NASPAA's Five Faculty Rule
A Discussion Paper

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Introduction and purpose of this paper

The purpose of this working paper is to summarize the rationale for and the arguments against the "five faculty rule" in NASPAA's Accreditation Standard 5.1 in the context of NASPAA's other standards, and in the context of the current revision of its accreditation standards to spur discussion about the advisability of continuing the five faculty rule as an accreditation standard. This is a discussion paper, not a position paper. It is intended to lay out the current (if not historical) issues associated with this rule as a backdrop for possibly revisiting this standard. The observations made reflect those of the author's only.

This working paper addresses two basic issues:
- *Is there a rationale for a "core nucleus" faculty/faculty sufficiency accreditation standard, in light of accreditation standards that are mission based but moving to outcome based?*
- *If there is a rationale for having a faculty sufficiency accreditation standard, particularly for mission-based accreditation, how prescriptive should the standard be? Should the faculty sufficiency standard (continue to) be numerically prescriptive? What are the arguments and potential impacts for and against a numerical faculty sufficiency standard?*

As part of the preparation for this report, the following were done:
- feedback and perspectives were obtained at the 2007 NASPAA Annual Conference from members of the Small Programs section, and from the Learning Environment and Faculty Sufficiency breakout session from the Plenary session on NASPAA Standards 2009
- the proceedings of the Five Faculty Rule Workshop (October 28, 2003) available at www.naspaa.org/accreditation/institute/rule/workshop.asp were consulted;
- the Five Faculty Rule Discussion: Options for Standard 5.1 (Five faculty Nucleus) based on an Accreditation Institute session at the NASPAA Conference, October 2003 (www.naspaa.org/accreditation /institute/rule/options.asp) was consulted;
- the Early NASPAA History by Laurin L. Henry, A summary report from the NASPAA Historical Project, prepared for NASPAA's 25th Anniversary Conference, Austin, TX, Oct. 18-21, 1995) (www.naspaa.org/ about_naspaa/about/history.asp was consulted;
- the relevant "case law" on the subject at (www.naspaa.org/accreditation/institute/rule/case_law.asp) was consulted
- a somewhat cursory examination was done of what other accrediting bodies require in this area, such as
    - Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) (www.aacsb.edu/)
    - National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (www.ncate.org/)
    - Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) (www.cswe.org/CSWE)
    - The Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (www.cahme.org/)

Several NASPAA colleagues from small programs provided valuable feedback on a draft of the discussion paper.

Background

NASPAA Accreditation Standard 5.1 states:

> *5.1 Faculty Nucleus. There must be a faculty nucleus that accepts primary responsibility for the professional graduate program. This regular faculty should consist of a sufficient number of full-time faculty significantly involved with the program to support the set of teaching, research and service responsibilities appropriate to the size and structure of the program. In no case should this faculty nucleus be fewer than five (5) full-time persons. The institution should specify how each regular faculty member is involved in the teaching and related research and service aspects of the program. At least 50 percent of the courses offered in the curriculum as well as at least 50 percent of the courses covering the common curriculum components shall be taught by full-time faculty of the institution.*

The "five faculty rule" dates back to the initial formulation of accreditation standards in the mid 1970s in the "Guidelines and Standards" statement that led to the formation of NASPAA.

> "The 'Guidelines and Standards' statement proposed for adoption incorporated the matrix and then ventured to spell out minimal institutional characteristics for offering MPA degrees in terms still familiar in NASPAA: programs ideally two academic years in length, with a minimum of a calendar year of course work even for students with relevant experience; a faculty of 'not less than five,' offering both academic and professional qualifications; an organizational entity "which possesses the same degree of independence accorded other professional schools and departments within the institution"; a designated faculty with substantial control of the program's content and requirements and its own personnel actions; and appropriate supporting services in the form of libraries and student services." (Source: www.naspaa.org/ about_naspaa/about/history.asp)

A "five faculty" requirement was articulated to underpin *both* quality and autonomy for MPA programs. Given the circumstances and diversity of MPA/MPP programs—in particular, the fact that many programs were—and still are-- "located" within other departments, program integrity and autonomy have been and continue to be an important issue for NASPAA and for many programs. It appears that from the very beginning, there was concern about the autonomy of MPA/MPP programs. *To the extent other academic programs do not face this "program autonomy" issue, this historical, and ongoing, circumstance arguably affects the approach and undoubtedly differentiates NASPAA standards from other program accreditation standards to the extent they are more likely to have separate, discrete departments as their autonomous program unit for accreditation purposes.* Whether or not the five faculty rule has *actually* been instrumental on the whole in underpinning program autonomy is another matter.

Standard 5.1, with its requirement of the so-called "five faculty rule," has historically perhaps been the most contentious NASPAA accreditation standard--what one commentator has referred to as this issue's "staying power." Why so contentious for NASPAA programs? The "five faculty rule" has over the years been the lens, or prism, by which we view what *is*, what *should constitute*, an MPA/MPP program, because the standard has been so determinative of what *is* an MPA/MPP program. The criticisms of the standard come externally, and internally. The contentiousness is partly over the issue of **five** full time faculty, and partly over what constitutes full time faculty who are "significantly involved." In general, though, the five faculty rule has been a two edged sword, and particularly tends to have a controlling impact on those programs "located" in other departments. On the one hand, there are the external concerns that the five faculty standard is "anachronistic," that it looks "back at a time when quality was assessed more in terms of inputs than outcomes and performance" (see www.naspaa.org/accreditation/institute/rule/workshop.asp), that it is simply a resource demand, and that it has no place in the current and emerging accreditation environment of outcomes. Internally, by its reliance on an apparently arbitrary numerical measure ("five full time faculty"), the rule arguably has served and continues to serve as a barrier to entry to the accreditation ranks for some number of small programs which *but for* this requirement might otherwise be accredited.

On the other hand, there is the argument that the five faculty rule has served and continues to serve as a vital floor, a bedrock, a mainstay, of faculty resources for a number of small programs, particularly those programs "located" within another department and not organized as their own autonomous public administration department. The rule has served as a justification for sufficient faculty resources needed to provide a quality—and autonomous--MPA/MPP program.

So, the stimuli to re-examine this particular standard (even as all of the accreditation standards are being re-examined) come both externally from outside of NASPAA and internally within NASPAA and its programs.

As a matter of focus for this paper, it needs to be noted that because the five faculty rule has had such "staying power" as a lens or prism by which MPA/MPP programs are viewed, the rule has also become a magnet, a draw, for several related, but discrete issues—things like the public administration intellectual integrity and commitment of the program—are MPA/MPP students being taught by a sufficient number of (full time) faculty who are grounded in public administration literature and practice? Is there a genuine governance of the program by more than the program director? While these clearly are important issues, they are not centrally addressed in this paper.

The basic questions
- *Is there a rationale for a "nucleus" faculty/faculty sufficiency accreditation standard, in light of accreditation standards that are mission based but moving to performance and outcome based?*

- *If there is a rationale for having a faculty sufficiency accreditation standard, particularly for mission-based accreditation, how prescriptive should the standard be? Should the standard be numerically based? What are the arguments for and against a numerical faculty sufficiency standard, and the potential impacts of a standard that would no longer be numerically prescriptive?*

Is there a rationale for a "nucleus" faculty/faculty sufficiency accreditation standard?

The five faculty rule standard has been criticized as being an input measure and no longer relevant in a world of performance and outcomes. While the faculty sufficiency rule in Standard 5.1 is perhaps the most conspicuous of the "input" measures for accreditation standards, there are of course a number of "input" *sufficiency* standards that programs must be meet for accreditation, all of which are presumably directed at assuring a basis for a quality program and quality learning environment. For example, NASPAA Standards 7 and 8 deal with a number of inputs/sufficiency measures:

Standard 7.0 Student Services
7.1 Advisement and Appraisal. Strong and continuous program advisement, career guidance, and progress appraisal shall be available for all students from the point of admission through graduation.

7.2 Placement Service. The program and/or the institution shall provide an adequate placement service oriented to public affairs and administration.

Standard 8.0 Supportive Services and Facilities
8.1 Budget. The program shall have financial resources sufficient to support its stated objectives.

8.2 Library Services. All students and faculty shall have reasonable access to library facilities and services that are recognized as adequate for master's level study in public affairs and administration…..

8.3 Supportive Personnel. Adequate secretarial and clerical personnel should be available to enable the program to meet its educational objectives.

8.4 Instructional Equipment. Program faculty and students should have access to appropriate equipment for coursework and research, including computer facilities, visual aid devices, audio and video tapes and films.

8.5 Faculty Offices. The offices for faculty should provide adequate space and privacy for student counseling, course preparation, and other faculty responsibilities.

8.6 Classrooms. Appropriate classrooms should be available for the courses being offered. This would normally include rooms suitable for seminars, case discussions, simulation exercises, and lectures.

8.7 Meeting Area. An appropriate area should be available for students and faculty to meet informally and discuss class projects, internship experiences, and other program matters.

These are all sufficiency "input" measures, dealing with the learning environment, and they are fairly common requirements among accreditation standards for professional programs. Arguably it makes sense to put some boundaries on what we call a "program" for the purposes of accreditation, and to articulate those dimensions that underpin a quality learning environment. And presumably, there is *some* relationship between mission and outcomes, and sufficient inputs/resources, such as faculty, budget, library, etc. to meet the mission and the intended outcomes. (Note, however, that these other "sufficiency" standards typically do not rely on a quantifiable measure for determining program compliance for accreditation purposes. Each program must document how it is complying with the particular sufficiency standard, consistent with meeting its mission.)

Similarly, there are other "input" measures that serve as accreditation standards, sometimes as prescriptive as the "five faculty rule" and sometimes not. For example, Standard 4.3 is prescriptive regarding the length of time for full time study to complete the degree:

"Students with little or no educational background or professional experience in the common and additional curriculum components are expected to devote the equivalent of two academic years of full-time study to complete the professional masters degree program. Where students have had strong undergraduate preparation in the common curriculum requirements or have been engaged in significant managerial activities, some of the subject matter requirements might be appropriately waived or reduced. Even in such cases, students ordinarily must spend the equivalent of a calendar year of full-time study in formal academic work, exclusive of an internship, to obtain the professional masters degree. A calendar year is defined as two semesters and a summer session at least eight weeks in duration or four quarters (exclusive of internship) of full-time academic work."

And of course Standard 5.0 on the faculty has a number of input requirements—things like the percentage of courses to be taught by full time faculty, the terminal degree requirements, faculty "quality" measures, and faculty diversity. So, arguably, there continues to be a powerful rationale for various input or "sufficiency" measures for accreditation purposes. The question then becomes:

Assuming there is a rationale for a faculty sufficiency accreditation standard (among other program sufficiency standards), how prescriptive should it be? Should the standard be numerically based?

What are the arguments for and against a numerical faculty sufficiency standard, and the potential impacts of a standard that would no longer be numerically prescriptive?

While there may be concerns about the relevancy of input/sufficiency measures for accreditation standards, the other major objection to the five faculty rule is, what *is* the rationale for an actual numerical standard of *five* (*significantly involved*) full time faculty?

<u>Arguments for a numerically based (five) faculty sufficiency standard</u>
There are three principal and interrelated arguments for a five (significantly involved) numerically based full time faculty sufficiency standard: the critical mass/program autonomy argument, the "backing into" argument, and, the argument from experience.

1) Critical mass argument for an identifiable autonomous and sustainable program
The main underlying issue for a numerically based faculty sufficiency standard *for NASPAA programs* may very well have to do with assuring an autonomous, integral, accountable, and sustainable program, including the relationship of the five faculty rule to other NASPAA accreditation standards. The "core nucleus faculty" requirement in Standard 5.1 is deeply intertwined with Standard 3 Program Jurisdiction, Standard 3.1 Administrative Organization, Standard 3.2 Identifiable Faculty and Standard 3.4 Scope of Influence, and of course with the ability to comply with Standard 4.21 Common Curriculum Components.

> Standard 3.1 Administrative Organization. Effective public policy and public administration programs may exist in several forms - sometimes as an autonomous department or school, sometimes as an accountable portion of some larger unit such as a school of administration or a department of political science. Within the framework of university organization, responsibility for the professional masters degree program in public affairs and administration should rest with an identifiable component of faculty and an administrative organization capable of conducting the program effectively….
>
> 3.2 Identifiable Faculty. There is a public affairs and administration program with identifiable faculty membership, whose primary responsibility for the program is recognized at the next higher level of university organization
>
> 3.4 Scope of Influence. Within the framework of organization and process peculiar to the institution, the public affairs and administration faculty and/or administrator exercises initiative, and substantial determining influence with respect to:
>
> - general program policy and planning
> - degree requirements
> - new courses and curriculum changes
> - admissions

- certification of degree candidates
- course scheduling and teaching assignment
- use of financial and other resources
- appointment, promotion, and tenuring of program faculty

Recognizing the historical and current reality of many MPA/MPP programs—namely, that many small programs are not discrete public administration departments but are located within other departments--and in lieu of requiring a discrete public administration department for accreditation purposes, the standards require five full time significantly involved faculty to comprise a program that has autonomy, integrity and sustainability.

The argument is based on the rationale that that *some* minimum number of (significantly involved) full time faculty is needed to constitute a core nucleus of a program that has integrity, autonomy and sustainability to it—that has the scope of influence and the ability to govern itself, without which a program would be unable to carry out the basic functions and requirements of a quality educational program. Presumably, if nearly all NASPAA programs were located within their own discrete Public Administration departments, this issue would be far less compelling. But given the historical, and current circumstance of many NASPAA programs that are located in another department, the issue of program integrity, autonomy and sustainability continues to come into play.

But, why *five* as the minimum number of significantly involved full time nucleus faculty? The argument then is that a program will need a minimum of *five* full time significantly engaged faculty if it intends to do exercise legitimate program governance in a competent and sustainable way.

It would be hard to argue that an autonomous, quality program could be defined and governed, and core courses taught, simply by having a designated program director. Could a program be governed and administered, with core courses taught, with less than five significantly involved full time faculty, say, four or three? Probably. But, nearly every program has experienced the annual vagaries of institutional budgetary (if not political) circumstances that impinge on the constancy of faculty resources for a particular program or department. The argument is that absent a firm numerical faculty sufficiency standard, faculty resources are subject to being (further) whittled down or away, thereby threatening the autonomy, the integrity and long term sustainability of a program, if not the adequacy of covering the required curriculum. The argument here is that it is one thing for a program with a mainstay of five significantly involved full time faculty members to periodically face the "whittling down" pressures, but that a program which has four, or even three significantly involved full time faculty members as its core faces program autonomy and integrity, viability and sustainability issues.

The critical mass argument relates both to program autonomy and governance—i.e., the need to have more than one significantly involved full time individual—the program director—setting program policy; and to the breadth and depth of covering the curriculum from both public administration and multidisciplinary perspectives. The argument is more tenuous on the curriculum side, since it is presumably possible to have different

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faculty teaching program courses who are not significantly involved (other than through teaching). But there remains the value of programs' having a core nucleus of "several" significantly involved faculty who teach in the program, thereby bringing valuably different perspectives to the learning environment.

2*) The "backing into" argument* is based on the rationale that an examination of all of the things that need to be effectively administered through a program, including meeting all of the instruction for the common curriculum components (Standard 4.21) would "count up to" the work of five significantly involved full time faculty, such as:

- The ability to teach the common (and specialized) curriculum components in a multidisciplinary professional program
- Advising
- Admissions
- Marketing
- Outreach and community involvement—again, the need for dedicated program faculty who are committed to doing that
- General program policy and planning
- Admissions
- Appointment, promotion, and tenuring of program faculty

The "backing into" argument makes the case that in order to carry out—and sustain--the various (accreditation?) requirements of a program--things like program planning, advising, outreach and community involvement, hiring, and promotion and tenure decisions, marketing, *and* teaching all of the multidisciplinary dimensions of the core and specialized curriculum components, that generally "adds up" to (or would add up to) five significantly involved full time faculty.

3) Finally, there is the argument from experience. Based on this argument, we have had 30 years of experience with the standard, and it has stood the test of time. This argument was spelled out in the 2003 workshop:

> "And yet, at NASPAA, for many years, there has been a shared consensus among both COPRA and many schools that five was not just an arbitrary number, but rather the result of considered expert reflection on how many people it really takes to run a good professional program, that is inherently multidisciplinary and often in a highly academic graduate setting where professional programs must struggle for identity and to provide special services to prepare students as professionals in public service. For many, "reform" of the Five Faculty rule is less about setting aside the language of the standard, than about articulating the long-standing tacit rationale for the Five Faculty rule that has existed behind the standard."   www.naspaa.org/accreditation/institute/rule/workshop.asp

The argument is that the five faculty rule has stood the test of time—although not without controversy--as an underpinning for providing program identity, autonomy, governance, accountability, and quality. It has worked as a standard to keep programs sustainable. And, as a standard, it is easy for programs—*and their institutions*—to understand. It is a

standard that deans and provosts can understand. It is a clear line in the sand for institutions, if a program wishes to obtain and maintain accreditation.

Arguments against a prescriptive numerical faculty sufficiency standard

There are two main objections to the five faculty rule.

First and foremost, within the framework of a mission-based (if not outcome based) accreditation process, *why and how does a prescriptive numerically based input standard matter*? The burden of proof should on the program to demonstrate how it meets its mission, not based on meeting some arguably arbitrary input or resources measure. A numerically prescriptive faculty sufficiency standard does not allow for the recognized diversity and uniqueness of NASPAA programs, and does not allow for the desired flexibility in meeting program mission and goals.

As a result, some number of programs are arguably arbitrarily denied accreditation but for not meeting this five faculty standard. Other things being equal, it is surely desirable to have (small) programs accredited.

It should be noted, however, that the case law seems to suggest that COPRA has not been rigid in its interpretation of the numerical standard. On the contrary, it *appears* that programs clearly not meeting this faculty numerical standard are highly likely to be experiencing "nonconformity" to other standards as well. That is, it *appears* rare that the *only* barrier for programs facing initial accreditation or re-accreditation is not meeting the numerical five faculty rule. Programs fail to achieve accreditation often due to inadequate resources: i.e., they may not have been structured or resourced adequately.

> "It is important to remember that the faculty nucleus issue should not be taken out of context of the overall review process: it is seldomly the only issue identified in the interim report, and is generally not the only non-conformity that gives rise to a non-accreditation decision. It is often embedded in a set of conformity issues regarding the program's coherence and sufficient resources to achieve its mission." (See case law on this matter at www.naspaa.org/accreditation/institute/rule/case_law.asp)

The argument has been advanced that the five faculty rule would be less contentious if programs more readily understood—or if it were made clearer to programs--how flexible the interpretation of this standard is for accreditation purposes. Indeed, arguments have been advanced that programs have so much flexibility about meeting the standard for five significantly involved faculty that insufficient attention has been paid to the need for sufficient program governance—i.e., ensuring that a core nucleus of faculty, not just a single program director, is responsible for program governance.

Secondly, *even given a rationale for a faculty sufficiency standard, why five*? There has not been advanced a sufficiently compelling rationale for *five* faculty as opposed to some other number, or any number, for a core, nucleus faculty. What is the objective basis for arriving at a numerical standard of five? The number five appears to be an arbitrary. And

why should the faculty sufficiency standard resort to a numerical prescriptiveness when other sufficiency standards do not impose that rigidity?

What do other accrediting bodies do regarding faculty sufficiency?

It is common for accrediting bodies of professional programs to incorporate a "faculty sufficiency" standard as part of accreditation.

The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB www.aacsb.edu/) standards say: "Degree programs in business must be supported by continuing resources." Its standards provide what they call "basis for judgment" and "guidance for documentation:" Here is their faculty sufficiency standard.

> *9: The school maintains a faculty sufficient to provide stability and ongoing quality improvement for the instructional programs offered. The deployment of faculty resources reflects the mission and programs. Students in all programs, majors, areas of emphasis, and locations have the opportunity to receive instructions from appropriately qualified faculty. [FACULTY SUFFICIENCY]*
>
> *Basis for Judgment:*
>
> - *Regardless of the type of contractual relationships between faculty members and the school (e.g., full-time/part-time, tenured/non-tenured, permanent/temporary, academic/clinical), the faculty is sufficient in numbers and presence to perform or oversee the following functions:*
>   *- Curriculum Development: A process exists to engage multidiscipline expertise in the creation, monitoring, evaluation, and revision of curricula.*
>   *- Course Development: A process exists to engage content specialists in choosing and creating the learning goals, learning experiences, media, instructional materials, and learning assessments for each course, module or session.*
>   *- Course delivery: The obligations specified in the Assurance of Learning standards are met.*
>   *- Other activities that support the instructional goals of the school's mission.*
> - *In determining sufficiency, reviewers should consider faculty commitments to all activities. This includes degree programs and such additional activities as research, instructional development, non-degree education, faculty development activities, community service, institutional service, service in academic organizations, economic development, organizational consulting, and other expectations the school holds for faculty members.*
> - *Normally, Participating faculty members will deliver at least 75 percent of the school's teaching (whether measured by credit hours, contact hours, or other metric appropriate to the school).*

- *Normally, Participating faculty members will deliver at least 60 percent of the teaching in each discipline, each academic program, and location.*
- *Participating faculty are distributed across programs, disciplines and locations consistent with the school's mission.*
- *The school has processes to support faculty members regardless of the employment relationships.*
- *A school should develop appropriate criteria consistent with its mission for the classification of faculty as participating and supporting. The interpretive material in the standard provides guidance only and each school should adapt this guidance to its particular situation and mission by developing and implementing criteria that indicate how the school is meeting the spirit and intent of the standard. The criteria should address:*

  - The activities that are required to attain participating status.
  -The priority and value of different activity outcomes reflecting the mission and strategic management processes.
  -Quality standards required of each activity and how quality is assured.
  -The quantity and frequency of activities expected within a typical AACSB review cycle to maintain participating status.

  The criteria should be periodically reviewed and reflect a focus on continuous improvement over time.

Guidance for Documentation:
- *Describe the faculty complement available to fulfill the schools mission and all instructional programs they staff in the most recent academic year.*
- *Demonstrate how faculty members and staff fulfill the functions of curriculum development, course development, course delivery, academic assistance, academic advising, career advising, and other activities that support the schools mission.*
- *Table 9-1 should be completed to document deployment of participating and supporting faculty.*

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE www.ncate.org/) in its Standard 6 on Unit Governance and Resources requires that the "unit has the leadership, authority, budget, personnel, facilities, and resources including information technology resources, for the preparation of candidates to meet professional, state, and institutional standards."

The Council of Social Work Education (www.cswe.org/CSWE/) in its Standard 4 on Faculty, requests that the
> *Program has full-time faculty, which may be augmented by part-time faculty, with the qualifications, competence, and range of expertise in social work education to achieve its goals and objectives. The program has a sufficient full-time equivalent*

faculty-to-student ration (usually 1:25 for baccalaureate programs and 1:12 for master's programs) to carry out ongoing functions of the program."

Faculty size is commensurate with the number and type of curricular offering in class and field; class size; number of students; and the faculty's teaching, scholarly, and service responsibilities. The baccalaureate social work program has a minimum of two full-time faculty with master's social work degrees from a CSWE-accredited, with full-time appointment in social work, and whose principal assignment is to the baccalaureate program. It is preferred that faculty have a doctoral degree The master's social work program has a minimum of six full-time faculty with master's social work degrees from a CSWE-accredited program and whose principal assignment is to the master's program. The majority of the full-time master's social work program faculty have a master's degree in social work and a doctoral degree.

Interestingly, the Council of Social Work Education is prescriptive about the social work program director's appointment and assigned time to that function.

The Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (www.cahme.org) in its Criterion IV on Faculty Teaching, Scholarship and Service, asks that "Program and University leadership will ensure that the complement, involvement and qualifications of Program faculty are sufficient to accomplish the mission of the Program."

Discussion and Concluding Observations

A faculty sufficiency standard—whether numerically prescriptive or not-- is generally part of a broader set of resources ("inputs") needed to deliver a quality program, a quality learning environment that is instrumental to effectuating student learning outcomes. Indeed, the Provisional Guiding Principles for NASPAA Standards 2009 recognize that in Principle #2: "NASPAA Standards should include multiple dimensions of quality, including the learning environment." Even in outcome based standards, there is a relationship between inputs/resources, and outcomes.

But, should there be a *numerical* faculty sufficiency standard in the context of standards that are mission based, but moving towards outcomes? What are the impacts, if any, of keeping the current five significantly involved full time faculty, or of revising or eliminating it?

At the heart of the argument for (and against) five significantly involved full time faculty as a core nucleus are the particular idiosyncrasies of NASPAA programs—namely, that historically and currently, a not insignificant number of NASPAA programs are located within departments other than discrete public administration departments. What is an MPA/MPP "program" in the context where the program is not itself a discrete public administration department? So, recognizing the reality, and the diversity of MPA/MPP programs, to deal with the autonomy and governance issues, the accreditation standards

have focused not on requiring an autonomous public administration department, but rather, on having a core nucleus "identifiable faculty" who have a substantial controlling influence over the program. The significant involvement of *five* full time faculty was and is intended to provide the *wherewithal* for programs to have autonomy, integrity, sustainability, and of course quality.

The criticisms of the five significantly involved five full time faculty standard come externally and internally. Externally, the five faculty standard has been criticized as "anachronistic" in a world driven by outcomes and outcomes measurement. It turns out, upon examination, that the five faculty rule is hardly anachronistic, for two reasons. One, there *is* a relationship between inputs/resources, and outcomes. More importantly, given the particular circumstances of many NASPAA programs—in particular, the historical fact that many programs have not been and are not their own discrete public administration departments, but rather are "located" within other departments and are therefore subject to legitimate program definition and program autonomy issues. The program autonomy is an issue not likely to be central in other accrediting bodies which have a dedicated department or school underpinning their programs, but it is an issue that has been at the heart of NASPAA accrediting issues from the beginning. Arguably, the five faculty rule would be far less of an issue if the overwhelming number of NASPAA programs were located in their own discrete public administration departments. At the same time, given the reality of the situation, it is hard to imagine that NASPAA standards would move in the direction of *requiring* a discrete public administration department as a condition of accreditation.

Internally, the five significantly involved full time faculty standard is criticized as negating the opportunity for some number of programs to obtain (or maintain) accreditation but for the five faculty rule. Some number of programs are arguably being denied accreditation but for this requirement. (We do not have data on the number of programs which have been denied accreditation due to not meeting the five faculty rule standard. Nor do we have data on the number of programs which have not even *applied* for accreditation, knowing that they would not meet the five faculty rule standard.)

On the other hand, those programs which have mustered, so to speak, the five full time faculty for accreditation generally find the standard desirable, indeed indispensable for them in terms of their maintaining this level of faculty resources for their programs.

The particular circumstances of NASPAA programs—that many of them are not discrete departments--may also be why it may necessary to proceed with some caution in seeking guidance on the faculty sufficiency issue from other accreditation bodies, at least to the extent that a given discipline may be more likely as a rule to have autonomous departments within which their programs are governed and operate and are accredited.

The five faculty rule especially impacts small programs, and small programs will be affected no matter what course of action is taken (or not taken) on this standard. Simply put, on the one hand, the five faculty rule has, for the most part, served a valuable purpose for those programs which have been able to meet the standard. It has served as a

bedrock for sustainability, for long term viability, given the inevitable vagaries of faculty turnover in programs. The standard is easy to understand (at least for some programs, compared to a non numerical standard), although not so easy to comply with for some programs, in particular for programs located within another department where program autonomy, and the competition for resources, continue to come into play. There is the sense that there is, on balance, a pretty strong commitment to the five faculty rule among accredited "small programs," and that a "weakening" of this standard would consequently dilute the value of accreditation, both for small programs and indeed for all programs.

Why five? The budgetary vagaries of faculty lines and institutional commitment to faculty resources for programs underlie the level of five. What program (with or without five full time faculty) has not experienced the loss of at least one faculty member in a given year? And is there any question that programs face whittling down of faculty resources when every institution of higher education is facing increasingly constrained budgets and increasing competition for resources for the institution's various programs. In that context, one can appreciate the argument for a "line in the sand" commitment of sufficient faculty resources for a viable and sustainable MPA/MPP program.

On the other hand, the five faculty rule apparently has served as a somewhat arbitrary barrier for some number of small programs which but for the five faculty rule would arguably qualify for accreditation. What is so determinative about the number five, or about any number of faculty, for which there is no prima facie rationale? In a mission based environment, why not let programs make their case for meeting their mission, rather than impose an arguably arbitrary numerical standard?

A change in the faculty sufficiency standard will impact MPA/MPP programs. We do not have accurate data on the number of programs which might benefit from the elimination of the five faculty rule, just as we do not have accurate data on the number of programs which believe they would be adversely affected by the elimination of the five faculty rule because of their reliance on this standard to maintain constancy of faculty resources.

So, we are left with the dilemma: keeping a numerical standard of five full time faculty provides vital support for those accredited programs which have come to rely on that standard; at the same time, keeping that numerical standard locks out otherwise successful applicants for accreditation who but for the five faculty rule would be accredited.

The elimination of a numerically prescriptive standard is possible. If the revised standards move in the direction of removing the numerical "five faculty" standard, the standards will in all likelihood still need to rely on *some* faculty sufficiency standard. As a result, there would need to be provided explicit and clear guidance to programs about what constitutes meeting the standard (what AACSB, e.g., calls "basis for judgment" and "guidance for documentation"). It would require NASPAA to provide specific guidance about what the objective expectations are for meeting the standard, and it would place the burden of proof on the programs to demonstrate that they have sufficient resources (in this case, faculty) to meet accreditation standards. That may of course beg the question. If

there are to be faculty sufficiency standards, what is the objective basis for knowing, for determining, that the faculty sufficiency standard has been and is being met? What will programs have to demonstrate that that they are meeting the faculty sufficiency standard? One gets the sense that in practice, the actual rule of thumb or the target for meeting the faculty sufficiency standard would (still?) be five significantly involved full time faculty, for the reasons argued above (that that is the number of significantly involved faculty needed for sustainable program governance, and to exercise in an acceptable way all of the responsibilities otherwise expected of an accredited program).

One additional observation: It may very well be the case of that the issue of the number of full time faculty is at least as much about what number of (full time equivalent) students is sufficient for longer term program viability and sustainability. Which comes first? Sufficient faculty resources to put on a credible program, or a sufficient volume of students to support (from the institution's perspective) a mainstay of sufficient faculty resources? And of course there is the related issue of a faculty student ratio as a measure of sufficiency. That is, the five faculty rule is a *floor* for meeting faculty sufficiency for an accredited program. Left unaddressed is the issue of whether programs should be required to demonstrate faculty sufficiency relative to the size (student enrollments) of the program after the minimum requirement has been met. Is it enough to say that a program of 50 students and a program of 200 students both meet a faculty sufficiency standard if they have the five full time significantly involved faculty?

At the heart of continuing or changing the five faculty rule, then, is this question: what constitutes a sustainable "program" for NASPAA purposes, given the historical and current uniqueness and diversity of MPA/MPP programs? What constitutes an autonomous, accountable, and sustainable unit that can be identified as an MPA/MPP program? And, so, we are left with still answering the question: do five significantly involved full time faculty constitute a sustainable core nucleus that defines an MPA/MPP program in terms of governance and covering the required curriculum areas, particularly in the circumstance where the program itself is not a discrete public administration department?