MPA Program earns NASPAA Seven-Year Reaccreditation

Spring 2012 saw an important milestone for the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program, as it was granted a seven-year reaccreditation from the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA).

“For students, NASPAA accreditation means the program and all of its components, from curriculum, faculty credentials, student services, to assessment, all correspond to the standards of a governing body of peers,” said Jason Jensen, who led the effort as MPA Director (2006-2012).

“The program works hard at maintaining accreditation and is proud of it,” Jensen said. “Having this ‘stamp of approval’ also has implications for students seeking jobs and promotions in the field; practitioners and academics have a respect and appreciation for NASPAA accreditation and realize that students from accredited programs have knowledge and skills that are important.”

The reaccreditation process was very intense. Because new standards were adopted by NASPAA in 2009, all programs were scrambling to conform. This was more pressing for programs coming up for reaccreditation.

From the Chair:

Paul Sum

I assumed the role of Department Chair in July and can happily report that the Department is as vibrant as ever. I would like to share just some of the exciting developments.

First, we welcomed a new tenure-track faculty member to the Department. Aaron Ley has joined us from Washington State University to teach courses in constitutional and administrative law. (See story, Page 2)

Secondly, we are continuing to encourage and support student travel and conference participation and would like to expand these opportunities. This year we again are sending students to conferences at West Point and the Naval Academy. This spring will be the 11th consecutive time POLS 503: Government and Business is offered. The course includes travel to Washington DC to meet with major policy-makers and interest group representatives.

Thirdly, our accredited MPA program continues to grow at a fantastic pace, and with the program fully online, we have attracted students from around the world. (See story at left)

Lastly, our Social Entrepreneurship graduate certificate program will complete its first cycle, with the fourth of four courses being offered this spring.

On behalf of the Department and alumni, I want to thank Professor Mark Jendrysik for the outstanding job he did as Chair, 2006-2012. We all appreciate his tireless effort and dedication.

Contact Sum at paul.sum@und.edu

MORE reaccreditation: See Page 2
My name is Tesfaye Mohamed. I am majoring in Political Science and History, and I am originally from Ethiopia.

I started at UND with a pre-med biology major, but after taking various classes in the PSPA department and being involved in election campaigns, both local and national, I changed my major to Political Science and later on added History as a second major.

My goal is to be part of progress in Africa, Ethiopia in particular. As much as I would love to stay and give back, I am driven by the desire to help Ethiopia, and if possible Africa, stand on its own. Besides, that’s helping America too – less problems to worry about for the United States. I think Ethiopia can benefit more from what America – the UND PSPA department in particular – has taught me.

I was elected as president of the African Student Union for 2012-2013. I was also involved in the student government with the Student Activities Committee (SAC), now called SOFA. I also served in the student hall government for my residence hall, Smith. I am also a member of the Sigma Nu Fraternity, Epsilon Kappa chapter.

I am planning to attend law school. Afterward I want to go back to Ethiopia and do what I have always planned to do ever since I changed my major to Political Science. I cannot thank the PSPA professors enough for what they have taught me; my mind is certainly broader than when I first entered my American Politics class back in 2008.

The self-study year was 2010-2011, with the self-study report submitted in August 2011. The Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA), NASPAA’s accrediting arm, responded in November, and the Department’s response was presented in January. The site visit was held in late March, 2012. Final confirmation of the seven-year accreditation was received in August.

“The visit was certainly a team effort,” Jensen said, “beginning with core MPA faculty and members of the Department, and also students, alumni, the Dean and Associate Dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs. The site visit team also visited with a career services representative and a librarian.”

Jensen said the accreditation experience should be viewed as an opportunity for the program to reflect on its management and processes. The program engages in strategic management, and improvements result. The MPA program, therefore, continues to grow and change and is currently in a very strong position, which was reinforced by NASPAA and the site visit team.

NASPAA accreditation is program-specific for the MPA degree.
Students were at the center of the Department’s Fifth Annual Awards and Recognition Reception held on May 3. Attention focused on those who stood out in the areas of scholarship and civic engagement. The four major awards include outstanding graduates in Political Science and Public Administration and outstanding civic engagement at the university and in the wider community.

Honorees were:
- **Erin Barta**, Outstanding Graduate in Political Science
- **Ty Skarda**, Outstanding Graduate in Public Administration
- **Janie Schroeder**, Outstanding Civic Engagement at the University
- **Tesfaye Mohamed**, Outstanding Civic Engagement in the Community

Awards and scholarships for the 2013 academic year were announced to these exceptional students:
- Lloyd Omdahl Undergraduate Writing Award: **Renee Branshaw**
- Dr. Ronald Pynn Scholarship: **Kristin Emmons** and **Colleen Lofton**
- Milton R. Young Scholarship: **John Mitzel**, **Adam Swigost** and **William Woodworth**

Scott Brand is a Law Clerk for the Northwest Judicial District of North Dakota. His clerkship began in August 2012. As a Law Clerk, Scott conducts legal research, prepares bench memos, and drafts orders and opinions for the seven judges of the district.

Scott graduated from UND with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science in 2009. The summer after graduation, he worked for Senator Byron Dorgan as an intern in Washington, D.C.

Reflecting on his educational experience at UND, Scott said, “The Political Science Department at UND not only gave me a solid educational foundation that I can rely on to succeed, they also inspired me to be an engaged citizen and to work to serve my community to the best of my ability.”

Scott grew up on a farm near West Fargo, ND. In 2005, Scott took a break from his undergraduate studies at UND and joined the Minnesota Army National Guard. Scott was deployed to Iraq in 2006.

In 2007, he returned from his deployment to finish his undergraduate education at UND. Scott became an officer of Pi Sigma Alpha, an honor society for college students who study Political Science, where he and other students organized a campus-wide effort to provide students with non-partisan information regarding where and when they could vote in the 2008 election.

Scott earned his Juris Doctor from the UND School of Law in 2012, graduating magna cum laude. While attending law school, Scott participated in Moot Court, Law Review, and was instrumental in the re-founding of the Environmental Law Society.

Under his leadership, the Environmental Law Society undertook numerous community service projects, including cleaning the English Coulee on UND’s campus and planting 70 trees and shrubs inside the Grand Forks Greenway. In recognition of his contributions, Scott was awarded the Lillian Elsinga Outstanding Student Leader Award and the Memorial Union Leadership Scholarship in 2012.
SUPPORT PSPA

If you’re interested in learning more about how to support the Department of Political Science and Public Administration or other priorities at UND, please contact Kim Woods, Director of Development for the College of Business and Public Administration at the UND Foundation, (701) 777-4106, e-mail: kimw@undfoundation.org.

Scholarships and Support

The Department gives a number of scholarships and awards. Alumni and friends might wish to contribute to these funds or start one of their own.

• Lloyd Omdahl Undergraduate Writing Award
• The Carolyn and Michael Becraft World Affairs Endowment
• Adrian Dunn Scholarship
• J. Raymond and Frankie MacMaster Olson Scholarship
• Dr. Ronald Pynn Endowment
• The Department coordinates internship opportunities for our majors. Alumni and friends interested in providing such opportunities should contact Dr. Mark Jendrysik at mark.jendrysik@und.edu.

Recent Faculty Research . . .

Research raises the profile of the Department and benefits students by keeping the faculty up to date on the latest trends and methods in the discipline. Here is a selection of recent faculty research:

• Dana Michael Harsell “My Taxes Paid for That?! Or Why the Past is Prologue in Public Arts Funding” forthcoming in PS: Political Science and Politics.

Faculty in the Media . . .

During the recent election cycle, PSPA faculty were in demand by the media as experts in the field on many topics, including polling, debates, campaign advertising, changing demographics in North Dakota, and much more. Following is a sample of the local, regional, and national outlets where you may have heard or read comments and analysis by our faculty:


• Katherine Felix Scheurer and Bri-anne Heidbreder “Gender and the Gubernatorial Agenda” forthcoming in State and Local Government Review.
• Brian R. Urlacher “Negotiating with Insurgents: Changing Perceptions or Changing Politics?” forthcoming in International Negotiation.

• Aaron Ley: Election night commentary and analysis on KFGO Radio.

Join Us

At our sixth annual Awards and Recognition Reception, Thursday, May 2, 2013, in the James C. Ray Idea Lab, Ina Mae Rupe Entrepreneur Center, 4200 James Ray Drive, UND Campus, Grand Forks. 4:30 p.m. Social, 5:00 Program.