

UNIT REVIEW MIDTERM REPORT - SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

Prepared August 29, 2025

Unit Review Site Visit: April 12-13, 2022

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The School of Public Policy should be embedded in the Faculty of Law and the Executive Director should report directly to the Dean of the Faculty of Law.		The University is aware of the challenges that have resulted from the School being located outside of a Faculty administrative structure. However, it is also understood that SPP’s autonomy is key to its excellence and ongoing success. The University is committed to maintaining that autonomy, while ensuring sustainability and operational efficiency. Several alternative governance models exist that also meet these goals and are currently being explored.	<p>The autonomy and flexibility of the School are critical, enabling it to respond more nimbly to important policy questions in Canada and beyond. Since January 2024, under the leadership of Director Martha Hall Findlay, the School has reaffirmed its model as both a School and a think tank within an academic setting at the University of Calgary. This structure allows the School to make meaningful contributions to policy discourse while enhancing the profile and impact of the University.</p> <p>Following the last unit review in April 2022, the School has made significant contributions to both UCalgary and the broader community. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • April 2023: Secured a \$9 million, three-year grant from the Government of Alberta to enhance the quality and capacity of the Master of Public Policy (MPP) program. • October 2024: Hosted the Productivity Summit (October 16–17, 2024, BMO Centre), funded by the Government of Alberta, attracting over 1,000 attendees (800 in person and 200 online) from across Canada to address the national productivity crisis. The event featured opening remarks by the President of the University of Calgary and the Premier of Alberta – Event link • 2025: Launched Canada’s Productivity Initiative, a series of policy dialogues across six Canadian cities — Ottawa (February 27), Halifax (June 5), Vancouver (June 23), with

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			<p>upcoming sessions in Montreal, Saskatoon, and Toronto in Fall 2025.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2025: Received \$6.5 million in funding from the Government of Alberta over five years for the New North America Initiative – <i>[UCalgary News, May 16, 2025]</i>. • June 12, 2025: Hosted Plans, Prospects, and Possibilities for the G7 2025 Kananaskis Summit at UCalgary to discuss Canada’s positioning ahead of the G7 Summit (June 15–17, 2025) amid U.S.–Canada tensions. Featured speakers included former prime ministers Jean Chrétien and Joe Clark, former deputy prime minister John Manley, and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith – Agenda link.
The university needs to position SPP to adopt a more secure and sustainable funding model.		The University is currently reviewing the funding model for the School of Public Policy including the exploration of alternative revenue sources.	<p>Since January 2024, Director Martha Hall Findlay has held regular discussions with former Provost Penny Werthner and current Provost Sandra Davidson regarding the financial aspects of the secondment model for the School of Public Policy. It is essential that the School reserve the assigned budget for a seconded faculty member if the individual returns to their home faculty.</p> <p>In 2025, the School established five areas of focus for its policy research: Health and Social Policy, Energy and Natural Resources Policy, Economic and Fiscal Policy, International Policy, and Canadian Governance Policy. Alongside these research priorities, the School is placing strong emphasis on funding development to support and expand its work. We have significant continued support from the Government of Alberta, plus an increased focus on the private sector.</p>

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The University and the SPP leadership must address critical challenges with workplace culture.		<p>The School of Public Policy is aware of conflicts and tensions that have impacted the unit’s organizational culture. We agree that the unit, and its leadership, have a critical obligation to provide a safe work environment that values and empowers its employees. It is also important to build a climate of civility, respect, and professionalism in order for the School to achieve its long-term potential. This is a foundational, collective responsibility held by every member of the School. The work to shift our workplace culture has already begun. New leadership within the School has placed a priority on directly managing conflicts between its members, pursuing conversations that seek to mend old rifts and prevent new ones from emerging. These conversations are happening across individual members of the School, as well as across teams that must work together in order to succeed. Across the School, respectful and professional communication is a core expectation for all members of SPP.</p> <p>There are also discrete actions to be pursued by the School. This will include working with the university’s Human Resources department to identify relevant training and support for members of the School such as opportunities for “respect in the workplace”, implicit-bias and collegial governance training. We will also call on HR for mediation supports should intractable conflicts occur within the School.</p> <p>Finally, there are structural challenges that impact the School’s culture. The School’s heavy reliance on the unpredictable flow of grant and philanthropic funding creates insecurity for</p>	<p>Since early 2025, the School has undergone a major organizational restructuring that has brought significant positive change to its workplace culture.</p> <p>Key elements of the restructuring include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminating the positions of Research Director and Director of Business Operations, with their responsibilities reallocated to the Associate Director portfolio. • Merging the Events and Communications teams. • Placing the School’s in-house journal, <i>School of Public Policy Publications</i>, under the Communications Director. • Transitioning the Simpson Centre from SPP to the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (effective May 31, 2025). • Directing strategic hiring efforts, including the Provost-approved recruitment of Dr. Robert Johnston (Columbia University) and initiating the recruitment of Carlo Dade (Canada West Foundation). <p>This restructuring has reintroduced a more collaborative, team-oriented, and outcome-focused culture within the School. In addition, the School has implemented several initiatives to strengthen engagement and alignment with its new vision for policy impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launching the Director’s message to the SPP community. • Convening a town hall meeting for all SPP members. • Reconvening the Faculty Members’ meeting. • Restructuring the composition of the Executive Committee. • Implementing the weekly SPP Forum

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		many staff. Our Research Associates, for example, experience the stress of this job instability. We will seek to identify funding models and hiring structures that offer more continuity and security for staff.	Together, these changes have had a very positive effect on the School's workplace culture, fostering collaboration and reinforcing its commitment to impactful policy work.
SPP should ensure its team is diverse and inclusive.		<p>The issues of equity, diversity, inclusion, anti-racism, reconciliation, and decolonization need to be central for every Canadian organization, including the School of Public Policy. We agree that SPP has ongoing work to do in these areas. The diversity referred to in this recommendation must include not just physical and cultural diversity, but also diversity in worldviews, experiences, and thought. To achieve this, the School of Public Policy commits to such a journey.</p> <p>We believe this work must begin with awareness and education. There are significant resources available to support this work, including University of Calgary workshops on Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI), the Indigenous Relations Training Program, and Anti- Discrimination/Racism Response Training (A.R.T.). There are also opportunities to work with and learn from other units at the university, exploring for example their unique responses to issues such as reconciliation and anti-black racism. We will pursue these opportunities to develop a comprehensive series of meaningful learning experiences for members of the School.</p>	<p>The School of Public Policy took successful measures to ensure its team members and students are nurtured in a diverse and inclusive culture and a safe working and learning environment</p> <p><u>Student Learning Opportunities:</u> The MPP and SEDV Admissions committees employ a merit-based review process, and both programs actively work to cultivate and present graduate studies at the SPP as welcoming, accommodating and inclusive (including public display of PRIDE Iconography). While many metrics of diversity of our student cohort are protected or unreported, we are proud that our graduate programs display a highly consistent degree of gender parity.</p> <p>Both graduate programs also include courses on indigenous policy (both taught by indigenous practitioners). This is a required course for the SEDV program, but an elective in the MPP program. MPP students also complete Ucalgary's Online Workshop: "The Story of ii' taa'poh'to'p" as part of the required PPOL 600 course. A requirement introduced after 2022.</p> <p><u>READI (Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion) Committee Formation and Governance (2023–ongoing):</u> In June 2023, the School of Public Policy established the Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility and Indigenous Engagement Committee. On November 30, 2023, committee members renamed it the READI</p>

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		<p>Awareness and education must be the starting point for long-term, structural change. We will work with our HR department to ensure that hiring practices reflect best EDI practices, encouraging a conscious effort to diversify the School. However, our work must extend beyond the actual hiring process to include attention to the practices and procedures that make diverse individuals feel welcome and safe in the organization. These practices are required to ensure those who reflect diversity have a strong voice and are not marginalized within dominant processes. To spark and guide this work we will revitalize the School's EDI committee, who will work closely with the School's leadership to move this commitment ahead.</p>	<p>Committee (Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion).</p> <p>Members of this committee have two parallel mandates to focus on EDIA and Indigenous Engagement (IE) at SPP as an extension of the University of Calgary's Office of Institutional Commitments and Indigenous Engagement. While there may be some areas that overlap with EDI and IE, we intend to fund and advocate activities in each of the two areas as their own separate initiatives. READI will engage with the Office of IE and the Office of Institutional Commitment on main campus on behalf of SPP. READI members are also encouraged to join the EDI Network at the University of Calgary and participate in their regular meetings.</p> <p><u>Faculty and Staff Engagement:</u> Since 2023, the School allocated funding to launch a new series of learning dialogues and experiences for faculty and staff. In February 2024, an EDIA and Indigenous Engagement survey was distributed to faculty and staff to help benchmark current levels of engagement and assess interest in future initiatives.</p> <p>Each month, SPP staff, faculty, and post-docs are invited to join the READI committee through our monthly READI newsletter which is distributed via email through the SPP mailing list during the first week of each month. This newsletter highlights EDIA and Indigenous Engagement events, showcasing UCalgary's activities and relevant events at SPP. The newsletter also highlights special occasions each month to emphasize the cultural diversity across Canada, including Days of Commemoration and other notable events, such as Pride Month, the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, and National Indigenous History Month. The newsletter also includes links to learning resources offered by the</p>

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			<p>University of Calgary, such as the Indigenous Relations Training Program. The READI team conducts a review each month of activities on campus and beyond (e.g., the Calgary Public Library) that are relevant for enhancing reconciliation and foster an inclusive environment at SPP.</p> <p><u>Events and Cultural Learning Opportunities:</u> To further intercultural capacity, SPP hosted a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation event in September 2023 with Métis Elder Kerrie Moore, attended by 15 participants. Building on this engagement, 12 faculty and staff members visited Kiipitakoyis Grandmother's Lodge in June 2024 for a follow-up session with Elder Moore.</p> <p>On September 12, 2024, the READI Committee hosted its first EDI Workshop, Introduction to Anti-Racism, facilitated by Dr. Ghada Sfeir, Senior Advisor for Anti-Racism and Racial Equity at the University of Calgary's Office of EDI. The interactive, in-person workshop, tailored for SPP, supported students, staff, post-docs, and faculty in developing a foundational understanding of anti-racism and its practical application in both professional and personal settings. Participants explored key concepts related to systemic racism and gained tools for embedding anti-racist practices into their spheres of influence. The event was offered in a hybrid format, with pizza provided for in-person attendees. The event was attended by 17 attendees.</p> <p>As part of its ongoing learning series, the READI Committee hosted a guest speaker event on February 20, 2024, featuring Teresa Woo-Paw, a long-time community leader and advocate for antiracism and equity policy. The session focused on Teresa's extensive experience with antiracism activism and EDIA policy development. A hybrid format allowed for broad participation, and in-person</p>

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			<p>attendees were invited to a networking lunch following the session. Teresa, Chair of the Canadian Race Relations Foundation, has founded several community organizations and has served on over 30 boards at local, provincial, and national levels. Approximately 20 staff, faculty, students and post-docs joined this hybrid event.</p> <p>On April 15, 2025, the School hosted a screening of Twice Colonized, a feature-length documentary profiling Inuit activist and lawyer Aaju Peter. The film, which won a Canadian Screen Award in 2024, explores Peter’s life and advocacy work across Greenland and Canada. Approximately 20 attendees joined this in-person event.</p>
The University should limit SPP faculty member secondments to tenured faculty.		The University is aware of the challenges that have resulted from some pre-tenure secondments and is committed to supporting Faculties members at all stages in their career. This recommendation will be further explored as part of the governance model review.	<p>There is value in securing secondments of tenured faculty members; however, the School would benefit from adopting greater flexibility in its secondment practices. The current faculty complement at the School includes secondments ranging from 25% to 100%, drawn from multiple faculties, including Arts, Law, Kinesiology, Science, the Haskayne School of Business, and the Cumming School of Medicine. Since the last unit review, the School has secured two secondments of tenured full professors — Trevor Tombe and Anthony Sayers. Nonetheless, the School continues to engage non-tenured faculty members, fostering collaboration with other departments and faculties for mutual benefit. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing three new Earth, Energy, and Environment faculty positions (40% secondment each) through the VP(R) Transdisciplinary Recruitment program (2024) for a five-year term. • Successfully recruiting an Azrieli Accelerator Professor in Law and Disability Policy (April 2024).

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			<p>The School also makes use of special hiring processes or Provost-approved strategic hires to bring in subject-matter experts and sector leaders from outside the university. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of Dr. Robert Johnston (Columbia University). • Recruitment of Carlo Dade (Canada West Foundation), who secured \$6.5 million in funding from the Government of Alberta over five years for the <i>New North America Initiative</i> at SPP (<i>UCalgary News</i>, May 16, 2025).
SPP should have a core of full-time faculty.		This recommendation will be further explored as part of the governance model review.	<p>To respond more efficiently to policy change, the School uses its established areas of focus as the anchor for faculty members and fellows.</p> <p>The School has identified five areas of focus in policy research: Health and Social Policy, Energy and Natural Resources Policy, Economic and Fiscal Policy, International Policy, and Canadian Governance Policy.</p>
SPP should increase the priority of academic programming.		<p>The review team referred to a “think tank versus academic unit” tension in the School and a culture that prioritizes research and external outreach above graduate training. It suggested that our educational programs were not positioned at the heart of the School’s work.</p> <p>We believe there is both an obligation to deliver high-quality degree programs in SPP and the opportunity to become a national leader in developing the next generation of</p>	<p>Over the last 18 months the SPP has undergone a reorganization wherein the following changes have been made:</p> <p>The position of “Academic Director” is replaced with the Associate Director.</p> <p>The position of “Graduate Programs Director” has been re-established</p>

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		<p>policymakers in Canada. Achieving these goals will in fact place our programs at the core of what we do.</p> <p>Work to revitalize and enhance our programs is underway. We have new Directors for both our Master of Public Policy (MPP) and Master of Science in Sustainable Energy Development (SEDV) programs. The SEDV curriculum has been updated and was implemented for the first time in May 2022. The MPP curriculum also needs to be updated, and that process lies ahead. We are exploring further integration of learning experiences for students across both programs (e.g., joint workshops & discussions, merging capstone presentations). It is also important to note that the School is now exploring new models to deliver and enhance our educational programs. These models include the creation of 4-course certificates in areas relevant to public policy, and an educational pathway that allows students to “stack” those certificates to complete our degree programs. Such a model has proven useful for other academic units, as it provides a mechanism to both diversify substantive areas taught within a School and the ability to offer more depth in particular areas. Work on such a model is in the early stages within the School.</p>	<p>Research areas have been reorganized to five areas of focus in policy research. An Executive committee has been established to advise the Director and Associate Director.</p> <p>The Graduate Programs Director is one of only three positions to sit on both the Directors’ Committee (Directors of five areas of focus in policy research) and the Executive Committee, evidencing a clear move to center the SPP graduate programs within both the research (Research Area Directors) and executive (Executive Committee) operations of the SPP.</p> <p>Recent academic secondments have been negotiated with attention paid much more closely to teaching duties. In particular, four out of five newly and continuing seconded research area directors teach core courses in either the MPP or SEDV programs, Drs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnson (SEDV) • Sayers (MPP) • Tombe (MPP) Winter (MPP) • Zwicker (MPP) <p>The graduate programs team is also working with the Director of International Policy (Dade) to establish opportunities for experiential learning through a trade negotiations workshop and simulation joint with Carleton University and through Research Assistantship opportunities. More specifically, training and education were built in as an integral part of the recently launched “New North America Institute” being hosted at the SPP.</p> <p>Additionally, the SPP is undergoing discussions about increasing formal teaching loads (shifting additional workload expectations</p>

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			from research to teaching) as part of our aforementioned ladder certificates expansions.
SPP should update its Master of Public Policy (MPP) curriculum to balance economics with other dimensions of public policy training, including governance and inclusion.		The unit review expressed a concern that our MPP program was too heavily focused on economics and tax policy. This may have been true in the past, but we will deliberately examine the balance of topics in the MPP program at that program moves ahead. We will work with curriculum design specialists at the University of Calgary to examine the MPP curriculum, update it and broaden its substantive reach. We will also examine the nature of MPP learning experiences to ensure the applied nature of governance and policy-making are core to the program. In the curriculum mapping process, it will also be important to consult with industry leaders to understand the knowledge, skills, and competencies that our graduates require. We are confident the combination of pedagogical guidance and industry reflections will allow us to offer a program that is a leader nationally.	<p>The MPP program introduced substantial calendar changes with the 2021-2022 Academic year. These included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The elimination of a 3-credit course: PPOL 601 (an economic foundations course) • The introduction of a 4-credit course (PPOL 602) replacing a 3-credit course (PPOL 605) in Markets and Public Policy. <p>On balance, this substantially reduced the weight put on Economics in the formal curriculum. As this review was conducted in 2022, it's unclear the degree to which this shift factored into the initial review.</p> <p>In 2024, the 4-credit economics course (PPOL 602) was again replaced with a 3-credit course (PPOL 608). As a result, since 2022, the program has eliminated a full 3 credits in formal Economics course load from the required curriculum.</p> <p>However, recent labour market analysis conducted as part of our laddering proposal suggests that formal technical skills (including econometrics adjacent skills) and formal economic analysis skills are highly valued in the labour market. As a result, the SPP may look into strengthening these curriculum components.</p>

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SPP should ensure the MSc in Sustainable Energy Development (SEDV) program receives proper attention.		<p>The SEDV program began as a cross-faculty initiative. It is now housed within the School of Public Policy. This fact demands that the School supports and sustains the program to ensure it is relevant and successful. We acknowledge that we must better integrate the SEDV program into the School. We make that commitment.</p> <p>As mentioned previously, the recently updated SEDV curriculum was implemented as of May 2022. This provides an opportunity to alter our course sequencing and scheduling. It also provides opportunities to create new electives and seek new instructors. The School will continue to evolve these components of the program as implementation continues. Our exploration of a stackable certificate pathway to degrees will require these steps as well.</p> <p>The topics germane to sustainable energy development are changing rapidly. Advances in hydrogen, biofuels, wind and solar power require regular updates to our degree program. The same may be said for changes to energy markets, regulatory frameworks, and environmental practices. The School must consult with industry leaders regularly to update degree content and ensure our graduates have the latest in knowledge and skills. We will regularly do so as the program evolves.</p>	<p>Staffing teaching positions within the SEDV program remains a challenge. Unlike the MPP program, secondments to the SPP do not tend to lend themselves well to the teaching requirements within the program with two notable exceptions: Dr. Megan Bailey and Dr. RJ Johnson (both of whom teach required courses). Formal discussions with other faculties (Engineering, Business and Law) on a teaching secondment model are pending</p> <p>As part of supporting the SEDV program, the SPP has established regular meetings of the teaching faculty and consults regularly with the SEDV student government. These meetings have highlighted deficiencies in the program; however, we consider this engagement and the identification of these deficiencies a successful outcome of consultations and we are taking steps to remedy the issues.</p> <p>Based on our engagement with teaching faculty and student government, the prior curriculum review has had limited success. Engaged faculty and the SEDV student government have noted multiple overlapping topics and multiple holes in the required curriculum relative to the pre-curriculum review offerings. This implies the need for a new curriculum review in the near term with an aim to reconcile contemporary issues in sustainable development, required learning objectives for the students and with the ongoing research directions and priorities within the Energy and Natural Resources area of the SPP.</p> <p>Eliminating the separate MPP and SEDV program director roles, and vesting the operations of both roles within the single "Graduate Programs Director" role has motivated better</p>

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			interaction between the SEDV program and the research operations (through the area Directors Committee mentioned above) and the executive functions (through the Executive Committee mentioned above) of the SPP.
The University should identify opportunities to improve the physical connection between SPP and the main campus.		The University of Calgary has several of its faculties and academic units located off main campus including, the faculties of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and Continuing Education. We are committed to exploring this recommendation further with the School's leadership team.	<p>The School of Public Policy has significantly strengthened its connection with the main campus. In Fall 2023, the School took the initiative to rebrand itself in alignment with UCalgary's branding, with input from the central branding team.</p> <p>Since then, the School has worked closely with central units — including Government Relations, Communications, and Events — on key initiatives such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recruitment of the Director of Communications and Marketing (2024). • Hosting the Government of Alberta's press conference announcing funding for the <i>New North America Initiative</i> (May 2025). • Collaborating with the UCalgary President's Office to organize the pre-conference event, <i>Plans, Prospects, and Possibilities for the G7 2025 Summit</i>, held at the main campus in June 2025. • SPP Director now attending regular Deans' Council meetings. • More staff engagement with main campus initiatives such as the United Way Campaign, etc.