EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. Introduction

Economic uncertainty, high poverty rates, low graduation rates and drought are among the challenges facing the state of New Mexico. The proposed Master of Public Policy (MPP) program would train a new generation of analysts who can serve the state by identifying and championing data-driven policy options. The applied research, critical thinking, oral presentation and writing skills of MPP graduates will contribute to improved decision-making in local and state government agencies, in Native communities, and in the private and non-profit sectors.

B. Description and Purpose of the Program

Program Description

The MPP will admit 10 students each year to a 2-year, 48-credit program. All but six of these credits will be earned in existing courses. Working students will be welcome to pursue the program on a part-time basis. The curriculum provides four interrelated learning areas:

- CORE CURRICULUM — Students will develop key competencies in empirical research and general background knowledge in public policy through eight required core courses (24 credits), including a required course on diversity, all of which are currently offered and as shown in the following table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MPP Key Competencies</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative &amp; Empirical Methods</td>
<td>Economics, Political Science or Sociology</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic Analysis of Public Policy</td>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Behavior</td>
<td>Sociology or Public Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Political Context</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Policy and Diversity</td>
<td>Political Science, Sociology or Public Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Management and Ethics</td>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>Public Administration</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **SUBSTANTIVE SPECIALTY** — Students will focus on building their own substantive specialty by taking five electives (15 credits) from a range of courses currently offered across the UNM campus, and including Social Welfare, Economic Development, Health, Education, the Environment, International Security, Foreign Relations, Criminology and Native American communities. The available specialties build not only on the substantive strengths of the faculty in the collaborating programs but also on UNM's unique location near two National Laboratories (International Security and Foreign Relations).

• **MPP SEMINAR & INTERNSHIP** -- All MPP students will participate in an ongoing policy seminar (6 credits) which will develop leadership, writing, presentation and other professional skills and serve as the integrative capstone course in the final semester, and a public policy internship (3 credits) in order to gain hands-on experience. The seminar and internship will be provided through new courses.

• **POLICY MEMO** – Students will write and present a substantive policy memo based on their internships, which will serve as their Master’s Examination. The policy memo requirement is similar to the professional paper requirement for MA programs in Public Administration and Community and Regional Planning, and to the professional project required for the MA in Water Resources.

An **Advisory Board** composed of representatives from the public, private and non-profit sectors will help align the program with community and employer needs.

The program aims to produce students who can: (1) evaluate research literature pertaining to policies and programs, (2) analyze data with appropriate statistical methods and commonly used statistical software, (3) produce well-argued and technically rigorous policy reports that provide politically feasible and institutionally sensitive recommendations, and (4) effectively communicate the content of these reports to general and diverse audiences verbally and in writing. The comprehensive policy report will serve as the basis for evaluation of these learning outcomes.

After four years of operation, the program would be eligible to apply for accreditation from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA).

**Program Purpose**

Potential employers in State and Local governments and at the National Labs have identified a strong need for professionals who can rigorously analyze policy, budget, and program questions. Desired skills include critical thinking, data analysis and interpretation, and oral and written communication. Officials in State agencies are keenly interested in developing a pipeline of well-trained
students from this program to support the work of state government. Letters of support accompany this proposal.

Although “Policy Analyst” does not appear as an occupation category in the NM Workforce Solutions database, some of our targeted jobs might be categorized as “Budget Analyst” and “Management Analyst.” New Mexico’s Department of Workforce Solutions projects that growth in Analyst positions will exceed average job growth, and that employers will need to fill 570 new Analyst positions in the next ten years. (See table in Appendix I.) Taken together with the interest of government officials, and the small size of the program, there should be robust demand for MPP graduates.

C. Duplication with Other Institutions in New Mexico

At present, there is no degree program available within the state of New Mexico for students seeking an MPP. Both UNM and New Mexico State University (NMSU) offer the Master in Public Administration (MPA) degree, but these differ in notable ways from the proposed MPP degree. The key difference between the two degrees is that the MPP is designed to train policy analysts for both the public and private sectors, while the MPA’s major goal is to train public and nonprofit managers. Letters of support from NMSU President Garrey Carruthers and the NMSU Deans of the Colleges of Business and of Agriculture, Consumer and Environmental Sciences can be found in the appendix.

A Master in Public Affairs is offered by New Mexico Highlands University. This program differs from the proposed MPP in three ways. First, the emphasis and the curricula of the two programs are quite different. The MPP is a technical degree that requires a two-course sequence in graduate-level econometrics, at least one course in Economics and at least two courses in Public Administration. The Highlands program provides a more general approach: students acquire a broad theoretical foundation for approaching social problems with required course work in Anthropology, History, Political Science and Sociology. Although Highlands students have the option of taking two courses in data analysis and research methods, Economics and Financial Management courses are not part of the curriculum.

Second, whereas the Highlands program requires a disciplinary concentration (in Applied Sociology, Political & Governmental Process, History or Historical and Cross-Cultural Perspectives), the MPP requires a substantive area (such as Health, Environmental or Educational policy). The MPP trains a specialist; the MA in Public Affairs trains a generalist — and both are valuable to employers.

Third, because of these differences, the programs will attract different students. Those interested in a broad liberal arts curriculum will be better served by the Highlands program. Those looking for technical training in econometrics and policy analysis will be better served by the MPP.
In short, these are two distinct programs designed to meet different work force and student needs. The MPP is also specifically designed to meet New Mexico’s need for technically-trained public policy specialists with econometric and financial management expertise.

D. Duplication with Institutions Outside New Mexico

There is one recently established MPP program available through WICHE at the University of Utah. This program is not available online, and therefore cannot serve working New Mexicans who want to pursue the degree on a part-time basis. The only other (accredited and non-accredited) MPP programs in the region identified by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) are in Arizona (at ASU) and California (at Mills College, Pepperdine, UCLA and USC). Notably, the University of Utah, ASU, UCLA, and USC all offer both the MPP and MPA degrees, reinforcing the distinct nature of these degree programs. Compared to MPA programs, however, there are relatively few MPP programs nationwide. In fact, NASPAA identifies only 32 MPP programs nationally. The limited number of MPP programs suggests that UNM will be able to compete nationally to attract students. And we are certainly in the unique position of attracting homegrown students who want policy jobs within the state.

E. Justification for Establishing this Program at Your Institution

UNM is particularly well suited to offer the MPP for the following reasons.

- Faculty resources: the UNM Departments of Economics, Political Science, and Sociology and the School of Public Administration employ a total of 65 faculty members engaged in nationally and internationally recognized research.

- The program relies almost entirely on courses already offered at UNM. Since the 10 students admitted annually will be distributed among the participating units, and further by interests, class sizes will likely rise by only 2-6 students and the units do not anticipate that they will need to expand offerings.

- The Economics department, as a result of its Spring 2011 academic program review, plans to dismantle its stand alone MA program, under the expectation that the MPP will better suit the needs and aspirations of students looking to pursue MA level work in Economics.

- UNM is heavily involved in practical policy research through its research centers and institutes, including the Institute for Social Research, the Bureau of Business and Economic Research, the Center for the Study of Democracy, the Center for Science, Technology, and Policy, the Center for Education Policy Research, and the Robert Wood Johnson Center for Health Policy, all of which have expressed interest in hosting MPP interns.