




Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate
Seton Hall University

From: Katia Passerini, Ph.D.

Provost and Executive Vice President

Re: *Online MPA - Public Service and Leadership*
2021-FS-11

Date: March 21, 2022

We are in receipt of 2021-FS-11, *Online MPA - Public Service and Leadership*, regarding the proposal for a Master of Public Administration Online with a concentration in Public Service and Leadership to augment the existing Online MPA program. The Faculty Senate approved this certificate at its April 23, 2021 meeting.

We note this proposal passed through the appropriate process, being approved by the Department and Chair of the Department of Political Science and Public Affairs, the College of Arts & Sciences Educational Policy Committee, the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences, and the Academic Policy Committee of the Faculty Senate prior to being reviewed by the Provost's Office. The proposal indicates that this program aims to attract and serve students who have been working in the private sector and who want to transition into the public sector.

The proposal asserts that the existing Nonprofit concentration in the Online MPA program currently graduates about 15 students per year, and this change aspires to attract roughly 10 additional new students per year over and above the students in our in-person MPA with its Public Sector concentration. The proponents of the program worked with members of my Office to explore how the current practices might be altered to create an academically and financially viable program and on the larger question of whether we might sustain both the campus-based and the online programs simultaneously, but we have not arrived at a satisfactory plan to move forward.

We cannot approve this proposal in its current state. We have met with the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences to explain our concerns about the sustainability of this program and to discuss some ideas that might work to pilot the new concentration sustainably. We remain open to working with the Department

Chair, the Program Director, and interested faculty to make this program sustainable and to introduce the new online concentration, but we are not ready to approve the new concentration at this time.

Our concern would be the prudence of breaking down resources across two programs when it is not clear that duplicating our efforts are encouraging sufficient growth in each of the modalities. For the past several years, fall enrollments in the online MPA have been around the mid-20s: 26 students in Fall 2019, 28 students in Fall 2020, and 23 students in Fall 2021. In the previous academic year, there was a total of 15 new students combined across all three terms--summer, fall, spring. In total, 59 students have entered the program since it started, though only 7 new students entered during this most recent academic year (2021-2022).

- 2017-18 = 2
- 2018-19 = 24
- 2019-20 = 11
- 2020-21 = 15
- 2021-22 = 7

To date, the online MPA program has graduated a total of 15 students since its inception. The online MPA is a 39-credit program. Since nearly all students study part-time, it should take about 2.5 years to graduate. A total of 26 students entered in 2017-18 and 2018-19. Given the two- and half-year timeframe, that translates to a 57% graduation rate (15/26).

The first year that online MPA degrees were awarded was in 2020-21; and that year, the Online MPA awarded degrees to 15 students. But the cohorts that made up that graduating cohort entered in 2018-19, which was the year that had the highest number of new students with 24. Since then, the annual number of new online MPA students has dropped from 11 to 15 to 7, so that we anticipate the next few years of graduating classes in this program will be much lower than 15. Even if we were to have an anticipated 10 additional new students per year in the proposed MPA track in Public Service, there would need to be 15 students entering in the other track of the Online MPA to get to the 25 total new students per year. The recent drop in numbers calls into question whether we can expect 15 in the Online MPA Nonprofit track, especially if the proposed Public Service track attracts students that would have otherwise gone into the Nonprofit track.

Meanwhile, enrollments in the campus-based MPA program over the past five years have halved. Total headcounts from Fall 2017 to Fall 2021 have been 52, 41, 28, 26, and 24. Additionally, the last three years of entering students in the campus-based program have dropped compared to the previous years. From 2017-18 to 2021-22, the number of new entering students in the campus-based MPA have been: 17, 15, 9, 12, 11. Without increases in new entering students in the upcoming year, the program will not see any growth in enrollments. Yet our most recent discussion with the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences and her team indicates an understanding of the sustainability concerns and of ideas that might work to pilot the new concentration sustainably; therefore, we look forward to seeing a proposal from the Program Director and interested faculty working with the Department Chair and the Dean's team to make changes that would enable us to approve this program.