Program – Public Administration, Voinovich School

This program includes the following degrees, minors, and certificates:

Degrees from catalogue
- Master of Public Administration

Recommendation
This program is found to be <u>viable</u>. See report for commendations, concerns, and recommendations.

Date of last review – AY ?
Date of this review – AY 2020

This review has been sent to school director and the dean, their joint response is attached.

This review has been sent to the Graduate Council, who "concur with the findings of the review committee that the program is viable and have no further comments."

General Summary of the Voinovich Masters of Public Administration at Ohio University

1. The program as a whole:

a. Is the current number and distribution of faculty sufficient to carry out the broad overall mission of the Department (Teaching; Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity; Service)

There are 5 tenure track faculty and 4 instructional track faculty. Three of the tenure track faculty are Professors and the other two are Associate Professors. A variable number of adjunct faculty are used to deliver the online programs primarily. All faculty members are on 12 month contracts rather than the usual 9 month faculty contracts. This is due to the significant responsibility faculty have for securing grant dollars. Each faculty member has soft money grants totaling millions of dollars. During interviews faculty stated that they feel well supported and resourced by the Voinovich shool. They also note the flexibility they have to pursue their research interests. The faculty carry a 1:1 teaching load due to their grant writing requirements.

b. Is the level of the Department's RSCA appropriate for the program given the size of the faculty and the resources available to the Department? Is the Department's level of external funding at an appropriate level?

This is a definite strength of the MPA program in the Voinovich center. As noted earlier, each and every faculty member generates significant grant funds. Additionally, the department is supported by 75 professional staff. Many of these professional staff members have advanced degrees and all work with students in some capacity and are integrated across all facets of the school's programs and services.. They support grant work of faculty. Professional staff members are on one year administrative contracts. Alumni report positive satisfaction with their preparation for post graduation careers. They further reported that they have been able to apply classwork to their jobs. Programmatically, faculty, staff, and students are integrated together through participation on research teams.

c. Is the level of service, outside of teaching, appropriate for the program given its size and the role that it plays in the University and broader communities it interacts with? Is the Department able to fulfill its service mission?

Many of the research activities generated by faculty and staff have direct community connections. From research on opiod addiction to issues of poverty, faculty and staff partner with community agencies that extends the university into communities throughout the state. In fact, agencies throughout the area that are facing challenges seek and receive faculty and staff expertise. Tenure track faculty are expect to expend 20% of their time providing service. Students reported that faculty are very quick to respond when asked.

d. Does the Department have an appropriate level of financial resources, staff, physical facilities, library resources, and technology to fulfill its mission?

Faculty and staff are expected to bring in soft dollars to pay for their own salaries. Other resources such as technology are provided by both grant and department resources. Each faculty member is provided with computer but, there is no department policy on refresh times for new computers. There are some physical issues with the building due to construction being done on the Ridges, they hope they have heat for the winter. Students benefit from paid conference travel, printing of posters, etc. During interviews with faculty and staff, it was learned that there is a serious need for office space within the school. There is space for additional offices on the upper floor but the school has been unsuccessful in getting permission to renovate. Adequate private office space is critical for this school as much of their grant contracts require confidentiality.

2. Undergraduate Program

3. Graduate Program

a. Is the program attracting students likely to succeed in the program? Is the number of students appropriate for the program? Is the program attracting a diverse group of students?

The Executive and Online MPA programs attract professionals in state and local government agencies, non-profits, and areas of public-private partnership who are looking to further their careers and their professional effectiveness by adding to and enhancing their leadership and managerial skills. The campus-based MPA program primarily attracts students with little professional experience who are interested in careers in public administration. Many have backgrounds in social and behavioral science or development-related fields. Both the OEMPA and OMPA programs are populated by fee-paying students, and enrollments for both programs are strong and growing. The OMPA program alone enrolled 82 students in 2017-2018. The size of the campus-based MPA program has decreased over time, consistent with the decrease in enrollment nationally, as well as for all on-campus Masters programs, but seems viable at around 20 students. Faculty and adminstrators report some challenges with finding highly qualified MPA candidates to fill all the available Graduate Assistantship slots. The OMPA program seems to have attracted a more diverse student body, while the on-campus MPA has attracted and enrolled a significant number of international students.

b. Does the graduate curriculum provide an adequate background to pursue discipline-related careers following graduation?

Alumni of the MPA program speak highly of the knowledge, skills, and mentorship they received in the program and how the curriculum has been applicable to their professional lives. Continuing professionals in the program reported using the grant-writing, program development and evaluation, and leadership skills emphasized within the MPA

curriculum to become better public servants and organizational leaders. Students at the beginning of their professional careers benefit from the Voinovich faculty and staff's vast network of public-private partnerships, contract work, and community engagement, which helps students gain real-world experience and secure internships and post-graduation employment in their field.

c. Does the program provide adequate mentoring and advising to students to prepare them for discipline-related careers?

Mentoring and advising in preparation for careers in public administration is a particular strength of the MPA program, especially for students without much professional experience. On-campus MPA students have the opportunity to work closely with faculty, staff and fellow students in research groups that do engaged, applied research for a variety of public and private clients. Both teaching faculty and research staff work closely with students in their research teams, overseeing the hands-on work of the students, providing feedback and contacts for securing internships, and even co-authoring reports and publications with students. EMPA and OEMPA students also reported high degrees of flexibility and responsiveness from their faculty in helping them tailor course assignments to the students' particular professional focus and career objective.

d. Are the resources and the number of and distribution of faculty sufficient to support the graduate program?

The balance of tenure-track, instructional, and adjunct faculty with the size of the program seems to be adequate at present. However, any additional growth of the OEMPA and OMPA programs will require careful management to maintain a strong, qualified pool of instructors to meet student demand and provide adequate advising and mentorship. The program should be commended for having a dedicated instructional faculty member to provide student and instructional support for the OMPA program, and this position should supported and maintained.

e. Does the program offer appropriate financial support to graduate students?

The mid-career professionals in the OEMPA and OMPA programs are fee-paying students, as are some of the on-campus MPA students. The program offers a limited number of Graduate Assistantships to highly qualified on-campus MPA students (for a total of 5), and others may be covered by funding from other departments through dual degree programs or by employee benefits through the university.

f. Is teaching adequately assessed?

Courses are evaluated by students at the end of every session, and the results are reviewed by the MPA director, who intervenes with faculty and instructors to address any problems. The user interface template and content of courses for the OMPA program is standardized across sections, which decreases variation in instructional quality.

Permanent faculty have co-taught sections with adjunct faculty in the past to ensure a high level of instructional quality.

g. Are students able to move into to discipline-related careers?

The placement record of graduates of the program appears strong, though specific data on placements was not available. Alumni reported satisfaction with placement support and the connection between their degree and career goals. Alumni also seemed to maintain good connections with the MPA program, and the network of alumni from the program has resulted in placements for more recent graduates, particularly in state and local government and agencies. The program should be commended for strong alumni outreach, which extends to alumni involvement in marketing and recruitment as well as internship and post-graduation placement. Alumni also reported using the MPA program as an ongoing resource for consultation, continuing education, and cross-agency connections.

4. Areas of Concern

Space issues: Out of office space; staff and faculty in 3 separate buildings; not enough private office space given needs of proprietary data related to grants and contracts, HIPAA and FERPA concerns; little space to convene alumni or for student interaction

5. Recommendations

a. Integrate diversity more deliberately throughout the curricula
b. Formalize mentoring of junior faculty – tenure-track, instructional and adjuncts – by senior faculty
c. Articulate the uniqueness of the engaged faculty model within the university and the benefits of this model for the community and the university
d. Pursue partnerships with other units in the university to strengthen enrollment of on-campus MPA program and to recruit strong applicants that can support engaged research mission

6. Commendations

Flexibility

Good balance between theory and practice

Engaged-Scholar model that emphasizes experiential, applied, service-learning approaches in instruction.

7. Overall Judgement: The program is judged to be **viable**.

Internal Reviewers: Myra Waterbury and Scott Sparks

External Reviewer: Hunter Bocot - University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Dates of Review: September 16 and 17, 2019

Dean Mark Weinberg's Response to the Ohio University 7-Year Curriculum Review of the Master of Public Administration Program
October 14, 2019

The Voinovich School of Leadership and Public Affairs thanks both the external and internal reviewers for the time they spent with the Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program. Their valuable review report will help us continue to improve of the Program. As Dean, I welcome the reviewers' finding that the Program is "viable."

I would like to highlight some key observations from the report and their connection to future initiatives. I was pleased to see the reviewers' comments on the strength and viability of the School's engaged faculty model and the externally-directed applied research "that extends the university into communities throughout the state." This has always been our model and we continue to seek new ways to build partnerships to create value for communities and greatly enhance the student learning experience. Our Voinovich Academy for Leadership in the Public Sector is allowing us to re-imagine the MPA student experience as transformational rather than transactional. A student may be enrolled in one of our three MPA platforms and also participate in Voinovich Academy leadership opportunities. Upon completion of the MPA degree, that student continues to be connected to the School and University through the Academy, along with the public or nonprofit agency that employs them. Professionals may first engage with the School through the Academy, then enroll in the MPA program. Our curricular innovations are increasingly being co-produced by our degree programs and the Voinovich Academy. For example, our new MPA concentration in Crisis and Emergency Management is largely a result of the demand for executive training in this area through the Academy.

The reviewers recognized the value of the applied research, learning by doing, and partner engagement that is central to the Voinovich School's approach and President Nellis' strategic pathway of engagement. The Ohio University Board of Trustees created the School as its first independent multidisciplinary engagement college. As part of this mandate, the School has a 12-month engaged faculty and professionals' model in which faculty and professionals work closely with community partners to promote economic growth, social impact, sustainability and leadership. Each faculty member links their work to a range of community challenges through applied research, classroom teaching, external training, and service to the region, state, and beyond. To facilitate this model, the School is organized in program partnerships as opposed to traditional departments or divisions. The Voinovich School approach to public service innovation and education is at the heart of the vision of the new American university. Arizona State University's President Michael Crow captures what this dynamic approach can be.

"The idea of the *New American University* offers an intriguing possibility of blending entrepreneurial and engaged approaches in a way that allows universities to differentiate themselves in meaningful ways. The key principles are being responsive to the unique challenges and characteristics of the university's region; academic excellence with a focus on broad access and diversity; an entrepreneurial approach to the academic enterprise, including transcending disciplinary boundaries; a focus on research that has the potential to impact societal challenges; and direct engagement in the community, locally and globally. This model opens up some interesting opportunities for the role of university public service as a vital component of the American University of the future." (Crow, 2010; adapted)

Ohio University's Voinovich School produces public value for students and state and community partners. Faculty and professionals take their tremendous talents and apply them to real world public policy issues – including the difficult task of policy implementation – and bring students along to learn. At the heart of these efforts are countless investments in public-private partnerships designed to enhance state and local government effectiveness as well as economic vitality, quality of life and sustainability. This practical approach to problem solving, explains why the Voinovich School is a 21st Century example of a public university keeping its public service promise.

The reviewers provided valuable suggestions for improving the program. We intend to develop a more structured approach to mentoring new faculty, including new adjunct faculty that we need in order to grow our online and executive programs. We must always look for ways to bring more diversity in our faculty, students, and curricular offerings. Our online and executive programs have enabled us to recruit a more diverse enrollment, so our curriculum must also support a diverse public and nonprofit management workforce. We are excited about the emerging possibilities to partner with other units at Ohio University to offer innovative undergraduate-to-graduate degree options. We are beginning to implement a one-year MPA program in order to facilitate these new partnerships.

The MPA program has been extremely successful in re-imagining, attracting a significant number of new, fee-paying students, and looking to the future. The faculty will continue to look for new ways to innovate in order to meet market demand and continue our leading role within the School, across the university, region, state, and beyond.