

**Graduate Degree Program Assessment Progress Report Cover Sheet:**

Degree: **Master of Public Administration** For Calendar Year: **2015**  
(Date submitted to college committee: April. 1, 2016 \_\_\_\_\_ By: Michael Crow  
(Date posted on college assessment website: \_\_\_\_\_)

Overall Rating: \_\_\_\_\_

Respond to all six parts following the “Degree Program Assessment Progress Report Instructions.” (NOTE: Parts 1 through 4 can be copied from the relevant sections of your assessment plan.) Attach additional pages as needed.

**(1) Student learning goal(s) addressed this year:**

The MPA program uses a biennial assessment process to measure student learning outcomes. The academic year 2014-15 is Year 2 of that two-year cycle:

**Year 2: Leadership, interpersonal and oral communication assessment.** In this assessment, the committee will measure and evaluate the MPA program's success at addressing learning goals pertaining to managerial and interpersonal abilities:

- Knowledge of public service principles (Learning outcome cluster 1A)
- Application of public service principles (Learning outcome cluster 1B)
- Developing, implementing, and evaluating policies, programs and projects (Learning outcome cluster 2A)
- Applying research skills to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions (Learning outcome cluster 2B)
- Leadership, organizational and management skills to lead and manage people in complex and changing environments (Goal 3)
- Written communication skills (Learning outcome cluster 4A)
- Oral communication skills (Learning outcome cluster 4B)
- Productive interaction with diverse workforce and citizenry (Learning outcome cluster 4C)

## **(2) Learning outcomes/objectives for those goals addressed this year:**

**Goal 3: Leadership, organizational and managerial** skills to lead and manage people in complex and changing environments

- 3.1 Identify appropriate leadership skills and apply these skills to different organizational settings and issues;
- 3.2 Demonstrate the use of effective teams in different organizational settings;
- 3.3 Identify human resource management techniques and apply these within the organization;
- 3.4 Select appropriate budgeting and financial analytical techniques and apply these to problems in the public and non-profit sectors; and,
- 3.5 Evaluate information and communication technologies for application and use in public organizations to identify appropriate solutions for managing information.

**Goal 4: Communication Skills:** Written and oral communication skills essential for effective public administrators to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry

### *Learning Outcome Cluster A: Written Communication Skills*

- 4.1 Write a professional paper that reflects an appropriate structure and format for the type of paper selected, i.e. research, policy analysis, or case study;
- 4.2 Write a clear, concise, comprehensive, grammatically correct, free from spelling errors, and properly referenced paper;
- 4.3 Write an executive summary that presents briefly the purpose of the paper, supporting literature, methodology and analyses and major results;
- 4.4 Use illustrations, tables, and graphics effectively; and,
- 4.5 Select the appropriate channel to communicate the information.

### *Learning Outcome Cluster B: Oral Communication Skills*

- 4.6 Prepare a well-organized, clear, and concise presentation;
- 4.7 Communicate the parts of the professional paper, i.e., problem/issue statement, literature review, methodology, analyses, results, conclusions and recommendations;

4.8 Use visual aids effectively; and,

4.9 Use appropriate language and public speaking skills, and respond to questions.

*Learning Outcome Cluster C: Interacts productively with diverse workforce and citizenry*

4.10 Recognizes the importance of diversity in societies and cultures;

4.11 Demonstrates flexibility and sensitivity to cultures and persons;

4.12 Recognizes utility of different channels of communication by different audiences;

4.13 Facilitates stakeholder communication and demonstrates a responsiveness and sensitivity diversity;

4.14 Elicits information and suggestions from a broad array of stakeholders to assist in achieving goals;

4.15 Gains cooperation and builds consensus;

4.16 Builds effective relationships and networks;

4.17 Negotiates differences;

4.18 Creates a comfortable, safe, and respectful environment in which divergent views can be shared;

4.19 Listens actively to divergent views; and,

4.20 Focuses on collaborations and partnerships.

### **(3) Courses & activities where assessed:**

To measure these learning outcomes, the faculty assessment committee evaluated identity-redacted student items from the MPA program's capstone course, PADM 7373 from fall 2012 to spring 2015. These products include:

- i) A capstone team paper
- ii) A team oral presentation of the paper to clients, stakeholders and public
- iii) Individually-completed peer evaluations, and self-reflection/process debriefing essay

In the capstone course, students, working as consultants, develop a group project that addresses a policy or public administration problem that a public client requests help with resolving. Consequently, students must synthesize what they have learned across the curriculum about public administration concepts and values; research methods; leadership, management and organization on a complex project; and teamwork, interpersonal relationships and effective oral and written communications. Hence, it is an ideal opportunity to evaluate student learning across the curriculum in these areas, as well as provide students with applied, practical experience with a project from inception to completion.

#### **(4) Methods used:**

We carried out three types of assessment for each capstone project: an assessment of the oral presentation (aimed at assessing oral presentation skills); an assessment of the capstone paper (aimed at assessing knowledge and application of public service principles, research design and analysis skills, and written communication skills); and an assessment of the process by which the students completed the capstone, as revealed by the peer evaluations and the reflection rubrics students complete at the end of the project (aimed at assessing leadership and teamwork skills and interaction in a diverse context). Each MPA faculty member evaluated each of these components using a rubric. In some cases, adjunct faculty or other parties assisted in conducting evaluations of the oral presentations. This assessment covers available materials from fall 2012 through spring 2015, though materials for some parts of the assessment are not available for all semesters.

## **(5) What are the assessment findings? How did you analyze them?**

### **Oral communications assessment**

The oral communications assessment is based on analysis of rubric-guided evaluations of the capstone oral presentations. We began to conduct assessments of capstone oral presentations when we adopted our current assessment plan in spring 2014. Hence, for this assessment we have evaluations covering spring and fall 2014 and spring 2015. Evaluation rubrics were completed by MPA tenure stream and adjunct faculty and Institute of Government staff present at these presentations at the time they were made. All tenure-stream faculty were encouraged to attend each presentation.

The oral presentation assessment rubric includes the following six items:

- Presentation had a clear sense of purpose and organization to achieve that purpose
- Demonstrated command of project problem, methods and recommendations
- Demonstrated effective use of PowerPoint and other visual aids
- Clear presentation, demonstrating appropriate language and public speaking skills
- Responded effectively to audience questions
- Overall, presentation effectively addressed the needs and expectations of the client

Each evaluator indicated whether competence on each item was not applicable (NA), not evident (0), partly evident (1) or clearly evident (2). To analyze the data, we report the median and mean for each item across all evaluators for each capstone project.

Our goal with this assessment is to identify oral presentation learning outcomes in which students seem to systematically underperform as judged by the capstone oral presentations. To accomplish this, we rate MPA program performance on each learning outcome according to the following criteria:

**NA** --- Insufficient data to assess

**Deficient** --- Two or more raters rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) for all three capstone presentations

**Of concern** --- Two or more raters rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) for two of the capstone presentations.

**Satisfactory** --- Two or more raters rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) no more than once for the capstone presentations.

1) Presentation had a clear sense of purpose and organization to achieve that purpose  
**(Satisfactory)**

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Spring 14:	1	1.3
Fall 14:	2	1.8
Spring 15:	2	1.8

2) Demonstrated command of project problem, methods and recommendations  
**(Satisfactory)**

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Spring 14:	2	1.7
Fall 14:	1	1.4
Spring 15:	2	1.8

3) Demonstrated effective use of PowerPoint and other visual aids **(Satisfactory)**

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Spring 14:	1	1.3
Fall 14:	2	1.8
Spring 15:	2	1.8

4) Clear presentation, demonstrating appropriate language and public speaking skills  
**(Satisfactory)**

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.7
Spring 15:	2	1.8



5) Responded effectively to audience questions (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	1.5	1.6
Spring 15:	2	2

6) Overall, presentation effectively addressed the needs and expectations of the client (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Spring 14:	2	1.7
Fall 14:	2	1.7
Spring 15:	2	2

<i>Table 1</i> <i>Summary Table of Capstone Oral Presentation Assessment</i>		
<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Rating</b>
4.6	Presentation had a clear sense of purpose and organization to achieve that purpose	Satisfactory
4.7	Demonstrated command of project problem, methods and recommendations	Satisfactory
4.8	Demonstrated effective use of PowerPoint and other visual aids	Satisfactory
4.9	Clear presentation, demonstrating appropriate language and public speaking skills	Satisfactory
4.9	Responded effectively to audience questions	Satisfactory
4.6	Overall, presentation effectively addressed the needs and expectations of the client	Satisfactory

Generally, these results indicate that students in our program are largely successful in mastering our learning goals with respect to oral presentation. While there is variation in the median on individual items from capstone to capstone, we do not see evidence of a systematic pattern in students falling short in one particular aspect of oral presentation. Moreover, it is notable that no evaluator scored a capstone team's performance on any item as 0 across the three capstones being evaluated. The results indicate that students are coming into the capstone with sufficient oral presentation experience to create a

professional oral presentation. This may reflect our efforts to incorporate oral presentation throughout the curriculum.

### **Capstone paper assessment**

The capstone paper assessment is based on analysis of rubric-guided evaluations of the capstone reports each team produces for its client. These capstone reports are available from fall 2012 (when we switched the capstone format from individual paper to group project) through fall 2014 (the spring 2015 paper is still being finalized). Evaluation rubrics were completed by all MPA tenure stream faculty.

The capstone paper assessment rubric includes the following 28 items. Each evaluator indicated whether competence on each item was not applicable (NA), not evident (0), partly evident (1) or clearly evident (2). To analyze the data, we report the median and mean for each item across all evaluators for each capstone project.

Our goal with this assessment is to identify learning outcomes in which students seem to systematically underperform as judged by the capstone paper. To accomplish this, we rate MPA program performance on each learning outcome according to the following criteria:

**NA** --- Insufficient data to assess

**Deficient** --- Two or more faculty rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) for three or more of the capstone papers.

**Of concern** --- Two or more faculty rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) for two of the capstone papers.

**Satisfactory** --- Two or more faculty rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) no more than once for the capstone papers.

*Holistic criteria*

- Paper identifies a clear purpose and is organized appropriately to fulfill that purpose (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Paper is free of mechanical problems (i.e. grammatical and spelling errors) (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.6

- Paper's writing style (word choice, paragraph and sentence construction) effectively communicates its argument and analysis to the client (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.7
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.4

- Paper's executive summary communicates the paper's goals, methods, and conclusions concisely and effectively to the client (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.5

- Develops analysis and recommendations appropriate for a governmental or nonprofit client (in contrast to for-profit clients) (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Addresses the concerns and questions of relevant stakeholders and policymakers (**Deficient**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.6
Spring 13:	2	1.6
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.6

- Conclusions and recommendations logically follow from arguments and evidence (**Of concern**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	1.6
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.7

- Overall, arguments and analysis generalize from the evidence and literature to generate original ideas, conclusions or recommendations (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

*Application of public administration knowledge*

- Applies principles and best practices in organization theory to analyze problems and develop recommendations to client (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Applies principles and best practices in public financial management to analyze problems and develop recommendations to client (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.6
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	NA	NA
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Applies principles and best practices in human resource management to analyze problems and develop recommendations to client (**NA**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	NA	NA
Spring 13:	NA	NA
Fall 13:	NA	NA
Spring 14:	NA	NA
Fall 14:	NA	NA

- Uses relevant public administration and public policy literature to support arguments and analysis (**Of concern**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.6
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.4

- Overall, describes and/or recommends managerial practices that will effectively address the client's needs (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.8

*Application of public service values*

- Fairly evaluates conflicting interests and values across stakeholders (**Deficient**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	1.5	1.5
Spring 14:	2	1.6
Fall 14:	2	1.6

- Distinguishes between public and private interests in developing recommendations (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	1.6
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Addresses ethical and legal issues relevant for the decision-making process and implementation (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.6

- Demonstrates understanding of relationship between political process and administrative process (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.6
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Describes and recommends practices consistent with principles of accountability and transparency (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

- Uses values rooted in public interest (efficiency, equity, effectiveness, accountability, transparency, etc.) to develop recommendations (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	2
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

- Overall, demonstrates adherence to ethical principles of public administration practice (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

*Analytic methods*

- Included client and stakeholders at appropriate points in the research process to determine needs and expectations for the end product (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.6
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Develops or adopts appropriate performance measures to evaluate outcomes (**Deficient**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	1	1.2
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	NA	NA
Spring 14:	1.5	1.3
Fall 14:	1.5	1.3



- Constructs tables, charts and illustrations with adherence to best practices (**Deficient**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	1	1.4
Spring 13:	2	1.6
Fall 13:	2	1.4
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	1	1.4

- Interprets tables, charts and illustrations competently (**Deficient**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	1	1.4
Spring 13:	2	1.6
Fall 13:	2	1.4
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.4

- Uses other descriptive methods of data analysis correctly and as appropriate (**Of concern**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	2
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.6

- Uses and interprets inferential statistical methods (e.g. regression analysis) correctly and as appropriate (**NA**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	NA	NA
Spring 13:	NA	NA
Fall 13:	NA	NA
Spring 14:	NA	NA
Fall 14:	NA	NA

- Overall, uses appropriate quantitative and qualitative evidence to support arguments and analysis (**Deficient**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.6
Spring 13:	2	1.6
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	1.8
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Overall, develops an effective product that meets the needs and expectations of the client and the public (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 12:	2	1.8
Spring 13:	2	1.8
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Rubric criterion</b>	<b>Rating</b>
<b>1.6 and 4.1</b>	Paper identifies a clear purpose and is organized appropriately to fulfill that purpose	Satisfactory
<b>4.2</b>	Paper is free of mechanical problems (i.e. grammatical and spelling errors)	Satisfactory
<b>4.2</b>	Paper's writing style (word choice, paragraph and sentence construction) effectively communicates its argument and analysis to the client	Satisfactory
<b>4.3</b>	Paper's executive summary communicates the paper's goals, methods, and conclusions concisely and effectively to the client	Satisfactory
<b>1.1 1.4 and 1.8</b>	Develops analysis and recommendations appropriate for a governmental or nonprofit client (in contrast to for-profit clients)	Satisfactory
<b>1.5 and 2.2</b>	<b>Addresses the concerns and questions of relevant</b>	<b>Deficient</b>

	<b>stakeholders and policymakers</b>	
<b>2.13</b>	<b>Conclusions and recommendations logically follow from arguments and evidence</b>	<b>Of concern</b>
<b>2.14</b>	Overall, arguments and analysis generalize from the evidence and literature to generate original ideas, conclusions or recommendations	Satisfactory
<b>1.2</b>	Applies principles and best practices in organization theory to analyze problems and develop recommendations to client	Satisfactory
<b>1.16 + 2.7</b>	Applies principles and best practices in public financial management to analyze problems and develop recommendations to client	Satisfactory
<b>1.15 + 2.6</b>	Applies principles and best practices in human resource management to analyze problems and develop recommendations to client	NA
<b>2.9</b>	<b>Uses relevant public administration and public policy literature to support arguments and analysis</b>	<b>Of concern</b>
<b>1.3 and 1.12 and 1.13 and 2.1</b>	Overall, describes and/or recommends managerial practices that will effectively address the client's needs	Satisfactory
<b>1.6</b>	<b>Fairly evaluates conflicting interests and values across stakeholders</b>	<b>Deficient</b>
<b>1.7</b>	Distinguishes between public and private interests in developing recommendations	Satisfactory
<b>2.4</b>	Addresses ethical and legal issues relevant for the decision-making process and implementation	Satisfactory
<b>1.5</b>	Demonstrates understanding of relationship between political process and administrative process	Satisfactory
<b>1.12</b>	Describes and recommends practices consistent with principles of accountability and transparency	Satisfactory
<b>1.9 and 2.4</b>	Uses values rooted in public interest (efficiency, equity, effectiveness, accountability, transparency, etc.) to develop recommendations	Satisfactory
<b>1.10 &amp; 1.11</b>	Overall, demonstrates adherence to ethical principles of public administration practice	Satisfactory
<b>1.17 + 2.5</b>	Included client and stakeholders at appropriate points in the research process to determine needs and expectations for the end product	Satisfactory
<b>2.8</b>	<b>Develops or adopts appropriate performance measures to evaluate outcomes</b>	<b>Deficient</b>
<b>4.4 (and 2.9)</b>	<b>Constructs tables, charts and illustrations with adherence to best practices</b>	<b>Deficient</b>
<b>4.4 (and 2.11)</b>	<b>Interprets tables, charts and illustrations competently</b>	<b>Deficient</b>
<b>2.11</b>	Uses other descriptive methods of data analysis correctly and as appropriate	Of concern
<b>2.11</b>	Uses and interprets inferential statistical methods (e.g. regression analysis) correctly and as appropriate	NA

<b>2.9</b>	<b>Overall, uses appropriate quantitative and qualitative evidence to support arguments and analysis</b>	<b>Deficient</b>
<b>1.18</b>	Overall, develops an effective product that meets the needs and expectations of the client and the public	Satisfactory

Overall, the capstone paper assessment suggests that the MPA program is successful at achieving learning goals on written communication and knowledge and application of public administration knowledge and values. Consistent with the writing and methods assessment last year (i.e. the policy analysis paper assessment), the capstone papers are generally characterized by well-organized and mechanically-correct writing. In addition, our evaluation of the capstone papers suggests that our students can apply principles from core courses (i.e. organization theory, public finance) to project management and have internalized core public administration values such as transparency, inclusion, and decision-making based on universalistic values (e.g. effectiveness, efficiency and equity) in their work. That is, they can “articulate and apply a public service perspective.”

The capstone paper assessment also points to some ways in which our students are falling short in our expectations. First, some of the capstone projects could have gone further in including the views and interests of a broader range of stakeholders into the project. This may suggest that our students are not giving sufficient thought as to who may be affected by a particular policy problem or proposal that is under consideration, beyond the client. It may also indicate that our students are not coming into the capstone aware of or comfortable with reconciling the interests and desires of a client with those of the broader community. In short, our students may be too quick to internalize the interests and values of a particular client, leading them to neglect the possibly conflicting interests of other stakeholders.

Second, some of the capstone projects have fallen short on our methodological expectations. None of the capstone projects involves inferential statistical analysis, and so the concerns center on descriptive methods of analysis, including graphical tools. This result, too, is consistent with last year’s policy analysis paper assessment.

Based on these results, we should consider the following adaptations to our curriculum:

- 1) Prompt students to identify more non-client stakeholders as part of the capstone project. Encourage them to contact or interview these stakeholders as appropriate to identify their interests and obtain input.
- 2) Incorporate examples of project management in core courses (e.g. Politics and Bureaucracy; Professions) and electives (e.g. Strategic Management; Managing Public Disputes) that successfully reconcile client interests with those of non-client stakeholders.
- 3) Incorporate a unit on conflicting interests in the policy analysis course as part of the discussion on normative analysis.

- 4) Make stakeholder identification a part of the policy analysis paper assignment.
- 5) Continue our process for integrating methods, and particularly descriptive methods, across the curriculum. In particular, incorporate assignments requiring descriptive data analysis in the majority of our core courses.

### **Capstone process assessment**

The capstone process assessment is based on analysis of rubric-guided evaluations of the peer evaluations and the reflection rubrics that each capstone student prepares at the end of the semester. Each student prepares an evaluation of each of his/her peers on his/her performance that includes comments on the scores they awarded each peer and why. These comments provide insight into the effectiveness with which members of the team addressed teamwork and interpersonal dynamics. In addition, each student prepares a self-reflection rubric on the capstone experience. The prompts for this assignment generally encourage students to comment on leadership and teamwork during their capstone experience. These assessments are available from fall 2013 through fall 2014 (the reflections and peer evaluations for spring 2015 are not yet available).

Each tenure-stream MPA faculty member reads all the peer evaluation comments and self-reflection essays that each capstone team member prepares and evaluates each capstone on a rubric that includes the following 16 items. Each evaluator indicated whether competence on each item was not applicable (NA), not evident (0), partly evident (1) or clearly evident (2). To analyze the data, we report the median for each item across all evaluators for each capstone project.

Our goal with this assessment is to identify learning outcomes in which students seem to systematically underperform as judged by the process the students used to carry out the process (reflected in their peer evaluations and reflection rubrics). To accomplish this, we rate MPA program performance on each learning outcome according to the following criteria:

**NA** --- Insufficient data to assess

**Deficient** --- Two or more faculty rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) for three or more of the capstone papers.

**Of concern** --- Two or more faculty rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) for two of the capstone papers.

**Satisfactory** --- Two or more faculty rated the competence on the outcome as “not evident” or “partly evident” (i.e. mean of 1.6 or below) no more than once for the capstone papers.

- Multiple students took responsibility for important elements of project execution (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

- Tasks for developing the project were fairly distributed across members (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

- Tasks for developing the project were assigned according to strengths of team members (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Team members communicated expectations effectively among each other (**Of concern**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.6

- Team members succeeded in developing consensus on project goals, methods and recommendations (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

- Team effectively addressed issues of free-riding (**Of concern**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	1	1.4
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	1	1.4

- Most team members followed through on individual commitments to the project (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Team members managed time well (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Team generated a work climate in which members felt free to express dissenting opinions (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Team effectively addressed resolved opinions (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Team communicated well with clients (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.6
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

- Team developed a work climate inclusive of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other underrepresented group members (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

- Team facilitated input from a broad array of stakeholders (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.6

- Team facilitated input from socially under-represented and vulnerable social groups (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	1.8
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8



- Overall, team members demonstrated effective leadership in the execution of the capstone project (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	2

- Overall, team members demonstrated effective teamwork in the execution of the capstone project (**Satisfactory**)

	<u>Median</u>	<u>Mean</u>
Fall 13:	2	2
Spring 14:	2	2
Fall 14:	2	1.8

<i>Table 3</i> <i>Summary of Capstone Process Assessment</i>		
<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Rating</b>
3.1	Multiple students took responsibility for important elements of project execution	Satisfactory
3.2	Tasks for developing the project were fairly distributed across members	Satisfactory
3.2	Tasks for developing the project were assigned according to strengths of team members	Satisfactory
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Team members communicated expectations effectively among each other</b>	<b>Of concern</b>
4.15	Team members succeeded in developing consensus on project goals, methods and recommendations	Satisfactory
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Team effectively addressed issues of free-riding</b>	<b>Of concern</b>
4.16	Most team members followed through on individual commitments to the project	Satisfactory
3.2	Team members managed time well	Satisfactory
4.18	Team generated a work climate in which members felt free to express dissenting opinions	Satisfactory

4.17	Team effectively addressed resolved opinions	Satisfactory
3.1	Team communicated well with clients	Satisfactory
4.18	Team developed a work climate inclusive of race, gender, sexual orientation, and other underrepresented group members	Satisfactory
4.13	Team facilitated input from a broad array of stakeholders	Satisfactory
4.11	Team facilitated input from socially under-represented and vulnerable social groups	Satisfactory
3.1	Overall, team members demonstrated effective leadership in the execution of the capstone project	Satisfactory
3.2	Overall, team members demonstrated effective teamwork in the execution of the capstone project	Satisfactory

Overall, the results indicate that students demonstrated leadership, teamwork and inclusion that meet our expectations. The peer evaluations and the self-reflection essays suggest that in general students had strong inter-personal dynamics; valued an inclusive work group; fairly distributed tasks; and communicated well with clients. At the same time, students were able to settle leadership questions and create effective working groups in most cases. This suggests that our students not only get to know each other well in the program and build effective relationships with each other before the capstone, but that they also internalize important values in group work, leadership and organizational and human resources management prior to coming into the capstone.

One area in which students are not quite meeting our expectations in leadership and management, however, is in managing free-riding. In two of the three capstones evaluated, the peer evaluations and self-reflections indicate that some team members felt other team members were not living up to their promised contributions to the group effort. As we might expect, this free-riding problem was more evident in the two larger capstone groups (fall 13 and fall 14) rather than in the spring 2014 group (which had just 3 students). Free-riding, of course, is a very typical problem in group work, but our aim in the program is to help students develop tools for addressing it that should be applied in the capstone.

Based on this, we might consider the following adaptations to our curriculum:

- 1) Make a discussion of free-riding more explicit in relevant core courses (organizational theory; human resource management; policy analysis). This might include requiring that students read Olson's Logic of Collective Action or a similar text as part of one of our core courses.
- 2) Include discussion of methods for addressing free-riding in the relevant core courses (i.e. organization theory and human resources management).
- 3) Encourage students to critically reflect on the free-riding problem in group-work in our core courses.

**(6) What conclusions were drawn and what decisions were made as a result? How were stakeholder groups involved?**

The capstone assessment provides an opportunity to assess our program's learning goals in knowledge and application of public service concepts and values, leadership and management skills, and oral communication skills. In addition, it serves to supplement the assessment of student writing and methodological skills carried out in the policy analysis paper assessment. In sum, we find that:

- 1) Program goals in oral and written communication are being met satisfactorily;
- 2) Most program goals in knowledge and application of public service concepts and values are being met satisfactorily, particularly with respect to best practices established in our core courses and with respect to accountability, transparency and professional ethical expectations;
- 3) Most program goals in developing leadership and managerial skills are being met satisfactorily;
- 4) Students may be falling short of our expectations in a few specific ways:
  - i) Identifying relevant stakeholders and incorporating their views and interests as part of a project;
  - ii) Effectively using tables, charts and other descriptive statistical tools as part of a project;
  - iii) Effectively addressing free-riding issues that come up in the course of executing a group project.

To address these shortfalls, we recommend that:

- i) The MPA program continues its process of integrating descriptive research methods across the curriculum. This process began this past year after we identified descriptive methods as an issue from the policy analysis paper assessment.
- ii) Core courses in policy analysis and elective courses in strategic management and managing public disputes give further attention to stakeholder identification and why it matters (perhaps using Bardach's text).

iii) Core courses in organization theory, human resources management and policy analysis more explicitly evaluate and discuss free-riding problems. We might want to consider incorporating Olson's Logic of Collective Action at some point in the curriculum.