



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Steven W. Cheung
Chair, Assembly of the
Academic Senate
Faculty Representative,
UC Board of Regents

Academic Senate

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1111 Franklin Street
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senate.universityofcalifornia.edu

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July 24, 2025

Katherine S. Newman
Provost and Executive Vice President
University of California

Re: Approval of Master of Public Administration at UC Irvine

Dear Provost Newman:

In accordance with the Universitywide Review Processes for Academic Programs, Units, and Research Units (the “Compendium”), and on the recommendation of CCGA, the Academic Council has approved UC Irvine’s proposal to establish a self-supporting Master of Public Administration.

Because this is a new degree title, and the Assembly of the Academic Senate is not meeting within 30 days of CCGA’s approval, Council must approve the program per [Senate Bylaw 125.B.7](#).

I am enclosing CCGA’s report on its review of the new program, and respectfully request that your office complete the process of obtaining the President’s approval.

Thank you for the opportunity to opine. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Steven W. Cheung
Chair, Academic Council

cc: Academic Council
Institutional Research and Academic Planning Analyst Procello
UCI Senate Executive Director Kim
Executive Director Lin



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COORDINATING COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE AFFAIRS

James Bisley, Chair

jbisley@mednet.ucla.edu

July 17, 2025

Steven W. Cheung

Chair, Academic Senate

Dear Chair Cheung,

On July 2, CCGA met and reviewed a proposal for a self-supporting Master of Public Administration from the Irvine division. After discussion, the proposal was approved 11-0-1.

This program aims to prepare practitioners for career advancement in leadership and management of government and nonprofit organizations. The target population for this program is working adults and recent college graduates who wish to further their education and gain skills that will help them obtain careers in fields related to public administration and policy, particularly with an emphasis on environmental and urban sustainability.

The program of study will consist of six quarters. Students will be required to complete a 13-course curriculum (two online courses per quarter during the regular academic year, following the introductory in-residence course) during their period of study (two years). Students will be immersed in an interdisciplinary field devoted to advancing scholarship, testing theories, and engaging in public service relevant to design and management of public and non-profit organizations in an era of social and environmental change.

CCGA received reports from three reviewers of this proposal. Two reviews were largely favorable, with some suggestions (some substantive) for improvement. The third reviewer said the program was “probably acceptable” but raised concerns about how faculty workload would be managed for the courses, along with remarks about internships, advising, staffing, program evaluation, and admissions. The MPA program proposers submitted a thorough response to all reviewer comments. The response letter also noted that the program’s faculty have relatively less reliance on

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federal grant funding than in other science and engineering programs, and that the graduates from the existing degree programs in the department tend to work in state and local settings, rather than in the federal government. UCPB approved the proposal but noted that there were some concerns that the teaching demands for the self-sustaining MPA program could lead to more lecturers teaching in the state-supported programs. The UCPB letter is attached.

As you know, CCGA's approval is the last stop of the Academic Senate side of the systemwide review and approval process except when the new degree title must be approved by the Academic Council. I submit this for your review; please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions regarding the proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bisley", with a stylized flourish at the end.

James Bisley
Chair, CCGA

cc: Academic Senate Vice Chair Palazoglu
Academic Senate Executive Director Lin
Academic Senate Assistant Director LaBriola
CCGA Members
Academic Planning and Research Analyst Procello
UCI Interim Dean of the Graduate Division Smith
UCI Senate Executive Director Kim
UCI Senate Analyst Nguyen

UCI Master of Public Administration (MPA)

Lead CCGA Reviewer: Wayne Steward, PhD, MPH

Date: July 14, 2025

The Department of Urban Planning and Public Policy in the School of Social Ecology at UC Irvine proposes a new self-supporting professional graduate degree program leading to a Master in Public Administration (MPA). This program would follow Plan II for a master's degree, requiring a capstone project for completion. Following a one-week introductory course to be held in residence, students would complete approximately two courses per term online for six terms (two years). The full curriculum would involve 13 courses and lead to a required 52 units. In the initial proposal, approximately half of the courses would be required, with the other half consisting of electives. The capstone would be completed as part of one of the required courses. As originally proposed, it would consist of an independent term paper demonstrating how knowledge and skills taught in the program could be applied to a research project. A committee of at least two faculty members would evaluate a student's capstone paper.

The program's target population is working adults and recent graduates. A market analysis suggested strong market potential, with respondents viewing a program at UCI as being of higher quality than competitor programs. The program would operate alongside the department's existing PhD program, a Master Public Policy (MPP) program, and a Master in Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) program. The School of Social Ecology would provide an \$800,000 loan to cover program launch. The program expects to begin with a class of 15 but eventually growing to 50. In response to comments from the UCI Academic Senate reviews, the program noted that it is possible the existing MPP program may eventually be sunsetted, given less favorable market forces for that degree. But its discontinuation is not necessary for the department to be able to launch the MPA.

CCGA received reviews from two external reviewers, one internal (to the UC system) reviewer, and comments from the University Committee on Planning and Budget. The first reviewer was very favorable, citing ways in which the program was differentiating itself from competitors. The reviewer's only critique was a request for more information on how the program would recruit among UCI undergraduates. The second reviewer also felt the program proposal had many strengths but offered substantive comments on how to better play up the relevant strengths among the department's faculty, particularly around leadership, and noted that the development of the MPA coursework may require more effort than was implied in the program proposal. The third reviewer said the program was "probably acceptable" but raised concerns about how faculty workload would be managed for the courses, along with remarks about internships, advising, staffing, program evaluation, and admissions. Finally, the University Committee on Planning and Budget approved the proposal but noted that there were some concerns that the teaching demands for the self-sustaining MPA program could lead to more lecturers teaching in the state-supported programs.

The MPA program proposers submitted a thorough response to all reviewer comments. The response letter described a number of changes to the proposal, including the addition of a Sustainable Public Administration course, shifting several elective course to required courses, leadership training by three of the program's faculty, reconceptualizing the capstone to focus on a professional consulting project, strategies to rotate core course teaching requirements among department faculty, and the hiring of an assistant director for the program to help with program evaluation and continuous improvement. The response letter also noted that the program's faculty have relatively less reliance on federal grant funding than in other science and engineering

programs, and that the graduates from the existing degree programs in the department tend to work in state and local settings, rather than in the federal government. The program is thus less vulnerable to the changes happening at the federal level.

Given the changes made in response to the reviews, the department is well positioned to launch the program. While there may eventually be additional tweaks to be made, these are likely to fall in the normal range of adjustments that any operating program might make. The program's leadership has given extensive thought to the development of the curriculum and planning for program operation. At this point, they would benefit from launching the program so that they can evaluate what aspects of the program plans work well and where changes might be needed. I therefore recommended approval of the program. This was endorsed by a vote of the full CCGA committee at its July, 2025, meeting.



Academic Senate

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UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON PLANNING AND BUDGET (UCPB)

Tim Groeling
groeling@comm.ucla.edu

February 14, 2025

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James Bisley
Chair, CCGA

RE: PROPOSED MASTER OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SELF SUPPORTING
GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAM, UC IRVINE

Dear James,

UCPB reviewed the proposed online Master of Public Administration self-supporting graduate degree program at UC Irvine's Department of Urban Planning and Public Policy. This program would be the only on-line MPA in the UC system. Unlike the existing Master of Public Policy – a technically-focused program – this degree seeks to focus on management skills to implement policies and programs.

Committee members noted the positive employment outlook in the field, as well as the high level of interest expressed by prospective students.

The program's cost is roughly half the cost of the in-person MPP program, and the proposal indicates that lowering the financial barrier to the degree would increase uptake. The reviewer did note that the proposed indirect cost rate was higher than the stated total of program salaries, expenses, and equipment. Once the program achieves profitability after paying off the startup loan, the revenues will be used to provide student financial aid, support PhD students in the School of Social Ecology and the Department of Urban Planning through paid research and teaching positions. In addition, courses within the program will be available to students in the School of Social Ecology.

The program aims to recruit from diverse student pools, likely those attracted by the stated focus on climate change and ecology. Financial aid will be awarded to diverse students demonstrating an interest in the field.

Committee members noted that while faculty would be paid on overload, some concern remains that courses in state-supported programs would then be shifted to lecturers. Additionally, while it is not the stated goal of the new program, there were concerns the existing MPP may be sunsetted in favor of the online program should the MPA program be successful, replacing a state supported master's degree with a self-supporting program. However, this is not a concern limited to this program; it is reflective of a competitive environment for master's programs at the UC.

The committee agreed to recommend that CCGA approve the proposal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Groeling', with a stylized initial 'T' and a long, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tim Groeling
Chair, UCPB

cc: UCPB

UCPB Proposed Self-Supporting Professional Degree Program Review Template

Name and Location of Program: *UCI Master of Public Administration (MPA)*

Lead reviewer(s): *Juliann Emmons Allison, UC Riverside*

Academic justification:

This degree program seeks to prepare practitioners for career advancement in leadership and management of government and nonprofit organizations. It is a “management and leadership degree, focused on managing people and systems in order to implement policies and programs” (in contrast to the existing MPP, which is a technical degree that provides students with the quantitative and qualitative analysis skills required to develop and test potential policies). The MPA’s target population for this is working adults and recent college graduates who wish to further their education and gain skills that will help them obtain careers in fields related to public administration and policy, particularly with an emphasis on environmental and urban sustainability. As an online program, the MPA is about ½ the cost of the in-person, making it more accessible to a larger and likely more diverse population of potential students.

Planning and Budget overview:

1. Proposed initial tuition and any rate of increase: *\$15,729/year, 1.03% annually*

2. Target enrollments for years 1-3:

<i>15</i>	<i>45</i>	<i>65</i>
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3. Projected net revenues for years 1-3:

<i>\$235,935</i>	<i>\$721,961</i>	<i>\$1,070,067</i>
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4. Proposed indirect cost rate (IDC):

XXX on campus: 10.94%

Off-campus online: 7.58%

Detailed areas of review:

5. How was the proposed IDC rate determined? Does the proposed rate appear to cover all indirect costs (facilities, IT, etc.)? What are the space needs of the program?

No clear calculation or justification for the proposed rate. Just an unclear statement. Calculated IDC is higher than the total of S&E and program-specific equipment.

6. What are the proposed uses of net revenues? How will they supplement [enhance] state-funded programs? Are there other ways that the program, if successful, will benefit the UC mission (e.g., filling a need not covered by state-supported programs)?

- a) Revenue generated in years 1-2 will be used to cover the program's operational cost and support its development. Once the program begins earning a surplus (in year 3), program net revenues will be used to pay off the loan used to establish the program; this payoff will take approximately 4 years. Thereafter, the program will:
 - i) work with the Budget Office, department faculty, and other relevant stakeholders to determine an appropriate return-to-aid formula that considers: program's financial, performance, enrollment trends, and student needs—with an emphasis on students from underrepresented and low-income backgrounds.*
 - ii) Support Ph.D. students in the School of Social Ecology and the Department of Urban Planning by funding paid research and teaching positions.*
 - iii) Provide small research grants to students and for programming (talks, etc.)**
- b) Course offerings will be available outside of the MPA program, serving the educational mission of the School of Social Ecology.*
- c) The MPA serves objectives identified in UCI's 2023 Strategic Plan, including: creating interdisciplinary programs around climate change and environmental sustainability (Pillar 1), and using technology to develop and administer effective learning environments that expand enrollments (Pillar 2).*
- d) The UCI MPA would be the only online MPA in the UC system.*

7. How are any potential negative impacts on state-funded programs and the research mission of the UC mitigated?

- a) If MPA students take courses associated with the MPP program or any other graduate program, the MPA program will reimburse the state-supported program for the cost of any seats taken by these students.*

- b) If the MPA program is significantly more successful than the existing MPP program, sun setting the MPP program would be considered.*

8. Describe disposition and compensation of **faculty** serving the program. What is the proposed ratio of UC Senate faculty to non-UC adjunct faculty? For the former category, differentiate between ladder rank and P/LSOE. How will UC Senate faculty be compensated? On-load (i.e., course buyout), overload, or some combination thereof?

- a) 12.5% of the salary for faculty who opt to teach MPA courses will be charged to the MPA account, with salary savings becoming available to hire lecturers to “replace” their courses as needed.*
- b) Most Urban Planning and Public Policy (UPPP) faculty will teach one course as an overload for the MPA. These faculty will be compensated by a flat fee consistent with the School of Social Ecology’s self-supporting compensation program.*
- c) As demand increases and exceeds the capacity of existing and future faculty, program revenues can be used to hire lecturers.*

9. Describe how the program will ensure accessibility and encourage diversity. Note: these concerns may be addressed through return-to-aid used for need-based fellowships, although programs may address accessibility and diversity in a variety of ways and UCPB does not set a standard return-to-aid percentage.

- a) The online modality of the MPA and associated lower cost (“substantially” lower than comparable MPA programs offered by R-1 universities as well as the department’s existing, state-funded MURP and MPP programs) is expected to suit a more geographically and socially diverse student population.*
- b) \$5,000 financial aid awards directed toward a targeted population of “diverse students who have demonstrated their commitment to the program and their potential to contribute to the field of public administration” will reduce tuition for those students to \$10,729/year, which is less than what MPP students pay each year, after receiving \$10,000 awards. This relatively small award may be increased contingent on revenue.*
- c) Focus on climate change and environmental sustainability is widely popular and likely to attract a more diverse range of students committed to becoming leaders in their communities around issues of sustainability.*
- d) Program is offered by the Department of UPPP, which has been recognized for its diverse student body according to Planetizen.*

- e) *Recruitment activities will include participation in recruitment fairs and events that target underrepresented and low income students. Further, joining the Public Policy and International Affairs program, a nonprofit that seeks to increase diversity in public service, the UCI MPA will be more visible to this population of prospective students.*

10. Describe the market analysis used to justify demand and price point for the proposed program. Will the program compete with others in the system? What are projected percentages of California resident, domestic non-resident, and international students in the program?

Market analysis prepared by MPM Inc. and UCI Division of Continuing Education included demand analysis, pricing, competitive analysis, employment demand and preference for MPA versus MPP. Summary of findings from MPM Inc. survey of 100 respondents belonging to a “demographically- and geographically-balance panel of more than 20 million respondents” indicates that:

- a) *These prospective students are aware of MPA programs available in the state.*
- b) *Survey respondents rate all of the MPA programs available in CA—ranging from CSU Bakersfield (\$15,000 for CA residents) to USC (\$90,000)—as “excellent” or “very good,” with USC’s MPA rated highest. Respondents said that the proposed UCI MPA would be of higher quality than most of these programs.*
- c) *Over 90% of survey respondents would apply to the UCI MPA and enroll if accepted. Informing respondents that the UCI MPA would include environment and sustainability made it more attractive. Cost is the primary barrier to applying.*
- d) *Survey respondents preferred the MPA to the MPP 3 to 1, and preferred an online program. Necessary presence on campus is the second most important barrier to applying.*
- e) *Optimal price point (\$37,000) is higher than the proposed cost of the program (\$31,000).*
- f) *Lightcast Occupation review, which draws on government data and data from social profiles, etc. indicates that employment trends in the nonprofit and government sectors, where MPA graduates are expected to work, show steady, slow increases over the next decade with reasonably high demand for individuals with “advanced skills in public administration.”*

11. Describe relevant consultation and assessment from lower levels of review, external assessments of the proposal, and the like.

Supported by Academic Senate, Irvine Division, Department of UPPP, UCI Graduate Council

12. Any other planning and budget concerns?

The possibility that the existing, in-person MPP, which the market analysis indicates is less desirable to prospective students than the proposed online MPA, might be sunsetted is concerning. Proposing faculty responses to these issues indicate that there is no plan to sunset the MPP at this time; however, that program exists in a competitive environment - both within the UC and more broadly within California - and is more expensive than the MPA. It raises the question of “the future of state-supported Masters programs” and issues around relative quality and value of (nearly) “competitive” Masters programs.

13. Any academic-quality or related concerns to flag for CCGA?

Not directly. (See #12 above)

14. Are there specific areas of concern that the mandated review after the third year of operation ought to capture?

No.

Conclusions and recommendation:

The proposed program is well conceived with reasonable expectations around context in the UC system and beyond, growth timeline, student demand, and outcomes/value for graduate students. Barring information that may be shared beyond the contents of this proposal, I would encourage UCPB to support it.