Master of Nonprofit Administration Degree Program
College of Professional Studies
University of San Francisco

Report and Recommendations of the External Program Review Team

Pier Rogers
Suzanne Feeney
John Palmer Smith

May 15, 2009
A. MISSION AND GOALS

I. Mission

The mission of the University of San Francisco is as follows:

“The core mission of the University is to promote learning in the Jesuit, Catholic tradition. The University offers undergraduate, graduate and professional students knowledge and skills needed to succeed as persons and professionals, and the values and sensitivity to be men and women for others. The University will distinguish itself as a diverse, socially responsible learning community of high quality scholarship and academic rigor sustained by a faith that does justice. The University will draw from the cultural, intellectual and economic resources of the San Francisco Bay Area and its location on the Pacific Rim to enrich and strengthen its educational programs.” (University of San Francisco, Statement of Vision, Mission and Values September 11, 2001).

1. Is the department’s mission clearly aligned with the University’s mission and strategic priorities? Does the program effectively educate leaders who will fashion a more humane and just world?

We believe that the answers to both of these questions are a resounding “yes.” Since the Master of Nonprofit Administration (MNA) degree program was established at the University of San Francisco (USF) in 1983 by USF faculty member Dr. Michael O’Neill, the principal purpose of the program has been to prepare experienced adults for management and leadership roles in nonprofit sector organizations. In the words of the program description on the University’s website:

“The program trains its graduates to be reflective practitioners, capable of independent professional judgment that integrates theory, practical experience and commitment to social values.”

Nongovernmental nonprofit organizations in the United States and around the world play a critically important role in the provision of services and the shaping of public policy in health, education, arts and culture, social welfare, religion, environmental protection, international development, disaster relief and rehabilitation, and many other fields with broad public or mutual benefit missions. These organizations constitute a significant and growing segment of local, regional, national, and international economies; play vital roles in civil society and civic discourse, and enhance the quality of life in the communities in which they are located. Educating managers and leaders of such organizations appears to us to be fully consistent with the University’s mission and strategic priorities and we have every reason to believe that the
more than 600 students who have gone through the MNA degree program since its inception have made significant contributions to the effectiveness of the nonprofit sector organizations in which they have worked and, given the missions of those organizations, are making significant contributions to “a more humane and just world.”

2. **Are the department’s mission and goals clearly articulated and communicated to faculty, students and staff as well as other campus constituencies?**

We believe the answer to this question is a qualified “yes.” There is on the University website, as noted above, a statement of the general purpose of the MNA degree program and a description of its intended target audiences. And there are--both on the University website and in the self study--statements of the program goals and learning outcomes for the MNA degree program. However, we believe it would be useful for the program to review all of these and other such statements to be sure that they clearly articulate the mission, vision, and values of the MNA degree program. It would then be very important to ensure that these critically important aspects of the program are being proactively communicated by the program and the College of Professional Studies (CPS) at USF to faculty, students, and other campus constituencies. It would also be very important for this information to be regularly communicated by the program and CPS beyond the walls of the University: to the larger nonprofit community in the San Francisco Bay area and to such peer educational institutions as those represented in the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) and such scholarly associations as the Association of Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) and the International Society of Third Sector Research (ISTR).

**II. Goals**

**Historic Importance of the MNA Degree Program**

Before turning our attention to a review of the goals of the MNA degree program and our assessment of how well these goals are being achieved at the present time, we believe that it is very important to underline the historic significance of the MNA degree program, not only to the development of the field of nonprofit management and leadership education, but also to the broader field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies.

When it was established in 1983, the MNA degree program was the first, full master’s degree program in nonprofit management and leadership offered at any university in the United States. The curricular content of the MNA degree program demonstrated that it was possible to develop and offer a rigorous set of “nonprofit-focused” graduate courses that was fully responsive to the following curriculum design question: “What do nonprofit managers and leaders need to know and be able to do to be effective?” The MNA degree program quickly became the model for the development of other stand-alone, “nonprofit-focused” master’s degree programs in universities across the United States and for many years it was the *de facto* standard against which these other master’s degree programs was measured. Even in universities in which much more limited programs were subsequently developed as nonprofit “concentrations” or “specializations” within other types of master’s degree programs, the MNA degree program at the University of San Francisco often served as the inspiration for faculty members and university officials across the
United States and elsewhere to begin programs in their own universities—and demonstrated that it was possible to design and implement successful graduate-level education programs that were specifically designed to meet the needs of nonprofit sector managers and leaders.

The MNA degree program at USF truly helped launch nonprofit management and leadership education as a new field of professional studies in the United States in the early- to mid-1980s. There are now more than 150 U.S. colleges and universities offering “nonprofit-focused” graduate-level education and more than 250 offering at least some undergraduate-level coursework with a nonprofit focus. And the growth of this field of studies continues apace in many other parts of the world. It is difficult to overstate how important the MNA degree program was in launching and shaping this, now quite robust, field of studies.

In addition, the MNA degree program, together with the Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management (INOM) at USF, also made significant—and very early—contributions, to the broader fields of research in nonprofit and philanthropic studies that were just beginning to be developed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The inclusion of a focus on research and research methodology in the MNA degree program itself; and the research projects conducted by INOM on a broad range of topics related to the nonprofit sector, nonprofit organizations, nonprofit management and leadership, and philanthropy; all helped to launch and propel the rapid growth of the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies in—and now well beyond—the United States.

1. After reading the departmental self-study and conducting a site visit, how would you characterize the quality and performance of the program?

We believe the MNA program continues to demonstrate many areas of strength as it is currently being offered. However, we also believe that there are a number of areas requiring improvement if the MNA program is to respond to important developments in the field and position itself to maintain its leadership role. The rapid growth and progress in the fields of nonprofit management and leadership education over the past 10-15 years, and the increasing availability of Ph.D.-trained faculty with expertise in nonprofit and philanthropic studies, suggest that the MNA program can be updated, expanded, and made more flexible and accessible to graduate students who will continue to be interested in taking advantage of high quality educational programming of this type.

2. Overall, how does this program compare to benchmark top-tier programs nationally?

3. Please rate the overall quality of the program.

We believe that the MNA program still compares quite favorably in many ways to the benchmark top-tier programs nationally. But we believe that in some important ways, the MNA program has fallen behind the “state of the art” of this field of studies as it has been rapidly evolving over the past 10-15 years. Our overall assessment of the quality of the program, using the definitions contained in the “Guidelines for External Reviewers,” would be some combination of “Very Good” to “Good.” As a program that we rate as “Very Good,” we have no doubt that the MNA program has the potential to become—or become again—an “outstanding or excellent program, a standard that would be readily recognizable by disciplinary
experts in the field who are external to the institution.” However, as a program that we also rate as “Good,” we believe that there are “a few notable areas where improvements could be made.”

We will discuss more specifically in the following sections both the many strengths of the program, and the areas in which we believe improvements are both possible and desirable.

**B. CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION**

**I. General**

The “Guidelines for External Reviewers” requests responses to the following:

1. Please comment on the enrollment, retention and graduation rates and trends for the program’s curriculum.
2. Does the program’s curriculum provide breadth, depth, and challenge in the light of current scholarship?
3. Does the department’s curriculum educate students in the values, knowledge and skills appropriate to the discipline?
4. Has the curriculum kept pace with developments in the field? How does the curriculum compare with those of comparable institutions?
5. Does the current emphasis within the curriculum complement the strengths and interests of the faculty?
6. Does the current emphasis within the curriculum meet the needs and interests of the students and current trends within the discipline?
7. Does the program have adequate procedures in place to determine whether it is meeting its instructional goals and objectives and to determine and refine curricular content?
8. Does the program appear to have adequate human and fiscal resources (support staff, space, laboratories, computer technology, equipment, income and expense budgets, etc.) to be or become an exemplary program? Is the program supported with sufficient leadership at the program, College and University levels?

Each member of the External Program Review Team has founded and/or directed, as well as taught in, graduate-level programs in nonprofit management and leadership in six different colleges or universities in the Northeast, Midwest and Northwest over the past 25 years. So it was perhaps inevitable that we focused a good deal of our time and attention on many of the questions listed above. Although many factors contribute to the success of a graduate program in this professional field, we believe the test of a high quality graduate degree program in nonprofit management and leadership importantly includes: the content and structure of the curriculum, the appropriateness of the modes and methods of instruction, and the quality of the faculty.

**Curriculcular Content and Structure**

The self-study states that the MNA degree program is a 36-unit master’s degree consisting of the following 11 required courses, each of 3 units:

- Introduction to the Nonprofit Sector
In addition, students may elect one additional 3 unit course chosen from among the following two elective courses (or, with the approval of the program director, some other course outside the MNA program):

- Marketing for Nonprofit Organizations
- Information and Communications

The members of the External Review Team understand that there have been some changes to this curriculum over the years since the program was established in 1983. For example, we understand that the Nonprofits and Public Policy course was added to the curriculum in recent years. And we note from the MNA self-study report that the nature of what is now the "Summary Project," or the "capstone" requirement for the program, has changed several times over the years.

We will return to a discussion of the "capstone" requirement of the MNA program, below. But first we would like to discuss the basic content and structure of the curriculum and address several of the questions raised at the beginning of this section.

The External Review Team understands that, with the exceptions just noted, and a few others, the basic content and structure of the MNA degree program has changed relatively little since the program was established in 1983. We believe that this is both an enduring strength of the MNA program and, perhaps, a growing weakness. Much of the basic content of the course offerings is as relevant and important to the effective management and leadership of nonprofit sector organizations as it was when the program was established in 1983. However, in other ways, the rapid advancements in the field of nonprofit management and leadership education over the past 10-15 years may not yet be appropriately reflected in the MNA program. We believe it is now possible to update the curriculum of the MNA degree program to ensure that it is keeping pace with the "best thinking" in the field.

This possibility is perhaps best evident in the work of the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC), the association of 45 nonprofit academic centers (including the MNA program at USF and the centers and programs represented by all three of the members of the External Review Team). Over the past seven years, NACC has worked to produce and publish *Curricular Guidelines for Graduate Study in Nonprofit Leadership, the Nonprofit Sector and Philanthropy* *(Second Revised Edition 2007).*
However, included here for easy reference are the sixteen major curricular topics that are offered in these curricular guidelines for consideration by colleges and universities in the establishment—or the review and refinement—of graduate programs such as the MNA program:

- Comparative Perspectives on the Nonprofit Sector, Voluntary Action and Philanthropy
- Scope and Significance of the Nonprofit Sector, Voluntary Action and Philanthropy
- History and Theories of the Nonprofit Sector, Voluntary Action and Philanthropy
- Ethics and Values
- Nonprofit Governance and Leadership
- Public Policy, Advocacy and Social Change
- Nonprofit Law
- Nonprofit Economics
- Nonprofit Finance
- Fundraising and Development
- Financial Management and Accountability
- Leadership, Organization and Management
- Nonprofit Human Resources Management
- Nonprofit Marketing
- Information Technology and Management
- Assessment, Evaluation, and Decision-Making Methods

The NACC curricular guidelines are just that: guidelines. They are not “accreditation standards”—though it could be said that they represent the collective “best thinking” now available in the field about the topics that should be considered for inclusion in high quality graduate-level programs in nonprofit management and leadership education.

These curricular guidelines are not intended to be used inflexibly, with each of the sixteen major topics listed above to be converted into a three-credit graduate course. It is understood that each college or university, and the faculty members who are responsible for developing and teaching in these nonprofit graduate programs, will need to be able to select from, and combine, these curricular topics in ways that conform to the educational objectives of their respective programs and the constraints of their respective educational institutions.

We note that many of the curricular topics contained in the NACC curricular guidelines are already included in the courses offered in the MNA degree program—as they should be. However, there may be other topics such as international and comparative perspectives on the nonprofit sector, nonprofit governance and executive leadership, nonprofit economics, and nonprofit finance that may not be adequately covered—or covered at all—within the existing courses of the MNA curriculum.
Recommendation:

1. The College of Professional Studies at USF should encourage-- and provide the necessary support for-- a full-scale review of the content and structure of the MNA degree program. Specifically, this review should address the following questions:

   a. Are there important curricular topics that should be added to those currently included in the MNA degree program?
   b. Are there topics currently included in the curriculum that should be deemphasized or dropped altogether?

We believe that the problem of adequate curricular content for a high quality master’s degree program for nonprofit managers and leaders goes well beyond simply identifying the appropriate curricular topics. This problem can be greatly exacerbated or ameliorated by how the program is structured and the modes in which it is delivered. Particularly important in the MNA program in this regard are several aspects of how the program is structured and delivered including:

- The total number of courses, or units of coursework, required for the degree
- The relative shares of required courses and elective courses required for the degree and, among the elective courses, the number of “choices” offered
- The “segments” of the program or “categories” of courses offered and the sequencing of the segments or categories offered
- The purpose(s) and type(s) of “capstone” experience(s) that are required for the degree
- The total number of classroom contact hours required for each course, the length of each class session, the number of classes per course and the number of weeks over which the courses are scheduled
- The times of day (or night) when the class sessions are offered
- The manner in which students enroll in the program (either as a “cohort” of students enrolling in, and proceeding through, the program together or as students enrolling individually in courses as they are offered and moving asynchronously through the program at their own respective paces)

In subsequent sections, we would like to address each of these points in turn.

The Total Number of Courses/Units Required for the Degree: Among full, stand alone, master’s degree programs in nonprofit management and leadership in universities across the United States, the range in the number of courses and credit-hours required is actually quite large: from 30 credit hours in some programs to as many as 60 credit hours (in the Master of Nonprofit Organizations degree offered by the Mandel Center for Nonprofit Organizations at Case Western Reserve University). At 36 units, the MNA degree at USF is somewhat below the range of 39-48 credit-hours that are most commonly required in leading master’s degree programs in the field of nonprofit management and leadership education.
Recommendation:

2. As part of a comprehensive review by the MNA program of the topics that should be included in an updated and comprehensive curriculum, a decision should be made regarding whether or not the current 36 unit requirement is sufficient to have the MNA degree program positioned as one of the leading such programs in the United States.

Required and Elective Courses: Our discussions with the teaching faculty and, particularly, with the students and alumni of the MNA degree program suggested that there would be considerable interest in having the number of courses/units available to students as electives increased as a percentage of the total number of courses/units required for the degree. Many of the students with whom we talked wished to delve more deeply into particular topical or functional areas. In general, this student interest in more elective choices corresponds with our own views given our experience and knowledge of other high quality degree programs in the field where there are usually more elective courses (and choices of electives) than the single elective course (out of 12 courses overall) in the MNA degree program.

Recommendation:

3. Serious consideration should be given by the MNA program to increasing the number of elective courses/units (and percentages of the totals) for the MNA degree. And consideration should be given to offering more choices of “nonprofit-focused” elective courses than the two now offered.

Course Segments/Categories and Sequencing: The MNA program’s self study describes the current curriculum as consisting of three major “segments” roughly as follows:

- A more “theoretical” segment (consisting of the first two courses taken by students in the program and taught by the only regular USF faculty member currently teaching in the program)
- The “management areas” segment (consisting of the next seven courses taken by students in the program and taught by adjunct faculty members), and
- The “research sequence” (consisting of the final three courses taken by students in the program and including the final “capstone” course).

Again, our discussions with the teaching faculty and, particularly, with the students and alumni of the MNA degree program, suggested that this particular way of conceptualizing the principal segments or “categories” of courses offered—and this particular sequencing of the segments—may be problematic in several respects. Among these is the distinction between courses in the first segment that are somewhat more “theoretical” and those in the second segment which are focused on “managerial functional areas” (even if they are taught by adjunct faculty in an “academically rigorous way”). We can’t help but wonder whether or not these two “segments” are being characterized in this manner as much or more because of the lack of Ph.D. (or equivalent) regular faculty members available to teach courses in the second segment as by any inherent differences in the nature of the topics contained in these two groups of courses. If, for
example, there were regular USF faculty members, in addition to Dr. O’Neill, who had Ph.D.(or equivalent)-level expertise in nonprofit law, or nonprofit public policy and advocacy, or nonprofit governance, would it be necessary to make this distinction between the courses in these two segments?

Similarly, with respect to the third segment—the “research sequence”—it appears to us that the first two courses of this segment have historically been intended to support the final “capstone” experience for students in the program—originally, a master’s thesis. The MNA self study now describes the purposes of these two courses as preparing students to produce (in the Project Summary course) “a document in which students define and address a research question important to [a] nonprofit organization, perform a literature search, develop and implement a research methodology, analyze the data they collect, and make recommendations based on their findings.” However, if these two courses were available to students earlier in their MNA degree program, they might also contribute to their understanding of important topics in other courses. The quantitative and qualitative decision making techniques that could be included in these courses would support the learning of topics of other courses that are already in the curriculum, or that might be included in the curriculum in the future including such topics as nonprofit finance and financial management, nonprofit marketing, and organizational assessment and program evaluation.

There is nothing inherently wrong with having in the curriculum a “research sequence” or in putting it at or near the end of the overall sequence of courses in the MNA degree program. Indeed, if these courses are appropriately designed and taught, we could argue that such an emphasis would be one of the hallmarks of a high quality learning experience for many, if not all, students in the program. We simply want to make the point here that conceived somewhat differently, these courses might serve other useful purposes in the curriculum, instead of, or in addition to, the purposes they are now intended to serve.

More generally, there are of course other good ways of conceptualizing (or “segmenting”) and sequencing the curriculum in a high quality master’s degree program in nonprofit management and leadership. For example (but without explicitly recommending that it be adopted in the MNA program), it would be possible to organize the curriculum into the following categories of courses and/or curricular topics:

- Contextual courses/topics (including the historical and theoretical contexts of the nonprofit sector, the legal context, the public policy context, etc.)
- Decision-Making and/or Research Methods and Techniques
- Governance and Executive Leadership
- Acquiring and Managing Financial and Other Resources
- The Integrative “Capstone” Experience
Recommendation:

4. **As part of the overall curriculum review recommended above, explicitly consider whether the current segments or categories of courses and their sequencing in the curriculum—or some other categorization and sequencing framework—would be the optimal configuration for achieving the principal educational purposes and intended learning outcomes of the MNA degree program.**

The Capstone Requirement: We understand from the MNA self study that the “capstone” requirement has changed several times over the years as follows:

- A master’s thesis or a directed research study required of all students
- A master’s thesis or a comprehensive exam
- A master’s thesis or a client project (which was an applied research project completed for a nonprofit organization)
- A Summary Project (which, following a transition period, will be required of all MNA students instead of a thesis or any other of the previous options)

We also understand from the MNA self study that many if not all of these changes to give students an option in addition to or other than the master’s thesis were motivated by a desire on the part of the MNA program directors and the administration of the College of Professional Studies to address what has been a recurring, and serious, problem: an unacceptably high rate of students who successfully completed all of their coursework in the degree program except for the capstone master’s thesis and thus failing to receive their degrees.

Data presented in the MNA self study regarding the graduation rates of students who began their studies over the Fall 2002 through Spring 2006 period indicate that approximately half of all students who had completed all of their coursework had not completed their master’s thesis or client project and thus had not received their degrees. We agree that that is an unacceptably high rate of those not graduating.

We have no reason to question what we assume to be the good faith efforts on the part of the MNA program directors and the CPS administration to address this problem. We too would be concerned if we confronted such a problem in our own programs—not least because of the ethical questions that are raised by a situation in which students might be unable to complete their degrees because of some structural or other problem with how the program is designed and delivered and that, arguably, is or might be as much or more the fault of the institution as of the students themselves.

That there has been a recurring problem with unacceptably low graduation rates associated with the master’s thesis raised several questions for the members of the External Review Team including:

- Did students fail to complete the thesis because the thesis itself was not a highly engaging or desired final project?
- Did students prefer a more practical project akin to the new final project?
• Did students fail to complete the thesis because they felt ill prepared and/or had inadequate preparation in research methods and skills and advising support?
• Did students fail to complete the thesis because it occurred after they had completed all coursework and were then outside the bounds of the support network they had experienced during their prior course enrollment?

We don’t believe that we have sufficient information available to us to respond to these and other such questions in a fully responsible manner. However, we believe it is possible to offer some observations with regard to two inter-related, but different, aspects of the issues raised by the question of the capstone requirement.

The first set of these observations relates to the substance of the question of whether or not there should still be a master’s thesis option for the capstone requirement. The second set of observations relates to the apparent lack of clearly communicated—or understood—information with regard to what the capstone requirement now is and is not.

With respect to the former, we can report from our discussion with the focus group of alumni and students with whom we met that a substantial number of those present reported that they either had elected the master’s thesis option when it was available to them or that they would still elect the thesis option if it is still available to them. And some stated their belief that the thesis option should be restored as an option if it is currently not an option. Many of those who said they favored a thesis option indicated that this requirement had been a significant factor attracting them to the MNA program. These students said they believed that completing a thesis would: strengthen their academic preparation in a focused area of interest to them, put them at a competitive advantage in their career trajectories, and prepare them for obtaining a higher-level Ph.D. or other such degree in the future.

It is important to note here that many of those in the focus group who expressed these views admitted they were probably a biased sample with respect to this subject when compared to the views of all of the MNA students and alumni.

It is also important to note that the focus group participants who favored the retention or reinstatement of a thesis option were not advocating that it should be the only option available; they endorsed keeping the “project summary” option for those students who preferred it.

Moreover, even those who felt the thesis option should be retained or restored said that it would be necessary to have additional faculty and other supports in place for ongoing advising during the post-classroom phase of the degree program for students electing the thesis option.

Based on the information available to us on this topic in the MNA self-study and the information we received in our discussion with those alumni and students who attended the focus group, we are not prepared to make an unambiguous recommendation with respect to whether or not there should or should not be a master’s thesis option to satisfy the capstone requirement in the MNA degree program.
In general, we believe that there is great value in having an integrative capstone requirement of some type in high quality master’s degree programs in nonprofit management and leadership--just as there is in high quality master’s degree programs in public or business administration. We understand that it is possible to design more than one option for satisfying an integrative capstone requirement if the appropriate faculty and other support services are available to ensure that all such options are of uniformly high quality. In the final analysis, this is a decision that should rest with the MNA program and the College of Professional studies.

Recommendations:

5. As part of the comprehensive curriculum review recommended above, the MNA program should reconsider the purpose and role of the capstone requirement in light of the overall purposes of the MNA degree program and a decision should be made (or reaffirmed) with respect to what option(s) for students is/are most appropriate to satisfy this capstone requirement without creating an unreasonably high barrier to graduation.

6. Should a decision be made to reinstate a master’s thesis as one option for satisfying the capstone requirement, the College of Professional Studies and the MNA program should ensure that the necessary faculty and other support mechanisms are in place to make this option a fully satisfactory learning experience for students electing this option.

With respect to our second set of observations on this overall topic, a number of students said to us in the focus group that they felt they were caught in the current ambiguous situation. They reported receiving mixed messages about their options. They expressed a desire for concrete directions and timetables, which they indicated had not yet been provided.

Recommendation:

7. Whatever decision is made (or reaffirmed) by the MNA program with respect to the option(s) that are now available to students for satisfying the capstone requirement, this decision should be unambiguously communicated to students as soon as possible.

Course Length: The “length” of the courses offered in the MNA degree program has several dimensions including: the length of each class meeting, the total number of times classes meet during each academic term, and the total number of classroom “contact hours” per course. We understand from information provided in the MNA self study report and from our conversations with the Program Director, members of the teaching faculty, and students and alumni that each of the 12 three-unit courses that make up the MNA degree meets for four hours each week over a seven week academic term for a total of 28 classroom contact hours per course. More commonly found at other universities are courses that meet the “Carnegie standard” of 37.5 classroom contact hours per graduate course. And these courses are more typically offered for 2.5 hours per class meeting once each week over a 15 week semester.
Although we know there is a range in the total number of classroom contact hours per graduate course among graduate programs in nonprofit management and leadership offered by other colleges and universities (and that some types of course topics lend themselves to different, more concentrated class meeting times than 2.5 hours per class), we believe that something closer to the Carnegie standard of 37.5 classroom contact hours per graduate course would be more appropriate for the MNA degree program at USF. In fact, we understand that at an earlier point in its history, courses in the MNA program met over an eight-week—not a seven-week academic term. Presuming that the length of each class in that earlier eight-week course format was also four hours, this would mean that the length of each course would have been a more acceptable 32 classroom contact hours.

No one in the alumni and student focus group or the members of the teaching faculty with whom we met felt that the current seven-week length of the courses in the MNA degree program was adequate to cover the course material. There was a general recognition that this was more of a problem in some courses than in others (where for example there might be two broad topics as in the MNA course on Governance and Strategic Planning that would best be taught and learned in two separate courses). Even so, this was still seen as a general problem that undermined the ability of both instructors and students alike to achieve a high quality set of learning outcomes.

Recommendation:

8. As part of the comprehensive curriculum review referred to above, the MNA program and the College of Professional Studies should consider increasing the length of courses to something more closely approximating the Carnegie standard of 37.5 classroom contact hours and ensuring that the combination of related curricular topics contained in the syllabus for each course make it possible to give appropriately rigorous coverage to each topic within a course of that length.

Course Scheduling/Time of Day: The current schedule is structured so that classes meet once each week from 6:15-10:15 in the evening. That is a difficult time slot for all involved. Ending a 4-hour weekday course after 10 pm, after most students have worked a full day, is not conducive to good learning. The External Review Team learned that the current scheduling has evolved from an earlier schedule that began in the late afternoon, from 3-7 pm. However, due to growing demand for available classroom space during the late afternoon period, the MNA program has been required to shift to the current time period. We understand that competing demands for classroom space at “prime times” is often a significant issue on college and university campuses. However, we do not believe that the current scheduling of MNA classes supports high quality learning outcomes. Alternative locations and/or alternative days and times for classes when demand for available classrooms might be lower might lead to significant improvements (e.g. intensives, week-ends, summer, and off-campus).

Recommendation:

9. That the MNA program, with the support of the College of Professional Studies, search for suitable classroom space, scheduling and location alternatives that would enhance learning outcomes.
The Cohort Model: The cohort model in use by the MNA degree program since its inception in 1983 allows and fosters student collegiality, bonding and networking. In theory, if not always in practice, this model also permits a more logical sequencing of courses that might enable students to benefit from the cumulative learning effects that come from being able to increase their knowledge and skills step-by-step, building logically in later courses on the topics learned in earlier courses.

We have no doubt that these features of the model can add substantially to the learning outcomes of all participants. We found that the students and alumni we interviewed were generally very satisfied with the cohort structure, indicating that it had been one of the aspects of the program that had initially attracted them to the program. The members of the faculty with whom we met also generally expressed their satisfaction with the cohort model.

On the other hand, we believe there are a significant number of drawbacks to this model. We believe that these drawbacks explain in large part why the cohort model has rarely been adopted by other graduate programs in nonprofit management and leadership in colleges and universities across the United States—including most of the leading programs in the field. These drawbacks include the following:

(1) For the most part, members of any given cohort are limited to the knowledge and experience brought into the classroom by members of their own group rather than having the opportunity to interact with students from a much wider array of professional and previous educational backgrounds. If a student happens to be in a relatively small cohort, that individual’s entire educational experience in the MNA program can be compromised in significant ways.

(2) The cohort has a “lock-step” sequence of courses that limit the ability of students to engage in any other coursework that may be of interest and available to them in other programs at USF. This relative lack of choice is exacerbated by the limited number of “elective” courses available to them in the MNA program itself.

(3) The cohort model allows for no flexibility for a student to “stop-out” of the program in the event of family or work circumstances that may interfere with her/his ability to complete the program on the schedule prescribed for her/his cohort. We believe that the inflexibility of this model may contribute to the attrition of some students for whom “life happens” and makes the program less attractive to other potential students in the first instance.
Recommendations:

10. Consider enhancing the cohort model with more flexible options that would enable part-time students to register for courses from a limited “menu” of courses regularly offered by the MNA program each year and permit students to complete the program either more or less quickly than the current 27 months depending on their “life circumstances.”

11. Consider adding new courses to the curriculum to permit MNA students to select from a wider array of electives and/or choose to specialize in certain areas of interest.

12. Consider increasing the accessibility to this expanded array of “nonprofit focused” graduate courses by students in other graduate-level programs at USF.

II. Graduate Program

The “Guidelines for External Reviewers” requests responses to the following:

1. How does the structure of the graduate program (process of admission, course requirements, evaluation) compare to other graduate programs in the country?
2. How does the quality of the graduate program compare with the high-ranking programs in other institutions? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this program?
3. Do the department’s proposals for improving the graduate program seem likely to be effective?
4. Assess the future demand for graduate students in the academic and professional areas covered by the program.
5. What is the overall quality of the graduate program?

Program Strengths—and Possible Improvements

We believe we have already responded to many of these questions in previous sections of this report and will endeavor not to repeat ourselves here. However, we believe some additional observations summarizing points we made earlier—and some additional perspectives--would be appropriate here.

As indicated earlier, we believe that the overall quality of the MNA degree program at USF compares very favorably with the very best of the graduate programs in nonprofit management and leadership that are being offered in colleges and universities across the United States. And this is true in large measure, we believe, because it has retained its status within the College of Professional Studies at USF as a full, stand-alone, master’s degree program designed to provide high quality professional education for the leaders and managers of non-governmental, nonprofit organizations. This may be, we believe, the program’s greatest strength. Any changes in the program that would significantly alter or diminish this enduring vision by combining it with some other program that has a substantially different purpose would result in
the loss of its leadership role and its ability to compete with other good, but more limited, programs in the San Francisco Bay area and beyond. Similarly, any changes that would restrict the array of curricular topics that are needed to prepare the current and future managers and leaders of nonprofit organizations to function effectively in those increasingly complex and challenging roles, would lead inevitably to the decline of the MNA program and its significant contributions to the field.

However, we believe there are perhaps three significant ways in which the MNA program could be significantly improved, many of which are reflected in earlier observations and recommendations. The first is for the program to update and expand the content of its curriculum. The second is for the program to make the delivery of its course offerings more flexible and thus more accessible to a larger number of students.

The third way that the MNA program could be significantly strengthened over the next five to ten years is to recruit and select increasingly well-qualified faculty members to teach in the MNA program and make significant scholarly contributions to the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies. We will have more to say about this topic in the section on faculty, below.

The “Markets” for Nonprofit Management and Leadership Education

The “market” rationales for retaining and strengthening the MNA degree at the University of San Francisco are based on two major trends and developments. First, on the “demand side of the market,” the size and importance of the nonprofit sector in the San Francisco and the Bay area, across America, and around the world have increased rapidly over the past 30 years. There are now more than 1.6 million nonprofit organizations in the United States. In 2004, these organizations employed 14.1 million people (or 10.5 percent of the total workforce in the United States). Of these, 9.4 million (or 7.2 percent of the total workforce) were paid employees and 4.7 million (FTEs) were volunteers.1

The growth rate of revenue generated by the nonprofit sector from all sources has exceeded the growth rates of both the for-profit and government sectors. For example, an earlier study indicates that over the twenty-year period from 1977 to 1997, total inflation-adjusted revenues generated by nonprofit sector organizations in the United States increased 144 percent compared to an inflation-adjusted increase in the overall U.S. gross domestic product of just 81 percent.2

In San Francisco, average quarterly employment and average weekly wages in nonprofit sector organizations have both been growing faster in recent years than those in either the public or for-profit sectors. The change in the number of nonprofit employees increased 9 percent over the 2000-2007 period compared to the public sector (4 percent) and the for-profit sector (which declined 1 percent). Average weekly wages paid by nonprofit sector organizations in 2007 accounted for 7.7 of all wages paid in the city and over the 2000-2007 period grew at a faster,

inflation-adjusted rate (19 percent) than wages in the public sector (2 percent) or the for-profit sector (which saw a decline of 9 percent).³

Even though organizations in all sectors--including the nonprofit sector--have been negatively impacted by the recent and severe downturn in the economy, growth in the need for “senior managers” and leaders of nonprofit sector organizations is quite likely to resume its robust growth throughout the United States when the economy recovers. In a recent national study, the Bridgespan Group analyzed “the leadership requirements of nonprofits with revenues greater than $250,000 (excluding hospitals and institutions of higher education.)” They concluded:

“Over the next decade, these organizations will need to attract and develop some 640,000 new senior managers—the equivalent of 2.4 times the number currently employed.

By 2016, these organizations will need almost 80,000 new senior managers per year.”

The author of the study, Thomas J. Tierney, states that this nonprofit sector “leadership deficit” “...results from both constrained supply and increasing demand. The key factors include the growing number of nonprofit organizations, the retirement of managers from the vast baby-boom generation, movement of existing nonprofit managers into different roles within or outside the sector, and the growth in the size of these nonprofits.”⁴

We have no doubt that the “demand” for high quality, graduate-level education in nonprofit management and leadership education will remain robust in the San Francisco Bay area over the next decade and, quite probably, beyond that period of time. And, we believe, the MNA degree program will continue to be viewed as a “preferred option” in that market.

Nationally, on the “supply side” of the market, the number of graduate-level educational programs for nonprofit managers and leaders has grown rapidly since the early 1980s when the M.N.A. program was established at USF as the first, full master’s degree in nonprofit management in the United States. More than 150 colleges and universities across the United States now offer graduate level programs and more than 250 colleges and universities now offer undergraduate-level courses and programs with a focus in nonprofit and philanthropic studies.

Currently, as noted earlier, 45 universities and colleges (including four from outside the United States) are members of the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, an association formed in 1991 to serve as the principal forum for these nonprofit academic centers and programs.⁵ Moreover, there is a rapidly growing body of scholarly and applied research coming from a wide range of academic disciplines to support these educational programs. There are two multi-disciplinary

---

³ Carol Silverman, Arleda Martinez, Jamie Rogers, Gene Waddell, Lina Morin-Calderon, and Jeanne Bell (April 2009), “San Francisco’s Nonprofit Sector: Contributions, Diversity, Challenges,” Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management, University of San Francisco, Table 7, p. 16.


⁵ For a list of the current institutional members of the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council, see http://www.naccouncil.org/members.asp.
scholarly associations in the field: the Association for Research on Nonprofit Organizations and Voluntary Action (ARNOVA) with more than 1000 members and the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) with more than 600 members. Three major scholarly journals are being published: Nonprofit Management and Leadership, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, and Voluntas.

There are now also an increasing number of colleges and universities in the San Francisco Bay area that offer some “nonprofit focused” educational programming. However, none of these other educational institutions, to our knowledge, offers a full, stand-alone master’s degree in nonprofit management and leadership that is comparable to the MNA degree program at USF.

Possible New Programming in Nonprofit Management and Leadership Education at USF

Growing numbers of institutions of higher education throughout the country have developed graduate certificate programs; non-credit, continuing education programs; and undergraduate-level programs focused on nonprofit management and leadership, civil society, civic engagement, philanthropic studies or other such topics. Sometimes these programs are offered in addition to full master’s degrees; sometimes they have served as the pre-cursors to full graduate degree programs.

In addition, increasing numbers of colleges and universities are beginning to offer these programs in new delivery formats that include either “hybrid” online and classroom formats, or are delivered fully online. The rapidly evolving sophistication and utility of online communications technologies has persuaded many university faculty members that it is now increasingly possible to use these new delivery methods without compromising the quality of educational programs. Given the options of either in-classroom or online instruction, many students are opting for online (or hybrid) versions. And increasing numbers of university administrators are encouraging development and implementation of these options.

Recommendations:

13. That the MNA program and the College of Professional Studies consider adding to one or more “specializations” within the MNA degree and/or a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management: (1) that could be added to other graduate degrees at USF by interested students; or (2) selected as a stand-alone program option instead of the MNA degree by students for whom the full MNA degree might not be feasible or desirable.

14. That the MNA program and the College of Professional Studies begin to explore the possibilities of introducing online instruction or other alternative formats and/or locations in its educational program(s) in ways designed to increase accessibility to (and enrollments in) these programs without compromising program quality.

III. Assessment
1. Please comment on the methods used by the department to assess its success in achieving its program learning objectives.

The MNA program conducted a comprehensive self-study of the MNA program, and issued a report that included descriptions of the history of the program and how it is situated within CPS and the University. In addition, the self study reviewed and presented both the program goals and learning outcomes of the MNA program. The self study included the results of interviews, surveys, and data analysis of the following: curricula, faculty, student satisfaction, graduation rates and related issues. The self study also included recommendations for change and improvements in the MNA program based on the results of the self-study.

We believe the methods used in the self study are appropriate means of assessing the success of the MNA program in achieving its program learning objectives and we found this self study report to be both comprehensive and extremely helpful in preparing for our onsite program review.

C. FACULTY

1. Please comment on the faculty demographic data contained in the self-study and assess the department’s future hiring priorities.

2. One objective is for our programs to be exemplary, distinctive, and reach national and international prominence. How does this program fare in relation to that goal?

3. Is the faculty distinguished in terms of their contributions to scholarship and creative work; teaching; and service to students, the profession, and community? Is the faculty sufficiently active in research or creative work to support superior academic programs?

4. How does the quality of the scholarly and/or creative work of the faculty rate in terms of national standards of the discipline? How does the mix of current and planned teaching and research specialties in the program compare to trends within the disciplines?

5. Comment on the quality of recent tenure-track appointments in the program? Do the latest faculty appointments represent careful planning with respect to the depth and breadth of curriculum?

6. To what extent is the scholarly and/or creative work of the faculty integrated into the department’s graduate and undergraduate programs?

We understand from the MNA self study that the MNA program has only one fulltime USF faculty member, Dr. Michael O’Neill. Dr. O’Neill devotes 60 percent of his course load to teaching in the MNA program, where he teaches the first two courses for each cohort: Introduction to the Nonprofit Sector and Management and Organizational Behavior. (The remaining 40 percent of this course load is devoted to teaching in the MPA program which is also in USF’s College of Professional Studies.) Dr. O’Neill holds an Ed.D degree from Harvard University.

The students and alumni we interviewed indicated that the depth of theory and academic rigor that Dr. O’Neill brings to his teaching, and his considerable published research in the area of
nonprofit studies, makes his contributions to the MNA program critically important to their overall learning experience in the program.

Two other “research sequence” courses in the MNA program recently have been taught by people with doctoral-level degrees: Dr. Carol Silverman, who has a Ph.D. in Sociology from UC-Berkeley and Dr. Brian Ross, who holds an Ed.D from the University of San Francisco’s School of Education. Also, in previous years, though not currently, MNA program director Dr. Kathleen Fletcher has taught the course Governance and Strategic Planning in the MNA program. She also holds an Ed.D degree from USF’s School of Education. However, all three of these individuals’ teaching assignments in the MNA program have been as adjunct faculty members—not as regular full-time faculty members at USF. And all three of these individuals have other professional responsibilities that significantly limit their ability to provide academic advising and other academic support services to the MNA program—services that normally would be expected of regular, full-time faculty members assigned to a high quality master’s degree program.

All of the other courses in the MNA degree program are taught by adjunct faculty members who have master’s degrees and extensive work experience, usually in the nonprofit sector or serving the nonprofit sector as a consultant, attorney, or other professional. Five of these instructors received their master’s degrees from the MNA program at USF.

We understand that it is often desirable to have at least some courses in professional degree programs such as the MNA degree program taught by adjunct faculty members who bring high-level practical experience to courses where such experience helps achieve the overall learning objectives for such programs. However, we are concerned that the MNA program relies much too heavily on adjunct faculty members without Ph.D or equivalent level academic training to teach in the program. And we are particularly concerned that over the years such a high number and percentage of the courses in the MNA degree program have come to be taught by graduates of the MNA degree program itself.

The leading master’s degree programs in the field have a much larger percentage of their courses taught by regular tenured, or tenure-track, faculty members with Ph.D or Ph.D-equivalent academic credentials. And many of these faculty members are leading scholars in the field of nonprofit and philanthropic studies. Good examples of leading programs in the field are the M.A. in Philanthropic Studies and the MPA in Nonprofit Management degree programs at Indiana University and the Master of Nonprofit Organizations (MNO) degree at Case Western Reserve University. In all three of these programs, 80 percent or more of the courses are taught by regular faculty members with doctoral-level credentials. In the MNO degree program at Case Western Reserve University, regular full-time faculty members from four of the university’s schools and colleges teach in the program: the College of Letters and Science, the Weatherhead School of Management, the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, and the School of Law.

We believe that it is especially important for the College of Professional Studies and the University of San Francisco to be preparing now not only to maintain, but to increase its investments in this program by hiring new, or assigning regular faculty members already employed by USF, to the MNA program. This would be especially important in the event that
Dr. O’Neill decides to retire from teaching in the MNA program any time in the near- to intermediate-range future.

**Recommendations:**

15. **Increase the number of regular USF faculty members assigned to teach courses in the MNA program to at least three within the next three years by hiring new faculty members with appropriate nonprofit teaching and research expertise and/or by reassigning at least portions of the teaching responsibilities of regular USF faculty members to the MNA program.**

16. **Increase the percentage of courses in the MNA program taught by regular USF faculty members or adjunct faculty members with Ph.D or equivalent academic credentials to at least 50 percent of the total within the next three to five years.**

17. **Significantly reduce the percentage of courses in the MNA program taught by adjunct faculty members who received their master’s degree from the MNA program at USF itself to no more than 20 percent of the total within the next three years.**

**Academic Advising:** Many of the students and alumni with whom we met expressed their dissatisfaction with the level of academic advising that they were receiving. This feedback wasn’t about the quality of the academic advising, but about its accessibility and timeliness. Some students and alumni said they felt that their advisors were simply overwhelmed with other obligations making access on a timely basis problematic in moving forward with their projects.

**Recommendation:**

18. **Ensure that students in the MNA program have adequate and timely access to the academic advising and other academic support services they need to optimize their learning experience.**

**D. STUDENTS**

1. Does the program provide a rich learning environment and distinctive education in the discipline? Does it prepare students to make a real contribution to society?
2. Does the performance of students, as evidenced by papers, course examinations, comprehensive examinations, and theses or other projects indicate satisfactory preparation in the discipline?
3. Does the program effectively monitor student academic progress and assist underperforming majors?
4. What efforts are made to create an intellectual and social climate that fosters student development and learning (e.g. clubs, student chapters of professional organizations, etc.)?
Based on evidence offered in other sections of this report, we conclude that the MNA program learning environment is a strong and rich one. We suggest elsewhere that offering more choices of electives, as well as additional topics in research will further enrich the learning opportunities for students.

The intellectual climate that exists for students seems largely dependent on their cohort experience, which is discussed elsewhere. There will be a loss going forward in that regard as well, due to the closing of INOM.

The MNA self-study includes data on student/alumni survey results where they respond to questions about learning outcomes, application of knowledge and skills gained in courses. Their feedback suggests that they do believe the learning is beneficial and prepares them in the theory and practice of nonprofit management and leadership.

The attention to the adequacy of students’ academic progress has been an issue over a period of time. The MNA leadership is addressing the major concern with the lower than desired degree completion rate. The strategy to modify the capstone project requirement by eliminating the thesis to substitute an organizational project has been discussed elsewhere. The supports needed for ensuring that students are prepared for the capstone requirement were discussed elsewhere as well.

E. DIVERSITY

1. Please describe and evaluate the diversity of the department in terms of its faculty, students and staff. How does it compare with departments at the very best institutions?
2. Does the program effectively promote diversity and build awareness of and sensitivity to multicultural issues?
3. What factors facilitate or impede the department’s ability to recruit and retain faculty, students and staff from underrepresented groups?

The issue of (a perceived lack of) diversity among students enrolled in the MNA program was discussed in the MNA self-study. However, this topic was not raised in any of the meetings the External Review Team had with students and alumni, faculty, Dean and Associate Dean of CPS. One team member finally asked the MNA program director about the issue of diversity as we neared the end of the site review meetings. It seems that diversity (assuming it means the presence in the program of students, faculty, and others who are different primarily due to their race or ethnicity) is valued within the MNA program and at USF. However, it may be taken for granted that although the value is held, diversity will not increase automatically without a plan and a concentrated effort to achieve specified goals. It also will not occur simply by asking current students who are of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds to give suggestions. The self-study requested input from the External Review Team on this issue. Several suggestions follow.

Since the MNA program for the most part does not do its own marketing or student recruiting, there are limits on the ways it can work toward increasing diversity without the full cooperation and support of the other units in the College of Professional Studies who are responsible for those functions. There are, however, more informal ways that such efforts can be pursued.
including partnering with organizations that serve specific racial/ethnic communities; using informal networking to talk about the desire of the MNA program to increase diversity, and asking people in those networks to help in those endeavors.

In addition, whenever there are opportunities to hire new regular or adjunct faculty members, diversity should be one of the selection criteria. Similarly, diversity should be one of the criteria used in the selection of guest lecturers for participation in MNA courses and as speakers in other MNA sponsored conferences and programs. Representatives from organizations that serve diverse communities should be invited to these conferences and programs.

F. RESOURCES

1. How does the total amount of resources provided to the department compare with that of departments at similar institutions?
2. Does the department have adequate support staff?
3. What additional resources and facilities, if any, are needed to improve the quality of the programs being offered?

We did not do an extensive review of the financial, human, and other resources (other than faculty resources) provided to the MNA program. Our general impression is that the level of these resources is not unusual compared to that provided to many other such master’s degree programs. However, the level of such resources appears to be well short of that which is provided to the leading graduate programs in nonprofit management and leadership education at other universities in the United States.

Given the importance of continuing to make the MNA degree program financially accessible to people whose nonprofit employers may not be able to provide tuition assistance, it is quite likely the case that some form of institutional financial aid may be needed. This may be an especially important part of a strategy to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of students enrolling in the MNA degree program.

Additional funds are needed for scholarships/student supports/internships/student research. Experience at other nonprofit academic programs suggests that funding in those categories has proven to draw students to those programs. One of our programs offers a 35% scholarship to students who are employed in nonprofit organizations. This remains an attractive (and competitive) feature when prospective students compare that particular program with others in the region.

G. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

1. What are the department’s strengths? In what ways could the department be considered a leader in its field?
2. What are the department’s weaknesses and where could it most improve? What further challenges do you foresee the department facing in the coming years?
3. What changes will occur in your field over the next five to ten years that will impact the future direction of the department?
4. Are there differences between the department’s view of its role and the College and University expectations of the department?

5. How would you describe the morale and atmosphere within the department? Does the department enjoy the kind of collegiality among its members that is conducive to sustaining and enhancing its excellence?

6. Please comment on the department’s integrated plan for improvement over the next five years.

7. What should be the core objectives and priorities for the department over the next five years?

8. What opportunities exist to extend and build on present strengths and what do you see as the major obstacles that impede the department’s progress?

9. What improvements are possible through reallocating existing resources?

10. What improvements can only be addressed through additional resources?

MNA Program Morale and Atmosphere

During our review, we observed a sense of collegiality among the faculty, and engagement among the students. There was an expression of loss by both faculty and students about the end of the INOM program. Those elements contributed to a mixture of feelings that seemed to be present in the program’s participants – both a positive spirit and a bit of low morale. For those reasons, it is critical that any steps taken to improve the MNA program consider that stability is important at this time.

Plans for Improvement

There were seven areas mentioned in the self-study as priorities for attention in 2009: recruitment of new faculty; recruiting a more diverse student body; increasing the rigor of the curriculum; improving the “research” sequence; making other changes in the curriculum; exploring program expansion; and determining ways to improve overall student satisfaction with the program. We agree that all of these areas are significant for program improvement. We have commented in other sections of this report about our specific recommendations in these areas.

Opportunities and Obstacles

The MNA program has much strength, and has sustained its reputation as an outstanding academic program. The recommendations we offer are made with the expectation that they would contribute to further enhancing the program’s quality and reputation. We believe that the program is at a critical juncture, and that failure to make improvements might jeopardize its competitiveness in the future. The field of nonprofit studies has expanded exponentially over the past two decades. The MNA program was an early leader. There is an opportunity now to enhance the program to ensure that it remains at the forefront in terms of quality in preparing students for various professions in the nonprofit sector, and to pursue advanced education and research in the field. It appears that the challenges may involve resources, and the university’s commitment to making such an investment.
The MNA program must attend to strengthening its relations within the university, to help decision-makers realize that an investment in improving the program at this time would better position the program to increase its student enrollment and the success of its graduates. In addition, strengthening external relationships within the Bay Area’s nonprofit communities will better position the program as a resource, which could only improve opportunities for increased student enrollment.

H. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The College of Professional Studies at USF should encourage--and provide the necessary support for--a full-scale review of the content and structure of the MNA degree program. Specifically, this review should address the following questions:
   
   a. Are there important curricular topics that should be added to those currently included in the MNA degree program?
   b. Are there topics currently included in the curriculum that should be deemphasized or dropped altogether?

2. As part of a comprehensive review by the MNA program of the topics that should be included in an updated and comprehensive curriculum, a decision should be made regarding whether or not the current 36 unit requirement is sufficient to have the MNA degree program positioned as one of the leading such programs in the United States.

3. Serious consideration should be given by the MNA program to increasing the number of elective courses/units (and percentages of the totals) for the MNA degree. And consideration should be given to offering more choices of “nonprofit-focused” elective courses than the two now offered.

4. As part of the overall curriculum review recommended above, explicitly consider whether the current segments or categories of courses and their sequencing in the curriculum—or some other categorization and sequencing framework—would be the optimal configuration for achieving the principal educational purposes and intended learning outcomes of the MNA degree program.

5. As part of the comprehensive curriculum review recommended above, the MNA program should reconsider the purpose and role of the capstone requirement in light of the overall purposes of the MNA degree program and a decision should be made (or reaffirmed) with respect to what option(s) for students is/are most appropriate to satisfy this capstone requirement without creating an unreasonably high barrier to graduation.

6. Should a decision be made to reinstate a master’s thesis as one option for satisfying the capstone requirement, the College of Professional Studies and the MNA program should ensure that the necessary faculty and other support mechanisms are in place to make this option a fully satisfactory learning experience for students electing this option.
7. Whatever decision is made (or reaffirmed) by the MNA program with respect to the option(s) that are now available to students for satisfying the capstone requirement, this decision should be unambiguously communicated to students as soon as possible.

8. As part of the comprehensive curriculum review referred to above, the MNA program and the College of Professional Studies should consider increasing the length of courses to something more closely approximating the Carnegie standard of 37.5 classroom contact hours and ensuring that the combination of related curricular topics contained in the syllabus for each course make it possible to give appropriately rigorous coverage to each topic within a course of that length.

9. That the MNA program, with the support of the College of Professional Studies, search for suitable classroom space, scheduling and location alternatives that would enhance learning outcomes.

10. Consider enhancing the cohort model with more flexible options that would enable part-time students to register for courses from a limited “menu” of courses regularly offered by the MNA program each year and permit students to complete the program either more or less quickly than the current 27 months depending on their “life circumstances.”

11. Consider adding new courses to the curriculum to permit MNA students to select from a wider array of electives and/or choose to specialize in certain areas of interest.

12. Consider increasing the accessibility to this expanded array of “nonprofit focused” graduate courses by students in other graduate-level programs at USF.

13. That the MNA program and the College of Professional Studies consider adding to one or more “specializations” within the MNA degree and/or a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management: (1) that could be added to other graduate degrees at USF by interested students; or (2) selected as a stand-alone program option instead of the MNA degree by students for whom the full MNA degree might not be feasible or desirable.

14. That the MNA program and the College of Professional Studies begin to explore the possibilities of introducing online instruction or other alternative formats and/or locations in its educational program(s) in ways designed to increase accessibility to (and enrollments in) these programs without compromising program quality.

15. Increase the number of regular USF faculty members assigned to teach courses in the MNA program to at least three within the next three years by hiring new faculty members with appropriate nonprofit teaching and research expertise and/or by reassigning at least portions of the teaching responsibilities of regular USF faculty members to the MNA program.

27
16. Increase the percentage of courses in the MNA program taught by regular USF faculty members or adjunct faculty members with Ph.D or equivalent academic credentials to at least 50 percent of the total within the next three to five years.

17. Significantly reduce the percentage of courses in the MNA program taught by adjunct faculty members who received their master’s degree from the MNA program at USF itself to no more than 20 percent of the total within the next three years.

18. Ensure that students in the MNA program have adequate and timely access to the academic advising and other academic support services they need to optimize their learning experience.