January 30, 2015

Andrew Young School of Policy Studies
Dean’s Office Response
Public Management and Policy Self-Study Report

This letter constitutes part of the Academic Program Review of the Department of Public Management and Policy and represents the overview of how this department contributes to the mission and strategic plan of the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies. The deans’ office recognizes and applauds the Department of Public Management and Policy for the hard work involved in assessing their progress over the last five years in the self-study report. We believe that PMAP has made important steps forward since the last review.

The primary ranking of the Andrew Young School is based on its stature as a school of public affairs. NASPAA, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration, is the accrediting body for the flagship graduate degree, Masters of Public Administration. Even though our MPA program encompasses more interdisciplinary courses and tracks than those of many of our peers, the core of the program resides in PMAP. Thus, it is critical to our overall reputation and rankings to maintain high quality in the department. I believe that the faculty and staff have continued to strive for high quality across many dimensions and I applaud their ongoing efforts to innovate both in academic programs and in research partnerships.

The PMAP Department makes substantive contributions to most parts of the University’s strategic plan as well as the AYS strategic plan. To mention only a few examples, hiring Dr. Ann-Margaret Esnard as part of the Second Century Initiative has added interdisciplinary research and increased focus on seeking external funding. Faculty members are key members of the Council for the Progress of Cities. The department has long been a leader in finding meaningful internship opportunities for both its undergraduate and graduate students.

The self-study reports the findings from the survey of current and former students from the BSPP program and does some analysis of the results. Some additional analysis would probably be valuable here because virtually all students declare this major farther along in their undergraduate careers. The self-study report identifies some possibilities, including a curriculum review. The deans’ office agrees with this assessment and also suggests some additional marketing of this degree to our undergraduates.

The doctoral program(s) in public policy has a long-standing reputation for turning out skilled and successful researchers, who go on to successful academic careers in peer institutions. The deans’ office would like to see a modest expansion of the size of this doctoral program. In order to achieve this, we will need to embark on a much more successful and sustained marketing program and we will need to secure additional funding. The need for increased departmental funding for doctoral students through external grants and contracts is recognized by both
department and deans’ office. This is a priority as the deans’ office currently provides annual support for doctoral students in the program.

The proposed disruptive innovations in academic programs are both exciting and feasible. Through our visits to strong universities in China and through delegations from other universities visiting here, we are convinced that there is a large market for training Chinese students in public management and public administration. The most promising option currently in the works is the joint Master of Public Administration with University of International Business and Economics (UIBE) in partnership with the city of Qingdao. This proposed program has the potential to bring an additional 25 students to GSU each year. The UIBE students will take courses in English at UIBE for one year, then come to GSU for their second year of course work.

The second innovation to academic programs has been under development for about two years. PMAP, in partnership with the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology, is developing a masters degree in criminal justice administration. This program will provide professionals in the many areas of law enforcement and security the leadership and management skills needed to advance. A challenging aspect to this interdisciplinary degree is that it will be offered primarily online. This will substantially increase the market for the program; yet it also makes the startup costs higher, as many PMAP faculty have not been heavily involved in online teaching. This is an area that the department has identified as requiring resources. The deans’ office agrees with the requirement and believes that this is an area worthy of investment.

A third innovation to academic programs is revamping the Masters of Public Policy (MPP) degree to add additional interdisciplinary concentrations. The recent dip in enrollments in the MPP program is surprising and so far we have not found an explanation. We believe the analytic nature of this degree program, especially when tied to an increasing variety of policy areas, should have appeal in the current climate of data-intensive work.

The department’s self-study notes that the success of these programs would require additional faculty to manage the increased teaching requirements. The deans’ office agrees that a growth of 25 to 50 students per year in these different areas will warrant further investment in faculty. Both the dual degree program with UIBE in China and the online masters program joint with Criminal Justice and Criminology have the potential to bring additional revenues into the Andrew Young School. We will work with the department to leverage resources to add faculty as increasing graduate hours require the addition of sections.

The outstanding faculty of PMAP, with their extensive recognition in the discipline along with the multiple awards they have won, are crucial to the Andrew Young School. The academic programs hosted by this department are critical to our success as a policy school. The deans’ office looks forward to the further advances possible for this talented and creative faculty. There are areas that require additional attention, certainly, but there is much potential for this department to advance in innovative and strategic ways.