**Annual Assessment Report for 2018-2019 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 #4:** Evaluate both current budgetary and human resource practices in public and/or nonprofit organizations in terms of impact on organizational performance.

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

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

**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 #4:** Critical Essay #2: 8 to 10 page essay addressing the following points:

Compare and contrast the “traditional” approach to human resource management with the strategic approach to human resources management.

How are each of these approaches linked to merit?

How have the following HR functions changed in light of strategic human resources management reforms: job analysis/position classification; recruitment & selection; and performance evaluation?

Assess the aforementioned changes in light of their ability to improve performance and strengthen merit in the national civil service.

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

The first part of the essay requires students to demonstrate an understanding of the historical and theoretical underpinnings of current human resource practices, as well as efforts to continually reform these practices. Strategic human resources management (SHRM) is driven by the assumption managers and human resource professionals should be collaborative and driven by the goal of enhancing organizational performance via the link between human resource practices and strategic planning. Proponents of SHRM will argue the link to merit is enhanced organizational performance and the flexibility of managerial decision making is important in this respect.

Students are then asked to identify how SHRM has shaped the human resource functions or practices of job analysis/position classification, recruitment/selection, and performance evaluation. This is done with an eye towards both performance (defined as organizational mission) and merit (defined as a principle based on qualifications, neutral competence, and a public service ethic).

In the final part of the essay, students are tasked with applying the different models (e.g., traditional human resources management and strategic human resources management) to current human resource practices. They should find tradeoffs between following the dictates of either model. Public organizations are required to do more than simply perform their missions effectively (SHRM), they must also uphold a public service ethic and provide an important interface between citizens and their government (traditional human resources management). This should lead students to conclude a more integrated approach to human resources management will better serve both purposes than following only SHRM or traditional human resources management alone.

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

**(2) SLO #10:**  Students are assigned a 15 to 20 page public policy research paper, which consists of the following elements:

(1) Introduction (Relevance of topic/policy; Thematic statement; Research questions; Brief outline of paper);

(2) Description of topic/policy;

(3) Theoretical/analytical framework (This could include a discussion of data and methodology if needed.);

(4) Analysis of topic/policy; and

(5) Conclusions (Implications of findings/analysis).

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

Students are introduced to a number of different policy areas and theoretical policy frameworks during the course. They are required to do research outside of the course readings on their topic of choice (e.g., original research). Students will utilize one of the theoretical policy frameworks to analyze their selected policy.

Students are required to submit a research proposal which provides a preliminary set of sources for their topic. This demonstrates there is enough existing research for the student to pursue a meaningful research project. They must also generate a research question, which will guide their research in the selected policy area. This is an important step in the development of the research project because the research question should inform the students’ choice of analytical frameworks. The analytical framework must be able to aid the student in addressing their research question.

It is from this basis (e.g., combination of original research, generation of research question, and selection of analytical framework), students are able to examine existing policies in a critical fashion. If students are identifying shortcomings in existing policy, they should be able to provide recommendations for improved policy alternatives.

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

**(3) SLO #11:** Critical Essay #1: 8 to 10 page essay addressing the following points:

Discuss the concept of broadened accountability and how it is related to ideas put forth in the “performance movement.”

Utilizing the concept of broadened accountability, analyze Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s conception of his authorizing environment. Is it adequate? (Support your position with course readings and case material).

How should Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld have responded to this authorizing environment?

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

The first part of the essay requires the students to integrate two important principles in public/nonprofit administration. The first is the principle of accountability. Using course materials, students should be able to trace the development of the principle of accountability. It has grown from a traditional view of top-down control to one that encompasses a variety of stakeholders (the “to whom” of accountability) and objects (the “for what” of accountability). Thus, the principle of accountability has broadened over time to take on more inclusive and negotiated aspects (Morrison and Salipante 2007).

One of these new aspects of accountability is the principle of performance. While the discussion of performance has existed somewhat independently of accountability, there are important links (Romzek 2000). The “performance movement” as conceived of by Radin (2006), tends to take a very narrow view of performance and how it is related to accountability.

By developing a discussion of these two principles, students now have a framework with which to analyze the decision making of Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. Students should be able to see how he has a very narrow conception of his accountability relationships, which is much akin to how these relationships are conceived of by proponents of the performance movement.

Because Rumsfeld conceives of his accountability relationships too narrowly, he neglects important dimensions of accountability in terms of both stakeholders and objects of accountability. These have important implications for how he responded to issues as they unfolded at Abu Ghraib. The recommendations flowing from this should suggest Rumsfeld’s view of accountability should have been more inclusive with respect to stakeholders and what he is accountability for in these more inclusive relationships.

So, students are asked to construct arguments concerning the basic principles of accountability and performance. They then communicate these principles via their application to the selected case study of Donald Rumsfeld and his decision making concerning interrogation policies at Abu Ghraib.

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 writing assignment, 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 #4:** There were nine students enrolled in MPA 245 – Seminar in Public Management during the Fall 2018 semester.

(1) Course-specific information: Number of students scoring four or better – 5 out of 9

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Number of students scoring four or better – 3 out of 9

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 3 out of 9

(4) Original thought in theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 3 out of 9

(5) Organization: Number of students scoring four or better – 4 out of 9

(6) Quality of writing: Number of students scoring four or better – 6 out of 9

(7) Proper citation: Number of students scoring four or better – 9 out of 9

(8) Overall assessment: Number of students scoring four or better – 4 out of 9

**(2) SLO #10:** There were twelve students enrolled in MPA 260 – Public Policy Administration during the Spring 2019 semester.

(1) Course-specific information: Number of students scoring four or better – 9 out of 12

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Number of students scoring four or better – 7 out of 12

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 6 out of 12

(4) Original thought in theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 7 out of 12

(5) Organization: Number of students scoring four or better – 7 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 – 7 out of 12

**(3) SLO #11:** There were seven students enrolled in MPA 240 – Seminar in Public Management during the Fall 2018 semester.

(1) Course-specific information: Number of students scoring four or better – 3 out of 7

(2) Understanding of pertinent literature: Number of students scoring four or better – 2 out of 7

(3) Quality of theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 2 out of 7

(4) Original thought in theoretical argument: Number of students scoring four or better – 2 out of 7

(5) Organization: Number of students scoring four or better – 3 out of 7

(6) Quality of writing: Number of students scoring four or better – 3 out of 7

(7) Proper citation: Number of students scoring four or better – 5 out of 7

(8) Overall assessment: Number of students scoring four or better – 4 out of 7

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

**(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.

The structure of the class session will remain the same: (1) Directed small group discussion; (2) Short presentation of assigned readings; and (3) Large group discussion.

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 will be made:

(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.

The overall purpose of these changes is to build students’ skills in developing and applying conceptual frameworks to case materials. The basis of good analytical writing is the ability to identify important concepts and clearly delineate their relationships to one another. By doing these two things, students also build the capacity to synthesize the relevant extant literature. Once these things are in place, organization of one’s argument and the ability to apply a fully developed conceptual framework follow.

**(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.

The structure of the class session will remain the same: (1) Directed small group discussion; (2) Short presentation of assigned readings; and (3) Large group discussion.

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(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.

The overall purpose of these changes is to build students’ skills in developing and applying conceptual frameworks to case materials. The basis of good analytical writing is the ability to identify important concepts and clearly delineate their relationships to one another. By doing these two things, students also build the capacity to synthesize the relevant extant literature. Once these things are in place, organization of one’s argument and the ability to apply a fully developed conceptual framework follow.

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

The structure of the class session will remain the same: (1) Directed small group discussion; (2) Short presentation of assigned readings; and (3) Large group discussion.

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 will be made:

(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.

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The overall purpose of these changes is to build students’ skills in developing and applying conceptual frameworks to case materials. The basis of good analytical writing is the ability to identify important concepts and clearly delineate their relationships to one another. By doing these two things, students also build the capacity to synthesize the relevant extant literature. Once these things are in place, organization of one’s argument and the ability to apply a fully developed conceptual framework follow.

**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.**

The following are a list of changes (and action on them) we recommended as part of your Assessment Report for AY 2017-2018:

**(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.

Dr. Cline has implemented this approach in all of his courses, both core and elective.

**(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.

The MPA program faculty have not yet made a decision about either the sequencing of courses or the use of prerequisites for the MPA 210 course.

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

Referral to the Graduate Student Writing Center and utilization of writing workshops is a standard recommendation for MPA program faculty. We have found the workshops to be useful for writing and citation mechanics, but not the substantive knowledge of particular courses.

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

**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.

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

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

(A) Recruitment plan –The MPA Program currently has a developed recruitment plan for CSU, Fresno’s four county service area. In addition to this, we plan to redouble our efforts in recruiting undergraduates in Political Science and other College of Social Sciences departments. We will also expand our efforts to other related majors outside the college (e.g., Mass Communication and Journalism, Economics). We will also be working to add a social media component to our efforts.

(B) Advisory board: The University Graduate Committee made the suggestion about the use of an advisory board. The MPA Program has opted to use a combination of informal working groups of alumni, as well as focus groups. We believe this gives us the important link to alumni input that an advisory board would, while at the same time giving us the opportunity to hear from a variety of different alumni on specific issues.

(C) Graduate Net: The Graduate Net Initiative provides an important opportunity we plan to utilize more fully. While we have a link to their web page and have had students in the program receive both funding and academic support from them, we have not utilized their outreach and web page services. This is something we plan to do in the coming academic year.

**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:**