

Contact: Diana Gonzalez

**REQUEST FOR A PROGRAM CHANGE IN THE MASTER OF PUBLIC POLICY PROGRAM
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA**

Action Requested: Consider recommending approval of the request by the University of Northern Iowa for changes to the Master of Public Policy Program in the Department of Political Science in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Executive Summary: The proposed program changes responded to an external review of the program. This request has been reviewed by the Board Office and the Council of Provosts and is recommended for approval. This request addresses the Board of Regents Strategic Plan priority to pursue “educational excellence and impact” and Goal #8 – “Iowa’s public universities and special schools shall be increasingly efficient and effective.”

Background:

- ◇ **Description of program.** The Master of Public Policy (MPP) program is a professional, interdisciplinary degree designed to provide students with a combination of skills. Policy decisions are increasingly becoming more complex, whether these decisions are being made by a government, a non-profit, or a for-profit entity. To respond effectively to these issues, organizations need professionals who are trained in the political and social aspects of public policy, as well as in the appropriate methods of policy analysis and evaluation. Policy professionals also need to be knowledgeable about numerous substantive policy areas. MPP students take courses and engage in research that develops these skills and substantive knowledge.

The Program was previously an interdisciplinary, self-standing program in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences (CSBS). Due to the retirement of the director, it was moved into the Department of Political Science. As part of the move, the program curriculum was re-evaluated, especially with respect the concerns of external reviews and the method of the program’s delivery which limited the number of students. The current program is a traditional, on-campus program that contains courses from political science, economics, and history. The proposed program changes include a reduction in the required number of credit hours for completion and substituting two new courses in the revised curriculum.

- ◇ **Reason for proposed name change.** In 2011, external reviewers recommended that the program hours be shortened and comprehensive exams be eliminated. These suggestions are incorporated in the revised curriculum package. External reviewers also suggested converting the MPP to a Master of Public Administration (MPA). While this suggestion was not possible due to limited resources, the department was able to incorporate in the curriculum changes an additive Graduate Certificate in Public Administration that students can complete both with and without the MPP.

As part of the curriculum restructuring, a course in program evaluation was proposed. In addition, a new course was proposed to replace an existing course. Furthermore, given limited resources, the program will move to a cohort model, with students admitted to a cohort only in the Fall of odd number years. In order to attract a wider range of students, the program may be completed by accessing all courses using distance delivery methods. This aids the department, program, college and university by streamlining the program, expanding the base of potential students, and reducing costs, all while maintaining a quality graduate program.

- ◇ Consistency with other programs on campus. The average number of credit hours for graduate programs at UNI is 30-36. The average number of credit hours for other Master of Public Policy or Master of Public Administration programs in the state is 30-40. The re-configured program delivery is consistent with other graduate programs at UNI that have moved to distance delivery.
- ◇ Consistency with accreditation requirements. This program is not accredited.
- ◇ Effect on program configuration. The number of credit hours required will now be 34. Previously, the program required 41-45 credit hours. The range is due to whether the student completes an internship. Students with extensive public policy work experience may have the internship waived.
- ◇ Effect on students. There will be no effect on current students. Students in the old program configuration have completed the program. New students will begin the new curriculum and program in Fall 2016.
- ◇ Effect on resources. There will be no increased costs to the Department of Political Science. Current faculty will teach the two new courses.
- ◇ Proposed name consistent with College mission. UNI's mission is to provide transformative learning experiences that inspire students to embrace challenge, engage in critical inquiry and creative thought, and contribute to society. The College's mission is to increase understanding of people in individual, social, cultural and historical contexts and to share this knowledge among faculty, students, and the larger community. The proposed program changes will address the University's mission and vision to be nationally known for innovative education, preparing students for success in a rapidly changing, globally competitive, and culturally diverse world as well as the College's mission.
- ◇ Workforce needs. Enabling students to complete a master's degree in public policy through distance education is ideally suited for UNI, which is remote from state and federal policy centers. Furthermore, the program is now part-time and courses are offered in the evenings to facilitate adult learners, already employed but seeking the advancement that a graduate degree may provide.

According to the Education Advisory Board 2013¹ mid-career professionals in the public and nonprofit sectors are the most likely to enroll in online public affairs graduate programs. With this in mind, the Division of Continuing Education administered a survey in Fall 2014 to professionals in public sector jobs in Iowa. The results of that survey identified 57 respondents indicating interest in a full MPP program, 44 respondents indicating interest in the Public Administration certificate, and 60 respondents indicating interest in one or two courses for professional development.

- ◇ Date of implementation. The proposed program changes will become effective upon approval by the Board of Regents and will be included in the University's General Catalog. The anticipated implementation date is Fall 2016.

¹ <http://tinyurl.com/lqe29zk>