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

AY 2017-2018

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 #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.

**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 #2:** We used a critical essay from MPA 250 – Ethics and Public Administration. The specific assignment is as follows:

Discuss Cooper’s (2012) design approach to ethical analysis. This should include a discussion of his model of ethical decision-making, as well as the model of responsible administration. This will be supplemented by additional literature from the course as appropriate.

Using the above framework, analyze Edward Snowden’s decision to disclose information about the NSA’s domestic surveillance program.

Did he make an ethically justified decision? Did he act as a responsible administrator?

The assignment addresses the student learning outcome in the following manner:

The first part of the essay requires students to use course materials to develop an ethical framework for the purposes of analysis. The basis of their ethical framework is Cooper’s (2012) design approach to ethical analysis. Students are required to integrate other course readings in order to provide a fully developed framework for analysis. This includes various ethical principles used to project the probable consequences of various alternative choices. Added to this framework is a discussion of Cooper’s standard of a responsible public administrator. This provides a criteria to evaluate the ethical content of the decision Edward Snowden made to publicly disclose confidential information (e.g., blow the whistle on the National Security Agency).

The second part of the essay requires students to apply their version of Cooper’s design approach to ethical analysis. Cooper’s model incorporates both an organizational (responsible conduct within organizations) and individual element (individual ethical autonomy). This allows students to evaluate the existing policies on whistle-blowing both generally and within the national security apparatus. They also analyze the actions taken by Edward Snowden as an individual.

The final part of the essay requires students to make a judgment on the ethical content of Snowden’s decision to publicly disclose information about the National Security Agency’s surveillance programs. This is done by viewing the individual’s action in the context of the larger organization and society (e.g., the individual’s decision in the context of existing public policy).

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.

**(2) SLO #3:** We used a research paper from MPA 210 – Organizational Theory in Public Administration. The specific assignment is as follows:

Students needed to construct a strategic plan to reform an organization, institution, or some combination of agencies, departments, etc. They should provide a justification for why the reorganization is necessary, how it will be implemented, estimated costs or cost savings, organizational chart(s), and expected results.

The assignment addresses the student learning outcome in the following manner:

Students will use various theories to analyze the relationship of organizations to both their internal and external environments. Based on the theoretical framework they use or develop, students will develop a strategic plan to address the various aspects of organizations. These include the following: structure, strategy, systems, staffing (human capital), skills, leadership style, and culture. The resulting reforms are aimed at improving the performance of the organization through both organization-member interface, as well as organization-citizen interface.

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 #7:** We used the final examination from MPA 230 – Public Budgeting. The specific assignment is as follows:

(1) How does ballot-box budgeting help or hinder state policymakers when they are developing the budget each year? Should policymakers or voters make the most important decisions about the budget and why?

(2) What tools does the state of California try to use to balance its budget and how effective have they been? What additional steps could California take to avoid boom and bust cycles and why?

(3) What are the top 3 budget reforms (tax reform, PAYGO, etc) that you think the state should adopt? Discuss the most likely path (tax commission, ballot measure, etc.) to adoption for these reforms.

The assignment addresses the student learning outcome in the following manner:

Students are asked to identify the existing budgetary environment in California. The second part of the exam question requires students to both identify and analyze the effectiveness of various tools used to manage budgetary resources. The last part of the exam asks students to apply their assessment of various budgetary tools, as well as various political/institutional processes, to implement effective budgetary reforms.

Dr. Cummins utilized the embedded question form, but not the student paper evaluation form. His assessment of the papers was more qualitative in nature.

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

**(1) SLO #2:** There were six students who took the MPA 250 in Spring 2018.

(1) Course-specific information: Average score – 4.00 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 2

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Average score – 4.00 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 3

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Average score – 3.92 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 2

(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 – 3.92 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 2

(6) Quality of writing: Average score – 4.50 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 6

(7) Proper citation: Average score – 5.00 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 6

(8) Overall assessment: Average score – 3.92 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 2

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

**(2) SLO #3:** There were 13 students who took MPA 210 in Spring 2018.

(1) Course-specific information: Average score – 4.85 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 13

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Average score – 4.77 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 13

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Average score – 4.62 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 12

(4) Original thought in theoretical argument: Average score – 4.62 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 12

(5) Organization: Average score – 4.38 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 12

(6) Quality of writing: Average score – 4.46 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 11

(7) Proper citation: Average score – 4.46 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 11

(8) Overall assessment: Average score – 4.46 out of 5; Number of students scoring four or better – 12

Students performed at or above our standard in all of the assessed areas.

**(3) SLO #7:** There were 11 students who took MPA 230 in Spring 2018.

The overall assessment is positive. About two-thirds of the students had strong responses to the questions in the A to high B range. There were a few students who fell in the B/C range. For those who received lower grades, the clarity of their writing was poor and they usually did not directly address the question. Some mentioned facts that were incorrect or did not completely address all parts of the questions.

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

**(1) SLO #2:** Lower than standard scores in the areas of both quality and originality of theoretical argument require class sessions to be redesigned. (1) Directed small-group discussion – Students will break-up into small groups to discuss the assigned readings. Their discussions will be focused around the theoretical concepts in each of the readings; (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 discuss the theoretical arguments and their application to examples/case study material; 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.

**(2) SLO #3:** Instructor recommends students take the course and write the paper in at least their second semester. The level of difficulty in the amount of reading material and length of assignment makes this a more intense endeavor. Some students may want to take this in their second semester, so they can be better prepared for graduate-level writing and theoretical concepts. \*There may be more here…discuss with Ken?

**(3) SLO #7:** Instructor will refer the weaker writers to the Graduate Student Writing Center and recommend the students enroll in writing workshops.

**5. What assessment activities will you be conducting in AY 2018-2019?**  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.

**SLO #4:** Evaluate both current budgetary and human resource practices in public and/or nonprofit organizations in terms of impact on organizational performance.

**SLO #10:** Formulate alternatives to existing policy based on the combination of theoretical frameworks and original policy research.

**SLO #11:** Construct and communicate effective discussions concerning the basic principles of public and/or nonprofit administration.

**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.”

As part of our program review in Fall 2017, we were charged with improving recruiting for the program. The MPA faculty are working to update our recruitment plan.

**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:**

**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)