationally accredited universities. This is a major step. An additional faculty

search for a health policy expert failed in 2016. However, a new search is necessary. Junior faculty should be paired with senior faculty to help them adjust to the teaching and research guidelines as well as makes adequate tenure and promotion progress. There is a lot of hope and the degree has been a major benefit to both student and beyond. Still, National Accreditation must be secured and a clear tangible plan must be developed to reach this goal. New faculty have been hired, and pointed strategic course development and planning can make this goal reality. **Satisfactory -**