

2015-2016 Academic Program Review

of

The School of Government and Public Policy
College of Social and Behavioral Sciences
University of Arizona

Internal/External Review Committee Final Report

March 24-25, 2016

prepared for Dr. Gail Burd, Senior Vice Provost, University of Arizona

Campus Visit: March 24-25, 2016

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Executive Summary

At the outset of the 5-year period of this review, the School of Government and Public Policy emerged from the merger of two departments facing the challenges of unifying the two faculties and developing new programs that would produce revenues to make up potential budgetary shortfalls.

The Committee's assessment is that the School has successfully grappled with both challenges. Two features especially impressed the Committee. First, we find that the morale within the School is truly exceptional. Given the initial context that prevailed at the time of SGPP's creation, the current cooperative spirit among faculty, administrators, staff and students is a testament both to the admirable goodwill of everyone in the unit and to the inspired leadership provided by the Director and Associate Director. Second, clearly the most striking feature of SGPP is the School's spectacular growth over the past few years. Its growth in undergraduate majors, student enrollments, and undergraduate and graduate programs clearly has made the School a model of success under the University's RCM2 management system.

The Committee's review of the School resulted in the identification of 9 areas of concern, touching issues associated with leadership succession, growth management, strategic planning, faculty integration and oversight, alumni development and outreach, and communication. The Committee offers 9 recommendations to SGPP to address these concerns.

- *Consider ways to broaden the leadership base, so as to cultivate successors who will have credibility and be accepted by faculty, staff, and students.*
- *Immediately hire in the area of criminal justice.*
- *Engage in a strategic planning process.*
- *SGPP and the College Dean should work together to develop a multi-year vision for hiring, in concert with the longer-term strategic plan for the school discussed in the previous point.*
- *Emphasize the importance of outreach as an independent element of faculty performance apart from professional service.*
- *Develop a formal process of documentation and communication of standards for promotion and tenure.*
- *Actively pursue the establishment of an identity that is projected through promotion, advertising, and recruitment of academic programs.*
- *Start building an SGPP alumni network.*
- *If it has not already done so, the School should provide its NTT faculty with clear guidelines for advancement, support for professional development, and a voice in program planning.*

The report concludes with some specific recommendations regarding the schools' research, teaching, and outreach missions.

Context of the 2015-2016 APR and Committee Report

The members of the APR Internal/External Review Committee met on March 24-25, 2016, to conduct a comprehensive review of the School of Government and Public Policy (SGPP) at the University of Arizona.

Prior to this site visit, the Committee members reviewed the School's APR Self Study. During its campus visit, the Committee met with Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs Gail Burd; the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences Dean John Paul Jones and Associate Dean Monica Casper; SGPP tenured, tenure-track, and non-tenure track faculty members; SGPP administrative staff and program heads; SGPP undergraduate and graduate students; and Provost Andrew Comrie.

All of the Committee's interactions with these individuals and groups were helpful and constructive, and we would like to thank everyone for their willingness to meet with us and discuss the SGPP in a candid and open way.

This report summarizes the Committee's views regarding the strengths of SGPP as well as concerns about the unit. The report further includes Committee recommendations about how SGPP and the University might address the concerns in ways that will make SGPP more resilient and robust and position SGPP for future success and growth. The report also includes an appendix that offers a number of recommendations about specific items pertaining to the schools' research, teaching, and outreach missions.

SGPP Context

This is the first Academic Program Review for SGPP since the merger of the Political Science Department and the School of Public Administration and Policy in July 2009. The merger was a significant change to the functioning of the two prior units.

Importantly, the initial context shaped how SGPP leadership approached managing the unit and making decisions regarding its directions. The merger of the Political Science and Public Administration and Policy faculties, though deemed necessary by University leadership, was not uniformly viewed in a positive manner by faculty in the two units. Indeed, in our interviews, several faculty members reported that there was widespread skepticism about the merger and at least one senior faculty member acknowledged that he felt in 2009 that a merger would not produce positive results for either faculty. This difficult institutional situation was exacerbated by significant budget challenges that emerged for the entire university, including SGPP, at the same time.

These dual realities caused leadership to place a priority on two activities. First, leadership sought to transform divided faculty into a unified SGPP. Second, due to budget-related concerns regarding viability, leadership placed an importance on developing new programs that would produce revenues to make up potential budgetary shortfalls.

The Committee feels that a fair evaluation of SGPP would not be possible without this context as a backdrop for considering performance.

SGPP Strengths

Overall, the APR Committee finds that the SGPP offers strong graduate and undergraduate programs with excellent advising of students at all levels. The School's faculty includes a number of well-established senior scholars of national and international prominence, as well as an exceptionally promising cohort of younger scholars with growing reputations. In addition, the School benefits from the excellent services of several non-tenure track faculty members. Its administrative staff is clearly committed to the mission of the School and is the backbone of the School's effective service to faculty and students. The undergraduate and graduate students with whom the Committee met expressed enthusiastic satisfaction with the advising, training, and professional support they are receiving from the faculty, administrators and staff.

Four specific points stood out as strengths of the SGPP.

- *Morale at all staff levels is very high.*

The merging of the two departments into the School of Government and Public Policy has been perceived as an overwhelming success for the College. All pre-existing doubts about combining these two units under one umbrella have been

eliminated. In fact, it was mentioned several times by the various groups that they have come out stronger and more interconnected intellectually than under the previous structure. This positive morale has made the staffing issues within the school manageable because there is a sense of camaraderie, a commitment to the common good, and a dedication to the students.

- *There is a self-awareness of the issues facing the department.*

Throughout the self-study and the discussions with faculty and staff, it was clear that leadership recognizes some of the areas that need improvement. There were frank discussions among the faculty regarding the need to diversify by adding more minority and female members, as well as the unsustainable faculty/student ratio caused by increasing student demand. Listed in the self-study are strategic priorities that address these issues, including a determined focus on growing the quality and quantity of the graduate program, enhancing community outreach efforts, developing an alumni network, and implementing program assessments. The ability to recognize these issues and bring them to the forefront of discussions regarding the future of SGPP will be very beneficial.

- *Advisors are high quality and play a critical role.*

The quality of the advising and advisors in the department is an unquestionable strength for SGPP. These positions in the department are the direct contact with students, sharing what programs are offered and how to navigate a path to graduation. The advisors are also the ones that smoothed the transition during the merger for enrolled undergraduate students. Each one has a heavy workload, but has been able to manage their students through extra hours and flexible schedules. This dedication to the students and program, despite relatively modest compensation, is another positive outcome of the positive morale in the department mentioned above. The programs and outreach done through this division of the department was the most diverse outreach we saw throughout the site visit. The newsletters, professional seminars, and alumni panels are all managed by these staff members, and students stated they connected strongly to these services. There have been changes to these types of programs since their inception, specifically making the email communications with students much more concise. Recognizing how students process information and adapting practices to meet these needs is another example of the strength of these staff members. It should also be mentioned that leadership in the department engaged the advisors by requesting their input on new programs and providing a new advising center.

- *SGPP features many innovative research institutes and academic programs.*

There is a set of diverse programs and institutes within SGPP that provide unique opportunities for current and prospective students. The BA in Law degree and the ISS online program are two such programs. The BA in Law program allows

students to gain some legal background prior to making a decision to attend law school or in preparation for professions in the legal field or criminal justice system. The ISS program provides an outlet for higher education primarily for non-traditional students looking to focus specifically on security challenges in the United States via an entirely online program. These offerings add to the strengths of SGPP course offerings. Additionally, SGPP houses or collaborates with innovative research institutes: the National Institute for Civil Discourse, the Rombach Institute for Crime, Delinquency, and Corrections, and the Consortium for Collaborative Governance. The connection to these institutes gives the department and students opportunities unavailable at other universities. Students who enroll in courses provided by SGPP have the ability to be involved in these specialized research institutes. These opportunities add to the department's ability to recruit talented students. An additional and important benefit of these innovative on campus and online programs is that they also have revenue-generating potential that can strengthen SGPP and make it more resilient in the face of future budget concerns that may arise.

The numerical growth in the number of students in SGPP programs, however, has not been matched by a concomitant growth in its faculty, staff and administrative support. This disparity has produced a situation that is stretching the School's operations beyond reasonable limits. Thus, the Committee finds that the School is approaching a critical stage in its history, and we present the remaining sections of the report and recommendations in an effort to enable the School to continue its recent success and to reach its full potential as an academic unit in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Arizona.

SGPP Areas of Concern

Through its review of SGPP, the Committee identified 9 areas of concern, which are briefly described below.

- *While a critical element of SGPP's ability to survive and thrive to date, the school's strong, high-quality leadership may create an "atmosphere of dependence," where faculty and staff increasingly rely exclusively upon the leadership to develop and implement a school vision and drive programmatic innovation.*

The strong leadership that shepherded the School through its transition period has created an environment where faculty and staff trust leadership to make key decisions regarding institutional vision and programs. Unless carefully managed, this could result in a crisis when succession issues arise, with an elevated possibility of potentially fractious conflict regarding programs and future direction. In addition, while strong leadership has been critical to the School's creation and survival in a challenging financial climate, new academic and curricular innovations ultimately require faculty support through regular governance processes. At least one of the new masters degree programs in

Criminal Justice is not well known to many of the tenured and tenure-track faculty. Although it may be a very productive and ultimately successful program, it will need faculty support to thrive over the long term.

- *The Criminal Justice Studies degree program cannot sustain its current scale without significant investment in full-time staff.*

The CJS program currently has 800 undergraduate students being supported by 1.5 full-time faculty FTEs. This faculty-student ratio is unsustainable and threatens future growth. Moreover, any expansion in this area, in the form of undergraduate enrollment or a new master's program, cannot be done effectively without considerable bolstering of the tenured and tenure-track faculty presence.

- *More generally, with the growth in existing programs and the development of new programs such as the MPP program, there is an increasing danger of mismatch between programmatic needs, and both the size and composition of faculty.*

While recent hiring has addressed some needs in the various programs, the rapid addition of multiple programs, and growth in enrollments, has created further pressures. Some net growth in the faculty size and diversity would make the programs more robust. At institutions offering a similar or smaller menu of programs, the student-faculty ratio is much smaller. For example, Arizona State University's School of Politics and Global Studies has 1500 undergraduate majors including 400 via online programs. The end comparative result is approximately 25% fewer majors with about 50% more faculty. The Department of Political Science at the University of Washington serves 630 majors with a tenure track faculty of 24. Programs are in danger of remaining vulnerable if future faculty hiring fails to address program needs in favor of maintaining the current distribution of research areas. The same entrepreneurial energy described as essential to solving other challenges should be applied to improving diversity. Standard recruitment strategies are not up to the task.

- *There has been an absence of longer-term strategic planning by the School.*

Faculty and staff were unable to articulate a long-term vision for the school and noted that there had been few, if any, conversations focused on the School's long-term trajectory. Indeed, many of the strategic actions taken by the school were in response to external events (such as the departure or retirement of a faculty member) rather than as part of a strategic effort to pursue a particular curricular or value-driven mission.

- *The message that outreach involves more than professional service needs to be institutionalized.*

The Committee found only limited understanding of the outreach responsibility as established via the University's status as a land grant institution. There was a

nearly uniform - and incorrect - equating of professional service, such as serving on School or University committees and participating in professional associations, with outreach. Though individual faculty members engage in outreach via community engagement, this is not explicitly incorporated as an element of performance reviews.

- *There are few formal outreach efforts to develop an SGPP alumni community or enhance alumni's connection to the School community.*

Despite having thousands of alumni from the two prior programs as well as the current SGPP configuration, there is no formal alumni community. Links with alumni are the result of personal relationships developed between faculty or staff and individual alumni.

- *Untenured faculty members are not aware of any written guidelines for the achievement of promotion and tenure, and instead appear to rely solely on verbal communications with leadership and other faculty to find information about benchmarks for progress.*

Untenured faculty were comfortable with the information they had received regarding standards for P&T, and were confident in leadership and in the third year review process to provide sufficient feedback on their progress. The Committee has an impression that there is a clear understanding that the review is vital to the progression of the careers of untenured faculty, but they could not articulate the content required for promotion and tenure and depended upon the development of the relationships both within and external to their school to ensure that the standards were applied in a fair manner.

- *The School's potential for growth has been stunted because of the absence of a communications and development infrastructure focused on establishing an identity and projecting that identity externally.*

Although SGPP does have a number of well-constructed brochures (impressively created in-house) and produces a newsletter for undergraduates, SGPP does not otherwise appear to engage in advertising of its programs, direct recruitment of students, or other promotion of its assets and accomplishments. Committee discussions with students found that each had a personal connection that introduced them to SGPP, and that contact through school-driven outreach was of limited importance. As of yet, the new School has not produced any significant recognition among the student body. This may be because, in part, the School is part of a larger umbrella organization in the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

- *Non-tenure track faculty do not appear to be integrated into the School's faculty governance structure.*

The non-tenure track (NTT) faculty now play a crucial role in many of the School's programs. The Committee spoke with a few NTT faculty members, but did not gain a clear picture of how well they are integrated into the School's faculty and governance.

Recommendations

In the wake of its assessment of the SGPP program, the Committee has developed a set of recommendations that respond to the concerns that we identified. These are detailed below.

- *Consider ways to broaden the leadership base, so as to cultivate successors who will have credibility and be accepted by faculty, staff, and students.*

Although the current leadership (Head and Associate Head) is outstanding and several other faculty members serve in key leadership roles, the Committee had some concerns that the authority be expanded and institutional knowledge be well documented so that new and effective leadership could be instituted in the future.

- *Immediately hire in the area of criminal justice.*

The Committee found some resistance to this among the SGPP faculty, in part because of a prevailing view that criminal justice scholars would struggle to thrive and achieve tenure. The basis for this view is related, in part, to the department's promotion and tenure process, which focuses on publication in political science and public administration journals rather than in criminology journals. The Committee disagrees vigorously with this view. In fact, given the strong demand, the Committee believes that a tandem set of 2-3 strategic hires, including a mix of senior and junior faculty members, could establish SGPP as the premier place for criminal justice scholarship.

- *Engage in a strategic planning process.*

Given the school's marked growth since its reorganization and its emergence from a period of considerable turmoil as a more stable institution, the Committee strongly suggests that SGPP initiate a strategic planning process as soon as possible. This process should result in a focused mission statement, a statement of the unit's short- and long-term goals, an assessment of the unit's assets and needs in light of those goals, and a clear plan to achieve the goals given its existing and anticipated resources.

- *SGPP and the College Dean should work together to develop a multi-year vision for hiring, in concert with the longer-term strategic plan for the school discussed in the previous point.*

The Responsibility Center Management (RCM) system recently adopted by the University provides an overall framework for the School and the College Dean to address this issue. Under RCM, strategic hiring that is aligned with programmatic growth should be incentivized.

- *Emphasize the importance of outreach as an independent element of faculty performance apart from professional service.*

As a land grant institution, the University has a responsibility to provide outreach services to the public. SGPP possesses exceptional personnel and programs that can greatly benefit the public, but it lacks a corporate vision for engaging with the public. The Committee recommends that the unit's faculty, administration and staff identify and devise guidelines for providing and recognizing appropriate forms of public service. As part of this effort, SGPP leadership should confer with other units at the university to identify strategies for better incorporating public service into the school's success metrics. These outreach efforts will increase the school's external visibility, which in turn will expand its potential support base.

- *Develop a formal process of documentation and communication of standards for promotion and tenure.*

Untenured faculty were comfortable with the information they had received regarding standards for promotion and tenure, and were confident in leadership and in the third year review process to provide sufficient feedback on their progress. Nevertheless, as noted above, reliance on the current leadership creates some risk—in the event of change—that faculty could be misled or misinformed or may not be provided clear notice about the standards necessary for advancement. The Committee strongly recommends that SGPP establish formal documentation and communication protocols. These will reduce the possibility of this occurring.

- *Actively pursue the establishment of an identity that is projected through promotion, advertising, and recruitment of academic programs.*

Despite the lack of attention to student recruitment, SGPP is large and has seen significant enrollment growth through its programs. The Committee believes this growth could further accelerate with relatively modest SGPP-specific investments, either at the School, College, or University level.

- *Start building an SGPP alumni network.*

A strong and robust alumni network can be an asset for School course offerings, for advising and student placement, and for establishing greater financial stability. First steps could be quite simple and involve low-cost events with little or no programming.

- *If it has not already done so, the School should provide its NTT faculty with clear guidelines for advancement, support for professional development, and a voice in program planning.*

SGPP leadership should seek out best practices for integrating NTT faculty into all SGPP governance processes. This will be particularly important in building the strategic plan. In doing this, leadership should become aware of approaches for integrating NTT faculty used both within the university and at other institutions.

Appendix: Additional Recommendations

In addition to the more global recommendations elucidated above, the committee has identified a series of other suggestions that SGPP should consider in improving its research, teaching, and service missions:

Advising

- Use a graduate assistant to handle routine scheduling and advising matters, especially during busy times of the semester.
- Expand the use of online resources and guides for routine advising matters.

Faculty Research

- Create incentives and otherwise encourage faculty members to pursue sponsored research opportunities.
- Tie some grant getting (e.g., grants and contracts) to outreach activities.

Undergraduate Curriculum and Instruction

- Increase the range of “capstone” options so that all students have a choice (not mutually exclusive) of senior theses, internships, study abroad, service learning, and other options.
- Explore on a pilot basis the expanded use of “hybrid” or “flipped classroom” instruction for large general education classes.
- Consider use of discussion sections led by graduate assistants for large general education classes in lieu of an additional faculty lecture.
- Consider creating opportunities for selected graduate assistants to teach their own classes either during the summer term or in innovative formats such as one credit short courses. These and other alternatives could be done in conjunction with the Global Studies major as well as in SGPP.
- Consider combining the Foreign Affairs and International Relations concentrations in the Political Science major.
- Consider reducing by one course, most likely among upper-division courses, for the political science and criminal justice majors to reduce instructional burdens and to be more in line with peer institutions,

Graduate Program Recruitment

- For non-online programs, calibrate program size to the number of tenure track and other faculty.
- Use additional funds from college or internal courses to supplement offers to the most promising graduate applicants.

- Target recruitment activities (e.g., faculty visits, mailings) to geographically proximate institutions as well as those colleges and universities that serve large numbers of historically underrepresented minorities.

Graduate Instruction

- Create a partnership with Arizona State University School of Politics and Global Affairs to share advanced methodology courses online or through videoconferencing, using the model created in the Big Ten among Minnesota, Ohio State, Wisconsin, and Illinois.
- Create a graduate student exchange program with Arizona State School of Politics and Global Affairs in which graduate students present papers in a workshop at the partner institution on a reciprocal basis.

Junior Faculty Mentoring

- Provide written guidelines and standards to all assistant professors at the outset of their appointments.
- Formalize a yearly meeting with each assistant professor with the program director and at least faculty member in the assistant professor's area of expertise. The meeting would focus on yearly progress and strategy for achieving promotion and tenure. This would occur in every year of the probationary period except for the third, when the third year review would perform similar functions.
- Include a classroom observation as part of the yearly meeting process.

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