Date: January 26, 2016

To: Edward P. Weber
U. G. Dubach Professor of Political Science
School of Public Policy
Oregon State University

From: Hank C. Jenkins-Smith
Professor of Public Policy
Director, National Institute for Risk and Resilience
University of Oklahoma

Re: Review of BSPP Proposal

Summary. As you requested, I have reviewed the proposal for a new Bachelor of Science, Public Policy (BSPP) at Oregon State University. In this report I will comment briefly on the structure and content of the proposed program, the fit of the program, and the analysis of student demand for the program below. In sum, however, this proposal represents a well-crafted program that fits well with existing university resources that targets an increasingly important niche for students who seek to provide – directly or indirectly – public service at the local, state and national level. I conclude with discussion of design considerations that may strengthen the students' experience within the program and enhance subsequent professional success.

Structure and Content. As noted in the proposal, there are relatively few undergraduate programs in public policy, and those that exist do not appear to compete directly with the proposed BSPP. The model used is an interdisciplinary undergraduate degree with (a) a strong methodological core and (b) coherent substantive tracks that draw on disciplinary and programmatic strengths already in place at OSU. Coupled with the prerequisites, the public policy core and methods requirements will assure that graduates understand the primary institutions (markets, formal institutions, informal social processes) that provide the context in which policy is made and the methods (theories, concepts, statistical tools) necessary for analyzing and evaluating the potential impacts of policies and programs. Substantive course in the concentration areas – environmental, rural and social policy – would presumably provide the basis for

applied policy analysis and management in the "practice" component of the program. The emphasis on real-world clients is critical to this model in that it provides a compelling setting for pulling the theoretical, methodological and substantive strands together for purposes of addressing policy problems from the perspective of an actual decision maker or public manager. These are, in my view, the the key ingredients for a successful and influential program in public policy.

I will also note that the tenure-track, instructor and adjunct faculty listed in Tables 8-10 are an impressive group with the depth and breadth to provide the course coverage called for in the proposed program. It is clear that the BSPP will benefit substantially from its relationship with the graduate program in the School of Public Policy in by drawing on its internationally known faculty. It is also likely that the BSPP will provide an important synergistic "feeder" role to the public policy graduate program (more on that below).

Program Fit at OSU. The proposal places the proposed BSPP within the context of OSU's current strengths and the University's mission as defined in OSU's Strategic Plan. First, the BSPP is an inherently applied program, focusing on public service, which is of direct relevance to the traditionally defined mission of land (and presumably sea, space, and sun) grant universities in the US. Second, the well-known strength of OSU's faculty and programs in environmental, social and rural research and teaching make for a natural blend of the University's strengths and the needs of students in the proposed program. The environmental science program, with its emphasis on natural resource management, will be of particular importance. Third, as noted above, the the BSPP would be situated within a faculty that centers on the current interdisciplinary School of Public Policy. In short, as defined in the proposal, the BSPP is an excellent fit at the broad strategic, university-wide substantive, and programmatic levels.

Analysis of Student Demand. Backing the proposal is an analysis of student demand addressing current OSU students, potential employers, and a marketing study undertaken by *Eduventures*. All three provide evidence that there is significant demand for a program like the proposed BSPP. The fact that there appears to be both employer demand and significant student interest is particularly reassuring.

Overview and Assessment. Overall this proposal is sound and provides compelling evidence of the appropriateness, fit at OSU, and student/employer demand for the program. Based on this evidence, I expect that the BSPP would be an early success and a credit to OSU. However, there are several steps that I would urge to make the prospects for the BSPP even stronger.

First, given the mixed-mode of delivery in the program, I would urge that the program design be built to enhance cohort interactions and identity across both on-campus and online students. In my experience and in discussion with other public policy faculty, the success of both undergraduate and graduate policy programs is enhanced by the development of cohort identity via shared experience through vehicles such as group projects, seminar-like discussions beyond classrooms, and engagement in broad (e.g., societal-level) thematic "problem analysis" as a group. The proposal itself notes a very promising theme for the latter: the issue of changing expectations for government, and how public servants fit into the evolving new society/governance environment. If the cohort-focused component of the program can be designed into the BSPP, it is likely to significantly enhance the value of the education provided, enhance the OSU-specific "brand" in the program, and have ripple effects that benefit the University more broadly.

Second, while this may already have been done, I would urge that the resonance between the undergraduate and graduate-level programs be enhanced to the benefit of both programs. While there are multiple ways to go about this, I would suggest that an accelerated undergraduate-to graduate program option be included, perhaps in the form of a 3-2 program in which more advanced classes/requirements in the BSPP program can be counted as progress in the Master's level program in public policy. This will increase the attractiveness of the BSPP, and provide a pool of well-prepared applicants for the graduate program. In the same vein, having a defined sub-set of course in the BSPP made available as a module for other programs (engineering is often the most attractive option) that need to prepare their graduates for public projects and programs would assure a a breadth of backgrounds and interests in the BSPP courses that enhances for intellectual excitement (and assures that the course demand is sufficient).

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January 11, 2016

Prof. Ed Weber
Chair, BSPP Degree Committee
U. G. Dubach Chair of Political Science
Oregon State University
Via email: Edward.weber@oregonstate.edu

Re: Review of Bachelor of Science in Public Policy

Dear Prof. Weber,

Per your recent request, this letter provides my assessment of the School of Public Policy's proposed Bachelor of Science in Public Policy (BSPP) degree, with an emphasis on the degree's importance, need, and current design. Based on my experience as a professor of public policy, and based on the evidence presented in the BSPP proposal, I believe that the degree will fill key gaps in undergraduate education in public policy – both in Oregon and nationally. Overall, I also find that the program is very well designed and will leverage the existing strengths of the School of Public Policy, as well as contribute to the growth and development of the School. Below I offer a more detailed discussion of my assessment. I also note some potential issues and recommendations for the School to consider in moving forward with the program.

Program Importance and Need

As noted in the BSPP proposal, this program will help fill a growing need for undergraduate training in public policy in the United States. Although several major universities have undergraduate degree programs in public administration or public service more broadly, few universities nationally offer Bachelor's degrees specifically in public policy. The proposed BSPP program, I believe, can help fill this gap by offering education and skills needed to analyze, assess, develop, and implement public policies. Such education will be essential for meeting the growing demands of government jobs (especially as the baby boomer generation retires), as well meet demands in the private and non-profit sectors

that interface with the field of public policy (ie. through contracting, policy analysis, think tanks, program evaluation, etc.). Most business schools today offer undergraduate business degrees for students wanting to work in the private sector, but the degree program options for those interested in public sector careers are more limited at the undergraduate level. While master's programs in public policy and public administration can provide skills needed to support this workforce, many of the employees in these sectors start without master's level training and need the knowledge and skills in public policy to be competitive in the job market. Moreover, master's degree programs are becoming increasingly competitive and often require students to have some foundational knowledge or experience in the public sector. Additionally, traditional liberal arts degrees (ie. political science, economics, sociology) typically do not offer some of the practical skill-building courses needed for these careers, or the interdisciplinary training needed for students to build well-rounded skills across different areas of the public policy domain. In providing these skills, I therefore believe the BSPP degree will fill an important gap in undergraduate education.

As I will discuss in further detail below, I believe that the proposed design of the program, which will include both online and face-to-face courses, will also serve a growing demand in education for non-traditional students who may be working or returning to school and demand flexible course delivery options and who want degree programs with strong professional training. For the Oregon State Campus, this may also be a way to accommodate students who live outside of Corvallis, which can be an opportunity to recruit new students, rather than merely attracting students in existing degree programs at OSU.

Program Design Strengths and Recommendations

Strengths:

As noted above, the design of the program has many strengths, which I believe will be attractive to new students, as well as to potential employers. These include:

- Overall, the program seems very well suited to the mission of the university and the School of public Policy. It also leverages the existing expertise within the three departments and across the School of Public Policy and resources very well.
- The program design requires a strong liberal arts foundation (90 credits), which includes appropriate prerequisites (math, economics, introduction to government, introduction to sociology), that will be needed for the upper division courses in public policy and in the concentration areas.

- It appears that the required courses will cover key topics in public policy that cross disciplines, sectors, and policy domains. This is important for training public policy students, as the issues facing public policy and the tools for analyzing and implementing public policy are inherently interdisciplinary.
- Valuable skills and essential content areas will be offered through the core classes (ie. policy analysis, public administration, research methods, etc.). The core classes also provide a foundation in ethics, which is essential training students in public policy. This is laudable given that policy schools commonly only touch on ethics indirectly in the design of their curriculum.
- Concentration areas were developed based on employer feedback, which should be helpful for their students in matching their education to career opportunities. The concentrations also complement existing programmatic and research strengths in the School of Public Policy. Each of the concentrations further has a robust set of courses for students to choose from. Finally, the concentration areas are broad enough to appeal to a wide range of student interests.
- The rural policy concentration is particularly novel and I believe will be appealing to students not only within Oregon, but also nationally. Urban policy concentrations have been popular for many years in master's level programs in public policy, but I believe the rural policy concentration is an opportunity to build a well-trained professional workforce for addressing some of the unique challenges that rural communities face.
- The practicum requirement will give students exposure to the workforce and allow them to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. It further gives students an opportunity to build professional networks and also help market the school to potential employers.
- Significant new resources are not needed to start the program, and the tuition from the new students should support any additional faculty or staffing needs. The school also has a large faculty relative to the proposed number of new students (25-50 over the next few years, as noted in the proposal), and for the proposed number of new proposed classes (2).
- Learning outcomes and approaches to improve the curriculum have been articulated well in the proposal and include multiple methods and sources of input.

Recommendations:

While the program is very well designed, below are a few recommendations for the School of Public Policy to consider for enhancing the program. I recognize that some of the recommendations may be inappropriate given contextual or internal organizational factors

that are not familiar to me, as an outside reviewer. However, I hope some will prove useful in moving forward with the program.

- Consider an alternative to the two paths for the methods requirements. From the proposal, the methods requirements seem potentially rigid. Some students may want to mix and match the social science and economic research methods courses, or propose alternative methods courses that may be offered on campus (ie. GIS, statistics in the math department, etc.)
- Consider offering an individually-tailored concentration, with approval from the program coordinator or an undergraduate advisor. While I think the concentrations as currently devised are excellent and there is clear rationale for selecting the rural, environmental, and social policy areas, I would imagine that many students may be interested in the degree generally, or interested in other substantive policy areas (ie. health, education, etc.). Alternatively, some students may be interested in blending the concentration areas (ie. rural and environmental or rural and social). It wasn't clear from the proposal what degree of flexibility might exist for the concentrations to accommodate such student demand.
- Consider providing more specificity about the capstone expectations than what is offered in the proposal. Ensure that the goals of the capstone are clear and that the capstone experience not only draws together lessons from multiple areas of the program coursework, but also contributes to the skill-building students will need for their careers or graduate education. The e-portfolio is an excellent idea for the capstone, but I would be sure to develop clear expectations about what skills the capstone will build for the students.
- Ensure that the program has adequate resources for training faculty in online course delivery. From my experience teaching in a program that offers nearly all of our courses in both online and face-to-face formats, the start-up costs of transitioning between formats can be high. Having access to campus resources that help faculty move face-to-face classes into online formats, and develop new online courses, has been extremely helpful for our program. Our university's online programming will also provide financial incentives to support developing new online courses.
- Consider allowing for a double-major between the BSPP and Economics, Political Science and Sociology to avoid cannibalizing the other undergraduate degree programs, as well as to maximize the learning opportunities for students.
- Look for ways to synergize the undergraduate program with the Master's program in Public Policy. Down the road you might allow students to do a joint BS/MPP since several of the classes at the undergraduate level will overlap in content areas with

the MPP areas. If students feel that the BSPP and MPP overlap significantly, you could potentially lose potential students in the MPP program.

- Look for opportunities down the road to develop a joint degree/certificate programs with the College of Public Health and Human Sciences at OSU, as students interested in health policy would benefit from the BSPP program.
- Consider fostering an undergraduate student association or other forms of student-oriented activities outside of class that will help instill a program culture.
- Develop a targeted and specific marketing campaign to attract new students. While I think the program design will be very attractive to non-traditional students, it will be helpful to ensure that enrollments actually increase rather than shift from existing student enrollments in the other social science degree programs on campus. This will obviously require some resources and the program should secure adequate funds for program marketing, in addition to the staffing, and faculty support for online course training.
- Include materials in the marketing campaign targeted at potential employers. The needs survey that the school conducted indicated that most prospective employers are not familiar with public policy undergraduate programs. To foster interest in the program's graduates, and prospective practicum organizations, some directed marketing might help.

Again, overall, I believe this will be a very strong program and fills an important need in higher education. I hope my feedback and my recommendations on the program are helpful. Should you have any questions, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Tanya Heikkila,
Associate Professor
Co-Director, Workshop in Policy Process Research
School of Public Affairs
University of Colorado Denver

January 4, 2016

To: Edward P. Weber
Chair, BSPP Degree Committee
U. G. Dubach Professor of Political Science
School of Public Policy
Oregon State University

From: Thomas A. Birkland
William T. Kretzer Professor of Public Policy
North Carolina State University

Oregon State University's School of Public Policy in the College of Liberal Arts proposes to offer a Bachelor of Science in Public Policy (BSPP) degree to commence in the Fall of 2016. I have been asked to provide my assessment of this proposed program. I am pleased to do so. I reviewed the initial proposal to create the PhD in public policy in 2011, and am pleased to see continued growth and development in the SPP's programs.

To preview my assessment: this is a strong undergraduate program, and I endorse its creation. But I will suggestions intended to encourage its proposers to hone some aspects of the program to make it competitive and useful.

Importance

The degree is an important one for Oregon State and for the state of Oregon. To my knowledge, no such program exists in a substantially similar form at other public institutions in Oregon. The program proposal notes that there are superficially similar programs at the University of Oregon, Portland State University, and at Western Oregon University. I am familiar with the UO and PSU programs, and concur with the proposers' opinion that the OSU program will be distinctive.

The UO offers an undergraduate degree in planning, public policy, and management (PPPM), in its Department of PPPM in the College of Architecture and Allied Arts. This program is considerably different from what OSU plans to offer, as the UO program places a very heavy emphasis on urban planning, with some instruction in public and nonprofit management. It is not as grounded in the course offerings of traditional social science disciplines as is the proposed OSU program. Similar to the proposed OSU program, admission to the UO's program comes in the junior year, and would-be PPPM majors are encouraged to "consider coursework or experience in public speaking, debate, economics, political science, sociology, computer science, mathematics, international studies, and volunteer work." Preparation in these fields is not, however, prescribed. OSU's program is more prescriptive and is better grounded in the range of disciplines most commonly associated with policy studies and policy analysis. The

WOU program is not likely to be competitive with the OSU program, as it is grounded more in political science than in an interdisciplinary perspective.

Portland State's minor in Civic Leadership is not a full degree program. Even if it were to evolve into a major, the SPP's proposal notes that PSU's emphases, such as in urban policy, are different from OSU's foci in rural and natural resource policy. As such, these programs complement each other, and the SPP notes that many PSU courses could transfer to the OSU program. This may be of particular interest to students in Portland who may choose to major in public policy and who could take advantage of OSU's online program.

Given the quality of the OSU faculty, the recent successes of the PhD and MPP programs at OSU, and the nature of the program, the OSU program will be the premier program of its kind in Oregon, and in the Pacific Northwest, upon its establishment. It is less narrowly focused than other programs, and has the weight of a major research university behind it. As the proposal notes, it will also build on the experience it has amassed in its MPP and its new but apparently successful PhD program.

Need

Students often seek programs that not only satisfy intellectual curiosity, but also meet labor market needs. These are not incompatible goals. The proposed OSU program will require rigorous academic preparation in courses that are generally considered "liberal arts" offerings, *and* will include coursework that prepares students for a professional career.

One concern that is implicitly addressed in this proposal is the labor market presumption that work in policy analysis generally requires an MPP, MPA, or equivalent. Based on the nature of MPA and MPP programs, and anecdotal evidence, students holding a BS in public policy may be at a competitive disadvantage compared with those who who hold an MPP or similar degree. While the proposal does not confront this question head-on, the design provides some confidence that students graduating with a BSPP will have laid the foundation for a sound career. The program design contains three well-defined policy tracks, although social policy is by far the broadest of the three, with environmental policy and rural policy being a bit more focused. The latter two concentrations play to OSU's historic strengths as a land-grant university with strong programs in natural resources, agriculture, and rural development.

The proposal notes that "BSPP students will be trained to work closely with clients through their practicums and internships, and innovative courses such as SOC 419: Applied Research Methods, in which students address community problems." This gives the program a flavor that most undergraduate programs lack: a clear connection between coursework, the degree, and potential career prospects. Practicums and internships will prepare students for policy-oriented work, and will make them very competitive compared with other BS or BA students in similar fields, such as economics or political science, or with professional degrees, such as business administration. Indeed, students in the BSPP will be far better able to address key public policy questions than will a typical BBA student.

To make the case for this program even stronger, I would recommend that the authors of the proposal more explicitly address the question of whether and to what extent a job market exists for students with a BS in public policy. I believe the raw material for this argument is contained in the proposal, but it could be made more explicit.

Aside from students who seek to enter the workforce upon graduation, this program will also be attractive to students who wish to pursue a master's degree, particularly the MPP at OSU, or similar degree programs at UO and PSU, or at any MPP or MPA program. And this program is also outstanding preparation for students who wish to pursue a law degree, an MBA (perhaps with a non-profit orientation), or other professional degrees in which policy analysis is important. And a small but important number of students in the BSPP program may be sufficiently motivated by the program and its instructors that they express an interest in doctoral work, at OSU or elsewhere. In short, the BSPP should be able to position itself well among degree programs at OSU and in Oregon in such a way that it will certainly attract a strong student cohort. I recommend that the proposal make explicit that this degree program will provide a sound foundation for students who are interested in graduate studies in public policy and related disciplines.

Because the program is also designed for on-line instruction, the program will be attractive to students across Oregon and throughout the region. There are few programs in the Pacific Northwest that will be competitive, will offer an online program, and will have the backing of a major university.

The demand analysis summarized in the proposal is clear and sensible. The number of students contemplated for admission to the program is, based on what I read, a conservative estimate. It is possible that this will become a very competitive program at Oregon State, with the median GPA of those admitted much greater than the 3.0 admission threshold. If demand exceeds 50 on-campus and 50 off-campus students, the program will need to consider whether it can grow to accommodate more students, and, if so, what the influence of such growth would be on delivering the MPP and PhD programs. This being said, the program appears to be well prepared to manage the size and composition of the student cohort.

Curriculum

The planned curriculum is, in a word, excellent. It strongly reflects my strong belief that the study of public policy is an inherently interdisciplinary endeavor, incorporating insights from, among other disciplines, political science, economics, and sociology. Too many public policy programs, particularly at the master's level, emphasize economics and what I call "economistic" analysis, and fail to account for the very real effects of *politics* and social forces on government decisions. The public policy core (30 credits) is an excellent balance of these disciplinary perspectives; indeed, I know of few programs that are this well balanced. And the methods tracks are intriguing, offering students the choice of focusing on traditional, economics-based policy analysis, or a track oriented toward social inquiry more broadly.

The prerequisites are sensible given this design, and, indeed, I have long advocated for requiring introductory micro- and macroeconomics as requirements for all undergrads in the social sciences.

As described above, the policy concentrations are based in OSU's strengths as a land-grant university. The social policy concentration will serve as the broad concentration, while rural and resource policy are rather more focused. It will be interesting to see if the social policy concentration develops a particular character based on the interests of the faculty, or if this will serve as a catch-all concentration for students who choose not to pursue the other concentrations. That said, the concentration courses provide needed flexibility for students without being simply a grab bag of courses. All the concentrations are well thought out.

The practicum component of the program appears well designed. It is sufficiently flexible that it would allow for, but not necessarily require, that students engage in an internship. Alternative projects are contemplated, which may make the program more attractive to a range of students.

Faculty and Resources

The SPP has an impressively large number of faculty. As the proposal notes, one reason for this proposal is that the faculty has grown considerably over the past several years, owing to the growth of the MPP and PhD programs. I am familiar with—and quite impressed by—the work of many of the faculty members. I note that the growth in faculty means that there are quite a few assistant and associate professors in the ranks. I view this as a healthy sign of a growing program, and given the research productivity and teaching interests of this faculty, I am confident this program will be successful.

The proposal notes that a faculty member will serve as BSPP coordinator. The SPP appears to have the staff resources needed to support the program. However, one element that is not entirely clear to me is the nature of student advising. It is not clear who will be responsible for advising students in the program. Given the plans for 50 on campus and 50 off campus students by year five, an advising burden of 100 students would be quite large for the faculty BSPP coordinator. Distributing the advising load among a broader group of faculty might be sensible, and, indeed, this might be what is contemplated in this proposal.

Conclusion

The proposed BS in Public Policy is very likely to be a successful program at Oregon State University. It serves a curricular and job market need. It is well aligned with the mission and history of Oregon State University. It is being offered by a faculty with a reputation for innovation, as evidenced by the PhD and MPP programs. The proposal for this program was carefully written and, to the extent possible, is evidence based. The level of care reflected in the proposal indicates a commitment to the success of this degree program. The additional costs to

the SPP or OSU for mounting this program appear to be minimal, and the benefits to the institution—and most important, to the potential students—are clear and compelling. I believe this is an outstanding proposal, and I endorse its formation and look forward to its inauguration at OSU.