ASSESSMENT REPORT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE FOR THE MASTERS DEGREE IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (MPA)

AY 2016-2017

MASTERS DEGREE PROGRAM

This report is organized around the six questions asked in the Department/Program Annual Report Guidelines. This report contains an appendix of assessment instruments used to analyze student learning outcomes.

**1.** **What learning outcome(s) did you assess this year?**

**(1) SLO #1:** Examine the impact of different social, economic, and political phenomena on public policy issues using analytical tools, including appropriate statistical concepts and techniques.

**(2) SLO #8:** Formulate and utilize human resource systems that are effective in terms of both protecting individual employees and enhancing organizational performance.

**(3) SLO #13:** Demonstrate an understanding of and apply basic public administration/nonprofit principles, theories, and research.

**2. What assignment or survey did you use to assess the outcomes and what method (criteria or rubric) did you use to evaluate the assignment?**

**(1) SLO #1:** We used the MPA 201 comprehensive examination questions to assess this student learning outcome. The specific questions are as follows:

Question #1: We are interested in studying the effect of charter schooling on overall student performance to see if students in charter schools perform better on standardized testing than do students in traditional public schools. We know that the mean student score for the entire population of students on our standardized test is 6 on a 1 to 10 scale. We take a sample of 100 charter schools and calculate their mean score, which is 7 with a sample standard deviation of 0.4. What is the null hypothesis here? Use the correct difference of means test to indicate whether we accept or reject the null hypothesis. Please show your work and round all calculations to two decimal places.

Question #2: We want to know if job skills training programs can help people find work, or at least help them get interviews with potential employers. We take a sample of twelve people and ask them how many interviews they had in the past two months. Then we have them attend our high-intensity job-training program and send them back out into the world. After two more months go by, we ask the same sample of people how many job interviews they have had during those two months (clearly this is a paired sample). Did the job training help? Use the data below to find out with the appropriate difference of means test. State the null hypothesis and tell me whether we accept or reject it and why. Please show all of your calculations and round decimals to two places.

Each of the questions making up the comprehensive examination for MPA 201 require students to use appropriate statistical concepts and techniques to analyze public policy issues. The first question examines the public policy issue of performance on standardized testing. Students use statistical techniques to test the impact of charter schools, as opposed to attendance at traditional schools, on standardized test scores. Students perform data analysis and use difference of means testing to examine the impact of high-intensity job-training programs on employment.

All students are expected to employ the correct statistical concepts and techniques, make the correct calculations, and provide the proper interpretation.

**(2) SLO #8:** We used a critical essay from MPA 245 to assess this student learning outcome. The specific assignment is as follows:

(a) For the concepts of equal employment opportunity (EEO), affirmative action (AA), and workplace diversity (WD); please provide the following: Basic definition; Purpose; Mean or mechanisms for achieving diversity; Targets.

(b) How do EEO, AA, and WD relate to strategic human resource management (SHRM) efforts to reform the civil service?

(c) Do you think AA or WD will be more effective in achieving its purpose? (Provide a justification for your position – e.g., ability to overcome larger social and political barriers, as well as those within an organization).

The goal of the assignment is to have students formulating human resource systems that are effective in both protecting individual employees and enhancing organizational performance. Key concepts are protection of individuals and groups from discrimination and enhanced organizational effectiveness based on diversity of personnel. The first part of the essay requires students to define different policies aimed at promoting diversity in organizations. Two of these are aimed at protecting employees from discriminatory practices (e.g., EEO and AA). Students are then required to link these different practices to strategic human resource management reforms aimed at enhancing organizational performance using diversity (e.g., workplace diversity). Readings in the course provide students with evidence of the link between increased diversity and improved organizational performance. Students should base the third part of their essay on this literature to show how these policies can both promote diversity and enhance organizational effectiveness.

We expect all students to score four on a scale of five in the each of the following areas: (1) Course-specific information; (2) Understanding of pertinent literature; (3) Quality of theoretical argument; (4) Original thought in theoretical argument; (5) Organization; (6) Writing; (7) Proper citation; and (8) Overall assessment.

**(3) SLO #13:** We used a critical essay from MPA 280T – Nonprofit Management and Leadership. The specific assignment is as follows:

(a) Explain the analytical concept of broadened accountability.

(b) Explain the nature of performance measurement (e.g., rational, objective measurement vs. social constructivist perspective).

(c) Identify and analyze the nature of the accountability relationships for those implementing Project Match.

(d) According to case material, officials at Project Match and the Illinois Department of Public Aid have different views about how to measure the performance of the program. Identify and analyze these views. What is the best way to measure the performance of this program? Address this question in terms of both the process of development, as well as the kinds of measures that should be applied.

To demonstrate an understanding of basic public administration/nonprofit principles, theories, and research; students address the first two items in the essay guidance. They need utilize the literature in the course to formulate their conception of broadened accountability, as well as the different perspectives on performance measurement. Once developed, these concepts are applied to provided case material. Students should be able to show how conceptions of accountability are related to performance measurement. In the case material provided, students should be making the connection between broadened accountability and a more encompassing view of performance measurement.

We expect all students to score four on a scale of five in the each of the following areas: (1) Course-specific information; (2) Understanding of pertinent literature; (3) Quality of theoretical argument; (4) Original thought in theoretical argument; (5) Organization; (6) Writing; (7) Proper citation; and (8) Overall assessment.

**3. What did you discover from the data?**

**(1) SLO #1:** There were eight students who took the MPA 201 comprehensive examination in Fall 2016 and Spring 2017.

All students who took the comprehensive examination for quantitative applications passed by successfully demonstrating their ability to perform the required calculations and complete the required policy analysis. All students performed the work with a high degree of accuracy in the selected time period.

**(2) SLO #8:** There were 10 students in the MPA 245 course in Fall 2016.

(1) Course-specific information: Average score – 3.5 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 5

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Average score – 3.65 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 4

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Average score – 3.7 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 5

(4) Original thought in theoretical argument: Average score – 3.4 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 4

(5) Organization: Average score – 4 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 8

(6) Writing: Average score – 4.3 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 9

(7) Proper citation: Average score – 4.15 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 7

(8) Overall assessment: Average score – 3.85 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 5

Students performed at or above our standard in the following areas: Organization of essay; quality of writing; and proper citation. The basic writing mechanics (organization, writing, and citation) were solid. However, students performed below are our established standard in the following areas: course-specific information; understanding of pertinent literature; quality of theoretical argument; and original thought in theoretical argument. Given problems with factual materials, it is not surprising there was some difficulty in developing and applying stronger theoretical constructs.

**(3) SLO #13:** There were six students enrolled in MPA 280T – Nonprofit Management & Leadership during the Spring 2017 semester.

(1) Course-specific information: Average score – 3.92 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 5

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Average score – 3.92 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 5

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Average score – 3.92 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 3

(4) Original thought in theoretical argument: Average score – 3.83 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 2

(5) Organization: Average score – 3.83 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 4

(6) Writing: Average score – 3.67 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 4

(7) Proper citation: Average score – 4.33 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better - 6

(8) Overall assessment: Average score – 4.00 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 4

Students performed at or above our standard in the following areas: proper citation and overall assessment. Students were below, but close to our standard in the following areas: Course-specific information; understanding pertinent literature; quality of theoretical argument; original thought in theoretical argument; and organization. Students were further below our standard in the area of quality of writing.

**4. What changes did you make as a result of the data?**

**(1) SLO #1:** No changes are needed for this student learning outcome.

**(2) SLO #8:** Lower than standard scores in the areas of both factual comprehension and theoretical development and application require class sessions to be redesigned. These changes will take the following form: (1) Directed small-group discussion – Students will break-up into small groups to discuss the assigned readings. Their discussions will be focused around a set of themes or concepts provided by the instructor; (2) Short presentations on each of the readings for the class sessions – This provides opportunities for students to present the main theme of a reading, as well as important supporting points and questions for further discussion; (3) Large group discussion – Following each individual reading, students will address the discussion question raised by the previous presenter. The course instructor will direct the discussion as needed. Both students and instructors will provide feedback on the main themes and arguments raised in the presentation; and (4) In-class exercise – There will be class sessions in which the instructor will utilize short case analyses, which allow students to apply the ideas and concepts in the particular class session. This will provide yet another opportunity for students to get direct feedback on the quality of their understanding of ideas and concepts, as well as honing their critical thinking skills.

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**5. What assessment activities will you be conducting in AY 2017-2018?** List the outcomes and measures or assessment activities you will use to evaluate them. These activities should be the same as those indicated on your current SOAP timeline; if they are not please explain.

**(1) SLO #2:** Evaluate the quality of public policy and the behavior of public servants using various ethical principles and frameworks.

**(2) SLO #3:** Appraise the activities of organizations and individual behavior in those organizations using various theories of complex organizations and organizational behavior.

**(3) SLO #7:** Design and implement budgeting processes and strategies that will lead to more effective use of budgetary resources.

**6. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?** Please provide a brief description of progress made on each item listed in the action plan. If no progress has been made on an action item, simply state “no progress.”

MPA program materials are currently under review by the Graduate Committee. Our last program review action plan dates back to AY 2008-2009. The following is of the items and our progress on meeting them.

(1) Develop a more rigorous student outcome assessment plan (SOAP).

The MPA program revised its SOAP in the following academic years: 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015. We be revising the timeline of activities for our upcoming SOAP.

(2) Increase involvement of practitioners in the MPA program.

The MPA program now offers three one-unit practitioner seminars once every four semesters. These one-unit courses are part of the program’s regular rotation of courses and have been so for the past six years.

(3) Develop program options for MPA students.

The MPA program has created two different emphases for students in the program. The first is state and local public management. The second is nonprofit management and leadership. The MPA program partners with the Department of Sociology to provide courses in grant writing and evaluation as part of this emphasis.

(4) Develop a curriculum for nonprofit management and leadership.

The MPA program has developed two of its own courses in this area. The first is Nonprofit Management and Leadership (MPA 280T). The second course is Program Evaluation (MPA 280T). These courses are paired with two courses in the Department of Sociology: SOC 183S –Philanthropy and Grant Making and SOC 184S – Grant Writing and Evaluation.

(5) Offer weekend courses in the on-campus MPA program.

This has been proposed at various times in MPA program core faculty meetings. There has been no progress made on this item.

(6) Provide a closer link between the MPA program and career advising for students.

MPA program faculty provide guidance for students seeking further their education in other graduate-level programs (e.g., advising on programs and writing letters of recommendation). MPA program faculty provide job leads to both current students and alumnus. MPA program faculty also write letters of recommendation and function as references for job interviews. MPA program faculty also provide linkage to the university’s Career Development Center.

**Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program**

**Student Paper Evaluation Form**

**Date:**

**Student Name:**

**Course:**

**Faculty Name:**

Please evaluate the enclosed student paper/portfolio according to the following scale:

**1=Fail 2=Weak 3=Average 4=Good 5=Excellent**

**(1) Displays an understanding of factual, course-specific information**

**1 2 3 4 5**

(2) Displays an understanding of issues in the pertinent literature

1 2 3 4 5

**(3) Quality of theoretical argument**

**1 2 3 4 5**

(4) Clarity, original thought, and conciseness in the theoretical argument

1 2 3 4 5

**(5) Quality of organization**

**1 2 3 4 5**

(6) Quality of writing

1 2 3 4 5

**(7) Sources cited properly**

**1 2 3 4 5**

(8) Letter grade (overall assessment)

A B C D F

Comments: (optional)

**MPA Program Outcome Assessment**

**Term**

**Course # and Title**

**Embedded Question**

**(1) Specific Issue or Question Examined:**

**(2) Assessment of overall class performance on Issue or Question:**

**(3) Recommendation for actions to be taken:**