Program: Certificate, Judicial Administration

Department: Public Policy and Administration

Number of students enrolled in the program in fall 2011: 11

Faculty members completing template: Rob Wassmer (PPA Chairperson), Donna Hoenig-Couch (Center for California Studies), and Candice Palaspas (College of Continuing Education)

Date: 1/26/2012

Period of reference: 2006-07 to present

Background

The College of Continuing Education, with advice/oversight from the Department of Public Policy and Administration, administers the Certificate in Judicial Administration at Sacramento State. It is funded entirely through student tuition.

The design of the four-course Certificate in Judicial Administration is for highly motivated individuals currently working in the courts and for those interested in a potential career of court administration. This program greatly enhances certificate holders’ knowledge and skills, enabling them to better work with judges and stakeholders and secure higher levels of responsibility within the court system. Certificate holders can climb the career ladder in the courts to obtain well-paid executive positions. An executive or manager in today’s court system must be a jack-of-all-trades in legal and fiscal matters, and human resources, as well as in facilities management and contract negotiation. The complexity and scope of executive/managerial jobs require future leaders to be skilled in using current technology, implementing innovative business theories and applying academic knowledge. Working in the California judicial branch is an exciting opportunity to contribute to a strong and impartial third branch of government.

The Graduate Certificate in Judicial Administration program at the College of Continuing Education at Sacramento State instills in the students a broad and deep base regarding judicial branch history, budget theory, principles and practices of public administration, as well as current and dynamic issues within the branch. Together with a strong interdisciplinary curricula, students learn from current leaders and subject matter experts in the California judicial system during one of the most dynamic and innovative eras for the branch. The result provides the judicial branch with leaders who make a difference in how justice is provided in their courts, in their communities, with the media – and particularly – in successful practice of overall judicial administration. This certificate is one of a few of its kind in the nation. The program was developed through close cooperation with the California Administrative Office of the Courts and others directly involved in judicial administration. A clear recognition of its success, in the first four years, three alumni have competed to become Court Executive Officers in California.
1) Please describe your program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program?

The four courses that comprise the Certificate in Judicial Administration are PPA 291 (Court Governance and Operations, PPA 292 (Court Management), PPA 293 (Court Leadership), and PPA 294 (Emerging Issues in Judicial Administration). Since the inception of these courses during the 2006-07 academic year, instructors have included learning objectives for them on the syllabi that students receive at the start of the semester. These learning objectives were originally developed during the creation of the certificate. Designed to provide a comprehensive theoretical and practical knowledge base of court policy, operations, and delivery of justice, the courses were developed to respond to the internal educational need for court employees holding a baccalaureate degree with the express intent to also respond to succession planning in the executive and administrative areas of the state courts. They have been refined over the four years that these courses have been taught through both formal review and informal discussion among the instructors.

There have been two formal one-day retreats, in June 2010 and June 2011, for faculty to assess and evaluate the curricular offerings, content and continuum of courses. The Steering Committee consists of court executives, educational staff from the Administrative Office of the Courts, and university faculty and administrative staff. Steering committee meetings occur on a quarterly basis to discuss the progress of the program and adherence to the partnership agreement with State Justice Institute and the Courts. In January 2012, the steering committee participated in a conference call to discuss a migration of the Certificate in Judicial Administration to a hybrid instructional delivery model using new and emerging distance learning tools, and to provide the necessary hands-on training to the cadre of faculty teaching in the program. These efforts will in turn help accomplish the long term goal of creating a sustainable, comprehensive, and exceptional program that can better serve the statewide audience.

In June 2012, a specially designed online teaching and learning training/orientation will be offered to the program faculty and subject matter experts. It will incorporate hands-on training at Sacramento State, but will also include online activities and assignments. The objective is to ensure that all stakeholders understand the hybrid delivery format, planned online learning environment and highly interactive components of each course. The goal is to ensure that all stakeholders and key project players develop familiarity with the model, help to promote the program with the judicial administration audience, and continue in partnership with the courts to educate and train personnel for succession planning.

Given that the four courses for this certificate are taught within the Department of Public Policy and Administration, and administered by the College of Continuing Education, both entities with a strong tradition of establishing learning outcomes, assessing how well they are being achieved, and if necessary making changes to better achieve them, the culture of learning-outcomes surrounding this certificate is strong.

2) Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content
knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated outcome, please provide the reason that it was designated as desired by the faculty associated with the program.

The best way to answer this question for a certificate program that consists of four courses is to list the learning objectives for all courses. These are:

PPA 291 (Court Governance and Operations)

At the end of PPA 291, students will:

1. be able to utilize critical reasoning and analysis skills to conceptualize and understand the structure of governance in the California state judicial system and analyze its accomplishments and challenges;
2. understand the interrelationship among the three branches of state government with particular emphasis on policy initiatives and directions in the state judicial system;
3. explore the role of the Judicial Council in setting statewide policy direction for the state’s judicial system and the role of the AOC in implementing it;
4. understand the governance structure of trial and appellate courts, including the relationship between the bench officers of each court and each court’s executive office;
5. examine the relationship between the necessary components of strong court governance and operations with the Core Competencies identified by the National Association of Court Management;
6. analyze the specific components of key court operations, including caseflow management, jury management, technology, strategic planning and security; and
7. recognize significant statewide trends affecting the courts and how courts respond to those trends.

PPA 292 (Court Management)

At the end of PPA 292, it is expected students:

1. have explored key public administration, organizational and management theories and be able to apply theories to practice;
2. understand the relationship between the National Association of Court Management’s 10 core competencies and key public administration, management, and organizational theories;
3. be able to discern the relationship between management and the success of a public organization;
4. understand concepts underlying budgeting, human resources, labor management, and case flow management and be able to apply specific elements of each in a court context;
5. have explored the value of and how to analyze data; and
6. understand how to manage the process of change.

PPA 293 (Court Leadership)

At the end of PPA 293, students will be able to:
1. define the general nature of leadership and the characteristics that tend to distinguish leadership from management, particularly in relation to courts and other public sector organizations;
2. describe standard theories of organizational leadership, their general assumptions, strengths, weaknesses and contingent nature;
3. identify the potential effects of organizational culture on court leadership and managing organizational change and the extent to which court leaders shape or are shaped by that culture;
4. explain and evaluate the relationship between court leadership, court performance, strategic planning and the court executive’s leadership role in carrying out the court’s mission; and
5. apply theoretical models to practical examples that illustrate the qualities of an Innovative leadership organization.

PPA 294 (Emerging Issues in Judicial Administration)

At the end of PPA 294, it is expected that students:

1. will have an understanding of the new issues and services, such as collaborative courts, restorative justice, specialized courts, therapeutic jurisprudence, services for self-represented litigants, elder abuse, and cultural competency facing the courts and how courts can respond to their communities’ needs;
2. will understand how external factors like the increasing importance and reach of technology in society and expectations of the community impact court operations;
3. will understand how science, technology, the media and affect the public’s perception of courts;
4. will be able to analyze the impacts of the 2007-11 economic downturn on the judicial branch throughout the United States and California, and how this downturn will force the judicial branch to effectively manage operations and expectations in what looks to be many years of stagnant and/or diminished resources;
5. will understand the organizational evolution of the courts from a loosely organized organization supported by the legislative and executive branches, into a co-equal branch with the same administrative and management challenges facing all complex public organizations.

3). For undergraduate programs only, in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.

This is a graduate only program.

4). For each desired outcome indicated in item 2 above, please:

a) Describe the method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured. b) Include a description of the sample of students (e.g., random sample of transfer students declaring the major; graduating seniors) from whom data were/will be collected and the frequency and schedule with which the data in question were/will be collected. c) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument” (e.g., survey or test), “artifact” (e.g., writing sample and evaluative protocol, performance review sheet), or other device used to assess the status of the learning outcomes desired by the program. d) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.
Unfortunately, there has been no formal measurement of the achievement of the above listed Certificate in Judicial Administration learning objectives. However, a recent student surveys offered a qualitative review of the objectives. A more thorough assessment would be best accomplished through three summative measures: (1) a targeted survey of certificate alumni to assess their opinion both on how well the 23 specific learning objectives listed above fits what they think they need to practice judicial administration, and then how well these specific learning objectives have been achieved through their completion of the Certificate in Judicial Administration, (2) a similar survey of potential judicial employers of certificate holders to see if these 23 specific learning objectives are appropriate to what they need from such a graduate, and a survey of actual judicial employers of certificate holders to see how adept these graduates are at the 23 specific learning objectives in their work environment, and (3) a survey given to students in PPA 291, 292, 293, and 294 that would ask their opinion on how well the learning objectives for the course have been achieved. Faculty who teach the four Certificate in Judicial Administration required courses could then discuss tabulated results with an eye toward possibly changing the curriculum and/or pedagogy in a way that would better achieve a learning objective not currently achieved at a desired level.

6) Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program's learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program's curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

In 2010, a survey was administered to alumni of the Certificate in Judicial Administration. The survey assessed the alumni's motivation to enroll in the program, if the coursework helped prepare them for new challenges in the workplace, the benefits of participating in the program, challenges in the program (e.g. scheduling, location, travel, etc.), if the program helped them secure higher levels of responsibility or promote within the court system, and recommendations for continued success of the program. Here is a summary of the results of the survey:

- Most alumni enrolled in the program to enhance their knowledge and skills in court administration as well as for career advancement.
- Most alumni felt that the coursework helped them prepare for new challenges in the work that they do.
- Benefits of the program included: networking with other court professionals in a competitive yet collaborative program; obtaining a comprehensive overview of how the judicial branch works, and interacting with past and current leaders in the California judicial system who were guest speakers/lecturers in the program.
- The biggest challenge for most alumni was balancing work/life/school.
- Most alumni felt that the learning was interconnected as they progressed from course to course.
- Most alumni have been able to apply the learning from the program in the current work they do.
- 50% of alumni have applied for a new position that would give them the opportunity to use the learning from this program.
- 42% of alumni have been promoted to a position of greater responsibility since completing the program.
7) Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?

No, it does not. There is no professional accrediting body for court management. The National Center for State Courts in Virginia, however, has its Institute for Court Management (ICM). ICM offers two certificate programs: Court Management Program, and Court Executive Development Program. ICM is designed for and available to current employees of U.S. courts. ICM has no academic accreditation or association, and there are no academic requirements of its students. As it is not an academic institution, its syllabi are not available on-line so its learning outcomes cannot be assessed or compared. That said, the topics of Court Management Program are covered in Sac State’s JA program. ICM’s Court Executive Development covers the same topics as its Court Management Program but includes a three week course in Williamsburg, Virginia, on leadership and managements in the courts and justice system, an independent project, and a concluding seminar.

Alternatively, the Judicial Administration Certificate Program is primarily academic; it explores – from a scholarly vantage point, the theory, principles and research around these various topics before applying them to the courts. Course content is rigorous, and better prepares our students to think outside the box, to question, to innovate, to assume leadership in the state courts.

8). Finally, what additional information would you like to share with the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities regarding the program’s desired learning outcomes and assessment of their accomplishment?

The most salient points regarding outcome and assessment in Sacramento State’s Certificate in Judicial Administration are addressed above. The program is committed to continued informal and formal evaluations to assess its accomplishment (e.g. formally through surveys, alumni networks, faculty assessment, etc.)