External Review of the Master of Public Administration Program at Sonoma State University
August 9, 2024

Sheldon Gen, Ph.D.
Interim Associate Dean of Faculty Affairs & Professional Development
Professor of Public Policy
San Francisco State University

Charge and context

This report is conducted under Sonoma State University's Program Review policy, policy number 2006-1, effective 2021,[1] which requires each academic unit to conduct program reviews once every seven years. The SSU MPA program was last reviewed in 2009 and 2016, in line with that policy. According to the Program Review policy, programs should describe their assessment plan and its self-assessment according to that plan. As it does so, it should reflect upon its strengths and weaknesses, and an action plan for changes to improve the program in light of the assessment.

<u>"Hiatus" context</u>

SSU's MPA program is in a critical period of its history. On October 7, 2023, a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was entered by the MPA program, the School of Social Sciences in which the MPA program resides, and the university's Academic Affairs division. The MOU immediately placed the MPA program in a "hiatus" status, during which the program may not admit new students, but continues to serve its continuing students. The period of the hiatus is up to three years, during which the program must engage in specific tasks aimed at renewing the program in a stronger organizational and academic position. That said, the MOU declares that if the prescribed tasks are not accomplished within three years, "the program can be discontinued." The MOU prescribes the following activities during program hiatus:

1. Revision of the curriculum in line with community needs.
2. Commitments from tenure track faculty to teach in the program, support its students with advising and supervision of culminating experiences, and contribute to program assessment, committee work, and general program coordination. These commitments should be expressed in a "multi-year schedule" identifying curricular coverage by existing tenure track faculty, along with outstanding curricular gaps to be covered by unidentified tenure track and lecturer faculty.
3. Completion of a program review.

Furthermore, the MPA's hiatus is happening within the broader context of significant changes at the university: changes in senior leadership, changes in organizational structures, and reductions in enrollments and resources. Even so, there is universal expressed desire for the MPA to emerge from hiatus as a revived and sustainable program, as described in this report.

<u>Self-study and program revision proposal</u>

The program's report *2023-2024 MPA Program Review: Revising the Curriculum, Refreshing the Program, & Future Direction of the SSU MPA program* ("self-study") does exactly as its title suggests. It is half assessment of the current program, and half proposal for a renewed future. The proposal portion of the self-study presents seven alternative courses of action for the program, based upon numerous

---

interviews with key stakeholders, including prior program coordinators, program faculty, and former deans of the School of Social Sciences (self-study, p. 4). The seven alternatives analyzed are:

1. No change
2. Hire a new faculty leader, coordinator
3. Temporarily employ a qualified leader to lead the program pending a new faculty hire
4. Discontinue the MPA program
5. Discontinue the MPA program and replace it with a new MPA program in the School of Extended Learning
6. Discontinue the program and facilitate the continued availability of MPA program to service area via another institution of higher education
7. Revise the MPA program

From these alternatives, the study recommends alternative 7, and lays out a plan of action for a new Master of Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) program.

Approach of this external review

Given this unusual structure for a program self-study, this external review is similarly structured unusually. The bulk of this report focuses on my assessment, as the external reviewer, of the current MPA program. This part of the report is shaped by standards of the public affairs discipline, as described below. The report closes with my brief reflections on the alternative actions considered and recommendation, informed by this assessment.

NASPAA (Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration) establishes accreditation standards for MPA programs, which were adopted in 2009 and amended in 2014, 2019, and 2023.[2] While SSU's MPA program is not accredited by NASPAA,[3] and is not currently seeking accreditation, there are two compelling reasons for using NASPAA's accreditation standards as a structure for this external review. First, SSU's MPA curriculum is explicitly designed to uphold the standards of NASPAA. "Courses are based upon the professional curriculum established for Public Administration programs by NASPAA."[4] Second, NASPAA's standards provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating the organizational health of MPA programs. Its seven standards assess all the essential elements of thriving programs:

1. Managing the program strategically
2. Matching governance with the mission
3. Matching operations with the mission: faculty performance
4. Matching operations with the mission: serving students
5. Matching operations with the mission: student learning
6. Matching resources with the mission
7. Matching communications with the mission

To inform this external review, I reviewed the program's self-study, and other documents cited in this report. I also interviewed 12 individuals representing key stakeholders, current students, and recent graduates. They are:
- Thai Hamilton, MPA student

---

[2] NASPAA accreditation standards, accreditation standards for master degree programs
[3] Roster of Accredited Programs, https://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/roster-accredited-programs
[4] SSU MPA homepage, https://politicalscience.sonoma.edu/programs/mpa

- Jamie Thompson, recent MPA graduate
- Diane Brown, lecturer
- David Sul, lecturer
- Andrew Sturmfels, lecturer
- Dr. David McCuan, MPA program coordinator
- Dr. Emily Ray, former MPA program coordinator
- Dr. Alexis Boutin, CRM MA coordinator
- Dr. Michelle Jolly, HIST MA coordinator
- Dr. Cynthia Boaz, POLS chair
- Dr. Troi Carleton, Dean School of Social Sciences
- Dr. Stacey Bosick, AVP Academic Affairs and Dean of Undergrad and Graduate Studies

Findings

The body of this report is structured by the seven NASPAA standards prescribed for MPA programs. It's followed by a reflection on the proposed options for the MPA program, and an overall conclusion.

Standard 1. Managing the program strategically

This standard requires the program to have a mission statement that guides performance expectations, including: its purpose and public values; its intended population of students, employers, and professionals it serves; and its intended advancements to knowledge and practice of public service. The standard also requires the establishment of performance expectations, such as program and student learning goals, and an evaluation plan to track progress toward those performance expectations. The findings of such a plan would be reported in the self-study, especially under standards 3, 4, and 5.

Mission and intended population

SSU's MPA does not have a formally articulated mission statement of its own. Even so, it clearly supports a priority of the university's strategic plan, and its stakeholders have a clear and consistent understanding of the program's purpose in the university and in the North Bay region.

The university's 2025 strategic plan "Building Our Future @ SSU" articulates the institution's strategic priorities as it continues to evolve as the North Bay's public university. Strategic priority #3 calls on SSU to cultivate regional leadership:

> *As the region's only public four-year university, Sonoma State embraces its leadership role in the North Bay and beyond. We prepare the next generation of leaders by providing students with opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills needed to build a better society both locally and globally.*

Stakeholders of the MPA program have a consistent view of the program that is not only aligned with this strategic priority, but also highlighted as the primary developer of public service leadership in Sonoma County and beyond. Stakeholders described the MPA program as a "vital program" to the region, with "historic longevity" that has proven its value over decades of service. One noted that the program used to be connected to key agencies and centers that provided a steady stream of students into the program.

Related, stakeholders also consistently see growing regional need for the program. The program has drawn students primarily from Sonoma County agencies and organizations, with a minority from Marin County. Demand for the MPA program is expected to grow in these counties, driven by demographic changes. Stakeholders described a generational turnover in public service leadership, creating an "extraordinary" demand for MPAs to backfill those positions. Furthermore, stakeholders note that SSU is a federally designated Hispanic Serving Institution, in a region made up of communities with large Latinx populations. The MPA program has the potential to build on this connection, recruiting MPA students from these communities, and returning them as public service leaders. As one instructor summarized, "There is tremendous potential for SSU's MPA students to strengthen public services in local communities by capitalizing on their demographic representation."

Beyond Sonoma and Marin Counties, stakeholders also consistently see the program's potential growth to the north and east. Lake and Mendocino Counties were specifically mentioned as places with growing demand for MPAs. Multiple stakeholders noted that the high cost of living in the North Bay region often hinders current MPAs from relocating to the region, making the development of MPAs within the region necessary. One administrator noted the potential of the program to deliver courses from SSU space in Ukiah, to better serve students in northern counties. Indeed, SSU's MPA program is the only one at a public university in the entire North Coast, from the Golden Gate to the Oregon border. (CSU Chico and Sacramento State cover the interior portion of Northern California.) While this area may be served by online programs, stakeholders note that many students still value in-person classes, especially early career students.

Program goals and objectives

The program has not developed program objectives in the past, such as enrollment and graduation goals, research goals, community engagement goals, etc. Such goals can help the program identify and prioritize the most important activities to reach those goals, and helps program staff and faculty see their contributions toward those goals.

Still, every responding stakeholder articulated the same immediate program goal, which is to reinstate the program. The unanimity and passion behind this goal is noteworthy and moving. Several respondents expressed shock and grief over the program's hiatus. "It seems like a death knell to me," said one. Another said, "It feels like [they're] killing the program." Still another said, "It broke my heart when I heard it." Current students expressed extreme disappointment and disbelief, saying the program's utility to them and the community is "a no-brainer", and is meeting large local demand. "It would be a huge disservice to the community if the program were to go away." Another noted the high quality of the program also, to emphasize how drastic it would be to discontinue the program:

> *It's the only game in town in the region, and it's affordable. It's got, in my opinion, across the board really great faculty... We've had amazing students come out of this program. It's not an average student program. These are working professionals who want to grow and develop, want to go out there and make a difference, and they're coming to Sonoma State.*

All respondents expressed a desire for the MPA program to be reinstated, with several targeting fall 2025 to admit new students.

The program does articulate learning objectives, on its homepage. There, the program states that "Students are expected to develop understanding of the theoretical principles informing the field, and the practical management techniques necessary to administer public and nonprofit organizations." This includes developing skills in organizational analysis, research, analytics, and communication to implement public policy and be effective managers. It also includes fostering students' commitments to social purpose and public interest. These are assessed under standard 5.

Commendation

1.1 The stakeholders of the MPA program—from faculty and administrators to students and community—are passionate about the program and are united in their desire to see it come back stronger. The program is deeply felt by its stakeholders.

Recommendations

1.1 The passion for the program expressed by all its stakeholder groups, combined with universally acknowledged regional demand for the program, provides SSU with an opportunity to **revise and reinstate the MPA program**. This is the overarching recommendation of this report, and all subsequent recommendations are oriented toward this objective.

1.2 **Develop a needs assessment**, to estimate the region's demand, differentiated target populations, competing service providers, and service gaps. While the interview data provided ample anecdotal evidence supporting the need for the MPA program at SSU, there has not been any kind of needs assessment to substantiate the anecdotal evidence. No resources have supported this important task (self-study, p. 23). Such a task need not be excessively costly or lengthy. Even a cursory needs assessment based on market demographics and a few key-informant interviews could provide enough guidance on the scale of any future MPA program. Indeed, the self-study begins to do a bit of this (p. 23) when it provides an overview of the public and nonprofit sectors in Sonoma County. The self-study also recommends systematic tracking of inquiries into the MPA program, as another measurement of demand for the program (p. 9). Overall, a more fully developed needs assessment can help shape a renewed MPA program, is mission, and curriculum.

1.3 **Develop mission statement and program objectives and goals**, to pursue under a reinstated program. As foundational documents for the renewed program, it should be created with input from all stakeholder groups, including participating faculty, students and alumni, community partners, etc.

1.4 **Consider targeting the North Bay region** beyond Marin and Sonoma Counties. As the only MPA program at a public university between the Golden Gate and the Oregon border, SSU's program has to consider how it can strategically reach North Coast communities. With the wide spectrum of pedagogic modalities available—including hybrid, high flex, low-residency, and online—it may be feasible to expand the program's footprint far beyond the host county, as other programs have done.

Standard 2. Matching governance with mission

Standard 2 requires programs to have an administrative infrastructure appropriate to carry out its mission, goals, and objectives. This includes an adequate faculty nucleus that exercise substantial governance over the program and implementation of it. For accredited programs, this usually means at least five full-time faculty who contribute at least a regular portion of their time to the curriculum's delivery.[5]

---

[5] In accredited MPA programs that I have reviewed, faculty contributing as little as one MPA course taught per year have been counted as nucleus faculty, as long as they also contribute to the program in other ways.

Administrative capacity

The program resides within the Department of Political Science. In the self-study year, that Department consisted of 5 FTE tenured/tenure-track (TT) faculty serving 144 majors (self-study, p. 7). Of those 5 TT faculty, 3 have taught in the MPA program in the past: Drs. David McCuan, Emily Ray, and Willie Gin. Drs. McCuan and Gin continue to teach in the program on a regular basis.

The remaining courses in the program are taught by lecturer faculty on a term-by-term basis. The lecturer faculty expressed uniform passion and dedication for the program, but insecurity in the reliability of their teaching schedules. At least one expressed that the lecturer faculty could provide the program with stability in teaching the curriculum if the course schedule could be made more predictable. Still, the self-study lists the high level of reliance on lecturer faculty to deliver the program as a weakness of the program.

The MPA program shares administrative staff support with its host department and others. Approximately 1.25 FTE staff support three departments: Political Science, Anthropology, and Sociology. Those departments deliver 7 degree programs (self-study, p. 20). The self-study's SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis identified the dedicated Departmental staff as a strength of the program (self-study, p. 28). At the same time, the loss of capacity in the staff is listed as a weakness. The result is that program faculty "… end up performing substantial clerical and general office work because the available office staff is stretched hopelessly thin" (self-study, p. 20).   These duties have effectively fallen on the program coordinator.

Faculty governance

The program is essentially governed and managed alone by the program coordinator, Dr. David McCuan. The self-study's description of the coordinator's responsibilities (p. 48-49), as well as interviews, confirm this. These duties include all basic functions of a graduate degree program, including admissions, course scheduling, recruiting and hiring lecturer faculty, advising all MPA students, supervising culminating experiences, and advising the MPA Student Association. In larger programs, these duties would be shared among faculty and staff, but at SSU, it is essentially one person with just a 4-unit release. According to respondents, part of the barriers to securing faculty commitments to the MPA program is the lack of tenure lines to the program. All faculty who teach in the program have their tenure lines in other programs. Layered on top of this is the university's current budgetary crisis, which has caused some departments to further retreat and "silo-ize" their work, according to one respondent. While I agree that these factors make it more difficult to secure faculty commitments, there are ample examples of successful programs made up of faculty from other programs, even in challenging times.[6] For example, SSU's Anthropology program has an interdisciplinary Cultural and Resource Management MA program that is supported by faculty from other departments. Those faculty find the interdisciplinary program rejuvenating. The appeal can be accentuated in departments that don't have a graduate program, by providing faculty an opportunity to teach graduate courses in their field of expertise. In this way, the MPA program has the potential to be interdisciplinary, particularly in policy fields.

This insufficient level of faculty governance constrains the program in 2 critical ways. First, it forces the program coordinator to simply keep up with the administrative demands of all these operational areas, with no time to strategically plan for revisions to program or growth. All the assigned time, and more, can easily be devoured by just keeping the program running. Second, it constrains the program's governance to the perspectives and experiences of just one person. In contrast, the interdisciplinary history and nature of Public Administration, and the best practices of shared

---

[6] For example, some of the CSU's first EdD programs in 2007 were completely interdisciplinary, and still prospered through furloughs and the Great Recession.

governance, require MPA programs to be run by teams. The NASPAA standards calls this team the faculty "nucleus", and is the foundation of healthy programs.

The School of Social Science is committing to support the MPA coordinator with 4-units of assigned time for the 2024-2025 academic year. Dr. McCuan will be taking those 4 units in fall 2024, and is planning to resign from the program coordinator role in December. There is no current plan for MPA's leadership in spring 2025, and no assigned time for it. Dr. Emily Ray was hired as the program coordinator at the rank of assistant professor in 2015, and served in that role through spring 2021, but she is not currently teaching in the program.

According to respondents, graduate program coordinators are not consistently supported with assigned time across the campus, which has created tensions among them. Program coordinators are also not in meetings of department chairs, reducing their visibility on campus and their ability to effectively manage their programs.

Commendations
2.1 The dedication of program coordinator David McCuan to the MPA program cannot be overstated. It is truly heroic, in terms of the program's continuation resting solely on his efforts to keep all operations going. It reflects his commitment to the program, and the students and communities it serves. Furthermore, he is ushering the program through this challenging hiatus, and has proposed a pathway out. Multiple stakeholders agree, and add that Dr. McCuan holds the program to academic standards, and makes it flexible for students to pursue.
2.2 The POLS department is also commended for supporting the MPA program with teaching assignments from their TT faculty (Drs. McCuan and Gin), and sharing the already-constrained staff to support the program.

Recommendations
2.1 **Develop a nucleus faculty to practice shared governance of the program**. The heroism commended above is not organizationally sustainable. There is broad agreement on this assessment, as well as the prescription to address it. To be reinstated from hiatus, the MOU requires the program to secure "commitment from tenure track faculty to actively teach in the program and support MPA students," and that such support should "…include advising, assessment activities, committee work, program coordination, and participating in culminating experience projects." In a phrase, shared governance of the program is required. The number of nucleus faculty should be enough to increase tenure density, and distribute program work to a reasonable level. In the near term, this could be as few as 2 or 3.
2.2 **The nucleus should be multidisciplinary**. Administrators and faculty stakeholders also agreed that the core faculty can come from multiple departments. Practically, this is a necessity because the Political Science department cannot currently achieve recommendation 2.1 on its own. Normatively, an interdisciplinary nucleus faculty could broaden the curriculum to better match the broad array of public services that MPA students represent. For example, MPA programs at other CSUs include specializations in public management, nonprofit management, public policy, analytics, social services, environmental management, transportation, criminal justice, education, etc. These specializations typically draw from faculty across related departments. A cursory scan of faculty and departments across Sonoma State University suggest potential MPA collaborations with individuals in Economics; Geography, Environment and Planning; Sociology; and Business. Furthermore, one respondent noted that some relevant departments are currently overstaffed, due to declining enrollments, so their faculty may be available to support the MPA program.

Standard 3. Matching operations with mission: faculty performance

Standard 3 sets standards for the qualifications of program faculty, and their continual development. Faculty teaching in the program should be academically or professionally qualified to teach in the discipline. The program should also recruit, retain, and support program faculty in ways that promote diversity, equity, and a climate of inclusiveness (DEI). Program faculty should also be active in scholarship, professional service, and community service. This can include service both on campus and off.

Faculty qualifications

Two full-time TT faculty, Drs. David McCuan and Willie Gin, taught in the program during the self-study year, and continue to do so on a regular basis. A third, Dr. Emily Ray, last taught in the program in 2022. All three are academically qualified with doctoral degrees. Beside the courses taught by these three, all other courses have been taught by part-time lecturer faculty who are "community practitioners" (self-study, p. 12). The three I interviewed are clearly professionally qualified to teach in the program. Diane Brown holds an MPA and has 33 years of experience consulting nonprofit organizations as part of the Non-Profit Assistance Group. David Sul holds an EdD and is founder of Sul & Associates International, an evaluation firm serving public service agencies and organizations for 22 years. Andrew Sturmfels holds an MPA, and is the current Assistant City Manager of Healdsburg, and former Deputy Director of the California Department of General Services. It was not reported if any other part-time faculty were contributing to the program during the self-study year.

A complete tally of courses taught in the self-study year, categorized by full-time and part-time faculty teaching them, is normally reported by accredited MPA programs, in order to determine the proportions of courses taught by nucleus faculty. SSU's MPA is not currently seeking accreditation, but such a chart could help the program monitor its reliance on lecturer faculty in a quantitative manner. Qualitatively, the program acknowledges its over-reliance on lecturer faculty, which "…makes it hard to offer all courses needed by students to graduate in a timely, predictable manner" (self-study, p. 12)

Faculty diversity

NASPAA tracks faculty diversity as part of its effort to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in MPA programs. Programs have flexibility to interpret diversity in many ways. In other MPA programs in the CSU, diversity of faculty is often measured by race or ethnicity, and gender, and sometimes LGBTQ identity, and academic discipline.

SSU's MPA did not report any faculty diversity data. Qualitatively, multiple respondents acknowledged that the program needs to improve its faculty diversity, and enhance a culture of inclusivity. Specifically, respondents noted that a majority of faculty teaching in the program have been male and white, while the program has a majority of female students and the university is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI).

Faculty scholarship

NASPAA also tracks the scholarship of MPA faculty, as one means to promote the currency of the program. SSU's MPA program did not comprehensively report on the scholarship of its nucleus faculty, but it did provide a narrative synopsis for each (self-study, pp. 10-11). Dr. McCuan is a well-known and respected political analyst who continues to engage media outlets in the Bay Area and beyond. His presence on YouTube is extensive and current. Dr. Gin is current with published scholarship, including a book published in 2018, *Minorities and Reconstructive Coalitions: The Catholic Question*. Dr. Ray is also current on scholarship, including recently co-editing a special issue of *Theory and Event* journal focusing on environmental political theory. Searches of Drs. Gin and Ray on Google scholar each show steady scholarly production over the last several years.

Commendations
3.1 The quality of the faculty teaching the program is clearly high, across the board. Tenure track faculty
      are all academically qualified and current on scholarship. The lecturers I interviewed are impressive
      practitioners with extensive experiences in positions and practices relevant to MPA students.

Recommendations
3.1 **Track course coverage by TT and lecturer faculty**. Doing so can help the program set a minimum
      proportion of sections to be taught by TT faculty, and determine how many TT faculty need to be
      recruited into the nucleus faculty (recommendation 2.1). Multiple respondents noted that the
      program's hiatus is not due to low enrollments, but to insufficient commitment from TT faculty.
      Tracking course coverage can help the program determine the number of TT faculty that
      demonstrates a sufficient commitment.
3.2 **Track diversity of faculty**. Multiple respondents noted that the program's service area has a large
      Latinx population (see standard 1), and the university itself is a HSI. Furthermore, the program has
      seen a "dramatic rise" in underrepresented minority students enrolled in recent years (self-study, p.
      18). To practice the public administration concept of *representative bureaucracy*, the program
      should track its faculty's representativeness of the students and communities it serves. Doing so will
      help the program recruit faculty to better reflect them. To start, the demographics it tracks should
      include at least ethnicity and gender.

Standard 4. Matching operations with mission: serving students
        Standard 4 focuses on the program's services to students outside of teaching and learning,
which are covered separately in Standard 5. This includes the program's recruitment of students as
appropriate for its mission, admission criteria and processes to support the mission, and support
services for its students (such as academic advising, career counseling and placement, etc.). It also
includes the program's promotion of DEI in its student body.

Student recruitment
        A comparison of the MPA coordinator's responsibilities (self-study, pp. 48-49) with the Graduate
Studies Office's (GSO) draft Graduate Program Coordinator Responsibilities (self-study, pp. 51-53)
reveals a gap in student recruitment. The GSO proposes that advertisement and student recruitment be
a responsibility of the program coordinator, and should include maintaining the program's website,
responding to inquiries from prospective students, attending recruitment events, and disseminating
materials to the University and public. The MPA coordinator's listed responsibilities does not mention
student recruitment, other than maintaining connections with community partners. Indeed, the current
demands on the program coordinator does not leave time or support for recruitment activities other
than the most passive, such as responding to inquiries or maintaining the program's website.
        Without prompting, current students and alumni that I interviewed raised recruitment as a
shortcoming of the program. One said he found the program himself by looking for nearby MPA
programs when his employer suggested pursuing one. He said he was thankful that he found the
program, but wished he had seen marketing for it. Another noted that the program's alumni are now in
positions of influence, and they could be tapped to help promote the program. Furthermore, some local
counties and agencies have educational benefits for their employees, and the MPA program could
market itself directly to them.

Student admissions

According to the program's website, the criteria for admission into the MPA program consist of a bachelor's degree from an accredited institution, a GPA of at least 3.0 in last 60 units of coursework, and up to 12 units of prerequisite course work or experiences in government, federalism, policy making, and nonprofit organizations.[7] One faculty member said the prerequisites are a barrier to student recruitment, diversity, and success, and suggested trimming them back.[8] They also potentially raise the number of required units to 52.

For the 2023-2024 academic year, the Graduate Studies Office identified 39 students in the MPA program, though this included students within the 7-year limit but not necessarily enrolled (self-study, p. 9). For example, actively enrolled MPA students numbered just 15 in spring 2024. The status of the other 24 students is not clear.

The program's current hiatus (self-study, p. 4) means it has ceased admission of new students since fall 2023.[9] During this hiatus, the program is continuing to serve its current students through graduation. It projects the following flow of graduates in coming terms: 8 graduating in fall 2024, 3 in spring 2025, 6 in fall 2025, and 4 remaining students thereafter.[10] However, with Dr. McCuan resigning from the MPA Program Coordinator role in December 2024, it is not clear how the projected 13 continuing students will be properly served.

Support for students

Administrators perceived a "large number" of student complaints about the quality of advising in the MPA program, and student respondents concurred. Even the self-study acknowledges that "Advising remains a central issue for both the undergraduate and graduate programs and also affects students perceptions of the quality and access in their education" (p. 16). The self-study claims this has led to a decline in outcomes for the MPA Culminating Experience, which has increased delays to graduation (p. 17).

A common cause of these complaints is the students' difficulty in finding an advisor. Advising is concentrated with the program coordinator (self-study, p. 48), which makes it challenging for students to get advising. Students expressed a preference for more advisors, to increase their accessibility.

Furthermore, the program coordinator position has had turnover in recent years, and according to students, this made advising inconsistent. Students expressed confusion and frustration about graduation requirements, how to fulfill prerequisites, course scheduling, and the culminating experience. Some students felt "orphaned" in the program, because the courses they need to graduate aren't being offered when needed or with regularity. Others noted to challenge of getting POLS professors to chair their culminating experiences.

Lastly, one student expressed a desire for the program to connect with ASPA (American Society for Public Administration). There is a regional chapter serving the Bay Area,[11] but the SSU MPA program is not currently connected to it. Other relevant associations do have student chapters hosted by campuses, including ICMA (International City/County Management Association) and Pi Alpha Alpha Honor Society.

---

[7] SSU MPA homepage, https://politicalscience.sonoma.edu/programs/mpa

[8] I concur. At San Francisco State University, we used to have prerequisites in American government, economics, and statistics. We eliminated all of them in a major curricular revision, without increasing program units, and have benefited from it.

[9] MPA Frequently Asked Questions, https://politicalscience.sonoma.edu/programs/mpa/faq

[10] Student report provided by Dr. David McCuan

[11] ASPA chapter listings, https://www.aspanet.org/ASPA/ASPA/Chapters-Sections/Chapters-List.aspx?hkey=7a09aa30-07ee-4b83-a86a-39b4185815f3

Student diversity

The self-study's SWOT analysis identified student diversity as a strength of the program (p. 28). The diversity spans socio-economic status, ethnicity, and areas of public service. In 2022, the MPA student body including 24% first-generation college graduates, and 28% underrepresented minorities (self-study, p. 17). Students come from local areas representing city, county, and civic organizations. And about 80% of MPA students progress through the program on a part-time pace, taking advantage of the lower fees for fewer than 7 units in a term (self-study, p. 17).

Still, some respondents noted the need to recruit for even more diversity, especially in other areas of public services (e.g., arts) and other disciplines within SSU. They note the high potential to recruit MPA students from related undergraduate programs.

Commendation

4.1 The program is commended for increasing its enrollment of underrepresented minority students in recent years (self-study, p. 18), and for its substantial enrollment of first-generation college graduates. The diversity of the program's students helps local public services better reflect the demographic characteristics of the communities they serve.

Recommendations

4.1 **Develop and implement an active student recruitment plan**. Passive recruitment activities, such as maintaining the program's website and responding to inquiries, are important to provide information for those seeking it. They should be complemented with active recruitment activities that deliver the information to prospective students, even if they aren't looking for it. These activities could include presentations to relevant undergraduate courses at SSU, online informational sessions, marketing to large public service agencies and organizations, leveraging alumni to promote the program with their employees and networks, etc.

4.2 **Develop a course schedule through spring 2026 to graduate the current continuing students**. This is critically important to do before Dr. McCuan resigns from the program coordinator role in December 2024. If this is not possible, coordinate with another MPA program to assure these 13 students can graduate in a timely manner.

4.3 **Actively connect with the 24 students who are matriculated but not continuously enrolled**. Encourage these students to complete their studies, or find out why they won't. Either of these outcomes is better than losing contact with them.

4.4 **Share academic advising responsibilities among nucleus faculty**. To increase accessibility of advising, the responsibility should be shared among the nucleus faculty. This is consistent with recommendation 2.1. To ensure advising is consistent, advisors should regularly discuss advising issues and develop agreed responses.

4.5 **Consider reducing or eliminating prerequisite courses, as part of a comprehensive curricular revision**. Doing so could increase matriculation, and reduce time to graduation. Prerequisites knowledge that are eliminated can instead be covered within the curriculum. Doing so has the potential added benefit of diversifying the disciplinary backgrounds of applicants to the program.

Standard 5. Matching operations with mission: student learning

Standard 5 focuses on the program's student learning outcomes. For accredited programs, it includes a set of "universal required competencies" established by NAPSAA:
- to lead and manage in the public interest;
- to participate in, and contribute to, the policy process;

- to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make evidence-informed decisions in a complex and dynamic environment;
- to articulate, apply, and advance a public service perspective;
- to communicate and interact productively and in culturally responsive ways with a diverse and changing workforce and society at large.

It also includes any additional required, elective, and professional competencies that the program adopts. For each competency, the program should evaluate its effectiveness in meeting student learning outcomes.

Competencies

SSU's MPA curriculum prescribes 40 units of coursework, including 20 units of common core courses, 16 units of concentration courses in either Public Management or Nonprofit Management, and 4 units of a culminating experience (self-study, p. 46). Several electives are also offered, though no elective units are required. Additionally, up to 12 units of prerequisites may be required. The current curriculum broadly covers the universal competencies prescribed by NASPAA, to stay aligned with professional standards. This alignment can help the program with accreditation, should it seek accreditation later, as it had hoped to do in the past (p. 22). At least one respondent prescribed the pursuit of accreditation, to enhance the value of the degree to students. The self-study's proposal for major curricular revisions also prescribes that the revisions stay within NASPAA's required competencies (p. 36).

Curricular alignment with NASPAA standards only indicates that the broad categories of public service competencies are covered in the curriculum, but programs have flexibility on *how* they cover the competencies to meet specific current, local demands. Thus, MPA programs should periodically review their curricula in the light of current academic developments and professional needs in public services.

It's unclear exactly when the MPA curriculum was last systematically reviewed and revised, but respondents suggested approximately 25 years, far greater than the usual 7 year cycle for academic reviews.[12] In the meantime, several stakeholders agreed with the self-study (p. 3) that SSU's MPA curriculum is overdue for a comprehensive review and revision. According to them,

- community members say that the MPA graduates are not getting the applied skills they need, such as managing budgets;
- the curriculum leans too heavily on academic theory and not enough on professional practice, particularly with the culminating experience;
- the curriculum needs to be more aligned with the needs of local public agencies and services, such as implementing DEI initiatives; and
- there are concerns with the currency and rigidity of the nonprofit track.

One even suggested delivering some of the courses at local agencies, as some other CSU campuses have done (e.g., San Diego State University at the City of Carlsbad, and San Francisco State University at the County of San Mateo).

Attainment of competencies

Attainment of the universal competencies has never been systematically assessed by the program (self-study, p. 23), and was noted by the 2009 external review too (self-study, p. 22). Nor has an assessment plan for the program been established yet. Only exit interviews have been analyzed for program assessment, but not with consistency. This appears to be a consequence of inadequate resources, rather than oversight. With only one faculty member assigned to the program's

---

[12] NASPAA accreditation spans a maximum of 7 years.

administration, learning assessment has taken a low priority to the immediate needs of each semester and year.

The university does require regular, systematic program assessment, in its Program Review policy,[13] and support for assessment ideally comes from Institutional Research. But the MPA program has not been consistent with annual reports, and inactive the assessing program competencies. According to one administrator, "SSU is still building a culture of assessment."

With the absence of any formal program assessment, I asked the students, alumni, and lecturers to reflect on the program's quality and efficacy. Their responses were mostly positive on the program's overall contents and impact. Example responses include:

- The academic experience in the curriculum is very positive.
- The workload is demanding; not difficult, but high in quantity.
- The program content has practical applications to the workplace; there are good options to develop specific skills, such as financial management, board governance, human resource management, budgeting, etc.
- MPA degree helps students rise to higher levels of responsibility in public services. Higher positions are requiring graduate degrees. Respondents summarily describe it as an "incredibly valuable degree," and would recommend it for professionals in public service. The degree is not cheap, but getting just one promotion at work would make a positive return on investment.

In terms of program output, the numbers of graduates from the program has been low but steady in recent terms: 2 in fall 2021, 1 in spring 2022, 4 in fall 2022, 7 in spring 2023, 4 in fall 2023, and 6 in spring 2024, averaging 4.0 graduates per semester.

While the program's contents were generally viewed positively by students and lecturer faculty, its delivery garnered a lot of concern. Specifically, respondents were critical of the program's course schedule, time to degree, and unit-lengths of courses:

- *Course schedule*: SSU's MPA program has low enrollment,[14] rolling admissions, and a capacity to offer about 14 units of courses per term. This combination makes it difficult for students to stay on a plan of study, because student demand for courses is spread over a large range of courses, while each course struggles for enrollments and is vulnerable to cancelation.
- *Time to degree*: Students feel the program is "structured to take a long time." For example, its 40-unit minimum curriculum makes it the longest program among four Bay Area peers.[15] Also, its sequenced courses create bottlenecks in students' plans of study. Furthermore, the capstone course is designed to take two semesters, and its comprehensive exam has a "high" failure rate in the first attempt. Students expressed waiting a long time for specific courses to be offered. Students prescribe a shorter degree with a shorter time-to-degree.
- *Unit lengths of courses*: The curriculum includes an unusual mix of 4-unit and 2-unit courses. This adds an additional barrier to degree progress. Students consciously pursuing part-time status must choose a specific combination of classes to stay at or under 6 units, thereby precluding options to take two 4-unit courses, even if it fit their sequence and preferences. The combination of 4-unit and 2 unit courses also discourages SSU students from taking electives at nearby MPA programs, because those programs have designed their courses to be either 4-units

---

[13] SSU Program Review policy, https://policies.sonoma.edu/policies/program-review

[14] While the MPA program is the fourth largest master degree program at SSU (self-study, p. 9), out of 21, its current enrollment 39 including students not currently taking courses.

[15] For students with professional experience in public services, San Jose State University's MPA program requires 36 units, San Francisco State University's requires 39, CSU East Bay's requires 32 units, and the University of San Francisco's requires 38 units.

or 3-units each.[16] One lecturer also suggested this hinders the recruitment of faculty to teach 2-unit courses, which typically run half semesters and pay a corresponding lower amount.

Recommendations

5.1 **Conduct a comprehensive curricular review and revision.** The goals of the review and revision would be to update the curriculum to match local needs, and to streamline the program for greater student success. The self-study's recommendation toward an MPPA degree (pp. 36-45) could be a part of that curricular revision, identifying a network of faculty across campus who study different areas of public policy. Other curricular revisions that were prescribed by respondents, and with which I concur, include:

- revision of core courses to 3 units to make course scheduling more flexible for both faculty and students, especially part-time students;
- consider delivering the curriculum in a cohort mode, which is common for small programs, and would make course scheduling more predictable, while concentrating enrollments in courses;
- develop streamlined alternative models of culminating experience that can get students more predictably finished in one term;
- consider paired courses for electives, which can support the grad program without staffing an extra section. It might also help recruit professors to teach in the program, by building out their current upper-division undergraduate courses for participation by MPA students.
- consider new modalities to deliver the curriculum—such as low-residency, weekend, hybrid online, and delivery at the Ukiah campus—to reach north coast counties.

5.2 To help support recommendation 5.1, **draw upon the substantial expertise in curricular review and revision at SSU**. This expertise was recently enhanced by SSU's active partnership in the initiative "Faculty-Led Curricular Design for Student Achievement in the CSU", funded by the Teagle Foundation, the College Futures Foundation, and the CSU Chancellor's Office, from 2019 to 2023. SSU's leaders included Drs. Jenn Lillig and Sharon Fuller. At least 15 other SSU faculty led curricular revisions under that initiative, and could consult the MPA program on its efforts.

5.3 **Develop program assessment plan to measure and track attainment of universal competencies, and begin implementation of the plan**. Sustainable assessment plans divide the assessments of competencies evenly across the review cycle, so that a little is done every year, rather than the bulk of it at once. Such pacing requires a plan that schedules specific competencies to specific years, which could be made a routine duty of some nucleus faculty.

5.4 **Develop projected courses schedule** going past the average time to degree. This helps the program plan its course schedules, and helps students plan their entire study plan with high confidence.

Standard 6. Matching resources with mission

　　Under this standard, the program should have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission.

Resource adequacy – physical facilities

　　The MPA program appears to be well supported with physical facilities, being housed in Stevenson Hall, which was renovated to LEED Certification standards in 2022.[17] The classrooms and

---

[16] A cursory survey of MPA programs in Northern California CSUs indicates that all other core courses are 3 units (San Francisco and San Jose) or 4 units each (East Bay).

[17] Stevenson Hall Renovation Information, https://stratcomm.sonoma.edu/stevenson-hall-renovation-information

faculty offices I visited were modern, exceptional in quality, and ample in size. Faculty also noted the positive technological support for delivery of hybrid courses. The self-study and interviewees conveyed no concerns with the program's physical spaces.

Resource adequacy – personnel

According to respondents, the university has invested in the growth of graduate programs since at least 2021, exemplified by a new campus-wide graduate studies administrator, and some centralized outreach for graduate programs. But most agreed that these investments are not sufficient to fully support graduate studies on campus (e.g., self-study, p. 5). At the same time, campus enrollments have declined and the campus budget has been strained, as has been the case for nearly all northern California CSUs. Graduate coordinators reported having to compete with each other for limited resources. "We're all fighting over the same scraps," one said.

Within this context, the MPA program was put on hiatus in October 2023. In MPA's case, however, it was not due to a lack of demand or enrollments. Indeed, multiple respondents cited the MPA program as a model of meeting regional need for specialized training. Instead, the program's hiatus is due to a lack of a nucleus faculty to fully operate and govern the program, as discussed under standard 2. Furthermore, respondents generally agreed that in the current budgetary environment on campus, and throughout the CSU, it is not realistic to expect new funding for the MPA program or its personnel. Rather, respondents agreed that the program would need to be revitalized with existing personnel and resources. They also agreed that the personnel commitments would have to come from tenured and tenure-track faculty, as the program is currently too reliant on lecturer faculty. This is a particularly difficult challenge for the MPA program, because of the loss of TT faculty in the Political Science department. The department reports a loss of 4.5 FTE faculty in the last 8 years, creating pressures for the remaining faculty to staff higher-enrolled undergraduate and GE courses, and increase their service loads to the university (self-study, p. 12). Committing TT faculty to the MPA program would require support at every level, to encourage faculty and departments to assign TT faculty to lower-enrolled graduate courses. The support appears to be there at the administrative levels, but not yet at the TT faculty level.

Commendation

6.1 The ample quantity and high quality of program spaces should not be overlooked. Other Bay Area MPA programs have long struggled with space issues (e.g., San Francisco State University, Presidio Graduate School), sometimes causing prospective students to enroll elsewhere. The modern facilities of SSU's MPA program, located on a bucolic campus with ample parking, should be highlighted to prospective students.

Recommendation

6.1 The evidence strongly suggests that the missing link to successfully revising and reinstating the MPA program is a nucleus of TT faculty who will commit to teaching in the program, and sharing in its operations and governance. See recommendations 2.1 and 2.2. The lecturer faculty expressed unanimous support to reinstate the program. Administrators at the school and university levels pledged their support for the program, such as encouraging faculty to teach graduate courses, even if lower-enrolled than undergraduate courses. Indeed, this may be the best time to do so, when campus enrollments are down. Among all those I interviewed, it was only the TT faculty who could not commit to the reviving the program. All agreed that SSU should have an MPA program, but **a few TT faculty need to step up** to make it happen.
6.2 All the recommendations in this report support the revision and relaunch of the MPA program. For TT faculty to lead this effort, they must be supported with ample time to do this prescribed work.

The School of Social Science has committed 4-units of release time in AY 2024-2025, based upon the recommendation of the Graduate Studies Subcommittee. Dr. McCuan has agreed to continue to serve as the program's coordinator through fall 2024, and plans to take this release time then. There is currently no plan for the program's continued work in 2025 on revising and relaunching the program, or serving the continuing students (projected to be 13). It's not reasonable to expect that the work prescribed in this report can be done by Dr. McCuan within fall term. **Additional release time is required to properly revise and relaunch the program**. I recommend a total of two courses per semester during the redesign and relaunch phase, which could easily span through spring 2025. These units would ideally be shared among 2 nucleus faculty members, which would help build a culture of shared governance in the program. After the relaunch, ideally in fall 2025, the program coordinator should be supported with at least 1 course release per term to maintain and grow the program. For a graduate program of MPA's size, this amount of release time is normal among peer programs, and is justified.

Standard 7. Matching communications with mission

Under this final standard, the program should effectively communicate its mission, policies, practices, and accomplishments—including student learning outcomes—to inform stakeholders such as prospective students, current students, faculty, university administrators, employers of graduates, alumni, and accrediting agencies.

Communications

The program's primary mode of communication to stakeholders appears to be its webpages, hosted on the Political Science department's website.[18] At least ten webpages are dedicated to the MPA program, providing information on program contents and requirements, faculty and staff, student resources, FAQs, and other details. With no articulated mission statement (see standard 1) or assessment plan (see standard 5), these items are not reported on these webpages.

The content found on most of these pages appear to be aimed at current students, providing detailed information on current class schedule, capstone guidelines, and internship opportunities. Other pages will certainly be of interest to prospective students, such as MPA requirements, faculty, and program overview. Still, the pages appear oriented toward providing information, and not enough on program strengths and achievements that might be more appealing to applicants and employers. Such information could include profiles of notable alumni, placements of graduates, testimonies from alumni and employers of graduates, etc.

Outreach

Indeed, many respondents identified outreach, to both prospective students and employers, as critically underdeveloped in the MPA program. Student respondents said they heard of SSU's program through word of mouth, and not through any marketing or social media. The self-study prescribes more coordinated effort among university departments (e.g. Graduate Admissions, Graduate Studies Office, and program homes) to conduct marketing and outreach for the MPA program (p. 10). And the program can take advantage of university services for marketing, such as promotional videos produced by Enrollment Management and Strategic Communications.

Respondents also identified varied ways that MPA faculty can promote the program to stakeholders. They included inviting stakeholders to capstone presentations to showcase students and their work, hosting events with public agencies and nonprofits to promote the program to their

---

[18] Master's in Public Administration front page, https://politicalscience.sonoma.edu/programs/mpa

employees and to promote graduates to their organizations, and tapping alumni to promote the program in their networks.

Commendation
7.1 With such limited personnel, the MPA program is commended for maintaining the program's webpages, containing detailed information particularly for current students.

Recommendation
7.1 A relaunched MPA program needs to be properly marketed. **Reorganize the program's webpages, and develop additional content, specifically for prospective students and employers**. These outward facing pages should highlight the strengths and achievements of the program.
7.2 With the relaunch, **develop a low-cost outreach plan** that takes advantage of university services and the networks of faculty and alumni. Track applications and placements along with outreach activities, to gauge their efficacy.

Options for MPA's Future at SSU

The second half of the self-study presents a policy analysis of alternatives for the MPA's future (pp. 24-42). The analysis itself exemplifies best practices within public administration, to comprehensively assess alternative plans in order to select a best course of action. The level of thoughtfulness and thoroughness in this analysis provides confidence that an agreed-upon path out of hiatus can be found, and that the path will have had ample input from stakeholders to garner support. I commend Dr. McCuan for developing the analysis.

The analysis broadly considers seven alternative paths for the MPA program, based on interviews with 28 key stakeholders, a SWOT analysis, and application of the rational framework for policy analysis (self-study, pp. 24-38). The seven options considered are:

- Option 1: No change
- Option 2: Hire a new faculty leader, coordinator
- Option 3: Temporarily employ a qualified lecturer to led the program pending a new faculty hire
- Option 4: Discontinue the MPA program
- Option 5: Discontinue the program and replace it with a new MPA program in School of Extended Education
- Option 6: Discontinue the program and facilitate the continued availability of MPA program to service area via another institution of higher education
- Option 7: Revise the MPA program

The study analyzes the seven options against five criteria, and it ultimately recommends option 7, in which a new Master of Public Policy and Administration (MPPA) degree program would replace the MPA program. The recommendation comes with a drafts of 1) new program learning outcomes that incorporates a new emphasis on public policy studies, and 2) a plan of action to recruit TT faculty, fully develop the degree, and market it to regional stakeholders.

It is my opinion that the analysis recommends the best option for the program. Besides the study's presentation of each option's pros and cons, which warrants careful reading, I offer my additional assessments of them. In my view, options 1, 2, and 3 only identify a program coordinator, but they do not address the more fundamental problem of an inadequate nucleus of TT faculty who can deliver the program with shared governance. (See standard 2.) Without that, these options only identify the coordinator who will usher the program's discontinuance, which is option 4. Any option leading to the absence of an MPA program at SSU would be a failure of the university. No stakeholder

interviewed in this review, and no evidence in the self-study, prescribed the discontinuance of a SSU MPA. Quite the opposite, there was unanimous and heartfelt prescription to revive the program. There is both regional demand for the program, and institutional expertise to meet that demand. So the only options to truly consider are those that offer ways for the program to be revitalized.

Options 5, 6, and 7 each do that, but in very different ways. The analysis of option 5 is thorough, and claims constraints that make in unviable, such as no shared revenues with the department. I don't question the analysis presented there, but I can say that other CSUs have successfully developed self-supported MPA programs. San Diego State University, for example, has two self-supported MPA programs, in addition to their traditional state-supported program. One is completely online and tailored toward senior practitioners, and a second is an onsite program tailored specifically for a municipal government. Their model does include shared revenue, and that revenue has boosted the strength of their state-side program. Still, delivering the SSU MPA through the School of Extended and International Education would result in other negative outcomes that the analysis highlights well. Most critical among those is the substantially increased cost to students, which could price out many public servants in the region.

Option 6 is also possible, with multiple potential partners in the region, including four CSUs (Sacramento, San Francisco, East Bay, and San Jose). There have been successful cases of such partnerships in the past. One example is a graduate program in Parks and Recreation that was jointly offered by three northern California CSUs. Most of the classes in that program were online, with a few meetings hosted by the campus closest to each student. A similar structure could be possible with another MPA program, especially one with significant online offerings. The unmentioned challenge here, however, would be the articulation of the curricula between the participating programs. (See "Unit lengths of courses" under Standard 5.) A curricular revision might be necessary to facilitate this option.

Option 7 is the one recommended by the analysis, and accompanied with drafts of learning outcomes and an action plan. The option proposes a new MPPA degree, using the new emphasis on policy studies to attract more SSU TT faculty to support it. I agree that this is the best option for SSU. Besides keeping a program completely at SSU and with state-support, the new degree would distinguish itself from those at the other four regional CSUs, by incorporating "policy" into the degree's name. That could have a marginal impact on attracting more students. It might also attract more TT faculty participation, as policy experts might be found throughout the university. This could be instrumental to developing a new nucleus faculty, as prescribed by the MOU and this external review.

While this review concurs with the self-study that option 7 is the preferred alternative, its success hinges on successfully recruiting a nucleus faculty who will deliver the program with shared governance. That condition cannot be an assumed. In fact, at the moment, no TT faculty has committed to this program past December 2024. Therefore, **this review recommends a ranked-order to the preferred alternatives**:

- First preference: Option 7 - Revise the MPA program
- Second preference: Option 6 - Discontinue the program and facilitate the continued availability of MPA program to service area via another institution of higher education
- Third preference: Option 5 - Discontinue the program and replace it with a new MPA program in School of Extended Education

Option 7 should be pursued first. But if it fails, particularly if a nucleus TT faculty cannot be assembled, then Option 6 should be pursued next. And if it fails, then Option 5 should be pursued. This set of ranked preferences prioritizes meeting regional needs for an MPA degree first. All three can do it, to different degrees, and all three options are superior to Options 1 through 4.

Conclusion

This was an exceptionally challenging review to write, because of the extraordinary circumstances of SSU's MPA program. The program faces an existential threat, which is not like any other program I have reviewed before. What makes this doubly challenging is the apparent cause of this existential threat. **It's not an ineffective program**. Stakeholders told me that the program fills a real need in the region for trained leadership in public services, with one concluding a "heavy impact" on local governance and economy. Many alumni of the program are well placed in regional public services, and the program has been critical to the advancement of local leaders. **It's not a lack of demand**. There is consistent agreement between the self-study and multiple interviewees that the demand for an MPA degree in the North Bay is strong enough to support a program. "The community demands it," said one respondent. Even more, SSU is a Hispanic Serving Institution which makes it better-positioned to develop local Latinx public servants into leaders through the MPA program. **It's not low enrollments**. Just as it was placed on hiatus, the program still boasted the fourth largest enrollment among the 21 graduate programs at the university (self-study, p. 9). Furthermore, its enrollments have been fairly stable over the last ten years (p. 19), even as the university's enrollments have declined. **It's also not a lack of university interest**. Every interviewee wants the program to continue, and believes it would be a disservice to the community to discontinue it. "It's a crown jewel" of SSU, said one respondent, and well known in the region. An instructor declared "My bucket is so filled by the great experiences I'm having in class with these young professionals who are looking to grow their careers." Alumni, faculty, and administrators all hope the program will continue.

Instead, it is a lack of tenure-track faculty who will commit to leading the program with shared governance. Most respondents agreed that this was the root cause of the program's current crisis, and it is supported by the self-study. This is a baffling conclusion to make, because CSU faculty are more often the champions of student success, community service, and academic innovation—things that are all on the line with the MPA's hiatus. As a CSU colleague, I understand the pressure to prioritize undergraduate studies, and to prioritize work within one's tenure line. Meanwhile, the MPA program serves graduate students and has no tenure lines. Still, it is a relatively large graduate program at a university with severely declined undergraduate enrollments. These circumstances present a rare opportunity for tenure-track faculty across many disciplines to reinvent a vital program of Sonoma State University. Administrators at the school and university levels have pledged to support such efforts. I sincerely hope a few faculty will answer this call, because as one administrator said, "If faculty don't build it, it won't happen."