Questions for the E-MPA Discussion

- The limitation to students w/o prior degrees in Public Policy: is that an unnecessary restriction for repeat customers? After all you are now targeting a different experiential level…

  **Response:** The proposal notes that the target student population for the program includes people who “have not previously earned a graduate or professional degree, or who have earned one in a field other than public affairs, policy, or administration.” But this is not intended as a limitation: we would absolutely consider applicants who have earned a professional public policy degree earlier in their careers and still choose to apply for the E-MPA. In addition, we view mid-career professionals who earned an undergraduate degree in public policy but have not earned a graduate or professional degree as a prime target for recruitment.

- Over-reliance on adjuncts for teaching: while some adjuncts may be highly qualified, they are not full-fledged Duke faculty and may be seen as “lesser” by the (prospective) students. Why pay high tuition if you are not instructed by “real” RR faculty? Are you concerned that reliance on non-research faculty may hinder the ability of Sanford to get this program off the ground? How would the financial model and projected surplus change if more RR faculty were brought into the mix?

  **Response:** To the contrary, we believe that prospective E-MPA students—as mid-career practitioners seeking advanced and applied training—will want and expect instructors in the program to have senior-level practitioner experience, and that applied or visiting faculty will be essential to meeting the program’s quality goals. Moreover, the hybrid modality will allow us to recruit adjuncts from across the country, as we have done successfully with the MNSP program (whose roster of adjuncts includes a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and a four-star admiral).

  That said, we believe a mix of adjunct/visiting and regular-rank faculty (both tenure-line and practitioner) will be important both for the program’s quality and for its institutional sustainability. Our proposal initially included a higher proportion of regular-rank instructors, but we increased the proportion of adjuncts in response to feedback from the Sanford faculty. The final ratio of adjuncts to regular rank remains fluid and will be determined as we secure commitments to teach in the program.

  In terms of budgetary impact, regular-rank instructors are more expensive than adjuncts, but we have enough flexibility in our projected budget margins to accommodate a higher proportion of regular-rank faculty if that is where we end up.

- Zoom vs. in-person instruction: we’ve recently observed a strong return to in-person work environments in the private sector and higher ed is also discovering the limitations of the online format (in-person meetings with students seem to yield much better outcomes that zoom meetings). Would it make sense to offer more in-person elements (at least one block per term)? Right now there are terms where students
don’t visit campus at all and I consider this a missed opportunity to make the degree “sticky” and prevent people from dropping out due to online fatigue.

**Response:** While we recognize the inherent limits of online instruction, the demand for hybrid degrees remains strong. In addition, not all hybrid degrees are created equal: we envision the E-MPA as a “purpose-built” hybrid program that includes a significant synchronous online component, which will capture at least some of the benefits of in-person instruction.

That said, we have been conducting additional research into the balance between in-person and online instruction and will likely increase the number of in-person immersions to at least four (up from the three outlined in the proposal).

- **DEI focus:** I really like the DEI focus in terms of recruitment (both students and faculty), but I worry that making it too strong of a pillar for the degree itself could have adverse effects: you don’t want to have this degree appear partisan – e.g. something that advertises a certain political bias towards future employers. Imagine a republican administration in DC – you don’t want your graduates to be sorted out of an applicant pool due to their degree from Sanford…

**Response:** We discussed this very issue at considerable length during the development of the proposal, and we decided *not* to more explicitly brand or market the program’s emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion, as some peer programs have done—in part to avoid the pitfalls you identify, and in part to ensure that our approach to DEI remains authentic and not performative.

Instead, the approach outlined in the proposal is rooted in Sanford’s historical focus on ethics, its current emphasis on analyzing and addressing structural inequalities across all of its programs and curricula, and its strong relationships with alumni, employers, and community partners representing diverse populations. In addition, we think the E-MPA could add value and distinctness by providing public managers with practical training on how to be more equitable leaders and build more equitable organizations within their communities of practice.

- **How will the AI tsunami affect curriculum and teaching methodology for this degree?**

**Response:** The honest answer is that we don’t know precisely how the “AI tsunami” will affect curriculum and teaching methodology in this program, any more than any of our colleagues know how it will impact their programs. But we believe we have an opportunity to design a curriculum and methodology “from scratch” that takes into account this new reality, instead of “retrofitting” existing approaches.

We also have an opportunity to train public leaders to navigate the changing AI landscape within their organizations and in their areas of practice (as one of our planned courses, which will likely be taught by the director of the Dewitt Wallace Center, will do).
• What is the marketing plan in more detail - how do they get the message to prospective students 7-10 years out in the work-force more precisely? Appendix F went into this, but in a bulleted format that was hard to follow.

**Response:** The marketing plan included in the proposal was a preliminary plan developed by Sanford’s Communications and Marketing team, but we have budgeted to work with an external marketing firm at least in the initial stages of the program’s launch. The firm we have selected (Tattoo Strategies) is in the early stages of refining our strategy, recognizing that no public-facing marketing activities will occur unless and until the program is approved. We also have hired a new marketing specialist at Sanford who has been engaging stakeholders across Duke (including the new marketing specialist at the Office of Learning Innovation).

We expect the final plan to include a mix of targeted social media advertising, direct-to-employer marketing, and possibly limited place-based advertising (e.g., banner ads in Washington, DC metro trains and stations).

• Page 3: MPP, MPAd, MPAf all have the same accreditation standards. Duke MPP has 51 credit hours and the MPAf has only 30 hours (p.10). Does this create some risk? I know the risk of cannibalization is low (p. iv) given only 3.6% of MPP students would qualify. However, I can imagine a situation where the current MPP students are not very enthusiastic. Have you asked the current MPP students what they think of this initiative? The E-MPA get an equivalent degree in less time (not sure what the tuition is for MPP). You need to be careful this does not backfire. The degree has only 30 credit hours vs. their 51 hours. How much does it cost for an MPP?

**Response.** As you note, the risk of “cannibalization” is low at the current experience threshold. We believe that prospective MPP applicants who meet the threshold should have the opportunity to decide whether they prefer a residential program (in which case, they should apply to the MPP) or a hybrid/executive program (in which case, they should apply to the E-MPA). There are already many hybrid/executive MPA/MPP programs available, so our assumption is that more experienced students who apply to the MPP have reasons other than time and expense for pursuing a residential program. (We already have a 30-credit program in the MIDP as well.)

That said, we are in the process of organizing a focus group of current MPP students who would meet the experience threshold to test this assumption and gather more data about their views on the prospective E-MPA program. We would be happy to share the results of this focus group with the APC.

As for the expense of the program, the MPP costs roughly twice the amount envisioned for the E-MPA (approximately $120,000 vs. $60,000), but the financial aid outlay is also higher (an average of 50% vs. 25-30%).
Page 6: “the direct connection with mid-career practitioners will create new opportunities for faculty to disseminate their research and expand their impact.” How many research faculty will be involved?

**Response:** As noted previously, the final mix of regular-rank vs. adjunct faculty (and among regular-rank, tenure-line vs. practitioner faculty), remains to be determined. Thus far we have three firm commitments to teach in the program (one regular-rank tenure-line, one regular-rank practitioner, and one adjunct) and several other soft commitments/expressions of interest from both research and non-research faculty.

Page 8: I am having trouble understanding the model. Fuqua launched two one-year Masters, MQM and MMS and clearly delineated from our MBA and E-MBA programs. The equivalent would be an E-MMP with a specialization in public affairs. However, this is not what you are doing. You are offering a different Masters designation – but a designation that has the same accreditation standards as MPP. Wouldn’t it be less risky to take the Fuqua route to avoid confusion to have a different masters name or to just do E-MPP?

**Response:** Duke’s current rules require any new degree bearing the same name as an existing degree program (e.g., an E-MPP) to be offered at the same number of credit hours. (It is our understanding that Fuqua’s E-MBA programs and other existing “executive” programs were granted an exception when this rule was adopted.) While there is some risk inherent in offering a different degree within the same accreditation standards, we do not believe it is practicable to offer a hybrid executive program at 51 credit hours. We are encouraged by the fact that many of Sanford’s national peers (e.g., Cal-Berkeley, Michigan, Harvard, Princeton, USC) offer both MPP and MPA degrees.

Page 12: What is the overlap of the course offerings with current MPP courses? How many are new courses and how many are repurposing of existing courses?

**Response:** Because of the “purpose-built” hybrid modality and distinct student population, all courses in the E-MPA will be “new builds” (with the exception of cross-enrollment opportunities in other programs, which we are working to identify).

Conceptually, there is significant overlap between three of the four courses in the E-MPA core curriculum and the core curriculum of other Sanford programs, so faculty teaching these courses will have an opportunity to utilize their previous experience and course materials. The Leadership, Management, and Ethics concentration will be more of a conceptual departure from other Sanford programs. While one or two of its courses (e.g., Public Budgeting and Financial Management; Ethics, Values, and Public Affairs) are conceptually similar to existing Sanford courses, most will fill gaps in our current curricular offerings. Students in other Sanford and Duke programs also will have an opportunity to cross-enroll in these courses.
Page 39: Does the hiring plan advance the research mission of Sanford? The first hire is a PoP and the second is a tenure/non-tenure quant. The document states a minimum of 3/14 courses taught by regular rank faculty and unclear how many of these regular rank faculty will be research faculty.

Response. We should be honest about the fact that the defining purpose of the E-MPA—as a professional degree program that aims to serve a population of students not served by our existing programs—relates more directly to Sanford’s teaching mission than to its research mission. That said, we believe the program would still advance the school’s research mission both directly (through new hires of research faculty) and indirectly (by generating revenue that can be used to support other research priorities. While E-MPA students will not be a major source of research support for faculty, the curriculum will include at least some focus on research methods (e.g., through the capstone project), and its students may arrange research assistantships with faculty on a case-by-case basis.
E-MPA questions for optional response

- Page 11: Have you discussed the cross-enrollment in Fuqua E-MBAs with Fuqua given that their classes could not absorb another 25 students?

  **Response:** We consulted several Fuqua faculty and administrators during the development of this proposal, and the proposal includes a letter of support from Dean Boulding. Based on the feedback received from Fuqua, we do not envision cross-enrollment in Fuqua E-MBA courses at this time.

- Page 20: What are the current fall 2023 enrollments of MPP, MNSP, MIDP? What are the tuitions and the net tuitions of these three programs? [This would help me calibrate the planned tuition for MPAf.] What are the credit hours for MNSP and MIDP?

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  **Note:**
  1. MPP first year headcount included the four senior students in MPP Accelerated program who do not generate revenue to MPP this year.
  2. MNSP’s financial aid is one time disbursement in summer 2023. So, the calculation of net tuition used the total summer disbursement divided by 3 as the fall financial aid amount.

- Page 26: What are the tuitions of the national competitors? What are the credit hours and lengths of the programs? I see figure 9 but it only has USC.

  **Response:** See Figure 9, which includes tuition, credit hours, and program lengths for eight national competitors (including but not limited to USC).

- Page 39: There are other admin hires. Does Sanford have the capability of doing the first year without hiring extra staff?

  **Response:** We have recently hired a new program coordinator who will devote 0.5 FTE of her time to the E-MPA, and our staff hiring plan includes an additional 1.5 FTE (1.0 hired in AY 2024-25 and 0.5 hired in AY 2025-26). In addition, Sanford is currently undertaking a broader staffing review to streamline academic support functions across programs, and we are hopeful that this will ensure the E-MPA is fully integrated into our existing staff structure.
Page 40: The initial goal is 25 students for the first year. What sort of standards will be applied? It is not just work experience but GREs, etc.

**Response:** Consistent with many mid-career professional degrees, the E-MPA will not require GRE scores for admission (though they may be provided optionally). The admissions process will prioritize professional experience, demonstrated leadership or leadership potential, and a clear statement of purpose for the E-MPA, as well as various forms of diversity consistent with applicable laws and Duke policies.

Page 40: Is there a minimum threshold? Suppose only 10 are accepted? Will the program be scrubbed?

**Response:** Based on our current budget projections (which will be updated regularly as we approach the launch of the program), the “break-even” number for positive revenue in the first year of the program is 18 students. While we are confident we can meet this number, we would be willing to accept as few as 10 in the first year of the program and adjust our course offerings accordingly (which would improve net revenue). Yields of fewer than the “break-even” number in the first two years of the program could lead us to pause admissions and revisit the program’s viability.