

**School of Public and Environmental Affairs  
Master of Public Affairs Program  
Assessment Plan  
12 April 2005**

**I. Assessment Purpose and Goals:**

The purpose of assessment in the SPEA Graduate Program is to evaluate the success of the MPA program in developing in graduate students the competencies and goals of the Mission Statement. Those competencies and goals are as follows:

**School of Public and Environmental Affairs  
MPA Mission Statement  
10-13-04**

The mission of the School of Public and Environmental Affairs Master of Public Affairs program is to prepare students to lead and manage community organizations.

Specific Competencies and Goals:

The SPEA MPA program further commits itself to enhance competency:

- in **organizational management**; by developing an appreciation for and an ability to use theoretical knowledge about management and public policy;
- in **governance**; by developing expertise in policy and management, developing an awareness of the economic and legal constraints within which leaders and managers operate, and developing the ability to understand and adapt to the ethical, social, economic, and political context of public policy;
- in **strategic action and analysis**; by developing the ability to use quantitative skills and developing problem solving and critical thinking skills;
- in coping with **globalization** and its ramifications; by developing an appreciation for the changing scope of governance and the impact of global action on public institutions from the local to the international;
- in **professionalization**; by developing an ethical consciousness and improving communication skills.

## **II. Assessment Methodology and Techniques:**

The primary assessment tools used by the Master of Public Affairs Graduate Program are 1) the Capstone Course (V600) which students take at the completion or near completion of their course work in the program; 2) a questionnaire given to all graduating students asking them to evaluate the success of the MPA program in delivering on the objectives of the mission statement; and 3) regular meetings with a Graduate Student Advisory Council in which feedback is sought on issues of concern to the students.

In the capstone course, students conduct a project that draws on a variety of the skills and knowledge that the program has attempted to teach as part of the mission of the program. Depending on the faculty member teaching the course the course has focused on program evaluation, policy evaluation or strategic planning for an agency. Each year at the conclusion of that course, the faculty member teaching the course will complete a questionnaire regarding student level of preparation (see Appendix I). That questionnaire is composed of thirteen questions addressing goals identified in the mission statement. The faculty member is asked to indicate in thirteen areas whether student preparation for that course is “more than adequate,” “adequate,” or “inadequate.” The questionnaire also includes an opportunity to comment on each question. In addition to the questionnaire, the director of the program further reviews with the faculty any comments or recommendations regarding the deficiencies of the students. This review is then used as one measure of the success of the program.

The purpose of the student questionnaire is to seek input on whether the MPA Program has successfully imparted to students the competencies and goals it has set for itself. The questionnaire includes the same thirteen questions as the instructor questionnaire and asks students to indicate whether, as a result of their enrollment in the MPA program, their skills or knowledge have “not changed,” “improved,” or “improved significantly.” Furthermore, if they indicate “not changed”, students are asked in a question #12 to specify whether it was due to prior development of those skills or knowledge or whether it was a failure of the program to deliver on that specific goal (see Appendix II).

The Graduate Student Advisory Council is composed of twelve graduate students at various stages in their graduate program. Typically four are selected from students just beginning the program, another four mid-way through the program and four nearing completion. The director of the program and the dean meet with this group each fall and each spring to solicit feedback on program issues of importance to the students. In particular, student feedback is typically sought on the mission statement, assessment instruments, or proposed course or concentration changes. This feedback is then used to consider any necessary changes to the aforementioned topics.

## **III. Process for Using Assessment for Program Improvement:**

The School of Public and Environmental Affairs meets each August in a retreat and reviews issues that arose from the last academic year and issues that need to be addressed in the coming year. At that point, the school will review the assessment of the program

that occurred in the last academic year. This will include the results of the capstone course, the results of the survey of graduating students and the meetings with the Graduate Advisory Council. Any issues that are deemed to warrant changes in the program and its curriculum will be addressed at that time.

#### **IV. Participation:**

The instruments of assessment used by the School of Public and Environmental Affairs have been discussed and approved by the faculty and by the graduate student advisory council both of whom have made modifications. The results of the assessment as indicated above will be discussed in the faculty retreat at the beginning of the academic year and modification made to the program if warranted.

#### **V. Records:**

The surveys administered to the graduating students and the questionnaire completed by the faculty teaching the capstone course will be maintained by the school in its graduate student's records along with copies of the assessment plan. Summaries of the modification to the program will also be kept in these files.

## Appendix I

### School of Public and Environmental Affairs Review of Capstone Course

Semester & Year \_\_\_\_\_

After teaching the Master of Public Affairs Capstone Course, I report the following regarding the level of preparation of the students in the class.

Performance in the Capstone Course demonstrates that in:

1. Communication

a. Student writing skills are:

\_\_\_more than adequate \_\_\_ adequate \_\_\_inadequate \_\_\_NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

b. Student speaking skills are:

\_\_\_more than adequate \_\_\_ adequate \_\_\_inadequate \_\_\_NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

c. Student listening skills are:

\_\_\_more than adequate \_\_\_ adequate \_\_\_inadequate \_\_\_NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Student awareness of legal constraints within which leaders and managers operate is:

\_\_\_more than adequate \_\_\_ adequate \_\_\_inadequate \_\_\_NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Student problem solving skills are:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

4. Student understanding of professional ethics is:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Student ability to apply management theory and principles is:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Student awareness of the economic constraints within which leaders and managers operate is:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Student quantitative skills are:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

8. Student critical thinking skills are:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

9. Student ability to understand and adapt to the ethical, social, economic, and political environment of public policy is:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

10. Student awareness of the impact of globalization on the public management is:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

11. Student expertise in policy and management in my MPA area of concentration has:

more than adequate     adequate     inadequate     NA

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix II

### Graduates of the Master of Public Affairs Program Indiana University South Bend

By participating in this confidential survey, you are helping us maintain and improve the high quality of the Master of Public Affairs Program at Indiana University South Bend. Your IUSB experience and your response to this questionnaire are important to us. Thank you for your time.

Please note that all of the questions are regarding your experience in the MPA program at IUSB.

As a result of the MPA program at IUSB:

1. Communication skills
  - a. My communication skills in writing have:  
 Not Changed     Improved     Improved Significantly
  - b. My communication skills in speaking have:  
 Not Changed     Improved     Improved Significantly
  - c. My communication skills in listening have:  
 Not Changed     Improved     Improved Significantly
2. My awareness of legal constraints within which leaders and managers operate has:  
 Not Changed     Increased     Increased Significantly
3. My problem solving skills have:  
 Not Changed     Improved     Improved Significantly
4. My understanding of professional ethics has:  
 Not Changed     Improved     Improved Significantly
5. My ability to apply management theory and principles has:  
 Not Changed     Improved     Improved Significantly



13. My concentration in the MPA program was (circle one):
- Public and Community Services Administration & Policy
  - Health Systems Administration & Policy
  - Governmental Administration & Policy
  - Non-Profit Administration & Policy

Revised April 12, 2005