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Evaluation of the School of the Federmann School of Public Policy and Government

During December 2010 the Review committee appointed by CHE visited the Federmann School of Public Policy and Government at the Hebrew University. Based on the Self Evaluation Report submitted by the School and the meetings with administrators, faculty members, and students, the committee submitted an evaluation report. We wish to thank the committee members for their effort in reading the self evaluation report, for visiting the School, and for writing the evaluation report. We appreciate their concern for the quality of higher education in Israel, and in particular education that hopefully will contribute to better the public sector.

The Federmann School is fairly young, and is growing in terms of the number of faculty members as well as maturing in the way it views its mission and goals. A great deal of thinking has been and is devoted to the School's mission, which is not necessarily compatible with the way the committee would like it to be. In particular, we do not subscribe to the view that portrays the School as a training school the mission of which is to provide students with professional training, ready-made recipe, facilitating their work as civil servants. We believe that current civil servants, and more so future civil servants, are and will be heavy consumers of research papers, as policy decisions must be evidence-based. Therefore, we consider the thesis project an essential training for those top quality people whom we train. We are delighted and gratified that a relatively high proportion of these theses are published in peer review journals and win recognized prizes. We take it as an indication for the seriousness of the projects our students pursue in their MA studies. We regret the fact that some of our students have not completed their thesis. This was mainly

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due to the very small number of faculty member in the early years of the School. The School is expanding and that number of incompletes is becoming minimal.

On the other hand, it should be emphasized that our MA program is not just a research program. Rather, we strive to, and do, provide extensive prescriptive training, that consists of about one quarter of our overall program. Among other things, our students are required to write a policy paper in their first year, which must contain clear recommendations for policy actions. In their second year, the students must submit a second policy paper with bold emphasis on the implementations of their recommendations. Traditionally, the second policy paper is presented to a "real" client.

Let us now refer to the specific recommendations (quoted in *italics*) of the committee:

The Federmann School needs leadership consisting of high-quality, respected faculty from inside the School to take charge of an effort to help the School realize its as-yet unrealized potential.

School faculty should play a central role in the committee to hire new faculty.

The School was founded with academically young cadre, and consequently it received a great deal of academic support from relevant departments and senior faculty at the Faculty of Social Science, as well as the Faculty of Law. With time, the School's size has increased and its faculty matured academically. Accordingly, more responsibility is being shifted to the School's own faculty. The head of school today is Dr. Momi Dahan who is a faculty member of the School of Public Policy. Similarly, as faculty members were academically young, they could not serve in the screening committee according to the bylaws of the University. Yet, the School was consulted on each appointment, and the input of the faculty members, based on their professional assessments of candidates' vitae, papers, and job talks, has been critical in the appointment process. In the future, the screening committee for new faculty will consist of school faculty.

Upgrading the quality and seniority of faculty in economics and organizational behavior/management should be a priority.

The two economists in the School are publishing in top journals. Dr. Momi Dahan has published his works in high quality journals such the *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Monetary Economics*, *Journal of Economic Growth*, *Public Choice* and *Water Resources Research*; Dr. Claude Berrebi has publications in respected journal such as the *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, *American Political Science Review* and *Journal of Politics*.

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Needless to say, the School plans to grow and we are looking for the best candidates in all areas that we deem instrumental for training civil servants.

The School should look for further opportunities to share courses between executive education and the masters program, and ways there can be curricular or other cross-fertilization between executive and masters education, particularly in terms of giving the masters program a greater professional content.

Last year we offered a course that had students from the two programs. Unfortunately, it was not a success. The different academic backgrounds, age, and seniority turn out to be a serious obstacle. Base on this experience, we are skeptical about the applicability of this suggestion.

In our general report we recommend eliminating the masters' thesis. Since the faculty recognizes that the thesis requirement is a main reason that students do not complete the program our recommendation seems particularly apposite. We do appreciate that Federmann faculty believe that graduation should entail some kind of capstone project. There are many such projects that enrich professional education. An example is a policy paper for a real client -- possibly after a stint as an intern.

As we discussed above, the committee's conception of the School is somewhat different from ours. We are proud to be part of the best research university in Israel, and we consider research to be one of our strengths. We believe that it is critical that top policy makers will be able to use research as one of their major tools. Research cannot be taught without practicing it. Therefore, our teaching ideology is that a thesis is a must.

Let us thank the committee again for their effort.

Sincerely,

Yaacov Schul

Vice Rector

Momi Dahan, Head of the Federman School

Avner de Shalit, Dean, Social Sciences