

Department of Public Administration
Master of Public Administration Program
Alumni Data on Learning Outcomes for the On-Campus MPA
Fall 2015-Fall 2017

A. MPA Alumni Survey

This report uses data collected from alumni who graduated in spring 2015, fall 2015, and spring 2016. The MPA Alumni Survey was administered online, using UW Oshkosh Qualtrics Online Survey Software & Insight Platform. Twenty-six MPA alumni were contacted. Of these, 10 alumni had available email addresses and were invited to participate via email on September 19, 2016. Sixteen alumni were mailed postcards with invitations to participate in the online survey on September 20, 2016. Reminder emails/cards were sent on October 11, 2016. Of the 26 alumni, 7 responded, for a usable response rate of 26.92%. All data were analyzed, using IBM SPSS Statistics 20. Descriptive statistics is reported below.

a. Socio-demographics of MPA alumni

Of the seven alumni, most respondents were female (43%) and white (86%); other races/ethnicities included Native American (14%). Many alumni were in the age group 35-44 (42.9%); those in age groups 25-34 and 45-53 were equally divided, i.e., 28.6% each. All were American citizens. All alumni were employed in diverse industries: two students (28.6%) were employed in nonprofit organizations; one (14.3%) in a government organization, one (14.3%) in a healthcare agency, one (14.3%) in a private business organization, one (14.3%) in a fire department and one (14.3%) did not specify an industry. Of the seven, two alumni (28.6%) received promotions since their graduation from the MPA program.

Five alumni (71.4%) graduated in 2016 and two alumni (28.6%) graduated in 2015. Six alumni (85.7%) completed the MPA program with a general public administration emphasis and one student (14.3%)—a health agency administration emphasis.

b. MPA Alumni Perceptions of Learning Outcomes

Figure 1 shows the mean scores of MPA alumni perceptions in relation to the three learning outcomes were all above the average, based on a scale of 1=Did not improve; 5=Greatly improved. The highest mean score ($M=5.00$; $SD .00$) was related to greatly improved competencies in public administration/management; this was followed by other competencies in leadership, policy and managing diverse organizations. Improvement of interpersonal skills and abilities to communicate also had high average score of 4.71 ($SD .76$), followed by critical thinking, problem solving and research skills 4.43 ($SD .79$).

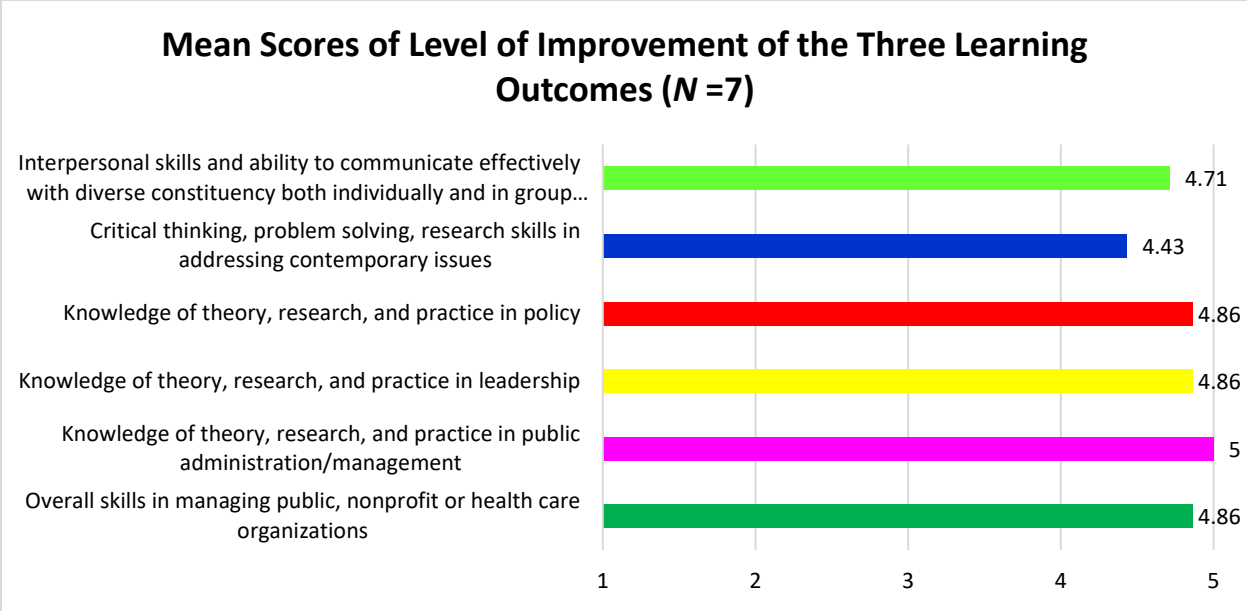


Figure 1. Mean Scores of MPA Alumni Perceptions of the Three Learning Outcomes

All alumni have taken the capstone seminar course. Figure 2 shows alumni level agreement with the benefits of the capstone experience in terms the three learning outcomes on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree. It shows that alumni expressed a high level of agreement with acquiring major competencies and skills through the capstone project. This was particularly the case with capstone enhancing further their analytic and problem solving skills (M=5.0; SD .00) and allowing the application of knowledge, theory, and research to new or unstructured situations (M=4.86; SD .38).

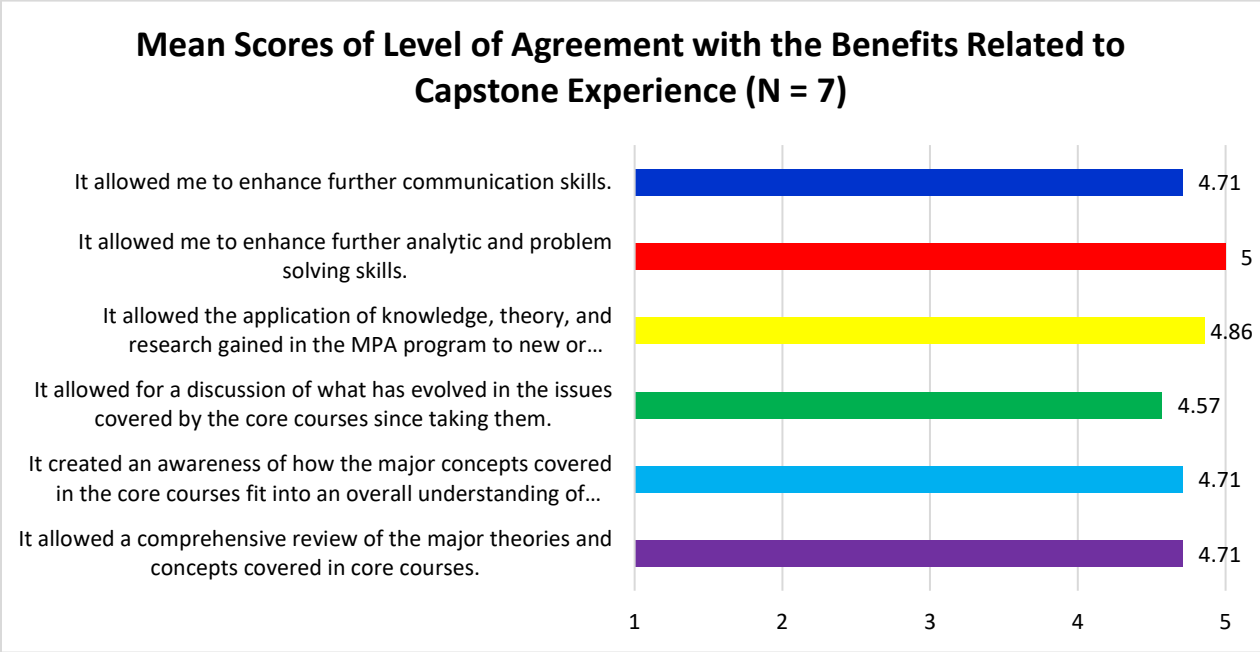


Figure 2. Mean Scores of MPA Alumni Perceptions of Benefits Related to Capstone Experience

c. MPA Alumni Level of Satisfaction with Curriculum, Format & Delivery, and Faculty

Figure 3 shows alumni level of satisfaction with the MPA curriculum, measured on a scale of 1= Very Dissatisfied; 5=Very Satisfied. On average, the 7 alumni were satisfied with it, and especially, with the course content (M=4.86; SD .38) and quality of instruction (M=4.86; SD .38). There was lesser satisfaction with the variety of elective courses (M=4.29; SD .49).

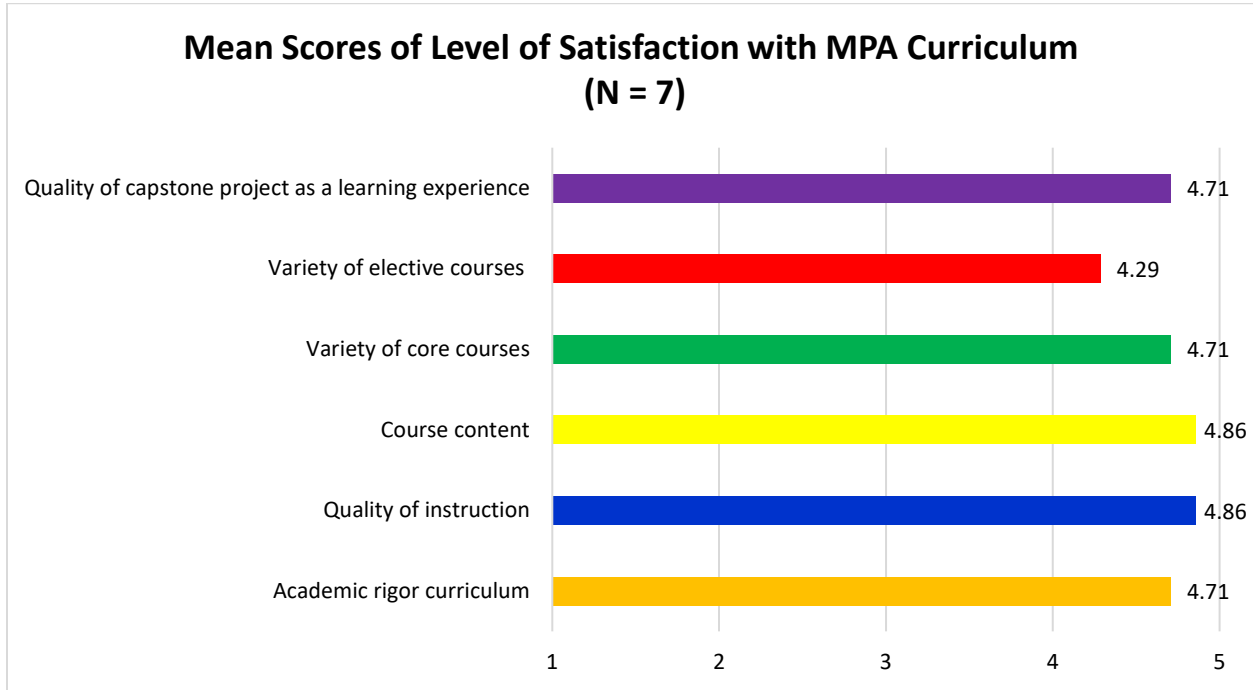


Figure 3. Mean Scores of Level of Satisfaction with MPA Curriculum

Figure 4 shows alumni level of satisfaction with the MPA program format and delivery, measured on a scale of 1= Very Dissatisfied; 5=Very Satisfied. On average, alumni were satisfied with those, and especially, with the number of classroom contact hours (M=4.86; SD .38), facilities (M=4.86; SD .38), and class sizes (M=4.86; SD .38). There was lesser satisfaction with the online format of delivery of elective courses (M=4.14; SD 1.07) and availability of online courses (M=4.29; SD .95).

Figure 5 shows alumni level of agreement with faculty roles and size, measured on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree. On average, alumni agreed strongly that faculty demonstrated scholarly competence in the field (M=5.00; SD .00); faculty were aware of new developments in their field of study (M=5.00; SD .00); and faculty were accessible and responsive to student needs outside of class meetings (M=5.00; SD .00). There was lesser agreement that the number of MPA faculty was adequate to support the MPA program (M=4.00; SD 1.16).

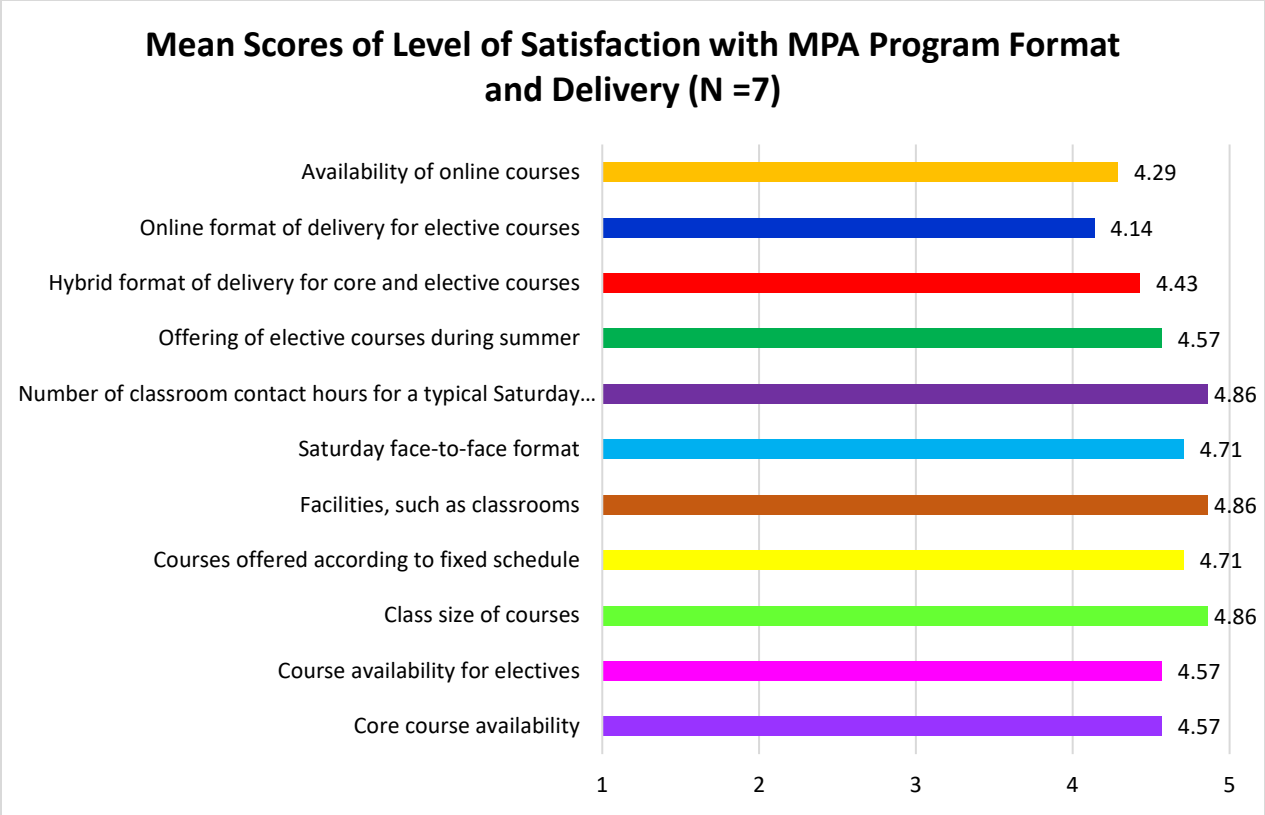


Figure 4. Mean Scores of Level of Satisfaction with MPA Program Format and Delivery

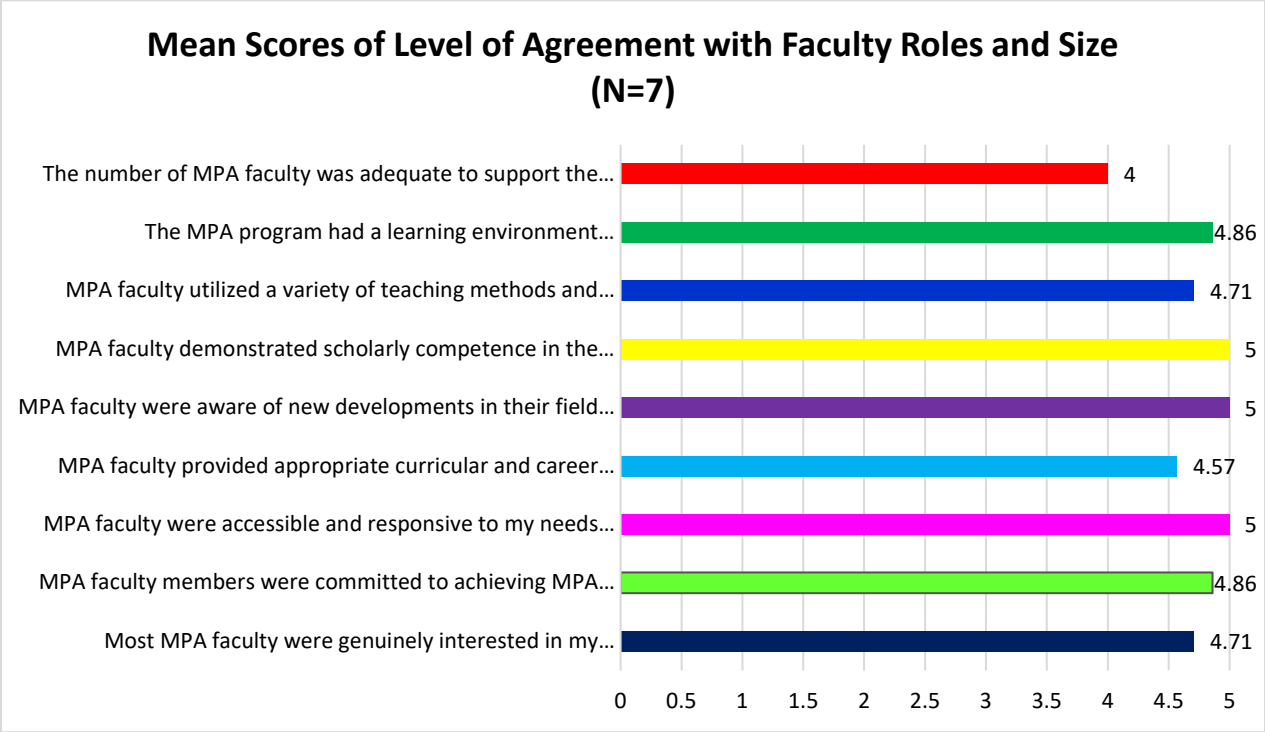


Figure 5. Mean Scores of Level of Agreement with Faculty Roles and Size

d. MPA Alumni Overall Perceptions of the MPA Program and Experiences

MPA Alumni Survey also asked three open-ended questions: What did you like about the MPA program? What did you dislike about the MPA program? What would you change about the MPA program? Data were synthesized into several categories below.

1.1. Format. MPA alumni noted that they “loved the hybrid format classes” because they worked really well with their work schedules. They also “loved the in-class Saturdays” because they could interact with a wide variety of people with varied work experiences and hear their presentations in person. Some alumni cautioned about that MPA program transitioning to mostly online courses. There was a general belief there was a greater benefit to in-person classes over 100% online. However, there was also an emphasis on the benefits of the hybrid format (3 classes in person and 2 online), especially when the travel to class was a long distance. (The PA Department has launched the online MPA but preserved the on-campus version of the MPA.)

1.2. Faculty. MPA alumni noted that, “The professors were great! Always professional, knowledgeable and approachable.” Faculty were also commended for applying content to daily working life, for being always available for questions, and for responding to e-mails in a timely matter.

1.3. Competencies and Skills. Some MPA alumni noted that the program helped them to grow their self-confidence in managerial skills, and that their knowledge of emotional intelligence, time management, self-awareness, public speaking, and networking grew immensely. They also believed that the program helped them become better managers by enhancing their self-leadership and ability to make changes in their environment, team and helping others. Some alumni reported that they were very pleased with the education they received through this program as it had helped them greatly with their personal and career growth.

1.4. Emphasis Diversity. Some alumni wished there were more emphases besides the general public administration and health agency administration. Examples included nonprofit management and leadership. (The PA Department has introduced such an emphasis.)

1.5. Internship. Some alumni noted that discussion was much better with those that had some work experience than with those who were going right from BA to masters without the work experience. They recommended at least one year of work experience for the latter. (The PA Department has introduced an Internship in the MPA curriculum.)