

**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Yolanda Cordero-Nieves  
Director, la Escuela Graduada de Administración Pública  
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras Campus

FROM: Laura Bloomberg  
Chair, Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation  
Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration

DATE: July 20, 2017

SUBJECT: NASPAA Accreditation Review

On behalf of the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA), I am pleased to inform you that the Commission found your Master of Public Administration to be in substantial conformity with NASPAA Standards, subject to the monitoring provisions outlined in the enclosed report. Your program is accredited for a period of 7 years – through August 31, 2024 – and will be included on the Annual Roster of Accredited Programs. An abbreviated letter announcing your accreditation has also been sent to your Acting Chancellor, María de los Ángeles Castro, and I encourage you to further share this decision letter with your colleagues and program administrators.

Please accept the Commission's congratulations on the accreditation of your program. By pursuing and achieving accreditation through a rigorous peer review, your program has demonstrated a substantial commitment to quality public service education. You are part of the global community of over 190 accredited graduate programs in public service. The Commission wishes to commend the program on its success in cultivating a highly qualified and diverse faculty in addition to the exceptional quality of the program's leadership. The Commission also wishes to commend the program for its steadfast dedication to student learning through rigorous assessment of learning outcomes and fostering unique applied research opportunities.

Your program is in substantial conformance with the NASPAA Standards. However, the Commission concluded that questions remain about Standards 2.1/6.1 and 4.3/6.1. Accordingly, COPRA plans to monitor your continued progress, annually, on these specific standards. The Commission asks that you report your progress on these particular standards each year in your annual accreditation maintenance report.

If you have any questions about this decision or NASPAA's accreditation process, I would be happy to answer them via email at [bloom004@umn.edu](mailto:bloom004@umn.edu). Questions about this year's annual report should be directed to Heather Hamilton, Accreditation Manager and Director of Assessment, at [Hamilton@naspaa.org](mailto:Hamilton@naspaa.org).

Warmly,



Laura Bloomberg  
Chair, Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation

**Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation  
Report on Monitoring Provisions**

**Master of Public Administration  
University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras**

**July 20, 2017**

**Item 1: Standard 2.1 – Administrative Capacity/Standard 6.1 – Resource Adequacy**

Standard 2.1 states, “The program will have an administrative infrastructure appropriate for its mission, goals, and objectives in all delivery modalities employed.”

Standard 6.1 states, “The program will have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission, objectives, and continuous improvement.”

In its Interim Report, the Commission requested the program explore with the Site Visit Team its strategies to enhance administrative capacity given its challenges related to administrative staff, student assistantships, and faculty turnover. In its response to the Interim Report, the program stated that it would maintain “the minimal human resources (academic and administrative) to operate the program in a satisfactory manner,” however, it also stated that limited resources pose challenges to filling upcoming administrative vacancies. This response also listed several initiatives approved by the Dean and Chancellor, including hiring a temporary employee that would extend the hours during which administrative resources were available to students and the approval for a COOP student to support data collection and reporting.

The Site Visit Report confirmed that “the staff support for EGAP is dramatically reduced from where it was at the time of initial accreditation” and that two of three administrative staff are set to retire in the very near future. The Site Visit Report also noted, “it will be necessary for all staff to fully utilize new technologies so that data can be better maintained and tasks of recruitment, admissions, and maintaining contact with alumni will be more efficiently and effectively accomplished.” Finally, the Site Visit Report expressed concerns that without continued attention to administrative capacity, the program will struggle to innovate and progress.

In the program’s final response to COPRA, it stated that Campus Administration had granted the program a “full time-one year, renewable contract” to hire a new employee and redistribute administrative responsibilities in a way that maintains the institutional memory of existing staff and capitalizes on their strengths. In addition, the final response states that the program will add one part-time student for secretarial duties. Finally, the program has communicated in its final response that the daily working schedule of administrative staff will be adjusted to be “better aligned with the demand for student services,” including “extended hours during pre-registration periods and during admissions.”

The Commission appreciates the program’s efforts to secure administrative capacity and requests the program use its annual reports to describe the continued progress made in acquiring and maintaining adequate and sustainable administrative support for the program. The Commission seeks evidence the program’s administrative capacity (including its ability to systematically and continuously track and

support students) aligns with its mission, is appropriate for its program delivery, supports continuous improvement, and ensures the integrity of the program.

**Item 2: Standard 4.3 – Support for Students/Standard 6.1 – Resource Adequacy**

Standard 4.3 states, “The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to progress in careers in public affairs, administration, and policy.”

Standard 6.1 states, “The program will have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission, objectives, and continuous improvement.”

In its Interim Report, the Commission requested additional information on the program strategies that would reinforce and improve support for students and which ultimately would help improve program completion rates overtime. The program responded that it was pursuing reforms in its academic advisory program, its thesis requirement for graduation, and its admission process in the interest of improving student persistence to graduation. The program cited successive faculty retirements as a hindrance to cultivating a “culture of academic advisory” and stated that it aims to reinvigorate advisory efforts after hiring two new full-time faculty. The program also stated that the pending introduction of an alternative to the thesis “maintains the areas of learning assessment but reduces the time of work and offers the structure of a seminar course.” Finally, the program stated it was making “substantial changes to the admission process,” with the object of having “a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of students applying for admission.”

The Site Visit Report further noted that the program had received funding to establish a small computer center and redesign some of its classrooms. The Site Visit Report also confirmed that “the administration extended [library hours] so that the evening students may meet and discuss any concerns or obtain any needed information.” In its final response to the Site Visit Report, the program further noted that the Chancellor approved the acquisition of several new computers, laptops and portable projectors to bolster the program’s technological capacity.

The Commission requests the program continue to provide updates on its concerted efforts to improve available student services, including replacing the final thesis with the research seminar course, ongoing academic advisement, and technological upgrades, including accessible computer labs and software. More specifically, the Commission requests the program discuss how these (and future) enhancements have been shown to support students as they persist to graduation and achieve their educational and career objectives.

---

Over time, the Commission expects that programs will continue to develop their approach to strategic program management, including student learning assessment, and that this maturation will be evident in the program’s annual accreditation maintenance reports. As the public service field continues to advance and evolve, COPRA seeks to support programs as they strategically pursue their missions, graduate leaders in public service, and achieve excellence in education.

Please note that the Commission will review each of your annual accreditation maintenance reports to determine ongoing conformity with NASPAA Standards, including progress in the areas noted above. Your annual reports and COPRA’s actions in response to your reports will become a permanent part of your

record for your next accreditation review. COPRA's acceptance of the Program's annual reports is contingent on receiving satisfactory responses on the issues noted. If the program does not submit the information requested regarding the monitored standards in annual reports, the Commission may require the program to re-enter the accreditation cycle with an updated Self Study Report. Monitoring provisions remain in effect and must be addressed each year until the program is notified by COPRA that the monitoring has been removed.

The Commission also wishes to reemphasize its commitment to the transparency and accountability central to Standard 7.1 – Communications. Accredited programs are expected to consistently, accurately, and publicly provide their stakeholders with relevant information about the program and its student learning outcomes, to include graduation rates and employment placement. Programs found out of conformance at the annual report review each fall will be expected to resolve any nonconformities immediately upon notification, at the risk of COPRA alerting the university provost and pulling the program into an early reaccreditation review.

We look forward to receiving your annual report by **October 1, 2017**. Questions about this year's annual report should be directed to Heather Hamilton at [Hamilton@naspaa.org](mailto:Hamilton@naspaa.org).