

## **Provostial and Decanal Follow up to the MAPH/MAPSS Wellbery Committee Report**

In Autumn 2010, the University-wide faculty committee on the Quality of Academic Life began its work. During the committee's initial inquiries, the structure and size of the Master of Arts Program in the Humanities (MAPH) and the Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences (MAPSS) surfaced as parallel issues worthy of further independent exploration by those who know the programs the best, the faculty within the Humanities and Social Sciences Divisions. As a result, I convened a special committee drawn exclusively from those two Divisions to explore the MAPH and MAPSS programs. This group concluded its task in Winter 2012 and I am very grateful for the careful work and thoughtful recommendations the members of the committee have presented in their report (available on the Office of the Provost website (<http://provost.uchicago.edu/news.shtml>)).

Both MAPH and MAPSS are deeply rooted, important components of their home Divisions. MAPH recently celebrated its 15th year and MAPSS is poised to mark its 75th year in 2015. These programs provide intellectually intense, creative, and diverse venues in which students make the transition from undergraduate to graduate learning, explore rigorous interdisciplinarity and critical inquiry in the humanities or social sciences, and for those who begin with a long-term goal to complete a doctoral degree, decide whether such a career is truly what they would like to pursue.

These programs have an enviable placement record. Some alumni pursue additional academic training (here and elsewhere) and accept appointments across academia, from positions at two-year community colleges to tenure-track appointments at research universities. Other graduates take or resume jobs such as museum curators, technical writers, data analysts, journalists and other media workers, marketing specialists, and policy analysts with investment firms; many having risen to senior leadership. The faculty and staff at the University of Chicago who deliver these programs witness the powerful social and intellectual networks that arise in each student cohort over the course of an academic year. Large numbers of graduates remain associated with the University via alumni networks and programming, including participation as event speakers, panelists or mentors who help us refine these programs and shape opportunities for future students. Many alumni also provide important and significant philanthropic support to their programs and to the University.

As is the case for all programs, strains can arise with success. The remainder of this document details the faculty committee's recommendations and notes the progress made to date in addressing the strains on the quality of faculty academic life. Given that each program has a distinct identity and has evolved via its own historical path, we will address the steps taken to improve the MAPH and MAPSS programs individually. Future updates will be posted on the Office of the Provost website. Paramount in this effort is an objective to ensure that these programs continue to serve their purpose in a manner that is both true to the University of Chicago approach and provides the best possible program experience to the associated students and faculty.

### **Committee recommendations and alleviating measures**

I. In view of the major finding that the MAPH/MAPSS programs have crossed the limit of acceptable strain on the faculty, the Committee unanimously recommends reduction of the size of these programs. Such reduction should be made with a view toward maximizing the number of students qualified to do graduate-level work consonant with the academic culture of the University of Chicago.

#### **MAPH**

As noted by the Committee, faculty members balance commitments to their research, to the training of graduate students at both the Masters and Ph.D. levels, to the education of

undergraduates, to service for the University. Getting this balance right is a difficult and evolving process. The growing strength of the College, both in size and quality, affords additional flexibility in crafting a balanced educational portfolio. As a first step, the steady-state class size of the MAPH program will be reduced to approximately 110 students from an average of 125 students over the last 7 years.

### **MAPSS**

As a first step, the steady-state class size of the MAPSS program will be reduced to approximately 150 students from an average of 180 students over the last 7 years.

II. In addition to recommending reduction in the size of the MAPH/MAPSS programs, the Committee also recommends the following measures to address problems regarding impact on faculty life that have come into view in the course of our deliberations. In particular, we urge the Divisions to:

- (a) find devices to alleviate inequities in the distribution of the work burden generated by MAPH/MAPSS;

### **MAPH**

MAPH administration has been working to alleviate inequities in the distribution of the work burden. Now senior tenured faculty members supervise no more than two or three master's theses and untenured no more than one or two. Furthermore, support for MAPH thesis writing has been bolstered by adding preceptors and writing interns and by having the MAPH Associate Director manage requests for advisors.

### **MAPSS**

The leadership of the MAPSS program has committed to using the admissions process to match the spread of interests of MAPSS students with the capacities of the different departments in the Division. MAPSS instructional staff will teach over 20 courses a year designed specifically for MAPSS students, including eight courses that may be used to satisfy program requirements.

- (b) eliminate fixed quotas of departmental recommendations in the MAPH admissions process and, in general, work more closely with departments on admissions;

### **MAPH**

MAPH eliminated required numbers of referrals from departmental Ph.D. applications (or fixed quotas) effective FY12.

- (c) begin consultations to explore ways of increasing the pool of qualified applicants;

### **MAPH**

MAPH is working with the College Admissions professionals to enhance the applicant pool. The program website is being revamped to increase its effectiveness as a communications tool and to make it easier for prospective students to navigate and utilize for application

completion and submittal. While it is still too early to see changes within the admitted student cohort, there has been a 27% increase in the number of direct applicants to the program, which should yield a more robust entering class. Moreover, MAPH is inaugurating a College program whereby third years in the College may be admitted to MAPH for their fourth years, earning both the BA and MA in four years. This year two College students will join enter the MAPH and the goal is to have 10 College students in each MAPH cohort.

### **MAPSS**

The MAPSS applicant pool has improved steadily as applications to the departmental graduate programs have increased, with an increase in average GRE scores from 1200 in the entering class of 2000 to 1320 in 2011, commensurate with the average GRE scores across the Ph.D. and other Divisional Master's programs. MAPSS will explore MAPH recruitment strategies to assess which might be transferable.

(d) create incentives for departments and/or individual faculty for contributions to MAPH/MAPSS;

(e) permit and support measures (e.g., prerequisites or numerical thresholds) to secure the integrity of advanced (Ph.D.-level) seminars;

### **MAPH**

MAPH is working with the Registrar's Office on enrollment thresholds for classes. Various options are being discussed at this time.

### **MAPSS**

MAPSS is exploring ways that the program and departments can cooperate to make sure that the academic needs of both doctoral students and master's degree students are satisfied.

(f) encourage MAPH/MAPSS to develop additional or alternative programmatic foci (e.g., "literary and cultural theory") that will 1) attract qualified student sub-cohorts and 2) distribute students more equitably across departments;

### **MAPH**

MAPH routinely adds tracks to broaden appeal to applicants as well as to help distribute student advising more evenly throughout the Division. Last year's additional track was in Visual Arts and discussions are underway regarding a track in South Asian Studies.

(g) effectively communicate to faculty the benefits that flow from the MAPH/MAPSS programs (including making annual reports available to chairs).

### **MAPH**

MAPH Director, Professor David Wray (Classics), presents a report to the all-faculty quarterly divisional meeting at least twice each year. This report goes into the minutes that are distributed to all faculty members. Additionally, Mr. Wray participates in the quarterly meetings of the DMS group (Directors of Master's Studies), at which each program's

director discusses his or her program.

Going forward, in her monthly meetings with Chairs and in the quarterly all-faculty meetings, the Dean will communicate and emphasize the essential role that MAPH plays in the Division. The Division also posts a feature on MAPH in every issue of their magazine *Tableau*; this feature celebrates MAPH alumni and their accomplishments.

### **MAPSS**

The MAPSS Director, Professor John MacAloon, communicates quarterly with Department Chairs about the decisions, results, and challenges in the program.