Executive Summary

Proposal for a New Academic Program: Bachelor of Science in Public Policy (BSPP)

The School of Public Policy (SPP) at OSU proposes to offer a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy (BSPP) to undergraduate students interested in the study and practice of policy as applied to issues critical to Oregonians and the world, drawing on the strengths and emerging signature areas of the SPP and OSU. The proposed BSPP will be offered both on campus and online with students having access to classes across platforms. While the proposed program draws on the strengths of the existing faculty in the graduate program in Public Policy, it also reflects the state of art in undergraduate education in public policy. Our external reviewers come from established programs, and their suggestions and improvements were integrated into the proposal. The BSPP is designed with an emphasis on interdisciplinary knowledge about important policy issues, analytic skills, and policy practice. Students have opportunities to pursue their individual interests and passion in specialization areas, each of which is supported by a wealth of experience and expertise in the SPP and across OSU. Students apply for the BSPP after completing an equivalent of 90 quarter credits at an accredited university. Students are encouraged to complete as much of the OSU Baccalaureate Core and College of Liberal Arts (CLA) requirements prior to entering the BSPP. In addition to 22 credits in the public policy core, students are required to take two terms (8 credits) of research methods, 20 credits in a policy specialization area, and 30 additional credits in electives. The BSPP also requires a five-credit practicum, and a five-credit capstone course. There are three general specialization areas currently available (Environmental Policy, Rural Policy, and Social Policy), although students can also work with an advisor to create a customized program. The proposed BSPP will prepare students for careers in the public, private, and non-profit sectors, having been trained to work closely with clients through practicums and internships, and innovative courses such as SOC 419: Applied Research Methods in which students work with a community client to help address community issues. Three different needs assessments were conducted to determine the potential for the program: one with existing online programs in public policy, another with current OSU students, and a third with non-academic organizations (and potential employers of graduates). There appears to be considerable interest among both prospective employers and students for this type of degree/skill set, while there is currently little/no online competition. There are related programs at OSU or other Oregon colleges and universities, but OSU's land grant mission, strategic goals, and areas of strength are quite distinct when compared with these other universities. This program does not replicate the urban policy focus of Portland State University, the urban planning expertise at the University of Oregon, or the health policy expertise in OSU's Health Management and Policy Program. The BSPP is designed to leverage existing faculty strengths and classes offered throughout the SPP and across OSU. The additional costs to include a BSPP in the SPP are minimal: a part-time instructor to advise BSPP students, a summer stipend for a faculty program coordinator, and a one-time design of a program brochure. The BSPP provides students with a set of research, analytical, and experiential skills that are transferable across sectors and across issue areas. It prepares graduates for careers not only in public service, but also for jobs in nonprofits and for-profit organizations, as well as admission to competitive graduate programs in a wide range of disciplines.