

Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report
Public Administration / School of Public Affairs & Civic Engagement
Fall 2012

The Public Administration Program utilizes a variety of ways to measure our student learning outcomes in order to cover as wide a range as possible of our student learning goals.

These goals, along with the means of assessment and available evidence of results, are:

Table 1: Program Assessment Methods and Evidence by Goals

Goal / Objective	Assessment Means	Evidence
<p><i>Goal 6:</i> Provide students with substantive knowledge about the depth and breadth of public affairs today.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Objective 1:</i> Develop an understanding of the theoretical and intellectual knowledge underpinning the discipline of public affairs - the history and theories of the field, the importance of social, economic, and political institutions, and the public policy process. 	Pre- and Post-Program Case Analysis & Rubric	Cases Prior to and At End of Degree Program / Reflective papers
<p><i>Goal 7:</i> Provide students with the skills necessary to be leaders in today's and tomorrow's organizations.</p>		MPA Eportfolio / Reflective papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Objective 1:</i> Enhance students' critical thinking skills. 	Pre- and Post-Program Case Analysis & Rubric	Cases Prior to and At End of Degree Program / Strategic Assessment Memo (SAMs) / Reflective papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Objective 2:</i> Develop the essential professional skills necessary for students to succeed in public service--research skills, budgeting and policy analysis skills, skills in organizational development and change, skills in personnel management, and the skills necessary in today's environment of shared governance, like collaboration and negotiation. 		MPA Eportfolio / Reflective papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Objective 3:</i> Develop students' skills so that they can write effectively and concisely for an audience of professionals. 	Pre- and Post-Program Case Analysis & Rubric	Cases Prior to and At End of Degree Program / MPA Eportfolio / Strategic Assessment Memo (SAMs) / Reflective papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Objective 4:</i> Develop students' oral presentation skills so that they can effectively present to small and larger groups (by providing both experience and the opportunity to develop confidence while speaking in public). 	Oral Presentation Assessment Rubric	Videos of Capstone Presentations / Reflective papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Objective 5:</i> Enhance students' abilities to work in groups and teams, providing positive experiences and the opportunity to assess the importance of using teams to accomplish organizational tasks. 	Next Step—Assessment Team Work Abilities	MPA Eportfolio / Reflective papers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Objective 6:</i> Train students to utilize the predominant computer and Internet applications as tools appropriate for the public and nonprofit workplace. 		MPA Eportfolio / Reflective papers
<p><i>Goal 8:</i> Provide students with the ability to be sensitive and knowledgeable about ethical, diversity and international issues in the public and nonprofit sectors.</p>	Pre- and Post-Program Case Analysis & Rubric / Strategic Assessment Memos	Cases Prior to and At End of Degree Program / MPA Eportfolio / Strategic Assessment Memos / Reflective papers
<p><i>Goal 9:</i> Provide students with the substantive knowledge about a specialized area of public affairs.</p>	Strategic Assessment Memos	Strategic Assessment Memos / MPA Eportfolios / Reflective papers

As can be seen, we are assessing most of these goals, except for the MPA Eportfolio and the teamwork goal; we will be working on the teamwork goal in this coming year. We will also be continuing to work on effective ways to assess the Eportfolio; at this point, we are content with using it as a rich means of qualitative evidence of student achievement and for students' usage in their job searches. We have been gathering our exit surveys for ten years now and continue to reap useful results from that process.

Pre- and Post- Program Case Analysis

One of the most important assessments of our Program is the Pre- and Post- Program Case Analysis. Students read a case when they begin our first course, PA 700, and are asked to analyze the issues within the case, applying one of Woodrow Wilson's important readings about administration. They then repeat that process in the capstone course, PA 800. The two analyses are scored according to a rubric in order to assess critical thinking skills, writing and knowledge about public administration.

Ideally, we would like to match up individual student's pre-test score with their post-test score. But the faculty worked for several years on the rubric, ending up with several "false starts." Therefore, the actual measurement of this analysis began in Spring 2010. The median number of semesters to finish our program is 7 semesters. The period from Spring 2010 to Fall 2011 only includes 6 semesters so only 7 students can be individually matched. In the meantime, therefore, rather than looking at just the difference in scores between the pre-test and post-test of individual students, we will also examine the pre-tests of all beginning students and the post-tests of all completing students. In statistical terms, we have only 7 students eligible for matched pair t-test analysis; Table 1 presents the results of the t-test measuring the difference between the pre-test of these students and the post-test. These results are highly statistically significant; they gained a significant increase in critical thinking and writing skills plus knowledge of public administration over the course of their MPA degree.

Table 2: Pre- and Post-Test Analysis of Matched Pair Students

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Pre Total Score	26.0000	7	2.44949	.92582
Post Total Score	35.2857	7	1.11270	.42056
Difference	-9.28571		2.13809	

Difference = -9.28571 , t=-11.49, 6 degrees of freedom, Prob = .000

Of course, this is only with 7 students so the t-test using independent samples is the more appropriate test.

Table 3 provides the results assuming all students are part of the same sample. The pre-test average score (25.0139) is significantly different from the post- test average score (33.2352).

Table 3: Pre- and Post-Test Analysis, One Sample T-Test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre Total Score	72	25.0139	4.58870	.54078
Post Total Score	79	33.2152	5.97360	.67208

Therefore, we may assume that students completing the program have made significant improvements in writing, critical thinking and knowledge of public administration when compared to their colleagues beginning the program. We can conclude that the MPA Program does make a significant difference in these areas.

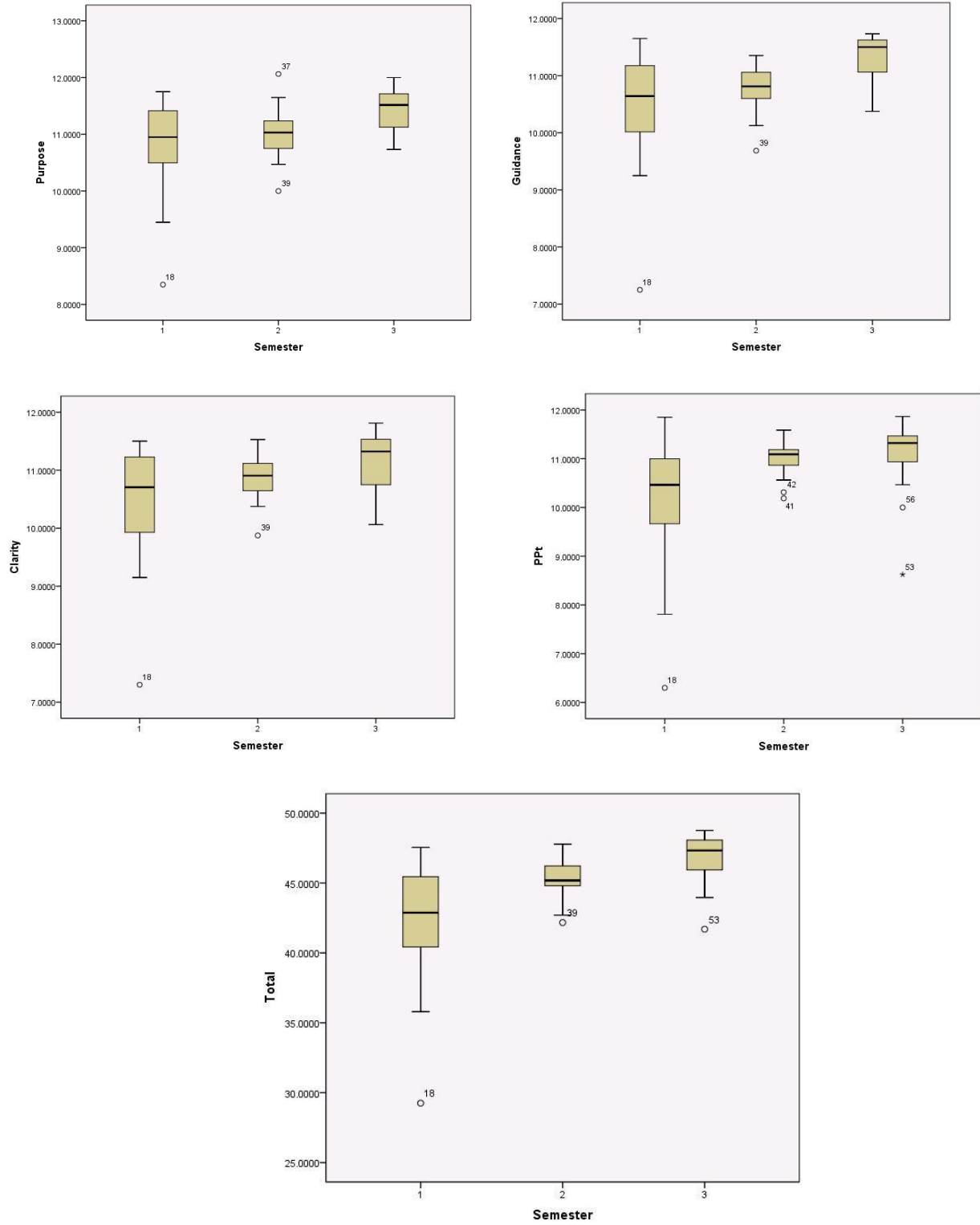
Oral Presentations

The next element of the program being assessed is students' ability to make oral presentations. The rubric for oral presentation incorporates scoring on Purpose of presentation, Clarity of presentation, Guidance to listeners, appropriate and professional usage of PowerPoint, and Total Overall Presentation score. Each student is scored by all of their classmates; then each student's score in each area is an average of their classmates' views on how they did on each element. This assessment has been completed for the past three semesters in PA 800: Capstone Course. For the past two semesters, these presentations have also been videotaped; these videotapes are kept in the MPA network space and are available to NASPAA accreditation teams as evidence of student accomplishment in oral presentations.

Each boxplot box has a central line that is the median score on that element for that semester. The "whiskers" above and below are the lower and upper quartiles; the small circles are outliers (with the student number of that student). The height of the box indicates the difference between the 25th and 75th percentiles.

Figures 1 a-d all indicate the median value for Purpose, Guidance, Clarity and PowerPoint have all increased over the three semester period, indicating an improvement in each of these elements in student presentations over even three semesters. This increase is even more pronounced in Figure 1e, the boxplot reflecting Total Score for presentations; there is a steady increase in the score over the period seen here. Even the outliers show an increase, none are as low as in the first semester being evaluated.

Figure 1 a-e: Boxplots of Oral Presentations



Exit Survey Results

The results of the exit survey are seen in Appendix I. In general, the 2011-2012 rankings of MPA program features were the same as in the past. However, there were some drops in scores from 2010-2011 to this past year, although most of these were not significant changes. We would attribute these drops to the atmosphere during Fall 2011, when MPA students were being asked if they would agree to pay double the Downtown fee in order for the Program to stay in place. While most students staying past Summer 2012 said they would rather pay than come back to the main campus, emotions were high. We believe that could have affected the results.

Improving knowledge in public administration in general as well as in a specific subfield are the two highest scoring areas. These are followed by improving professional skills, quality of elective courses, and quality of faculty.

A now typical pattern is that the lowest scoring area is the program's ability to improve the student's computer skills and their view on advising. The faculty believe that most students now come into the program with high levels of computer skills and so, the ability to increase those even more is difficult. Nevertheless, we continue to have discussions about how to improve those skills for students. In addition, we feel we constantly make efforts to improve advising; these findings will once again result in discussions on how to improve in this area.

Results for our summary questions indicate a very high proportion of students continue to believe the program has resulted in their feeling prepared for entry and mid-career level jobs and has put them on track to achieve their career goals. In addition, we have an explicit goal of providing a combination of theory and practice across our curriculum; these results indicate students continue to believe we are achieving that goal (4.31 average in 2011-2012 on a 7 point scale where 1 equals Theory and 7 equals Practice; 4 is a perfect balance between the two).

Demographic results indicate that students emphasizing public management and nonprofit administration are evenly split (approximately 35 percent each) with the remainder in urban administration, policy analysis and self-designed emphases.

Conclusions

Program faculty will continue to evaluate our progress in helping students achieve our learning goals. When we detect patterns indicating improvements are needed, we make changes in our program. Our next steps will be to work out ways to evaluate students' ability to effectively work in teams—a crucial skill for today's workplace.

Appendix I: Student Exit Survey Assessment Results, 2003 - 2012

	2002 -	2003 -	2004 -	2005 -	2006 -	2007 -	2008 -	2009 -	2010 -	SM Cohort	2011 -	Total
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011		2012	
	<i>n =</i> 15	<i>n =</i> 28	<i>n =</i> 41	<i>n=48</i>	<i>n=32</i>	<i>n=34</i>	<i>n=13</i>	<i>n=20</i>	<i>n=</i> 53	<i>n=15</i>	<i>n=16</i>	<i>n=26</i> 4
Evaluations (Ranked By 2010-2011 Results)	<i>(scale is 1 to 7 where 7 is the best)</i>											
Improve Knowledge of General PA	6.4	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.5	6.4	6.7	6.7	6.38	6.5
Improve Knowledge of Specific Area	5.5	6.2	5.9	6.3	6.3	6.2	6.3	6.45	6.6	6.4	6.25	6.2
Improve Professional Skills	5.7	6.0	6.0	5.9	6.0	6.0	6.3	6.85	6.2	6.1	6.06	6.1
Quality of Elective Classes	5.9	6.4	5.9	5.8	6.2	5.8	5.9	6.15	6.4	6.1	6.06	6.1
Quality of Faculty	5.9	6.0	5.8	5.9	5.7	5.7	6.2	5.85	6.2	5.9	6.06	5.9
Size of Classes Conducive to Learning	6.0	5.9	5.5	5.7	5.4	5.9	5.9	6	6.6	6.9	6.00	5.9
Help to Improve Writing	4.9	5.7	5.6	5.3	5.8	5.7	6.2	6.1	6.2	6.3	6.19	5.8
Quality of Core Classes	5.6	5.8	5.7	5.6	5.3	5.5	5.9	5.85	6.1	5.9	5.88	5.7
Help to Improve Presentations	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.7	6.0	5.5	5.9	5.7	6.1	6.1	5.25	5.7
Help to Improve Ability to Work in Teams	-	6.0	5.3	5.6	5.8	5.8	5.7	5.85	5.9	5.7	5.56	5.7
Ability to Schedule Core Classes Sufficient	6.1	5.6	5.5	5.6	5.0	5.1	5.9	5.5	6.3	6.7	5.13	5.6
Ability to Schedule Electives Sufficient	5.8	5.6	5.4	5.6	5.4	5.4	5.9	5.1	6.2	6.6	4.87	5.6
Quality of Outside Electives	5.8	5.3	5.4	5.2	5.6	5.1	5.5	5.33	5.8	n/a	5.89	5.4
Access to Courses Sufficient to My Needs	5.8	5.3	5.4	5.3	4.9	5.0	5.6	5.05	6.0	6.4	5.25	5.4
Library Resources Sufficient to My Needs	5.1	5.1	5.0	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.5	5.75	5.7	6.1	5.44	5.2
Computer Resources Sufficient to My Needs	5.6	5.7	5.3	5.0	5.3	5.1	5.3	4.85	5.2	5.5	5.25	5.2
Advising Sufficient to My Needs	5.6	5.2	4.7	4.8	4.8	4.9	5.6	5.1	5.3	4.5	5.31	5.1
Improve Computer Skills	4.9	4.8	4.6	4.4	5.1	4.7	5.4	4.7	4.9	5.1	4.13	4.7

Student Exit Survey Assessment Results, 2003 – 2012 (Summary Measures)

Summary Measures	<i>(scale is 1 to 7 where 7 is the best)</i>											
	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	SM Cohort	2011-2012	Total
MPA Has Prepared Me Well for Job / Career	5.9	5.8	5.9	6.0	5.9	6.0	6.0	6.1	6.3	6.20	5.7	6.0
As Result of MPA, I Feel Qualified for Entry Level Job	6.2	6.5	6.3	6.5	6.3	6.6	6.4	6.8	6.6	6.73	6.0	6.4
As Result of MPA, I Feel Qualified for Mid-Level Job	6.1	6.0	5.9	5.8	5.7	6.0	6.0	6.4	6.4	6.47	5.4	6.0
Balance Between Theory (1) and Practice (7) Achieved (4 = balance; 1=Theory; 7=Practice)	4.4	4.2	4.1	4.4	3.8	4.2	4.58	4.2	4.2	4.33	4.31	4.19
I Believe I am on Right Career Track Compared to Beginning of Program-- Yes	100.0 %	96.0 %	100.0 %	95.2 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	80%	100 %	98.8%

Preference for Other Class Structures

Preference for Class Structure	<i>(percentage figures)</i>											
	2002-2003	2003-2004	2004-2005	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	SM Cohort	2011-2012	Total
Would Have Liked More DTC Courses- Yes	54.5 %	66.7 %	62.5 %	62.8 %	87.1 %	60.0 %	---	---	60.5 %	100%	---	68.8 %
Would Have Liked More Weekend Courses- Yes	18.2 %	35.0 %	47.1 %	37.2 %	60.0 %	38.7 %	53.8 %	52.9 %	36.6 %	33.3 %	25.0 %	41.3 %
Would Have Liked More Online Courses- Yes	28.6 %	47.1 %	37.5 %	33.3 %	57.1 %	55.6 %	38.5 %	60.0 %	38.3 %	57.1 %	42.9 %	43.6 %
Would Have Liked More 4 to 7 Courses- Yes	61.5 %	42.3 %	44.4 %	63.8 %	39.3 %	65.6 %	46.2 %	38.9 %	30.4 %	25.0 %	33.3 %	47.1 %
Would Have Liked More Off-Campus Courses- Yes	20.0 %	12.5 %	20.7 %	31.0 %	35.0 %	11.5 %	61.5 %	21.4 %	32.6 %	77.8 %	26.7 %	23.8 %

Student Demographics (From Exit Survey)

Demographics												
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008-	2009-	2010-	SM	2011-	Total
	-	-	-	-	-	-	2008-	2009-	2010-	Cohort	2012	
	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011			
Average Years of Professional Experience	12.3	8.5	8.9	7.7	8.6	8.5	9.8	7.8	10.7	15.9	8.3	8.9
Average Years in Current Job	4.8	4.1	4.0	2.4	2.5	3.4	4.3	2.4	4.8	6.6	4.1	3.6
Elective Emphasis												
Nonprofit Administration	27%	36%	21%	27%	40%	21%	23.1%	25.0%	31.9%		35.7%	28.7%
Policy Making and Analysis	7%	4%	11%	21%	3%	6%	7.7%	0.0%	2.1%		35.7%	8.9%
Public Management	27%	39%	26%	7%	30%	29%	38.5%	30.0%	46.8%	100%	14.3%	29.1%
Self-Designed Emphasis	20%	7%	16%	30%	10%	18%	23.1%	40.0%	8.5%		7.1%	17.4%
Urban Administration	13%	14%	24%	16%	17%	27%	8.0%	5.0%	10.6%		7.1%	15.2%