

Program Suspension Proposal: Master of Public Administration

The University of Maine undertook a wide review of its degree programs in 2009-2010. President Kennedy formed the Academic Program Prioritization Working Group (APPWG) and charged it with evaluating and prioritizing all UMaine academic programs, stating that “the goal of this process will be strong support of our highest priority degree programs funded by a reduction in those ranked as our lowest priorities” (President’s Charge to APPWG). In its final report, APPWG recommended the elimination of the Department of Public Administration. President Kennedy accepted this recommendation. In implementing this decision, this is a proposal to suspend the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program pending final decision on the elimination of the Department. Concurrently, a similar proposal is being made to suspend the Department’s undergraduate program, Bachelor of Arts in Public Management.

Five-Year Summary of Program Enrollments

The Master of Public Administration is housed in the Department of Public Administration. There are four full-time regular faculty members who teach most of the courses that make up the MPA program. Adjunct faculty members teach some courses in the curriculum as needed.

A summary of the MPA majors and degrees conferred over the past five years is included in the following table¹. The number of majors is based upon fall headcounts.

Academic Year	Majors	Degrees
2005-2006	35	14
2006-2007	32	7
2007-2008	45	13
2008-2009	42	11
2009-2010	38	11

Rationale

Within the APPWG process, the College of Business, Public Policy and Health was directed to identify and implement budget cuts of approximately 20% over a three year period. A strategic decision was made to identify and preserve the programs that contributed most to the teaching, research, and service mission of the University, and eliminate other programs and units with smaller contributions. The Department of Public Administration was targeted for elimination primarily because of low enrollment. The graduate program being considered here (MPA) by itself is not necessarily smaller than other programs on campus. However, in conjunction with the small numbers of students in the undergraduate program, the Department’s aggregate contribution to the teaching mission of the University remains fairly limited. The Department’s research and outside

¹ All data cited here come from the Office of Institutional Studies.

grants cannot offset this low demand. The Department cannot remain a viable unit by offering the graduate program alone in the current period of severe strain on resources.

The proposal for eliminating the Department of Public Administration will be reviewed in the 2010-2011 academic year following University of Maine System policy and procedures.

Impact on Students

While the loss of any program narrows down the choices for students and is unfortunate, the University can redirect potential graduate students with interests in Public Administration to alternative programs in Business Administration (MBA), Economics (MA in Economics and MS in Resource Economics and Policy) or Global Policy (MA in Global Policy, offered by the School of Policy and International Affairs), minimizing the loss of students. Some students can be redirected to a similar program (Master's degree in Public Policy and Management) at the University of Southern Maine.

Current graduate students will not be impacted during the program suspension period as the University will offer the required classes over a period of up to two years so that they can finish their course of study.

Faculty Assignment During Suspension Period

There will be no change in the assignment of faculty during the first year (2010-11). If the elimination of the Department is approved, it will be carried out primarily by attrition, as three of the four faculty are eligible and likely to retire. Opportunities are being explored to find alternative employment for the fourth faculty member, who in any case will likely be needed to teach out the students currently in the program.

Timetable

Pending approval, the suspension of the MPA program will commence in January 2011. No new students will be admitted to the program while it is under suspension. The program will be considered by May 31, 2011 for elimination.

Meetings/Discussions Regarding Proposed Suspension

The former Dean of the College of Business, Public Policy and Health and the Chair and faculty of the Department of Public Administration met several times in 2009-10 to discuss the proposed elimination. A public forum was held on March 29, 2010 where concerns of graduates of the program and employers were voiced and discussed. The Dean met with AFUM's representative on October 26, 2010. The current proposal incorporates AFUM's suggestions about rationale and faculty assignments.