

Academic Programs Committee
Resolution on the Executive Masters of National Security Policy
March 11, 2021

I. Introduction

Subcommittee A of the Academic Programs Committee reviewed the proposal for creating of a new Executive Masters of National Security Policy (E-MNSP) degree on March 3, 2021. Representing the unit were Judith Kelly (Dean), Mark Hart (Director of Digital Learning), and Tim Nicholas (Visiting Professor of the Practice) of the Sanford School of Public Policy. APC was provided with documentation including a detailed proposal for creation of the E-MNSP, feedback from the Master’s Advisory Council, and written responses to the questions from APC. The revised version of the proposal included responses to the recommendations from MAC in an appendix.

a. Summary of APC discussion:

- i. **Curriculum content:** The APC asked the Sanford team about the appropriateness of proposed program curriculum content, given the relatively advanced experience level and heterogeneity of the professional backgrounds of the potential student population. Some of the course titles suggest quite generic and basic material which might be ill-matched to the student population needs. The response was that the program developers have consulted extensively with diverse members of the national security community (spanning military, civil service, intelligence, etc.). The Sanford team feels that the target community will value a foundational approach and will benefit from the curriculum’s commonalities. The team’s preference is to build the program around long-term and broader perspectives, with more transient “current event” content added and removed as needed. They will collect input from students as well.

The APC was provided with details of specific content from the few other examples of similar degrees. The aim is that Duke’s program will excel with respect to these other programs by emphasizing foundational aspects and by building leadership skills and community among the students.

In the proposed curriculum, students take a single elective with only a few choices for that elective (the sparse elective choice may have pros and cons.) A few local students might be able to take in-person courses. The number of elective slots and breadth of elective choices may increase post-COVID. Sanford will reach out to other schools at Duke to see what might be of interest to students and available.

- ii. **Online course capacity:** The APC inquired as to whether there would be sufficient capacity within Sanford to host the required number of new online courses (given also other online course needs within Sanford.) Sanford is currently ramping up a few new online courses each semester, and they are confident that that resources will be sufficient to provide service for the new E-MNSP courses.
- iii. **Diversity of instructors and students:** Although overall the Sanford faculty is relatively diverse in racial and ethnic background, the current national security faculty are predominantly white male. There has been one recent hire of a woman in the national security area. A majority of recent counterterrorism fellows have been women. The Sanford team states that they are very aware of the diversity issue and that they will be working to improve it. The degree's hybrid format may be helpful for diversity in that students with families will find it easier to participate in online activities than in fully campus-based education. The APC anticipates that increasing and maintaining diversity will be one of the biggest challenges for this program, given the lack of diversity in the potential pool of students. Continued attention to this issue will be required over time. Enhanced diversity of cultural perspective within the program could potentially also be considered, perhaps via course content (e.g., language or cultural courses) or via co-curricular activities (seminars, discussions, etc.).
- iv. **Recruitment:** the pool of applicants will be relatively small, with the aim of about 50 applicants for a class of 20, and they expect to meet that target easily. Recruitment efforts are mainly targeted to specific groups and individuals. There has been recent progress in approach to recruitment via online marketing. The Sanford team wants to avoid the perception that the program is a "degree mill," so they prefer to keep the program small. They are hoping that graduates will return to their professional communities and then help to recruit future classes of students. Long-term attention to marketing may be in order, as the first cohorts saturate initial demand for the degree.
- v. **Long-term vision:** it is not clear whether the program should grow much beyond around 25 students, although the team will track metrics to evaluate whether future growth is warranted. The goals are to create a prestige program and to be consistent with the Sanford "brand." The program will be evaluated against the overall Sanford criteria for degree programs (capacity to deliver quality education, positive revenue, and enhancement of Sanford's mission).

II. Resolution

- a. APC recognizes the excellent potential of the Duke E-MNSP program and is very impressed by the Sanford team's proposal. The team has identified a clear need

within the national security community and has devised a well-thought-out implementation plan to address this need. APC appreciates the team's thoughtful and comprehensive responses to questions.

- b. APC recommends continued and persistent attention to increasing and maintaining the diversity of students and instructors participating in the program.
 - c. APC suggests also incorporation of diversity of cultural perspective into the program via curricular content or co-curricular activities.
 - d. APC recommends attention to long-term marketing strategies for student recruitment.
- I. **Vote** – The resolution passed with 8 yes's and 2 abstentions (2 abstentions were members who had to miss the meeting).