To The UCR Community,

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor Dallas Rabenstein and I are delighted to announce the launch of the School of Public Policy (SPP), with curricula leading to the degrees of Master of Public Policy and Doctor of Philosophy.

This initiative began as a grass-roots effort of the faculty in 2004, passed through the processes of the UCR Division of the Academic Senate, Academic Council, and the UC Office of the President. The SPP was supported by the California Postsecondary Education Commission and approved by the Regents of the University of California in September 2008.

Regrettably, since 2008 we have had to delay the launch of the SPP because of the continuing economic downturn and yearly uncertainty of UCR’s general fund budget. During this past year we received requests to go forward from several faculty members across many departments and colleges, despite the budgetary uncertainties. We also received endorsement from Professors Gauvain and Wudka as the then chair and current chair, respectively, of the Riverside Division of the Academic Senate, as well as several Academic Deans.

Our economic challenges are by no means over. Nevertheless, in light of the continuing faculty support and the fact that if we don’t launch the School our window of opportunity to do so will lapse, it is time to launch. If our opportunity lapsed because of further delay, we would have to go through the laborious approval process again without any assurance of outcome.

Provost Rabenstein will work with the Senate to identify an expedited process to select the founding Dean, who shall be chosen from among the UCR faculty for a term appointment of 3-5 years. Nominations, including self-nominations, can be made directly to the Provost at dallas.rabenstein@ucr.edu. Among the Founding Dean’s initial responsibilities will be seeking approval for the School’s academic curricula from the Senate and working with UCR Advancement to identify and raise external gifts for the new school.

The establishment of the School of Public Policy is firmly rooted in several of the key objectives of UCR 2020, our strategic plan. It will expand professional education in areas that respond to the needs of the state and region that help to stimulate a knowledge-based economy, establish stronger ties with the community, and expand educational opportunities for students. We also anticipate that the SPP will enhance UCR’s reputational rankings as we will be investing in areas of academic strength. The SPP also will increase the ratio of graduate/professional to undergraduate students.

Prior to construction of new facilities well into the future, the faculty and students in the School will be located in existing campus space on an interim basis.

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY: MISSION, VISION AND DESIGN
The mission of the School of Public Policy encompasses three broad mandates: (i) to train a cadre of students in rigorous policy analysis, preparing them to pursue careers in local, state, and national governments and in non-profit organizations; (ii) to facilitate research by multi-disciplinary teams at UCR on substantive public policy problems facing the region as well as the state, the nation and the world; and (iii) to initiate and maintain a dialogue with policymakers in the region and the state. The SPP will be the first serving Inland Southern California.

Two major themes will distinguish the UCR School of Public Policy. First, the School will focus on a range of social policy issues, particularly those associated with population growth and movement, as they intersect with environmental policy. UCR’s Inland Southern California location makes the campus uniquely situated to address such concerns.

The second theme is the importance of regional policy. Increasingly, key policy issues transcend city, county, or even state boundaries, making a regional approach to common problems far more effective. Yet current public policy structures have not adapted to the needs of regional policymaking. The School will specialize in regional relationships and will be a leader in the development of the field of regional policy analysis and policymaking.

The Masters in Public Policy (MPP) degree will be offered as a two-year, full-time program consisting of a core curriculum, a policy internship in the summer following the first year, a second-year policy analysis project, and elective courses. The program will focus on the practical and applied aspects of policy-making and policy implementation (including monitoring and evaluation).

The MPP program will also be offered to mid-career students (typically, policy professionals already working in the public sector who seek to strengthen their analytical and quantitative skills and move into positions of greater responsibility), by allowing them to stretch the program over 3–4 years.

The doctoral program will attract two types of students: those who wish to pursue teaching and/or research careers in public policy programs at other universities or policy think-tanks, and those who are primarily interested in other subject matter programs (such as the environment, political science, or economics) but who wish to pursue an additional specialization in public policy. The School of Public Policy will offer a Ph.D. in public policy for the first type of student and a Ph.D. Minor in Public Policy for the second type of student.

The School will provide students with four areas of specialization: environmental and sustainable development policy, population and health policy, higher education policy, and immigration policy.

UCR has faculty and research strengths in each of these areas, as evidenced by the presence of other colleges and schools including the emerging School of Medicine, and several research centers at UCR. The centers include the:
- Center for Sustainable Suburban Development (CSSD)
- One Health Center of the UC Global Health Institute
- Center for Disease Vector Research (CDVR)
At full build-out, the SPP will also offer a 15-month Executive MPP (EMPP) program, a fast-track for experienced and busy professionals working in government, non-profit, and community agencies. In addition, non-degree certificate programs will be offered in select areas for professionals working in the public sector who are interested in career enhancement.

UCR will explore offering the EMPP and certificate programs jointly with UCR Extension, which already has considerable experience in offering customized professional development programs targeted to mid-career professionals in public agencies in such areas as leadership training, project management, information technology, pest management, workplace health and safety, green waste management, water treatment and safety, law enforcement, and environmental contamination cleanup.

As described above, one of the primary research foci for the new School will be the intersection of social and environmental policy. Demographic and other societal changes related to population growth and movement create stresses on the physical and biological environment; it is vital to understand – and plan for – these changes in ways that are environmentally sustainable. At the same time, changes in the physical and biological environment, including global and local climate change, have diverse impacts on social, economic, and health outcomes.

Sound policymaking calls for anticipating these impacts and preparing society to cope effectively with them. UCR’s School of Public Policy will be unique in integrating these two areas – social and environmental policymaking – to come up with policy solutions to real-world problems.

The second research focus of the new School will be regional policymaking. At both the regional and global levels, new governmental alliances have arisen to address critical policy issues that transcend traditional geographical boundaries.

Faculty and students in the School of Public Policy will conduct research aimed at regional relationships, making UCR a leader in the development of the field of regional policy analysis and policy-making.

The Southern California/Northwestern Mexico region provides an unparalleled opportunity to study the interactions among rapid population growth, ex-urban sprawl, stresses on the natural and social environment, and rising social and economic disparities – problems common to many other mega-regions around the world.

Thus, a distinguishing characteristic of the UCR School of Public Policy will be to emphasize the larger linkages that the Southern California/Northwestern Mexico region has with the rest of the world, and to compare explicitly Inland Southern California with other world regions.
The School’s research will build on existing strengths at UCR as virtually every existing school and college at UCR has assets that will interact with and help to strengthen the School. These synergies include such interests as higher education policy; air, water, and soil quality; biodiversity; sustainable suburban development; crime and justice; economics; political science; anthropology; and the School of Medicine.

Sincerely,

Timothy P. White
Chancellor