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FROM: Jeffery L. Osgood, Jr.
Chair, Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation
Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration

DATE: July 30, 2018

SUBJECT: NASPAA Accreditation Review

The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) has completed its review of your Master of Public Administration degree program and has determined that your program is not in substantial conformance with the NASPAA Standards for Professional Master's Degree Programs in Public Affairs, Policy, and Administration.

Based upon a detailed review of the documentation submitted to the Commission, the Kean University Master of Public Administration program continues to experience overall program instability as a result of insufficient administrative capacity and faculty governance. The Commission's Standards require accredited programs to have a nucleus of faculty who accept primary responsibility for the program and exercise substantial determining influence for the governance and implementation of the program. Based on the review, inadequacies in these areas consistently impact the faculty's ability to ensure integrity across the program with respect to transparent and effective governance, faculty qualifications, student support, and resource adequacy. The overarching concern is the resources available to the program are not sufficient to support its capacity to pursue the stated mission and to pursue initiatives and improvements in response to systematic assessment.

While the Commission appreciates the program's stated intent to continue working on issues identified throughout the accreditation review process, the evidence presented in the current review indicates the MPA degree is not in substantial conformance with the Standards outlined below. In the Commission's judgment, the program cannot be accredited at this time or included in the Annual Roster of Accredited Programs.

The Commission encourages the program to re-apply for accreditation when it has been able to fully resolve its quality issues in a sustainable manner, especially with respect to the resources to support a stable governance system and mission-based student support.

The identified non-conformities are with the following Standards:

- Standard 2.1
- Standard 2.2
- Standard 3.1/Standard 3.3
- Standard 4.2/Standard 4.3
- Standard 5.1
- Standard 6.1

While the specific instances of nonconformance are discussed below, it should be noted that the decision to deny the program accreditation does not hinge on any one Standard, but is based on a lack of evidence that the program is in substantial conformance with the NASPAA Accreditation Standards.

Item 1: Standard 2.1 – Administrative Capacity

Standard 2.1 states, “The program will have an administrative infrastructure appropriate for its mission, goals, and objectives in all delivery modalities employed.”

Following the 2016-17 accreditation review, the Commission had serious reservations regarding the program’s administrative infrastructure, specifically how the administrative capacity of the program allows faculty to balance teaching, research, and student support, to pursue its mission. As indicated in the prior review, faculty in the program teach a 4/4 course load, while also managing, among other things, student advising, internships, an undergraduate program, and two certificate programs. As discussed below, these concerns remain unresolved.

In his January 10, 2018 letter of support, the provost stated the approval of department staffing of 7+1 (7 full-time faculty and 1 lecturer), with 2 full-time staff lines. The interim report response confirms three upcoming hires, to increase the faculty nucleus to 7, and the addition of a second full-time clerical staff line to support the current Managing Administrative Assistant II. (This new administrative line is also mentioned in the September 20, 2017 response). The new clerical hire would then allow the Managing Administrative Assistant II to shift to that of a program support officer and focus on long-term program growth and success.

At the time of the site visit, the team reported that the new administrative position had not been filled and there had been no new hires as of yet. On-the-ground there were only 3 existing faculty returning in academic year 2018-19.

The Site Visit Report states:

The University has authorized an administrative support position, titled "Managing Administrative Assistant II", with the duties of performing routine daily administrative functions (scheduling, organizing reports, budgeting, performing research e.g.), but the job description indicates-and the Executive Director stated-that the position would "do other work that is required". While the University might have approved changes to the

administrative support structure, it has not moved rapidly to fill the new position and institute the changes. The result is that there is very little change in administrative capacity from last year's initial SVT visit and recommendations. Furthermore, the position would report to the Executive Director. When we brought up this matter with the executive director, he suggested that these things are decided in the president's office. When we discussed it with the provost, he indicated that because the executive director is a 12-month salaried staff, all professional staff will report to him in the summer. The president suggested that the position is indeed a Criminal Justice position that would free up the current administrative coordinator to be 100% Public Administration...It is also important to note that the SVT remains concerned that, even if the position was a PA position, the reporting line for the new position could be a problem - if the person's main job is to serve the MPA program or PA Unit Coordinator, then that is who the person would report to.

The Site Visit Report also states:

Aside from the memorandum from the provost (included in the interim report response) the SVT was not presented any type of staffing plan for the program. Although we believe the new hires are needed, the Program has not shown at any point how the new hires will relieve the program administrators of anything other than internship supervision. Everyone in our interviews seemed to suggest that the lecturer position would be a 12-month appointment that will take care of advising, program management and other program responsibilities during the summer months when the program administrators are not on contract.

Elsewhere in the report, the team notes that the lecturer position is a 5/5 position, with the possibility to teach during the summer semester, whilst also managing internships.

Finally, the Report states:

The University has imposed on the Kean MPA program a strict 4/4 course load for all full-time program faculty, including administrators. Coupled with skeletal administrative staff, this results in an undue burden on the administrators and the faculty of the program...In the SVT meeting with the Executive Director of the School, he indicated that he intends to give the new lecturer a course release each semester for managing the internship. The team then asked him if that would apply to current administrators in the Department, the MPA Director and the Healthcare Coordinator...He indicated that that has always been an option, but the people involved were not interested in a course release and were instead interested in the financial compensation. In our meeting with the provost, however, he indicated that such option is not possible. In our meeting with the president, he indicated that this is the load negotiated by the union...The SVT heard very different interpretations of the University's policy on faculty releases for research

or administrative responsibilities...it appears that there is a structural problem with the university's research release system that would make it harder for administrative faculty to obtain research releases - if they do, they lose the administrative supplement payment...The SVT received multiple different answers from the different administrators on things that are basic personnel questions such as research release, administrative release, reporting structure, reappointment criteria, promotion criteria, tenure criteria, etc.

The program's final response (dated May 23, 2018) notes that the university has moved toward an increased emphasis on research, on top of the "mandatory 4/4 load" (p7). The final response also states that a new position - Managing Assistant Director III - has been approved for the School of Criminal Justice and Public Administration, with responsibilities centralized for the entire School, but to include work directed in support of the MPA program. The response confirms two lecturers have been hired, one to coordinate the MPA internship program (and teach at the undergraduate level), representing a shift from the January 2018 letter of support: one full-time tenure track line has been converted to a lecturer position, and one lecturer will not teach in the MPA program.

The Commission finds the program is not in conformance with Standard 2.1. The Standard requires accredited programs to have a clearly defined administrative infrastructure that enables it to pursue its mission and ensure program delivery. Based on the review, the MPA program continues to operate with an untenable administrative burden on the faculty, with unclear and differing opportunities to strategically enhance its capacity. Based on the site visit report, the new lecturer position will provide only minor relief of the administrative burden on the program director (through internship supervision). In addition, enhancements in professional support (the hiring of the second administrative position) have not yet been implemented. As a result, the administrative infrastructure is impacting the faculty's ability to adequately support its mission, faculty, and students.

Critically, the administrative capacity of the program as presented appears to be having a negative impact on its students. The Site Visit Report states, "While students genuinely commend and appreciate the faculty's willingness to help, they are feeling the impacts of the burdened faculty, and are more vocal on this visit than last year's. Among the impacts experienced and voiced by students as a result of the faculty load are haphazard advising on course scheduling, little backup, an out-of-date web site, a newsletter which could be a better vehicle for information. Alumni cited a decided reduction in the faculty's ability to support and help students navigate issues with the university process."

For these reasons the program has not demonstrated that it can achieve or sustain ongoing conformance with respect to administrative capacity.

Item 2: Standard 2.2 – Faculty Governance

Standard 2.2 states, “An adequate faculty nucleus—at least five (5) full-time faculty members or their equivalent—will exercise substantial determining influence for the governance and implementation of the program.”

In addition to the concerns related to administrative capacity (above), in the 2017 interim report, the Commission expressed concern regarding faculty engagement in the governance of the program, including its participation in hiring processes and requested information from the program in this regard. The Commission’s concerns were compounded when it appeared that the September 2017 response was submitted by the university on behalf of the program, rather than by the program itself.

As noted above, the program had several open lines during the 2017-18 academic year. Based on the September 2017 response these include 3 new faculty and 1 lecturer. At the time of the 2018 site visit, the team reported:

The department advertised the faculty positions which attracted a pool of 22 applicants for the healthcare administration positions, 22 applicants for the MPA Generalist, and 10 applications for the lecturer position. The faculty interviewed and made decisions on the faculty tenure-track lines but have not yet interviewed for the lecturer position. The staff position has yet to be advertised. Worth mentioning that last year's posted position was not filled despite a favorable selection by the Program, Department and the Dean. The provost deemed the candidate unacceptable...It is the site visit team's understanding that the executive director of the school is the one who initiates these job descriptions, although he plays no further role in the hiring process. Once faculty are interviewed within the department, the coordinator of the department will make a recommendation to the dean who makes a recommendation to the provost and then to the president. It is not clear that the faculty in the Department are engaged in deciding the nature and scope of these hires. Based on last year's decision to not extend an offer to a candidate proposed by faculty and supported by Unit Coordinator, executive director, and dean, [it] is not clear that faculty and administrators involved in the hiring process below the Provost's level are on the same page as the provost in terms of new hire qualifications.

The Site Visit Report elaborates on the prior failed faculty search:

The SVT notes that during last year's SVT, the program announced that it was looking for a second healthcare person for the MPA program. Apparently, that search proceeded, and the program made a recommendation to hire someone to the Dean who then recommended the hire to the provost, who then proceeded to cancel the position because the faculty candidate did not show good research potential. This issue of inadequate alignment across the different levels of the hierarchy was a problem in most

of these cases presented above. It appears that there are no clear written criteria for hiring, reappointment, promotion and tenure and that all these decisions are made exclusively at the provost level. The Executive Director and the Dean seem to have no role in these decisions, nor does a consensus of the program faculty.

In its final response to COPRA, the program responds to the site visit team's comments regarding the tenure and promotion process. While the response indicates that decisions related to tenure and promotion are "initiated at the department level" (p4), the response repeatedly states that all decisions are made at the discretion of the provost and/or president. For instance, with regard to both tenure and promotion, the response states: "Ultimately it is the opinion of the Provost and the President regarding the candidate's scholarship, service and teaching that influence [promotion and tenure] decisions." The program also references its stated teaching mission, which does not appear to align with Kean's emphasis on research. These items suggest a lack of clarity among the faculty regarding what is required to successfully sustain and improve academic qualifications, which is further evidence that the faculty are not exercising substantial determining influence over the program.

As cited in Item 1, the site visit team also noted a lack of clarity regarding the new administrative staff position, and the accountability as related to the program versus the Executive Director. The program's final response does not address these questions.

The Commission finds the program is not in conformance with Standard 2.2. The governance arrangement, including administrative leadership, should ensure the integrity of the Program, and should be transparent, identifiable and effective. Because program nucleus faculty members have deep knowledge of their program and a commitment to participatory processes, they also should play a significant role in the governance and execution of the program. Based on the review, the Commission finds that the nucleus faculty have little influence over the recruiting, promoting, and awarding tenure to their colleagues, the administrative staffing of the MPA program, as well developing other policies related to the mission, design, and delivery of the program.

Item 3: Standard 3.1 - Faculty Qualifications/Standard 3.3 - Research, Scholarship and Service

Standard 3.1 states, "The program's faculty members will be academically or professionally qualified to pursue the program's mission."

Standard 3.3 states, "Program faculty members will produce scholarship and engage in professional and community service activities outside of the university appropriate to the program's mission, stage of their careers, and the expectations of their university."

Related to the Commission's concerns regarding administrative capacity and faculty course load (Item 1) are those related to expectations of scholarship and service. In response to the 2017 interim report, it was indicated the program would submit to the university expectations and benchmarks related to scholarship and service for its review and approval.

The Site Visit Report states:

The program's stated mission is a teaching mission. The program faculty's workload is 4/4 plus administrative and research expectations of everyone. The senior administration of the University seems to emphasize a research mission. The provost seems to enforce these research expectations when making hiring and reappointment decisions...The SVT reports that the program has drafted some guidelines for research and performance expectations. These guidelines were sent to the dean in December 2017, but the status of these guidelines remains unclear. We asked the provost and he indicated that he had not seen them. We also asked the provost for his guidelines and whether there are clear written guidelines but we received a general answer that the University cares about student-centered teaching and research...The students' assessment of practitioners is mixed. They like the exposure to practical experience, but feel some practitioners, while perhaps very competent in their profession, are not good teachers.

The Site Visit Team also indicates concerns that “unrealistic expectations to balance advising, research, teaching and service” are impacting faculty promotions, notably a persistent lack of promotion for the MPA Director and Department Coordinator.

In the final response, the program provides an appendix which outlines a proposed reappointment, tenure, and promotion policy. This table has been shared with the interim dean and provost, however at the time of the final response, it did not appear to have been reviewed or approved by university leadership. Similarly, it is not clear how the policy, if adopted, will guide the hiring (such as the May 2018 hires), reappointment, tenure, and promotion processes or if it is merely an articulation of what is generally expected or the faculty's expression of what they expect of themselves in terms of scholarly contributions.

The Commission finds the program is not in conformance with Standards 3.1 and 3.3 and that the program lacks systematic steps and strategies for and investment in individual faculty career development to ensure that faculty sustain and improve their academic and professional qualifications. As referenced in Items 1 and 2, based on the review, it appears there is significant misalignment between the university's expectations for promotion and tenure and the program's mission-based capacity for teaching, service, and scholarship. Further, it is unclear to the Commission whether the drafted reappointment, promotion, and tenure policy will be approved and implemented. The Standards require accredited programs to demonstrate that program faculty have the capacity to engage in scholarship, community service, and professional service, as appropriate to the program's mission and the field.

Item 4: Standard 4.3 - Support for Students

Standard 4.3 states, “The program will ensure the availability of support services, such as curriculum advising, internship placement and supervision, career counseling, and job placement assistance to enable students to progress in careers in public affairs, administration, and policy.”

In the 2017 decision letter, the Commission expressed concern related to the program’s capacity to fully support students, both with regard to advising (especially as related to supporting students admitted through an open admissions policy), but also with regard to career objectives and internships.

In addition to the concerns raised by students in Item 1, the Site Visit Report states:

The lecturer position is a 5/5 position which is supposed to be a 12-month position. The executive director indicated that the person could be teaching as many courses in the summer semester too. The person will manage the internships and may receive a 1 course...reduction for every X number of internships. But this was offered up as a suggestion, without confirmation of how this would work...The students expressed concerns about inconsistent advising, although they expressed great fondness for the faculty personally. Other concerns raised by the students included lack of structure for the internship program and minimal career counseling/job placement support. Given the heavy teaching loads and service obligations of the faculty, it is difficult to see how this could be otherwise. It was conveyed to the SVT that the new instructor hire (5-5 teaching load) would be taking on internship oversight.

The program’s final response indicates that in Fall 2018, all core faculty will share the responsibility of advising MPA students, although it offers no explicit plan for sharing this responsibility. In addition, the response confirms a lecturer who will not teach in the program, but who will coordinate internships.

The Commission finds the program is not in conformance with Standards 4.2 and 4.3. Based on the review, the program has taken minimal steps to alleviate the burden on program faculty with regard to advising and internships. Internship oversight will now be concentrated in a lecturer with a minimum of a 5/5 course load, and while advisement may now not be solely concentrated in a handful of faculty, it remains to be seen how core faculty with 4/4 course loads and significant research expectations will adjust workloads to support students to graduation. The Commission does not find evidence that the outcomes of student services are consistent with the program’s mission.

Item 5: Standard 5.1 - Universal Required Competencies

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.”

In response to concerns regarding sustainability of the program’s assessment process, the September 2017 letter provided a draft curriculum map, developed by the Executive Director and university representative. The 2017 interim report requested detailed information about how faculty exert influence over student learning across the program, including through assessment.

The Site Visit Report confirms faculty engagement, also stating:

The program has significantly changed the process of assessing the learning outcomes and competencies since the last site visit...The new approach to student learning assessment is based on a three part course series: a methods course, a thesis proposal class and then a thesis writing class. Students prepare a thesis proposal in one class, and then write a thesis in another class (average page length 25-35 pages) that is evaluated using a rubric. The professor then uses the results of that rubric to develop an assessment report to be shared with the program. The program shared their first assessment report using their new approach. The rubric that was used to assess the final theses is a traditional essay writing rubric with categories for: research question, literature review, methodology, data collection, analysis of results, implications for practice, conclusion, quality of writing, and oral presentation. It is the understanding of the site visit team that the first assessment report did not actually result in "closing the loop" or making programmatic changes, but rather the department decided to make some small changes to the rubric. While it seems reasonable that the rubric could be used to assess the critical thinking competency (#3), none of the other competencies are assessed in the rubric or in the thesis writing class. However the rubric itself is not directly connected to the actual learning outcomes that were defined for the critical thinking competency (#3), and it was not articulated by the program that the rubric was supposed to connect to competency #3, that was simply our interpretation.

The program responded that while it did reduce the number of assessment points, it still uses measures from across the core curriculum to assess student competency. As a follow-up measure to previous assessment, the program adjusted a 3-course sequence, which now forms the foundation of its new assessment system. It also states that the site visit team comments related to the rubric were directed at the grading rubric, but that assessment of competency is based on a second competency-linked rubric. The program provided an assessment table, which, for two competencies, provides definitions, the link to the thesis, and the assessment criteria (rubric). An assessment report discusses evidence collected for 2 competency domains.

The Commission finds the program is not in conformance with Standard 5.1. While the program has provided an overview of assessment on 2 competency domains, it is not evident to the Commission the

scope of the assessment system across all domains or the extent to which it will be implemented moving forward. The Commission seeks evidence of how programs plan to assess each competency, when they will be assessing each competency, who is responsible for assessing each competency, and what measures will be used to assess each competency. The program has not demonstrated that student learning assessment is connected to the program's overall mission and goals or that it is systematic, ongoing, and sustainable.

Item 6: Standard 6.1 – Resource Adequacy

Standard 6.1 states, "The program will have sufficient funds, physical facilities, and resources in addition to its faculty to pursue its mission, objectives, and continuous improvement."

In the 2017 decision letter, the Commission communicated concerns that the adequacy of resources available to the program - most specifically physical capacity that is conducive to the pedagogical approaches of the program and program administration arrangements - were not sufficient to pursue the program's mission and improvements. These concerns continued in the Interim Report, with COPRA asking specific questions regarding the scheduling of classes and the computer laboratory availability.

The Site Visit Report states:

All classes are now scheduled outside Willis Hall and in newer facilities. The students complained that the lab was not open past 4:30 PM. When we asked the administrators below the Provost, we were told that the lab would be staffed properly starting the Fall 18 term. The Provost in our meeting indicated that he had approved the funds and it should have been staffed by now. The lab continues to be open only until 4:30. Despite the fact that the vast majority of the students are working full-time, the more than half of the classes are offered at 4:30, and the rest at 7:30. While this in theory allows the students to "stack classes" so that they can take two courses in a night, students complained about the 4:30 time slot and indicated that parking was not really available at 4:30 while the parking lot is near empty after 5 PM...The College of Business [appears] to have classes that start past 6 PM. Students also expressed an interest in executive model classes, as well as Saturday classes.

The Report also states:

Students cited several facility concerns, among them: 1) the computer lab closes at 5 pm, which effectively closes it as a resource for students who have night classes. The Provost said he had approved a 20 hour position to keep the computer lab open until 9 pm, but it hasn't happened yet, and no one seems to know why, and no one seems to be following up on it. In the meantime, students suffer the lack of the resource; 2) there is no lounge area for students to gather and discuss their assignments and classes; 3) since classes start at 4:30 pm it presents a problem for students who work full time; 4) parking is a problem until 5 pm. Classes starting at 5:30 or 6 pm would better

accommodate working students and save time looking for parking spaces. Students cited curriculum concerns: 1) the need for more up-to-date technology in class instruction, in order to better prepare them for the technology they will use working; 2) more real life class projects. Students stated that theory is fine to establish base knowledge, but more practical learning is desired.

The program's final response indicates that job offers had been made to two academic specialists to work to keep the public administration computer lab open until 8pm four days per week. The program also notes that there is some discussion across campus about changing evening class times.

The Commission finds the program is not in conformance with Standard 6.1. Based on the final response, it remains unclear to the Commission whether or not the academic specialist positions have been formally filled, the computer lab hours have shifted, as well as what strategies the program is exploring to explicitly address student concerns related to infrastructure and course scheduling. The Standards require an accredited program to have the resources required to pursue its mission and to continue to improve. The overarching concern is whether the resources available to the program are sufficient to pursue the stated mission and to pursue initiatives and improvements in response to systematic assessment.

Should the program address these non-conformities to the NASPAA Standards, it may re-enter a future accreditation cycle as outlined in the Commission's *Policies and Procedures for Peer Review and Accreditation* (<https://accreditation.naspaa.org/resources/official-standards-policies/>). You will need to submit a new self-study report should you re-enter a future cycle.

You also have the option to appeal COPRA's decision. Information on the appeal process is contained in Section 15.0 of the *Policies and Procedures*.

Denials of accreditation will be announced publicly and listed on the NASPAA website in COPRA's annual statement of actions on September 1, 2018. For all denials of accreditation, COPRA will provide specific reasons for the decision accompanied by a response from the denied program (if submitted).

On behalf of COPRA, I want to express our appreciation for your participation in this endeavor. The commitment represented by your review has been substantial and your participation has been important in the continuing development of our field. The Commission strongly encourages your program to re-apply for accreditation after it has fully addressed the nonconformance issues detailed above.

The Commission looks forward to working with you in the future. If you have any questions, please contact me at JOsgood@wcupa.edu. Additional questions may be directed to NASPAA's Chief Accreditation Officer, Crystal Calarusse, at 202.628.8965 ext. 103 or calarusse@naspaa.org.