MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Edward P. Weber
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CC: Dr. Michael Bowers
Interim Executive Vice President and Provost
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

FROM: Michelle Piskulich, Chair
Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation,
National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration

DATE: July 26, 2011

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 program to be in conformity with NASPAA Standards, subject to the monitoring provisions outlined below. Your program is accredited for a period of seven years and will be included on the Annual Roster of Accredited Programs.

The Commission will monitor your progress annually on the following specific standard(s): 1.1, 3.2, and 5.1/1.3. The Commission asks that you report your progress on these particular standard(s) explicitly each year in your annual report and that you provide the information or data related to the standards that the Commission has noted below.

Standard 1.1 Mission Statement

Standard 1.1 states that “The program will have a statement of mission that guides performance expectations and their evaluation, including

- its purpose and public service values, given the program’s particular emphasis on public affairs, administration, and policy
- the population of students, employers, and professionals the program intends to serve, and
- the contributions it intends to produce to advance the knowledge, research, and practice of public affairs, administration, and policy.”
The Interim Report states, “The Commission requests additional information regarding the process that will be used to develop the new mission statement. COPRA requests that the Site Visit Team explore this issue with the program during the site visit, paying particular attention to the specific process that will be used in developing the mission statement and how stakeholders will be involved in that process in a manner consistent with the mission of the program.”

The Site Visit Report states, “The SVT discussed this issue extensively with the program and is able to verify the information reported in the SSR and the program’s response to COPRA’s interim report. The current (functional) mission statement was developed without much stakeholder input and it was the program’s intention to develop a process for reviewing and revising its mission statement during the current academic year. Unfortunately, budgetary and structural uncertainties have impeded this effort...Not surprisingly the MPA program’s timeline for mission review and revision has been delayed. It plans to begin the review and revision soon. Preliminary efforts will begin soon but the process will begin in earnest after the current round of university budget cuts is completed. Although it is uncertain exactly when the cuts will be finalized, matters should begin to clarify after the release of the May state revenue estimates for FY 2012 and later solidify when the state adopts its budget most likely in August during the anticipated special session of the legislature. Despite the understandable uncertainty about the exact timeline for the process, the program outlined elements of its plan for moving forward. These included scanning the field for best practices in MPA delivery, talking with employers and alumni, and involving current students. If the program decides to implement the recommendation by the SVT to create both an alumni advisory board and a stakeholder advisory board, these bodies could be used to assist with the mission review and revision.”

The Commission requests the program provide updated information regarding its mission review and revision. The program should provide information regarding the process it will be using, how stakeholders will be involved in mission development, and the timeline for the process.

**Standard 3.2 Faculty Diversity**

Standard 3.2 states that, “The program will promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness through its recruitment and retention of faculty members.”

The Interim Report states, “The Commission requests more specific information regarding the program’s efforts to promote diversity and a climate of inclusiveness, especially given the diversity of the student body and the program’s stated challenges in diversifying the faculty. The Commission requests that the Site Visit Team discuss with the program the mission-specific strategies the program has employed to recruit and retain a diverse faculty.”
The SVR states, “Through its discussions with program faculty and administrators, the SVT was able to confirm that the SSR appropriately described the efforts to date within the College, SEPA and the MPA program in the area of faculty development. The program is aware that it needs to bolster is efforts in this area and underscored its commitment to making improvements in this regard. The program is particularly cognizant of the benefit to students of having faculty that complement the diverse makeup of the MPA student body...Given the relatively short time a university-level office has been in existence and the fact that the previous Vice President’s efforts tended to be focused more on dealing with specific issues associated with diversity and inclusiveness, it is not surprising that an academic unit like SEPA and its MPA program do not currently have a fully developed faculty diversity plan. Vice President Saddler’s focus, during his relatively short four month tenure, has been to develop a clear plan for the attraction and retention of a diverse faculty at UNLV. He is committed to working with units on campus to enhance their efforts to attract and retain a diverse faculty body and his office will serve as a resource for academic unit attraction and retention initiatives. Prospectively, SEPA and the MPA will be in a position to use the resources of the Office of the Vice President for Diversity and Inclusion as they work to develop a formal plan that ensures their recruiting efforts are strategic in the areas of attracting and retaining diverse faculty.”

The Commission requests the program provide updated information regarding its efforts to develop a program specific faculty diversity plan that promotes diversity and a climate of inclusiveness, including the recruitment and retention of faculty members.

**Standard 5.1 Universal Required Competencies and Standard 1.3 Program Evaluation**

Standard 5.1 states, “As the basis for its curriculum, the program will adopt a set of required competencies related to its mission and public service values. The required competencies will include five domains: the ability

- to lead and manage in public governance;
- to participate in and contribute to the policy process;
- to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions;
- to articulate and apply a public service perspective;
- to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry.”

Standard 1.3 states, “The program will collect, apply, and report information about its performance and its operations to guide the evolution of the program’s mission and the program’s design and continuous improvement with respect to standards two through seven.”

The Interim Report states, “The Commission requests additional information on how this assessment evidence was used for program improvement beyond the course modifications described in this section of the SSR as evidence of a more fully developed
assessment cycle. The Commission requests that the Site Visit Team explore the program’s progress in this area."

The SVR states, “It is reasonable to believe that the program will be successful in achieving its goal of formalizing and expanding its ability to effectively use the evidence it gathers and analyzes during the assessment process to inform programmatic decisions and changes...Given these resources at the campus, College, and School level plus the realization that assessment is a top priority of the university, its accreditation body, and NASPAA, it is reasonable to believe that the MPA Program will continue to make progress in this area (as stated in the SVT). As was noted in COPRA’s interim report, the MPA Program has not closed the ‘feedback loop’ with regard to impacting programmatic changes.”

The Commission requests the program provide updated information on how it is developing more formal assessment feedback procedures that will result in tangible programmatic improvement.

The Commission would like to thank the program for voluntarily participating in the pilot group for the new 2009 NASPAA Accreditation Standards. The Commission applauds your efforts and appreciates your enthusiasm to experience the new accreditation standards and processes firsthand. Over time, the Commission expects that its understanding of the Standards and the expectations of what it means to be in compliance will advance and evolve, as programs (and COPRA) become more familiar with the competencies-based approach to accreditation. The Commission will expect accredited programs to continue to develop their competency measures and use of assessment tools, and that this maturation should be evident in the program’s annual maintenance reports.

Please note that the Commission will review each of your annual 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 provisions have been removed. We look forward to receiving your annual report on September 15, 2011. If you have any questions, please contact me via telephone (248.370.2190) or email at (piskulic@oakland.edu). You may direct questions about next year’s annual report to COPRA at copra@naspaa.org.