**Annual Assessment Report for 2020-2021 AY**

**Department/Program:**  Political Science/Master of Public Administration

**Degree:** Master of Public Administration (MPA)

**Assessment Coordinator:** Dr. Kurt Cline

**1. Please list the learning outcomes you assessed 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 #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?** ***Please describe the assignment and the criteria or rubric used to evaluate the assignment in detail and, if possible, include copies of the assignment and criteria/rubric at the end of this report.***

**(1) SLO #1:** Final Research Paper, 10-12 pages

For the paper, students have to select their own policy issue or public administration related topic and collect secondary (or original) data to analyze. They are required to use both descriptive and inferential statistics, explain the results, and present the data in tables and graphs. There are six key sections of the paper required. Students are provided written guidelines and a copy of the rubric prior to submitting the paper. (Note: The papers evaluated for this report are from Fall 2019. Due to the extensive one-on-one meetings between students and the professor that take place to complete the assignment, the paper was cancelled for Fall 2020 when the course was taught fully online during COVID-19.)

The assignment is evaluated using a rubric (attached). The rubric includes ten (10) criteria and points are assigned for each of the criteria. The criteria are: (1) introduction/clear discussion of importance of topic; (2) clearly stated hypotheses, and why these relationships are expected; (3) discussion of data, including where and how it was collected and identification of dependent and independent variables; (4) discussion of statistical methods used in the analysis; (5) a discussion of the results and why they are important, expected or unexpected, etc.; (6) a conclusion with suggestions for policy change and/or future research; (7) inclusion of at least one table, formatted correctly and including the relevant information for the type of analysis completed, correctly titled and labeled, as is required per paper guidelines; (8) inclusion of at least one graph or figure appropriate for the data and type of analysis, correctly labeled, as is required per paper guidelines; (9) correct use of citations; and (10) general writing and page requirements met.

Students are expected to at least 180 out of 225 points on the rubric, as is typical for graduate-level courses. That would give them an equivalent to a B on the paper.

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

Students examine the impact of different social, economic, and political phenomena on public policy issues using analytical tools, including appropriate statistical concepts and techniques by researching the topic and reading about existing studies related to the topic. They collect data, either on their own, using publicly available information or they use secondary data that is publicly available (such as data from state websites or research centers). They apply the appropriate statistical techniques to examine the data, often after one-on-one meetings with the professor to confirm they are using the right approach, and then they must interpret the results and report them in a way someone unfamiliar with the topic or data would understand. This helps them learn how to convey information about statistics and complex policy issues to a broad audience.

Copies of the writing assignment, MPA program paper evaluation form, and embedded question form are included at the end of this report.

**(2) SLO #13:** Essay. Please answer ONE of the following questions as completely as possible in roughly 800-1000 words (~3 type-written pages). Make sure you attribute all sources according to APA style. Please submit your essay via Turnitin.com.

(1) Describe how Progressive Reform came to be the Administrative Orthodoxy (modernism) by the middle of the 20th Century. What characteristics and motivations did Stillman’s “moral reformers” all have in common with one another? What was it about the theories posited by these reformers that led them to be institutionalized into the “one best way” to manage people in organizations?

(2) What is the role of Public Administration in postmodern society, according to O.C. McSwite? Given the negatives, such as Kafka-esque bureaucratic sadism, and Imperial Bureaucracy, why would anyone want to be a public servant? How can we combat the negative aspects of governance and replace them with something more positive and beneficial?

(3) Explain the role that rules play in the structure of public institutions. Why do we have constitutions, according to Rohr? Why does it matter how a society structures its government? What do Knott and Miller argue about how we decide to organize for public goods and services? Can certain structures pre-determine policy outcomes?

We utilized the MPA program’s paper evaluation form to assess this writing assignment in the following categories: (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.

We expect all students to score four on scale of five in each of these categories.

Copies of the MPA program paper evaluation form and embedded question form are included at the end of this report.

**3. What did you learn from your analysis of the data? Please include sample size (how many students were evaluated) and indicate how many students (number or percentage instead of a median or mean) were designated as proficient.**

**(1) SLO #1:** There were thirteen students enrolled in MPA 201 – Quantitative Applications for Public Administration during the Fall 2019 semester. The following are based on all thirteen submissions.

The final paper was worth a total of 225 points. The average grade was 183.3 (81.5%). The grades ranged from a low of 141 to a high of 222.

Performance on the individual sections reported as average and number of students obtaining 80% or better:

(1) Intro to topic, clear discussion (15 pts): Avg =12.2, 10 out of 13 scored 80% or better  
(2) Hypotheses, including theory (15 pts): Avg =12, 11 out of 13 scored 80% or better  
(3) Discussion of data (40 pts): Avg =30.6, 8 out of 13 scored 80% or better\*   
(4) Discussion of methods (30 pts): Avg =21.7, 8 out of 13 scored 80% or better\*   
(5) Discussion of results (40 pts):  Avg =29.9, 6 out of 13 scored 80% or better\*  
(6) A conclusion (20 pts): Avg =15.8, 8 out of 13 scored 80% or better\*   
(7) At least one table (15 pts): Avg =12.1, 12 out of 13 scored 80% or better   
(8) At least one graph/chart (15 pts): Avg =13.7, 13 out of 13 scored 80% or better   
(9) Citations included, if applicable (10 pts): Avg =8.8, 12 out of 13 scored 80% or better   
(10) Well written, follows a logical order, at least 10 pages (25 pts): Avg =17.4, 7 out of 13 scored 80% or better\*  
  
\* = identified as area for improvement

**(2) SLO #13:** There were 12 students enrolled in MPA 210 – Organization Theory in Public Administration during the Spring 2021 semester.

(1) Course-specific information: Number of students scoring four or better – 12 out of 12

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Number of students scoring four or better – 12 out of 12

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 11 out of 12

(4) Original thought in theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 11 out of 12

(5) Organization: Number of students scoring four or better – 12 out of 12

(6) Quality of writing: Number of students scoring four or better – 12 out of 12

(7) Proper citation: Number of students scoring four or better – 10 out of 12

(8) Overall assessment: Number of students scoring four or better – 11 out of 12

**4. What changes, if any, do you recommend based on the assessment data?**

**(1) SLO #1:** Two key areas for improvement stood out, both related to writing. First, students had difficulty writing a discussion of the data and methods used in their research. This is very specific, technical writing and may be different from essay writing many students are familiar with, so the results are not surprising.

Second, student struggled with writing, overall. Several students struggled writing a good conclusion and several struggled with writing a paper that flowed well or included good transitions, etc.

The overall structure of the class will remain the same.

The following changes will be made:

1. Time will be set aside in class to include more detailed discussion of how to write up data, methods, results, and conclusions in an academic paper and in policy reports.
2. Writing resources will be provided to students along with their paper guidelines and rubrics. This class is often taken in students’ first semester, so I will remind students that graduate writing center and other graduate resources are available to help them as they make the transition into graduate school. I may invite someone to come speak to the class, time permitting.

The overall purpose of these changes is to build students’ skills in using statistics to make informed assessments and policy analysis, and learn how to present those results in a way that would be informative to a broad audience. This requires that they understand how to discuss data, be transparent about the analytical process, and convey what the results mean. This is an area that can be improved.

**(2) SLO #13:** This course (MPA 210) requires two midterm exams, which included written essays, as well as a substantial term paper. Since we encourage students to take this course early in the program, some issues concerning their writing have come up in recent years. We are considering a series of shorter papers or essays like the ones in the midterms so that students can practice their prose prior to writing a larger paper in another course.

**5. If you recommended any changes in your response to Question 4 in last year’s assessment report, what progress have you made in implementing these changes? If you did not recommend making any changes in last year’s report please write N/A as your answer to this question.**

**(1) SLO #4:** The general lack of proficiency in the key areas of understanding the pertinent literature, quality of theoretical argument, application of theoretical argument, and paper organization necessitate important changes in the substance of class sessions.

While the structure of the class session will remain the same, the substance/content of the discussions will be changed. The current practice has been to focus on the individual readings and then spend some time at the end of the class session tying the readings together.

The following changes were recommended:

(1) Directed small group discussion will be focused on identifying important concepts in the readings and the relationships among them. These small group sessions will function as a “brainstorming” session of sorts, as students seek to develop conceptual frameworks. It is these frameworks which will form the basis for analysis of a given case study. (2) Large group discussions will take one of two forms. The first will be to build on the small group discussions about the relationship of various readings to one another. In addition to looking at how readings in a particular session are related, students will be asked to look at how these readings connect to other relevant course material. The second will be to use in-class exercises to practice their application of these conceptual frameworks. The instructor will utilize either short cases or real-world examples as part of these in-class exercises. (3) Conduct of case analyses/paper review sessions. These sessions will focus on the organization of the paper, synthesis of material, and critical analysis. There will be an expectation students will have mastered basic descriptive material. The review sessions will utilize a similar format to the one used in the regular class session. Small groups will discuss the guidance for the case analysis/paper. Large group discussions will continue this discussion and integrate the thoughts of the various groups.

Dr. Cline has implemented this approach in the MPA 245 course.

**(2) SLO #10:** The general lack of proficiency in the key areas of understanding the pertinent literature, quality of theoretical argument, application of theoretical argument, and paper organization necessitate important changes in the substance of class sessions.

While the structure of the class session will remain the same, the substance/content of the discussions will be changed. The current practice has been to focus on the individual readings and then spend some time at the end of the class session tying the readings together.

The following changes were recommended:

(1) Directed small group discussion will be focused on identifying important concepts in the readings and the relationships among them. These small group sessions will function as a “brainstorming” session of sorts, as students seek to develop conceptual frameworks. It is these frameworks which will form the basis for analysis of a given case study. (2) Large group discussions will take one of two forms. The first will be to build on the small group discussions about the relationship of various readings to one another. In addition to looking at how readings in a particular session are related, students will be asked to look at how these readings connect to other relevant course material. The second will be to use in-class exercises to practice their application of these conceptual frameworks. The instructor will utilize either short cases or real-world examples as part of these in-class exercises. (3) Conduct of case analyses/paper review sessions. These sessions will focus on the organization of the paper, synthesis of material, and critical analysis. There will be an expectation students will have mastered basic descriptive material. The review sessions will utilize a similar format to the one used in the regular class session. Small groups will discuss the guidance for the case analysis/paper. Large group discussions will continue this discussion and integrate the thoughts of the various groups.

(4) Institute mandatory meetings with students concerning their research paper proposals. Meeting one-on-one with students concerning their choice of topics, research question, and choice of analytical frameworks will allow the instructor to provide additional guidance in such areas as theoretical development, organization of paper, and analysis of findings. This should result in an overall increase in proficiency.

Dr. Cline has implemented this approach in the MPA 260 course.

**(3) SLO #11:** The general lack of proficiency of students on this assignment necessitates some important substantive changes to the focus of class sessions.

While the structure of the class session will remain the same, the substance/content of the discussions will be changed. The current practice has been to focus on the individual readings and then spend some time at the end of the class session tying the readings together.

The following changes were recommended:

(1) Directed small group discussion will be focused on identifying important concepts in the readings and the relationships among them. These small group sessions will function as a “brainstorming” session of sorts, as students seek to develop conceptual frameworks. It is these frameworks which will form the basis for analysis of a given case study. (2) Large group discussions will take one of two forms. The first will be to build on the small group discussions about the relationship of various readings to one another. In addition to looking at how readings in a particular session are related, students will be asked to look at how these readings connect to other relevant course material. The second will be to use in-class exercises to practice their application of these conceptual frameworks. The instructor will utilize either short cases or real-world examples as part of these in-class exercises. (3) Conduct of case analyses/paper review sessions. These sessions will focus on the organization of the paper, synthesis of material, and critical analysis. There will be an expectation students will have mastered basic descriptive material. The review sessions will utilize a similar format to the one used in the regular class session. Small groups will discuss the guidance for the case analysis/paper. Large group discussions will continue this discussion and integrate the thoughts of the various groups.

Dr. Cline will be implementing this approach the next time this course is offered (Spring 2022).

**6. What assessment activities will you be conducting during the next academic year?**

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

**(2) SLO #9:** Formulate alternative regimes for ethical behavior and decision making in public and nonprofit organizations.

**7. What progress have you made on items from your last program review action plan?**

The MPA program has received re-accreditation from the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) through the 2027-2028 academic year (AY).

**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:**

Rubric for Final Paper: MPA 201

Student Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student Identified/Included:

1) Intro to topic, clear discussion \_\_\_\_\_/15 pts

2) Hypotheses, including theory\_\_\_\_\_/15 pts

3) Discussion of data \_\_\_\_\_/40 pts

4) Discussion of methods used in each section \_\_\_\_\_/30 pts

5) Discussion of results \_\_\_\_\_/40 pts

6) A conclusion \_\_\_\_\_\_/20 pts

7) At least one table \_\_\_\_\_/15 pts

8) At least one graph/chart \_\_\_\_\_/15 pts

9) Citations included, if applicable \_\_\_\_\_/10 pts

10) Well written, follows a logical order, and at least 10 pgs long \_\_\_\_\_/25 pts

**Total \_\_\_\_\_/225 pts**