

9/22/2023

**ACADEMIC PROGRAM REVIEW  
INTERIM PROGRESS REPORT FORM**

This form is composed of three parts: the Program Section, the Dean Section, and the Provost Section. Guidance for submission is provided in each section.

**Using the Form:** The form is pre-loaded with information specific to each program and sent by the dean to the program. The program should download and save their form to begin using it. The form is locked, so instructions are viewable and the only sections of the document that can be edited are the form fields. To ensure the fillable fields function correctly, the form must be completed in Microsoft Word. It will not function properly in Google Docs. Programs that wish to record collaborative discussion of the report might consider creating a separate document to take notes, prior to entering final responses in the official fillable form.

The form uses narrative boxes, text only, and drop-down boxes. Narrative boxes have a character limit, which includes spaces. To undo an answer, press "Control-Z" or "Command-Z."

Responses are to be narrative text only, and must be ADA and FERPA compliant, and must not include the names of any current or former employees. Do not embed any tables or links, including to webpages or other documents. To be FERPA compliant, do not include the names of any current or former students. Rather, use statements such as, "In AY22 four program graduates were accepted to graduate programs in the field." Programs with specialized accreditation or other external recognitions must comply with restrictions regarding what may be published, as per the accreditor or external organization. Do not include appendices. Appendices to this form will not be accepted.

**Assistance:** For technical assistance with this form, email Academic Affairs ([uaa.oaa@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa.oaa@alaska.edu)).

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**Submission date:** 8/28/2023

**Name and title of person(s) submitting the report:** Marie Lowe, Chair, Department of Public Policy and Administration

**Program(s) in the report:** MPA Public Administration

**Specialized Accrediting Agency (if applicable):** N/A

**Campuses where the program is delivered:**  Anchorage  KOD  KPC  MSC  PWSC

**Year of last review:** AY21

**Final decision from last review:** Interim Progress Report

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**PROGRAM SECTION (Due on August 1)**

*After completing the Program Section, the program should email this form to the dean. If the program is delivered on a community campus, copy the appropriate community campus director(s) as well.*

**1. What is the program's vision for moving forward, including a timeframe for any changes? (3000 characters or less)**

One month before the pandemic was declared in February of 2020, the BOR approved the MPP program at UAA. This outcome represented three years of work building off the strengths of the MPA program to create joint public service degrees at UAA. The MPA and MPP are symbiotically linked, preparing students for the professions of public administrators and policy analysts. They share a common prefix and core curriculum we developed from the MPA program, a model employed in many leading public affairs departments across the country. Aligning these degree programs so students benefit from the overlap in both administration and policy is our vision for moving forward. When Chad Briggs, the former director of the programs abruptly left UAA in Spring of 2022, Marie Lowe took on the role as chair and requested Dean Nofsinger allow her three years to move the programs forward. Since that time, we've been increasing enrollment and starting exciting new initiatives with partners from federal and state government agencies in which we have heard there is a great, new demand for our graduates. We were able to expand our faculty and bring Dr. John Duffy on in a term capacity and Dr. Jen Schmidt as an Associate Professor of Natural Resources Policy from ISER. John is the former Matsu Borough manager who has been adjuncting in the department for many years and is highly respected by the students. Jen Schmidt is an accomplished interdisciplinarian and brings needed expertise in Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for policy and planning. With a PhD in Political Science, Provost Runge has also offered to teach for us while we work to expand our programs and we are strategizing ways to attract adjuncts from the community as we build enrollment. We have added two new electives through the MPP program, Alaska Policy Studies and Issues in Arctic Policy, that are becoming popular with MPA students at UAA and UAS as well as students outside the programs. We have started developing and offering additional electives in the summer to attract new students through vital courses in community planning and natural resource management. With the help of Andrea Jones, CBPP's recruitment specialist and graduate advisor, we've developed new recruiting materials, are attending UAA and community functions to meet with prospective students, and fielding weekly requests for information about our programs.

**2. Discuss the status and goals of coordination with UAF and UAS, including any plans to coordinate course scheduling and to develop a coordinated course rotation. (3000 characters or less)**

At UAF, we have been coordinating with David Valentine, chair of the Natural Resources and Environment department, for their students to take our classes and vice versa. Jen Schmidt and John Duffy have developed an emphasis area for the MPP in natural resource management and policy that we are trying to align with the program at UAF. One problem we've encountered thus far is recently realizing that although students from other campuses are interested in our courses, some of them are unwilling to pay the super tuition at CBPP. We would like to discuss with the administration if it's possible for students from other campuses to get a waiver for the additional tuition cost.

In regard to UAS, our students regularly enroll in that MAU's MPA courses if they need them during a semester we are not offering them. As we've started to offer all of our classes with an

online option, we are increasingly attracting more UAS students to our classes as well. Although we have not started formal discussions about how to better join forces with the UAS MPA program, there have been informal discussions between our respective departments' faculty members and with the UAS administration. We have recently learned the UAS program is suffering from low enrollment and would, therefore, like to explore ways of merging our efforts instead of competing with each other.

Within our own department, we have developed an established annual course rotation.

**3. If the program will continue to require total credits beyond the Board minimum, please provide a rationale for that decision. (3000 characters or less)**

We would like to continue offering credits beyond the BOR minimum to maintain integrity of the program in the context of what is expected at other leading programs throughout the US. We see a demand for our MPA emphasis areas and also see how they draw in students from other programs, such as the UAF program in justice and the UAA program in public health. If we eliminate our emphasis areas, we would reduce the quality of the program which could in turn reduce enrollment. While we don't want to delay students' intended graduation dates, we feel this assessment metric is based on undergrad scheduling. Our students are usually part-time and working and therefore an assessment that requires a decreased time-to-graduation is out of sync with most students' graduate study plans. With UAA recently participating in the McNair program designed to assist underserved students with a path to graduate school, UAA graduate programs will require some flexibility and support in maintaining the features of our programs like emphasis areas that attract students to them.

**4. Is the program recommending that the program seek specialized accreditation? Why or why not? (3000 characters or less)**

We are working on our path to accrediting our programs. In her new capacity as department chair, Marie Lowe attended the annual meetings of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) in Chicago in Fall 2022 and a day-long accreditation workshop. She is, therefore, now familiar with recent modifications to NASPAA accreditation standards and is working with MPPA department faculty on a strategy for meeting for them. From the beginning, the MPP program's assessment plan was designed to align with NASPAA accreditation standards and the department has been revising the MPA assessment plan to reflect them as well. We are cross-walking our course student learning outcomes with the programs' learning outcomes and these are all important first steps in seeking accreditation. One problem we need to solve is NASPAA requires five, full time faculty members at UAA who are associated with the program and currently, we only have four with Dr. Duffy on a .6 workload. The Provost has indicated we can't hire at the moment but we are working diligently to increase enrollment through the means discussed above so we can eventually attract an additional faculty member. We are in discussions with Diane Hirshberg at ISER about whether or not one of our new faculty members there could serve in this capacity. We recognize accreditation represents a standard of excellence for public policy and administration programs and are committed to working towards it.

END OF PROGRAM SECTION

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**DEAN SECTION (Due on August 15)**

After completing the Dean Section and entering their name and date, the dean should email this form to the program, and copy [uaa.oaa@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa.oaa@alaska.edu).

- 1. Please reflect and comment on the program's vision for moving forward, as well as the timeframe presented for this plan. (2000 characters or less)**

The MPP had a difficult time getting started because of its approval at the beginning of the pandemic and then experienced a transition in leadership nearly two years later. Since that time the program has created stronger linkages with the MPA, built out more teaching topic capacity, and added linkages to UAS MPA and other programs. These successes are adding students and student opportunities. The Vision only briefly mentions it, but I believe an important next step is to develop stronger linkages to the state (and federal) government to attract more students and to enhance MPA and MPP graduates' opportunities. State officials have mentioned an interest in us providing education/training to groups of existing state employees. Programs like that can lead to attracting some of those employees into our graduate programs.

- 2. Please reflect and comment on the program's coordination with UAF and UAS, as well as any plans to coordinate course scheduling and to develop a coordinated course rotation. (2000 characters or less)**

The coordination with UAS is a great start and we may have much to offer their program if/when they downsize their resources in a declining program. We should explore more formally offering to teach specific courses that are mutual to both programs to create more efficiency both here and at UAS. There would be benefits from working with several of UAF's programs too. However, I do recognize that we do not have a strong history of such coordination and thus, initiating collaboration is difficult.

I am satisfied with our internal course rotation and would like to see that expanded to the UAS program if possible.

- 3. Please reflect and comment on the program's decision regarding total credits, including the rationale for continuing to exceed the Board minimum, if applicable. (2000 characters or less)**

I would like to see a more formal analysis of whether our programs should reduce the credits needed toward the BOR minimum and how it would accomplish it.

- 4. Please reflect and comment on the program's conclusions regarding seeking specialized accreditation, including your recommendations. (2000 characters or less)**

I think NASPAA accreditation would be valuable to the program. I am favor of the continued exploration and review of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) accreditation requirements and how our program can satisfy them. However, I also find it likely that our program needs to experience more growth in order to efficiently qualify for

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this accreditation.

**In AY21, the provost required an Interim Progress Report in AY22, which was extended to AY23.**

**Does this Interim Progress Report demonstrate that the program has completed the tasks as requested by the provost?  Yes  No**

**If you are proposing that this Interim Progress Report end the current review cycle:**

**What are your continuing or new commendations?**

**I commend the program for: *(number and list the specific commendations in the narrative box, 1500 character limit)***

1. In the past couple of years, this program grew and developed in a manner that it should have done in its first couple of years. It is commendable that the program is back on track after a slow start (likely caused by Covid).
2. I also commend the program for adding new policy topic experts to expand the potential student interest in the program.

**What are your continuing or new recommendations?**

**I recommend that the program: *(number and list the specific recommendations in the narrative box, 1500 character limit)***

1. I would like to see a more thorough analysis of moving both the MPA and MPP toward having 30-credit options.
2. As stated above, I would like to see a close relationship built with state employees and managers to provide them education that can lead to future program enrollment.

**What is your proposed final recommendation for the cycle?** Continued Review -- Program is required to address specific issues and to undergo another review within the next two academic years.

**If an Interim Progress Report is proposed, recommended year:** N/A

**If a Follow-up Program Review is proposed, recommended year:** AY2025

**Proposed next regular Program Review:** AY2027

**Dean first name last name:** John Nofsinger

**Date:** 8/30/2023

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**PROVOST SECTION (Due on September 1)**

*After completion and signature, the provost will email the final decision to the program and dean, with a copy to [uaa.aaa@alaska.edu](mailto:uaa.aaa@alaska.edu) for posting. If the program is delivered on a community campus, copy the appropriate community campus director(s) as well.*

**Provost's commendations, additional or adjusted recommendations, if any, and other general comments (3000 characters or less):**

I agree with the dean's commendations and would like to recognize in particular the program's ideas about growing enrollment. The alignment with the MPP and with ISER seems to be paying off and I encourage the program to think about other ways to expand outreach efforts.

I do wish to be clear that while ensuring the curriculum aligns with accreditation standards is good practice, there is no immediate goal of seeking specialized accreditation in the near term.

Finally, I strongly encourage the program to consider ways to bring the total number of credits into alignment with the Board of Regents 30-credit minimum for a master's degree. Given the nature of the program and the target students, many of whom are working adults and attend part time, this makes sense from the perspective of enrollment and completion.

I also am asking programs to think about how they put students first. This includes continuing to monitor any courses with high DFW rates and seeking out strategies for remediation as needed. It also includes continuing to think about what it means to embrace diversity and inclusivity on the course and program level and to demonstrate this in your particular program(s). This could be through the use of proven, high-impact practices at the program level, or through proven pedagogic strategies such as designing assignments using Transparency in Learning and Teaching (TILT). It can also be through implementing OER and ZTC materials, particularly where course materials can be more reflective of diverse perspectives, or by using the same materials across all sections of a course. Finally, I am asking that every program identify at least one opportunity for students to develop each of UAA's core competencies within the program's curricular and/or co-curricular offerings.

**Provost's decision:** Continued Review -- Program is required to address specific issues and to undergo another review within the next two academic years.

**Interim Progress Report year:** N/A

**Follow-up Program Review year:** AY2025

**Next regular Program Review:** AY2027

**Provost's signature:**



**Date:** 9/22/2023