CONTINUING ACCREDITATION REPORT

ON

THE VERMONT CERTIFIED PUBLIC MANAGER PROGRAM

Presented to:

The National Certified Public Manager Consortium

By the Review committee:

Kim Hanson, Chair
Marci Porter Campbell, Instructor
Jeffrey Dinkins, CPM Graduate

September 2020

We, the members of the committee appointed to review the Vermont Certified Public Manger program for continuing accreditation are pleased to report we have completed our review and recommend that the Vermont CPM program be accredited for the maximum period authorized by the bylaws. Our recommendation is based on the following findings:

Findings

1. Vermont program administrators submitted all required program documentation to each of the review committee membership. We appreciated the time and attention the Vermont team put into the preparation for our review. The program is characterized by stability, adaptability, and resilience. Its stability is demonstrated by its more than 25 years of operation with continued strong participation.

2. After review by committee members all supplemental documentation was provided on a timely basis;

3. In the matter of general program requirements, the committee determined that:

    A. Adequate linkages exist with institutions of higher education. A major change for the program occurred in January 2019 when the State of Vermont decided to partner with the University of Vermont (UVM) to provide instruction by its faculty and to allow participants to earn up to six (6) undergraduate or graduate credits through UVM's Masters in Public Administration (MPA) program. The Vermont Department of Human Resources Workforce Development Division collaborates with UVM on course scheduling and other administrative tasks, although the Department of Human Resources Workforce Development Division maintains ownership and oversight of the program. As with many programs, spring of 2020 had this team working on moving all of the course work to an online format. Our virtual discussion with the leadership of the university and the state showed a strong collaborative nature grounded in their overarching goal of offering a robust curriculum to ensure emerging leaders received the training, support and guidance necessary to succeed in public service no matter what the delivery method would be.

    B. An advisory board is actively involved in dealing with appropriate program issues. The committee is structured in that they will provide advice and guidance in the areas of curriculum content, resources and structure. They serve in the advisory role and hold no authority to make decisions for the VCPM program. They have small advisory board consisting of the VCPM program manager, a representative from the institution of higher education, one manager from a state agency and on

VCPM graduate. They serve two-year terms and may retain their seat for two terms. They meet on an annual basis.

 C. The program, while emphasizing service to state government, is actively and successfully marketing to local and federal customers. VCPM is a sought-after program. They have a high volume of applications for a limited number of spaces. They are successfully marketing their program and have the Administration in state government strong support. One of their goals as they move forward is to promote the program to non-profit and local municipalities.

 D. Program requirements are clear and accessible to all applicants and candidates.

4. In the matter of program organization, we find:

 A. Adequate financial support exists from a combination of appropriated funds and fees. Our committee was provided with budget information from 2019 along with the last annual report as part of the review process. These items along with the other items in the review binder and our virtual meeting where questions were asked and answered, confirm the resources and capacity exist for the needs of the program

 B. Program instruction is provided by a combination of well qualified state employees and contract instructors. Our review committee found the range of facility expertise supporting this program to be a strength.

5. We find thorough documentation of administrative policies and procedures in a combination of administrative policy and formal regulations.

We further find:

 A. Participant's progress is tracked using attendance and assignment tracking tools within Blackboard, the web-based virtual learning environment and learning management system UVM uses to manger the course content and assignments.

 B. Project requirements are clear and the use of projects in the curriculum is one of the strengths of the program.

 C. Adequate security exists for student records.

 D. Student evaluations are based on a series of formal [tests/assessments].

6. In the matter of course materials we find: As mentioned, Vermont has had a rich history as part of the CPM program. As the leadership was preparing for

the reaccreditation visit it became clear that not all of their historical data had been preserved and within easy access. Many of the leadership team members were not in their positions for past reaccreditation visits. Our review team appreciated how forthright they were with this and their commitment to preserve the data as they move forward. While they may not have been able to provide us with specific examples of historical capstone projects they were able to speak to the current standards and the rigor associated with the program

A. Courses provided are balanced to adequately cover the required competencies. Our view team found the partnership with the university a positive strategic move to strengthen the credibility of the program as it furthers the diversity of the SME's delivering the content which contributes not only to the breadth of the topic areas but also to the depth. As we listened to the university partners it became clear they are committed to providing tools participants would be able to use in their professional careers. They have implemented a "learning portfolio" concept which is described as over the course of the program each student amasses a body of products (written assignment, small projects, etc) that are later be used as "evidence" of having met or exceeded program standards. Participants have the opportunity to use assessments tools to support their own learning and development as leaders such as the Clifton Strengths finder and 360 assessments. The first learning portfolio assignments will be completed in March 2021.

B. Course syllabi that include learning objectives exist for each course. Our review committee would also like to note the learning objectives for each of the modules, they are outstanding and will assist the program in setting up measurements as the program moves forward.

C. The program, while responsive to the competencies, is well integrated. A rubric based on the CPM seven learning competencies serves as a guide for self and instructor-initiated assessment that occurs at the end of the experience during the culminating capstone. Students will have their learning portfolio to further augment their development throughout the program.

D. Clear policies regarding substitutions are in place. The expectation is that a participant who misses a seminar will make up that session. The University alerts the participant of other dates the seminar is being held for the following cohort. Participants have two years to make up the missed seminar.

E. All requirements regarding hours of instruction are met.

7. We find the projects and learning portfolio to be one of the strong points of the Vermont program.

8. In regard to program evaluation we find our committee found with the incorporation of the University as a partner in program delivery, VCPM has greatly improved its online support for learning. UVM hosts and manages the program via Blackboard. Blackboard provide a consistent place for participants to post and discuss ideas, view course schedules and assignments, complete assessments, track progress and interact with other participants and instructors. In addition, Blackboard offers a space for students to compile all of their work, allowing ongoing reflection and enhancing participants' ability to make connections between different elements of the curriculum. While in-person classes are preferred by most instructors and participants, UVM has been using video conferencing as part of the delivery modality

    A. Each course is adequately evaluated by students. Since the partnership with the University is a new one, during our virtual meeting the commitment to a continuous improvement framework was discussed. The new capstone experiences the UVM brought to the program involved the development of learning portfolios that is tracked to the CPM seven learning competencies. UVM has developed a rubric tied to these seven competencies and intends to use the annual results from the completed portfolios to recalibrate program offerings. In addition, every unit is evaluated using a survey, to assess unit instructors and to identify gaps in current program offerings. Routine check ins with participants also allow for in course modifications to the program as needed

    B. Each instructor is adequately evaluated by students.

    C. There is strong feedback from agency managers, of high satisfaction based upon their continued use of the program and, most importantly, the utilization of CPM graduates for special assignments.

9. We examined a detailed list of candidates in the program.

10. We discussed the program's perceived strengths and weaknesses. We are impressed by the efforts to address areas needing improvement, especially:

    A. As mentioned previously, on challenge of the program is maintaining consistent assessment while also engaging a diverse team of instructors to deliver the courses. A strength of program is the diversity of instructors, however, there is an opportunity to employ more consistent and timely assessment of student learning.

    B. Our committee discussed with the leadership of the program, gathering data to support ROI for project sponsors. Important to note, that while they

not officially tracked the impact of projects they have received feedback from sponsors that they are very pleased with the results of the project and intend to implement the recommendations presented by the consultants. VCPM will be looking into ways to address the area of ROI.

C. The VCPM program has also identified that the differentiation of instructor model they are employing, garnering consistent completion of assignments has been a small challenge. They have already begun to address this through instituting an assignment tracking tool and setting benchmarks for participants to keep track of missing assignment and deadlines. The review committee supports their efforts in course correction.

The program has many strong points. We were especially impressed by:

A. Project teams for the capstone: The VCPM Program Manager, in partnership with UVM, screens the projects and follows up with the sponsor to clarify the scope of the project. The VCPM administration manages the proposed project definition and scope to ensure the teams do not take on functions of the client organization. Instead, they focus on research and recommendations regarding current state questions and future solutions and plans. In this way, the team members are able to apply the skills acquired in the program while providing a service most departments would not or could not seek without incurring additional expense. At Module 11, Consulting Skills, the projects are shared with the cohort. Once participants have had a chance to review the project(s), participants are asked to pick the project that most interests them. Instructor assesses the diversity of team members by managerial, supervisory, non-supervisory and fair representation across agencies/departments.   Some participants may be asked to work on a different project from their first pick to allow for similar numbers of participants per consulting team. Participants cannot work on a consulting project for an agency to which they are assigned.

B. The senior level support of the program as evidenced by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Administration and the Commissioner of the Department of Human Resources support of the VCPM and address the classes regularly

C. Quality of instructors- All instructors are experienced trainers, university level professors and consultants with experience and knowledge in the public and private sectors.

The findings and recommendations are based on a review of all documentation by the committee and confirmed by a virtual site visit by the chair and all committee members on 8/14/20.

Committee Recommendation:

Accredit   x☐   Accredit Provisionally ☐   Not Accredit ☐

If either accredit provisionally or not accredit, please specify reasons or reference the relevant paragraph in the report.

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Recommendation endorsed by consensus of the committee and respectfully submitted by:

[Name]:   ____Marci Porter Campbell_____

[Name]:   _____Jeffrey Dinkins, Sr_____

And

_____(signed)_____ Kim Hanson_____   10/80/20_____
[Name], Chair, for the Committee   Date

NCPMC Accreditation Standards
Program Accreditation Review Checklist

Program under evaluation: State of Vermont   Date: 8/14/20 virtual meeting for visit

Evaluator's Name: Kim Hanson, review team members: Marci Porter Campbell and Jeffrey Dinkins

Evaluator's Role: ☒ Review Committee Chair   ☐ CPM Graduate   ☐ CPM Instructor

Standard 1: Mission and Public Service

The program has a program specific mission statement?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Does it guide public service performance expectations?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Is there a method of program operations and performance evaluation?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Evaluator's Comments:

We appreacted the time and attention the Vermont team put into the preparation for our review. The program is characterized by stability, adaptability, and resilience. Its stability is demonstrated by its more than 25 years of operation with continued strong participation.

Items of Note:

A major change for the program occurred in January 2019 when the State of Vermont decided to partner with the University of Vermont (UVM) to provide instruction by its faculty and to allow participants to earn up to six (6) undergraduate or graduate credits through UVM's Masters in Public Administration (MPA) program. The Vermont Department of Human Resources Workforce Development Division collaborates with UVM on course scheduling and other administrative tasks, although the Department of Human Resources Workforce Development Division maintains ownership and oversight of the program. As with many programs, spring of 2020 had this team working on moving all of the course work to an online format. Our virtual discussion with the leadership of the university and the state showed a strong collaborative nature grounded in their over arching goal of offering a robust curriculum to ensure emerging leaders received the training, support and guidance necessary to succeed in public service no matter what the delivery method would be.

Suggestions for Improvement (if any):

Through out discussion as a review board and with the leadership team in Vermont the following topics were discussed: ROI measurements for students, agencies and project sponsors. Vermont had further identified a couple of areas each partner would be focusing on as they move forward. For the Department of Human Resources Workforce Development Division they would like to see increase promotion to non-profits and municipalities. UVM would like to continue providing consistency to

students in the area of instruction as well as instructor feedback. They have developed a rubric which is proving helpful with the 8-10 different instructors they have to deliver the program.

> **1.1 Mission Statement. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** mission statement, interviews with stakeholders about development and implementation of the mission statement and about use of the mission statement to set priorities, develop programs and curricula, establish learning outcomes, and allocate resources.

> **1.2 Performance Expectations. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** Review of brochures, handbooks, flyers, website information; planning documents; logic models and environmental scans; and interviews with stakeholders to discuss expectations for alignment of the mission and goals with the program.

> **1.3 Program Evaluation. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** The most recent Annual Report; evaluations of the program; survey results from alumni, employers, and focus groups; and Interviews with stakeholders about program improvement processes and about improvements to the program.

The program adequately meets Standard 1: Mission and Public Service   ☒ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

If no, then please explain your concern here:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Standard 2: Core Competencies

Are the CPM Core Competencies adequately addressed across the curriculum?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Does the program consist of 300 or more hours of structured learning activities? ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Does the program have a public management project (capstone) that
includes a written component?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Does the public management project benefit their organization?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Evaluator's Comments:

As mentioned, Vermont has had a rich history as part of the CPM program. As the leadership was preparing for the reaccreditation visit it became clear that not all of their historical data had been preserved and within easy access. Many of the leadership team members were not in their positions for past reaccrediations visits. Our review team appreciated how forthright they were with this and their commitment to preserve the data as they move forward. While they may not have been able to provide us with specific examples of historical capstone projects they were able to speak to the current standards and the rigor associated with the program.

Items of Note:

Our view team found the partnership with the university a positive strategic move to strengthen the credibility of the program as it furthers the diversity of the SME's delivering the content which contributes not only to the breadth of the topic areas but also to the depth.   As we listened to the university partners it became clear they are committed to providing tools participants would be able to use in their professional careers. They have implemented a "learning portfolio" concept which is described as over the course of the program each student amasses a body of products (written assignment, small projects, etc) that are later be used as "evidence" of having met or exceeded program standards. A rubric based on the CPM seven learning competencies serves as a guide for self and instructor-initiated assessment that occurs at the end of the experience during the culminating capstone experience. Participants have the opportunity to use assessments tools to support their own learning and development as leaders such as the Clifton Strenghts finder and 360 assessments. The first learning portfolio assignments will be completed in March 2021. Our review committee would also like to note the learning objectives for each of the modules, they are outstanding and will assist the program in setting up measurements as the program moves forward.

Suggestions for Improvement (if any):

Noted above regarding historial data preservation.

> **2.0 Core Competencies. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** Documentation of core curriculum and learning outcomes and of core curriculum and competencies; sample capstone projects; policies and procedures; brochures; handbooks; flyers, website information; interviews with stakeholders—participants, Faculty/Instructors, employers about the curriculum.
>
> **2.1 Competencies Addressed in Curriculum. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** brochures, handbooks, flyers, website information; policies and procedures; sample capstone projects; sample assessments, evaluations and, tests; interviews with stakeholders.
>
> **2.2 Examinations and Projects. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** Sample capstone projects, assessments and tests; policies and procedures manual; interviews with alumni who submitted exceptional projects (possibly Askew Award winners).

The program adequately meets Standard 2: Core Competencies   ☒ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

If no, then please explain your concern here:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Standard 3: Resources and Capacity

Does the program adequately document the adequacy of its resources and capacity to fulfill its mission?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Does the program have policies and procedures that promote effective management and operation of the program in a sustainable manner?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Do the policies provide guidance linking administrative procedures to the mission?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Does the program utilize instructors who can demonstrate academic or professional experience to be qualified for the content they teach?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Does the program have a governing or advisory group guiding policy, recommendations, and potential clientele?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

Evaluator's Comments:

Our committee was provided with budget information from 2019 along with the last annual report as part of the review process. These items along with the other items in the review binder and our virtual meeting where questions were asked and answered confirming the resources and capacity exist for the needs of the program.

Items of Note:

As noted our review committee found the range of facility expertise supporting this program to be a strength.

Suggestions for Improvement (if any):

None noted

> **3.0 Program Resources. Evidence could include but is not limited to** Documentation of resources showing alignment with the mission, goals, objectives and outcomes, for example, a Logic Model. Tour of the physical facility, budget documentation, brochures, website etc., interviews with participants and Faculty/Instructors about the adequacy of resources and capacity.

> **3.1 Administrative Infrastructure. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** Policies and procedures; interviews with institutional and program leadership; observation of modalities used in the program (for example, access to on-line platform and/or observation of a classroom)

> **3.2 Faculty/Instructors. Evidence could include but is not limited to** Documentation of Faculty/Instructors, including name, address and area of expertise (A list of the Faculty/Instructors and their bios is available); brochures, handbooks, flyers, website information.

3.3 Administrative Policies and Procedures. Evidence could include but is not limited to flyers, brochures, website and policies and procedures manual; confidentiality statement.

3.4 Funding. Evidence could include but is not limited to: documented budget**;** interviews with both institutional and program leadership. A copy of the budget will be available for review.

3.5 Advisory Group. Evidence could include but is not limited to: Documentation of advisory board members/group and their meetings, including name, address and area of expertise; brochures, handbooks, flyers, website information, interviews with advisory board/group members.

The program adequately meets Standard 3: Resources and Capacity ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

If no, then please explain your concern here:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Standard 4: Planning and Implementation

Does the program engage in ongoing, participatory planning that provides direction for the institution and leads to the achievement of intended outcomes for programs and services? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Are the program's planning and implementation processes sufficiently flexible to address unexpected circumstances while maintaining the program's rigor and viability? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Are participant records held securely and confidentially? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Are assessment review standards clearly specified? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Are evaluation results taken into consideration for program improvements? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Evaluator's Comments:

With the incorporation of the University as a partner in program delivery, VCPM has greatly improved its online support for learning. UVM hosts and manages the program via Blackboard. Blackboard provide a consistent place for participants to post and discuss ideas, view course schedules and assignments, complete assessments, track progress and interact with other participants and instructors. In addition, Blackboard offers a space for students to compile all of their work, allowing ongoing reflection and enhancing participants' ability to make connections between different elements of the curriculum. While in-person classes are are preferred by most instructors and participants, UVM has been using video conferencing as part of the delivery modality.

Items of Note:

As mentioned previously, the committee found the idea of the learning portfolio a practice to follow up on.

Suggestions for Improvement (if any):

As mentioned previously, on challenge of the program is maintaining consistent assessment while also engaging a diverse team of instructors to deliver the courses. A strength of program is the diversity of instructors, however, there is an opportunity to employ more consistent and timely assessment of student learning.

4.0 Planning and Implementation. Evidence could include but is not limited to: Strategic plan; frequency or cycle of planning; flexibility of planning and implementation; documentation of curriculum; survey results; interviews with stakeholders

4.1 (3.5) Program Requirements. Evidence could include but is not limited to: brochures, handbooks, flyers, website information, samples of correspondence between program and applicants

4.2 Tracking System. Evidence could include but is not limited to: Observations of tracking/filing system/s; samples of correspondence with participants about their progress; interviews with current participants of the program.

4.3 Security Measures. Evidence could include but is not limited to: Observation and review of how participant files and evaluations are secured; policies and procedures

4.4 Assessment. Evidence could include but is not limited to: sample assessment reviews and evaluations; policies and procedures; interviews with stakeholders.

The program adequately meets Standard 4: Planning and Implementation ☒ **Yes** ☐ **No**

If no, then please explain your concern here:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Standard 5: Effectiveness and Improvement

Does the program assess how well the participants are meeting the expectations of the Faculty/Instructors? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the program invite participant evaluation of classes? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the program evaluate assessment outcomes to improve the program? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the program demonstrate and implement a plan of appropriate strategic growth? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the program promote a culture of continuous improvement processes? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Evaluator's Comments:

Since the partnership with the University is a new one, during our virtual meeting the commitment to a continuous improvement framework was discussed. The new capstone experience the UVM is bringing to the programs involved the development of learning portfolios that is tracked to the CPM seven learning competencies. UVM has developed a rubric tied to these seven competencies and intends to use the annual results from the completed portfolios to recalibrate program offerings. In addition, every unit is evaluated using a survey, to assess unit instructors and to identify gaps in current program offerings. Routine check ins with participants also allow for in course modifications to the program as needed.

Items of Note:

Project teams for the capstone: The VCPM Program Manager, in partnership with UVM, screens projects and follows up with the sponsor to clarify the scope of the project. At Module 11, Consulting Skills, the projects are shared with the cohort. Once participants have had a chance to review the project(s), participants are asked to pick the project that most interests them. Instructor assesses the diversity of team members by managerial, supervisory, non-supervisory and fair representation across agencies/departments. Some participants may be asked to work on a different project from their first pick to allow for similar numbers of participants per consulting team. Participants cannot work on a consulting project for an agency to which they are assigned

Suggestions for Improvement (if any):

As mentioned previously, our committee discussed with the leadership of the program, gathering data to support ROI for project sponsors. Important to note, that while they not officially tracked the impact of projects they have received feedback from sponsors that they are very pleased with the results of the project and intend to implement the recommendations presented by the consultants. The VCPM program has also identified that the differentiation of instructor model they are employing, garnering consistent completion of assignments has been a small challenge. They have already began to address this through instituting an assignment tracking tool and setting benchmarks for participants to keep track of missing assignment and deadlines. The review committee supports their efforts in course correction.

> **5.1 Participants' Reactions. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** Sample assessments; evaluations and interviews with stakeholders including participants, Faculty/Instructors, and employers

> **5.2 Program Development. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** Interviews with stakeholders; documented changes in curriculum and strategic plan

> **5.3 Areas of Growth. Evidence could include but is not limited to:** Strategic plan; documented changes resulting from a continuous improvement process; interviews with program stakeholders

The program adequately meets Standard 5: Effectiveness and Improvement   ☒ **Yes**   ☐ **No**

If no, then please explain your concern here:

Click or tap here to enter text.

In Conclusion

After careful review, I find the program adequately meets the NCPMC Standards for accreditation and would recommend accreditation of this program to the NCPMC Executive Council.

☒ **Yes** ☐ **Conditionally Yes** ☐ **No**

If "Conditionally Yes", what conditions would you propose for consideration by the NCPMC Executive Council?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What did you find particularly effective or remarkable about this program that other programs might wish to emulate?

The Review committee would like to mention three thing we found particulary notable about the program:
1) The senior level support of the program as evidenced by the Secretary and Deputy Secretary of Admininistration and the Commissioner of the Depaerment of Human Resourcs support of the VCPM and address the classes regularly
2) The consulting skills projects- the VCPM administration manages the proposed project definition and scope to ensure the teams do not take on functions of the client organization. Instead, they focus on research and recommendations regarding current state questions and future solutions and plans. In this way, the team members are able to apply the skills acquired in the program while providing a service most departments would not or could not seek without incurring additional expense.
3) Quality of instructors- All instructors are experienced trainers, university level professors and soncultants with experience and knowledge in the public and private sectors.

Any other comments or concerns?

Click or tap here to enter text.