



2008-2009 Assessment Plan Report

PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT AY 2008-2009

Report Date: June 2009

School/College: BPS

Department/Program: Public administration programs (BPA)

Person completing the Report: Maurice Penner, Professor and Program Director in consultation with faculty and staff

1. **Overview Statement:** Briefly summarize the assessment activities that were undertaken this academic year, indicating:

- a. Which program learning outcomes were assessed this year.
- b. Who in your department/program was involved in the assessment of the above learning outcomes

BPA Program Learning Outcomes:

1. Explain scholarly knowledge and concepts, and apply this to real-world and case situations.
 2. Adhere to legal and ethical standards; develop and describe responses to challenging situations
 3. Evaluate and inform public management problems through accurately identifying and utilizing descriptive and inferential statistics
 4. Evaluate and inform public management problems through accurately identifying and utilizing organizational theory and analysis
 5. Discern, distinguish, discuss and analyze major issues and initiatives
 6. Demonstrate good writing and presentation skills
- a. The capstone course for the Bachelor in Public Administration program is Emerging Developments (BPA 366). This course and the two-semester-long Field Project/Service Learning course (BPA 368) are designed to provide students with their culminating experiences in the program and enable us to assess at least the following program learning outcomes: (#1) explain scholarly knowledge and concepts, and apply this to real-world and case situations, (#3) evaluate and inform public management problems through accurately identifying and utilizing descriptive and inferential statistics; and (#6) demonstrate good writing and analytical skills.

BPA 366 addresses broad-based and specific areas of concern in public administration



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management, policy process and implementation, and leadership, and measures student knowledge and skills through case analyses, group collaboration projects, and student self-assessment of their learning and experiences in the BPA program.

The primary data points for assessing student learning in the BPA program are an analysis of the final grades in Emerging Developments (BPA 366) and the Field Project/Service Learning (BPA 368) courses based on course assignments, including comprehensive case analyses; SUMMA evaluations; online end-of-course survey of BPA 368 students (see attached); and, qualitative self-assessment student reports. The qualitative student self-assessment is solicited by faculty who teach the Field Project/Service Learning course.

Students in the Field Project (BPA 368) course select a topic in one of the three BPA concentrations: Law Enforcement Leadership, Nonprofit Administration or the generic public management concentration. The comprehensive project in this two semester course is designed to assess students' analytical writing and ability to explain scholarly knowledge and concepts, and apply them to real-world situations (# 6 and #1 program learning outcomes). Student projects that utilize quantitative methods allow for an assessment of students' knowledge of statistical tools and application of appropriate quantitative methods (learning outcome #3).

It is worth noting that the Dean and the public administration faculty are exploring accreditation of the MPA program with the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA). As a long-standing member of NASPAA, we believe accreditation is an important next step. NASPAA requires outcomes-based direct assessment of student learning as a core requirement for accreditation. Although NASPAA does not accredit undergraduate programs, we will adopt NASPAA principles and practices in assessing learning in the BPA program.

- b. The Public Administration program director and associate director and full-time faculty participated in the design, implementation and ongoing review of program learning assessment. They are: Drs. Maury Penner (Director), Michael O'Neill, Larry Brewster, Catherine Horiuchi, and Gleb Nikitenko (Associate Program Director and instructor). Many of the long-standing and highly qualified adjunct faculty have participated in the planning and implementation of assessment through frequent faculty meetings, telephone conferences, email and blackboard communication, and as instructors.

Faculty are expected to communicate with those who teach the courses preceding and following their course to facilitate learning across the curriculum.



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7. **Please answer the following questions for each of the Student Outcomes Assessed:**

a. **What did you do?**

Describe clearly and concisely how you assessed the learning outcomes that were evaluated this year (e.g., measures, research methods, etc.). [please use bullet points to answer this question]

- i. The course sequencing for the Field Project (BPA 368), Policy Analysis (BPA 352), Nonprofit Governance and Development (BPA 378), Law Enforcement Leadership (BPA 400), and Public Budgeting (BPA 365) and the course delivery formats were revised to better address #'s 1, 5, and 6 program learning outcomes. The changes were in response to faculty and student feedback through SUMMA, cohort visits, focus groups, and faculty discussions. These changes will be evaluated as relevant data is collected and analyzed, and necessary adjustments will be implemented in Spring 2010.
- ii. The Emerging Developments in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors (BPA 366) was re-designed to accommodate a piloted comprehensive exam (see below). We also introduced a new textbook and course assignments that better reflect the learning outcomes. The piloted comprehensive exam is under review by faculty and program administrators.
- iii. The comprehensive case analysis exam as part of the Emerging Developments course (BPA 366) was designed in April-May of 2009 and piloted that summer. The faculty and program administrators are reviewing the results of the exam. The faculty and program administration are in the process of considering alternative methods for end-of-program learning assessment.
- iv. Public Finance and Budgeting faculty with the program and associate program directors met several times in October and November of 2008 to review and revise the course curriculum and learning objectives in support of BPA learning outcomes #s 1, 3, and 6. The meetings and subsequent e-mail exchanges resulted in the re-design of the case-study and budgeting assignments. The faculty reported that the changes had a very positive impact on student learning as demonstrated by student performance and student evaluations.
- v. The Legal Responsibilities course (BPA 362) was re-designed and utilized the Wiki course management and interaction system. The new course materials and improved learning activities (in-class and online) resulted in markedly increased course satisfaction and learning as evidenced by



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student performance, SUMMA, and faculty assessment.

b. What did the faculty in the department or program learn?

Summarize your findings and conclusions as a result of the assessment indicating strengths and weaknesses in student learning demonstrated by this assessment.

While student performance on the BPA culminating exams and projects is generally very good and suggest that the program learning goals have been achieved, we acknowledge that learning assessment is ongoing and an evolving process. The pilot comprehensive exam, for example, is a work in progress.

We continue to work with faculty and administration to revise the curriculum and course learning goals. We may engage in a NASPAA self-study in AY2010-2011 which will help to inform learning assessment in our graduate and undergraduate programs.

In June 2009 the Provost announced the elimination of the College of Professional Studies and the School of Business and Management and the formation of a new School of Business and Professional Studies. The BPA and MPA faculty and program administrators are exploring shared curriculum and faculty with our new Business colleagues.

c. What will be done differently as a result of what was learned?

Discuss how courses and/or curricula will be changed to improve student learning as a result of the assessment. Include a discussion of how the faculty will help students overcome their weaknesses and improve their strengths.

- i. The program director and full-time faculty will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the Field Project (BPA 368) and Emerging Developments (BPA 366)—the capstone and Service Learning course—in the AY 2009-2010. We will develop two survey instruments that (1) will invite BPA students to self-assess learning based on the program learning outcomes and (2) provide faculty an opportunity to assess program learning outcomes as reflected in their student's performance in the Emerging Developments course.
- ii. A comprehensive review of all syllabi mapped to course and program learning outcomes will continue in an effort to identify inconsistencies, and to further develop sophisticated measurement tools and assessments of learning outcomes. This process will result in further course revisions, refinement of learning goals, and additional tools designed to measure actual learning. Full-time and adjunct faculty will be involved in this process.



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- iii. As mentioned, we will develop and implement additional end-of-course and program student self-assessments and better integrated faculty feedback. We will evaluate the pilot-comprehensive exam and determine whether to continue this as a permanent program requirement and, if so, what weight should be given to the exam in evaluating overall student performance in the program.

8. **Attach a copy of the components of the department/program assessment plan that have been modified since its initial submission:**
 - a. Program Mission
 - b. Program Learning Goals
 - c. Program Learning Outcomes
 - d. Curriculum map that shows the courses that pertain to the outcome

Please return to: Provost Office by June 1, 2009

You can send your replies as either a Word attachment (to: marin@usfca.edu) or as a hard copy to: Provost Office, Lone Mountain Rossi Wing 4th floor.

If you have any questions, please contact: William Murry, Director of Institutional Assessment (wmurry@usfca.edu or x5486).