

UCR

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SERVING THROUGH KNOWLEDGE

The newly launched UCR School of Public Policy will bridge the university and the Inland community by generating research-based solutions to local and global problems

BY PHIL PITCHFORD

From traffic on Highway 91 to air pollution in Mira Loma and poverty in Coachella, the Inland Empire is wrestling with many of the same problems that face emerging countries around the world.

The new UC Riverside School of Public Policy aims to train the policy professionals who can help identify potential solutions to such problems. Their work could help governments across the globe with problems like water quality and access to health care, while also providing much-needed guidance to decision-makers closer to home.

“We need people who can determine which public policies are going to be the most cost-effective because many of these issues are quite complex,” said Anil Deolalikar, an economics professor and the school’s founding dean. “A lot of the policies we have in place now are a knee-jerk reaction to some situation that has occurred. We need people who are able to distill that knowledge, determine what the options are and what the likely (intended and unintended) outcomes are.”

The School of Public Policy, currently scheduled to admit its first students in fall 2014,



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will be designed to produce just such problem-solvers for jobs in local, state and federal governments and in nonprofit organizations. Depending on pending curricular approvals, the school will begin accepting students in early 2014 and eventually will have 30 doctoral and 120 master’s degree candidates.

“The professionals that we are going to be producing here will be trained to take positions across the United States as soon as they leave school and contribute at a very high level,” said Joseph Childers, English professor and dean of the Graduate Division. “It also creates another

way for us to underscore the importance of what we do on campus to the community that has been so supportive of us.”

Graduate students will be able to pursue a Master of Public Policy (M.P.P.) and an M.D./M.P.P. in conjunction with the UCR School of Medicine. A Ph.D. and a Ph.D. minor in public policy are planned. A 15-month Executive M.P.P. program will be available for experienced professionals already working in related fields. Nondegree certificate programs will enable existing public employment professionals to pursue career enhancement.

Four areas of specialization are planned: environmental and sustainable development policy, population and health policy, higher education policy, and immigration policy. In the same way the new School of Medicine aims to improve health outcomes in the Inland area, the School of Public Policy is being designed to play an active role in the region.

“The public policy school will serve as a bridge between the university and the public,” said Ken Baerenklau, an associate professor of environmental science and an associate environmental economist. “They will have a better understanding of what we do, and we will have a better understanding of what they want.”

Students who pursue an advanced degree in public policy will carry on the UCR tradition of treating the surrounding area as a “living laboratory” that generates research-based solutions to problems here and abroad.

“It’s not just learning from the rest of the world, but also teaching the rest of the world,” said Deolalikar, who is known internationally for his work on poverty, malnutrition and illiteracy. “Public policy as a discipline pertains to almost everything we do on this campus, which is why this is such an exciting program for so many people.”

The school is expected to strengthen the overall mission of UCR by bringing together academics from many disciplines across campus, including some that rarely interact with one another.

“Right now, there is kind of a disconnect between the science side of campus and the social sciences and the humanities,” said Kevin M. Esterling, an associate professor of political

science and associate dean of the Graduate Division. “Science has a lot of practical applications, but it takes an interdisciplinary approach to determine what those applications might be. This school will bring people together and foster interaction between the colleges.”

Ron Loveridge, an associate professor of political science who recently completed a 33-year career as Riverside mayor and councilman, said the Inland counties will need sound policy planning more than ever since they are expected to be two of the largest counties in the state by 2060, trailing only Los Angeles County.

“So much of what [our] faculty does is research for each other,” Loveridge said. “It’s important to get that research into the policy arena, and a School of Public Policy will do that.”

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