

**Office of Academic Program Assessment, Office of Academic Affairs
The 2012-2013 ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT**

for

Master's Program in Public Policy and Administration (PPA)

Prepared by

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1. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented any changes for your assessment including learning outcomes, assessment plan, assessment tools (methods, rubrics, curriculum map, or key assignment etc.), and/or the university baccalaureate learning goals?

In fall 2012, the Department of Public Policy and Administration underwent their scheduled Program Review. This was part of a "Pilot Study" for the University's Program Review process. The central goal of this program review allowed PPA to select a focused area of inquiry which was an explicit review of student-learning assessment.

As a foundation for understanding the PPA Master's Program, the internal review team (Sacramento State Professors Kimo Ah Yun, Lisa Bohon, and David Mandeville) and an external reviewer (Professor Michelle Saint-Germain, Department of Public Policy and Administration, California State University, Long Beach) examined the following PPA documents:

- *Public Policy and Administration 2012 Self-Study Proposal*
- *Public Policy and Administration 2012 Self-Study Report, including the appendices:*
- *PPA Learning Objective Matrix by Core Objectives and Courses*
- *PPA Student Assessment of Core Learning Objectives by Course*
- *PPA Policy Memo Description and Evaluation Rubric*
- *Summary of Faculty Assessment of Student Pre and Post Policy Memos*
- *Survey Monkey Exit Survey of 2010-11 PPA Graduates*
- *Alumni Survey Results for Five Broad PPA Learning Objectives*
- *Alumni Survey Results for PPA Specific Learning Objectives*
- *Alumni Survey Results on PPA Core Courses and Professional Competence*

- *Proposed 2012-13 Mapping of PPA Specific Learning Objectives to PPA Core Courses by Primary and Secondary Coverage*
- *PPA 200 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 205 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 207 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 210 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 220A Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 220B Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 230 Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 240A Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *PPA 240B Language for Specific Primary Learning Objectives*
- *Public Policy and Administration Summer 2005 Self-Study Report*
- *The Department of Public Policy and Administration website: <http://www.csus.edu/ppa>*
- *The Department of Public Policy and Administration Program Review website: <http://www.csus.edu/ppa/about/programreview> .*

The review team also interviewed faculty, staff, students, and others.

The commendations and recommendations that resulted from this review process, that specifically relate to assessment of the PPA Program's learning goals, are:

Commendations to the Department of Public Policy and Administration

- *The Department is commended for being a campus leader in engaging their entire faculty in their assessment efforts.*
- *The Department is commended for developing a solid assessment plan that is guided by the principles and recommendations offered by their program's accrediting body.*
- *The Department is commended for their decision to embed direct measures in their efforts as a cornerstone of their assessment plan.*
- *The Department is commended for using the Focused Inquiry option in the Program Review process to direct their assessment changes in a purposeful manner.*

Recommendations to the Department of Public Policy and Administration

- *The Department should discuss the amount of yearly effort that is put into collecting direct assessment data from the memo assignment. Should the workload exceed the value of having yearly data, an alternative schedule of assessing different learning objectives over a longer period of time should be adopted.*
- *The Department should evaluate the merits of using non-faculty reviewers to score the memo assignment on a trial basis.*

- *The Department should reduce the amount of indirect assessment data in their general assessment plan.*

a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes?

We received these commendations and recommendations in the middle of the spring 2013 semester and were very pleased with the highly positive appraisal of our assessment practices reflected in the four commendations offered. We also appreciated the three recommendations offered and set about immediately discussing a plan of action to deal with them in the three bi-weekly department meetings that remained. During these meetings, faculty offered their reactions and a vigorous discussion ensued that resulted in the emergence of a few different proposals on how best to deal with the recommendations. We tabled these proposals until our annual day-long department retreat that occurred in early June. We set aside half of this retreat's time for an extended discussion of the pros and cons of these proposals, and an ultimate decision of what to do.

The result being that we will no longer use the faculty assessment of a pre and post memo (written by students before they begin the PPA Program, and at the time of their completing all coursework) to directly assess the achievement of the six primary learning objectives (and 23 categories that comprised them) in place before the review. Instead we will institute an annual review of randomly chosen PPA theses regarding how well they achieve a more compact version of PPA learning goals that still contains all the elements of our previous learning goals, but now in the form of three primary learning objectives and 16 categories that compromise them (see attached 2013 Revised Mapping of PPA Specific Learning Objectives).

The annual review of theses will proceed in the late spring of each academic year through the random choice of 12 PPA theses to review from the past academic year (this represent about half or more of those likely completed in a given academic year). PPA Professors Jez, Kirlin, Lascher, Shulock, Venezia, and Wassmer all being assigned two different theses to read and then to complete an evaluation rubric (see attached 2013 Rubric for Scoring PPA Theses) based upon the newly revised PPA Learning Objectives. The quantitative scores and qualitative comments on these rubrics is then compiled for discussion at the annual PPA retreat where the results of faculty findings will be used to identify potential weaknesses in achieving learning goals attributable to pedagogy, assignments, curriculum, etc. and, if needed, a plan of action crafted to institute changes in the next academic year.

The second recommendation resulting from our review suggested the possibility of using non-PPA faculty to conduct direct assessment. We respect this suggestion, and will revisit the possibility of doing this at the spring 2014 PPA Retreat after we have completed our evaluations using only PPA faculty.

Regarding the review's final recommendation that we should reduce the amount of indirect assessment data used in our assessment process, we have effectively done this through the addition of the new direct assessment method that will utilize a very direct assessment of a

random sample of at least half of the final products of PPA master's students. Though we still plan on keeping our indirect assessment of specific primary learning goals expected to be achieved in each PPA course (see 2013 Revised Mapping of PPA Specific Learning Objectives) through a Leichert based survey given to all PPA students after the completion of a core course. We believe that this indirect measure of how well students believe the PPA learning objectives are achieved in each course, along with how well faculty feel they are achieved in the culminating thesis, offers the appropriate balanced of both direct and indirect measures important to an annual assessment of how the achievement of a program's learning goals.

b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results?

The desired result in this revision of our assessment practices was the recommended achievement of a reduction in the amount of yearly effort that the PPA Department put into collecting direct assessment data. The reason for doing this was the reviewers' belief that the cost of workload to do so using the previous pre and post-memo process likely exceeded the benefit of the data gained. On paper our new plan looks like the workload to gather direct assessment is less and the information gained greater. We will only be certain of this after we have done our first trial run of this process at the end of next academic year.

c. If no, why not?

If we say no to this new process of collecting direct assessment data it will be due to either the value of the data in assisting the assessment process not meeting our expectations and/or the time to gather/process this data being too great.

2. As a result of last year's assessment effort, have you implemented any other changes at the department, the college or the university, including advising, co-curriculum, budgeting and planning?

Yes, see below.

a. If so, what are those changes? How did you implement those changes?

We have also decided to devote at least one hour of each of our 2013/2014 PPA Department Meetings to a discussion of the material, pedagogy, and assignments in each of our nine PPA core courses. With the arrival of new PPA faculty, changes in how the pedagogy of these courses, and the highly interdisciplinary nature of our program and the faculty's core disciplines, we believe there will be strong overall benefits to the overall assessment of the PPA Program's achievement of desired learning goals..

b. How do you know if these changes have achieved the desired results?

The desired results of these discussions is the briefing of all faculty on what is taught in our entire curriculum and the use of this knowledge to better see how it all fits together to achieve

our overall learning objectives. Success in this process will be measured by changes to specific courses that arise because of it and the knowledge gained by all.

c. If no, why not?

We will count this initiative as unsuccessful if PPA Faculty agree it was not enlightening and/or very little changes are made to any PPA core course.

3. What PROGRAM (not course) learning outcome(s) have you assessed this academic year?

As briefly described above, and in the full internal and external reviewers' reports attached (see 2013 Final Internal Report PPA Program Review and 2013 Final External Report PPA Program Review), all of the learning objectives of the PPA Master's Program, and our methods of assessing their successful achievement, were examined this past year through the PPA Program Review.

4. What method(s)/measure(s) have you used to collect the data?

The PPA documents looked at by the internal and external reviewers were previous listed. In the process of this review, the Public Policy and Administration Review Team also interviewed faculty, staff, students, and other related individuals, including:

- *Don Taylor, Interim AVP, Academic Programs and Global Engagement, Academic Affairs*
- *Amy Liu, Director, Office of Academic Program Assessment*
- *Suzi Byrd, Administrative Assistant, Department of Public Policy and Administration*
- *Robert Wassmer, Chair, Department of Public Policy and Administration*
- *Nancy Shulock, Director, Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy*
- *Mary Kirlin, Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration*
- *Ted Lascher, SSIS Interim Dean and Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration*
- *Su Jin Jez, Professor, Department of Public Policy and Administration*
- *Peter Detwiler, Adjunct Instructor, Department of Public Policy and Administration*
- *Steve Boilard, Director, Center for California Studies*
- *PPA students and alumni*
- *Christy Jensen, Professor Emerita, Department of Public Policy and Administration*
- *Susan Sherry, Director, Center for Collaborative Policy*
- *David Booher, Center for Collaborative Policy, and Adjunct Instructor, PPA*
- *Adam Sutkus, Mediator, Center for Collaborative Policy*
- *Donna Hoenig-Couch, Administrative Staff, Center for California Studies*
- *Carlos Nevarez, Director, Ed.D. program, College of Education*
- *Bob Pritchard, Professor, Ed.D. program, College of Education .*

5. What are the criteria and/or standards of performance for the program learning outcome?

The internal and external reviewers established their own standards of performance described in the attached internal and external reports.

6. What data have you collected? What are the results and findings, including the percentage of students who meet each standard?

Given that the PPA Department underwent a program review that was explicitly focused on our assessment practices, we suspended our actual assessment for this past academic year.

7. As a result of this year's assessment effort, do you anticipate or propose any changes for your program (e.g. structures, content, or learning outcomes)?

Yes, as described above we have condensed/simplified our program's learning objectives, decided upon a new direct way of directly measuring of how these new learning objectives are being achieved, created a rubric for scoring the faculty member's review of a PPA thesis, and asked each faculty member teaching a PPA core course to update the course specific learning objectives for that course that matches the primary learning objectives expected to be achieved in that course.

8. Which program learning outcome(s) do you plan to assess next year? How?

Next year, and every year following that until the next program review, we will indirectly assess the achievement of primary learning objectives in each core course through a survey given to all students in a PPA core course regarding the achievement of each primary learning objective for that course. We will also directly assess the achievement of all PPA learning objectives by looking at a sample of 12 master's thesis in the manner previously described. We will produce an annual report on these findings.