**MPA Program --- Fall 2020 Enrollment**

**February 10, 2020**

**MPA Program Application Count**

The first round (priority) deadline for MPA program applications was Monday, February 3rd. As of that date, the Master of Public Administration program had the following numbers of applications for the two cohorts for which it is recruiting in Fall 2020:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Olympia PNAPP Cohort** |  |
|  | Applications |
| Fall 2017 | 119 |
| Fall 2018 | 70 |
| Fall 2019 | 63 |
| Fall 2020 (as of February 3) | 34 |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Tribal Governance Cohort** |  |
|  |  |
| Fall 2016 | 35 |
| Fall 2018 | 25 |
| Fall 2020 (as of February 3) | 12 |

**Possible Contributing Factors**

MPA program staff believe the following factors may contribute to this change:

1) Economy: A strong economy typically encourages potential students to delay graduate education

2) Declining Evergreen undergraduate enrollment: About 40% of the MPA program’s enrollment consists of students who earned their undergraduate degree at Evergreen.

3) Tacoma program success: It is possible that some students who would have applied in Fall 2020 and live in Pierce or King County are waiting until Fall 2021 to apply for the next Tacoma cohort.

4) Institutional reputation: lingering concerns since events in 2017 may discourage applications, as well as negative student experiences attributable to reduced staff in student support services.

5) MPA program reputation: Since 2018, we have seen unusually low student satisfaction scores in our annual MPA student survey, possibly generating negative word-of-mouth

6) Rising tuition and fewer tribal resources to support Tribal Governance students

7) Concern over the future of the Evergreen employee tuition waiver (2 applications this year, compared to 7 or 8 in other years)

**Short-Term Strategies**

In response, MPA staff are exploring the following options to increase applications for Fall 2020:

1. Setting a second deadline for March 9th and continuing social media and personal contact strategies to encourage applications
2. Consider moving to a rolling admissions process for Fall 2020, accepting applications through spring and summer 2020.
3. Lower our enrollment targets for our Fall 2020 cohorts and readjust curriculum to serve a smaller cohort:
   1. Olympia PNAPP cohort: 30
   2. Tribal Governance cohort: 15

This strategy will require that we re-allocate MPA faculty and may have implications for EWS and/or the Tacoma undergraduate program, since we had planned to draw on them for faculty to support our core courses.

**Long-Term Strategies**

1. Non-enrollment survey: Follow up with potential students who started but did not submit applications on their reasons for discontinuing the process.
2. Data analysis: Use application pool data to describe who we are reaching and to identify possible missed opportunities.
3. Marketing campaign: Use revisions in the MPA program’s curriculum to promote and re-brand the program (for instance, addition of a weekend-intensive option).
4. Responding to demand for online and hybrid options
5. Engaging alumni as a means to generate positive word-of-mouth
6. Weekend intensive option to supplement Tribal Governance program
7. Move towards admitting cohorts every year in Tacoma
8. Build relationships with political science departments in “feeder” programs (NWIC, WWU, UWT, UPS, St. Martins)
9. Explore additional academic programs (legislative assistant program and graduate certificate programs)
10. Explore ways to increase flexibility in the MPA program (reducing barriers to entering program, to completing the degree, and increasing options for part-time students)