

Biennial Program Assessment Report
Master of Public Administration Program
Department of Public Administration
2017-2019

I. Program Student Learning Outcomes

The UW Oshkosh Public Administration Department offers a Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. The purpose of the MPA program is to integrate theory, research and practice in public administration in a manner that develops and enhances leadership skills, administrative capabilities, and management practices. MPA students gain advanced knowledge and training in managing governmental agencies, nonprofit organizations, health care organizations and other public service organizations. The MPA program is guided by the core values of academic rigor, collaboration and community engagement, collegial work environment, democratic principles, integrity, productivity, professional success, and student-centered and inclusive environment. It has three major learning outcomes:

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate board-based knowledge of theory, research, and practice in public administration, leadership and policy directly applicable at professional levels in public, non-profit, and health care organizations.

Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate well-developed critical thinking, problem solving, and research skills in addressing contemporary problems or issues in the public interest.

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate strong, positive interpersonal skills and ability to communicate effectively with a diverse constituency both individually and in groups.

These outcomes reflect the National Associations of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration¹ accrediting body's five universally required domain competencies: (1) to lead and manage in public governance, (2) to participate in and contribute to the policy process, (3) to analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems and make decisions, (4) to articulate and apply a public service perspective, and (5) to communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry. The three MPA learning outcomes are also fully aligned with UW Oshkosh Essential Learning Outcomes for Students², including but not limited to, (1) intellectual and practical skills, practiced extensively across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance; (2) individual and community responsibility developed through real-world challenges and active involvement with diverse communities; and (3) integrated, synthesized, and advanced learning, demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.

¹Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation. NASPAA Standards 2009. Adopted October 16, 2009 at the NASPAA Annual Business meeting in Arlington, VA and amended November 6, 2014 at the NASPAA Annual Business meeting in Albuquerque, NM, p. 7. <https://naspaaaccreditation.files.wordpress.com/2015/02/naspaa-accreditation-standards.pdf>

²COLS Strategic Plan, pp. 4-6 https://cols.uwosh.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/cols_strategic_plan2010.pdf

II. Assessment Methods/Tools Appropriate for MPA Learning Outcomes

The Public Administration Department uses several venues and methods for assessment of graduate student learning goals. Rubrics linked to the three learning outcomes are used in place of grades for direct assessment of learning outcomes in all core MPA courses, including the capstone. Additionally, indirect survey assessment of learning outcomes is accomplished through student and alumni reflections on survey questions that are directly linked to specific learning outcomes. Each learning outcome is restated below with an explanation of how each is assessed through direct and indirect measures.

Outcome 1: Students will demonstrate broad-based knowledge of theory, research, and practice in public administration, management, leadership, and policy directly applicable at professional levels in public, nonprofit, and health care organizations.

- **Direct assessment** of administration, management, leadership, or policy competencies assessed in nine required core MPA courses and the capstone seminar through instructor application of a rubric for the research paper, policy analysis project or capstone project assignment of the core courses and the capstone seminar.
- **Indirect survey assessment** of administration, management, leadership, or policy competencies through current student reflections through survey questions that are directly linked to those specific competencies.

Outcome 2: Students will demonstrate well-developed critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills in addressing contemporary problems or issues in the public interest.

- **Direct assessment** of critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills assessed in nine required core MPA courses and the capstone seminar through instructor application of a rubric for the research paper, policy analysis project or capstone project assignment of the core courses and the capstone seminar.
- **Indirect survey assessment** of critical thinking, problem-solving, and research skills assessed through current student reflections through survey questions that are directly linked to those specific competencies).

Outcome 3: Students will demonstrate strong, positive interpersonal skills and ability to communicate effectively with a diverse constituency both individually and in group settings.

- **Direct assessment** of interpersonal and communication skills assessed in nine required, core MPA courses and the capstone seminar through instructor application of a rubric for the research paper, policy analysis project or capstone project assignment of the core courses and the capstone seminar.
- **Indirect survey assessment** of interpersonal and communication skills assessed through student reflections through survey questions that were directly linked to those specific skills.

In addition to assessing learning outcomes directly and indirectly, the department used an indirect assessment through student surveys to measure student perceptions of different aspects of the MPA program, such as curriculum satisfaction, program format and delivery, faculty and overall perceptions.

III. Direct Assessment Methodology and Results

Each instructor assessed the core MPA courses and capstone seminar that he or she has taught for the period fall 2017-spring 2019 through instructor application of rubrics for the research paper, policy analysis project or capstone project assignment as types of evidence (see Table 1). The rubrics were adapted from *Models for Assessment of Graduate Student Learning*, a report prepared by Michelle Saint-Germain for the NASPAA Standards Task Force³. The assessment sheets included lists of all students enrolled in the specific course. The faculty rated each student for the three learning outcomes, using three criteria and measuring scales, and then reported the average scores on the three learning outcomes. Summary statistics was presented in Table 2. Scores were discussed during department meetings.

³Saint—Germain, M. A. (2008). *Models for Assessment of Graduate Student Learning*. A Report for the NASPAA Standards Task Force, California State University, Long Beach, CA
<http://web.csulb.edu/~msaintg/documents/MPAmodelsofassessment.doc>

Table 1. Learning Outcomes, Courses, Criteria, Type of Evidence, and Measuring Scale

Learning Outcomes	Core Course	Type of Evidence	Criteria	Measuring Scale
Outcome 1 Administration, Management, Leadership, Policy Competencies	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Research Paper	1) Competently defines and discusses concepts, theory, legislation, research, and practice in public administration, management, leadership or policy related areas. 2) Makes use of knowledge of public administration, management, leadership, or policy theory, research, and practice to recommend appropriate/innovative solutions, strategies or policies.	1 Fails to Meet Expectation 2 Meets Expectations 3 Exceeds Expectations
	MPA 734 Applied Economics for PA	Policy Analysis Project		
	MPA 715 Leadership & Ethics	Research Paper		
	MPA 752 Public Budgeting and Financial Management	Policy Analysis Project		
	MPA 723 Organization Theory and Practice	Research Paper		
	MPA 742 HRM	Research Paper		
	MPA 732 Analytic Methods	Research Paper		
	MPA 721 Policy Analysis	Policy Analysis Project		
Outcome 2 Critical thinking, Problem-Solving, & Research Skills	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Research Paper	1) Key problems and issues faced by public administrators and/or policy makers are correctly identified. 2) Appropriate concepts in public administration, management, leadership or policy are considered in the analysis. 3) One or more appropriate/innovative approaches or solutions are described. 4) Critically evaluates, organizes, interprets and synthesizes information from publications.	1 Fails to Meet Expectation 2 Meets Expectations 3 Exceeds Expectations
	MPA 734 Applied Economics for PA	Policy Analysis Project		
	MPA 715 Leadership and Ethics	Research Paper		
	MPA 752 Public Budgeting and Financial Management	Policy Analysis Project		
	MPA 723 Organization Theory and Practice	Film Analysis		
	MPA 742 HRM	Case Study Analysis		
	MPA 721 Policy Analysis	Policy Analysis Project		
	MPA 780 Capstone	Research Paper		
Outcome 3 Communication Interpersonal Skills	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Presentation	1) Communicates persuasively. 2) Conveys a professional image. 3) Speaks effectively, accurately, clearly, and concisely. 4) Tailors the presentation to the audience's level of expertise and needs. 5) Handles questions and comments from the audience.	1 Fails to Meet Expectation 2 Meets Expectations 3 Exceeds Expectations
	MPA 734 Applied Economics for PA	Presentation		
	MPA 715 Leadership and Ethics	Presentation		
	MPA 752 Public Budgeting and Financial Management	Presentation		
	MPA 723 Organization Theory and Practice	Presentation		
	MPA 742 HRM	Presentation		
	MPA 721 Policy Analysis	Presentation		
	MPA 780 Capstone	Presentation		

Table 2 provides summary statistics for the three learning outcomes during the fall 2017 and 2018 semesters. On average, students were rated to have met or exceed expectations learning outcome 1, as scores ranged between 2.67 and 2.99 (Fall 17) and 2.60 and 2.94 (Fall 18). Similarly, faculty rated students on learning outcome 2 as meeting or exceeding expectations; average scores ranged between 2.61 and 2.88 (Fall 17) and 2.53 and 2.87 (Fall 18). Finally, scores for outcome 3 ranged between 2.44 and 2.92 (Fall 17) and 2.47 and 3.00 (Fall 18).

Table 2. Summary Statistics for Learning Outcomes during Fall Semesters

Learning Outcomes	Core Course	Type of Evidence	Fall 2017	Fall 2018
			Mean (N)	Mean (N)
Outcome 1 Administration, Management, Leadership, Policy Competencies	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Research Paper	2.88 (8)	2.80 (10)
	MPA 734 Applied Economics	Policy Analysis Project	2.67 (18)	2.75 (12) 2.74 (19)* 2.60 (20)**
	MPA 715 Leadership and Ethics	Research Paper	2.69 (13) 2.88 (26)*	2.83 (12)
	MPA 752 Public Budgeting and Financial Management	Policy Analysis Project	2.89 (19)	2.86 (16) 2.94 (18)*
	MPA 742 HRM	Research Paper	2.74 (19) 2.79 (24)*	2.81 (11)
	MPA 780 Capstone	Capstone Project	Cancelled	Cancelled
Outcome 2 Critical thinking, Problem-Solving, & Research Skills	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Research Paper	2.88 (8)	2.80 (10)
	MPA 734 Applied Economics	Policy Analysis Project	2.67 (18)	2.67 (12) 2.53 (19)* 2.80 (20)**
	MPA 715 Leadership and Ethics	Film Analysis Paper	2.61 (13) 2.77 (26)*	2.53 (12)
	MPA 752 Public Budgeting and Financial Management	Policy Analysis Project	2.89 (19)	2.87 (16) 2.83(18)*
	MPA 742 HRM	Case Study Analysis	2.79 (19) 2.83 (24)*	2.55 (11)
	MPA 780 Capstone	Capstone Project	Cancelled	Cancelled
Outcome 3 Communication Interpersonal Skills	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Presentation	2.75 (8)	2.8 (10)
	MPA 734 Applied Economics for PA	Presentation	2.44 (18)	2.67 (12) 2.47 (19)* 2.60 (20)**
	MPA 715 Leadership and Ethics	Presentation	2.69 (13) 2.73 (26)*	2.53 (12)
	MPA 752 Public Budgeting and Financial Management	Presentation	2.74 (19)	2.73 (16) 2.78 (18)*
	MPA 742 HRM	Presentation	2.79 (19) 2.92 (24)*	3.00 (11)
	MPA 780 Capstone	Presentation	Cancelled	Cancelled

*Courses offered online as part the online MPA program.

**A second online section offered due to high enrollment.

Table 3 provides summary statistics for the three learning outcomes during the Spring semesters of 2018 and 2019. On average, students were rated to have met or exceed expectations in acquiring administration, management, leadership, or policy related competencies (learning outcome 1), as scores ranged between 2.42 and 2.94 during the two semesters. Similarly, faculty rated students' acquired skills in problem solving, critical thinking, and research (learning outcome 2) as meeting or exceeding expectations; average scores ranged between 2.62 and 3.00 during the two semesters. Finally, interpersonal and communication skills scores ranged between 2.62 and 3.00 during the two semesters, which was on average, high scores for outcome 3.

Table 3. Summary Statistics for Learning Outcomes during Spring Semesters

Learning Outcomes	Core Course	Type of Evidence	Spring 2018	Spring 2019
			Mean (N)	Mean (N)
Outcome 1 Administration, Management, Leadership, Policy Competencies	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Research Paper		2.68 (17+2)**
	MPA 732 Analytic Methods	Research Paper	2.83 (24)	2.81 (21)
	MPA 721 Public Policy	Policy Analysis Project	2.94 (18)	**
	MPA 723 Organization Theory and Practice	Research Paper	2.42 (19)	2.72 (18) 2.69 (16)*
	MPA 780 Capstone	Capstone Project	2.89 (9)	**
Outcome 2 Critical thinking, Problem-Solving, & Research Skills	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Research Paper		2.58 (17+2)**
	MPA 732 Analytic Methods	Research Paper	2.83 (24)	2.62 (21)
	MPA 721 Public Policy	Policy Analysis Project	2.94 (18)	**
	MPA 723 Organization Theory and Practice	Film Analysis Paper	2.68 (19)	2.61 (18) 2.63 (16)*
	MPA 780 Capstone	Capstone Project	2.89 (9)	**
Outcome 3 Communication Interpersonal Skills	MPA 711 Introduction to PA	Presentation		2.63 (17+2)**
	MPA 732 Analytic Methods	Presentation	2.83 (24)	2.62 (21)
	MPA 721 Public Policy	Presentation	2.94 (18)	**
	MPA 723 Organization Theory and Practice	Presentation	2.74 (19)	2.89 (18) 3.00 (16)*
	MPA 780 Capstone	Presentation	2.89 (9)	**

*Courses offered online as part the online MPA program, which started in 2017 Spring semester.

**Since Spring 2019 MPA 711 and 780 are offered completely online and combine online and on-campus students; the second number in parenthesis represents the on-campus students.

IV. Direct Assessment Methodology and Results

Data were collected from all current MPA students during the months of September and October of 2019. The survey (see Appendix B) was administered online, using UW Oshkosh Qualtrics Online Survey Software & Insight Platform. Eighty-seven (87) MPA students were invited by email to participate in the online survey on September 25, 2019. A reminder email was sent on October 7, 2019. Of the 87 students, 38 responded, for a usable response rate of 43.68%. Data were analyzed, using STATAIC 12. Descriptive statistics are reported below.

a. Socio-demographics of MPA current students

Most respondents were female (50%) and white (76.3%); other races/ethnicities included African-American (2.6%), Hispanic/Latino (2.6%) and other races (15.8%). Most students were in the age group of 35-44 (44.7%), followed by 25-34 (28.9%), 45-53 (21.1%), and <25 (5.3%). The majority were employed (79%) and about 42.1% worked in government agencies (Figure 1).

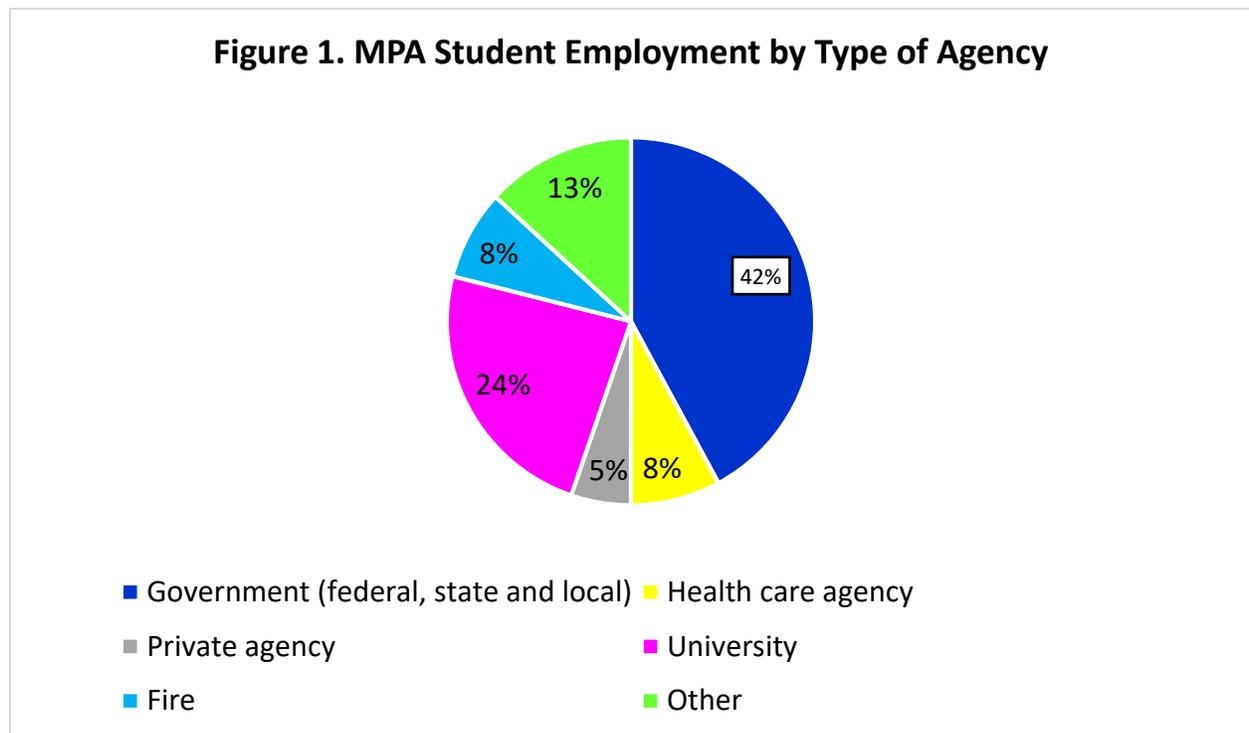
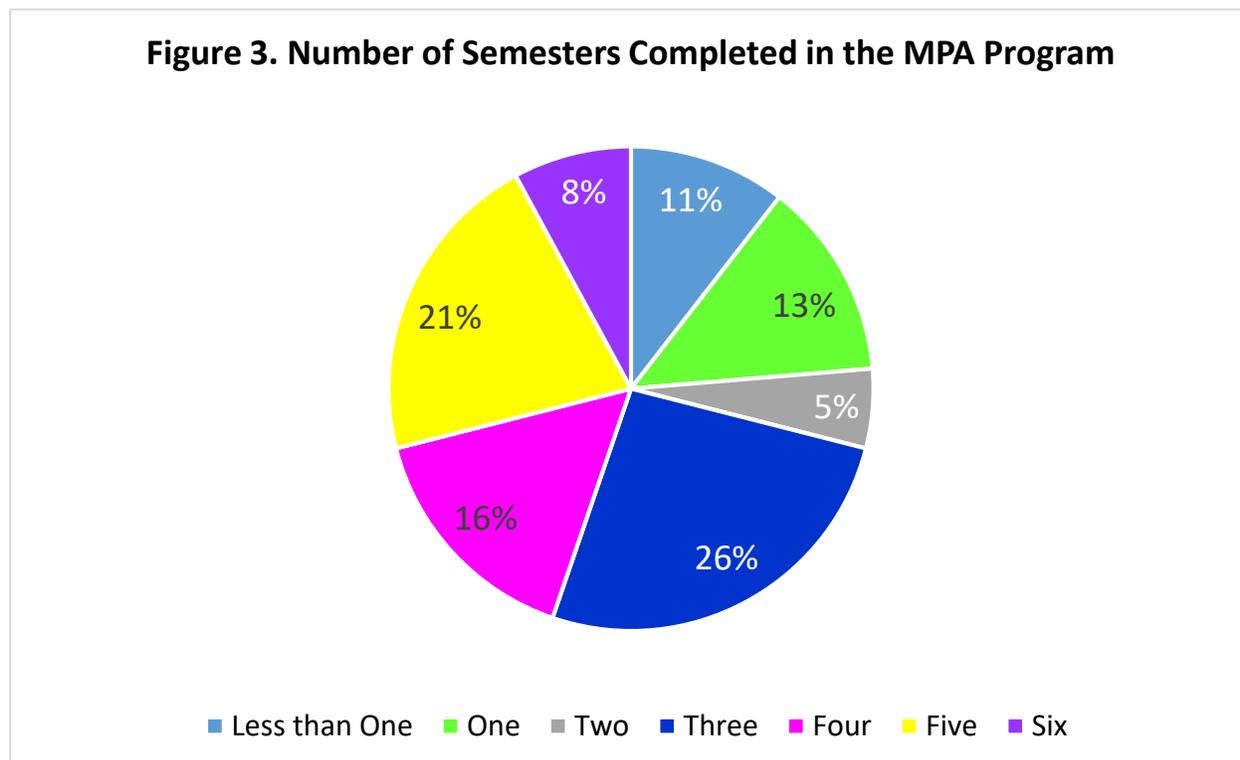
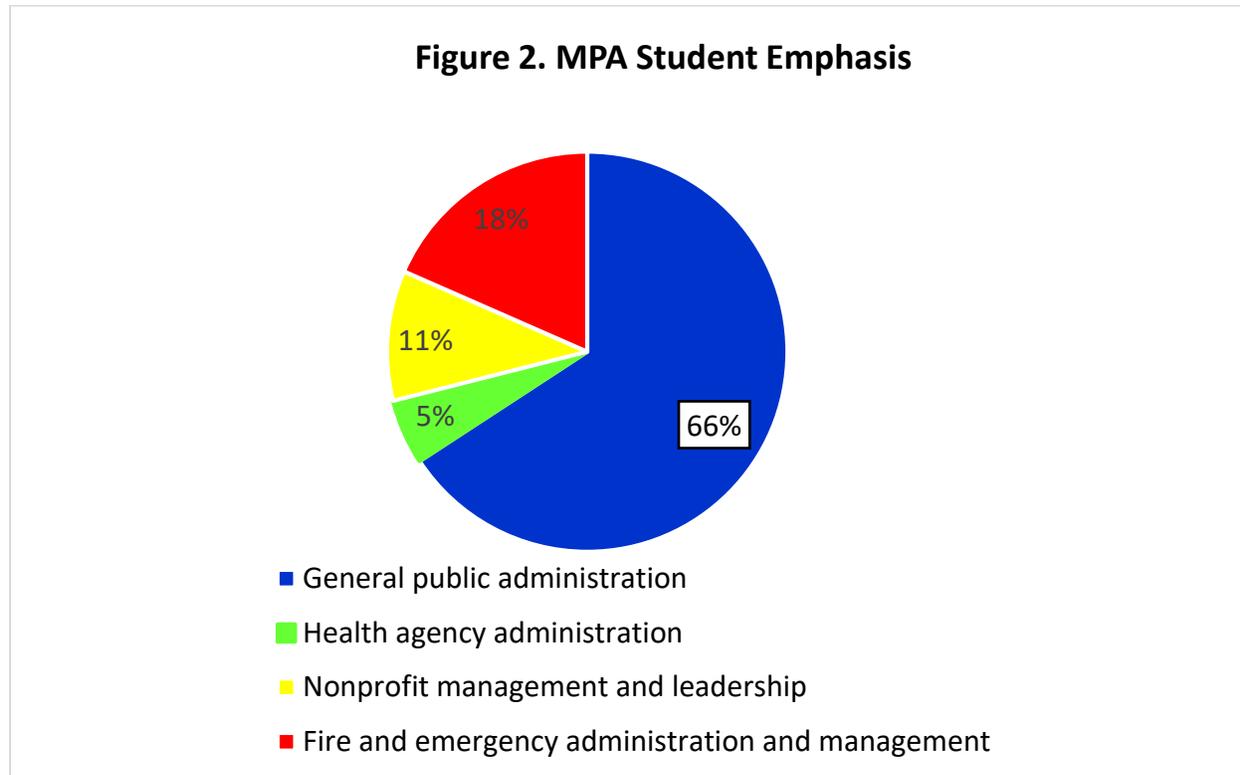


Figure 1. MPA Student Employment by Type of Agency

Most of the responding students (65.8%) were with a general public administration emphasis (Figure 2) and have completed between three and five semesters (63%) (Figure 3). There was an equal split of respondents in on-campus and online versions of the MPA program (50%/50%).



b. MPA Student Perceptions of Learning Outcomes

Figure 4 shows the mean scores of MPA student perceptions in relation to the three learning outcomes. All were above the average based on a scale of 1= Did not improve; 5=Greatly improved. The highest mean score (M = 4.78; SD .42) was related to knowledge of theory, research and practice in leadership. Least improvement was reported in terms of interpersonal skills and ability to communicate effectively with diverse constituency (M = 4.28; SD .85).

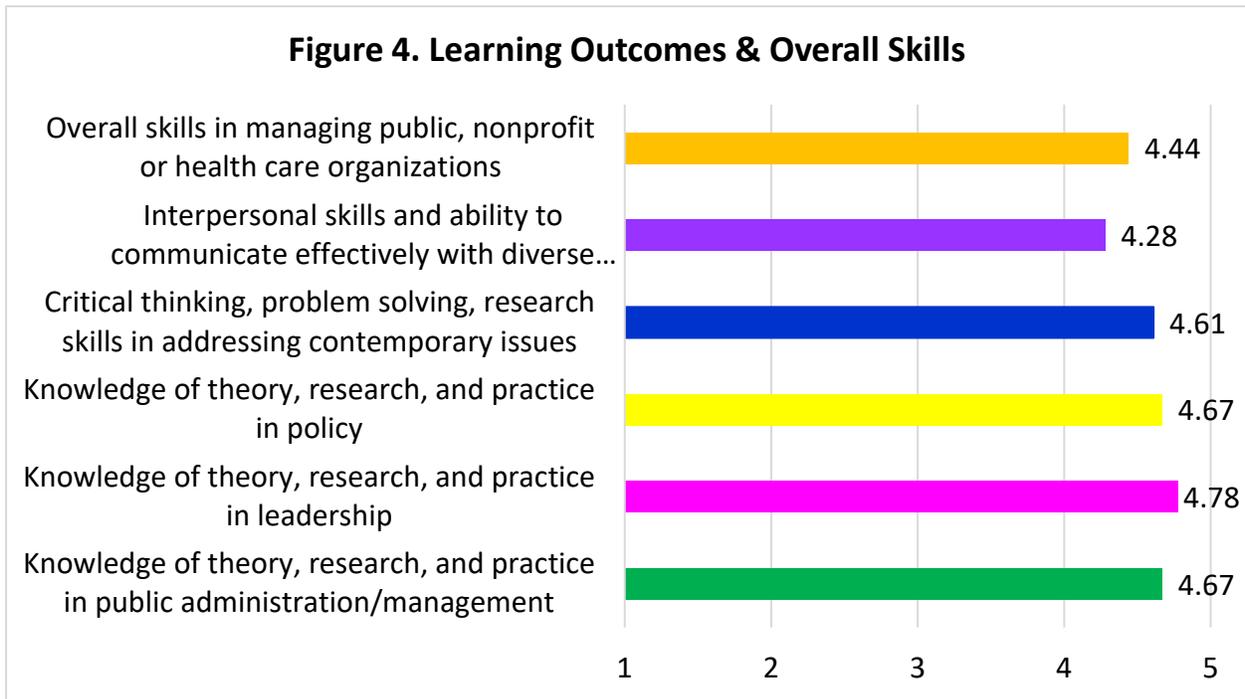


Figure 4. Mean Scores of MPA Student Perceptions of the Learning Outcomes and Skills

When examined by version of the MPA program, students in the online MPA were more likely to rate “greatly improved” knowledge in leadership, knowledge in policy, and critical thinking/analytic/problem solving/research skills than on-campus students. On the other hand, on-campus students were more likely to rate “greatly improved” knowledge in public administration/management, interpersonal/communication skills, and overall skills in managing public, nonprofit, or health organizations than online students. However, those differences were not statistically significant.

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

Figure 5 shows student level of satisfaction with the MPA curriculum, measured on a scale of 1= Very Dissatisfied; 5=Very Satisfied. On average, students were satisfied with it, and especially, with the quality of culminating project (M = 4.65; SD .71), quality of instruction (M = 4.66; SD .58), course content (M = 4.63; SD .63), and academic rigor of the curriculum (M = 4.63; SD .54). There was lesser satisfaction with the variety of elective courses (M = 4.21; SD .94).

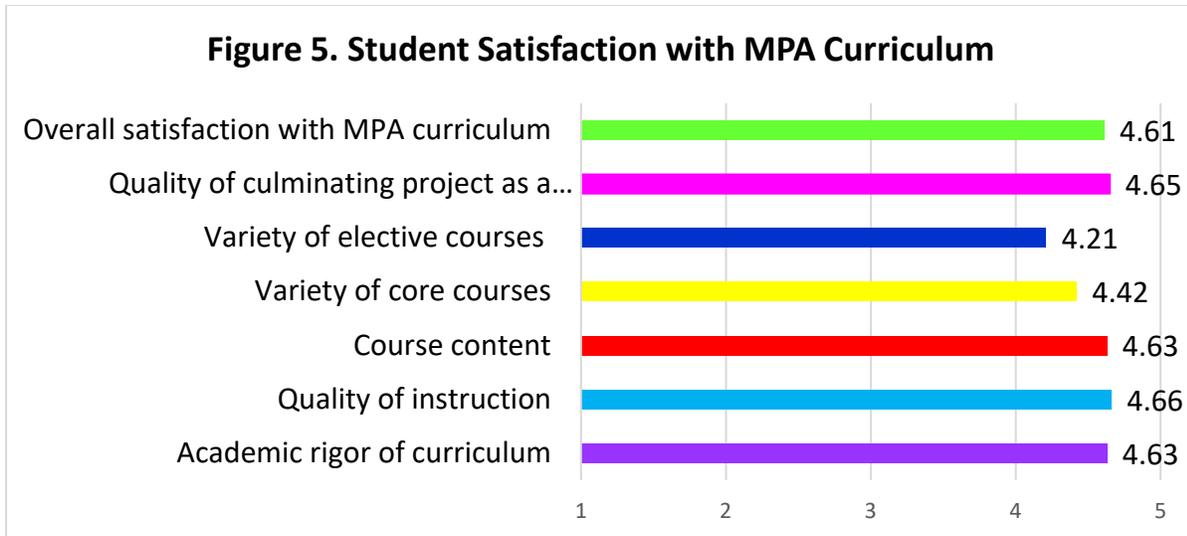


Figure 5. Mean Scores of Students' Level of Satisfaction with MPA Curriculum

Figure 6 shows student level of satisfaction with the MPA program format and delivery, measured on a scale of 1 = Very Dissatisfied; 5 = Very Satisfied. On average, students in the on-campus program were satisfied with the Saturday face-to-face format ($M = 4.63$; $SD .60$), the hybrid delivery of courses ($M = 4.61$; $SD 1.03$) and the number of classroom contact hours for a typical Saturday class ($M = 4.53$; $SD .70$). Students in the online MPA program were less satisfied with the availability of sufficient online courses per semester ($M = 4.2\%$; $SD .83$). Students in both versions of the program were not as satisfied with the weekly online format of delivery of core and elective courses ($M = 4.13\%$; $SD .96$) and course availability of electives ($M = 4.05\%$; $SD .98$).

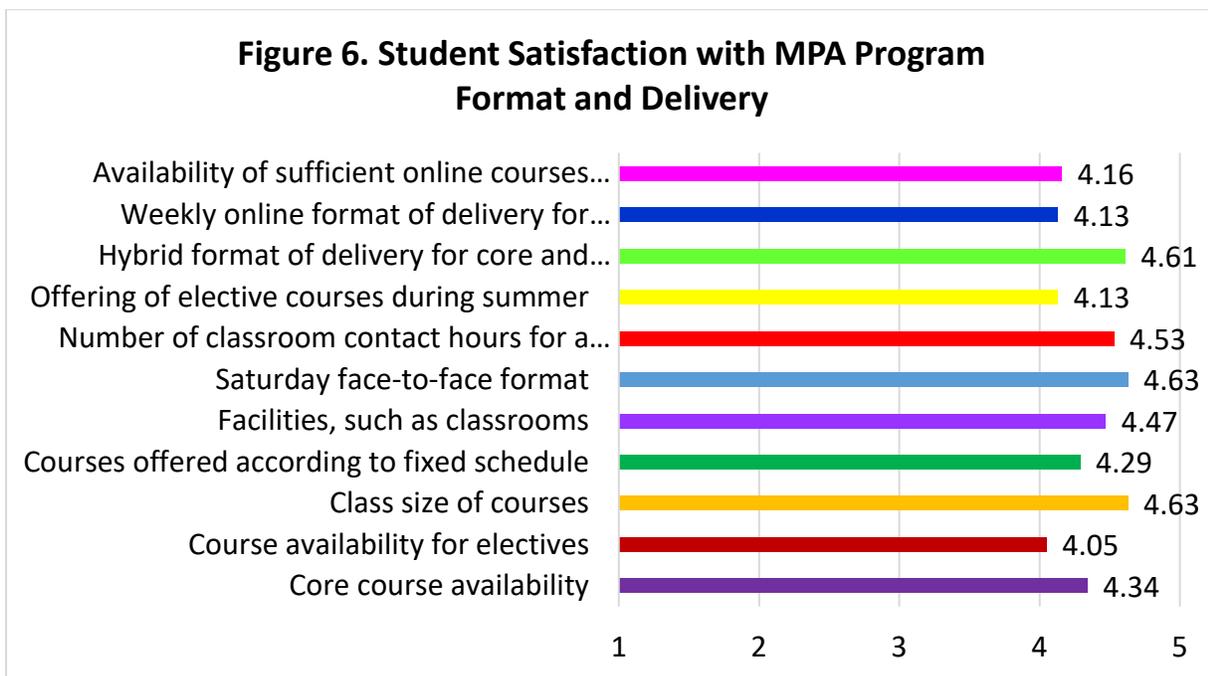


Figure 6. Mean Scores of Satisfaction with MPA Program Format and Delivery

Figure 7 shows student level of agreement with faculty roles and size, measured on a scale of 1=Strongly Disagree; 5=Strongly Agree. On average, most students agreed that faculty were accessible and responsive to student needs outside of class meetings ($M = 4.63$; $SD .67$), the faculty were committed to achieving the MPA goals ($M = 4.61$; $SD .68$), and the MPA program created a learning environment of mutual respect between faculty and students ($M=4.58$; $SD .68$). There was lesser agreement that the size of MPA faculty was adequate ($M = 3.89$; $SD .95$) and that the quality of instruction of adjunct instructors was satisfactory ($M = 4.26$; $SD .72$).

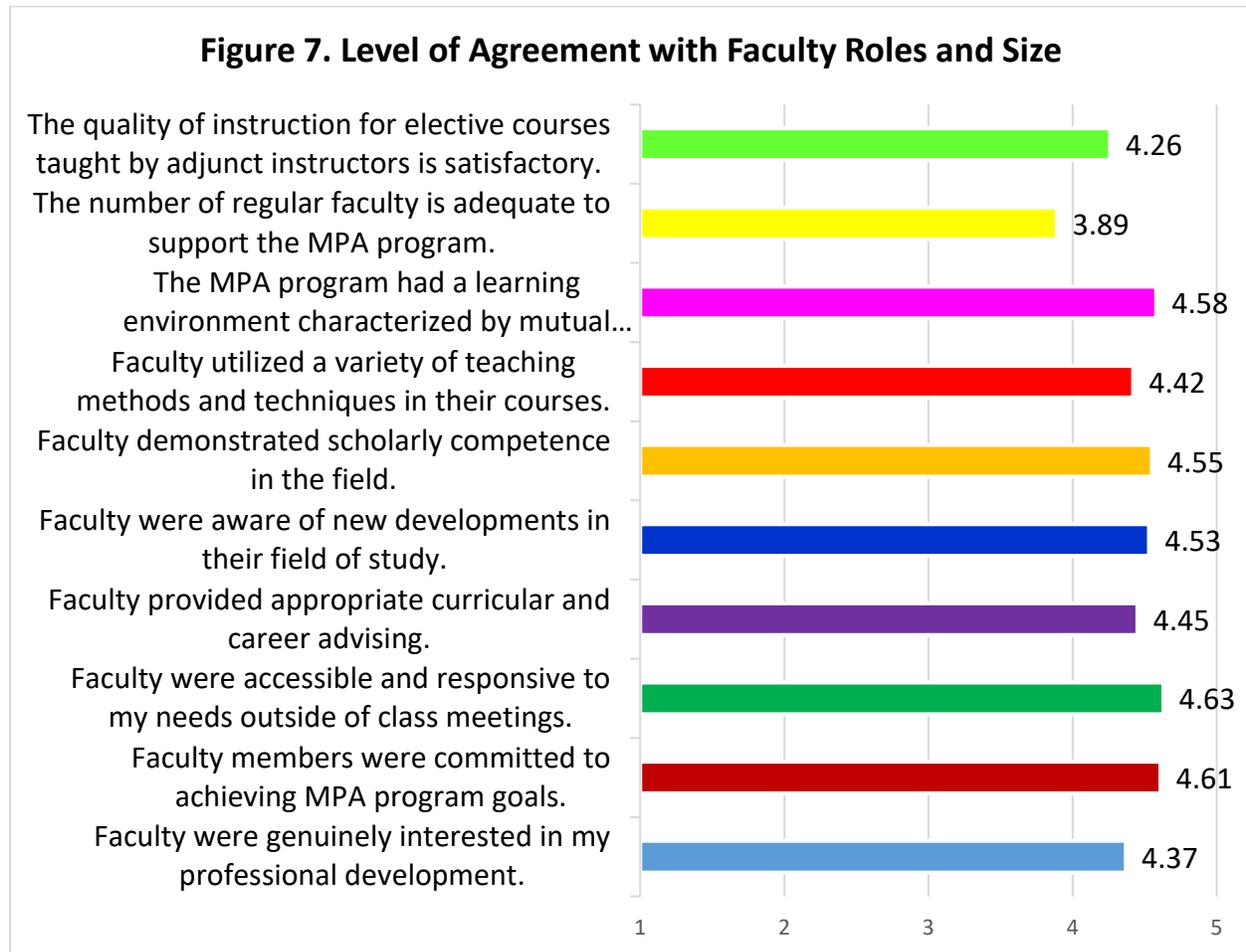


Figure 7. Mean Scores of Level of Agreement with Faculty Roles and Size

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

MPA Student Survey asked to address 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. **Networking.** Students liked the relationships they built with fellow students who came with different experiences and backgrounds. They also liked learning from different students' perspectives and the fact that the majority of classmates were working as public administrators who shared about different issues from their workplaces, as well as shared about challenges they faced and how they handled those.
2. **Diversity of Delivery Formats.** Students liked both the online and on-campus version of the MPA program. When it comes to the on-campus MPA program, students liked the fact they were provided with the opportunity to exchange ideas, discuss complex issues and simply enjoy conversations in person with classmates and professors. They also liked the hybrid format of delivery for some core classes. Students in the online MPA program noted that they liked the weekly format of delivery and its rotation, which helped them greatly with integrating the program into the personal and professional life.
3. **Curriculum.** Students liked the curriculum and indicated it was very rigorous. They liked the focus on practical application in addition to theory. They noted that the content was helpful in giving them insights and perspectives about the field of public administration.
4. **Practitioner Orientation of the Program.** Students liked the real world application in the program and that they could relate things they learned directly to their job.
5. **Faculty.** Students appreciated the guidance from professors. They liked that professors gave relevant assignments and coursework, that they were very accessible, that they selected relevant textbooks, that they were dedicated to the success of all students in the program, that they had an abundance of new knowledge, that they focused on quality instruction and that they were very helpful and reassuring.
6. **New Elective Courses.** Students suggested the addition of new elective courses to the MPA curriculum, such as community development and more fire administration specific courses. Collaborations with other UW Oshkosh graduate programs and Green Bay was also recommended in diversifying the elective offerings.
7. **Group Projects.** Students recommended faculty to seriously consider whether group projects were of real value in some classes, how they were graded, and the amount of work involved.
8. **Class Offerings.** Students recommended that core classes be offered during summers and that more elective courses be offered during the academic year if feasible.
9. **Faculty Size.** Students noted the need for more faculty members in the department, including ones that taught in the FEAM emphasis, and that current "professors should be given a raise" for the work they do.

B. Program Response to Assessment Results

1. How the Assessment Data was Used to Make Changes in Curriculum, Instruction, Student Learning, or Program Assessment Plan

- The assessment data were used to address the issue of availability, variety, and format of delivery of MPA courses. During 2018 spring semester, faculty approved the 2021-2023 long-term schedule of core and elective courses that allowed for diverse offerings of elective courses in fall, spring, and summer semesters, including health care courses in fall and spring semesters. The plan helps both faculty and students to plan their courses.
- The assessment data were used to improve orientation/onboarding to new students who began the MPA program in 2018 and 2019. An orientation was first built in D2L and then transferred and updated in CANVAS. All new students are being enrolled in it.
- The assessment data were used to initiate discussions about the possibility of transfer of credits from the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer program.
- The assessment data were used to implement a credit-for-prior learning policy.
- The assessment data were used to improve coordination in performance expectations, learning outcomes, type of assignments and grading among all faculty; discussions on these were/will be ongoing during department meetings.

2. Who is Involved in Making Decisions about Changes to the MPA Program

All faculty are involved in making decisions about changes to the program. Each faculty has ownership in the assessment and decision-making process. However, the ultimate decisions about course cancellations, the hiring of new faculty, and support for program accreditation, among other issues, are made by the higher levels of university administration. Support from higher administration is a must for the program to thrive in the future.

3. How Changes are Reported to Faculty

Any changes related to the MPA program are approved by majority vote during department meetings. The department chair engages faculty in a broader dialogue about student outcomes, achievements, and how the results could be used to improve the MPA program. Any changes are reported through written reports as well as through oral presentations.

4. How the Effectiveness of Any Changes Made be Tracked and Reported in the Next Reporting Cycle

The effectiveness of any changes in the MPA program will be tracked by the department chair through the administration of additional surveys to program constituents, as well as through continuous discussions during department meetings and organized retreats. We keep data from previous assessments. This enables us to examine student performance and program changes over time.