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## Cover Photo

Building on a rich tradition of education for public service and on its location in the nation's capital, just a few blocks west of the White House, the George Washington University offers a superior education for students wishing to pursue public affairs-oriented academic programs. George Washington University serves as the host institution of Lori A. Brainard, our guest editor for our symposium on Directing Public Affairs Programs.

## Cover and Interior Design

Val Escher

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# Alternative Facts and Public Affairs

**David Schultz**  
Co-Editor

What is a fact and how do we know when something is true? These are not just philosophical questions. In this era of intense partisan polarization, especially in the United States, the very notion that objective facts and truth exist is contested, and it seems acceptable for elected officials, policy makers, and the media to eschew real facts and opt instead for alternative facts. Contrary to the assertion of former US senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who once declared that everyone is entitled to his own opinion but not to his own facts, it now seems that everyone and each political party do have their own facts and truth. Why? Simply put, scientific facts and truth are not the same as political facts and truth; democracy and science are often in conflict, and the differing groups that support the Democratic and Republican Parties have vested interests in endorsing rival conceptions of truth. This is a dangerous proposition for governance and public affairs, where belief in knowledge, facts, and the pursuit of best practices premised on these is the mainstay of what we teach and encourage in our students as we prepare them for careers in public service.

For 30 years, I have taught American politics, law, and public policy. As someone with graduate degrees in astronomy, philosophy, law, and political science, my research and teaching centers on how policy making can be more evidence-based. In most aspects of our lives and

in business, we are taught to draw on the best available evidence before making decisions. The same should be true for politicians and government. Decisions crafted out of political myths and faulty or no evidence yield bad public policy, wasting taxpayer dollars and leading to failed or ineffective programs. Yet too much policy is created without real evidence.

There are many reasons for this. One can clearly point to intense interest group politics and the corrosive impact of money on politics as possibilities. But there is also a profound difference in how scientists and politicians gather facts and think about the world.

Scientists (and most social scientists) subscribe to the scientific method. This is a rigorous approach, ideally using controlled experiments and the inductive process of gathering discrete data, which are then aggregated to test hypotheses. Scholars also often use statistical sampling to estimate how representative their samples are in terms of the phenomena being studied. One cannot examine every molecule in the universe, and good samples allow for generalizations. But there is always a slight probability of error.

For scientists, facts are rigorously tested but cannot be proved with 100% certainty. Science is about falsifying claims. Scientific knowledge is also incremental, built on what is previously known, as bricks laid one upon another to

construct a wall. Scientists have built a wall of knowledge, facts, and truth. The laws of gravity, Einstein's famous  $E = mc^2$ , and  $1+1 = 2$  are examples. Scientific facts and truth have made possible telephones, television, the Internet, and the cure for polio. If one denies scientific truth, one might as well deny civilization. While we may not have a social science or public affairs equivalent of  $E = mc^2$ , we do have an impressive trove of data and knowledge about the world of public policy and administration. We may not know truths that are etched in stone, but we do know what has failed and often what should *not* be done. In many cases, we have the lessons of history to guide us, or we simply do the best we can in a world of bounded rationality—we act based on the best knowledge we have and perhaps, in Charles Lindblom fashion, muddle through.

But (social) scientific knowledge is different from political knowledge. What is political truth, especially in a democracy? It is what 50% plus one of the population says: majority rule. For elected officials, what counts as facts and truth is what they learn from their constituents. A politician's world is not one of controlled experiments, hypotheses, and statistically valid samples; what counts as valid evidence in making policies are the stories and interests of voters. This can be powerful evidence to someone who may need support in the next election. What is true in this sense has less to do with rigorous methods of investigation than with how well an assertion plays with the media or voters.

On occasion, scientific and political truth converge, resulting in good public policy. But historically they do not. The tension between scientific or expert knowledge culled from rigorous testing versus political knowledge based on majority rule is deep and has existed since Plato discussed it nearly 2,500 years ago. This is the technocracy/democracy gap. Some have more or specialized knowledge compared to others. Should the people defer to the experts or choose for themselves what they consider to be true? This is where political leadership comes in—to guide the public and make decisions based on the best knowledge at hand.

While science and democracy are in tension, how do we explain the partisan war on science between Democrats and Republicans in the United States? Battles over global warming and alternative facts are sourced in competing economic interests that support or sustain specific biases or factual worldviews. The two parties represent divergent interests that in turn have financial interests in rival conceptions of truth. Right now, Republicans are representing interests generally hostile to science, including energy companies that wish to deny climate change or workers who fear that automation will un-employ them. But this could change.

The gap between scientific and political knowledge might be bridged with more scientific education in schools. It might also be good if we elected more scientists to office. Together, this might create conditions that would make the political process more hospitable to science, yet there is no guarantee. Differing economic interests drive scientific skepticism, as do fear and prejudice, and something needs to be done to address both tendencies. The challenge for scientists and their allies is to convince the public and politicians that science is not a threat but rather enables and enriches our society.

As editor of *JPAE* and as a professor, I remain committed to the old-school idea that facts matter and truth exists and that both should guide the teaching and practice of public affairs. My goal has been to make sure that each issue of this journal contains articles that enhance our teaching and knowledge, helping us in the quest of producing the next generation of scholars and administrators who have the skills and knowledge to do their best to serve their constituents. This issue is no exception.

This issue features a symposium, "Directing Public Affairs Programs," guest edited and introduced by Lori A. Brainard. Serving as a program director is often a thankless task (I served as a doctoral program director for more than 8 years and speak from experience). Directors have a lot of responsibility but often face many con-

straints. The articles in this symposium explore issues ranging from job satisfaction to the unique challenges of small programs, from gender dynamics to the rewards, challenges, and pressures of running programs. Professor Brainard's introduction offers a richer and fuller overview of the symposium, and I will let her speak for the articles therein.

In addition to the symposium, this issue also publishes two articles and a book review. In "Paying It Forward: The Role of Student Philanthropy Course Activities on Civic Outcomes," Jodi Benenson and Erika Moldow investigate how philanthropy course activities contribute to students' understanding of philanthropy and their likelihood of engaging in civic participation. The authors find that having direct contact with nonprofits, doing research into an issue area, assisting in writing a grant proposal on behalf of an organization, serving as a group leader or co-leader, and investing a large percentage of class time on a philanthropy project are activities that most strongly predict students' confidence in their philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge.

Gabriel Purón-Cid, in "Information Technology Strategy and Management Curricula in Public Administration Education in Latin America," fills a gap in our understanding of how information and communication technology (ICT) is taught in Latin American public administration programs. He notes that NASPAA has promoted standards in computer literacy and ICT since 1986 but that these standards' diffusion in Latin America has been poorly studied. Purón-Cid draws on interviews with chief information officers and executives (employers) in the public sector in Mexico to identify competencies for ICT curricula.

Finally, Michael W. Popejoy reviews Mordecai Lee's *A Presidential Civil Service: FDR's Liaison Office for Personnel Management*. Popejoy finds it to be a good history that offers rich information about civil service and staffing at a critical time during the Franklin Roosevelt administration.

Collectively, the contents of this issue reinforce the theme of this Editorial Perspective that truth and facts matter: all of the articles underwent peer review, they are grounded in well-respected source citation, and they reach sound conclusions based on real facts and data, not alternative ones.

I hope you enjoy what you read and feel that you too want to contribute to the dialogue by submitting an article, book review, or case study. Please contact me at [dschultz@hamline.edu](mailto:dschultz@hamline.edu) if you have questions, comments, or suggestions. Thank you.

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#### ABOUT THE CO-EDITOR

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## Directing Public Affairs Programs

**Lori A. Brainard**

*George Washington University*

This issue of the *Journal of Public Affairs Education* focuses on directing Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Public Policy (MPP), doctoral, and other public affairs programs. It is an attempt to bring more attention to the role of program director, those who occupy it, and what they spend their time doing, pondering, and worrying about. We intend this issue, at least in part, to help program directors by making them aware of what other program directors do, why they do it, and how they fare. We also seek to inform those who interact with program directors on a daily basis, including faculty (from whom program directors seek help), staff (with whom program directors work closely), and chairs and deans (who can influence not only the program director role but the context in which directors operate). Those considering taking on the role will learn about what it entails.

Over the past several years, I have observed a growing need for more information on and insight into directing programs. The Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) has been both the conduit through which this need has been expressed and also the institutional focus for efforts to meet that need. There have been several panels on directing programs at NASPAA annual conferences. Some of these panels were standing-room only, with attendees spilling out into the corridors. NASPAA has also organized gatherings of

program directors, such as a coffee hour at the 2016 conference. Program directors themselves have arranged other informal gatherings. In 2015 NASPAA hosted, and I facilitated, a New Director's Institute, a half-day workshop for new program directors and those considering becoming program directors.

MPA, MPP, and doctoral programs have always had faculty administrators. Why does the need for more information about this appear to be so strong now? I can only speculate, but based on what I have seen and heard at the events just noted, I believe it stems from changes in the context in which program directors operate: the corporatization of universities, increasing admissions pressure, competition for decreasing resources, the struggle for promotion and tenure, and a new focus on health and wellness in academe. Below, I detail some of these contextual factors and then describe their impact on the role of program director and the people who occupy it.

Over the past several decades, American universities have experienced increasing corporatization (Donoghue, 2009; Gerber, 2014; Ginsburg, 2011; Lewis, 2005; Readings, 1996), hiring professional administrators—often at the levels of dean, associate dean, and vice president—such as admissions experts, specialists on global initiatives (e.g., establishing campuses outside of the United States), and outcomes

and learning assessment experts. Universities have also been adopting, revising, and running on strategic plans, often developed and guided by external consultants and covering everything from curriculum design and delivery to image management. Economic justifications have become dominant in decision making, and students have become our customers. The ecosystem in which program directors thus exist is now hyper-professionalized, populated with management experts, and driven by commercial and corporate needs.

Admissions pressures have become significant as well. Survey results published in 2016 by *Inside Higher Ed* (Jaschik, 2016) show that only 37% of admissions directors expected to make their admissions target, while 42% reported meeting their target in 2015 (Jaschik, 2015). The pressure to meet admissions goals may be especially pronounced in professional programs, such as MPA and MPP programs, which are often considered potential revenue generators for their colleges and universities. The focus on admissions has been especially pronounced in an era of decreasing resources. Admissions pressure flows downstream, from boards of trustees, through the admission consultants and administrators, and all the way to the program director.

In addition, promotion and tenure expectations are constantly increasing (Paglia, 1991). While universities seek to increase their research funding and visibility (as part of their corporatization), faculty strive to keep up with increased expectations for publishing. Faculty are expected to publish more than ever, in better than ever journals—as measured numerically via impact factors (Liu, Gai, & Zhou, 2016). This pressure necessarily creates a time crunch in which program directors struggle to research, teach, and perform university and professional service.

There is also increasing awareness of the health and wellness toll in academe. In 2014, the *Guardian* published articles on mental illness among academics and on academic overwork and isolation (Shaw, 2014; Shaw & Ward, 2014). Similarly, scholars are now publishing

on the topic, with two books published within months of each other. One (Zavattaro & Orr, 2017) is a collection of essays about surviving academe. One of seven sections is on health and wellness. Some essays focus on physical health (Brainard, 2017) while others focus on mental health (Briones, 2017). A second book (Berg & Seeber, 2016) urges academics to situate their work within the “slow” movement (Honore, 2005), which tries to find ways to fight back against the culture of speed and busyness in which we find ourselves. Program directors share these concerns.

It is in this context that the many formal and informal gatherings of program directors have taken place over the past few years. In panel discussions and over coffee, the anxiety about surviving and thriving in the context created by the above factors has been palpable. Program directors fear that spending too much time on administrative issues and not enough on research and teaching will endanger their efforts toward promotion and tenure. A major topic that emerged at the 2015 half-day NASPAA workshop for program directors was how to create time and space for the professional activities (research and teaching) on which we are actually evaluated and promoted. In this new corporatized ecosystem, program directors must learn and adopt new vocabularies, new metrics, and new techniques to manage, evaluate, and advocate for their programs. In short, program directors have to become more management oriented, yet they generally lack management training and experience.

Most program directors at the gatherings noted above said that their training has been on the job, sometimes with advice from the person who previously occupied the role. Program directors must become admissions experts, of sorts, reading applications and making admissions decisions, recruiting students—often hosting them on campus—and making decisions about financial aid. The admissions focus has come to center on reaching enrollment targets—another aspect of university corporatization. Program directors must learn, on the job and in real time, the specialized skill of

recruiting, anticipating yield, and enrolling more students while maintaining the quality of students and of the program.

While it is more important than ever to learn more about program directors, the education literature generally, and the public affairs education literature specifically, does not have much to offer about directing programs. The literature provides a good deal of scholarship on *teaching*, including symposia on using technology for teaching (Sandfort, 2016; Ganapati & Reddick, 2016). We also have scholarship on teaching with various kinds of students in mind (Klawitter & Schultz, 2015b; Schlossberg, Lynch, & Chickering, 1989). The literature additionally gives insights into different aspects of program *delivery*, including on offering student orientations (Klawitter & Schultz, 2016) and on curriculum design, including integrating nonprofit organizations (Klawitter & Schultz, 2015a).

Nevertheless, we lack a specific literature on managing and directing programs, and this special issue is a first attempt at filling that gap. This issue addresses the contextual factors described above and seeks to establish a baseline of what we know, empirically, about directing public affairs programs in the United States. The articles discuss the multiple roles of the program director; motivations, rewards, and challenges of program directors; the constraints and opportunities associated with directing small MPA programs; and the role of gender—both the differences and similarities between what men and women do and how they lead. In addition, the authors use various methods, including survey, interview, case study, and narrative approaches.

We lead off with Thomas J. Vicino's "Navigating the Multiple Roles of the MPA Director: Perspectives and Lessons." Through a case study of the various structural, contextual, other changes in the MPA program at Northeastern University, Vicino explores the dominant business model of higher education in the United States and how it affects the role of program director. The new business model

he describes generates the multiple roles a program director must play, including those of manager, advocate, liaison, and entrepreneur.

Next, Jerri Killian and Mary Wenning, in "Are We Having Fun Yet? Exploring the Motivations, Challenges, and Rewards of MPA and MPP Program Directors in the United States," explore why program directors serve. They find that the key motivator is to promote the program's mission and values. Killian and Wenning are surprised to find that their survey respondents are more positive than expected about their role. Where expectations are not met are in the areas of working with the central university administration and in remuneration and compensation (both financial and course releases).

Donna Lind Infeld and I, in "The Challenges and Rewards of Service: Job Satisfaction among Public Affairs Program Directors," next explore what program directors do day-to-day. The role is multifaceted: program directors typically make admissions and financial aid decisions, work on student recruitment, participate in school leadership, work with advisory boards, participate with career services, and engage with alumni. Program directors seem satisfied with most aspects of their job, though there are differences by gender and program size. Challenges program directors face are balancing their workload and stress and pursuing their research.

In "Gender and the Role of Directors of Public Administration and Policy Programs," Bonnie Stabile, Jessica Terman, and Catherine Kuerbitz ask whether women are more likely than men to serve as program directors and whether women and men report different experiences. Through a survey and interviews, Stabile and colleagues finds some differences in what men and women experience as program directors. Yet they also finds that women serve proportional to their faculty representation and that both men and women report similar struggles, including the balancing of research, teaching, and service.

Michelle Pautz and Grant Neeley, in "Beyond the Usual Complaints: The Front-Line Challenges and Opportunities of Small MPA Pro-

grams,” use the narrative method to help us understand the program director role in small MPA programs. Such programs make up the majority of NASPAA-accredited programs. Helpfully, rather than belabor factors beyond our control—including the contextual factors described above—the authors focus on aspects of the job that program directors can influence. Pautz and Neely also identify several larger challenges, including being the program’s only advocate and existing as a graduate program in a primarily undergraduate environment.

William Hatcher, Wesley L. Meares, and Victoria Gordon continue the theme of small programs in “The Capacity and Constraints of Small MPA Programs: A Survey of Program Directors” and draw on their survey of directors of such programs. Surprisingly, the authors find that directors of small programs report having manageable teaching loads and enough travel money. Yet they face unique challenges, including creating, maintaining, and working with advisory boards. The authors’ respondents also report needing more budget autonomy in order to be effective in their jobs and, importantly, the need to work on maintaining NASPAA accreditation.

Finally, Meghna Sabharwal, Helisse Levine, and Maria J. D’Agostino present “Gender Differences in the Leadership Styles of MPA Directors.” Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, the authors find that though women and men share many similar styles of leadership, women program directors are more likely than men to perform in ways that reflect a transformational leadership style.

Together, these seven articles cover significant aspects of the program director role. The authors explore both large and small programs and differences and similarities between men and women program directors. We gain a greater understanding of the various facets of the role—that is, what program directors do each day and why they do it. We get a strong sense of the rewards and challenges they face: university corporatization, admissions pressures, maintaining a research agenda, and well-being.

While there remains much to learn about directing public affairs programs, these seven articles constitute both a first step and an invitation to continue the pursuit.

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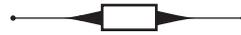
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**Lori A. Brainard** is an associate professor in the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington University. Her research interests include civic engagement and state-society relations. She focuses on how government agencies, nonprofit organizations, and ordinary people use social media to engage in public life.

# Navigating the Multiple Roles of the MPA Director: Perspectives and Lessons

Thomas J. Vicino

*Northeastern University*

## ABSTRACT

This article explores how the changing landscape of higher education affects the roles that a director of a Master of Public Administration (MPA) program plays in leading and managing academic programs. I offer a new perspective on the dominant business model of higher education and its impacts on the multiple roles of the MPA director. I argue that institutions of higher education must adopt a new model that responds to changing societal landscape and needs. As institutions seek to adapt to these changes, the MPA director is asked to play a variety of roles vis-à-vis many stakeholders. I present a typology of these roles: (1) the manager, (2) the advocate, (3) the liaison, and (4) the entrepreneur. I review characteristics of these roles and provide illustrative examples by drawing on the experiential education model pioneered at Northeastern University.

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## KEYWORDS

Administration, leadership, management, higher education, public affairs

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In recent years, many transitions have dramatically affected the state of higher education, notably those shaped by increasing economic uncertainties and the advancement of numerous technologies (Ginsberg, 2011). This is evident in the copious news headlines about higher education that remind us about the impacts of globalization, demographic change, waning political support, and financial challenges (O'Neil, 2014). In the spring 2013 issue of the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, Schultz (2013) argues that "the dominant business model for American higher education has collapsed" (p. ii). Graduate programs in public affairs are particularly affected, given their unique mission to serve the public.

Institutions of higher education have in fact evolved from a traditional model to a business

model. The traditional model is based on the demand for strong public support of colleges and universities and the supply of many students seeking an education. In contrast, the business model seeks to compete for scarce resources by developing new markets for higher education. Thus, academic leaders are confronted with the imperative to adapt their leadership strategies and management skills to align with these new realities. Given their mandate to serve the public affairs community and maintain professional accreditation, directors of public affairs programs take on numerous roles in the areas of management, advocacy, and entrepreneurship to fulfill their program's mission.

This article presents a new perspective on the dominant business model of higher education

and its impacts on the multiple roles of a director of a Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. I first review the literature on the evolution of higher education and then analyze a case study of the MPA program at Northeastern University. I then present a typology of the multiple roles of the MPA program director and conclude by reflecting on possible lessons to be learned.

### THE EVOLUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

There is a large body of literature on the evolution of higher education in the United States (Rudolph & Thelin, 1990). The mission of the university evolved from a religious purpose to an intellectual pursuit for the advancement of knowledge and economic development through research, teaching, and public service (Loss, 2012). After World War II, the nation witnessed the rise of the modern university. Millions of returning veterans used the GI Bill to advance their education, and governments invested dramatically in higher education (Altschuler & Blumin, 2009). This transformation was also defined by universities' outreach to external stakeholders through the dissemination of research (Kerr, 2001). This led to the growth of a multifaceted system of some 2,000 institutions of higher education, such as the public land-grant university and the private university, among other types of institutions.

This evolution resulted from a complex interaction of many factors, including but not limited to globalization, new demographic patterns, political and economic changes, and neoliberalism (Rich, 2013; Schultz, 2013). Globalization has affected people, places, and institutions in the United States (Stiglitz, 2003). The process of globalization can be broadly defined as the sociospatial, economic, and political processes that concentrate socioeconomic activities of humans and firms in an agglomerative pattern (Sassen, 2011). Without a doubt, globalization has touched institutions of higher education in distinct ways. From study-abroad programs and the internationalization of student bodies to the knowledge economy and new learning technologies, the footprint of globalization is evident across the nation's campuses (Rubaii,

2016). Although globalization brings many new opportunities to universities, many observers caution that global competition and disinvestment in U.S. institutions of higher education present new threats. Friedman (2005) draws attention to the "quiet crisis" of American society and more specifically, higher education, arguing that there is an erosion of the organizations that promote and sustain the nation's scientific thinking.

### Models of Higher Education

The globalization of society and the economy in the United States shaped the growth of institutions of higher education. Two models, the traditional model and the business model, reflect the evolution of the approaches to leading and managing these institutions. From approximately the 1940s to the 1980s, the traditional model of higher education enjoyed broad political support and healthy public investments to grow facilities, faculties, and student bodies. The decline of public support, the lack of financial resources, and the competition for students are some factors that led to the rise of an alternative model of higher education (Newfield, 2008). In contrast to the traditional model, the business model evolved in the 1990s and persists today. It promotes corporate, entrepreneurial behavior among institutions of higher education to seek revenue sources other than public support in the face of competition for scarce resources.

Table 1 summarizes these two models' characteristics. In the traditional model, fiscal affairs are centralized at the university level and depend on strong political support, whereas the business model promotes fiscal autonomy at the college or unit level. The traditional model assumes regular enrollment growth, while the business model must attract and retain enrollments in a competitive market. Finally, the traditional model provides an accessible education, whereas the business model seeks to create new markets for nontraditional educational opportunities. The decline of the traditional model and the subsequent rise of the commercialization of higher education is well documented (Bok, 2003).

**TABLE 1.**  
**Characteristics of the Models of Higher Education**

	<b>Traditional model</b>	<b>Business model</b>
<b>Key years</b>	1940s–1980s	1990s–2010s
<b>Key premise</b>	Broad political support for healthy public investments in research, faculty, and facilities	Corporate, entrepreneurial strategies to seek other revenue sources for varied activities
<b>Key characteristics</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal centralization</li> <li>• Enrollment expansion</li> <li>• Accessible education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal autonomy</li> <li>• Enrollment imperatives</li> <li>• Develop new markets</li> </ul>

Still other observers of the evolution of higher education have called attention to the rise of the entrepreneurial university, often viewed as a response to globalization. The entrepreneurial university seeks to be a self-reliant organization that engages in innovation through economic development activities. This occurs in several ways: the university may pursue urban revitalization and real-estate investment (Rodin, 2007); the university may partner with science and technology corporations to produce intellectual property (Thorp & Goldstein, 2010); or the university may become a business incubator to create jobs (Feldman, 1994). Clark (2001) offers a positive assessment of these activities, observing that this creates “new forms of knowledge, new types of students, new labor force connections, new problem-solving skills for government and the economy” (p. 23). However, Slaughter and Rhoades (2000) critique this transformation, asserting that “academic capitalism ... reduces the calculus of the public interest” (p. 79). Whatever the case, it is no surprise that at the beginning of the 21st century, former president of Cornell University, Frank Rhodes (2011), observed that the “knowledge business” of universities has witnessed the restructuring of an industry.

Collectively, the transformation of institutions of higher education has placed distinct pressures on MPA programs and, more generally, on

academic units of public affairs. Berry’s (2010) presidential address to the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) effectively underscores the impacts on the field, declaring that “a transition from the traditional model to the business model will require public affairs programs to be more entrepreneurial” (p. 4). Historically, conversations in public affairs have focused on the utility, worth, and value of the MPA degree (Grote & Holzer, 1975; Lewis 1987). However, more recently attention has focused on the pressures to maintain and grow enrollments in the wake of the Great Recession and even to save MPA degree programs (Kerrigan, 2011; Teicher, 2010). It is time to reconsider other models of higher education.

#### **THE CASE OF THE MPA PROGRAM AT NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY**

Based on five years of experience (2011–2016) as director of a medium-to-large MPA program at a private research university, I offer a new perspective on the dominant business model of higher education by illustrating the experiential education model pioneered at Northeastern University and the impact on its MPA program. Drawing on Barth’s (2002) method of reflection on building an MPA program, I reflect on these experiences and draw lessons about academic leadership for MPA directors. In this section, I employ the method of thick description to consider three contexts (institutional, program,

and administrative) that shape the leadership and management environments of MPA program directors (Geertz, 1973).

### **The Institutional Context**

Few other institutions in the nation have witnessed as dramatic a transformation as Northeastern University. Founded in 1898 as the Evening Institute for Younger Men at the Huntington Avenue Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in Boston, the institution was incorporated in 1916 as Northeastern College and later, in 1922, as Northeastern University (Churchill, 1927). During the 20th century, Northeastern's academic portfolio and enrollments grew dramatically. By the 1980s, enrollments peaked at 60,000 before the institution implemented a strategy to decrease the size of the student body and improve the quality of the academic experience. Today, the institution is a global, experiential, research university built on a tradition of engagement with the world. This model creates a distinctive approach to education and research (Itin, 1999). Experiential learning integrates the classroom and the real world (Kraft & Kielsmeier, 1995). Students engage with the world through cooperative educational experiences known as "co-ops." Students leave the university to participate in an intensive 6-month period of full-time work with a private, public, or nonprofit organization in their area of interest. Students repeat the co-op experience on several occasions over the course of their academic career. The integration of learning experiences allows students to affect the world around them (Kolb, 1984; Shor, 1992).

By the beginning of the 21st century, Northeastern enrolled approximately 25,000 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs that lead to degrees through the doctorate in nine colleges and schools, as well as select advanced degrees at graduate campuses in other regions. In 2016, Northeastern was categorized as a doctoral university with the highest research activity (also known as Research-1, or R1) by the Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. Northeastern was ranked 39th in the 2017 edition of *U.S. News & World Report* in its annual ranking of national universities—in 2007,

its ranking was 98 (Northeastern University, 2016b). Indeed, the Northeastern story attracted national headlines and followed a parallel discussion about the future of higher education (Carey, 2015; Fischer, 2011; Lewin, 2011).

### **The Program Context**

The MPA program at Northeastern University was founded in 1969 as a graduate program of the Department of Political Science in the College of Arts and Sciences (formerly the College of Liberal Arts). The original mission of the MPA program was to assist those who aspire to government employment (pre-service) in obtaining public management jobs, and to help those who have jobs (in-service) advance to their utmost skill and preference levels. Over the years, the program focused on preparing students with a professional education for the public sector in a constantly changing environment. The program successfully capitalized on the need in the workforce to produce qualified and highly skilled public sector employees, with a focus on state and local government. Thus, two faculty members with expertise in the public administration field were initially hired to support the program. During the 1960s, 10 additional faculty were hired in the department. By 2007, on the department's 50th anniversary, the faculty had grown to 22 full-time members, many of whom supported the MPA program in various capacities. Ultimately, four decades of growth produced more than 1,000 MPA graduates—the public managers and policy analysts of state and local government in the Boston metropolitan area.

Following a national trend, numerous institutions of higher education sought to develop more effective budgeting systems to sustain their core missions of research, teaching, and service in an increasingly uncertain and complex landscape of higher education (Duderstadt, 2000). Like many of its peers, Northeastern also pursued this strategy. In 2008, the university initiated a reorganization of the College of Arts and Sciences and launched a hybrid "responsibility center management" budget model. The college was divided into three smaller, thematic units: the College of Science; the

College of Arts, Media, and Design; and the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. Each new college was designated a responsibility center in the university's new budget model. The Department of Political Science and the nascent School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs were administratively relocated to the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. National searches were launched to hire deans for the newly created colleges.

The 2009–2010 academic year was a critical turning point for the MPA program. In this year, the program was part of the last cohort of NASPAA member schools to be evaluated and reaccredited under the pre-2009 standards. A variety of factors led the program to consider an administrative reorganization to position itself for future compliance with the new accreditation standards. First, the newly adopted mission- and outcomes-based NASPAA accreditation standards necessitated that the MPA program reevaluate its organizational structure, administrative capacity, and operating procedures (NASPAA, Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation, 2014).

Second, in 2009, the MPA program launched an online component. Many graduate programs in public affairs created online courses and degree programs during the 2000s, but they faced several obstacles in providing effective, efficient, and responsive educational experiences as accredited programs (Ginn & Hammond, 2012).

Third, the growth of enrollments, especially during the Great Recession, created new demands on the faculty and staff of MPA programs to provide quality experiences. Between 2009 and 2012, Northeastern's MPA program tripled the size of its student body, which peaked at 130 students. Similarly, the university's new budget model created fiscal incentives to grow enrollment, but it also created budgetary pressures to maintain them (Teicher, 2010).

Fourth, a national trend showed a decline of MPA programs supported by traditional political science departments (NASPAA, 1995). Baldwin (1988) found that schools of public

affairs consistently outperformed political science departments in their ability to fulfill program mission and achieve the program goals.

Finally, broad aspirations to grow the reputation and quality of Northeastern motivated the MPA program to focus on providing a distinctive and high-impact educational experience. In the wake of these new administrative changes, it became clear that the complexity of administering the MPA program could not be sustained solely by the Department of Political Science.

As a result of these organizational dynamics shaping the environment of Northeastern's MPA program, a complete program reorganization took place over the course of three academic years. Table 2 summarizes the reorganization of the MPA program. During the 2010–2011 academic year, the faculty reevaluated the program's mission and reviewed the administrative structures of peer institutions with similar MPA programs. In the following academic year, program faculty engaged the community of stakeholders to consider reorganization options. The program director and faculty facilitated open forums, small group interviews, and informal conversations with university administrators, current students, alumni, internship partner organizations, and employers. The results of these engagements informed the MPA program that its stakeholders wanted it to grow and further develop while maintaining NASPAA accreditation.

At the conclusion of this process, a plan was adopted to reorganize the MPA program into Northeastern's School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs. The school's mission complemented the MPA program's mission, and the school had the capacity to serve professional graduate students and the public affairs community. Over the course of the next three academic years, the administration of the program shifted incrementally to the new unit. First, in 2013, a new Faculty Nucleus was constituted, consisting of faculty teaching and serving the program from a variety of academic units. Then, in 2014, the position of MPA program director was created, appointed by the dean of the College of Social

**TABLE 2.**  
**Timeline of the Reorganization of the MPA Program at Northeastern University**

Academic year	Actions
2009–2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPA program is reaccredited in the Department of Political Science</li> <li>• New NASPAA standards launched</li> </ul>
2010–2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPA program’s mission reevaluated</li> <li>• Administrative structures of peer institutions reviewed</li> </ul>
2011–2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community engagement with MPA program’s stakeholders</li> </ul>
2012–2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPA director position created</li> <li>• Faculty Nucleus constituted</li> </ul>
2013–2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bylaws and policy documents created</li> <li>• Administrative team formed</li> </ul>
2014–2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum and budget transferred</li> <li>• Joint faculty workloads established</li> </ul>
2015–2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-study year for NASPAA reaccreditation</li> </ul>

Sciences and Humanities upon recommendation of the Faculty Nucleus. Next, the MPA program adopted new bylaws and established itself as a self-governing body to be supported by the various units from which the Faculty Nucleus was composed. An administrative team, consisting of the program director and professional staff members, also formed to provide student services and to support program operations. Last, in 2015, the curriculum and budget were transferred from the Department of Political Science to the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs. Joint faculty workloads for members of the Faculty Nucleus were established in consultation with other unit heads in the College of Social Sciences and Humanities. By 2016, the beginning of the MPA program’s next self-study year for NASPAA reaccreditation, the reorganization was completed.

### The Administrative Context

Northeastern’s MPA program used the university’s academic planning process to grow and further develop. In 2015, Northeastern launched a university-wide academic planning process to create a new strategic and long-range plan for the institution (see Table 3). In its academic plan, the university identified three key institutional strategies: (1) build diverse, inclusive

networks of endless possibilities; (2) learn any time, from anywhere, with anyone; and (3) accelerate discovery exponentially through the power of networks (Northeastern University, 2016a). The MPA program sought to align its activities strategically with other organizational units in the university in order to establish the distinctive nature of the program. The university’s academic plan, *Northeastern 2025* (Northeastern University, 2016a), provided that opportunity.

The first institutional strategy identified the building of diverse, inclusive networks to create experiential opportunities for students. In response, the College of Social Sciences and Humanities developed a learning model of “experiential liberal arts” as the conceptual grounding of its mission. Northeastern president Joseph Aoun (2015a) called attention to this model by launching a national conversation on the experiential liberal arts, asserting that they “combine the rigor of traditional academics with active participation in workplaces, laboratories or volunteer opportunities—especially ones in a global context. These real-life elements would heighten students’ motivation, promote practice and self-reflection, promote contextual understanding, and encourage self-direction.”

In this model, students engage in a rigorous study of politics, society, culture, and ethics; apply and transform liberal arts knowledge and capacities across and beyond the university; study issues of diversity and inclusion in theory and practice; and develop awareness about the impact of their activities on the city of Boston through meaningful community engagement. Thus, all units and programs in the college, including the MPA program, would adopt the experiential liberal arts model.

The MPA program’s educational mission and public service values meshed well with this new model, and the program aligned its activities in two ways. First, it created graduate certificates in targeted areas of strength, including data analytics; nonprofit sector, philanthropy, and social change; public policy analysis; urban informatics; and urban studies. The program gave MPA students the opportunity to craft their elective coursework in these areas. Second, the program redeveloped its capstone

course to engage the public affairs community and incorporate experiential elements in substantive ways. Following similar models at other institutions, the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs adopted a unit-wide, client-based capstone course (Allard & Straussman, 2003; Mayhew, Swartz, & Taylor, 2014; Schachter & Schwartz, 2009). Designed as the culminating educational component of the school’s professional graduate degrees, the course requires students to integrate the skills, tools, and knowledge they acquired during their training to complete a real-world project for an individual client or organization. Drawing on a network of alumni and partners based in Boston and throughout the world, students work in interdisciplinary teams over the course of one semester to conduct research and analysis and develop a set of recommendations for the client. These strategies aligned the MPA program’s educational activities with the institution’s model for experiential liberal arts education.

**TABLE 3.**  
Alignment of Institutional Strategies

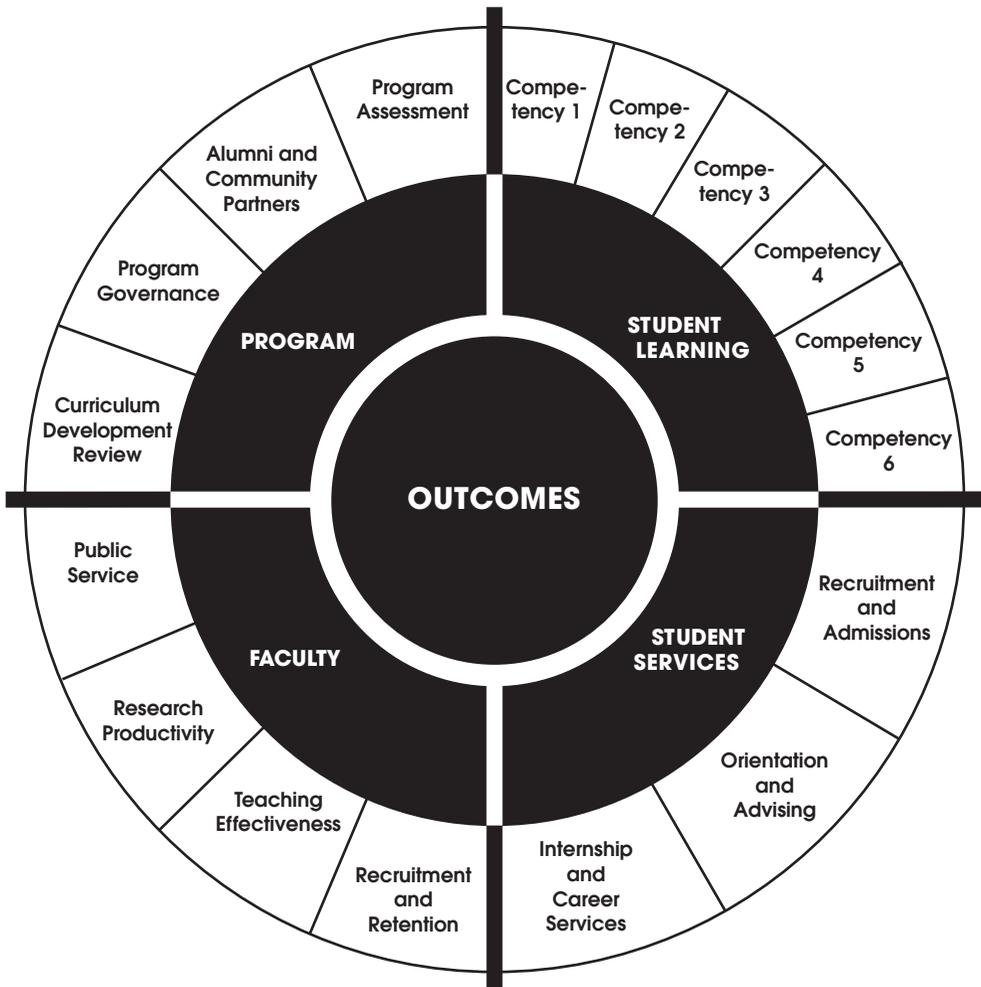
Organizational level		
Institutional strategy	College or school strategy	Program strategy
Build diverse, inclusive networks of endless possibilities	Provide an experiential liberal arts education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Align graduate certificates to targeted areas</li> <li>• Engage key stakeholders</li> <li>• Implement experiential capstone course</li> </ul>
Learn any time, from anywhere, with anyone	Promote professional, graduate-level education through the Professional Advancement Network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver a degree program campus, online, and hybrid modalities</li> <li>• Enroll additional students</li> <li>• Institutionalize assessment activities</li> </ul>
Accelerate discovery exponentially through the power of networks	<p><b>Develop foci in three areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience and sustainability</li> <li>• Big data, network science, and digital humanities</li> <li>• Governance, globalization, and civic sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop strengths in targeted areas</li> <li>• Create high-impact experiential opportunities</li> </ul>

The second institutional strategy put forth a learning model in which students engage with the university in multiple ways. In response, the university launched its Professional Advancement Network, a portfolio of professional programs offered across multiple learning channels. These academic programs are composed of on-ground, online, and hybrid modalities in a network of campuses in Boston, Seattle, and Charlotte. The College of Social Sciences and Humanities identified the MPA program as one to join this network. Through its participation in the institution's Professional Advancement

Network, the MPA program received new financial resources to redevelop its entire curriculum as online courses to be offered across the network. Additional resources for advertising, marketing, and student recruitment were also provided.

With these additional institutional resources, the program was able to invest in developing its operations. It placed a special focus on building systems and capacities to institutionalize the assessment of outcomes for all programmatic activities. Figure 1 displays the domains and

**FIGURE 1.**  
Domains and Outcomes of the MPA Program



outcomes established by the MPA program. The program's activities are divided into four domains: program, faculty, student learning, and student services. In each domain, activities are assessed that lead to program outcomes. This administrative approach facilitated assessment of the program's activities across all modalities and networks at the institution.

The third institutional strategy focused on creating new networks for the discovery of knowledge. The university's strategy supported interdisciplinary collaborations that promote sustainable human communities. In response, the College of Social Sciences and Humanities developed research and scholarly foci in three areas of strategic strength: resilience and sustainability; big data, network science, and digital humanities; and governance, globalization, and civic sustainability. The MPA program, in partnership with the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs, aligned its activities with the strengths of experiential education and with areas of resilience and sustainability of the city and public policy. The program, in collaboration with the school and college, developed public platforms to take ownership of policy issues and build the public affairs community, using a variety of flagship programs, centers, and labs aligned to the program's strengths. These initiatives include the following:

- The Myra Kraft Open Classroom Series is a semester-long seminar series for students and the general public to explore public problems and solutions around critical issues that face Boston, the state, the nation, and the world. This weekly seminar series attracts hundreds of people from the public as well as students, faculty, staff, and members of the public affairs community. It is taught by faculty of the School of Public Policy and Urban Affairs.
- The Conflict, Civility, Respect, Peace: Northeastern Reflects Series focuses on creating public dialogue around civic sustainability. The series encourages the practice of civility in engaging with diverse

opinions and in acknowledging wrongs of the past, broadening personal networks, finding common ground in social action, and making the world a better place.

- The Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, the Resilient Cities Lab, and the Social Impact Lab serve as the school's hubs for research activities and public engagement.

The MPA program aligned its programmatic activities to the school's and college's experiential opportunities by (1) having members of the Faculty Nucleus lead and manage these efforts; (2) integrating these activities into the MPA curriculum; and (3) engaging the public affairs community to create new experiences for students. Such alignment allowed the MPA program to fulfill its mission while also supporting the university's strategic plan.

#### LESSONS FOR THE MPA DIRECTOR

The case of strategic planning and reorganization of Northeastern's MPA program offers several lessons for MPA directors. Leaders of public administration programs are often engaged in a variety of distinct leadership roles. What are the roles of the MPA director in an increasingly complex institutional landscape? The MPA director position is a classic example of a middle manager. Academic middle managers, like department chairs and program directors, face numerous challenges. Charged with leading and managing academic programs, the middle manager has little institutional support and training to be effective (Floyd, 2016). In most cases, the MPA director is neither a unit head or dean but is given substantial administrative responsibilities. Caught in between the unit and college level in the organizational structure, the middle manager reports to many stakeholders (Buller, 2012; Ginsberg, 2011). Directors of MPA programs have even further challenges to confront, including maintaining NASPAA accreditation, ensuring autonomous governance and decision making, and engaging the public affairs community. An understanding of how to navigate these administrative roles is essential to an MPA director's success.

The following case is emblematic of the leadership and management environment that confronts directors of graduate programs in public affairs. Although the case draws on the experience of a private research university, the external forces shaping higher education and public affairs affect all programs, albeit in different ways. In addition, directors of NASPAA-accredited programs face similar leadership and management obligations to maintain standards for the program, the faculty, the student experience, and the public affairs community. Thus, we can draw lessons from the experience at Northeastern University to inform our broader understanding about the challenges and opportunities for directors of these programs. Based on these experiences, I identify four key roles of the MPA director: (1) the manager; (2) the advocate; (3) the liaison; and (4) the entrepreneur. Table 4 displays a typology of these roles and describes the responsibilities and key activities associated with each role. I review each of these roles in turn.

**The MPA Director as Manager**

The primary role of the MPA director is to serve as a manager of the program. The MPA director administers all operations that are central to the program. The director is responsible for developing, monitoring, and executing the

budget and financial resources of the program. As a manager, the director oversees human resources, including hiring, monitoring, and evaluation of faculty and staff. The director also oversees the curriculum and ensures the quality of students’ experience through rigorous assessment of the program’s domains and outcomes. As a manager-academic, the MPA director is equipped with theoretical and applied training in the management of organizations, thus the manager role is learned with practice and interaction with colleagues. Academic units can empower the manager-academic by promoting opportunities for self-critical reflection and peer evaluation (Johnson, 2002).

**The MPA Director as Advocate**

The role of an advocate is to represent the interests of the program and its stakeholders. The community of stakeholders is broad, including administrators, faculty, staff, students, alumni, employers, and the public. In balancing these multiple interests, the MPA director’s primary role is to advocate for the interests of the program’s mission, vision, values, and goals. In the context of NASPAA-accredited programs, the MPA director must regularly make decisions that are grounded in the mission of the program. Similarly, the director advocates for the values of the program in its research, teaching,

**TABLE 4.**  
Description of the Roles, Responsibilities, and Key Activities of the MPA Director

Role	Responsibilities	Key activities
<b>Manager</b>	Administers the operations central to the program	Manage the budget and human resources, assessment, curriculum, and the student experience
<b>Advocate</b>	Represents the interests of the program and its stakeholders	Promote the interests to the program’s mission, vision, values, and goals
<b>Liaison</b>	Facilitates relationships with organizations and people that promote the program’s mission	Engage stakeholders, including administrators, faculty, staff, and students as well as the public affairs community
<b>Entrepreneur</b>	Provides strategic leadership	Create new opportunities for growth and development of the program

and services activities. While the program's values are context-specific, an appreciation for public service values of the public interest, equity, accountability, ethical practice, and democracy are paramount for the public affairs community (Molina & McKeown, 2012).

### **The MPA Director as Liaison**

The role of the liaison is to facilitate relationships with organizations and people that promote the program's mission. The MPA director engages stakeholders and balances their interests with the interests of the program. In the context of NASPAA-accredited programs, the director serves in a liaison role as the principal representative to NASPAA and ensures that information is shared with stakeholders. The director also creates formal and informal networks to develop an organizational climate that is essential to the well-being of the program. Ultimately, the director is a champion for the successes of the program's stakeholders (Gmelch, 2004).

### **The MPA Director as Entrepreneur**

The role of the entrepreneur is to provide strategic leadership for the program. The MPA director participates in an ongoing process to create new opportunities for the growth and development of the program. The director identifies opportunities, articulates short- and long-term goals, crafts a plan for implementation, and executes the plan. Creative thinking, collaboration, coordination, and delegation are skills essential for the success of the academic entrepreneur (Chu, 2012).

The experience of strategically planning and reorganizing the MPA program at Northeastern University underscores the multidimensional nature of these various roles for leaders of public administration programs. We can draw several lessons for MPA directors. Strategic alignment of the program's mission to the institution is essential. Creating institutional parity with the university, college, and unit levels facilitated the success of the reorganization of the MPA program. The decision to focus the program's strengths and align them to the institution's strengths helped to clarify the program's distinctiveness in a competitive land-

scape for graduate education in public affairs. Furthermore, directors can utilize the NASPAA accreditation process as an imperative for programmatic improvement. Articulation of the value of NASPAA accreditation to university administrators is essential for securing resources to institutionalize assessment, engage stakeholders, and maintain a commitment to the public affairs community.

In summary, MPA directors should be prepared, flexible, and ready to adapt to new realities in an increasingly global landscape in higher education that demands demonstrated results and impacts. Change is constant, and successful academic leadership will depend on the ability to manage uncertainties. The multiple roles of managing, advocating, liaising, and entrepreneurial leadership are essential for MPA directors.

### **CONCLUSION**

Institutions of higher education in the United States are rapidly changing. The globalization of colleges and universities, the introduction of advanced learning technologies, and uncertainties about funding and enrollments are influencing how academic leaders and policy makers respond to these changes. The dichotomy between the traditional and business models of higher education limits the discussion of how to confront the challenges that these changes present to our institutions. The experiential learning model provides academic leaders with a novel approach to create opportunities to learn by doing. MPA programs and their leaders are well positioned to take advantage of these changes because their educational approach is grounded in experiential learning and real-world problem solving. Based on a case study of Northeastern University's MPA program, this article demonstrates the importance of the multiple roles of the MPA director in aligning the program with the institution's strategies and goals. As a manager, advocate, liaison, and entrepreneur, the MPA director plays an essential role in the implementation of these plans. In an age of rapid change, leaders of public affairs programs will need to adapt their programs to respond to institutional and societal changes.

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**NOTE**

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# Are We Having Fun Yet? Exploring the Motivations of MPA and MPP Program Directors in the United States

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## **ABSTRACT**

The typical role of the graduate program director in higher education combines the responsibilities of both academic faculty and staff. This study uses survey data to investigate the motivations, expectations, and levels of satisfaction of Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy program directors in the United States. We explore the job characteristics that are primary motivators and look at what characteristics program directors expect and assign importance to. We also glean estimates of job satisfaction from the survey data. This study is preliminary, a first step in understanding the motivations, expectations, and job satisfaction of program directors.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Motivation, higher education, university administration, university faculty

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Academic faculty and administrative staff typically have clearly defined roles within institutions of higher education. The role of program director, however, is usually a hybrid of faculty and staff responsibilities, and the nature of this dual role varies from one institution to another. For example, beyond the faculty norms of teaching and research, the responsibilities of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) or Master of Public Policy (MPP) program director at university number one may include developing course schedules, overseeing the program budget, and managing all aspects of the program. In contrast, the program director at university number two may develop course schedules but not manage the budget. And while the program director at university number one may earn a stipend and receive a course

release (i.e., exemption from teaching) to compensate for the administrative responsibilities of directing a program, the director at university number two may enjoy no additional compensation, though he or she is responsible for managing multiple aspects of the degree program.

Given the variations in institutional and program missions, cultures, and norms, as well as variations in what motivates individuals, one may assume that MPA and MPP program directors seek and/or accept the director position for reasons that are equally varied. This study aims to explore the motivations, expectations, and realities of MPA and MPP directors' roles. We also approximate levels of job satisfaction and offer recommendations for future research.

## THE CONCEPTUAL FRAME

This research is based on four well-known models of motivation: (1) rational-economic models (e.g., Taylor, 1947); (2) self-actualizing models (e.g., Maslow, 1943; Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959); (3) social models (e.g., Mayo, 2003); and (4) complex models (e.g., Schein, 1985; Vroom, 1964). The first two are content models of motivation that attempt to explain the intrinsic job factors that serve as motivators for employees. The second two are process models of motivation that seek to understand the impacts of extrinsic environmental and cultural influences on a person's motivation (Rowley, 1996). Conclusions concerning job satisfaction may also be drawn by analyzing and interpreting data using these theories of motivation.

### Content Models of Motivation

During the Industrial Revolution of the 20th century, Frederick Taylor—a mechanical engineer turned management consultant—sought to optimize efficiency to increase production in the workplace. He conducted experiments to determine optimal performance levels of workers, whom Taylor believed were lazy and lacked intelligence. In Taylor's view, the intrinsic job element of money paid for work performed was the primary (and perhaps sole) worker motivator, and that places Taylor's thinking squarely within the content models of motivation.

Taylor applied the scientific method by analyzing each step in a given process to determine the optimal way to perform any given task. He claimed that he could develop the "one best way" (Taylor 1947) or most efficient way, to complete a given task. However, some scholars say that Taylor made "adjustments" in his data, ranging "from 20 percent to 225 percent," to make his scientific method—now commonly known as scientific management—appear more valid and attractive to potential clients (Stewart, 2006). Nonetheless, Taylor's research represents the rational-economic models of organizational theory in this study.

Taking a more humanistic approach, psychologist Abraham Maslow wanted to understand what motivates people. He believed that people

are motivated by factors unrelated to rewards or unconscious desires. Instead, Maslow (1943) posited that people are motivated to meet specific needs. The most widespread version of Maslow's model includes five types of motivational needs: three basic needs (physiological, safety, and belonging) and two growth needs (esteem and self-actualization). According to Maslow, unmet basic needs motivate people, and the motivation to meet these needs becomes stronger the longer they are denied. Maslow further argued that one must generally satisfy lower-level basic needs before being motivated to satisfy higher-order growth needs and ultimately the highest need level—self-actualization.<sup>1</sup>

Building on Maslow's model of motivation, psychologist Frederick Herzberg set out to determine the effects of attitude on motivation by asking people to describe situations where they felt good and bad about their jobs (Herzberg et al., 1959). Not surprisingly, people who felt positive about their jobs gave very different responses from the people who felt negative. These results form the basis of Herzberg's two-factor theory which, along with Maslow's approach, represents the self-actualizing models of motivation.

Herzberg believed, in contrast to Maslow, that lower-order needs are not by themselves motivators of employee behavior. Rather, he posited that employees are motivated to satisfy higher-order needs such as achievement, responsibility, professional growth, status, and valuing the work itself. These characteristics are inherent in the job and Herzberg considered them to be intrinsic motivating factors. Intrinsic job characteristics tend to involve the content of the job itself rather than the processes determined by organizational rules, norms, or culture. Herzberg also reported that intrinsic characteristics of a job are consistently related to job satisfaction, while extrinsic job characteristics—the hygiene factors—may affect levels of employee job dissatisfaction. Extrinsic hygiene factors tend to be oriented toward process rather than job content and include elements such as organizational policies, the nature of supervision, relationships with supervisor and peers,

compensation, and job security. The extent to which hygiene factors exist tends to depend on organizational policies, norms, and cultures as opposed to being inherent parts of a job. Figure 1 identifies the intrinsic motivating factors and extrinsic hygiene factors relevant to this study.

Herzberg further concluded that job satisfaction and job dissatisfaction are not opposites. Rather they are independent of each other: eliminating the causes of dissatisfaction will not create satisfaction nor will adding job satisfaction factors eliminate dissatisfaction. For example, if a program director does not like the content of his or her job, giving that person a raise will not make him or her satisfied with the position.

Similarly, if someone has a healthy working relationship with his or her peers but the position has none of the intrinsic factors related to job content, the level of employee dissatisfaction will likely not be altered. According to Herzberg, the intrinsic factors leading to job satisfaction are motivators and distinctly separate from extrinsic hygiene factors. Eliminating hygiene job factors may not necessarily enhance employee motivation, satisfaction or performance. Similarly, when hygiene factors are met, people are not necessarily satisfied with their jobs. Only the higher-order, intrinsic job characteristics determine a person's level of motivation and job satisfaction (Herzberg et al., 1959).

**FIGURE 1.**  
**Job Characteristics in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory**

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**Motivating Factors  
(Intrinsic)**

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| Promote program mission     | Increase responsibility      |
| Promote program core values | Increase professional status |
| Professional growth         |                              |

**Hygiene Factors  
(Extrinsic)**

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| Work more closely with central administration | Increase professional network   |
| Work more closely with dean                   | Increase job security           |
| Work more closely with department chair       | Increase authority              |
| Work more closely with peers in unit          | Increase autonomy               |
| Receive stipend                               | Receive course release(s)       |
| Lower demands for research                    | Adequate clerical/admin support |
-

### Process Models of Motivation

On the process side, and representing the social models of motivation, psychologist Elton Mayo (2003) led a team of researchers from Harvard University in 1924 in studying the effects of changed environmental conditions on worker productivity. The original research focused on changes in workplace lighting and resulted in inconclusive findings. Also inconclusive were findings related to changes to the structure of work, such as working hours and the timing of breaks, along with subsequent experiments of direct observation designed to better understand worker motivation and productivity. These experiments, commonly known as the Hawthorne experiments, continued for eight years, during which researchers interviewed employees to determine what actually affected worker productivity (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939).

The Hawthorne studies ultimately showed, unlike Taylor's thinking, that human resources are not motivated merely by financial incentives or optimized work efficiencies, but rather by social and other "soft" factors. Mayo (2003) and his team of researchers thus concluded that supervisor and coworker behaviors—such as inclusion in decision making, providing and receiving constructive feedback, demonstrating genuine interest in the employee, and meeting desires to belong to a group—are critical when seeking to motivate employees.

Whereas Maslow, Herzberg, and Mayo examined the relationship between individuals' needs and the effort required to fulfill them, management theorist Victor Vroom's expectancy theory posits that people are motivated by the expectations and levels of importance perceived to exist for specific actions. According to Vroom (1964), three perceptions—expectancy, instrumentality, and valance—can separately motivate individual behavior, but they are most powerful when utilized in combination. That is, an individual is motivated to the extent that he or she believes that a certain amount of effort will lead to a given level of performance or outcome (expectancy), that level of performance or outcome will be rewarded (instrumentality), and that the reward or outcome is highly valued

(valance). These three elements of expectation theory interact with one's personal preferences to motivate behavior. Vroom's theory is represented by the following equation: Motivation = Expectancy  $\times$  Instrumentality  $\times$  Valance.

Taking a different approach and representing the complex models of motivation, in the 1980s noted management scholar Edgar Schein began positing that the culture of an organization also affects employee behavior. According to Schein, organization culture reflects the essence of a given organization in the same way that social culture reflects the essence of a given society. The culture is based on an inherent set of "values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, behavioral norms, artifacts, and patterns of behavior" that determine what is and is not deemed acceptable within the confines of the organization itself (Ott, 1989, p. 50). New organization members are exposed to and taught accepted norms and thus become socialized into the culture of the organization. Organization culture may therefore be viewed as a normative adhesive that holds an organization together and expresses the shared ideals and beliefs of organization members. As Schein (1985) argues, culture sets the boundaries for and direction of behavior within the organization. Thus, Schein would likely agree with Herzberg that the extent to which Herzberg's hygiene factors exist tends to be a function of organizational policies, norms, and cultures as opposed to being inherent parts of the job.

### METHODOLOGY

Informed by the content and process models of motivation discussed above, previous studies of motivation, and the experiences of both authors, we developed a survey and administered it using Qualtrics software. We tested the survey among graduate program directors employed by the same university as the authors. Based on feedback, we made minor adjustments to several survey questions.

For our survey, we targeted the 173 directors of MPA and MPP programs in the United States accredited by the Network of Schools in Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) as listed

on NASPAA’s website in the 2015–2016 roster of accredited programs. We identified the names and e-mail addresses of the program directors by looking up each program on its website.

In addition to questions concerning demographics, the survey asked about each of the 17 intrinsic motivating and extrinsic hygiene factors associated with the job of program director identified in Figure 1. On a 5-point Likert scale, response choices for these questions were Extremely, Very, Moderately, Slightly, and Not At All Important. We coded these responses 1 to 5 (1 = Extremely Important). We asked a second set of questions concerning these same 17 job elements and the reality program directors found in the position. We asked specifically to what extent respondents’ expectations were met for each of the 17 intrinsic and extrinsic job factors. Again on a 5-point Likert scale, response choices were All, Most, Some, Few, and No Expectations Were Met. We also coded these responses 1 to 5 (1 = All Expectations Were Met).

Finally, we asked a third set of questions about respondents’ satisfaction concerning their ability to promote their program’s mission, promote their program’s core values, contribute to student success, and effect positive change. The final question in this set asked about respondents’ overall satisfaction vis-à-vis the job of program director. We again used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Extremely Satisfied, 5 = Not At All Satisfied).

We distributed the survey electronically, along with an invitation to participate, to 173 MPA and MPP program directors on October 23, 2016, and the survey remained open until November 5, 2016. We sent two reminder e-mails before the closing date. Three of the 173 email addresses were invalid, thus leaving 170 potential participants. Of those, 57 program directors participated, resulting in a response rate of 33.5%.

Table 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the survey participants; Table 2 summarizes the characteristics of their programs and institutions. Only one of the respondents is considered staff, and the remaining respondents

**TABLE 1.**  
**Demographic Summary**

Respondent characteristics	Percentage
<b>Gender identity (n = 48)</b>	
Male	62.5
<b>Race/ethnicity (n = 42)</b>	
White	89.4
<b>Faculty or staff (n = 49)</b>	
Faculty	98.2
<b>Current rank (n = 49)</b>	
Assistant professor	10.2
Associate professor	32.7
Professor	55.1
Other	2.0
<b>Tenure status (n = 49)</b>	
Tenured	85.7
On tenure track, not tenured	6.1
Not on tenure track	8.2
<b>Volunteered for director position (n = 54)</b>	
Yes	64.8
<b>Union membership (n = 54)</b>	
Yes	33.3
<b>Age (n = 41)</b>	
mean = 52.85	
std. dev. = 11.2	
<b>Years at current institution (n = 54)</b>	
mean = 11.23	
std. dev. = 8.4	
<b>Years as program director (n = 54)</b>	
mean = 4.98	
std. dev. = 4.1	

**TABLE 2.**  
**Program and Institution Characteristics**

Program characteristics		Institution characteristics	
	Percentage		Percentage
<b>Program type (n = 54)</b>		<b>Public or private institution (n = 49)</b>	
MPA	87.0	Public	91.8
<b>Average annual enrollment (n = 54)</b>		<b>Carnegie classification (n = 49)</b>	
< 50	24.1	Research 1	38.8
50–99	35.2	Research 2	20.4
100–149	18.5	Research 3	14.3
150+	22.2	Master college	20.4
		Unknown	6.1
<b>Mode of delivery (n = 52)</b>		<b>US Census region (n = 48)</b>	
In person only	28.8	New England	2.1
In person with online coursework	63.5	Mid Atlantic	8.3
Primarily or completely online	7.7	East North Central	10.4
		West North Central	8.3
		South Atlantic	31.3
		East South Central	8.3
		West South Central	14.6
		Mountain	6.3
		Pacific	10.4

are faculty members. The typical participant is white (89.4%), male (62.5%), tenured (85.7%); holds the rank of professor (55.1%); and works at a public institution (91.8%). The average participant age is 53; these program directors have been at their respective institutions for an average of 11.2 years; and the majority of participants (63%) have served as program directors for 5 years or less.

The majority of Program Directors reported that they volunteered for their positions (64.8%). Of the directors surveyed, 87% direct MPA programs, and the remainder direct MPP or mixed MPA/MPP programs. In terms of pro-

gram delivery, 63.5% of respondents' programs combine traditional in-person instruction with some online coursework. Directors from various-sized programs and different regions of the country are well represented, although programs in the South Atlantic region of the United States may be overrepresented in the sample.

As with all research of this kind, there are limitations to the findings. First, because all programs included in this study are bound by NASPAA requirements, our findings may not be reliably generalized beyond the sample population. Second, although respondents'

answers may not be biased or inaccurate, the “truth value” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290) of this study may be bounded. However, the use of participants from multiple sites located in different geographic regions across the United States helps to offset these limitations.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Herzberg’s two-factor theory assumes that some elements of a given job are inherent in the position, perceived to be important, and serve as intrinsic motivators, while other elements are extrinsic hygiene factors that do not serve as motivators nor affect levels of satisfaction with a given job. In contrast, Vroom’s expectancy theory is rooted in the perceived expectations and importance of a given act. When Herzberg’s two-factor theory is combined with Vroom’s expectancy theory, however, the level to which a respondent indicates that an intrinsic motivating factor is important may also indicate the level of expected success for that factor. Although many considerations may influence the decision, program directors would likely not have accepted the position had they not believed they would be able to achieve success in the most important aspects of the job. For example, respondents who indicate that promoting the program’s mission (an intrinsic characteristic of the director’s job) is a very important factor in their decision to accept the position expect that they would be successful in promoting the mission. If there was no expectation of success, respondents who felt that promoting the mission was important would most likely not accept the position.

The mean scores for responses to survey questions suggests the level of importance/expectation assigned to each of the 17 intrinsic and extrinsic job characteristics of a program director. A second set of survey questions asked about the extent to which the expectations for each job element had been met. Table 3 shows the mean importance/expectation scores for each of the 17 intrinsic and extrinsic job factors associated with the role of program director and the extent to which the expectations for each factor had been met.

Data in Table 3 indicate that promoting the program’s mission (mean = 2.29) and promoting the program’s core values (mean = 2.37) are the two most important factors motivating program directors to accept the role. Over half of respondents (57.7%) reported that promoting the program’s mission and values, respectively, are Extremely or Very Important, while 65.9% indicated that working with these two variables fully or mostly met their expectations.

Additional job characteristics that round out the top five motivating factors are, in descending order, opportunity for professional growth (mean = 2.85), opportunity to receive course release(s) (mean = 3.17), and opportunity to increase professional status (mean = 3.19). Interestingly, the top five motivating job characteristics identified by our respondents match, with one exception, Herzberg’s two-factor theory as depicted in Figure 1. The exception is that respondents reported receiving course release(s) to be a moderately important aspect of the job, with some expectation that a course release would be granted to individuals serving as program directors. Therefore, these data suggest that respondents perceive a course release to be an intrinsic motivating aspect of the job, although not all program directors actually receive a course release.

We explore respondents’ satisfaction with their role as program director in several ways. First, we look at the grand mean value of the survey questions that measure the importance and expectations that respondents’ assign to each of the 17 factors in Figure 1 compared to the survey questions that measure the extent to which respondents’ expectations are met for each of the same 17 intrinsic and extrinsic job factors. The grand mean of 3.51 indicates a slight to moderate level of overall importance and expectation perceived for the role of program director, while the score of 2.99 indicates that at least some of respondents’ expectations for the role of program director have been met. These scores suggest that the reality experienced by respondents is more positive than what they expected in terms of satisfaction with the program director role.

**TABLE 3.**  
**Levels of Importance, Expectations, and Expectations Being Met for Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Characteristics**

Intrinsic and extrinsic job factors	Importance/expectations (mean)	Expectations met (mean)
The opportunity to promote the program’s mission	2.29	2.23
The opportunity to promote the program’s core values	2.37	2.23
The opportunity for professional growth	2.85	2.49
The opportunity to receive course release(s)	3.17	2.72
The opportunity to increase professional status	3.19	2.80
The opportunity for increased responsibility	3.25	2.55
The opportunity to receive a financial stipend	3.28	3.13
The opportunity to work more closely with other faculty in your academic unit	3.46	2.77
The opportunity for increased autonomy	3.50	2.95
The opportunity to broaden your professional network	3.58	2.86
A sufficient level of clerical/administrative support	3.62	3.34
The opportunity for increased authority	3.65	3.11
The opportunity to work more closely with central administration (president, provost, etc.)	4.11	3.45
The opportunity for greater job security	4.13	3.60
The opportunity to work more closely with department chair or direct supervisor	4.19	3.07
The opportunity to work more closely with dean	4.30	3.36
The opportunity to reduce research productivity requirements	4.74	4.22
Grand mean	3.51	2.99

Second, bivariate analyses allow us to further explore the relationship between program directors’ realities—the extent to which their expectations have been met—and levels of satisfaction. We asked directors to rate their

level of satisfaction with the top 5 motivating job characteristics, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Extremely Satisfied, 5 = Extremely Dissatisfied). In general, participating program directors are mostly satisfied with their overall role

(mean = 2.19). This finding is consistent with the previous finding derived from a comparison of grand means. The bivariate analyses also provide additional insight insofar as our survey respondents indicated that they are generally satisfied with their ability to promote the program's mission and values (mean = 2.04 and 1.98, respectively), to promote student success (mean = 1.69), and to effect positive change (mean = 2.10).

We also performed bivariate analyses between the demographics of respondents and each of the 17 intrinsic and extrinsic job characteristics. We found only one significant demographic relationship among these variables: age was positively correlated to professional growth ( $r = 3.13, p \leq .046$ ).

We examined each of the top 5 job characteristics where expectations have been met (the intrinsic characteristics of mission, values, growth, and

responsibility and the extrinsic characteristic of course release) against each of the dimensions of satisfaction discussed above. As shown in Table 4, each of the 4 intrinsic job characteristics are associated with at least three dimensions of satisfaction. In contrast, program directors' realities regarding the extrinsic job factor of receiving course release(s) is not significantly correlated to any dimension of satisfaction.

There is also a positive, statistically significant relationship between expectations for the variable of promoting the program mission being met and directors' ability to promote student success ( $r = .502, p \leq .01$ ), program values ( $r = .487, p \leq .01$ ) and the mission itself ( $r = .427, p \leq .01$ ). Directors who indicate that these same expectations were met also tend to be satisfied with their role as program director ( $r = .498, p \leq .01$ ). And directors' expectations of their opportunity for professional growth being met also produced a significant relationship across

**TABLE 4.**  
Results of Bivariate Analyses

Job factors with expectations met	Satisfaction with overall role of director	Satisfaction with ability to promote student success	Satisfaction with ability to effect positive change	Satisfaction with ability to promote core values	Satisfaction with ability to promote mission
Opportunity to promote mission	.498**	.502**	.541**	.487**	.427**
Opportunity to promote values	.426**	.233	.273	.380*	.345*
Opportunity for professional growth	.342*	.342*	.315*	.363*	.297*
Opportunity to increase responsibility	.436**	.132	.388**	.361*	.330*
Receive course release(s)	.205	.043	.181	.098	.044

\* $p \leq .05$ . \*\* $p \leq .01$ .

all 5 dimensions of satisfaction, at  $p \leq .05$ . Interestingly, the strongest statistically significant relationship of satisfaction ( $r = .541, p \leq .01$ ) is between promoting the program mission and the ability to effect positive change.

Table 5 is based on Table 3's mean scores for importance/expectations and expectations met for each of the 17 job characteristics. Data in Table 5 indicate aspects of the program director's job where the rank order of the director's reality—where expectations were met—match the rank order of expectations; where the rank of the director's reality is more positive than the rank of expectations; and where the rank order of the director's expectations is above the rank of reality. Perhaps most meaningful is the third column in this table, which suggests that there is room for improvement in managing at least 6 of the 17 job characteristics that may affect directors' motivation and job satisfaction.

**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on our research, there is a void in extant literature concerning the motivations of graduate program directors. This study is intended to help fill that void through application of the content and process theories discussed herein.

Regarding the content models of motivation, Taylor's notion that employees are primarily motivated by money appears to be somewhat flawed, given that the extrinsic element of receiving a stipend is ranked 7 among 17 possible motivating job factors. However, receiving a stipend is the highest ranking extrinsic job factor motivating survey respondents, which lends at least some degree of support to Taylor's theory.

Similarly, both Maslow's and Herzberg's theories of motivation (Maslow 1943; Herzberg et al. 1959) seem partially supported by these research findings. For example, 6 of the top 10

**TABLE 5.**  
Program Directors' Expectations vs. Realities of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Job Characteristics

Expectations rank matches reality	Expectations rank lower than reality	Expectations rank higher than reality
Promote the mission	Increase responsibility	Receive course release(s)
Promote core values	Work more closely with peers	Increase professional status
Professional growth	Increase professional network	Receive a stipend
Increase autonomy	Increase authority	Clerical/admin support
Lower research demands	Work more closely with chair	Increase job security
	Work more closely with dean	Work more closely with central admin

motivating factors reported by survey respondents (increase professional growth, professional status, responsibility, working more closely with peers, autonomy, professional network) are considered higher-order needs according to Maslow's theory of motivation. And consistent with Herzberg's two-factor theory, all 5 of the identified intrinsic job factors (promote the mission, promote the core values, increase professional growth, increase professional status, and increase responsibility) are among the top 6 motivators reported by survey respondents. Although respondents reported that receiving course release(s), an extrinsic job element, was a key motivator, we found no statistically significant relationship between this variable and job satisfaction.

We explore the extrinsic job factors relevant to participating program directors by applying the process theories represented by Mayo, Vroom, and Schein. Mayo's (2003) finding that the desire to satisfy one's social needs in the workplace is as a key motivator seems at least partially contradicted by our research findings. That is, the 3 extrinsic job factors of having the opportunity to work more closely with their institution's central administration, a direct supervisor, and the dean each appear in the lower half of the reported rankings of importance/expectations for the 17 intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. Respondents ranked only the extrinsic job element of having the opportunity to work more closely with peers in the top 10 motivating job factors.

With regard to the complex models of motivation, applying the logic of Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory allows us to identify the level of expectation and importance assigned by respondents to each of the 17 intrinsic and extrinsic job characteristics relevant to program directors. Schein's (1985) theory of organizational culture promotes our understanding of influences extrinsic to the job itself, such as compensation and relationships with superiors and peers, that may affect program directors' levels of motivation.

Combining Herzberg's two-factor theory with Vroom's expectancy theory provides analytic benefit by accounting for the personal preferences of our respondents, an identified weakness of Herzberg's model (see House & Wigdor, 1967). Moreover, combining these two models may allow for more reliable estimates of job satisfaction than either model alone.

In a more practical sense, over half of our survey respondents reported that promoting the mission and promoting core values of their respective programs are the two most important aspects of the program director's job and that their expectations regarding these variables were mostly or fully met. These are significant findings given that NASPAA accreditation is based on a program pursuing achievement of its mission and core values.

In addition, our findings may assist with efforts to increase the motivation and performance of program directors by paying close attention to those elements of the director position reported to fall short of expectations. Additional opportunities for program directors to increase their professional status by working more closely with their institution's central administration, having adequate clerical/administrative support, enjoying increased job security, receiving a stipend, and having the possibility of course releases may generate increased motivation and productivity.

Finally, the activity of promoting the program mission is significantly correlated to each of the five measures of job satisfaction. Interestingly, the strongest statistically significant relationship of satisfaction ( $r = .541$ ,  $p \leq .01$ ) is between the elements of promoting the program mission and having the ability to effect positive change. This finding reinforces the importance of the program mission as an intrinsic aspect of the program director's job, the satisfaction derived from the job, and NASPAA's accreditation process.

In conclusion, our data indicate that program directors participating in our study are mostly

satisfied with their role and the intrinsic rewards they receive. However, we recommend that future research delve more deeply into understanding the motivations and levels of satisfaction of MPP and MPA program directors. A better understanding of these factors would surely aid in choosing the right people for the job, not only in terms of recruiting, but also through retaining talented individuals who are highly motivated to carry out their program's mission, embody their program's core values, promote student success, and effect positive change.

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## NOTES

- 1 Maslow (1970) later concluded that less than 1% of the US adult population becomes fully self-actualized, because American society rewards motivation primarily based on belonging, esteem, and other social needs, thereby reducing a person's motivation to realize his or her own unique potential.

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# The Challenges and Rewards of Service: Job Satisfaction among Public Affairs Program Directors

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## **ABSTRACT**

Most public affairs programs have some form of director, but we do not know the full scope of the program director's role. This article thus asks, What tasks and duties does a program director perform? What aspects of the role are most satisfying to those performing it? What aspects of the role present challenges? Based on survey data, we conclude that female program directors are more likely to engage with advisory boards, while males are typically more satisfied in their role. Those currently in the position are less likely than former directors to work on financial aid. There also appear to be differences in how program size relates to the tasks and duties of the program director, to compensation, and to maintenance of a research agenda. Finally, we draw lessons for prospective program directors and for chairs and deans who have influence on how this role is structured.

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## **KEYWORDS**

MPA program directors, MPP program directors, PhD program directors, academic work, university employees, public administration and public policy employees, job satisfaction

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Academic programs do not run themselves, and the position of academic program director is ubiquitous across universities in the United States. Yet there is no standard description for the role, though one description from Australia says that such directors are “those with responsibility for delivery and quality of a course [program]” (Vilkinas & Ladyshevsky, 2014, p. 102). Most degree programs in public affairs have some form of director and, according to the Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA (Eagan et al., 2014), 15% of faculty are in an administrative role other than dean, chair, or president across all academic fields. Nevertheless, we do not know, with any systematic clarity, what program directors do,

what unique challenges they face, and what they put into the role or get out of it. Knowledge of these factors is important for recruiting appropriate faculty into the position and structuring the role to make it desirable. Given the growing pressure for “professional management practices and quality leadership in universities” (Vilkinas & Ladyshevsky, 2014, p. 102), understanding these factors takes on a special urgency.

We do have some anecdotal information about directing graduate programs in public affairs. Program directors often talk informally among themselves. Additionally, the past few annual conferences of the Network of Schools of Public

Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) have included panels about directing programs, and in 2015 NASPAA offered a half-day workshop for program directors. We know from these gatherings that program directors often navigate between and among faculty, students, staff, chairs, and deans and that to varying degrees they are involved in curricula, student life, and relationships with internal and external stakeholders. But beyond this, we know little. Indeed, we undertake this research in part because there is no standard description of the program director role. We thus seek to identify what program directors do and thereby propose a basic description of the role. We also seek to identify sources of satisfaction and specific challenges associated with the position.

The consensus during conference discussions was that directors are critical to program success and that a better grasp of directors' roles would help deans and other university administrators recruit appropriate faculty into these positions and enable them to work with directors more effectively. As Morris and Laipple (2015) state in their examination of academic administrators, "Poorly prepared leaders may at best slow the progress of their organization and at worst adversely affect productivity and morale" (p. 243). Bozeman and Gaughan (2011) conclude that investigating faculty job satisfaction has important implications for university management, which should aim to "align incentives and job requirements to promote performance" (p. 179).

Some challenges faced by program directors may differ according to program characteristic. For example, benefits and challenges may vary by size of program. At some small programs, one person called on to serve as program director represents a substantial proportion of faculty and likely will have unique stresses and rewards. At the other end of the spectrum, directors of large programs, especially at research universities, must maintain their research agenda and may have different obstacles and incentives.

One challenge that all program directors have in common is that they are usually unprepared

for leadership and administrative roles. A PhD is a research degree, and though some doctoral programs provide teaching (or teaching assistant) opportunities, the focus of graduate-school training is on research skills. Faculty who take on administrative positions typically have no formal management training (Morris & Laipple, 2015).

Several other factors contribute to the importance of examining administrative and leadership demands on faculty members. First, faculty are aging, leading to a period of substantial turnover. About one in four (25%) faculty members nationwide are 64 or older (Eagan et al., 2014) and their retirements will lead to a new wave of hiring. Second, almost one in three (31%) faculty spend at least 4 hours per week on administrative tasks above and beyond committee functions, leaving less time for research and teaching (Eagan et al., 2014). This leads to a third factor: faculty positions are increasingly stressful. Hagedorn (2000) finds that "college professors typically work in environments that are high-pressured, multifaceted, and without clear boundaries. Stress abounds" (p. 6). Stress and satisfaction levels are of specific concern because they are related to a faculty member's intention to leave his or her job. Fully one third (35%) of faculty across disciplines report that they have considered leaving academia in the previous 2 years (Eagan et al., 2014).

It therefore seems critical that we examine what tasks and duties are included in administrative and leadership roles as well as the reported sources of satisfaction and challenges. No studies to date focus on job satisfaction among public affairs program directors in the United States. We seek to fill that gap with three research questions:

1. What tasks and duties are included in the program director role?
2. What aspects of the role are most satisfying to those performing it?
3. What aspects of the role present challenges to those performing it?

### JOB SATISFACTION OF ACADEMIC FACULTY

Despite decades of research, no single, clear model of job satisfaction has emerged. Starting with work of Frederick Herzberg in the late 1950s, scholars have explored general concepts related to worker satisfaction (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). Herzberg introduced the two-factor theory of job satisfaction, arguing that intrinsic factors (such as how rewarding the work is) affect satisfaction, while extrinsic factors (such as salary) affect dissatisfaction. However, there has been considerable debate about this two-factor theory because of the narrow sample on which it was based (Smerek & Peterson, 2007). Looking at Herzberg's theory in the context of academic administrative roles, Basak (2014) found that among academics, most factors affect both satisfaction and dissatisfaction similarly.

Because there is no standard theory or measure of job satisfaction, and since we wanted to focus specifically on job satisfaction among public affairs program directors, we discuss the limited but more focused explorations of job satisfaction in academic settings. According to the 2013–2014 survey of 16,112 undergraduate teaching faculty (Eagan et al., 2014), most (74%) are satisfied with their job overall, but they also report substantial levels of stress caused by self-imposed high expectations (85%), teaching load (63%), and lack of personal time (74%).

Basak and Govender (2015) recently developed a theoretical framework of factors affecting university academics' job satisfaction based on a systematic review of 59 published and unpublished studies that met specified standards for validity and trustworthiness. Factors identified in that literature include salary and compensation, working conditions, promotional opportunities, the work itself, an individual's characteristics, administration and management, supervision, and facilities.<sup>1</sup> However, this framework is not specifically related to satisfaction among program directors. Further, the authors used no primary data, and most of the empirical studies they rely on predate 2010.

Al-Rubaish, Rahim, Abumadani, & Wosornu (2011) developed and validated an academic job satisfaction questionnaire in Saudi Arabia. Based on a review of 20 job-satisfaction measures, they included 46 items relevant to the academic setting. They sampled 248 faculty across several disciplines and identified 8 factors that explain 60% of the variance in job satisfaction. These factors are consistent with those identified by Basak and Govender (2015), with the addition of policies and facilities, interpersonal relationships, commitment, and workload (including job stress). The items used by Al-Rubaish et al. (2011) and Basak and Govender (2015) gave us a sense of the range of factors that affect faculty satisfaction. Because these studies do not focus on the specific impact of leadership and administrative roles and functions, we adapted them.

Very little empirical research has been conducted on satisfaction in academic settings in the United States. Hagedorn (2000) conceptualized a general model of job satisfaction to include triggers (such as significant life events) and mediators (including demographics and environmental conditions such as collegial relationships). She focused on how motivators of satisfaction vary across faculty career stage. Using a large sample of 25,780 faculty, Hagedorn explained 49% of the variance in job satisfaction. However, it is important to note that her data are from 1993. While 33 studies have cited Hagedorn's work in the last 5 years, most have applied the model to specific disciplinary settings (e.g., nursing and engineering) or in other countries (e.g., Germany and Portugal), and none address the impact of leadership and administrative roles on faculty satisfaction. Clearly, there is need for current research on this topic.

Within the limited research about job satisfaction among faculty in the United States, an even smaller share addresses academic program directors. While some of the general research on faculty job satisfaction includes academic service, directing and leading programs are typically not included as service (see, e.g., Houston, Meyer, Paewai, 2006). Rather, much

of the limited literature on job satisfaction in academic administration focuses on nonacademic positions (e.g., Smerek & Peterson, 2007) or higher-level administrators. Morris and Laipple (2015) looked at job satisfaction among academic administrators, but only 92 of their sample of 1,515 respondents were in fact program directors. The rest were deans, vice presidents, and other senior administrators. Morris and Laipple noted that even at these levels “few academic administrators have had any leadership training prior to beginning their post” (p. 241).

A search for literature related specifically to academic program directors in the United States identified a few studies in a range of disciplines, particularly programs with clinical components, such as medical residency programs (Beasley, Kern, Howard, & Kolodner, 1999; Hinchey, McDonald, & Beasley, 2009), psychiatry residency programs (Arbuckle et al., 2012), and associate nursing degree programs (Mintz-Binder, 2014). Common themes for program directors across these studies included the importance of workload issues and social supports. In addition, because of the clinical nature of these programs, these studies addressed attention to patient care.

One relevant study examined job performance and role attractiveness among academic directors across disciplines (Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2014). However, it was conducted in Australia, which has a unique academic reward system, and therefore its applicability to public affairs programs in the United States is somewhat tenuous. The study collected data using a 360-degree feedback survey from 101 academic directors who were participating in a leadership development program. While the study did not focus specifically on job satisfaction, some of its findings have bearing on the current study. Workload had the most significant impact on directors’ performance. Factors identified as significant in making directors’ positions more attractive included credibility of the role, workload points (credit for the administrative role), research time, administrative and

professional support, role clarity, recognition, and resources. The authors note that “this points to the need for good job design and analysis, and having policies in place which demonstrate that the role is valued and one that will support movements toward promotion” (p. 110).

### **Gender, Discipline, and Satisfaction**

Gender is the most widely studied demographic characteristic related to faculty job satisfaction (Hagedorn, 2000, p. 8), yet the evidence remains mixed with respect to gender’s specific interactions with job satisfaction. Seifert and Umbach (2008) studied the effects of faculty demographic characteristics and disciplinary context on dimensions of job satisfaction, concluding, “The weight of the evidence suggests that women faculty and faculty of color are less satisfied with their jobs than their male and White colleagues” (pp. 357–358). A more recent study by Bozeman and Gaughan (2011) found that, in STEM fields, men and tenured faculty tend to be more satisfied but that “demographic variables alone are weak predictors of job satisfaction” (p. 173).

Sabharwal and Corley (2009) studied faculty job satisfaction across both gender and discipline. When they controlled for other variables, there was no difference in satisfaction based on gender and only weak differences in satisfaction by discipline. The most relevant finding for our study is their support for examining a range of measures of satisfaction rather than a global measure, finding that “using a measure of overall job satisfaction to implement policies for change might be misleading” (p. 554).

While some of the concepts and measures from the literature reviewed here are relevant to our study, none directly address the question of the impact that taking on a leadership and administrative role, in addition to normal faculty duties of teaching and research (and possibly other university and professional service), has on that job satisfaction. Our study thus focuses on the job satisfaction of faculty exclusively in their role as public affairs program directors.

## INSTRUMENT AND METHODS

Our survey sample consists of current and former directors of Master of Public Administration (MPA), Master of Public Policy (MPP), and PhD programs. We circulated the call for participation widely and multiple times using Twitter (via the Trachtenberg School of Public Policy and Public Administration at George Washington University, Association for Public Policy and Management, American Society for Public Administration, and NASPAA). Some followers of those organizations retweeted. The call also appeared in *JPAE* and in the NASPAA program directors' newsletter. Program director colleagues pretested the survey. After making changes based on the pretest, we distributed the survey using Survey Monkey during the summer of 2016. We received 126 responses.

As Table 1 shows, 83% of respondents were current directors and 18% were former directors. Males and females were nearly equally represented; 48% were female and 52% were male. Not surprisingly, program directors tend to be tenured faculty (associate and full professors), and a small minority are assistant or untenured faculty. Four out of 10 (43%) iden-

tified themselves as full professor, 43% as associate professor, and 4% as assistant professor. Ten percent (10%) were non-tenure track or nonfaculty, which we refer to as professional program directors.

Most (71%) respondents were MPA directors, 10% were MPP directors, and 5% were PhD directors. In addition, 7% were directors of other related programs, such as Master of International Development and Master of Public Policy and Administration. Similarly, 7% of program directors managed multiple programs. In all, our study included 136 programs: 73% MPA, 10% MPP, and 10% PhD, in addition to 7% being other related programs (see Table 2). The 136 programs included 122 master's programs and 14 doctoral programs. To estimate a response rate, we looked only at current directors, in order to not double-count programs. There were 77 current MPA directors and 9 current MPP directors; thus, 86 respondents direct master's programs. Given that NASPAA (2016) reports 196 master's programs, our response rate for master's program directors is 44%.

**TABLE 1.**  
Characteristics of Respondents

Characteristic	Percentage
Current director	83%
Former director	18%
<b>Gender</b>	
Female	48%
Male	52%
<b>Rank</b>	
Professor	43%
Associate professor	43%
Assistant professor	4%
Professional directors: non-tenure track, nonfaculty, such as "clinical" or "distinguished" professors	10%

Note.  $N=126$ .

**TABLE 2.**  
**Characteristics of Programs**

<b>Program type</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
<b>MPA</b>		73%
<b>MPP</b>		10%
<b>Doctoral</b>		10%
<b>Other</b>		7%
<b>Program size</b>		<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Small</b>		39%
<b>Medium</b>		46%
<b>Large</b>		15%

*Note.* N=136.

The tenure of program director respondents varies widely, from 1 month to 54 years, with a mean of 6 years. Three respondents reported having completed one or more previous terms as well. We specifically examined professional program directors, those without regular faculty positions, to determine whether they are different enough to warrant exclusion from our analysis. In terms of this variable, they are like other program directors, having an average tenure of 5.8 years. Because of their fewer number of years in the position, their range of years in this position is significantly narrower at 2–12 years. However, since the stresses experienced by nonfaculty directors, especially regarding research productivity, are likely to be different, we excluded these professional directors from the parts of our analysis that focus on job satisfaction and challenges.

Table 2 also provides the distribution of self-reported program size. Most directors report their programs as either small or midsized. In the analysis that follows, we examine whether perceived size relates to levels of satisfaction or challenges faced by directors.

To develop the survey instrument, we drew primarily from Al-Rubaish et al. (2011), Basak and Govender (2015), Sabharwal and Corley (2009), and Russell (2010). We found that their approaches contained some job satisfaction

items in common, including salary and compensation, promotion opportunities, relationship with supervisors, facilities and resources (including staff and funding), workload, and relationships at work. When adopting items common to previous studies, we collapsed elements from several studies in order to keep our survey manageable in length. For example, Al-Rubaish et al. (2011) included four items related to salary, while we had one general measure of satisfaction and added one related nonsalary remuneration. Similarly, we collapsed five items about relationships with one's supervisor into a single item. Other items we included were based on issues described above, including those identified in faculty conference discussions. We asked questions designed to help us understand the characteristics of program directors and their programs. We included questions that examined the composition of their roles—that is, what program directors do and how they are compensated. We asked questions related to job satisfaction (see Table 5 for specific wording) and concluded by asking an open-ended question about other important sources of satisfaction and challenges.

There are of course several limitations to this study. First, while we promoted our survey across as wide an array of venues as possible, and in sources targeted to program directors, we obviously cannot be certain that we reached every former program director. Second, one respondent noted that questions did not provide a “not applicable” option. Given that 111 (of 126) respondents answered the particular question that triggered this concern, however, we infer that respondents in general found the question sufficiently direct to provide an answer. Respondents for whom an item was not applicable simply did not answer the question. Third, a large majority (71%) were directors of MPA programs, so our findings are not necessarily representative of those from MPP or PhD programs. In addition, respondents were overwhelmingly associate or full professors (86%); only 4% were assistant professors. Given the small portion of assistant professors, we dropped them from much of the following analysis because comparisons using them were not meaningful.

## DATA AND FINDINGS

### Program Director Role

Our first research question concerns the composition of the program director role: what program directors do and whether and how they are compensated. We asked respondents to identify whether they participate in school leadership, work with an advisory board, work on student recruitment, make financial-aid decisions, make admissions decisions, participate with career services, and/or engage with alumni organizations.

Table 3 details the frequency distribution of the various activities in which program directors engage. Program directors are most likely to regularly participate in direct student-facing tasks, including making admissions decisions and working on student recruitment. The single most frequent activity of program directors is making admissions decisions: almost all program directors (90%) have this responsibility. Student recruitment is close behind: 85% reported this activity. The third most frequently reported responsibility (76%) is participating in school leadership (e.g., executive committees, curriculum committees). These three functions are conducted by a large proportion of directors across program sizes, without important differences in frequency. We do see meaningful

differences in working with advisory boards, working on financial aid, and working with career services and with alumni organizations. Our discussion of these findings focuses on the functions in which there is notable variation based on program size and/or faculty characteristics.

Only 60% of program directors report working regularly with advisory boards. Directors of midsized programs do this less often than those in either smaller or larger programs. Two thirds (65%) of directors of small programs, 53% of directors of midsized programs, and 63% of directors of large programs report working regularly with a board. This difference, however, disappears when combining those who work regularly and occasionally with advisory boards.

Six of 10 (61%) full professors compared to 54% of associate professors report working with an advisory board regularly. When adding in those who work with advisory boards only occasionally, the proportions increased substantially across ranks: 85% of full professors and 89% of associate professors. Interestingly, non-tenure track (professional) directors are even more likely to work with advisory boards than full or associate professors; 67% do so regularly and 92% regularly or occasionally.

**TABLE 3.**  
Program Director Survey

In your position as MPA, MPP, or other program director, do you:	Regularly	Occasionally	Rarely or not at all
Make admissions decisions	90%	5%	5%
Work on student recruitment	85%	12%	3%
Participate in school leadership based on being a program director	76%	21%	3%
Work with an advisory board/steering committee	60%	29%	12%
Make financial aid recommendations or decisions	58%	16%	26%
Participate with career services/placement	45%	46%	9%
Engage with an alumni organization	39%	44%	17%

Note. N=113.

Differences in the likelihood of working with advisory boards also occur by gender. Almost two thirds (63%) of female respondents report regularly working with an advisory board, while 56% of males do so. Again, these shares grow substantially (but the pattern holds) when adding those who take on this task only occasionally: 92% of females and 85% of males report regularly or occasionally working with an advisory board.

While the likelihood of working on financial-aid decisions (58%) is generally lower than the previously discussed activities, this rate varies substantially by program size: directors of small programs are less likely to have this job than either medium or large programs. Over half (51%) of directors of small programs report working on financial aid regularly, while three of five (60%) directors of midsized programs and 69% of directors of large programs report that response. This pattern holds when we combine working on this activity either regularly or occasionally.

Differences in working on financial aid are even more substantial when comparing current and former directors. Over half (54%) of current program directors regularly work in financial aid, while over three quarters (77%) of former directors regularly do so. Again, this difference is maintained when adding those who work on financially aid only occasionally.

### Compensation

The most frequent compensation for being a program director is to receive at least one course release (86%) (see Table 4). Fully 70% of program directors receive a stipend or other financial remuneration. In fact, most (62%) of those who receive payment get it in addition to course release(s). Only 7% of program directors report getting neither type of compensation for taking on this responsibility.

The data regarding compensation related to program size are interesting. Small programs (74%) are more likely to offer a stipend or other financial remuneration; midsized programs are close behind (71%). Large programs are

**TABLE 4.**  
**Program Director Compensation**

Stipend or other remuneration	70%
Course release(s)	86%
Both	62%
Neither	7%

*Note.*  $N=126$ .

more likely to offer course release(s) (94%); with midsized programs are next (90%) and small programs trail (78%).

Of potentially greater interest is difference in compensation by gender. Less than half (46%) of females receive a stipend, compared to 54% of males. While the reported likelihood of a reduced teaching load is close to equal, the difference is in the same direction as for stipends: 48% of females and 52% of males report receiving one or more course release(s). This gap can possibly be explained by differences in rank, since we find that males are more likely to be full professors (52% compared to 43% of females). However, it seems that while the amount of stipend might vary based on rank, simply receiving one should not.

### The Heart of the Matter: Job Satisfaction and Challenges among Program Directors

**Sources of Satisfaction.** Our second research question addresses satisfaction among program directors. Program directors rated how satisfied they were with 11 aspects of their position. We also gave them an opportunity to provide open-ended comments about additional challenges or sources of satisfaction of their role. Because we thought it likely that professional program directors, who were not regular faculty members, may have different pressures and experiences, we excluded them from the analysis related to sources of satisfaction and job challenges. We examined differences in terms of program size, gender, and rank, but the following discussion discusses details only where differences were notable.

As seen in Table 5, program directors are generally satisfied with most (6 of 11) aspects of their job. Over 70% of directors are satisfied, very satisfied, or extremely satisfied with having efficient support staff, having appropriate information needed to accomplish their work, the stipend and/or course release, trusting their school director/leadership, and their friendships and team spirit among colleagues.

The positive assessments of job characteristics do differ, again, based on program size and respondent's gender. Those in small programs more often report being extremely satisfied regarding their ability to pursue research (9%, compared to less than 2% for other-sized programs). Directors in medium or large programs are more likely to report being not satisfied with their research opportunities (38% for both, compared to 14% in small programs). We found the opposite pattern in terms of having sufficient and efficient support staff; directors in large programs are most satisfied

and those in medium and small programs more likely to report being not satisfied. Directors of larger programs also tend to be more satisfied with their stipend or course release. Interestingly, directors of large programs are at both ends of the spectrum as concerns sharing a sense of friendship with colleagues (56% extremely satisfied, a larger share than in other-sized programs; and 13% not satisfied with these friendships, also a larger share than in other-sized programs).

Gender differences are also meaningful. Male program directors are generally more satisfied. Specifically, 26% are extremely satisfied with the stipend or course release they receive (compared to 18% of females), and 44% are extremely satisfied with working in an environment that is sensitive to diversity (compared to 28% of females). In addition, 21% of males are either satisfied or extremely satisfied with having an administrative workload that allows them to perform at what they see as a high level (compared to 12% of females).

**TABLE 5.**  
Satisfaction with Aspects of Program Director Role

	Extremely or very satisfied	Satisfied	Only slightly or not satisfied
Have financial resources adequate to run the program	16%	34%	50%
Pursue your research agenda and/or academic promotion	17%	27%	57%
Have an administrative workload that allows me to perform my other activities at a high level	17%	29%	54%
Manage the workload without undue stress	18%	27%	55%
Have administrative support sufficient to do the work	32%	20%	48%
Have appropriate information to accomplish my work	39%	37%	24%
Receive a stipend, course release, or other remittance	47%	33%	20%
Work with efficient support staff within my unit	50%	23%	27%
Trust my school director/leadership	53%	20%	28%
Share sense of friendship and team spirit with colleagues	71%	15%	14%
Work in an environment that is sensitive to diversity	73%	19%	8%

Note.  $N=113$ .

**Challenges of Being Program Director.** Regarding our third research question, there are several important challenges. At least half of respondents reported being only slightly or not satisfied with the extent to which they are able to manage their workload without undue stress, pursue their research agenda and/or promotion, have financial resources adequate to run the program, and have administrative workload that allows completing other activities at a high level.

There were, however, differences in these responses based on program size. Fully 70% of directors of midsized programs report challenges with their ability to pursue their research agenda (only slightly or not satisfied), compared to 41% in small programs and 56% in large programs. While over 50% of those in small and midsized programs had low levels of satisfaction with financial resources available to their program, only 25% of those in large programs had this concern. The other notable difference is that those in small programs were less likely to report such challenges in their ability to manage the workload without undue stress (39%), compared to medium (69%) or large programs (50%).

The job characteristics that present program directors with the lowest levels of satisfaction are their level of stress, ability to pursue their research, the financial resources of the program, and their ability to balance their workload. Notably, while respondents generally trusted their leaders, unfortunately more than one in four (28%) responded as less than satisfied in this area.

Looking at the challenges by rank reveals an understandable difference. Given associate professors' greater need to produce research and publications to achieve tenure and/or promotion, it is not surprising that they are more likely to report low levels of satisfaction concerning their ability to pursue their research agenda and/or promotion (32%), compared to tenured professors (22%).

While 32% of males report that they are not satisfied with being able to pursue their research

agenda, this is true for only 24% of females. At the same time, females are more likely to report not having adequate administrative support (25% not satisfied, compared to 19% of males).

### **Additional (Open-Ended) Concerns**

In an open-ended request for additional challenges and sources of satisfaction, respondents noted more of the former than the latter. As to challenges, respondents' answers struck several themes: resources (in particular, resources for marketing), lack of (or not enough) faculty participation, and perceived problems shaped by university decisions (such as trimesters rather than semesters). One challenge that came up several times relates to demands from NASPAA. Program directors report having difficulty with ongoing administrative work for NASPAA as well as the time involved in seeking or retaining accreditation and the vagueness of the standards.

Some directors also offered a few sources of satisfaction. Several noted faculty participation as a positive, with one person stating that "faculty are wonderful" and another referring specifically to excellent adjunct faculty. The most frequently mentioned rewarding part of the job was seeing students' successes. Five open-ended comments referred to this aspect of being a program director, including, for example, the comment that "helping students advance in their profession is very satisfying." Thus, there are both challenges and sources of satisfaction in the role of being a program director beyond those items that the literature suggests are significant determinants of faculty satisfaction generally.

### **CONCLUSION**

The data above allow us to better define the role of program director, which in turn helps us identify areas for future research. Clearly the position of program director is multifaceted. It appears to be predominantly student facing, specifically at the prematriculation stages of recruitment, during admissions decisions, and as concerns financial-aid awards. Though the role does include working with faculty and external stakeholders, it appears that these

activities receive much less emphasis. The role is usually compensated, with both stipend and course release(s). Intangible and intrinsic benefits include work friendships and a sense of team spirit with faculty, as well as working in a diverse environment. However, the role includes a stressful workload that often impinges on the program director's ability to maintain a research agenda.

The activities demanded of the program director do appear to vary by perceived program size: there are some distinct differences between responses of directors who said their programs were small, medium, or large. Program size is a differentiator in likelihood of working on financial aid, with advisory boards, and on career services. Differences also occur in receiving compensation for the job of program director and being able to work on research. Directors of small and large programs are more likely to report working with advisory boards, while those in large programs (versus small and medium) are more likely to work on financial aid and on career services. The latter finding is surprising, as one might think it more likely that large programs would have professional career services staff. In terms of compensation, small programs are more likely to offer financial compensation, while large programs are more likely to offer course release(s). This is consistent with the idea that program directors of large programs have a heavier research expectation, so course release(s) may matter more. Those in large programs are more likely to be satisfied with their compensation. Regarding working on research, those in small programs are most satisfied with their ability to pursue research. Directors of large programs are most satisfied with having sufficient and efficient support staff. Interestingly, directors of large programs are at both ends of the spectrum in terms of sharing a sense of friendship with colleagues.

Another unexpected finding is the existence of professional program directors. It would be valuable to track whether this is an increasing trend. Unfortunately, our sample size was not adequate to determine whether these profes-

sional program directors experience the same challenges as regular faculty. Future investigations could involve trying to understand what difference, if any, this makes in how programs are run and in attention paid to students.

There was only one notable gender difference in administrative activities: females are more likely to engage with advisory boards. Further study could investigate why this is the case. Does gender make a difference because working with an advisory board is a requirement of the position? Or do females choose more frequently than males to work with advisory boards?

We are surprised to learn that current program directors are less likely than those no longer in these positions to work on financial aid. We wonder if this function might increasingly be being handled at some other university level.

There are also differences in terms of the extent to which characteristics of program directors affect reported areas of satisfaction and challenges. As has been reported in at least some of the research on academic job satisfaction generally, male program directors are typically more satisfied, especially with their remuneration, ability to manage the workload without undue stress, working in an environment that is sensitive to diversity, and having an administrative workload that allows performance of other activities at a high level. In-depth interviews might enable future researchers to understand why these differences exist.

Finally, we find that program directors report important challenges. Specifically, that approximately one in three are not satisfied with their ability to pursue their research agenda and/or promotion, do not have adequate financial resources to run their program, and lack the ability to manage their work without undue stress should be of concern to university administrators. Specific to public affairs programs, the workload associated with accreditation seems to add to this stress, and increasing demands for program marketing are an apparent pressure. Having good colleagues and supportive school

leadership, seeing student achievement, and receiving some sort of compensation appears to offset some of these concerns, but the number of areas that cause dissatisfaction and the general content of additional open-ended responses describe a work environment consistent with Hagedorn's (2000) observation that "stress abounds" (p. 6).

### **Lessons for Prospective Program Directors and Those with Influence over the Role**

Our data, combined with the literature, provide several possible recommendations for the program director role in public affairs programs. First, as few program directors are assistant professors, those at this rank who are asked (or feel pressured) to serve in the role pre-tenure can point to our study as evidence that doing so would be well outside the norm. These data are also reminders for chairs and deans to refrain from asking assistant professors to serve—and that assistant professors' serving as program directors may well warrant course release(s) above and beyond what tenured faculty receive for serving.

Second, prospective program directors must be attentive to the role's multifaceted nature. As was found in Australia and among senior academic administrators in the United States, our findings support that those with management skills are especially suitable for the position (Morris & Laipple, 2015; Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2014). As most academics do not have management training, deans and chairs might consider providing management training and mentoring for those considering the role and for those already in it. Further, as the role seems to emphasize duties involved in the pre-matriculation phase of student recruitment, working on admissions, and working on financial aid, a person with strong student-facing skills might be most suitable for the role. Alternatively, deans and chairs might structure the role to emphasize post- and nonmatriculation duties (working with an advisory board, alumni, career services, etc.) when a potential program director's skills lie in that area.

Third, knowing that a majority of program directors receive both a stipend and a course release, prospective program directors should now know that it is reasonable to advocate for both—our data show that this would be of particular importance for female program directors.

Fourth, sources of dissatisfaction in the role are stress and lacking the resources to run the program. In addition to providing adequate resources and administrative support (Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2014), senior administration should strive to enable directors to develop and maintain health and wellness behaviors (Morris & Laipple, 2015).

An important challenge is having enough time to maintain a research agenda. Chairs and deans might restructure the role and/or develop policies to provide more research time (Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2014). Alternatively, they might work with provosts to establish tenure and promotion criteria that recognize the role of director (Al-Rubaish et al., 2011).

Finally, given the array of lessons above, chairs and deans might consider changing the role from one filled by a faculty to member to one filled by an administrator. Long-term, professional program directors who have a clear understanding of the position, management training and/or experience, and a horizon more distant than that of a faculty administrator appointed for a term might address many of these issues (Vilkinas & Ladyshewsky, 2014). However, more research is needed to better understand the effectiveness of professional directors and their impact on dimensions such as faculty collegiality and student relations.

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of the role of program directors in public affairs programs. These positions have never been the focus of such attention. While our findings are consistent with those in other countries, in clinical fields, and among senior academic administrators, they also lead to specific recommendations that can help shape and improve public affairs program directors' roles in the future.

## NOTE

- 1 An “other” category included security, commitment, workload, organization vision, feedback, and work burden. These items did not inform our instrument.

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# Gender and the Role of Directors of Public Administration and Policy Programs

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article examines the role of gender as it relates to director positions in Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Master of Public Policy (MPP) programs. It specifically investigates whether women are more likely than men to serve as MPA and MPP program directors and whether men and women report different experiences in the role, such as length of service, rewards and burdens, and possible constraints on research and teaching and thus promotion potential. We surveyed schools offering MPA and MPP degrees and found that women served as program directors proportional to their representation among the faculty, at about 35%. Interview findings suggest that while some gendered characterizations of women's leadership persist, men and women program directors and faculty experience similar struggles in balancing their administrative roles with the demands of teaching and research, both of which are likely to suffer during their service.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Gender, academic service, public affairs

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Management of Master of Public Administration (MPA) and Master of Public Policy (MPP) programs is a central form of university service with important implications for curriculum development, student recruitment, alumni engagement, and relationships with employers of graduates and the community at large. Some recent scholarship has focused on the degree to which women, while underrepresented in full-time faculty roles across academia, may disproportionately fill service roles of various types in

university settings, with potential repercussions for their research output and career trajectories (Masse & Hogan, 2010; Misra, Lundquist, Holmes, & Agiomavritis, 2011). Women seem to experience undue service burdens that may inhibit their career development. This may, paradoxically, be an unintended consequence of schools encouraging representation of women and minorities in visible positions in response to calls for diversity and inclusion. Since this phenomenon has been observed in

the humanities and sciences, it seemed worth considering if similar forces might be at play in the realm of public affairs education.

The diversity report of the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) shows that the percentage of female faculty at schools with accredited programs almost tripled, from 12% to 34%, between 2000 and 2013 (Primo, 2013). Though this reveals a clear upward trajectory, women remain a minority in faculty ranks, which is important in its own right as a matter of equity within the academy and as a signal to current and future public sector leaders, who make up the majority of the student body in schools of public affairs. Current graduates are likely to find women's underrepresentation even more evident in the public sphere, where women hold 25% and 20% of state and federal elective offices, respectively, and just 30% of local government department leadership and federal Senior Executive Service positions (Moss, 2015).

We surveyed schools of public affairs to first identify current MPA and MPP program directors and then assess the extent to which women are occupying these positions as part of their university service relative to their male counterparts. We then interviewed a sample of program directors to elicit their experiences in the role, such as length of service, rewards and burdens, and possible constraints on research and teaching and thus promotion potential.

#### **LITERATURE REVIEW: WOMEN AND ACADEMIC SERVICE**

Research, teaching, and service are the three criteria by which tenure candidates are evaluated. Masse and Hogan (2010, p. 1) refer to these as "the trinity of promotion and tenure criteria," but as most academics can attest, they "are not equally weighted" (Park, 1996, p. 47). Both women and men view research as the "real work" of faculty and say that research is the work most frequently recognized and rewarded (O'Meara, 2016). Candidates with strong research and publication outputs are highly valued and often see their lack of service to the university pardoned, while candidates with strong or primarily

service-oriented résumés are not similarly rewarded if their scholarly output is less than prolific compared to their service contributions (Park, 1996, p. 48). In other words, type of service is significant. Professional service (chairing a national professional organization) is considered of greater importance than university service, and campus and community service are held in the least esteem. The only exception, according to Park (1996), concerns administrative posts, such as dean and research chair, which "carry far more weight than membership on university committees" (p. 49).

The literature about the question of differential participation and valuation of women in university service roles examines the quantity, type, and prestige of that service and its relationship to promotion potential. One of the earliest such studies found that female faculty were more likely than their male counterparts to devote time to service (Park 1996). Women have been and continue to be underrepresented in higher education (Cama, Jorge, & Andrades Pena, 2016, p. 68). They are outnumbered by men at every faculty rank, and the gender gap grows with each step up the ladder (Pyke, 2011, p. 85). Yet, while there are fewer women among faculty, they fill more service positions. A higher percentage of female professors fill major administrative positions in their departments campus-wide, for example, directing undergraduate or graduate programs or working as associate chair or chair (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). In political science departments more specifically, women faculty members engage in more service than men do (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013).

Several scholars have examined why this disparity in service occurs. One reason seems to be that women and minorities are often sought to fill seats on boards and oversee student groups to fulfill diversity requirements (Pyke, 2011, pp. 85–86) and in so doing to serve as "positive role models" for other women or minority members (Park, 1996). The smaller number of female professors places a higher burden on this group to fill seats on committees and boards earlier in their careers (Pyke, 2011). Research also suggests that women are approached for

service more frequently because they are often considered to be more “caring and sensitive than men” (Park, 1996, p. 54), and they are more “reluctant to refuse” because they “are socialized to be cooperative” (Pyke, 2011, p. 86). In keeping with these traditional gender stereotypes, many women feel guilt at refusing a service request, as they expect that the request will simply be passed on to another female faculty member (Pyke, 2011, p. 86).

O’Meara (2016, p. 15) found that women and men have distinct visions of service; women take a more local and communal approach to campus service and men view it as impeding their ability to pursue individual priorities and goals. In her campus-wide review of faculty across 12 disciplines at a “typical” land grant university, she further found that women felt unable to refuse service assignments because of their belief that “there was no one else to do the task, or do it well” (O’Meara, 2016, p. 16). Women also expressed the importance of their service to furthering campus/institutional goals. This “sense of mission” gave them some satisfaction in engaging in service efforts and commitments (O’Meara, 2016, p. 17). Though women engage in more service and, as a group, hold differing views of service than men, they do not prefer this type of work over academic research. Rather, Misra et al. (2011) found that both women and men faculty members “overwhelmingly...express a preference for research” (p. 25).

Female faculty members turned down service requests less frequently than their male colleagues, who consistently described campus service as a distraction or burden, and women were also less likely to negotiate offsets to relieve their workload (O’Meara, 2016, p. 20). As a demonstration of what O’Meara (2016) calls “individualistic thinking,” she quotes one male interviewee who says that female colleagues fail to establish critical boundaries to limit time spent on service endeavors and thus miss promotion opportunities (p. 21). Indeed, female professors report feeling more “pressured by the demands of service, mentoring, and teaching” (Misra et al., 2011, p. 25) and they

are, in fact, more frequently asked to serve than men (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013).

In addition to establishing that women bear the brunt of the university service workload, the literature also considers the type of service assigned to each gender. For instance, women surpass their male counterparts in number of undergraduate advisees, while men lead in postdoc supervision (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, p. 361). Among faculty directing undergraduate or graduate programs or working as associate chair or chair, a third of women have served as undergraduate program director compared with 17% of male faculty (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). Where committee service is concerned, women’s involvement centers on “nominating, membership, awards, graduate students, and steering committees,” while men report higher levels of committee participation in leadership and policy (Twale & Shannon, 1996, pp. 120–121). “Women academics tend to provide service of a more ‘token’ nature” and are more likely to serve on professional committees, while male professors are more frequently approached to chair a program or department” (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, pp. 361–362).

In short, female professors shoulder a greater service burden but do not reap the same compensation, research, and teaching benefits as their male colleagues, whose service tends to be more “prestigious” and offer greater career advancement opportunities and salary increases (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, pp. 362–363). Cama et al. (2016) observe disparities in tenure and promotion between women and men faculty, fewer numbers of women in leadership and management positions, and a pay gap. Women have a perception that service activities are not valued or considered in terms of promotion, and point to the differences in types of service. For example, “women at times characterized their service as ‘grunt work’” and noted that “time spent in ‘nurturing’ activities (advising, mentoring students at both graduate and undergraduate levels) is certainly less valued, or less documentable, than chairing a department or an all-campus committee” (Modern Language Association [MLA], 2009, p. 22).

Their more student-focused agenda correlates with women spending less time on research and writing and more time on grading, course preparation, and interfacing with students, activities that are rarely recognized in terms of pay or promotion (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). Though both female and male professors work on average 64 hours per week, women associate professors spend more time teaching and mentoring and an additional 5 hours per week in service, while male associate faculty devote 7 more hours to research (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). This translates to 27% of female professors' time spent on service compared to 20% of male professors' time.

Service is not rewarded relative to research. It can also detract from time available to engage in more valued activities (MLA, 2009, p. 11) and contribute to gender gaps in research productivity, affording women decreased access to resources like graduate assistants, lab equipment, and research funding (Park, 1996, p. 54). Many faculty might attest that research is nearly the sole criterion for promotion, but service work often stands in the way. This creates a double bind for female professors: refusing service assignments can be seen as disrespectful to higher-ranking faculty, possibly those who will later decide promotion, pay, and tenure. But engaging in disproportionate amounts of service pulls female faculty away from research. And there is no forgiveness given to faculty overworked by service; rather "individual women... are blamed and punished when their service workload hurts their research productivity," and they are often charged as having "mismanag[ed] their career[s]" (Pyke, 2011, p. 86).

In fact, female professors who serve as undergraduate program directors take an additional five years to receive tenure than their male counterparts serving in the same role. This is referred to as the "service gully," in which many women get stuck (Misra et al., 2011, p. 24). An examination of English, modern language, and literature faculty across 50 states also found that while women and men take an average of 7.4 years to progress beyond the associate professor rank, women take anywhere from

1–3.5 years longer to achieve this promotion (MLA, 2009, p. 5).

If disparate and disproportional service burdens on female faculty can inhibit women's promotion potential within individual institutions, it might also have repercussions for their advancement in the wider discipline of public affairs. Feeney (2015) examines data from nine leading public administration journals and notes a distinct lack of women in journal editor positions. She points out that fewer female faculty in public administration overall, as well as even fewer women in senior positions, can lead to a scarcity of female journal editors (pp. 9–10). Since journal editors are responsible for setting "priorities and preferences for what will be reviewed and by whom and ultimately what gets published" (p. 2), editorship is a critical gatekeeping role in the profession.

Finally, the literature also considers both additional causes and potential solutions to the disproportionate burdens and career stagnation experienced by female faculty, including whether childcare demands, service burden, or systemic/structural challenges hold women back (MLA, 2009, p. 4). Park (1996, p. 63) recommends that to better incorporate teaching and service into tenure decisions, committees should consider quantity in addition to quality, including such things as number of classes taught annually, number of student advisees and students in each class, number of student theses supervised, and number of new courses developed. Feeney (2015, p. 15) offers nine suggestions for incorporating more women into journal editing work, advocating that editorial boards "more actively recruit and consider women candidates for editorial positions" and that departments more actively support women in these roles.

The literature describes widely observed disparities between women and men throughout academia with regard to representation in faculty ranks, type and amount of service work performed, compensation and benefits, time spent on teaching and research, and length of time to promotion and tenure. The following

section describes the methods we employed in this study to examine the extent to which these disparities might be generalizable to schools of public affairs, particularly pertaining to those serving in the role of MPP or MPA program director.

## METHODS

We administered a survey and conducted interviews in order to investigate the question of whether and how gender might be a factor in the role of MPP or MPA program director in schools of public affairs in the United States. We sent surveys to all schools in NASPAA's listing of professional schools offering MPA and MPP programs, and we conducted interviews with a convenience sample of program directors from schools that responded to the initial survey.

### Survey of MPP and MPA Programs

After compiling a list of NASPAA-accredited schools using the NASPAA website, we identified a contact person for each of the 276 schools through a review of program websites. Where possible, MPP and MPA program directors served as contacts; program coordinators and assistants to the dean also comprised a significant portion of the total contacts. We then e-mailed each contact survey questions and a request to respond. The survey asked for the name of the current and most recent program director and that person's faculty rank and time in service in the director position. Some universities had both an MPP and MPA program; those without one or the other were simply instructed to answer the questions applicable to their program. We recorded each response in a spreadsheet.

After five weeks, we sent a general e-mail to all nonresponsive schools in an effort to yield additional responses. Those replies were again recorded. If current program directors were identifiable from the website alone, we included them in the program director count for the purposes of assessing the gender of current program directors, though information on faculty rank, time in service, or predecessor's identity was recorded as missing. In total, 140 of 276 schools responded. A *t*-test for differ-

ences of means showed that the sample was representative of regional and national schools. Of the 276 schools in our initial sample, 63 were ranked within the top 100 public affairs programs by *US News & World Report*, and we also included 17 of the 73 land grant institutions in the United States.

For each school responding to the survey with MPP and MPA program director information, we counted full- and part-time faculty using the school's website. We classified these positions as full-time faculty: professor, associate professor, assistant professor, research professor, clinical professor, lecturer or instructor. We included adjuncts and other faculty ranks called "part-time" in the part time faculty count. We did not include fellows, research associates, visiting professors of various ranks, practitioners in residence, emeritus faculty, and staff in the faculty counts, because faculty in these categories are not regularly expected to fulfill service responsibilities.

### Interviews

We invited current MPA/MPA program directors at all schools that responded to the original survey to participate in interviews. We conducted interviews with 21 of the 26 program directors who replied and offered to be interviewed by phone between November 17 and 22, 2016. The interview subjects included 14 male and 7 female program directors. The appendix lists open-ended interview questions and responses. Table 3 shows the tallied responses according to the questions posed (e.g. length of service, whether the role was considered more rewarding or burdensome). We identified emergent themes by reviewing open-ended responses, for instance, in answer to the question of whether program directors had ever thought about gender differences as they relate to the role and its responsibilities; and extemporaneous elaboration offered in response to the other questions, such as whether program directors found the demands of the role manageable, or the degree to which they perceived the program director role as a constraint on time for other responsibilities and activities.

### Limitations of the Study

Though we made every effort to be meticulous in counting program faculties, some websites of schools or units of which MPA and MPP programs are a part may not be up to date, and not all websites include listings of all categories of faculty, including part-time or adjunct faculty. The small number of interview responses limits the generalizability of any conclusions drawn from them. Also, program directorship is just one form of faculty service that might be measured.

## FINDINGS

### Survey

Of the 140 schools that responded to our original survey, schools had a mean of 27 full- and part-time faculty and an average of 10 (35.86%) female faculty and 18 (64.59%) male faculty. In terms of program directorships, 52 schools in our sample had female program directors and 83 schools had male program directors. An unequal variances *t*-test indicates that the overall percentage of female faculty members (35.86%) is not statistically different ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) from the percentage of females in program directorship positions (35.54%). Similarly, there was no statistical difference ( $\alpha=0.05$ ) between the proportion of female full-time faculty members (35.85%) and the percentage of females in program directorship positions (35.54%). In other words, it does not appear that women hold a disproportionate number of program directorships in light of their faculty representation (both overall and in terms of those holding only full-time status).

Of these 140 schools, 17 were land grant institutions;<sup>1</sup> 103 have numbered rankings in *US News & World Report*<sup>2</sup> and 63 are in the top 100; and 46 are classified as regional schools by *US News & World Report*. Table 2 contains cross-tabulations and the relevant associated chi-square statistics. In all of these cases, there is no statistical relationship ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) between any of these institution types and female program directorship.

The pie chart in Figure 1 shows faculty gender by position type—full- and part-time. In terms

of both whole numbers and percentages, full-time male faculty make up the majority of faculty positions. While the vast majority of programs (104) are led by tenure-track faculty, other program governance structures include having two directors—one tenure-track, the other administrative staff, administrative faculty, or senior lecturers on term contracts. There was no relationship between female program directorship and position type.

### Interviews

**Who Serves and for How Long?** When asked how they became program director, 6 of the 21 respondents (1F, 5M) indicated that “no one else would do it,” and 2 of these 6 were serving in a dual administrative role (one woman was also serving as an associate dean and one man was also serving as program chair). Five other respondents (5M) said that they wanted or actively sought the position. One had held the same leadership role at two previous institutions; another declared that, as a former military officer, he “always wanted to be in charge.” Two had offered to fill an existing need: one, who had offered to step in for a year, was serving his second year as program director; the other had approached his department chair offering to help if, he said, he was sure “to get credit” for his efforts. One had applied for and gotten the role of MPA director after an internal search. Ten faculty members (5 F, 5M) said that they had been hired specifically for the position: two were elected (1F, 1M); two (F) were recruited from outside the school; two (M) assumed the role after the previous program director had filled the position for a decade or more; and two (1F, 1M) were appointed or named after serving as acting or interim program director. One woman described herself as having been “groomed” for the position after having first served as graduate studies coordinator.

Eight current program directors (2F, 6M) indicated that they would serve in the role for a defined period of time, and virtually all noted a time period of between three and five years. Nevertheless, five of the eight expressed that they or their predecessor had extended or would exceed the intended tenure for the role.

**TABLE 1.**  
Gender Breakdown of Faculties

	Mean (min-max)	SD	Percentage as part of the program unit (min-max)	SD	Program directorships <sup>a</sup> (% of sample)
Female faculty members	9.69 (0-79)	11.89	35.86% (0%-80%)	12.96%	52 (35.54%)
Male faculty members	17.96 (1-192)	25.72	64.59% (20%-100%)	13.45%	83 (61.48%)

<sup>a</sup>Five schools reported having no program directors.

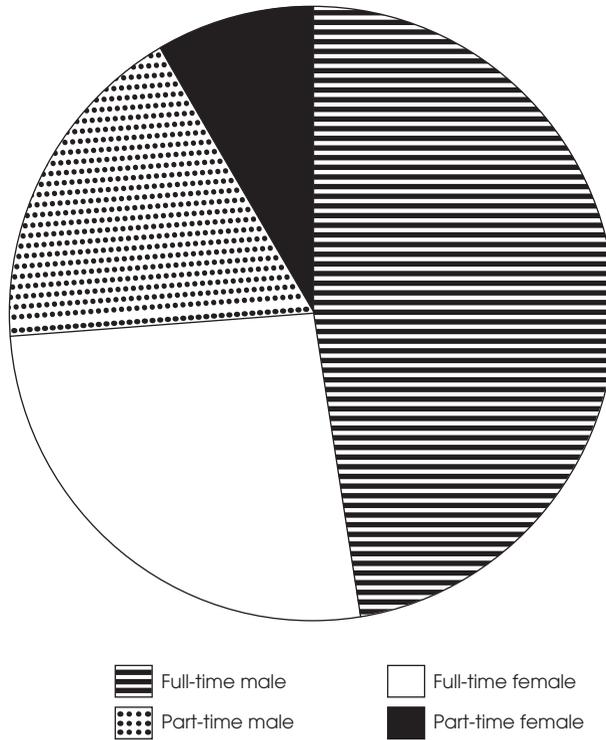
**TABLE 2.**  
Type of Institution

Program directorships	Land grant institutions		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	46	6	52
Male	72	11	83
Chi <sup>2</sup> (1) = 0.085 (p = .77)			<b>135</b>

Program directorships	Regional institutions		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	37	15	52
Male	54	29	83
Chi <sup>2</sup> (1) = 0.54 (p = .462)			<b>135</b>

Program directorships	US News & World Report Top 100 rankings		Total
	No	Yes	
Female	28	24	52
Male	46	37	83
Chi <sup>2</sup> (1) = 0.032 (p = .858)			<b>135</b>

**FIGURE 1.**  
Average Number of Faculty by Gender and Position Type



One woman, getting ready to go on sabbatical and relinquish the role after more than five years, said she “wouldn’t be surprised” if she “took it on again as an interim program director at some point in the future” noting that, in her late 40s, “I’m still pretty young” relative to other members of the department. Two male program directors said they had finished their five-year and three-year terms but would “do another three or so to see us through reaccreditation.” A tenured faculty member himself, one said that most of his colleagues were assistant professors, and having to fill this position could undermine their careers by cutting into the time available to do research and publish.

Eleven interview subjects said that their tenure in the program director position was open-ended (4F, 7M). Two women had been in their

positions for about six and 11 years, respectively, while a third had occupied the position for the better part of two decades, except when she had served a brief stint as department chair.

**Benefits and Burdens.** Almost two thirds of the interview subjects found the program director position to be more beneficial or rewarding than burdensome (6F, 7M for beneficial versus 1F, 6M for burdensome). Of seven women responding, only one reported that she found the position burdensome. Of the seven respondents who reported the position to be more burdensome than beneficial, six were men. One woman program director said, “I enjoy it—it’s not just a duty,” adding that she had expanded the program and developed a new business model, new curriculum, and cross-campus initiatives. Two male program directors also

**TABLE 3.**  
**JPAE MPP/MPA Program Director Interview Questions with Response Tallies**

	Female	Male
<b>1. How did you become program director?</b>		
a. No one else would do it	1F	5M
b. I wanted/sought out the position	—	5M
c. I was hired specifically for the position	5F	5M
d. Everyone has to take a turn	—	—
<b>2. Do you know how long you will serve in the role?</b>		
a. Defined period of time	2F	6M
b. Open-ended	4F	7M
<b>3. What has your experience as director been like?</b>		
a. Beneficial/rewarding	6F	7M
b. Burdensome	1F	6M
<b>4. Are there any benefits to the position? (Yes)</b>		
a. Course buyout	7/7F	8/11M
b. Extra compensation	6/6F	8/12M
c. Status	3/3F	7/7M
d. Graduate research assistant or other administrative support	5/6F	10/11M
<b>5. Are the demands of the role manageable? (Yes)</b>		
	3/3F	4/8M
<b>6. Does the director role constrain available time for other responsibilities or roles?</b>		
a. Teaching (Yes)	0/2F	4/6M
b. Researching (Yes)	4/4F	6/7M
c. Writing (Yes)	2/2F	2/2M
d. Consulting (No responses given in this category)	—	—
e. Family (yes)	0/1F	2/3M
<b>7. Have you ever thought about gender differences as they relate to the role and its responsibilities? (Questions offered as prompts, not addressed specifically by respondents)</b>		
a. Are women more or less likely to act as program directors?		
b. Do men and women approach the role differently?		
c. Does the position affect the career paths of men and women in different ways?		

*Note.* There were 21 respondents (7 women, 14 men); not all respondents answered all questions.

expressed satisfaction in their accomplishments in the position, one saying he was beginning to think in terms of having some kind of legacy now that he was over 60; the other saying that trying new initiatives and seeing positive results—such as moving up in national rankings during his tenure—was “kind of fun.” Both of these program directors mentioned being in leadership roles during the NASPAA accreditation process.

Of those who said they enjoy the role, four (1F, 3M) brought up that they “like working with students.” One program director (F) described meeting with current or prospective students as getting to “deal with the happy stuff” (recruiting, encouraging, graduation) and another (M) described serving in the role as a “net positive,” saying that it offered the chance to be remembered by students due to roles in recruiting and advising. While one male program director described it “as the best job I’ve ever had...very rewarding,” others were more measured, calling it “mostly positive” (M) or saying “it’s fine, since I have administrative proclivities” (M). Another said, “I view it as a form of service to the school. I’ll be happy when it is done...not intellectually interesting to me” (M).

A few described their experience as program director in overtly negative terms. “I’ll be honest, we’ve had a lot of problems—fiscal challenges, conflicts in the department, grievances from multiple students,” said one program director (F). “Absolutely a train wreck,” said another (M) who, not being tenured, said he found it hard trying to get people to move: “I don’t have a lot of carrots and sticks—not a whole lot of incentives.” Another junior faculty member (M) said that he found the position to be “somewhat painful,” like “herding cats” or a “painful death by a thousand cuts”; every day, he said, tasks crop up that he effectively doesn’t have formal authority to deal with, as he “can’t force faculty to do anything.”

As for more tangible benefits associated with the role of program director, the majority of program directors—18 of 21—received a course

release of one or two courses per academic year for assuming the role. Two of the three who did not indicated that there had been such a benefit in the previous year or for their predecessor. Similarly, all but two respondents said that they receive some form of extra compensation for being program director, either in the form of a stipend, summer salary, or a percentage of salary (8%, 9%, and 10% were mentioned). Two program directors (1F, 1M) mentioned having to “fight for summer compensation,” as summer work was required in their roles for recruiting and admissions. In the face of tough financial times, with the governor being aggressive about reducing funds, “a bit of gamesmanship is needed,” according to one (M) who waged such a fight, who asserted, “I don’t work for free” and expressed that “our sense of public service and commitment to the program is sometimes taken advantage of.” A final form of material benefit for the program director role is administrative support; all but two (1F, 1M) indicated that they have access to such support in the form of an administrative or graduate assistant, though about half indicated that such staff are shared with other faculty in the department.

Ten program directors (3F, 7M) mentioned that they think the role confers some form of status, either within the university or department or externally. One (M) mentioned that he was at the helm of a highly regarded graduate program that has a strong statewide reputation and that he was “naturally the face of the program.” Another (M) expressed that as program director at a Tier 1 university, he has status, especially with governmental entities. Others noted that any status associated with the position was more internal, whether through recognition of leadership on campus (M), in the department (M), or among students or alumni (F). One program director (M), on whose watch the program received accreditation, said it was instrumental in his getting tenure and it provided him with a voice in his department.

In answer to the question of whether the demands of the program director role were manageable, 11 offered responses (3F, 8M) and

most admitted to at least some challenges. Six responses could be classified as measured, in that respondents sounded somewhat put upon while trying not to be completely negative. "I'm not going to jump out of a building," replied one female program director; "I go home, hang out with my kids, then work 'til 11pm." "I stay busy but enjoy it," said one male program director, declaring that the role was "not a burden" and joking that, as academics, we "have influence over which of the 80 hours a week we want to work"; "I could be a lot less busy," he said, "but wouldn't want to be." Said one (F), with some sense of resignation, "I'm an administrator now—that's what I am every day, all day—it doesn't feel part-time."

Four responses, all from men, could be classified as overtly negative. One (M) called the role "barely" manageable, saying, "I'm struggling" and bemoaning that there had not been "a whole lot of mentoring" for him in taking on the program, with only a "data dump from the last director" to build upon. "University politics wear me down," said another (M), while a different program director (M) more ominously stated that he was "trying to be careful that it's not wreaking havoc on my person." Only one program director (M) responded with unmitigated enthusiasm, saying that the dean had delegated authority over the curriculum to the MPA coordinator, so in his view he held a position of significant power; "When I come up with ideas," he said, "I get a lot of support."

When asked whether the program director role constrained time for other responsibilities such as teaching, researching, writing, or family/personal time, some general responses included "all of the above" (M), "yes, of course" (M) and "now, that's the \$64,000 question!" (M). Just over half of respondents specifically mentioned teaching and researching (2F, 9M). Four (M) elaborated by saying that the program directorship meant having less time to reinvent courses, review new texts and materials, and maintain integrity as a scholar and teacher. One declared, "I'm on autopilot," while another lamented having "less time to update and do

cool new things" in the classroom. Two program directors (1F, 1M), on the other hand, said the course release fairly balanced their workload, enabling adequate time for program director duties such as requests for information, meetings, advising, hiring adjuncts, and curricular issues.

Only two (M) of 11 respondents (4F, 7M) who elaborated on research as it pertains to their role as program director did not discuss the role as a detriment to their research agendas. In one case, this seems to be because the individual (M) had just moved to a research-focused institution from one with far fewer research opportunities; the other (M) said that the "over \$1 million in grants" he brought in meant that he was always involved in research activity, which also informed his teaching. Most others (4F, 5M) asserted that directing the MPP or MPA program "definitely has an impact on my ability to complete research projects in a timely way." In the words of one program director (M), the demands of the job are "less flexible than research, so research gets pushed." Yet another (M) said, "I'd like to do research" but "have only managed to write two papers in six years." Four (2F, 2M) brought up writing and publishing in particular. One female program director indicated that she "continues to publish, but not as much as before I wore the director's hat." Recounting her efforts to finish a book the previous summer, another woman called it "really painful and stressful."

Only four program directors (1F, 3M) chose to expound on the role as it relates to their family or personal time. One woman said that it was not an issue for her because she had "no small children" and her job time, home time, and personal time were all one and the same, resulting in "a really good work/life balance." A male program director said he looked forward to retirement, when he expected to have more time for his wife, church, and community; in the meantime, he said that the fact that the role encroached on family time was "the nature of the business." One father of a young family declared setting aside family time as "nonnegotiable."

***Perceived Gender Differences in Experience of the Program Director Role.*** When asked whether they had ever thought about gender differences as they relate to the role and its responsibilities, only three (1F, 2M) replied that they never had. One male program director answered tersely that he had not and ended the conversation, while the other, in saying that he had not considered it, noted that he himself was 70 years old, had two daughters, and had observed that about 65% of his students were female. Two other male program directors mentioned that students are predominantly female, one saying “70% of students in the MPA program are female, maybe 100% in non-profit leadership.” Another offered, “I think being a white male makes a difference with female students. ...Female pre-service students need women mentors.” He added that “ASPAA and NASPAA have had numerous female presidents,” saying this is “a potent symbolic message.” Along these lines, one female program director noted that her university president was a woman who promoted women’s leadership; when this director was quoted in the press after local elections, the university president called to congratulate her. Offering further encouragement, their state has an active “women leading government” initiative.

Regarding women in leadership roles, four male program directors noted the presence of women predecessors in the program director role or as chair of their departments. One said his department had a “long tradition of female leadership” and that the “last three chairs were women.” Another noted that “of the last six directors, half were men, half women—they were equally likely to be asked.” He added that at his research-focused university “almost no one wants to do the job” but that the role brings some esteem from colleagues — “it’s not seen as academic housework.”

In noting that his predecessor in the program director role had been female, one director said, “She did a good job” but was viewed as “a mother versus a mentor” because “she felt personally

responsible for students.” His colleagues applied the term *mother* pejoratively to her, he said, because she went “above and beyond being professional in and out of the classroom,” so “she burnt out” because “she invested too high a level of emotion and energy—not learning skills.” Of the current female chair of his department, one male program director said that she is “harder on” his female faculty colleague who is preparing for tenure and that she wants “to work with her to be sure she is ready.” Of the junior women faculty in general, he said, “I get concerned about them a bit... there are pay inequities in the department, and I’m an ally in that conversation.”

One other program director, a woman, cited an instance of a female chair being less understanding than a male chair, in this instance saying that it was not gender that likely accounted for leadership differences but other factors such as whether one had a family (the female chair in question did not, while the “more understanding” male chair did). While as program director she herself did “get some pushback from faculty,” she felt this was more likely attributable to her being in her 40s, while many of her colleagues were in their 60s. On the whole, she characterized the men in her department as “kind of enlightened” where gender issues were concerned.

Other program directors explicitly attributed different experiences in or approaches to the director role to factors such as “philosophical differences” (1M), “personal inclination and preparedness” (1F), or “administrative inclination” (1F) rather than gender. A self-described “civil servant of 20 years...accustomed to administration,” one woman program director recounted that her predecessor, a man, had been “hideously unqualified—made a wreck of the records and failed at everything else, in the classroom and as a mentor,” so she was hired to do the job and teach. Of her aspirations for the role she said, “I wanted to raise the next generation.” Another female program director had a male predecessor who “didn’t work out”

because he was “less suited to some of the administrative skill set” and was “happy to get back to his research,” while she “chose to take on advising for all Master’s students” upon assuming the role. “I’m a boundary spanner,” she said. “I see the role as that of a connector.”

The male program director who cited “philosophical differences” in how people approached the role said that the leadership style espoused by social worker and management consultant Mary Parker Follett—whom he described as an early feminist who said “that collaboration and discussing things are important”—was “fine for lots of things . . . but I’m more in military 101 mode. . . I’ve got objectives I want to get to—can’t let it get protracted—I do things on an ordered basis.” Saying that “sometimes we have to make black and white decisions,” he described his predecessor as “well loved but not effective,” ostensibly due to this “philosophical” difference in approaches. Musing further on program director duties he added, “I’ve heard that women are more accepting—males are more likely to say ‘not gonna do it.’” Summing up her own approach to the program director role, one woman said, “I try to be cooperative. I like consensus. Some are savvier about saying no, but I’ll suck it up.”

Interviews with current program directors revealed several things that they believe women have had to “suck up” or endure, such as getting “more pushback negotiating a raise and salary.” According to one woman—the first female in the position at her school—the interim dean tried to downgrade the position in giving it to her, but, she said, “I’m not a shrinking violet kind of person. . . They were like, ‘How dare I ask for money?’ I said, ‘I won’t do it unless I get the same support offered to my predecessor.’ . . . I was willing to walk away.” In addition to this and the previously cited pay inequity, one male program director observed that “women are talked over in meetings,” while another recounted that when a woman “agreed to chair our self-study team, one of the male members responded negatively to her and the department head

had to intervene.” One female program director said that it was, in two instances, students who had given her “a hard time because I am a woman.” In the first it was Saudi students who “went over her head to the chair”—something “not experienced by my male colleagues”; and in the second case she felt threatened by a student who had been suspended for cheating during an exam she was proctoring, an incident she described as being the only time she “felt not OK being a woman.”

A few interviewees (1F, 2M) mentioned the importance of “protecting assistant professors from administrative duties so they can get tenure” as a reason for not accepting or giving such a junior faculty member the role or for proceeding with caution in assuming the role. A woman who volunteered “to step up to be MPA director” said that her department chair asked, “Are you sure? I don’t want to slow you down” as far as research productivity was concerned. Values such as protecting junior faculty, though, can sometimes be challenged by practical concerns, such as a paucity of faculty available to serve in this and other positions within a department. So, too, can the aspiration of “attracting female professors”; as one male program director related, “Our program has difficulty” in this regard. The top two candidates for the position that opened in his department last year were women, but both accepted positions elsewhere. In this program director’s view, new women graduates have an advantage in the current market relative to their male peers, as departments are striving to hire more women, partly in response, according to another male program director, to self-studies looking at gender diversity. “There are lots of women on the public administration faculty,” opined one male program director from a department where six of the seven full-time faculty are male. “Lot’s of diversity among adjuncts.”

## **DISCUSSION**

We undertook this study to assess whether women faculty were disproportionately represented in the role of director of graduate programs in public administration and public policy and whether

their experience in taking on or serving in those roles differed in substance or approach from that of their male colleagues. Because women are underrepresented among faculty of schools of public affairs, and because the differential demands of service work have been implicated in inhibiting women's career advancement in other academic disciplines, it seemed worth examining whether this particular form of academic service has a similar effect in public affairs programs.

Findings from the brief survey and subsequent faculty count indicate that the percentage of female faculty (35.86%) is not statistically different from the percentage of females in program directorship positions (35.54%), so it does not appear that women hold a disproportionate number of program directorships in light of their faculty representation. This finding remains constant across types of institutions, including land grant and regional universities and those in the top 100 public affairs schools as ranked by *US News & World Report*.

Park's (1996) finding that female faculty are more likely than their male counterparts to devote time to service is not borne out with regard to the program director role. Park's (1996, p. 49) point that administrative posts, such as dean and research chair, "carry far more weight" and thus status "than membership on university committees," where women are disproportionately represented in other disciplines, may carry over to the MPA/MPP program director roles, making men more amenable to filling this particular post. Twale and Shannon's (1996) finding that men do not perform less service overall but are more likely to fill leadership type roles to fulfill their university service might also explain why men are not underrepresented in this service role, which, while not as prestigious as dean or department chair, nonetheless has a leadership quality to it. Mitchell and Hesli (2013) also find that "male professors are more frequently approached to chair a program or department" (pp. 361–362) and are more likely to chair departments or run a program (pp. 362–363); and while women

are doing more service, the type of service they engage in does not translate toward career advancements or salary increases (pp. 362–363). Most program director roles, though, do include a stipend or some, though usually modest, form of compensation.

The interview responses highlight many commonalities of experience between women and men in their recruitment to and experience of the role of MPP or MPA program director. There were no discernable differences along gender lines with regard to length of time in service or benefits associated with the position. The majority of program directors reported receiving a course release and extra compensation and having access to administrative support. About half of respondents elaborated on the demands of the role as they relate to their research agendas, and they complained of what they described as considerable constraints on their research output. About a quarter discussed having to curtail their classroom preparation, making their teaching less innovative and interesting due to their program director duties.

One difference of note between women and men was in their descriptions of the program director role as predominantly beneficial/rewarding or burdensome. Though respondents split just about evenly in calling the position mostly rewarding—six women and seven men characterized it that way—of those labeling the position as mostly burdensome, six of the seven respondents were men. O'Meara's (2016, p. 15) finding that men view service as impeding their ability to pursue individual priorities and goals is borne out here to the extent that men seem more likely to speak negatively about their service responsibilities as program director. Men also either described themselves, or were discussed as, being glad when their term of service was over so that they could get back to the "real" work of research, another characterization found by O'Meara (2016, p. 20).

Though not the intended focus of this study, interviews revealed some implicitly gendered characterizations of service. Some descriptions

of the role offered by men included phrasings like being “in charge,” being “in military mode,” and leaving a “legacy” or employing “gamesmanship” (Brands, 2014; Lewis, 2014). One male program director spoke dismissively of collaboration and discussion, both organizational approaches commonly associated with women (Benko & Pelster, 2013). Another noted that running the MPA program was not seen as mere “academic housework,” implicitly acknowledging the lower status of work typically attributed to women. Finally, one male program director spoke of his female predecessor as being seen as a “mother” rather than a mentor. He critiqued her relationships with students as involving “too much emotion,” conjuring references to women’s service as “academic mothering” (O’Meara, 2016, p. 2), women’s disproportionately performing “care labor” (Pyke, 2011, p. 85), and the disparagement of women’s labor along traditional lines of hierarchy, which Park (1996, p. 77) argues are replicated in the university setting. Indeed “nurturing” activities such as “advising” and “mentoring students at both graduate and undergraduate levels” are acknowledged by many to be “less valued” than more prestigious service work such as “chairing a department” (MLA, 2009, p. 21).

One female program director described herself as having been “groomed” for the role. Another defined her duties as “raising the next generation” and characterized herself as a “connector” or “boundary spanner.” These descriptions are in line with characterizations from the literature of women as more nurturing and attuned to being “cooperative” or as using more such techniques in teaching and negotiating (Mitchell & Hesli, 2013, p. 357; Park, 1996, pp. 56–57; Pyke, 2011, p. 85). One of our interview subjects described herself by saying, “I like consensus,” and that is the quintessential encapsulation of women’s leadership style (Benko & Pelster, 2013; Jackman, 2013; Kristof, 2008). Women further described men as being bad at administration and themselves as having a natural inclination for it, which also reflects

gender roles and stereotypes identified by business scholar Rosabeth Moss Kanter in the 1970s (O’Meara, 2016, p. 2).

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

We undertook this analysis to investigate whether women are disproportionately represented in service roles in schools of public affairs, as they are elsewhere throughout higher education. The findings are heartening to a degree, since we did not uncover disproportionate shouldering of service burdens by women faculty, which can hamper their career advancement. Women are represented proportionally in the faculty ranks as MPA and MPP program directors, at about 35%, and their numbers among program affairs faculties have nearly tripled since 2000. Any advancement toward equity is to be celebrated.

Nonetheless, women remain underrepresented in public affairs faculties, and the metric selected for service here—program directorship—may not capture less prestigious forms of service, such as committee membership, that the literature indicates women are more likely to engage in than men and for which they are less rewarded. Subsequent studies should investigate whether such service disparities are likely to inhibit women’s advancement or compensation, thus delaying accomplishment of the broader goal of achieving faculty gender balance.

The scope of this concern transcends women’s advancement within individual institutions, which was the primary focus of this study. Often, onerous service burdens that inhibit the promotion of female faculty within institutions may also impede women’s ability to advance by moving between institutions of higher education. A deep commitment to time-consuming service by any individual faculty member on a given campus is likely to be undervalued in terms of pay and promotion. And to the extent that service constrains available time for the more highly valued pursuits of research and writing, it diminishes a faculty member’s worth on the job market and limits opportunities to burnish credentials in the wider discipline,

such as by assuming key gatekeeping roles like journal editorship (Feeney 2015).

The persistence of some gendered characterizations that emerged from the interviews suggests that work remains to be done to bring awareness to stereotypes, for instance, of men as being better at research or of women as being more suited to teaching and administration. Though we might imagine that such beliefs are more commonly held by older faculty members, and thus likely to eventually disappear by attrition, we ought not be complacent in accepting such slow, uncertain advancement. This is especially true in the short term, when senior faculty have significant influence in promotion and tenure decisions, which holds serious implications for women's advancement potential.

The responsibilities of research, teaching, and service that make up "the trinity of promotion and tenure criteria" should be shouldered and rewarded equitably, as a value in their own right. Gender equity among faculty also has important symbolic and practical value for student bodies as well as campus and wider communities. As noted by interview subjects, female students may be more comfortable with faculty advisors of their own gender. Further research could do more to investigate the importance of female faculty role models for students' educational experience and workforce preparation.

Interviews reveal that women share similar experiences with their male colleagues, both beneficial and burdensome, of the program director role. Interviews also brought to light several hopeful instances of senior faculty actively seeking to protect junior faculty from onerous service demands in order to help them bolster research output in preparation for tenure review. The assessments offered by MPA and MPP program directors overall can serve to inform the thinking of university presidents, deans, and department chairs in enhancing faculty equity with regard to types of service performed, research opportunities, compensation and benefits afforded, and promotion trajectories achieved.

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## NOTES

- 1 According to Higher-ed.org, there are 73 land grant institutions in the United States ([www.higher-ed.org/resources/land\\_grant\\_colleges.htm](http://www.higher-ed.org/resources/land_grant_colleges.htm)).
- 2 The 2016 *US News & World Report* rankings of public affairs schools number up to 168 (some schools are tied for a specific rank) ([www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-public-affairs-schools/public-affairs-rankings](http://www.usnews.com/best-graduate-schools/top-public-affairs-schools/public-affairs-rankings)).

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## APPENDIX

### SELECTED INTERVIEW RESPONSES

#### On Taking on Program Director Role:

I "always wanted to be in charge" (M)

Agreed to take on role when assured I'd "get credit." (M)

Thinking in terms of having a "legacy" (M)

"I view it as a form of service to the school. I'll be happy when it is done... not intellectually interesting to me" (M)

#### Responses to and Views of Program Director Role:

"Almost no one wants to do the job" but "it's not seen as academic housework" (M)

"Absolutely a train wreck"; "I don't have a lot of carrots and sticks—not a whole lot of incentives" (M)

"Somewhat painful," like "herding cats" or a "painful death by a thousand cuts"; "can't force faculty to do anything" (M)

"A bit of gamesmanship is needed" to negotiate extra compensation for the role. "I don't work for free"; "our sense of public service and commitment to the program is sometimes taken advantage of" (M)

"I'm struggling... not a whole lot of mentoring," only a "data dump from the last director." (M)

"University politics wear me down" (M)

"Trying to be careful that it's not wreaking havoc on my person" (M)

"I'm on autopilot" (M)

"When I come up with ideas, I get a lot of support" (M)

"I'm a boundary spanner. I see the role as that of a connector." (F)

#### On Whether Demands of the Role are Manageable:

"I'm not going to jump out of a building... I go home, hang out with my kids, then work 'til 11pm" (F)

"I stay busy but enjoy it... not a burden... we have influence over which of the 80 hours a

week we want to work"; "I could be a lot less busy, but wouldn't want to be" (M)

"I'm an administrator now—that's what I am every day, all day—it doesn't feel part-time" (F)

#### Role's Effect on Time for Teaching and Research:

"Less time to update and do cool new things" in the classroom (M)

"Definitely has an impact on my ability to complete research projects in a timely way" (F)

Demands of the job are "less flexible than research, so research gets pushed" (M)

I "continue to publish, but not as much as before I wore the director's hat" (F)

"Really painful and stressful" to finish book project (F)

"Have only managed to write two papers in six years" (M)

#### Gender Differences Observed or Considered:

"Women are talked over in meetings" (M)

"She did a good job," but she was viewed as "a mother versus a mentor" because "she felt personally responsible for students" (M)

"She burnt out" because "she invested too high a level of emotion and energy—not learning skills" (M)

"I wanted to raise the next generation" (F)

"I try to be cooperative. I like consensus. Some are savvier about saying no, but I'll suck it up." (F)

Women get "more pushback negotiating raise and salary" (F)

He was "less suited to some of the administrative skill set" and was "happy to get back to his research" (Current program director about her predecessor) (F)

She was "well-loved, but not effective" (Current program director about his predecessor) (M)

# Beyond the Usual Complaints: The Front-Line Challenges and Opportunities of Small MPA Programs

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article uses narratives to consider our experiences administering a small, regionally focused Master of Public Administration (MPA) program accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration. Small programs are the majority of public administration programs in the United States, and they have unexpected challenges and opportunities. As directors and department chair, we have identified the following particular challenges: (1) explaining the MPA program and its merit to internal constituencies within the university, (2) valuing a graduate program in an institution that emphasizes undergraduate education, (3) being the program's only advocate, (4) contending with perverse incentives regarding the best and brightest prospective students, (5) capitalizing on the undergraduate emphasis and including graduate students, (6) existing in the world of both undergraduate and graduate education, and (7) grappling with the changing public sector landscape in the region the program serves. This article explores these challenges through personal stories, drawing lessons and offering suggestions.

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## **KEYWORDS**

MPA program administration, program challenges, narratives

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Directors of Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs face an array of challenges that both hinder and enhance their programs. And it is often easy to focus on the negative aspects of those challenges. In keeping with that tendency, we explore some of the challenges we have faced running a small, regional MPA program at a midsized university in Ohio, but

we offer two less common perspectives on these challenges. First, we endeavor to move beyond the usual complaints of staffing challenges and a desire for more financial resources. We posit that those challenges are ubiquitous for programs large and small and much beyond our control. Second, we consider the challenges we have encountered and offer ways to cope

with them (or at least share our methods of muddling through). We are not so bold as to claim that some of these challenges will ever be overcome, but recognizing their steadfastness enables us to think productively about how to respond and possibly bring about incremental changes. Accordingly, our reflections here should be of interest to other program directors, as we all encounter similar complaints as we strive to educate the next generations of public servant leaders.

We could employ various methodologies to examine our administrative experiences; we opt to heed the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) research that reminds us of the importance of our own stories. As Weimer (2013) notes, narratives are an exceedingly useful means of analyzing experiences and drawing lessons for the future. Further, Shadiow (2013), Mulnix (2016), and Cohan (2009) represent an increasing focus in the SOTL literature on narrative as an instructive means to reflect on and improve our efforts as faculty members. Therefore, our discussion of challenges unfolds as follows. First, we explore this stream of SOTL literature and consider how reflection can be instructive. Second, for context, we give an overview of our program and backgrounds. Third, we discuss how we inventoried our challenges, and we describe seven challenges we have encountered that are beyond the more typical complaints from program directors. We detail each challenge and articulate how we have learned to deal with it, in some cases having even made some progress in mitigating that difficulty. Fourth and finally, we pull our discussion together in the hopes of offering fellow directors and faculty members an opportunity to reflect on their own experiences and see potential pathways through some of the challenges we all encounter.

### **THE IMPORTANCE AND VALUE OF NARRATIVES**

Many of us have anecdotal experience in sharing our stories, sharing our trials and tribulations with others. Often, in those

moments we find some relief or catharsis. Sometimes knowing that other individuals in similar contexts are dealing with the same issue is helpful on its own. And in some instances, we ponder the situation from a new perspective or come up with a solution to a present challenge. It is no surprise, then, that the SOTL literature speaks to the importance of sharing our experiences and reflecting on our own teaching and interactions with students and colleagues. Palmer's (2007) widely read *The Courage to Teach* emphasizes the importance of reflecting on our experiences as educators, as the good days and the bad days provide valuable insights and opportunities for reflection. Just as we encourage our students to be reflective, we must be as well. There are numerous examples of faculty who have transformed their teaching and mentoring of students through intentional reflection. Cohan's (2009) story is particularly noteworthy, as he came to the realization that he might very well have been one of "those bad apples" (p. 32).

Shadiow's (2013) *What Our Stories Teach Us: A Guide to Critical Reflection for College Faculty* helps us understand the power of stories and narratives to learn and relearn. Our stories, according to Shadiow, enable us to note, tell, and reflect on our stories, which permits insights into our journeys as educators and to more fully explore that role. Indeed, as teachers, we tell stories to our students to facilitate learning. In the other facets of our work, our stories can be equally as powerful.

Mulnix (2016) reflects that

college educators need to tell more stories about their own learning experiences, not just to their students but also to other faculty. Personal stories that describe learning are rare...yet...they have real potential to help faculty intellectually grab hold of the new realities. (p. 8)

Even though reflective thinking is not new—John Dewey detailed it in his writings—it is

nevertheless surprisingly uncommon (Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991). Alterio and McDrury (2002) present an engaging discussion of the use of narratives and storytelling in the college classroom, and Jalongo, Isenberg, and Gerbracht (1995) describe how teachers' stories can be used to foster professional development. However, there is little extension of that approach to the work of administration.

To remedy that gap, we advocate that program administrators share our experiences, both for catharsis and for seeking new ways to approach a challenge and move forward. We posit that the value of using narratives as a component of reflective teaching can and should be extended to administering academic programs, even though a review of the literature does not extend this approach to the administrative context. The benefits of using narratives so that educators can reflect on and improve their teaching are analogous to program administration.

### **OUR APPROACH**

We focus on our context as current and former directors of an MPA program. We maintain that sharing our stories about running a small MPA program will be helpful in the following ways. First, half of MPA programs are small programs that have less than 100 students (NASPAA, 2016), yet we generally hear most about the large, highly ranked programs. This is understandable, but the actions and practices of such larger programs may or may not be instructive for small programs. We do not mean to suggest that professional organizations, such as the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA), do not endeavor to target and provide assistance to small programs; rather, we simply want to remember that small programs outnumber large ones.

Second, as we have both experienced firsthand, many of the challenges we encounter are not unique to our circumstances, meaning that much synergy is possible when we reflect and

talk about our roles and experiences. We have found through conversation at professional gatherings and among members of our own professional networks that many of these challenges are not new; but solutions—or at least coping mechanisms—seem to be reinvented continuously. Therefore, we hope to spur some dialogue through this work and the conversations it might precipitate.

Third, we seek to create a repository of experiences that can endure and serve as a baseline to measure future progress of any given MPA program. Documenting these challenges and the relative merits of our attempts to address them can augment our ability to improve the educational experience we provide students at our institutions. We know we are not alone in the belief that some of the challenges we routinely face can adversely affect the quality of the education our students receive, and this is unacceptable. Instead of the complacency that understandably results from these challenges, we see them as an opportunity to foster continual improvement. And we suspect that many of our counterparts would agree.

To identify the challenges we discuss here, we engaged in a multistep process. First, we each spent time contemplating the frustrations and obstacles associated with our time administering the MPA program. Then, after individual assessments, we met and discussed our lists at length. We were surprised to see many common themes in both of our lists, even if we used different language to articulate them. After this initial discussion, we went back to our own lists and revised them, mindful of our discussion. We also began to categorize the different challenges identified. We met again and began consolidating our lists into the form that unfolds below. Additional conversation took place about how we each have dealt with some of these challenges and other possible efforts that could be taken.

We hope that our own reflections here will help others, as we confront many of the same

complaints in directing MPA programs. We have found the process of crafting this narrative helpful for ourselves, and we now look at some of these challenges from a new perspective. Before we delve into our specific stories, we first provide some context of our specific MPA program and our organizational environment. From there, we offer seven challenges and discuss our efforts to wrestle with these situations. We detail our coping mechanisms and suggest additional insights for others in similar environments.

### THE CONTEXT OF OUR MPA PROGRAM

Our MPA program celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2017 as one of the founding members of NASPAA. Similar to a quarter of MPA programs (NASPAA 2016), ours is located within a political science department (itself within a college) and at an institution primarily focused on undergraduate programs, although it offers several STEM doctoral programs. In 2017, we have about 30 students in the MPA program, some part-time and some full-time. About half are in-service, working professionals and the other half are pre-service students, including many who have just completed their undergraduate degrees. The core faculty in the MPA program hold appointments in the Political Science Department that have a 3/3 teaching load,<sup>1</sup> which requires balancing the demands of both undergraduate and MPA curriculum requirements. This results in MPA faculty typically splitting their time and contributing to two programs, teaching one graduate class and two undergraduate classes each term, while the MPA director typically teaches one undergraduate class and one graduate class.

Our institution is a religiously affiliated private university whose undergraduates comprise approximately 70% of the student population; 95% of those students live on campus. The university's focus on undergraduates in a residential environment has some positive spillovers for our small graduate program. There is strong support for undergraduates in terms of co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities,

which the MPA program is able to leverage for our graduate students; such opportunities would not have been otherwise possible given the limited resources dedicated to graduate programs.

Sporadic support of graduate programs led to an erratic enrollment pattern over the MPA program's history; peak enrollment occurred in 1981, followed by a substantial decline. Since the mid-2000s, local governments have drastically cut personnel budgets—affecting the number of both potential students and post-graduation placements. Over the last decade, the program has increased outreach efforts to the nonprofit sector and state and federal governments to compensate for the decrease in local opportunities, in terms of both tuition assistance and placements. This approach has resulted in a close working relationship with a campus-based center for community leadership and in the incorporation of MPA curriculum-based projects that engage students with local community organizations. Also during the past decade, the program has been central in the institution's public-service orientation, culminating in recognition as a Carnegie Community Engaged University.

Further, in a purposeful effort to improve the quality of the small program's student body, the faculty has moved away from a "formulaic" admissions policy that all but guaranteed admission with minimum GPA and GRE scores. The faculty now more holistically assess a potential student's interest in public service, indicators of such interest within the applicant's file, and that person's writing and communication skills. This choice was in direct contrast to some in the university administration who wanted clearer criteria for admission, which at one point even involved a proposal to "automate" graduate admission by removing faculty review of applications and simply basing admission on combined GRE and GPA scores.

Finally, a brief word about our own backgrounds. Both of us hold MPA degrees; one of us earned a doctorate in political science, the other in pub-

lic administration. Both of our research agendas and publication records fit within the broad landscape of public administration. Additionally, we both have public sector experience. We mention our backgrounds to help our colleagues understand where we are coming from and how our experiences inform our storytelling here.

### **FRONT-LINE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ADMINISTERING A SMALL MPA PROGRAM**

Undoubtedly, MPA directors of programs of all shapes and sizes encounter frustrations caused by internal and external forces. Often, those issues are rooted in typical complaints about resource constraints and other frequently lamented challenges in higher education. Here, we take these usual complaints as givens and look beyond them to focus on a different type of problem we face on the front lines of running an MPA program. More specifically, we discuss challenges that we might be able to exert control over to either effect solutions or at least offer coping mechanisms for. We identify seven challenges organized around the following themes: a university environment that focuses principally on undergraduate education and does not understand public administration, program-specific issues and opportunities stemming from the program's location in a political science department, and the changing nature of the population the program serves. Within each theme, we illustrate and discuss specific challenges we encounter. Then we consider the different ways in which we strive to turn those challenges into opportunities or at least to cope with them.

#### **The University Environment and Valuing Public Administration**

Many of the challenges we have both faced in running the MPA program stem from the broader university environment and the dynamics of our particular institution. While these issues are somewhat context-specific, we are surely not the only directors who have encountered them, as many programs exist in environments similar to ours.

The first challenge we identify is one that invariably plagues public administration broadly: explaining public administration and its merits to internal constituencies within the university. As those practitioners and scholars of public administration know all too well, outside the field little is known or understood about public administration (cf. Goodsell, 2014). We spend a great deal of time explaining the MPA program and its worth to various internal constituencies, ranging from our political science colleagues, to our dean's office, to the upper administration tasked with overseeing graduate education. Even though our university's mission is heavily intertwined with service and the pursuit of social justice, and we see the obvious connections with the field of public administration, others do not. Time and again, we find ourselves explaining the very nature of public administration to colleagues who at the same time seem to grasp the nature of other fields, such as business administration. This is particularly frustrating when the apparent lack of understanding of public administration and the reasons for the existence of our MPA program seem to exclude the program from discussions of initiatives on campus. For instance, when curriculum innovations are discussed and it is obvious that the MPA program would be a natural fit, we are not included in those conversations. Or if co-curricular events are being planned that endeavor to help students learn about different public sector careers, the MPA program has been overlooked for consultation.

While those of us in the field might wish for a day when everyone would understand the nature of public service, the way everyone seemingly comprehends the nature of business administration, that is unlikely. Therefore, while it may be defeatist, we accept the need to explain (and often re-explain to the same individuals) the nature of public administration and its integral connection to the work and mission of our institution. This can be frustrating, but we endeavor to use each opportunity as a way to remind individuals of the work of

our MPA students and faculty and to highlight the connections.

One example surrounds our marketing materials for prospective students. Our institution centralizes marketing and admissions, and we find it difficult to convey effectively the value of the MPA degree to these offices, which are under-resourced and emphasize undergraduate outreach. As a result, we draft the content of our own marketing materials, both in print and online, and convey the messages we want to disseminate. Furthermore, to maximize our external reach and minimize our cost, we have focused on connecting with prospective students (as well as current students and alumni) via social media and networks of public-service entities whenever possible. This does mean more work for us, but we would rather be the ones crafting (and controlling) our message and explaining the MPA program as opposed to delegating that task to another entity on campus. Some of the frustrations we face in explaining the program are connected to other issues we identify and develop below. Overall, we make a concerted effort to be visible and engaged in broader university conversations in order to increase awareness about the program, particularly to internal constituencies. We may be small, but we do our best to be vocal.

Our advice to other directors in similar situations: Embrace the opportunity to explain your MPA program and its value, even if you have to repeat yourself to the same stakeholders, and take charge of crafting your own messaging where possible. In an era in which branding is increasingly important to universities, this presents an opportunity to maintain alignment with your own program's values.

A second challenge we encounter is that too often we are the program's only advocates. Not only is there not widespread understanding of the MPA program, despite our best efforts, but there are usually few opportunities for the program to advance or engage. The institution does support the program overall but the pro-

gram has no champions beyond its own faculty and students. This leaves us as the lone advocates, which can affect the program adversely. For example, within the region there is a major U.S. Air Force base, which means there is an extensive array of firms in the area engaged in the defense industry. It should be unsurprising that we would desire to connect to this community at an institutional level, not just a programmatic one. However, the lack of understanding of the MPA program (the first challenge) and the related lack of institutional advocacy (the second challenge), we are left to pursue building relationships on our own with this community. Our institution does support us in these efforts, but these are initiatives that we as a department and program have to pursue ourselves, even when the positionality may seem to be misaligned. This can prove exasperating. However, we have learned that there is tremendous opportunity here.

Since it falls to us, its lone advocates, to explain the MPA program and its merits, we can use that circumstance to pursue opportunities and relationships that we deem appropriate without some of the barriers that might otherwise be present. Indeed, we have discovered that we can be far more nimble when we do not have to wait for the rest of the institution. Returning to the example of the air force base, we have been anxious to build relationships with the large contingent of federal civil servants and related defense-industry personnel. While we are frustrated with the lack of broader institutional initiatives in this area (and senior leaders on campus are likely tired of hearing us talk about this), we have been able to strike out on our own and start building these relationships. We do stay within the boundaries set by our institution, and we do follow protocol, but we pursue our aims largely as we see fit.

For instance, in our efforts to serve the federal defense workforce, we recently entered into a partnership with the local Defense Acquisitions University campus to enable its students, who do not earn degrees, to transfer some of their

accredited coursework into our MPA program to count as electives. This relationship started when we brainstormed with our program's advisory board about possible access points. Put differently, while it is difficult at times to seemingly be the only champion of the program, we strive to use the resources we do have and channel them as we think appropriate. While our relationship with the federal defense community is far from where we would like it to be, we are making progress.

Our advice to other directors in similar circumstances: By being the only advocate, you can pursue opportunities you think appropriate for your program without having to wait for other actors to come to the same realization. This nimbleness can enable you to act efficiently and be responsive to the ever-changing environment MPA programs find themselves in.

Some of these issues stem from a third challenge we encounter: our university has long emphasized undergraduate education. Even though we are categorized as a doctoral university with high research activity, our institution's primary focus has been undergraduate programs, despite having a handful of very well-regarded graduate programs, including in theology, engineering, and the natural sciences. In this sort of environment, it is difficult to get the campus community to devote time, attention, and resources to graduate programs, including the MPA program. Structurally we lack a graduate school or empowered administration officials to oversee and champion graduate programs of all kinds. As a result, there is not an administrative apparatus that supports programs like ours beyond the department or unit where the program resides. Unevenness among programs and their support and resources is a direct result of this lack of coordinated and centralized administrative structure. And it can be maddening for small graduate programs.

A lengthy organizational history and culture explains our particular circumstances, but that only serves to contextualize the current predi-

cament. For example, the databases employed by the university to track progress toward degree completion are adept at handling undergraduate students and their needs but far less successful in managing degree requirements for graduate students. Indeed, such systems are frequently implemented with only undergraduate information tested and loaded—graduate program utilization is not considered unless program directors broach the topic and follow up. The software can thus be being frustrating and inadequate for graduate faculty and students alike. But, because of our ongoing vocalization about the need to focus on graduate programs, we were the first graduate program to be included in the degree requirement system. Granted, this inclusion came only after the director insisted that the MPA program be included and worked with the software team—a task that no undergraduate degree had to undertake. Once the MPA program had piloted the application, other graduate programs were subsequently added.

Additionally, much of the university's brand and image focus on appealing to traditional-aged undergraduate students. Though we leave marketing to the experts hired for that purpose, it can be difficult to use those images in a manner that attracts graduate students, particularly those who are midcareer. It took quite a while to convince university marketing staff that photographs of traditional-aged undergraduates in casual dress are not appropriate for the MPA program's marketing materials.

At our institution, there is indication that graduate programs are important and that they will play a greater role in the future of the university. Accordingly, we can easily find support for efforts we want to undertake on our own and actions we want to pursue. For instance, a law school is part of the university and we had always been puzzled as to why there was no joint MPA-law degree program, given that such degree programs are very common. There were no official structures in place to facilitate the construction of a joint degree

program, but if we were willing and the law school was willing, we could create such a program—and we did just that. Clearly such efforts are contingent upon the individuals in various roles, but we were encouraged to find that if there is something we want to do, especially if that something is not resource intensive, it can generally be done. Of course there are aggravating aspects to this situation, but we have nevertheless been able to pursue various avenues to advance the MPA program.

Our advice to program directors in institutions that emphasize undergraduate programs and students: Position your program at the forefront of the graduate programs that are on your campus. Get involved in everything from new software tool development to building partnerships with other programs that you deem advantageous. Responding in these ways will help with some of the other challenges identified in this section, including educating stakeholders about the MPA program and its value. These are some of the institutional-level challenges we encounter, and there are program-level ones to consider as well.

### **Program-Level Challenges**

Beyond the university environment, we routinely experience challenges within our program and department, and the next few challenges are situated in that context. A fourth challenge is the tension we experience with recruiting and retaining our best and brightest students. A few years ago, we created a bachelor's plus master's program that provides well-qualified undergraduates the opportunity to start working on their MPA degree during the final year of their undergraduate education. Our BA2MPA program allows especially talented undergraduates in their third year who are interested in the public sector to apply for conditional admittance to the MPA program and begin graduate coursework in their fourth year. This enables those students, typically, to finish their MPA in one additional year after earning their bachelor's degree.

Many institutions have these sorts of bachelor's degree plus master's, or five-year programs. But we were unprepared for a challenge we encountered with our BA2MPA program: what do we advise our best and brightest students to do? Many of our top undergraduate students are highly competitive for admittance to the nation's best MPA programs. In recent years, our students have gone on to earn MPA degrees at Indiana University, Syracuse University, and George Washington University, to name just a few top programs. Many of these students began their studies in public administration in the BA2MPA program. This leaves us in a pickle. Do we encourage them to stay and finish their MPA with us, or do we encourage them to leave our MPA program and go on to get their degrees elsewhere? If students pursue degrees elsewhere, does this hurt our standing in the eyes of the university, based on our number of students? Or does it enhance our reputation because our students go on to top ranked programs?

There is no simple answer to these perverse incentives, as we all want the very best for our students, and we are unable to offer a universal method of dealing with this conundrum. We counsel each student individually about her options and how one choice or another for an MPA degree will factor into her professional future. In the end, we are proud of our students whether they complete their MPA with us or elsewhere, and we strive to stay connected to this network of young professionals as they embark upon careers of public service.

For this challenge, we are unsure of advice to offer; rather, we simply note that this is a challenge you may confront in this situation. Perhaps the best we can counsel is to consider each student on a case-by-case basis and make sure that any pushback the institution exerts on the MPA program is an opportunity to point out that students end up, one hopes, attending various highly ranked programs, which reflects well on the university.

The fifth challenge we identify is how to work within the undergraduate focus of the institution. Numerous examples could demonstrate the related challenges we encounter. But opportunities have also presented themselves. As previously mentioned, the MPA program has been able to leverage opportunities for our students to participate in co-curricular and extracurricular activities originally designed for the undergraduate population.

Two examples come to mind. First, the university sponsors a distinguished speaker series that affords students a chance to meet in a small group setting with the speaker. By maintaining close connection and communication with the staff member who arranges these speakers, the MPA program has been able to garner invitations for our students to these prestigious events. Second, the college and department fund a summer internship program in the state capital. Although this program was initially designed for undergraduates, the MPA program has successfully lobbied for and secured internship placements for our students, resulting in full-time employment within state government for three of our graduates. Keeping an eye out for a “graduate-friendly” space can be an opportunity for small programs without detracting from or supplanting the undergraduate experience.

Our advice here to other program directors: Think about how to leverage the emphasis and resources given to undergraduate programs and look for ways to include graduate students in those programs. We have often been able to ensure that undergraduate programming also supports our MPA students.

Functioning as an MPA program within a political science department is not a new challenge, but we note this as a sixth challenge to small programs. In particular, this challenge involves the delineation of responsibilities and authorities for running and staffing a graduate program within a department that also supports two undergraduate majors. Given the dual role

of departmental and programmatic faculty, the MPA faculty bear a substantial burden beyond their service on departmental committees; in our case, this means serving collectively as a committee to fulfill graduate-specific functions of program admissions, curriculum, and accreditation requirements. To maintain curriculum offerings and the NASPAA Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) standards for substantial teaching within the program, and having a core MPA faculty of five, the faculty and program director have to engage in constant monitoring and seek support of departmental and upper administration leadership for regular faculty contingencies (i.e., sabbaticals) and unique circumstances (i.e., administrative appointments). Our experience suggests that placing primacy on MPA offerings is of utmost importance, as we have been successful in garnering university administration support for adjunct teaching appointments in the Political Science Department or for offering overloads for additional compensation to political science faculty.

Day-to-day, existing in both undergraduate and graduate worlds can prove taxing, not only for the MPA program director but for faculty as well. Beyond different service requirements, different groups of students have varying needs. This apparent double work can seem like a burden; for example, carrying out the assessment processes that unfold one way for undergraduates and another way for graduate students. However, there are some advantages. Given that the core MPA faculty teach in both graduate and undergraduate realms and to both political science and public administration students, we find wonderful opportunities for crossover.

Two such synergies have emerged. First, a handful of MPA electives are cross-listed as advanced undergraduate electives, creating a fascinating dynamic and appealing energy in the classroom, with a tremendous mix of students. Topics and experiences are addressed from a multitude of perspectives, leading to an engaging learning environment for students

and faculty. At first, one might be skeptical of mixing midcareer public servants with more traditional-aged upper-division undergraduates; but in our experience, the dynamic is rewarding and one appreciated by all. Second, having MPA faculty also teach undergraduate classes allows us to identify promising students for the BA2MPA program, increasing enrollment. This rich learning environment relates to the changing nature of the community and region we serve.

Our advice concerning this apparent double duty: Think creatively about how to ease some of the double-duty tasks MPA faculty have to contend with given both MPA and undergraduate responsibilities. Mixing various types of students in a classroom has proven productive for all involved, semester after semester; and these interactions between undergraduates and MPA students (particularly those already in service) can be a tremendous benefit to recruiting talented undergraduates to the public sector.

### **Challenges in the Region**

Every program contends with challenges beyond its campus, whether in terms of the region and students it strives to serve or the broader economic and political context. For us, a seventh and final challenge is the changing nature of our region's public sector. A traditional mainstay of both students and employment opportunities, local governments in the region have been in a decade-long period of downsizing or holding employment levels steady. Our program thus struggled with both recruitment and placement issues.

While the public sector has atrophied, nonprofit organizations in the region remain fertile ground for both ends of the student pipeline. Recognizing this changing landscape of public-service organizations, we identified a need to develop curricular offerings for our students geared toward the nonprofit sector and employment therein. We piloted courses for two summers and developed a series of MPA

electives that lead to a certificate in nonprofit and community leadership; we also successfully garnered university support for this new certificate, including a new faculty hire with responsibility for teaching in and administering the new certificate program. While the proposal took considerable time and effort to develop, the benefit in adding a new faculty member and new course offerings has generated student interest in the growing nonprofit sector. This effort ameliorated the decrease in student credit hours that MPA courses generate, and the certificate program is touted by the institution's administration as a success.

Our advice for MPA program directors regarding this challenge: Stay abreast of changes in the public sector in your community. Constantly think about how your program can meet the needs of the public sector nearby and how the public sector can be engaged to serve your program.

### **CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

What advice do we have for small MPA programs based on our experiences? First, recognize the environment you operate in—strive to work with, not against it. Seek those opportunities that may exist in other institutional spaces, whether with undergraduate programs, other graduate programs, or community partners. Ascertain the strengths of your institution or region and work to make and maintain connections with those strong points. Second, leverage your “smallness” to be agile and seek to create opportunities within the scope appropriate to your situation. This may mean arguing against being classified together with other graduate programs, such as Master of Art or Master of Science programs, and being more entrepreneurial or professionally focused with external constituencies. Finally, when faced with being the only advocate for your program, maintain internal consistency. Do not waiver in your belief in your program's value, and be ready to fight for and espouse its virtues. Maintain communication with your external

constituents—your graduates and their respective employers and your advisory board of community professionals. Internal constituents can advocate for your program as well. We have been fortunate to count many staff among our alumni, and we encourage them to participate in our programmatic functions and to remind administrators of their affiliation with the program. Taken together, these constituents can be powerful allies in conveying the importance of your program.

We set out to discuss the challenges and opportunities of running a small MPA program, and we situated that discussion within a framework of narrative reflection by heeding the suggestions of existing work on narratives and storytelling in higher education and extending that guidance to our work as program administrators. We are pleased to say that the efforts of pausing for reflection have been of tremendous use to both of us, just as we emphasize to our students the importance of reflection. We are reminded that while we often get caught up in the day-to-day frustrations of gathering MPA program data for another campus office that does not accurately reflect our program or what our students accomplish, we have continually been able to make programmatic improvements that lead to better outcomes for the public servant leaders we strive to educate.

Stated differently, our time reflecting on the opportunities we have seized and challenges we continue to face has been uplifting and encourages us to continue making the changes we believe are in the best interests of our students and our program. We hope our stories help our colleagues, and we invite an ongoing dialogue about being on the front lines of running small MPA programs. Of course, these are just the narratives of two program directors associated with one MPA program, with all the limits of a single case study. However, we make two final points. First, the value and importance of narratives in higher education must extend from our work in the classroom to our work

behind the scenes administering academic programs. There is utility in working with past and present administrators in a sort of exercise similar to that conducted here in assessing challenges and opportunities. We encourage others to do the same. Second, as other MPA program directors engage in this endeavor, we can and should learn from one another as we advance the cause of public service education. Additional work in this area could establish a foundation for more systematic survey methodologies, for example, that might produce results of interest not just to directors but to academic institutions and NASPAA.

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## NOTE

- 1 A 3/3 teaching load indicates that full-time faculty teach three courses each semester of the academic year.

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# The Capacity and Constraints of Small MPA Programs: A Survey of Program Directors

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## **ABSTRACT**

Small Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs are commonly defined as having enrollments below 100 students. Given their size, these programs face unique administrative challenges, such as heavy faculty teaching loads, resource constraints, and marketing beyond their region. However, the graduates of small programs serve many of the nation's communities by building the capacity of local public administration. To explore the capacity and constraints facing small MPA programs, we administered a survey to the directors of these programs. We find that many small programs have faculty with manageable teaching loads and adequate funds for travel. However, small programs still face challenges. Directors of small MPA programs receive little formal training, work under recruitment pressures, and have difficulties maintaining active advisory boards. Directors also report needing more administrative support and budget autonomy to do their jobs effectively and maintain accreditation with the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Small MPA programs, MPA program directors, public administration employees

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A significant percentage of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) have enrollments below 100 students. In 2014, there were 118 small MPA programs, and of these 85 (72%) were accredited by NASPAA. For that year, small MPA programs comprised 44% of NASPAA member MPA programs. These small

programs play an important role in public affairs by contributing to governance and life in many communities. The graduates of such programs serve many rural and medium-sized communities and nonprofits in the United States. Small programs offer several advantages: the ability to provide individualized attention to students; small classes where instructors can employ interactive teaching methods; mean-

ingful service-learning projects for pre-service students; and the ability to educate large numbers of in-service students already working in the field, which also enriches the learning experience of pre-service students (Hatcher, 2015).

Still, directors of small programs face special challenges. First, small programs are often in universities and colleges that require faculty to teach many courses. Heavy teaching loads make it difficult for faculty to balance instruction with research and service roles, and this is especially problematic if the service responsibilities include serving as MPA program director. Second, given how budgeting decisions in higher education are often driven by the number of students enrolled in a program, small MPA programs may struggle to obtain needed resources. Lastly, small programs have difficulty marketing themselves because their reputation does not extend beyond their region.

In recent decades, MPA programs of all sizes have faced existential challenges. Even large programs struggle to compete within public university systems that focus increasingly on the bottom line. According to an article in *Governing* on the future of the MPA (Kerrigan, 2011), programs are fighting to survive by detaching from their home colleges and forming new schools, as with public affairs at the University of Arizona. Other programs are seeing constraints as a prompt to make a case for their value, as with the Evans School at the University of Washington. However, some programs are being shut down, even large, historic ones like the undergraduate and graduate degrees in public administration at the University of Maine. These examples illustrate what Rich (2013) describes as the difficulties public affairs programs face in making their case when higher education is dominated by return on investment and cost centers. To survive, public affairs programs need to fund-raise, find externally sponsored grants and assistantships, increase graduate-level tuition, consolidate programs, and develop new undergraduate offerings (Rich, 2013). If large MPA programs are facing these constraints, one can imagine that the need to

justify costs is even more salient for small MPA programs. But little is known about the challenges facing small programs.

Only two published studies (Cleary, 1990; McGinnis, 1993) have focused on small MPA programs and the directors of these programs. Given the importance of small programs and their increasing numbers within NASPAA, this dearth of research prompted us to survey directors of NASPAA member programs that have 100 or fewer students. We developed our survey questions using McGinnis's (1993) survey as a starting point. We intend for our research to gather and analyze data on the modern challenges and constraints facing small MPA programs and their directors. More important, these results can be disseminated to ensure that small programs continue to build and strengthen their governing capacity and to give program directors a forum for voicing their needs and concerns about program capacities, challenges, and constraints.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In public administration, we often ask our students to think about why something is considered a "public" problem. We challenge students to understand who and what matters in any issue that we try to analyze. Following this logic, we determined that the administration of small MPA programs does warrant a place in the discussion of public administration education. We want to understand the issues, challenges, and constraints that the directors of small MPA programs face in fulfilling day-to-day administrative tasks and in balancing the competing roles of teacher and researcher. By understanding the viewpoints of directors, we gain insights into the challenges and capacities of small MPA programs. Though we do not attempt to fully answer these questions, we begin here so as to place our study in the context of what has come before and where we hope to go.

Previous research, as shown in Table 1, has focused on ranking programs through looking at program reputation, faculty research productivity, student job placement and advancement, success in securing presidential management

fellows, and program quality. Uveges (1987) looked at program prestige and was very supportive of NASPAA accreditation standards for public administration programs; however, he was never able to secure that designation for his program during his tenure due to lack of resources and small faculty size. The lack of resources ensured that the program struggled to satisfy accreditation standards. Baldwin (1988) studied MPA program directors' perceptions of the effectiveness of their programs and the effect on accreditation status of organizational structures, such as being an autonomous or stand-alone program, a program located within or attached to another department such as political science, or a program located within another school such as business. Jennings (1989) focused on outcome assessment criteria and found that small programs are at a disadvantage compared to larger programs due to resource constraints. He suggested focusing on outputs rather than inputs. For example, MPA program quality should be judged based on the knowledge, values, and skills of graduates as well as their success in securing employment upon graduation.

These early studies, while important, did not address the role of the program director. Cleary's study published in 1990 got a little closer. In 1989, Cleary surveyed all principal representatives of NASPAA-affiliated programs. He described programs based on name of degree, program setting and organization, credit hour requirements, and internship requirements; he focused primarily on core curriculum requirements. One notable finding was that a significant number of small programs were not accredited. Cleary found that small programs, defined as enrolling 100 students or fewer, were less likely to be accredited than larger programs.

It was not until McGinnis's (1993) study that the needs of small programs were addressed through survey research and the status of small programs was assessed. McGinnis focused on nine areas of concern: the public service role of MPA programs, MPA student population, the definition of a small program, NASPAA faculty standards, program autonomy, faculty research, the importance of NASPAA standards, measur-

ing program outcomes, and small programs and NASPAA governance (p. 21). McGinnis surveyed 84 directors of small programs and found the following:

- Larger programs had more of a national reputation (p. 30) than smaller ones and defined their size based on number of MPA degrees awarded and extensive reliance on an active alumni (p. 23), although small MPA programs often had solid reputations that extended regionally. Further, small program definitions were self-selected based on number of full-time faculty, number of graduate students, level of program resources, and breadth of curriculum (p. 22).
- Small MPA programs had more in-service students than pre-service students, and the interaction between in-service and pre-service students during class discussions added value and meaning for the pre-service students in understanding public service in practice (p. 21).
- For the most part, institutions provided small programs with the research support needed to achieve and maintain NASPAA accreditation (p. 26).
- The six criteria identified by program directors as important and that should be considered by NASPAA in accreditation of small programs were autonomy, faculty size, sufficiency of program resources, program outcomes, research capacity, and enrollment levels (p. 28).
- The two program outcomes identified by program directors as most important were quality of education and the success of placement of graduates into public service positions (p.28).

Despite the passage of 25 years and a wealth of data collected about small MPA programs, the role of the MPA director has not yet been thoroughly studied. Through our survey research, we attempt to fill this void in the literature and to more fully describe and understand the current status of small MPA programs, including their capacity and constraints.

**TABLE 1.**  
**Survey of the Literature on Directing an MPA Program**

Source	Focus
Morgan, Meier, Kearney, Hays, & Birch, 1981	Program reputation and research productivity in an effort to rank 10 best programs; autonomy of program vis-à-vis other departments, schools, etc.
Morgan & Meier, 1982	Program reputation and research productivity
Adams, 1983	Program reputation
Ferris & Stallings, 1988	Program reputation and program quality
Uveges, 1987	Impact of NASPAA standards on graduate education, program resources, and program viability
Baldwin, 1988	Program effectiveness, institutional arrangement, and accreditation status
Jennings, 1989	Assessment criteria, accountability, and program quality on graduate education
Cleary, 1990	MPA program curriculum
McGinnis, 1993	Demographic descriptions and needs of small MPA programs

*Note.* Adapted primarily from McGinnis, 1993

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS, STUDY SUBJECTS, AND SURVEY LIMITATIONS**

Our study’s main research question is, what is the status of small MPA programs? Uncovering the answer would help us better understand the capacity and constraints of small MPA programs. Furthermore, we use our survey results to describe the status of small MPA programs by asking program directors what their tasks are, what resources they have, and what resources are lacking.

We extended and developed survey questions from McGinnis’s (1993) survey. We sent our survey via e-mail on August 3, 2016, to programs identified on NASPAA’s small program mailing list. We sent a reminder survey on August 27, 2016. We netted a total of 74 surveys as of October 4, 2016, a response rate of 43.7%. Most of the questions were answered by 40 to 50 respondents.

We acknowledge the following survey limitations: Those who are part of a professional organization such as NASPAA may have a particular

interest in and assign significant importance to the subject of the survey. We do not know how those who did not respond might have answered the questions. The length of the survey may have proved daunting to some and affected the response rate. We offered no incentives for completing the survey. Finally, while the survey instrument promised confidentiality, fear of being identified may have negatively affected the survey response rate.

**SELECTED DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS**

At most universities in the United States, faculty have responsibilities in three areas: teaching, research, and service. There can be variation in the amount of time and effort that goes into each of these areas of responsibility. For example, first-year, tenure-track faculty might be protected from extensive service responsibilities as they prepare to teach new courses and develop their research agendas. Once faculty are established in those areas, service duties are generally added to their mix of responsibilities.

One aspect of service for public administration faculty is to serve as MPA director. Accordingly, the administrative work is often treated as service. The tasks of an MPA director have to be balanced with the demands of teaching and research. This leads to the assumption that the person appointed to the position of MPA director has teaching experience and an established research agenda and publication record in his or her field of expertise. Ideally, the MPA director is tenured and holds the rank of associate or full professor. This is not meant to imply that the teaching and research roles and areas of responsibility disappear or are somehow less important than the role of MPA director. However, some concession or consideration must be made about the workload associated with the tasks related to the position of director.

First, we wanted to answer the question, who are the directors of small MPA programs? An examination of survey respondents shows little diversity: 88% of those who answered the question ( $n = 42$ ) self-identified as white, and 67% were male compared to 37% female. As expected, 88% of those who answered the question about their position ( $n = 41$ ) were tenured faculty; and 95% held either the rank of associate (58%) or full professor (37%). Only three directors reported their rank as assistant professor. Interestingly, 76% reported working as a practitioner before becoming an academic, and several respondents reported holding high-level governmental jobs for a significant number of years before becoming an academic. The finding that many respondents are “pracademics” (academics with practitioner experience) is encouraging and enhances the connection between theory and practice in the field (Battaglio & Scicchitano, 2013).

Second, we wanted to confirm that the MPA programs surveyed were small. Respondents reported that in fall 2015, their programs admitted an average of 22 students, with 20 being the number most prevalent in the data set. These programs reported an average student body size of 55.

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

### What Do Directors of Small MPA Programs Do?

The day-to-day tasks of an MPA director vary in part based on the level of administrative support provided to the small MPA program. Other resource constraints also factor into a director’s tasks. Table 2 presents the responses to “Select all the tasks that are part of your job as director.” This list is not exhaustive nor does it show the amount of time or frequency of each task; rather, it shows the variety of tasks undertaken by the MPA director.

According to respondents, they have most autonomy in their jobs in the area of curriculum changes (92% reported having autonomy over this issue), and they have the least control over issues concerning the budget and tenure and promotion. The lack of control over tenure and promotion is understandable for two reasons: promotion and tenure decisions are normally not made at the program level, and some of our respondents are not tenured and hold the rank of assistant professors. When we asked directors what they viewed as their most important tasks, they ranked recruitment, student advising, and curriculum as the most important parts of their jobs. Respondents saw career service and alumni relations as their least important tasks.

**TABLE 2.**  
Tasks Undertaken by Directors of Small MPA Programs

Task	Percentage of directors reporting
Managing the program’s budget	52%
Supervising administrative staff	58%
Recruitment	90%
Curriculum changes	96%
Career services	65%
Student advisement	96%
Alumni relations	92%

Note.  $N = 52$

The directors reported that their home institutions viewed enrollment levels as the most important outcome of their MPA programs, while the directors themselves saw program resources as the most important.

### **What Resources Are Important to Directors of Small MPA Programs and to Their Satisfaction?**

For the individual faculty member appointed to the position of MPA director, we must recognize that just like any employee in any other organization, job satisfaction may be influenced by or associated with several factors (Ellickson & Logsdon, 2001). An individual's job satisfaction may be a function of the multiple roles that person fulfills—teacher, researcher, and MPA director as the primary service role. Because these three roles are distinct, we have a unique opportunity to explore how resources available to or perceived as important to the MPA director in serving within that role may be associated with varying levels of job satisfaction. And the job satisfaction of the directors of small programs affects how they approach their work, which in turn affects the overall capacity of their programs. If directors are not satisfied with their jobs, this is an important constraint facing their programs and limits program capacity.

A sense of autonomy and the ability to work independently often contribute to job satisfaction. The ability to work independently as a teacher or researcher is not questioned; indeed, independence in these roles is normal in an academic setting. We expected to see the same with the role of MPA program director, because of the need to balance the demands of competing roles. Of the survey respondents, nearly 90% felt they had control over their work. Pay and benefits also contributed to job satisfaction. Close to 60% of respondents reported that they somewhat agree or strongly agree that they are fairly paid for their work, and 69% indicated having the needed travel support. Of the survey respondents, 74% reported that they are given an additional stipend or other monetary consideration for serving as MPA director.

A reasonable workload also contributes to job satisfaction. Only 37% reported that their faculty have a 2/2 teaching load, while 38% reported a 3/3 teaching load, and 9% reported a 4/4 teaching load. Approximately 13% reported other types of teaching loads, such as 2/1 or 3/2 loads. These institutional teaching loads may be an indicator or a proxy of whether the MPA director has colleagues who are in a position to assist with the service tasks that must be conducted to support the director and/or the program. Of the survey respondents, 95% reported a teaching load reassignment as a consideration for serving as MPA director.

Other survey questions asked about NASPAA and accreditation, which respondents viewed favorably: 57% strongly agreed that NASPAA was beneficial and an additional 21% somewhat agreed. Of the small programs surveyed, 24% reported not being accredited by NASPAA. However, 90% of respondents indicated that their institutions support the research needed for NASPAA accreditation; but only one MPA director received reassignment of research load as a consideration for taking on the role of MPA director. MPA directors indicated that they receive varied levels of support from other faculty in the NASPAA accreditation or reaccreditation process, along with assistance in recruitment, intern supervision, and student assessments activities such as the grading and evaluation of comprehensive exams, portfolios, or theses. Willingness to continue in the role of MPA director may be related to how the director perceives such support or lack thereof.

### **What Resources Are Lacking?**

Adequate training and resources to accomplish a job also contribute to job satisfaction. Responses to the question of whether the MPA director received training from the former director upon starting the position revealed that only 25% did, while 75% did not. Of those who answered the open-ended question to describe the training received, two described the training as “informal,” four described it as “mentoring or shadowing,” and four described it as “discussions.” Respondents referenced NASPAA conference training for small program directors. Concerning training provided

to MPA directors, the appendix presents responses as written by survey respondents in the categories of informal, mentoring or shadowing, or discussions; some responses could fall into multiple categories.

Most respondents (69%) reported having a 9- or 10-month appointment; however, all directors reported that they worked year-round (12 months) in performing their MPA director duties. This may be a significant constraint on the reasonableness of their workload and their satisfaction as directors. All directors surveyed work throughout the entire year but only officially serve in a 9- or 10-month appointment. In their comments, many directors said they received a stipend, but not all received this extra pay for the summer months.

Other resources that might be lacking are an adequate number of faculty to meet NASPAA accreditation standards. Of the respondents, 44% reported having difficulties in recruiting faculty. Further, 60% reported not having administrative support dedicated to the MPA program. These factors, coupled with the MPA director's working year-round and an inadequate number of faculty to share in program governance responsibilities, could indicate lack of support from the upper administration for the MPA program and the director. Certainly, these factors indicate resource constraints experienced by MPA programs.

We asked several open-ended questions of MPA directors to understand the importance of resources. Responses to the question "What resources do you wish you had?" generally fell into three categories: more money, more faculty, and more administrative support. The appendix lists all responses; some responses could apply to more than one category.

Lastly, in terms of adequacy of resources, only 18% of respondents reported having a very active MPA program advisory board. In the open-ended responses, those who reported having active advisory boards indicated a variety of ways in which the board contributed to governance of the program. The appendix presents these responses. It is apparent that advisory

boards are being used in helpful ways that other MPA programs might duplicate and find useful.

### **What Is the Most Frustrating Part of the Job of MPA Director?**

To further understand the role of MPA director, we asked this open-ended question: "What is the most frustrating part of your job?" We also asked that respondents provide an example. Responses were similar to those presented in the prior tables, and many respondents referred to resource constraints: lack of budgetary support, lack of faculty support, and lack of administrative support. It is also notable that some directors indicated that they felt a great sense of responsibility for the success of the program but acknowledged that they did not have the authority in many instances to accomplish necessary tasks. The appendix presents these responses and the examples provided.

### **PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR SMALL PROGRAMS**

Directing a small MPA program is a challenging administrative job fraught with difficulties. None of the difficulties described by survey respondents are insurmountable, but no MPA director should view these difficulties in isolation. As a discipline and profession, public administration needs to do a better job of encouraging the sharing of best practices via NASPAA, the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), or other professional organizations. We need to encourage more research into the role of MPA director so that we might come to a greater understanding of how to better govern the MPA programs we serve.

From our survey, we found that most MPA directors are tenured, and a plurality are associate professors. The directors as a group are not that diverse in terms of gender or ethnicity. Our field needs to focus on encouraging a more diverse range of faculty members to become MPA directors and examine why this lack of diversity among directors exists. Program directors are mostly engaged day-to-day in curriculum changes, student advising, and recruitment. It is not surprising that recruitment is a major pressure on directors of small MPA programs, but respondents reported that they

lacked resources to support recruitment. It is also worrisome that many home institutions did not value program outcomes—such as quality of education provided or how prepared students were to be gainfully employed upon graduation—as much as they valued recruitment and enrollment numbers.

When it comes to their work, we learned that directors reported having control of how they undertook their jobs and having manageable teaching loads. In fact, a majority of respondents said that their nucleus MPA faculty had reasonable teaching loads (2/2 or 3/3). Only a few reported that their faculty were teaching a heavy load of classes (4/4 or higher). When faculty teaching loads are reasonable, faculty are in a better position to offer assistance with service activities to the MPA program in the form of supervising internships or serving on assessment committees or grading comprehensive examinations. We were surprised to find that many respondents reported having adequate financial support for travel, which indirectly shows that there is support for research efforts.

From our survey, we identified a number of constraints facing MPA directors and their programs. Perhaps most concerning, we found that many directors received little to no training before assuming their administrative roles. Training of new MPA directors is lacking, and there is no suitable reason that an MPA director who steps down should not spend some time training his or her replacement. Such training should be more formalized, moving beyond informal discussions, mentoring, or shadowing. Perhaps there needs to be a transition or overlap period of one semester where both outgoing and incoming directors share in the role of director; or perhaps the outgoing director could continue to have a teaching reassignment for one semester to ease the transition and be available to train the incoming director.

Eight of the MPA directors who responded to our survey reported that their small program is not accredited by NASPAA. Across universities, resources are scarce and there is great competition for them. But universities need to

provide support and necessary resources for their accredited programs, including dedicated administrative support for MPA programs. This is a resource sorely missing from small MPA programs. Meeting the standards for reaccreditation takes a tremendous amount of work and must be a joint effort of all faculty in the program. Strengthening the contribution of each faculty member and sharing in the governance process would make it easier for MPA directors to avoid burnout and would decrease turnover in the position. Additionally, we found that advisory boards of MPA programs are underutilized. These boards help connect MPA programs, students, and alumni to the practice of public affairs and to the communities in which they serve. The lack of involvement from advisory boards is significant for the field of public administration.

Based on our research, we suggest the following important takeaways for public affairs education, especially for small programs. First, we need to encourage the training of MPA directors. Most directors only receive informal training before and after assuming their leadership roles. While NASPAA-provided training is helpful, travel to the NASPAA annual conference is a hefty cost for small programs to incur. However, asking NASPAA for help or to recommend someone to speak to at another institution is an acceptable way to find assistance.

Second, we need to help directors with recruitment and marketing. We need to help them communicate the importance of program outcomes to both internal and external constituencies. The top pressure on directors from their home institutions is recruitment. Again, NASPAA can assist with this pressure by offering more help in the area of marketing programs. Beyond recruitment and enrollment, graduation rates and placement of graduates in public sector positions are outcomes important to the success of MPA programs that must be acknowledged by home institutions. NASPAA can also help small programs learn how to highlight those successes to their constituencies and how to further use that data in recruitment and marketing efforts.

Third, on the surface, directors reported having needed resources, but their open-ended comments revealed major resource constraints. In particular, deficiencies revolved around the inability of programs to control their operating budgets, the inability to have enough faculty to share in the workload, and the lack of administrative support dedicated to the MPA program. If they need help, MPA directors must learn to advocate for it, whether with the upper administration in terms of funding an administrative aide or additional graduate student or by asking a colleague to share in the workload.

Lastly, utilization of advisory boards needs to be strengthened, and our director-respondents have solid ideas for leveraging boards to achieve important outcomes for their programs and students. Advisory board members can assist with program reviews and course assessments; serve as guest speakers and adjuncts; serve as mentors; and develop internship placements for students and job placements for graduates. It is likely that most programs have alumni who are just waiting to be asked to serve on an advisory board and could lighten the load of the MPA director, while at the same time bringing a fresh perspective to governance of the program.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study advances our understanding of the role of the MPA director in the administration of small MPA programs in the United States. Academic programs in public affairs are operating in constrained environments (Kerrigan, 2011; Rich, 2013). Even large public affairs schools and programs face budgetary constraints that hinder their work of educating public servants and improving the governing capability of our communities. Small MPA programs face an even more tightly constrained situation than larger programs.

Our survey findings confirm that small MPA programs are operating in constrained environments. Respondents reported not receiving administrative support and support from the upper administration to accomplish programmatic goals. At the same time, small MPA programs do seem to have needed resources in some areas. For instance, it appears that faculty

of small MPA programs tend to have control over their work, manageable teaching loads, and necessary travel resources.

When asked to indicate the number of years the individual intends to serve as MPA director, the 54 respondents' average answer was three years. Resource constraints may play an important role in these directors' intentions. Frequent turnover may indeed exacerbate administrative challenges and resource constraints faced by small MPA programs.

Public administration as a discipline needs to focus on addressing the constraints facing small MPA programs (Hatcher, 2015). According to our findings, small MPA programs comprise a large percentage of NASPAA member programs. We know that the faculty of these programs serve many of the nation's communities, especially nonmetropolitan areas. Still, only a handful of studies have examined the particular challenges facing small programs. Our work contributes to the literature by building on these studies and providing a clearer understanding of small MPA programs as they currently operate.

In this article we have identified what tasks small MPA program directors perform and both the capacity and constraints of their programs. We plan to further analyze our survey data to help explain how directors of small MPA programs view their contributions to public service. Through responses to our survey's open-ended questions, we will try to understand what motivates directors to serve as MPA director, what directors view as the rewards of serving in the role, and what factors make serving as director frustrating and might result in turnover. We also hope to further explore what contributes to or diminishes the overall job satisfaction of these administrators who do such important work for MPA programs. Knowing more about directors' job satisfaction will help us develop prescriptions for improving public administration education and practice. As practitioners in this discipline and profession, we all need to work diligently to ensure that small MPA programs receive the necessary resources to accomplish their goals and continue to contribute to the field of public service.

While our findings contribute to the discussion of small MPA programs' importance, more research is needed. We invite interested researchers to study MPA directors and small MPA programs. We are hopeful that further research will help small MPA programs continue to build and strengthen their governing capacity and will help program directors voice their needs and concerns about program capacities, challenges, and constraints. As a result, we may come to a greater understanding of how to better govern the MPA programs we serve and how to assist those serving in the important role of MPA director.

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## APPENDIX

### Open-Ended Survey Responses

#### TRAINING PROVIDED TO MPA DIRECTORS

##### *Informal*

- Informal training from previous director and NASPAA conference.
- Informal transition meetings the semester before I started. On-demand advising as needed during first year.

##### *Mentoring or Shadowing*

- More shadowing than training.
- Had been interim director during a sabbatical; shadowed; went to NASPAA orientation.
- It was informal training, probably considered shadowing or mentoring. Prior to becoming MPA director, I helped the previous director with accreditation reports, attended graduate program director meetings when he or she couldn't, etc.
- Shadowing, mentorship.

##### *Discussions*

- Ability to ask questions about situations that have and might arise.
- I inherited a program that was designed and run based on the old NASPAA standards. The former director helped me understand the program and our institution. He had not initiated anything necessary for the program to meet the new standards; so I had a lot to learn and create on my own.
- Answered questions when I asked.
- One-on-one conversations.

#### RESOURCES MPA DIRECTORS WISH THEY HAD

##### *More Money and Faculty*

- More endowments and more support from the university. When I came after the program had been around 40 years, there was zero in MPA endowments and gifts and no scholarships. Now we have some resources from fund-raising, but if they had done this 40 years ago, we would be in great shape now.

- A sense of what a budget really is for the program and control over it. A full-time recruiter.
- Bigger budget. More university support for advertisement and recruitment.
- More travel and budget autonomy.
- More money, more and better staff.
- More money for graduate assistants.
- Small operating fund, say \$1,000 per year.
- Additional funding and a bit more freedom to raise funds and keep the funds we raise. There's a lot of revenue sharing that goes on, but not as much sharing of the work it takes to raise that revenue. Additional faculty; we had a retirement a few years ago and the line is still vacant. It really stretches us, especially in a year like this one when we've got two of five faculty taking sabbaticals. More competent administrative support staff.
- A much larger budget for advertising and recruitment, at least one more faculty member, a separate organizational identity (department), co-located offices.
- A larger faculty would help us focus our energy into fewer subfields, which would be helpful for trying to have some kind of research agenda.
- More money for travel and faculty and student development; more recruitment support; more faculty.
- More faculty or a 3/3 teaching load cap.
- More faculty, a separate budget, better technology for distance learning (we have to rely on a central university location that does not meet our needs).
- More faculty to spread out related functions, like setting up club advising and outreach. Our outreach and marketing services are too decentralized, which requires more time for coordination than should be necessary. Still, we are making significant progress.
- More faculty lines.
- More faculty and travel money.
- More faculty.
- More faculty! We struggle to count the minimum of five on a regular basis.

##### *Administrative Support*

- More funding for recruitment and career placement administrative positions.
- A program manager that could work on recruitment and manage assessment and NASPAA requirements.

### **Administrative Support (continued)**

- More help with student recruitment.
- An enrollment growth specialist and a marketing specialist.
- Administrative support. A million or so in an endowment to support more student scholarships and fund a public speaker series.
- An associate director and administrative support for assessment.
- Every program needs some sort of dedicated professional support. No MPA director should have to become an expert in marketing, learn how to develop Facebook/Google ads, develop websites, etc. It is also impractical to think that I can maintain an updated alumni list as people get married, change names, relocate and change jobs, and have their university e-mail dumped into spam folders.
- A full-time administrative assistant and a small budget to support student programs, bringing in speakers, and supporting travel to another conference. Most small programs severely lack resources. Note: The rankings asked earlier in this survey were affected by the fact that my program does not have a budget; therefore this is not one of my main duties.
- Dedicated recruiter, more marketing money.
- A program manager to maintain records and figures, especially for annual reports and the self-study report for accreditation.
- Reliable administrative support.
- More administrative support.
- Feedback on communication, placement, quality of graduates, fund-raising, sounding board for curriculum changes and other proposals.
- Recruitment and curriculum guidance, mentoring to current students.
- They make course suggestions based on what is needed in the field. Provide accountability with regards to budgets, hiring, and assessment results.
- Helps us with strategic planning.
- We have started and restarted the committee three times in the last 6 years. Curriculum review has been an important component. We have also sought advice on how to create internship and placement opportunities.
- Currently, it is more of a stakeholder group and we are considering restructuring. It reviews curriculum and placements. Members have served as city manager in residence and have attended program events. Most have been guest speakers and some have been practitioner adjuncts. One has been a link to local ASPA chapter; others have referred students or hired students.
- Networking, alumni relations, recruitment, and advisory.
- We are revising our committee to provide more curriculum development input and less student recruiting.
- They fight for us with the dean and the administration.
- Provides direction on marketing, fund-raising, curriculum needs, etc.
- Reviews mission, helps with fund-raising, helps with internship and job placement.
- They provide good feedback on the field in practice, including feedback on how new employees (ours and others) are doing in the field; help us crafting mission; help us/advise on starting new programs.
- We meet annually to review curricular changes, discuss internships, provide feedback and insight on the direction of the field and skills required of graduates.
- They are not a governing body, but an advisory body. Most recently, they helped with a branding initiative, participated in aspects of our NASPAA reaccreditation, and provided input on curriculum revisions.
- Outreach and recruitment and curriculum development.

### **Other**

- More time.
- A course release for someone else to do student advising and monitoring of scheduling and progress in curriculum. Would give me more time to focus on bigger-picture issues.

### **ADVISORY BOARD CONTRIBUTIONS TO MPA PROGRAMS**

- They can provide useful input when contemplating a curriculum or other program change.
- Assists in internships and curriculum.
- Reviews changes to the program. Plans for the future.
- They review current curriculum and program requirements and offer suggestions for revisions.

- Curriculum content, search committees, internship supervision, student networking, guest speaking, training, fund-raising, class projects.
- We have two, a student advisory board and an alumni advisory board. Members of both may attend faculty meetings. All are involved in providing advice on proposed changes in curriculum, recruitment, and program evaluation and student outcomes. All participate in search and screen activities for recruiting new faculty.
- Twice-a-year retreats discussing curriculum changes, marketing and recruitment, pedagogy.
- We meet with the advisory board twice a year. They provide report assessment, strategic goals, curriculum changes, etc. They also provide suggestions for the program.
- Assists in alumni recruitment and involvement. Assists in major curriculum development or change. Assists in fundraising and event planning. Will assist in assessing comprehensive exams in the future.
- Encouraged to help with final assessment of student final project.
- Portfolio evaluation; recruitment.
- Reviews and comments on curriculum issues. Identifies new opportunities for student community engagement. Reviews and approves program mission.

### **MOST FRUSTRATING PARTS OF THE MPA DIRECTOR JOB**

- Having responsibility but no authority. If the program fails, I am held responsible, but I don't control resources, do evaluations, etc. I don't really direct anything.
- It is ceaseless.
- Too many things going on at once.
- When we meet with the dean and have to explain why enrollments did not meet her expectations even though we have no resources for recruitment.
- Dealing with administration. The university wants the program to be accredited but provides no resources to make that happen.
- Dealing with university administrators who couldn't give a crap about program quality and just want enrollments so they can re-program those new resources to some pet project that will get them a new line in the résumé and something to highlight in their cover letter, so they can get their next job at another university before the chaos and carnage they created are discovered.
- Upper administration.
- University politics.
- University politics, constantly fighting for limited university resources, working with administrators who don't have the same values, cultivating donors, maintaining communication with alumni.
- Working with administrators to provide adequate resources.
- Too much focus from the university on the revenue side of the program. For example, a request to change the teacher/facilitator model to soften the pressure on instructors has been met with great resistance even though the current design is putting a lot of stress on faculty who did not expect the rapid growth.
- Dealing with administrators who couldn't care less about any public service role for the university.
- Dealing with bureaucracy, university, Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, and NASPAA.
- Dealing with the bureaucracy. We're based at a physical campus but "remote" from the main campus, where we rent space from a commercial property management firm. It can be difficult to get basic support down here, whether IT, janitorial services, or something else. Also, helping students navigate what seems to be unnecessary red tape in terms of filing forms, whether withdrawal paperwork or any other kind of "petition" the bureaucracy demands. We are overly reliant on paper, among other things.
- The lack of administrative support.
- NASPAA has not always been helpful, as there is often a top-down, NASPAA/COPRA (Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation) knows best attitude and little appreciation of the issue of sustainability in terms of NASPAA/COPRA demands on my time.
- Administrative tasks and data gathering that appease others but do little to support what is needed at the ground level to properly innovate, support faculty, and achieve student and research success.
- NASPAA reporting requirements.
- Fights over limited resources.

### **MOST FRUSTRATING PARTS OF THE MPA DIRECTOR JOB (continued)**

- Competing for resources with another grad program in the department. For example, I secured resources for a student recruiting course release from our grad school and had another public administration faculty member willing to do the day-to-day recruitment activities. The course release was diverted to support our other grad program, which has very weak enrollment.
- Recruiting without any control over how it is done.
- Lack of resources. No money for marketing, travel, space, etc. It is improving now, but it has been difficult.
- The School of Public Affairs is short two to three faculty lines based on our enrollment stats and graduation outcomes. We could do more if we had more core faculty to teach courses in public management and policy and in criminal justice.
- Budget cuts and micromanaging.
- Lack of budget authority.
- Lack of faculty.
- Faculty narrow view.
- Distrustful faculty.
- Dealing with difficult faculty members who fight you over everything. Having to fight for resources in a college with 13 departments/programs where you are the second smallest program.
- Recognizing and acknowledging diverse faculty perspectives and finding common ground to move projects/decisions forward.
- Dealing with political science colleagues.
- Annual scheduling of graduate courses with faculty.
- Assessment. We have a strong culture of assessment, but few people who are willing to keep up on it.
- Large portion of time spent on assessment for accreditation at various levels—NASPAA, state council on higher education, regional association of colleges, etc.
- Right now, we are behind on enrollment outreach and there are more areas to be updated than originally anticipated.
- There are a few of us really dedicated to going the extra mile to make this program awesome for our students. There are a few others who could not care less about these extras and who rarely even attend events, let alone help. There are a few others who will show up and think it's great, but do little else. We'd be blowing the doors off of this thing if we could get rid of the few slackers and replace them with the very dedicated.
- I was an untenured assistant during most of my time as MPA director, and I was still doing service work and prepping courses. My research agenda suffered terribly, and I remain a bit angry about that loss, but I am proud of the work I accomplished. It need not have been so difficult if the full professors had helped. Such is life in the academy, I suppose.

# Gender Differences in the Leadership Styles of MPA Directors

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## ABSTRACT

A growing body of literature has documented leadership styles by gender. This study examines if directors of Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs accredited by the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration exhibit gender differences in leadership styles. Such differences may affect the implementation of public administration and how effective MPA directors are in achieving positive outcomes. Using a mixed methods approach—specifically, exploratory sequential design utilizing qualitative data and analysis, followed by a quantitative survey—we find that there are some gendered differences among public administration directors. In particular, we find that women directors are significantly more likely than their male counterparts to exhibit traits that resemble transformational leaders. However, we also find that male and female directors converge in terms of other styles of leadership.

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## KEYWORDS

Leadership, leadership style, gender, transformational leadership

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In 2004, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration (NASPAA) conducted a survey of 100 schools, asking, “What does it take to be a good MPA/MPP program director?” Leadership was cited among the top five responses.<sup>1</sup> Leadership is a heavily studied topic among social science researchers; a quick Google Scholar search for the term *leadership* returns 3.4 million results. Yet scholars have neither reached consensus regarding a clear definition of leadership, nor have they definitively determined whether leadership styles differ by gender.

Leadership style by gender is a contested topic in organizational studies (Butler & Geis, 1990; Butterfield & Grinnell, 1995; Eagly, 2005; Fox & Schuhmann, 1999; Juntrasook, 2013; Schein, 2001; Schein & Mueller, 1992). On one hand, several studies have shown that women have a more democratic, participative, and collaborative style of leading (Cheung & Halpern, 2010; Juntrasook, 2013). On the other hand, Juntrasook (2013) suggests that men and women in equivalent positions of power behave similarly, suggesting no difference in leadership styles. Given these varied findings, this study

looks at a specific group: we examine if directors in Master of Public Administration (MPA) programs exhibit a gendered style of leadership. Since our study subjects are men and women in similar positions of power, we were interested to see if any leadership differences that emerged could be attributed to gender. We used a mixed methods study design, including in-depth interviews with MPA directors and a quantitative survey, to examine leadership styles.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the 1970s, a vast literature on gendered leadership spanning organizational type (Chliwniak, 1997; Trinidad & Normore, 2004), sector (Højgaard, 2002; Teasdale, McKay, Phillimore, & Teasdale, 2001), leadership style (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006), effectiveness (Bartol & Butterfield, 1976; Chapman & Luthans, 1975) and theoretical perspective (Eagly & Karau, 2002) has documented a complex and unsettled area in public administration scholarship. Research findings have been mixed. Whereas many scholars have argued that gender differences mark leadership styles, others have found no such gender influence. According to Butterfield and Grinnell (1999), "Overall, this area of inquiry has been hotly contested" (p. 225).

Aldoory and Toth (2004) attribute these mixed findings to either gender socialization or structuralism. Gender socialization refers to stereotypical traits and behaviors not subject to change (e.g., emotionality, nurturance and sensitivity to others). Incongruent behaviors, Aldoory and Toth say, such as women displaying autocratic behaviors or men being good listeners, are perceived as ineffective. Butler and Geis (1990) confirm the view that sex<sup>2</sup> differences have focused on perceptions of leadership (Butler & Geis, 1990) and as Lewis's (2000) study shows, followers feel uncomfortable and respect their male leaders less when these men cry in front of subordinates. In the same way, women are considered more nurturing than men and more sensitive to others' feelings (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Structuralism posits the opposing view, arguing that job status, job description, and position in a hierarchy displace gender stereotypes in leadership styles. Other evidence indicates

that both gender socialization and structuralism reciprocally influence leaders' behaviors (Lewis & Fagenson-Eland, 1998; Portello & Long, 1994). For example, Lewis and Fagenson-Eland (1998) find that leaders' self-reports are related to their gender, whereas supervisors' reports on leaders are related to the leaders' organizational level.

## Leadership Styles

In response to this lack of consensus, scholars have focused on transformational, situational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership types. First, transformational, or charismatic leadership (Bass, 1985, 1990; Bass & Avolio, 1992), includes risk taking, goal articulation, high expectations, and emphasis on collective identity, self-assertion, and vision (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001; McWhinney, Webber, Smith, & Novokowsky, 1997). Cheung and Halpern (2010) align transformational leadership with the interpersonal characteristics associated with women leaders more than with the aggressive and hierarchical characteristics associated with male leaders. These leaders "transform" others by encouraging them to question prior assumptions and consider alternative points of view (Goethals, 2005). Druskat's (1994). Further, Cheung and Halpern (2010) illustrate that women line workers, for example, perceive women leaders as embracing more transformational characteristics than transactional ones, stressing the importance of communication and team building.

Eagly and Carli (2003) support the perception that women tend to use transformational leadership more than men and that women leaders tend to engage in more reward contingency behaviors. That is, women leaders tie employee rewards to behaviors, which enables employees to make connections between their efforts, outcomes, and the rewards they receive. Linking effective outcomes with transformational leadership, Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam (1996) assume that women are more effective leaders because they are more likely to use the transformational style. Krishnan and Park (2005) find a significant and positive relationship between the number of women in top management and the financial performance of the company. The authors explain this important finding by

noting the differences between female and male leadership styles, especially women's greater willingness to share information, a transformational trait, which can drive better performance throughout the company.

Some have also argued that transformational leadership may be characterized as more feminine because the socialized characteristics of nurturing and supporting subordinates are integral to this leadership approach (Guy, Newman, & Mastracci, 2008; Newman, Guy, & Mastracci, 2009; Wang, 2011). Jin (2009) notes that, although emotions are an essential part of an organization, not until recently have researchers paid attention to their role. The reason is that emotions have "traditionally been thought to be something that women do naturally; and too often dismissed as either nurturing or supportive" (Jin 2009, p. 3). Maher (1997) writes that transformational leadership is positively associated with leadership effectiveness; therefore, if women typically exhibit transformational leadership behaviors, "this may contribute to breaking the glass ceiling as women are increasingly selected to occupy executive-level positions" (p. 212). Over the years, the concept of transformational leadership has evolved to include leaders who are inspiring, optimistic, moral, and equitable and who provide others with inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, and a higher purpose in life (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Scholars view the second kind of leadership—situational leadership—in two ways: one approach sees leadership behavior as a dependent variable and focuses on identifying how contextual factors, such as position or type of organization, shape this behavior; the other approach focuses on elements that influence the relationship between leadership behavior and effectiveness (Ford, 2005; Juntrassook, 2013). This latter approach, Ford (2005) suggests, assumes that leadership style depends on contextual factors, including the nature and characteristics of environment, work, and subordinates, and that there is one effective style of leadership suitable for a given situation.

Third, transactional or authoritative leadership establishes positions held by the leader (Aldoory & Toth, 2004), focusing on exchanges between leaders and followers (McCleskey, 2014). These exchanges, McCleskey (2014) argues, allow leaders to accomplish performance objectives, complete required tasks, maintain the current organizational situation, motivate followers through contractual agreement, direct behavior of followers toward achievement of established goals, emphasize extrinsic rewards, avoid unnecessary risks, and improve organizational efficiency. Maher (1997), in turn, defines transactional leadership as behaviors that emphasizes exchanges or bargains between manager and follower, focusing on how current needs of subordinates can be fulfilled. Bass, Avolio, and Atwater (1996) classify transactional leadership as management-by-exception and contingent reward, where the former is either active, such as when the leader monitors and corrects follower performance, or passive, in which the leader intervenes to take remedial action only when something goes wrong. The latter is a more constructive, positive transaction that involves directed, consultative, or negotiated agreements between leaders and followers about objectives and/or task requirements. In the contingent reward aspect, the leader promises and/or provides suitable rewards and recognition if followers achieve objectives or execute tasks as required. In other words, the leader concentrates on identifying and correcting mistakes and taking disciplinary action.

Fourth, several researchers describe a *laissez-faire* or passive-avoidance style of leadership (e.g., Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1995; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). This leader type tends to react only after problems have become serious enough to take corrective action, and she or he often avoids making any decisions at all. Marked by a general failure to take responsibility for managing (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001), and exhibiting frequent absence and lack of involvement during critical junctures (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & van Engen, 2003), this leader type does not provide direction or guidance. The *laissez-faire* leader, according to Jones and

Rudd (2008), avoids accepting responsibilities, is absent when needed, fails to follow up on requests for assistance, resists expressing his or her views on important issues, and gives followers the majority of control in decision-making processes. Laissez-faire leadership assumes that followers are intrinsically motivated and should be left alone to accomplish tasks and goals.

### Alternative Approaches

Alternative leadership styles are replacing traditional ones, providing new (and possibly superior) ways to understand leadership (Eddy & VanDerLinden, 2006; Ford, 2005). Leadership throughout the organization (Peterson, 1997), team leadership (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993), servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977; Spears & Lawrence, 2002), transformative leadership (Burns, 1978), inclusive leadership (Helgesen, 1995), and the role of followership (Kelley, 1988) have replaced motifs of the “great man” or “hero” leader. There has been a shift from heroic leaders to a more participatory, encouraging type who works productively with all organizational members (Fletcher & Käufer, 2003). According to Davis (2003), leadership can “bubble up” in various places within institutions, no longer the domain of formal leadership roles. For example, Eddy and VanDerLinden (2006) explore whether community college administrators use alternative or emerging language about leadership. They find that male leadership is perceived as more directive and autocratic (based on position, i.e., me-centered) and female leadership as more participatory and valuing meritocracy. The authors argue that gender does not always define how one chooses to lead but rather that institutional structures may act as barriers or impediments for the advancement of women.

In summary, Eagly and Johnson (1990) note ingrained sex differences in traits and behavioral tendencies, a spillover of gender roles into organizational roles, and subtle differences in the structural position of women and men, all of which could cause leadership behavior to be sex-differentiated. It is not surprising, then, that some organizational studies find evidence of

sex differences in leadership style. Nonetheless, we deem organizational roles more important than gender roles, which led us to predict that differences between men and women occupying the same leadership role in various organizations would be smaller than differences between men and women in other types of leadership research, namely laboratory experiments and assessment studies.

### DATA AND METHODOLOGY

We used a mixed methodology approach to study differences in leadership style among MPA directors, by gender. More specifically, we employed an exploratory sequential design, characterized by initial qualitative data collection and analysis followed by quantitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2015; Creswell & Clark, 2010). The first, qualitative phase consisted of in-depth interviews of 10 MPA directors stratified by location, faculty size, and gender. We contacted 30 MPA heads, of which 10 agreed to participate. A sample of 10–15 interviews is sufficient as a starting point in an exploratory sequential mixed methods study design (Creswell & Clark, 2010). The second, quantitative phase employed a survey of leadership styles using the well-tested Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) scale (Bass & Avolio, 1992).

In our first phase, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 MPA directors that lasted 1–2 hours. We recorded, transcribed, and analyzed the interviews. Two independent coders coded the data. Of the 10 participants, six were female and four male; four were in the Northeast, one in North Central (i.e., the Midwest), two in the South, and three in the West. There was an equal distribution of participants (four each) from small (less than 10 nucleus faculty) and midsize programs (10–20 nucleus faculty). One fifth of the program heads (two) belonged to large programs that had more than 20 nucleus faculty. We conducted interviews in early fall 2016. We categorized responses by concepts that allowed us to identify patterns. We employed a phenomenological approach to study what meaning the MPA directors ascribed

to their roles as leaders. We asked respondents 15 questions, divided into three key areas: motivations for becoming an MPA director, leadership style, and challenges and rewards. In this article, we focus on answers to these two questions: (1) What does leadership mean to you? (2) How would you describe your leadership style?

We used the in-depth interviews to develop an online survey to measure leadership styles of MPA directors. We used the MLQ, a popular tool in organizational science to measure transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. The MLQ has changed since first introduced by Bass and Avolio (1992) and Avolio, Bass, and Jung (1995). The original questionnaire had 73 items, which was reduced to 45 items also referred to as the MLQ (Form 5X). Our study uses the MLQ-6S, an abbreviated version that has 21 questions and measures three leadership styles.

We assessed transformational leadership through four factors: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. *Idealized influence* indicates if a leader is able to gain the trust, faith, and support of subordinates and keep their hopes and dreams alive; in short, the ability to act as a role model. *Inspirational motivation* measures the degree to which a leader can provide a vision and encourage others to see the significance of their work. *Intellectual stimulation* is the degree to which a leader can espouse new ways of problem solving and creativity and nurture people to question existing values and beliefs. *Individualized consideration* is the degree to which a leader is able to pay attention to the needs of every employee in an organization, even those who seem less involved. Two factors—contingent reward and management-by-exception—measure transactional leadership. Contingent reward and management-by-exception emphasize rewards contingent on performance and a belief in “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” We measured the hands-off laissez-faire leadership style using three questions. The appendix lists all questions used for all three leadership styles.

Respondents answered using a 5-point scale, where 0 = Not at all and 4 = Frequently, if not always. We used the MLQ to triangulate findings of our in-depth interviews by gender.

Our survey also used statements from the Guy-Newman-Mastracci emotional labor questionnaire (Guy et al., 2008). These statements measure emotional work and are as follows: My job requires that I display many different emotions when interacting with others. My work requires me to guide people through sensitive and/or emotional issues. My work involves dealing with emotionally charged issues as a critical dimension of the job. My job requires that I manage the emotions of others. In my work, I am good at dealing with emotional issues. My work requires me to provide comfort to people who are in crisis. The Cronbach alpha of these measures is 0.91. We ranked responses to these statements on a 7-point scale, from 1 = Never to 7 = Always. We specifically added these measures because female MPA directors in our interviews mentioned their emotional investment in their leadership roles.

Our survey also asked about overall job satisfaction, student enrollment, number of full-time faculty, and MPA directors’ age, gender, and years of experience. We conducted the survey in November 2016 using an online tool, Qualtrics. We sent 295 requests to MPA directors of NASPAA-accredited programs (two reminder requests followed the initial e-mail request); we received 84 responses, a 28.5% response rate.

Of our total survey respondents ( $N = 84$ ), 61% were male, 37.8% female, and 1.2% other. Close to 15% were aged 30 to 39, approximately one third (33%) were aged 50–59, about one third (33%) were aged 60 and over, and the remaining 22% were aged 40–49. The majority of the program directors were full professors, followed by associate and assistant professors. As expected, only a small percentage of MPA directors were assistant professors (6.1%). Respondents’ average years employed at their current institution was 12.8 years, and respondents averaged 5.4 years in their current leader-

ship role. The majority of programs offered MPA degrees (73%), 6% offered MPP degrees, 10.7% offered both, and close to 25% had other master's offerings (e.g., in government, nonprofit, health administration, or urban planning). On average, the programs included four full-time female faculty compared to six full-time male faculty (tenured and tenure track). Most programs had more female students than male students enrolled during spring 2016 through fall 2016. (See Table 1.)

**TABLE 1.**  
Descriptive Statistics of Survey Respondents

Description	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	61%
Female	38%
<b>Age group</b>	
31-39 years	12.7%
40-49 years	22.8%
50-59 years	31.6%
>60 years	32.9%
<b>Rank</b>	
Assistant professor	6.3%
Associate professor	41.8%
Professor	48.1%
Other	3.8%
<b>Average amount of time spent</b>	
At current institution	12.8
In leadership role	5.4

Note. N=84

**RESULTS**

**Interview Results**

Table 2 presents the results of our interviews with 10 MPA directors, six female and four male. Women directors were more likely to describe a leader as someone able to lead by example. Women directors indicated the importance of being a role model for their students and faculty members. They accomplished this by maintaining accountability, being a team player, and serving as a mentor to their students and junior faculty members. As one of the female directors said,

I see my leadership as a facilitator and a mentor and a role model. Because I think if I model for them [students and faculty] a good representation of the department, then it gives them a level of what they should expect of themselves as leaders. I try to model with them by being efficient and effective.

Most women directors also felt a responsibility to lead by example. As one summarized,

There's a responsibility to take whether you know it's assessment or curriculum, so I think it's being the kind of person that's in charge of making sure that you know you're moving in the right direction. And I try to do that by example.

Women directors further emphasized relationship building and bringing out the best in others:

I believe leaders should be empathetic, well-rounded, and able to find the best in others. Leaders should be able to mediate challenges and create excitement about possibilities. Leaders need to take responsibility for the bad as well as the good. Great leaders share success and recognize that we lift each other up by our partnerships rather than competitive relationships.

Male directors in our sample described leadership as setting a vision and agenda to move the program forward. Some of the key themes that

emerged are highlighted in Table 2. One of the male MPA directors said,

As a leader you are the advocate, the implementer, if you will. But more broadly, I mean, to me, a good leader is the person who keeps us on course and has a vision of where we're going and then implements, you know, kind of, "the how," how we get there. You're the captain of a ship in some ways. You're steering it, but you're also charting the course.

Male directors described leaders as strategic thinkers who set agendas, implement a vision, and communicate that vision to stakeholders. One male interviewee commented,

Leadership is more, to me, at least, it's about setting an agenda. And you know, looking at the mission of the program and saying, you know, who are we? What do we want to be? What's our vision? What's our strategic plan? And sort of implementing the vision, if you will.

Others saw their role as advocates, policy implementers, and administrators. One male director said, "I am basically responsible for implementing policy. If I were to make an analogy to a parliamentary type government, it might be that I'm the prime minister to ... whoever is the president." Male directors also emphasized leading by example.

We asked interviewees to describe their leadership style, and we transcribed and analyzed responses by gender. Women directors described their leadership style as informal, collaborative, nurturing, facilitative, trusting, and laissez-faire (see Table 3). One female respondent noted,

You can't just say, "Well, we are just going to do X. Lead, follow, or get out of the way." That doesn't work in my experience in a public agency and it certainly doesn't work in an academic environment where nobody has control over anybody. It has to be collaborative and people have to feel that their opinions and their concerns matter.

**TABLE 2.**  
What Meaning MPA Directors Ascribe to Leadership

Male directors	Female directors
Setting vision, agenda	Maintaining accountability by taking responsibility
Role model	Setting an example/role model
Implementer	Initiator
Administrator	Representative/advocate of the program
Communicating vision to the stakeholders	Empathetic
Advocate	Facilitator
	Mentor
	Relationship building/connecting
	Others/collaboration/team building

**TABLE 3.**  
Preferred Leadership Style

Male directors	Female directors
Consultative	Informal
Administrator/policy implementer	Collaborative/facilitative
Laissez-faire	Nurturer
	Laissez-faire
	Empathetic and trusting

Women directors also described their style as facilitative, nurturing, and serving as counselors to students. One interviewee commented about counseling students, “You have to be a priest or a rabbi sometimes.” Another indicated, “My style is facilitative, nurturing, empathetic, and protective. I try to build teams that have complementary skill sets among collaboratively minded individuals.”

Male directors described their leadership styles as consultative, administrative, and laissez-faire (see Table 3). “I don’t know if I particularly see myself as a leader,” one male respondent said. “I’m an administrator and the dean is ultimately the leader of the school.” Another commented, “The first word that comes to mind is *consultative*. So I like to listen and consult with others on important decisions before just executing them.” Still another said, “I’m not very directive, telling people you have to do it this way or that way.”

**Survey Results**

Based on the themes that emerged from our qualitative interviews, we developed a survey to assess differences in leadership style, both employing the MLQ and examining emotional work. Table 4 presents factor-wise distribution of the MLQ for all respondents. The MPA directors scored high on intellectual stimulation

and individualized consideration, and most scored moderate on the remaining factors. The highest percentage among the low range was those who had a contingent reward style of leadership. The most expressed style of leadership was individualized consideration. To assess if there were significant differences in leadership styles by gender, we performed a *t*-test on the seven factors that comprise the MLQ (i.e., idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, contingent reward, management-by-exception, and laissez-faire).

The results in Table 5 show that women directors scored significantly higher on idealized influence and inspirational motivation factors of the MLQ. These two factors are part of the transformational style of leadership. But while women directors scored higher on individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation, there was no significant difference by gender in the remaining factors that comprise transformational leadership. Male directors scored higher on contingent reward and management-by-exception, which are both elements of the transactional leadership style. However, there is no significant difference between male and female MPA directors. Interestingly, both male and female directors scored identically in terms of the laissez-faire leadership style.

**TABLE 4.**  
Range of Leadership Scores for MPA Directors in the Sample

	High (score of 9–12) (percentage)	Moderate (score of 5–8) (percentage)	Low (score of 0–4) (percentage)
<b>Transformational leadership</b>			
Idealized influence	41.4	48.3	10.3
Inspirational motivation	48.3	44.8	6.9
Intellectual stimulation	56.2	36.2	6.9
Individualized consideration	61.4	31.6	7.0
<b>Transactional leadership</b>			
Contingent reward	30.3	53.6	16.1
Management-by-exception	39.3	58.9	1.8
Laissez-faire	44.6	53.6	1.8

**TABLE 5.**  
Mean Differences in Leadership Style by Gender (per the MLQ)

	Male ( <i>n</i> = 37)	Female ( <i>n</i> = 21)
<b>Transformational leadership</b>		
Idealized influence	7.3	8.5*
Inspirational motivation	7.7	8.6**
Intellectual stimulation	7.9	8.6
Individualized consideration	8.3	8.9
<b>Transactional leadership</b>		
Contingent reward	7.4	6.9
Management-by-exception	7.9	7.6
Laissez-faire	4.7	4.7

*Note.* The scale ranges from 0 = Not at all, 1 = Once in a while, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Fairly often, to 4 = Frequently, if not always; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .1$ .

**TABLE 6.**  
**Mean Differences in Emotional Work by Gender**

Emotional work indicators	Male (n = 33)	Female (n = 21)
My job requires that I display many different emotions when interacting with others.	4.73	4.81
My work requires me to guide people through sensitive and/or emotional issues.*	4.41	5.14*
My work involves dealing with emotionally charged issues as a critical dimension of the job.	4.3	4.9
My job requires that I manage the emotions of others.	4.3	4.8
In my work, I am good at dealing with emotional issues.	4.9	5.1
My work requires me to provide comfort to people who are in crisis.	3.9	4.4

Note. The scale ranges from 1 = Never to 7 = Always; \* $p < .05$ .

We also analyzed differences in emotional work by gender. We included a section on emotional work in the survey after female MPA directors noted how much time they spent attending to students' emotional wants and needs and similar faculty needs. Table 6 presents the results and indicates that while women scored higher on each of the emotional factors, they ranked significantly higher for the statement, "My work requires me to guide people through sensitive and/or emotional issues." Overall, women directors expressed a more transformational and nurturing style of leadership.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

While there is no shortage of organizational leadership research, conflicting literature makes it difficult to distinguish what effect gender has on leadership styles. In this study we questioned whether gender difference exists among a sample of MPA directors of NASPAA-accredited programs. Consistent with Eagly and Carli's (2003) and Yoder's (2001) work on gendered leadership, we find that transformational leadership may be especially advantageous for women because it encompasses stereotypical female behaviors of support and consideration. We find that women directors lean toward the

transformational style of leadership because they integrate elements of collaboration, relationship building, and empathy. This supports Cheung and Halpern's (2010) definition of transformational leadership, which aligns more with the interpersonal characteristics associated with women leaders than with the aggressive and hierarchical characteristics associated with male leaders.

Also important, male directors scored higher on contingent reward and management-by-exception, both factors of a transactional leadership style. This supports Dvir's (2001) conclusion that as transactional leaders, men are more concerned with completing tasks efficiently and correctly, which becomes their most important duty. Yet, given that male and female MPA directors did not differ significantly in their leadership styles, we are reminded that Bennis and Nanus (1985) cautioned that despite more than 350 definitions of leadership, there is no clear understanding of what distinguishes leaders from nonleaders. In other words, blurred lines persist in terms of leadership generally and gendered leadership specifically. Stivers (2002) adds that leadership is partly a matter of personal qualities and

partly contingent on the situation; in sum, it is a myth used to make sense of organizational and political significance and to support and rationalize existing political, economic, racial, and gender arrangements. However, as Fox and Schuhmann noted in 1999, and still holds true today, “While it is important not to overstate gender differences, it is increasingly evident that men and women often bring different leadership qualities, agendas, priorities, and methods of conceptualizing policy issues to their professional roles” (p. 231).

Another interesting finding is that both male and female directors scored identically on laissez-faire leadership style. This is not surprising given that both males and females also reported laissez-faire as one of their leadership styles during the interview phase of our research. This finding may signal the need for a more in-depth questionnaire to better capture the nuance of what constitutes laissez-faire rather than simply identifying it as hands-off approach. This finding may also indicate convergence in male and female leadership styles. Perhaps, as Stivers (2002) noted, gender may not always be the defining variable of difference in how one chooses to lead. Instead, we should focus study on institutional structures that may act as barriers or impediments for the advancement of women (VanDerLinden, 2003).

Our findings probe us to think critically about leadership and gender and the necessity to unmask important aspects of social reality in relation to how participants—in this case, MPA directors—make sense of their leadership. Do women perceive themselves as transformational because that is what is expected? Are they acting according to perceived gender roles? The mainstream understanding of leadership derives from male professionals who have defined it to include decisive, visionary, bold, strategic, and inspirational behaviors (Stivers, 2002). Indeed, as Aldoory and Toth (2004) highlight, incongruent behaviors—such as women displaying autocratic behaviors or men being good listeners—can be perceived as ineffective.

In large part, a director’s leadership style influences the successful governance and performance of his or her organization (Seidle, Fernandez, & Perry, 2016). How MPA directors, regardless of gender, develop their leadership styles can positively affect their programs’ outcomes as well as future public administrators. Further research should focus on leadership development programs for both directors and students, in order to expand the repertoire of leadership styles (Dearborn, 2002). For example, the expansion and inclusion of emotional intelligence elements are key to developing leaders, to organizational outcomes, and to moving beyond mainstream perceptions of leadership (Sadri, 2012; Seidle et al., 2016).

One limitation of this study is the absence of survey questions regarding organizational hierarchy. Knowing the effect of MPA directors’ placement within a university’s and/or school’s structure is an important area for future study. In other words, whom the director reports to (e.g., dean, chairperson, director of graduate studies, etc.) may affect decision-making autonomy and thereby leadership style.

Several implications of this study are important for the direction of MPA programs. For example, gender and second-generation bias are not present in current MPA curricula (Schachter, 2017). MPA programs need to redefine the skills and knowledge taught to students so as to include these perspectives. Given the director’s role in curriculum development, if she or he is constrained by expected gender roles, curriculum changes of this sort may be challenging. Similarly, the increasing number of women in MPA leadership positions, including directorship, may present challenges if women do not adhere to gender expectations and perceived gender roles. Consequently, this may limit the possibility of structural and organizational change necessary to address fundamental limitations. Stivers (2002) explains that critically acknowledging the gendered nature of leadership and organizations is essential for institutional changes to take place and if more women are to assume leadership responsibility and ultimately successfully govern organizations. We are not

suggesting that MPA programs should be run by women only, but we urge program leaders to acknowledge gender differences in leadership styles and learn from each other.

Broader implications of this study touch on whether differences in leadership styles affect diversity policies and initiatives and the way that public administration is run. In other words, how effective are leaders in achieving positive outcomes in their roles? In light of the global push toward more women leaders and changing organizational practices (Eagly & Carli, 2003), studying the challenges and rewards of leadership are important next steps.

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## NOTES

- 1 See NASPAA's website for a summary: <http://www.naspaa.org/principals/resources/summary.asp>.
- 2 Earlier literature uses *sex* and *gender* interchangeably.

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## APPENDIX

### Elements of Leadership Styles

#### TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

##### *Idealized Influence*

- I make others feel good to be around me.
- Others have complete faith in me.
- Others are proud to be associated with me.

##### *Inspirational Motivation*

- I express with a few simple words what we could and should do.
- I provide appealing images about what we can do.
- I help others find meaning in their work.

##### *Intellectual Stimulation*

- I enable others to think about old problems in new ways.
- I provide others with new ways of looking at puzzling things.
- I get others to rethink ideas that they had never questioned before.

##### *Individualized Consideration*

- I help others develop themselves.
- I let others know how I think they are doing.
- I give personal attention to others who seem rejected.

#### TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

##### *Contingent Reward*

- I tell others what to do if they want to be rewarded for their work.
- I provide recognition/rewards when others reach their goals.
- I call attention to what others can get for what they accomplish.

##### *Management-by-Exception*

- I am satisfied when others meet agreed-upon standards.
- As long as things are working, I do not try to change anything.
- I tell others the standards they have to know to carry out their work.

##### *Laissez-Faire*

- I am content to let others continue working in the same way as always.
- Whatever others want to do is OK with me.
- I ask no more of others than what is absolutely essential.

# Paying It Forward: The Role of Student Philanthropy Course Activities on Civic Outcomes

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## **ABSTRACT**

This article explores how student philanthropy course activities influence student understanding of philanthropy and the likelihood of engaging in civic activities. Data came from 1,628 students participating in the Pay It Forward student philanthropy initiative. Multivariate regression analyses reveal that having direct contact with nonprofits, doing research into an issue area, assisting in writing grant proposals on behalf of organizations, serving as group leader or co-leader, and investing a large percentage of class time in the philanthropy project are activities that most strongly predict student confidence in philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge. We also find that a high level of engagement (i.e., making important decisions, developing ideas, having responsibilities) is more significant than any single course activity in predicting student confidence and shifting philanthropic, volunteer, and work plans. Finally, we find that student philanthropy course activities have less of an effect on students who have previously participated in philanthropic activities.

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## **KEYWORDS**

Student philanthropy, experiential learning, service learning

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In recent years, indications of changes in civic learning and engagement have spurred academic- and community-based conversations around how to engage the next generation of philanthropists (Cornelius, Covington, & Ruesga, 2008; Perry, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Saratovsky & Feldmann, 2013; Van Pelt, Wick, & Abrams, 2011). Because higher-education institutions serve as venues for young people to become engaged in their communities via service and scholarship (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007), one response has

been to integrate the teaching of philanthropy into higher education. Since the late 1990s, a growing number of higher education institutions have implemented educational programs and course-based opportunities for students to become engaged in and study philanthropy (Ashcraft, 2002; Falk, 2002; Irvin, 2005; Payton & Moody, 2008; Wish & Mirabella, 1998).

Student philanthropy (also known as experiential philanthropy) is an experiential education strategy that integrates academic study and com-

munity service to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities, and includes a philanthropy component (Olberding, 2009). Within student philanthropy courses, undergraduate and graduate students study social issues in the community and make decisions about distributing funds to nonprofit organizations. The purpose of these courses is not only to introduce students to the practice of philanthropy but also to encourage them to remain philanthropic throughout their lives. Indeed, civic learning that includes knowledge, skills, values, and the capacity to work with others on today's challenges can help increase the number of informed, thoughtful, and public-minded citizens who are well prepared to contribute to society. Civic learning opportunities, such as those within student philanthropy courses, can equip students with knowledge and prepare them for action in our communities (National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement, 2012).

Early findings in the field of student philanthropy have been promising. Relevant courses have been linked to students' increased awareness of social problems and the role of nonprofits, a heightened sense of responsibility to help others in need, and a greater investment of time and money in support of their communities (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007–2008; Olberding, 2012). No published work, however, has examined which specific student philanthropy course activities may be responsible for these outcomes. This article explores how such activities predict students' understanding of philanthropy and their plans to give to, volunteer in, and support their communities. Specifically, this study uses data from the Pay It Forward student philanthropy initiative to address the following research questions:

- What features of a student philanthropy course predict students' confidence in their philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge?
- What aspects of a student philanthropy course predict changes in students' plans to donate money to, volunteer in, and work in the nonprofit sector?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Student Philanthropy: What Is It?

Student philanthropy emerged in the teaching and philanthropic studies literature more than 10 years ago, and courses have spread across the United States to at least 40 colleges and universities (Olberding, 2012). Olberding (2009) defines student philanthropy as “an experiential learning approach that provides students with the opportunity to study social problems and nonprofit organizations, and then make decisions about investing funds in them” (p. 463). Programs such as the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project at Northern Kentucky University and Northeastern University's Students4Giving are examples of university-based initiatives that have emerged in the past 15 years and continue to affect communities through grantmaking, while providing students with an opportunity to “practice” philanthropy.

Most colleges and universities implement the student philanthropy approach in classes for academic credit, and these courses can take place across disciplines and departments (Olberding, 2012). Models of student philanthropy can employ either a traditional direct giving or an indirect giving approach (Olberding, 2009; Olberding, Neikirk, & Ng, 2010). In the direct giving model, which emerged as a pedagogical approach in the late 1990s, a class is provided with a certain amount of money donated by foundations, corporations, universities, the government, or local funders, and students make giving decisions that directly affect the funding of nonprofit groups (Olberding et al., 2010). In the indirect giving model, which Northern Kentucky University developed in 2007, students evaluate grant proposals and a board makes the final funding decisions (Olberding, 2009). This article focuses on an initiative that uses the direct giving model.

### Student Philanthropy's Roots in Service Learning

The initial exploration of student philanthropy led Olberding (2009) to the more extensive literature on service learning, which she argued is similar to student philanthropy in that the

two concepts are both experiential education strategies that integrate academic study and community service to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities (Astin & Sax, 1998; Cohen & Kinsey, 1994). The key difference is that service learning involves the “time and talents” of student participation while student philanthropy adds the “treasure,” or funds, that come from foundations, corporations, government agencies, campuses, or even individuals via students’ fund-raising efforts (Olberding, 2009).

Olberding (2009) identified several goals for student philanthropy, many of which align with those of service learning (see also Furco, 1996). These goals include enhancing awareness of social problems and nonprofit organizations, increasing knowledge of philanthropic processes (e.g., grant seeking and grantmaking), and influencing attitudes, interests, intentions, and behaviors related to civic engagement and social responsibility. Additional goals of national student philanthropy initiatives include improving the understanding of academic content through integration of theory and practice and improved critical thinking, communication, leadership, and other work-life skills (Olberding, 2009).

Scholars have primarily conducted post-test studies to determine whether progress has been made toward these goals. Ahmed & Olberding (2007–2008) found that the direct giving model is associated with greater student awareness of social problems and nonprofits, an increased sense of responsibility to help others in need, and, consistent with Tice (2002), greater intentions to donate and volunteer. McDonald and Olberding (2011) conducted the first quasi-experimental study of student philanthropy by looking at student philanthropy within criminal justice courses and found that student philanthropy participants were significantly more likely to be aware of nonprofit organizations in their community than nonparticipants. Further, the change scores of student philanthropy participants for “social problem awareness” and “interest in helping others” were significantly greater than the

change scores of non-participants. Olberding (2012) conducted the first study to examine the long-term effects of student philanthropy courses by surveying alumni; she found that student philanthropy had a positive effect on awareness, beliefs, and intentions. This study also found that 86% of student philanthropy alumni had recently made charitable contributions, 71% reported volunteering, and 15% served on nonprofit boards, all of which are higher percentages than the national averages for these activities. These results provide evidence that student philanthropists continue to be philanthropists once they leave the university setting, suggesting that the “learning by giving” approach is associated with long-term student volunteering and giving.

### **Understanding Student Philanthropy Course Activities**

Despite increased knowledge of student philanthropy course outcomes, very little is known about the factors that contribute to these outcomes. In particular, given the wide range of types of student philanthropy courses and the differences within each type, one can expect course activities to vary substantially in the extent to which they promote and achieve the aforementioned goals of student philanthropy. The service-learning literature suggests that different course activities could influence course outcomes. For instance, Billig, Root, and Jesse (2005a) found that students who engaged in direct service (e.g., tutoring, visiting older adults) were more attached to their communities, students who engaged in indirect service (e.g., funding, research) were more academically engaged, and students who engaged in political or civic action (e.g., organizing a community forum) had higher levels of civic knowledge and civic disposition. In addition, Morgan and Streb (2001) found that civic outcomes increased among students who took an active role in designing service projects and had a choice about their involvement.

Billig (2007) identified promising practices to improve student outcomes in service learning in educational settings for young people, which include (but are not limited to) curriculum

integration, youth voice, meaningful service, and duration. For instance, Billig (2007) suggested that instructors integrate service learning into curricula as an instructional method to help students master content standards. In addition, giving young people a voice in every aspect of the service-learning process, as well as opportunities for meaningful participation, enabled students to engage in problem solving, decision making, planning, and goal setting (Billig et al., 2005a).

College students in particular were more satisfied with their service-learning experience and more likely to volunteer in the future when they believed their contributions were valuable to the mission of the organization and to the constituents being served (Tomkovick, Lester, Flunker, & Wells, 2008). Specifically, when students took on smaller tasks (e.g., were able to select the issue to address, have a personal connection to the task or issue at hand, to interact with the “recipient” of a service, problem-solve and analyze an issue), service learning became more meaningful because students could see the results of their efforts, compared to assuming bigger tasks (e.g., solving poverty) where impact is difficult to see (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005b; Root & Billig, 2008).

Finally, recent research suggests that service-learning experiences in the classroom must be long enough to have an impact on both the student and partner organization, typically one semester, or 70 hours (Billig, 2007; Billig et al., 2005a; Spring, Dietz, & Grimm, 2006). This recommended time frame allows for preparation (e.g., research into an issue area and local nonprofit organizations, writing requests for proposal), action (e.g., connecting with and visiting nonprofits, developing selection criteria), reflection (e.g., grappling with the challenges of selecting an awardee), and demonstration of results (e.g., awarding a philanthropic gift). Further exploration is needed into which activities within student philanthropy courses meet and achieve the goals of student philanthropy.

It is also important to note that students may experience course activities differently based on

prior exposure to philanthropic activities. Although parents, religious life, organizational associations, and neighborhoods can affect the ideals that lead to engagement in philanthropic behavior (Bjorhovde, 2002; Daloz, 1998; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006), not all students have been exposed to these experiences. Disparities in civic participation exist based on socioeconomic status (Hyman & Levine, 2008), race and ethnicity (Foster-Bey, 2008), and gender (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, 2013). Moreover, the literature suggests that students’ prior exposure to or participation in civic or philanthropic activities can affect the impact that a service-learning or philanthropy course has on students (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007–2008; Dickie, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Reinke, 2003). Specifically, for those students with a high levels of awareness and exposure to social problems and nonprofits, the intention to give money and volunteer, and a sense of personal responsibility to their community, the service learning or experiential philanthropy course may have very little or no effect (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007–2008). Thus, while the potential for student philanthropy courses to meet their goals is considerable, students’ backgrounds and prior philanthropy experiences must be taken into consideration in evaluating course success.

## METHODOLOGY

This article uses data from Pay It Forward, an initiative of the Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio Campus Compacts that aims to develop a new generation of philanthropists by infusing the practice of philanthropy as a core component of college coursework. Campus Compact is a coalition of college and university presidents that seeks to advance the public purpose of higher education by deepening its ability to improve community life and educate students for civic responsibility. More than 30 universities in Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio offer Pay It Forward courses in diverse disciplines. In each course, students research social needs and nonprofit organizations, invite nonprofits to apply for grants through a request for proposal (RFP) process, evaluate applications and pro-

posals, and make collective decisions about which organizations to fund (Olberding, 2012). Pay It Forward uses a direct giving approach, and each course gives awards of \$4,500 and has \$500 for administrative costs (which primarily pay for student travel to organizations and end-of-semester award ceremonies). Pay It Forward is sponsored by Ohio Campus Compact, and the initiative's 2010–2011 funding was made possible through a Learn and Serve grant from the Corporation for National and Community Service.<sup>1</sup>

Pay It Forward's main goals are to address critical needs in communities through student-led grant-making, provide service-learning opportunities, and connect campuses and communities. One of the initiative's requirements is that instructors infuse a philanthropy project into existing courses rather than create new courses. Another requirement is that students must volunteer at least 15 hours with a local nonprofit during the course term.

Since January 2010, Pay It Forward has engaged nearly 4,200 college students in 197 courses across 37 campuses. Consistent with previous research (Campbell, 2014), these Pay It Forward courses occur in a variety of disciplines, departments, and organizational units. While courses are often taught in business/management and human-services settings, they also occur in dozens of other areas, including art/design, health, and criminal justice. Pay It Forward instructors can teach these courses individually or with another instructor. Some Pay It Forward courses are multisection courses. The hope is that this student philanthropy experience will inspire students to engage in lifelong philanthropy and volunteer to improve the lives of others.

### Sample and Response Rate

Between January 2010 and August 2011, 2,215 students participated in 110 Pay It Forward courses across 33 colleges and universities. All students enrolled in Pay It Forward courses were asked to take a survey after the course. We received 1,628 end-of-course surveys from students who participated in 96 philanthropy

courses across 31 higher-education institutes in Kentucky, Michigan, and Ohio. The response rate of participating students, courses, and colleges was 73%, 87%, and 94%, respectively.

### Survey Instrument and Variables

Ohio Campus Compact and the Sillerman Center for the Advancement of Philanthropy at Brandeis University jointly developed the survey instrument (available upon request). Previous instruments used to study philanthropy and philanthropy education informed the current survey, including the Students4Giving 2009–2010 survey, the Great Cities Great Service program college student survey, the Campus Connects Student Philanthropy Project end-of-semester survey, and Conrad and Hedin's (1991) community-service checklist. The current survey asks about student characteristics; prior philanthropic experience; course activities and experiences; confidence in philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge after taking the course; and perception of course impact after taking the course. Ohio Campus Compact oversaw all aspects of survey administration. Participating instructors administered surveys at the end of the course. Students could complete the survey on paper or online. Ohio Campus Compact then mailed paper surveys to the Sillerman Center, to be entered into a database and analyzed.

### Dependent Variables

We were interested in understanding how specific activities in student philanthropy courses predicted two outcomes related to philanthropy, volunteering, and broader civic engagement: (1) confidence in philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge; and (2) changes in future philanthropic, volunteer, and work activity. These outcomes align with Olberding's (2009) initial assessment of the goals of student philanthropy initiatives.

**Confidence in Philanthropic Skills, Abilities, and Knowledge.** Regarding this first outcome, the survey asked students about their confidence in identifying issues and challenges facing the local community, articulating a community need, and measuring the impact of nonprofit programming on community needs. We asked

students to rate their level of confidence about 17 statements (on a 4-point scale, ranging from Not at all Confident to Very Confident). These statements addressed the following areas:

- Knowledge of emerging trends in philanthropy and fund-raising
- How to build partnerships with leaders in the community
- How to identify issues and challenges facing local communities
- The role of the nonprofit sector in the local community
- How to measure the impact of nonprofit programming on community needs
- How to develop an RFP for the nonprofit community that reflects giving priorities
- How to gather and analyze information from partnerships and/or site visits with nonprofits to inform decisions
- Ability to articulate points of view different from the students' own
- Ability to articulate a community/educational need through public presentation, grant writing, or other fund-raising strategy.

These statements factored into a single scale of confidence, with a Cronbach's alpha of .94, indicating a very high level of internal consistency.

**Changes in Future Philanthropic, Volunteer, and Work Plans.** Concerning this second outcome, the survey asked students to consider how likely they were to participate in various philanthropic and volunteer activities before taking the Pay It Forward course and then to reflect on their plans for participating in these activities after the course. We asked 16 questions about students' perceptions of future giving, future volunteering, future conversations about philanthropy, and future work in the nonprofit sector. The survey asked students to report how likely they were to engage in each activity at the beginning of the course versus after the course (on a 4-point scale, ranging from Not at All Likely to Very Likely). We further explored six of these outcomes: whether students give money to local

nonprofits after graduation, volunteer after graduation, talk with peers about giving, talk with family about giving, pursue work in the nonprofit sector after graduation, and/or seek employment in an organization or corporation that values volunteer service. We first calculated whether there was an increase, decrease, or no change in the likelihood of student respondents' participating in these six outcomes after taking the Pay It Forward course. Next, we recoded the dependent measure into two categories: (1) change (increase) in likelihood; or (2) no change or a decrease in likelihood.

### **Independent Variables**

The survey and our analyses included several relevant covariates. We were particularly interested in student philanthropy course activities and other course components while controlling for demographic characteristics and prior philanthropy experiences.

#### ***Student Philanthropy Course Activity Covariates.***

The survey asked about students' investment of time and overall engagement in nine course activities: direct contact with nonprofits, research into an issue area, helping develop selection criteria for grant awards, communication with nonprofits, writing the RFP, plans to volunteer at a nonprofit next term, leadership, making a donation to a nonprofit being considered for an award, and coordinating a nonprofit's speaking to the class.

The survey also asked students seven questions about their level of engagement in the Pay It Forward course, asking them to rate how often they had had certain experiences (using a 5-point scale, ranging from Practically Never to Very Often). These experiences included the following: felt I made a contribution, had the opportunity to learn by doing, had the freedom to develop and use own ideas, had real responsibilities, made important decisions, had challenging tasks, and had a variety of tasks to do at each site. Taken together, these seven questions became our overall scale of engagement. In addition, the survey asked students about other course components, such

as the number of visits made to a nonprofit being considered for a grant award and the percentage of in-class time devoted to the philanthropy project.

#### **Demographic and Prior Experience Covariates.**

The survey asked for student demographic characteristics and prior philanthropy experiences. These included gender, religious affiliation, parental education (a measure for socioeconomic status), and race/ethnicity because of these factors' roles in influencing civic outcomes. We selected four measures of prior philanthropic experience based on findings from existing research and preliminary analyses. These consist of whether a student took a prior course in philanthropy, participated in service learning in high school, previously made a donation to a nonprofit organization, and/or previously discussed philanthropy with a parent or guardian.

#### **ANALYSIS**

We ran quantitative analyses to examine which aspects of the Pay It Forward courses were significant predictors of overall confidence and participation in future giving, volunteering, and work in the nonprofit sector. We ran correlations to ensure that multicollinearity would not prevent using prior philanthropy experiences or course activities in the model. Because of the low correlations between all variables, we included all in the model.

To answer the first research question, we used ordinary least squares regression analysis and controlled for students' demographic characteristics and prior philanthropic experience to identify which aspects of the course were significant predictors of students' overall confidence in these areas. To answer the second research question, we first calculated whether there was a change in students' likelihood of participating in philanthropic, volunteer, or work activities after taking the student philanthropy course. Next, using logistic regression analysis, we controlled for students' demographic characteristics and prior philanthropic experience to identify which aspects of the course predict a change in students' expectations for future philanthropic, volunteer, and work plans.

#### **DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS**

Table 1 provides an overview of the independent variables used in the analysis. As shown, the majority of Pay It Forward participants were female (66%), were members of faith-based communities (66%), and identified as white/Caucasian (82%). Nearly half (49%) of students had a parent with a bachelor's degree or higher.

The survey also asked about prior philanthropic experience. While 77% of students had previously made a donation to a nonprofit organization, 42% had participated in service learning in high school and only 18% had taken a course in philanthropy. Only 13% of respondents had discussed their parents' or guardians' philanthropic work in-depth with them, 37% had done so briefly, and 51% had never done so. Prior discussions with parents or guardians about their philanthropic or volunteer activity were broken into two categories: in-depth (13%) or briefly/never (87%).

Because each Pay It Forward course was integrated into preexisting curricula, the activities offered and the focus on philanthropy varied. Most students had direct contact with nonprofits (76%), did research into issue areas (75%), and developed selection criteria for grants (61%). About half of students made an initial contact with a nonprofit to learn about the services offered or see if the group was interested in submitting a proposal (58%) and assisted in writing the RFP/grant proposal on behalf of an organization (45%). Fewer students served as a group leader or co-leader (34%), made a donation to at least one of the nonprofits being considered for an award (31%), or coordinated the visit of a nonprofit to speak to the class (18%).

To inform their grantmaking decisions, many students visited the organizations they were considering for a grant award. Students visited an average of three different nonprofits throughout a Pay It Forward course. Specifically, while 55% of students made two or more visits to a nonprofit being considered for a grant, 45% visited an organization only once or not at

**TABLE 1.**  
Description of variables

<b>Dependent Variables</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Confidence in philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge	Continuous	1-4	2.75	0.57
Change in donating to local nonprofits after graduation	1 = Change	0-1	0.47	0.50
Change in volunteering after graduation	1 = Change	0-1	0.46	0.50
Change in talking with peers about giving	1 = Change	0-1	0.50	0.50
Change in talking with family about giving	1 = Change	0-1	0.48	0.50
Change in pursuing work in the nonprofit sector after graduation	1 = Change	0-1	0.44	0.50
Change in seeking employment in an organization or corporation that values volunteer service	1 = Change	0-1	0.42	0.49

<b>Independent Variables</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>				
Gender	1 = Female	0-1	0.66	0.48
Religious affiliation	1 = Member of a faith-based community	0-1	0.66	0.47
Parent education	1 = Bachelor's degree or higher	0-1	0.49	0.50
Race/ethnicity**	1 = White/Caucasian	0-1	0.82	0.39
<b>Prior Philanthropic Experience</b>				
Taken a course in philanthropy before	1 = Yes	0-1	0.18	0.39
Participated in service learning in high school	1 = Yes	0-1	0.42	0.49
Made a donation to a nonprofit organization	1 = Yes	0-1	0.77	0.42
Parent/guardian discussed philanthropy	1 = Discussed in-depth	0-1	0.13	0.33
<b>Course Activities</b>				
Had direct contact with nonprofits	1 = Yes	0-1	0.76	0.43
Did research into an issue area	1 = Yes	0-1	0.75	0.43
Helped develop selection criteria for awarding grants	1 = Yes	0-1	0.61	0.49
Made an initial contact with nonprofit to learn about services offered or see if group was interested in submitting a proposal	1 = Yes	0-1	0.58	0.49
Assisted in writing the RFP/grant proposal on behalf of an organization	1 = Yes	0-1	0.45	0.50
Made plans to volunteer at a nonprofit next term	1 = Yes	0-1	0.36	0.48
Served as a group (board) leader/co-leader	1 = Yes	0-1	0.34	0.47
Made a donation (money, material items) to at least one nonprofit being considered	1 = Yes	0-1	0.31	0.46
Coordinated the visit of a nonprofit to speak to the class	1 = Yes	0-1	0.18	0.38
<b>Other Course Components</b>				
Number of visits made to a nonprofit being considered for an award	Continuous	0-45	2.95	3.62
Percentage of in-class time spent on philanthropy project	Continuous	1-4	2.25	0.92
Engagement scale	Continuous	1-5	3.78	0.88

*Note.* N = 1,628. \*SD = Standard Deviation. \*\*Respondents were asked to select all applicable categories.

**TABLE 2.**  
Course Predictors of Confidence in Philanthropic Skills, Abilities, and Knowledge

Variable	B	Std. Error
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>		
Gender	-0.064*	0.029
Faith	0.003	0.028
Parent education	-0.034	0.027
Race/ethnicity	-0.069	0.036
<b>Prior Philanthropic Experience</b>		
Taken a course in philanthropy before	0.150***	0.036
Participated in service learning in high school	0.059*	0.027
Made a donation to a nonprofit organization	0.067*	0.032
Parent/guardian discussed philanthropy	0.041	0.041
<b>Course Activities</b>		
Had direct contact with nonprofits	0.146***	0.034
Did research into an issue area	0.089**	0.033
Helped develop selection criteria for awarding grants	0.042	0.029
Made an initial contact with nonprofit to learn about services offered or see if group was interested in submitting a proposal	-0.002	0.029
Assisted in writing the RFP/grant proposal on behalf of an organization	0.063*	0.028
Made plans to volunteer at a nonprofit next term	0.040	0.030
Served as a group (board) leader/co-leader	0.064*	0.030
Made a donation (money, material items) to at least one nonprofit being considered	0.022	0.030
Coordinated the visit of a nonprofit to speak to the class	-0.042	0.038
<b>Other Course Components</b>		
Number of visits made to a nonprofit being considered for an award	0.004	0.004
Percentage of in-class time spent on philanthropy project	0.050**	0.015
Engagement scale	0.220***	0.017
Constant	1.552***	0.760

Note.  $N=1,557$ . B is an unstandardized coefficient. Model summary:  $R=.539$ ,  $R^2=.290$ . \*Significant at  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*Significant at  $p \leq .01$ .  
\*\*\*Significant at  $p \leq .001$ , two-tailed.

all. In addition, it was rare for instructors to devote most of their course time to the philanthropy component. The majority (63%) of students spent less than half of in-class time on the philanthropy component of the course,

and only 11% of respondents spent over 75% of their time on philanthropy. On the engagement scale, the majority of students on average felt engaged somewhere between Sometimes and Fairly Often.

**MULTIVARIATE RESULTS**

**Confidence in Philanthropic Skills, Abilities, and Knowledge.** Because scholars have linked the quality of a service learning experience to the outcomes of participants (Spring et al., 2006), we examined the relationship between what occurs in a student philanthropy course and students' confidence in their philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge at the end of the course. Table 2 provides the results of the ordinary least squares regression analysis, where we controlled for students' demographic characteristics and prior philanthropic experience to identify which aspects of the course are significant predictors of students' overall confidence. As seen in Table 2, having direct contact with nonprofits, doing research into an issue area, assisting in writing a grant proposal on behalf of an organization, serving as a group leader or co-leader, the percentage of class time spent on the philanthropy component of the course, and the overall level of engagement are all significant predictors of students' overall confidence. Other significant predictors include gender (female), taking a prior course in philanthropy, participating in service learning in high school, and making a donation to a nonprofit organization.

**Change in Philanthropic, Volunteer, and Work Plans.** We then explored whether participation in a student philanthropy course influenced students' future plans to donate, volunteer, have conversations about giving, and work in the nonprofit sector. Table 3 highlights change scores from the six questions we used in our analyses about giving and volunteering, conversations about giving, and work in the nonprofit sector. The majority of students responded that they experienced no change or an increase in likelihood of participating in philanthropic, volunteer, or community activities.

Table 4 highlights the results of the six regression analyses. Using logistic regression analysis, we again controlled for students' demographic characteristics and prior philanthropic experience to identify which aspects of the course (if any) made students more or less likely to change their perceptions around future giving and volunteering, conversations about giving, and work in the nonprofit sector. The dependent variable for these analyses was whether there was a change in likelihood to engage in these different nonprofit sector activities after taking the course.

**TABLE 3.**  
Change Score Results (%)

Survey Item		N	Decrease	No Change	Increase
Giving and Volunteering	Donate to local nonprofits after graduation	1,473	2%	51%	47%
	Volunteer after graduation	1,454	2%	52%	46%
Conversations about Giving	Talk with peers about giving	1,471	2%	48%	50%
	Talk with family about giving	1,447	2%	50%	48%
Work in the Nonprofit Sector	Pursue work in the nonprofit sector after graduation	1,475	3%	53%	44%
	Seek employment in an organization or corporation that values volunteer service	1,467	2%	56%	42%

**Giving and Volunteering.** When it came to future giving, we found that a 1-point increase in the engagement scale resulted in a 31% increase in the likelihood that students would change their plans toward giving money to local nonprofits after graduation. However, students taking a prior course in philanthropy, making a donation to an organization, and a parent's or guardian's discussing philanthropy in-depth decreased the likelihood that these plans would change after taking the philanthropy course (by 36%, 32%, and 52%, respectively).

Similarly, we found that a 1-point increase in the engagement scale resulted in a 25% increase in the likelihood that students would change their plans to volunteer after graduation. But again, prior philanthropy experiences such as making a donation to a nonprofit and in-depth philanthropy discussions with parents or guardians decreased the likelihood that students would change their plans to volunteer by 25% and 47%, respectively. In addition, for students who helped develop selection criteria for awarding grants, we saw a 24% decrease in the likelihood that their plans around volunteering after graduation would change.

**Conversations about Giving.** An increase in course engagement is the most positive and significant predictor of whether students change their plans around talking with peers and family about giving after taking a student philanthropy course. A 1-point increase in the course engagement scale resulted in a 31% increase in the likelihood that students would change their plans around talking with peers about giving and a 24% increase in the likelihood around changing plans to talk with family about giving.

However, yet again, students with prior philanthropy experience and course activities were less likely to demonstrate changes in future conversations about giving. Prior experience donating to a nonprofit resulted in a 40% decrease in the likelihood that students would change their plans to discuss giving with their peers. For students who had previously talked with their parents or guardians about

philanthropy in-depth, we found a 25% decrease in the likelihood that they would change their plans to talk with family about giving, most likely because these conversations had previously occurred. In addition, students who coordinated a visit of a nonprofit to speak to a class resulted in a 29% decrease in likelihood to talk with peers about giving; students who made an initial contact with a nonprofit to learn about services they offered or see if the group was interested in submitting a proposal resulted in a 23% decrease in likelihood of changing whether they would talk with family about giving after taking the student philanthropy course.

**Work in the Nonprofit Sector.** After taking a student philanthropy course, female students were 30% more likely than males to change whether they were going to pursue work in the nonprofit sector after graduation. In addition, two specific activities resulted in an increased likelihood that students would change whether they were going to pursue nonprofit work after graduation: assisting in the writing of the RFP/grant proposal on behalf of an organization (38%) and making plans to volunteer at a nonprofit next term (40%). Making plans to volunteer at a nonprofit next term also resulted in a 44% increased likelihood that students would seek employment in an organization or corporation that values volunteer service. However, coordinating the visit of a nonprofit to speak to the class resulted in a 32% decrease in the likelihood that students would seek employment in a place that values volunteer service. Finally, consistent with other outcomes, an increase in course engagement resulted in a 37% increase in the likelihood that students would pursue work in the nonprofit sector after graduation and a 39% increase in the likelihood that they would seek work in a place that values volunteer service.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Student philanthropy courses aim to engage students in philanthropic experiences that broaden their perspectives about giving and volunteering. Our analyses suggest that specific course activities make a difference in students' confi-

**TABLE 4.**  
Odds Ratios of Course Change in Philanthropic, Volunteer, and Work Plans

Dependent Variables	Giving and Volunteering		Conversations about Giving		Work in the Nonprofit Sector	
	Donate to local nonprofits after graduation	Volunteer after graduation	Talk with peers about giving	Talk with family about giving	Pursue work in the nonprofit sector after graduation	Seek employment in an organization or corporation that values volunteer service
Independent Variables	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)
<b>Demographic Characteristics</b>						
Gender	1.08	0.89	1.00	1.01	1.30	1.03
Faith	0.86	0.96	1.21	0.96	1.00	0.94
Parent education	1.03	0.96	0.97	0.86	1.13	1.03
Race/ethnicity	1.06	1.04	1.07	0.94	1.00	1.11
<b>Prior Philanthropic Experience</b>						
Taken a course in philanthropy before	0.64**	0.75	0.83	0.98	0.79	0.67*
Participated in service learning in high school	1.11	1.01	1.12	0.99	0.99	0.91
Made a donation to a nonprofit organization	0.68**	0.75*	0.60***	0.84	0.90	0.88
Parent/guardian discussed philanthropy	0.58**	0.53***	0.74	0.65*	0.88	0.72
<b>Course Activities</b>						
Had direct contact with nonprofits	1.20	1.07	1.28	1.12	1.03	1.11
Did research into an issue area	0.92	1.32	1.24	1.18	0.98	0.85
Helped develop selection criteria for awarding grants	0.96	0.76*	1.13	1.02	0.91	0.91
Made an initial contact with nonprofit to learn about services offered or see if group was interested in submitting a proposal	1.09	1.17	0.79	0.77*	1.05	0.91
Assisted in writing the RFP/grant proposal on behalf of an organization	1.17	1.01	0.90	1.07	1.38**	1.16
Made plans to volunteer at a nonprofit next term	0.93	1.12	1.13	1.29	1.40**	1.44**
Served as a group (board) leader/co-leader	0.96	1.04	0.95	0.89	1.03	1.08

Note. Dependent variables were coded into change/no change. \*Significant at  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*Significant at  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*Significant at  $p \leq .001$ , two-tailed.

**TABLE 4. (continued)**  
**Odds Ratios of Course Change in Philanthropic, Volunteer, and Work Plans**

Dependent Variables	Giving and Volunteering		Conversations about Giving		Work in the Nonprofit Sector	
	Donate to local nonprofits after graduation	Volunteer after graduation	Talk with peers about giving	Talk with family about giving	Pursue work in the nonprofit sector after graduation	Seek employment in an organization or corporation that values volunteer service
Independent Variables (continued)	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)	e(β)
<b>Course Activities (continued)</b>						
Made a donation (money, material items) to at least one nonprofit being considered	1.13	1.21	1.23	1.13	1.05	1.14
Coordinated the visit of a nonprofit to speak to the class	1.07	0.81	0.71*	0.68*	0.79	0.68*
<b>Other Course Components</b>						
Number of visits made to a nonprofit being considered for an award	1.01	1.03	0.99	1.03	1.00	1.00
Percentage of in-class time spent on philanthropy project	1.03	0.98	1.08	1.05	0.99	0.95
Engagement scale	1.31**	1.25**	1.31***	1.24**	1.37**	1.39**
Constant	0.35**	0.40**	0.30***	0.42**	0.17**	0.26**
<b>N</b>	1,473	1,454	1,471	1,447	1,475	1,467

Note. Dependent variables were coded into change/no change. \*Significant at  $p \leq .05$ . \*\*Significant at  $p \leq .01$ . \*\*\*Significant at  $p \leq .001$ , two-tailed.

dence about their ability to identify community needs and measure the impact of nonprofits in meeting those needs. Further, particular course activities can influence whether students are likely to change their plans to give money, volunteer, and work in the nonprofit sector.

Importantly, although this study offers several strengths in its design, data, and analysis, characteristics of its methodology limit our ability to generalize the findings. First, students self-select into Pay It Forward courses and may be

different in important ways from students who choose not to enroll. Further, since the survey was administered at the end of the course, and collected from students who voluntarily offered their feedback, the responses may be different than had all enrolled students completed surveys. Second, our study relies on students' predictions about giving and volunteering in the future, rather than measuring actual changes in behavior over time. Self-reported data are open to social desirability bias—a tendency to answer questions in the way respondents think the researchers

want them to answer—which can occur when participants are asked questions about giving money or time (Rooney, Steinberg, & Schervish, 2004). Finally, because Pay It Forward courses are offered in three Midwest states, the findings are not generalizable to all colleges or universities in the United States. Despite these limitations, this research highlights the importance of considering students' prior philanthropic experience and the components of student philanthropy courses when examining the effects of these courses on student philanthropic outcomes. Our findings have several implications for the field of student philanthropy.

First, we find that the level of engagement in a course, an investment of time, and experiential activities are factors that most strongly predict students' confidence in their philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge. Students' overall engagement is the best predictor of their confidence in these areas, which is consistent with previous research that suggests that young people value service learning more when they become more engaged and acquire knowledge and skills (Billig, 2007). Moreover, several hands-on activities fitting this description were positively linked to confidence, including whether students had direct contact with nonprofits, did research into issue areas, assisted in writing a grant proposal on behalf of an organization, and served as group leaders. This finding is consistent with previous service learning research, which suggests that active, hands-on activities that provide an opportunity to "learn by doing" positively support student learning (Billig et al., 2005a; Billig, 2007).

Second, our analyses show a positive relationship between the percentage of time students invest in the philanthropy component of the course and students' confidence in their philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge. This finding may motivate instructors to increase the amount of time spent on the philanthropy project during the course, as just over one-third of courses spent more than half of their time on the philanthropy project. This find-

ing highlights the need to carefully balance discipline-related content with the philanthropy component of the course. If course instructors seek to improve students' confidence concerning philanthropy, they must devote time and attention to relevant activities—such as providing students the opportunity to serve as group leaders, conduct research into issue areas, write a grant proposal for an organization, and have direct contact with nonprofits. Intentional modifications of service learning courses are associated with positive gains in terms of outcomes for both students and partner organizations (Mobley, 2007). Importantly, course instructors must be given the appropriate resources and support to design their student philanthropy courses to meet specified learning goals, objectives, and outcomes.

Third, our analyses suggest that overall engagement in student philanthropy courses is more significant than any single component in shifting students' philanthropic, volunteer, and work plans. By engagement, we mean increased opportunities for students to feel like they made a contribution, had the opportunity to learn by doing, had freedom to develop and use their own ideas, had real responsibilities, made important decisions, had challenging tasks, and had a variety of tasks to do at each site. These findings are consistent with previous research about student engagement and service learning: a higher level of engagement in the course matters for future civic outcomes (Billig et al., 2005b; Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011). In particular, students who made plans to volunteer next term and assisted in the writing of a grant proposal were more likely to seek employment in the nonprofit sector or for an organization that values volunteer service after graduation. These findings are also consistent with previous service learning research that suggests that when students directly interact with the "recipient" of service, the service experience becomes more meaningful and students become more attached to their communities (Billig et al., 2005a; Billig et al., 2005b; Root & Billig, 2008).

These findings have important implications for instructors' design of student philanthropy courses. For instance, instructors must ensure that students have opportunities to engage in meaningful activities in the classroom. This includes providing activities that are substantive but not overwhelming, framing activities so that they have clear relevance to students' lives, explicitly connecting to students' previous experiences, and providing students with challenging tasks to do at each site (Brophy, 2004). Meaning can be derived by meeting an interesting challenge, seeing the benefit of one's efforts for both oneself and others, and ensuring that the student philanthropy project actually meets an important need (Billig, 2007). Following recommendations from Hatcher and Studer (2014), class activities should also allow students to frequently interact with nonprofit leaders and community partners both inside and outside the classroom, so students are exposed to the assets, challenges, and limitations of nonprofits in addressing social issues.

In addition, instructors should invite student voices throughout the entire student philanthropy process. This includes providing opportunities for students to share meaningful feedback and considering student voices within a framework of learning outcomes. Instructors should provide guidance to students around understanding when students can experiment with new ideas; they should ensure that students know and receive the assistance they need throughout the process; they should provide spaces for students to learn and innovate; and the courses should be developmentally appropriate (Billig, 2007). Instructors should also create space in the curriculum for students to seek out and create a plan for future volunteer and philanthropy activities. Intentionally structuring opportunities for students to engage in such activities invites students to think about how their student philanthropy course activities may translate into future civic action.

Finally, we find that controlling for students' prior philanthropic experience can shed important insights on understanding student philanthropy course outcomes. We find that although

that many students had prior experience with giving and volunteering, over half had never discussed their parents' or guardians' volunteer or philanthropic work with them. While parents, organizations, and neighborhoods can influence whether youth engage in philanthropic activities, it is clear that not all students have opportunities to engage with philanthropy early on in life. We also find that factors such as taking a philanthropy course, participating in service learning in high school, and making a donation to a nonprofit organization prior to the student philanthropy course can have a positive and significant effect on students' confidence in philanthropic skills, abilities, and knowledge. However, students with these prior philanthropic experiences do not demonstrate the same increased likelihood of changing their plans to give, volunteer, and work in the nonprofit sector.

These findings are consistent with previous research that suggests that this prior exposure to philanthropy affects the outcomes of student philanthropy courses (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007–2008; Dickie, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Reinke, 2003). Student philanthropy course instructors must consider the variation in previous exposure to voluntary or nonprofit sector activities when designing a student philanthropy project, recognizing that student background could have a differential effect on student course experiences and perspectives on future civic outcomes. Future research has an opportunity to delve further into whether participation in a student philanthropy course has differential effects on students based on characteristics such as socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, gender, level of education, and previous exposure to philanthropy. Research must also explore different types of student philanthropy courses at different types of higher-education institutions (e.g., community colleges, four-year selective institutions). Such research will allow us to better understand which students benefit most from these courses.

Overall, we learned from this research that the activities that occur in student philanthropy courses matter for students' understanding of

and future engagement in the nonprofit sector. While the core goals of student philanthropy courses are consistent across courses, students' experiences in such courses vary considerably. These findings contribute pedagogically to how instructors might design courses to most effectively engage a new generation of philanthropists; these findings also provide evidence that factors such as prior student philanthropy experience may influence the effectiveness of these courses. Future research and continued funding of student philanthropy courses in higher education will not only bring answers to new questions about the practice of teaching student philanthropy, but also enable a new generation to strengthen and invest in their communities.

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## NOTE

- 1 Beginning in fall 2011, owing to loss of funding from the Corporation for National and Community Service, the allotted amount for each class to give to nonprofits decreased to \$2,000. The majority of campuses in the Pay It Forward initiative found additional money or used student fund-raising to

augment the awards. To participate, each campus needed to make a 100% funding match, and at least nine campuses located funds to sustain courses for 2012–2013. Through local foundation funding, Ohio Campus Compact started a Pay It Forward initiative in Licking County, Ohio, offering seven courses on two campuses during Spring 2013. Since then, Ohio Campus Compact has continued to work with local organizations and higher-education institutions in Licking County to organize Pay It Forward courses.

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# Information Technology Strategy and Management Curricula in Public Administration Education in Latin America

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## ABSTRACT

Around the world, failures and scandals in government have evidenced the need to improve the information and communication technology (ICT) curriculum of public administration programs. In the United States, since 1986, the Network of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs, and Administration has promoted standards of computer literacy that include ICT skills. Studies of ICT curricula in public administration education focus on the supply side (the opinions of schools and students), neglecting the demand side (the opinions of employers). Programs in Latin America have been poorly studied and there are no clear ICT standards. The present study involved interviewing chief information officers and executives (employers) in the public sector in Mexico in order to identify competencies for ICT curricula. As a result, this study identifies soft and hard competencies and subsequently examines them using an extension of the NASPAA's Annual Data Report survey and reviewing Latin American public administration program websites. In general, this study finds that ICT-related courses in Latin America are more associated with soft competencies than hard competencies.

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## KEYWORDS

Public administration, higher education, curriculum, information technology

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Bountiful examples illustrate how government professionals at all levels face different types of data and technology issues around the world (Dawes, Helbig & Nampoothiri, 2014; Heeks, 2006; West, 2005). Implementing and managing digital government initiatives are rapidly growing phenomena across countries and governments but a very hazardous investment and risky endeavor for those involved in these tasks (Heeks, 2006). Data and technology issues have key roles in public sector performance, so well-trained professionals are a critical factor in success (Dawes, 2004; Purón-Cid, Gil-García, & Luna-Reyes, 2012; West, 2005). Regarding challenges in this arena, professionals in the pub-

lic sector face information systems failures and costly investment risks in complex intra- and interorganizational settings characterized by data and privacy leakages, dispersion of information, lack of competent staff, and poor executive leadership. The questions of how public administration education<sup>1</sup> should prepare future government professionals in contexts that are information and technology intensive and the questions of what information technology strategy and management (ITSM)<sup>2</sup> curricula should be integrated into public administration programs are not new, and they transcend borders (Dawes, 2010; Kraemer & King, 1986; NASPAA, 1986; Op de Beeck & Hondeghem, 2010).

The actual curricula and competencies in public administration education lag behind adequate ITSM competencies due to rapid technological changes. Scholars have investigated ITSM standards and competencies in two general ways: (1) from the supply side, mainly through surveys of schools and programs of public administration (Brown & Brudney, 1998) and/or of students and graduates from these programs (Lan & Cayer, 1994); and (2) from the demand side, using questionnaires administered to governments to examine the competencies demanded by public organizations (see Rosenbaum & Kauzya, 2007; UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs [UNDESA], 2008). In general, studies of the supply side dominate the research, resulting in a strategic limitation about our knowledge of proper ITSM curriculum design.

Technological conditions are changing rapidly worldwide. Therefore, public administration education must revise its ICT curricula to include ITSM competencies that meet the expectations and requirements of students, graduate programs, and employers. The United Nations E-Government Survey provides a comparative overview of digital government development across member states. One of the survey's components is its Online Service Index (OSI), which examines the ICT patterns of digital government.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 compares the OSI of different regions during the period 2003–2014. North America and Europe clearly have advanced digital government. Asia's digital government has markedly improved. Oceania has made significant progress in the last few years of the period.

Africa and Latin America experienced moderate progress during the first half of the period (similar to Asia) but have had subsequent poor advancement during the second half. The reasons for these patterns are complex and exceed the scope of this article. However, it is important to note that adequate ITSM education and training are critical and strategic tools for building competencies and skills among those who are or will be responsible of digital government initiatives, both in general (Dawes, 2004; Rosenbaum & Kauzya, 2007)

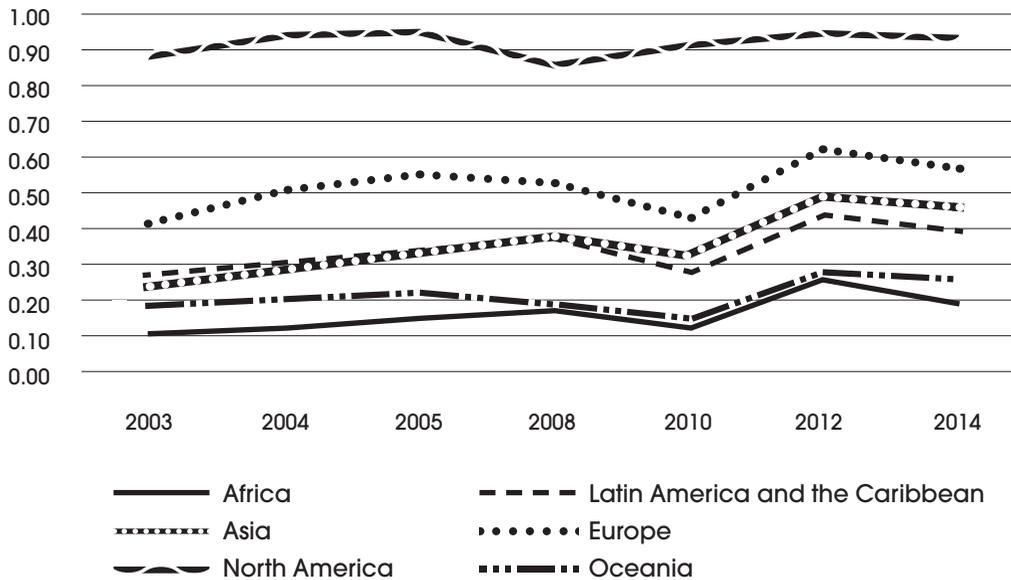
and in Africa and Latin America specifically (Al-Wohaibi, Masoud, & Edwards, 2002; Araya Moreno, 2007). Strengthening public administration education by improving ITSM curricula is critical to the success of digital government adoption (Al-Wohaibi et al., 2002; Heeks, 2001, 2006; Rosenbaum & Kauzya, 2007). Conversely, lack of vision, strategy, and competencies and poor project and change management, among other administrative deficiencies, increase the risk of digital government failure (Heeks, 2001, 2006).

Today, public administration education is a necessary ingredient in a complex value chain that facilitates adoption of ICT tools and advancement in their application. Such education's effect may be indirect but still critical for developing a more democratic and effective state. This study posits that to understand the ICT needs of different world regions, we need to study how public administration education and ITSM curricula perform from the perspective of employers (supply side). This approach in particular may improve our understanding of the needs of Latin America and Africa, where digital government development seems subject to context-specific inhibitors, such as lack of skilled and well-trained staff.

Unfortunately, few international comparative studies of the role of public administration education discuss digital government in Latin America and Africa. Recently, competency models of ICT standards have been revised among developed countries like Australia, Canada, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the United States (CIO Council, 2012; Op de Beeck & Hondelghem, 2010). This has helped to understand the ICT curriculum for public administration education in theory and practice in these countries (Op de Beeck & Hondelghem, 2010). But there is much more to assess based on other experiences around the world.

This study aims to contribute to this body of research by applying a two-phase research approach in Latin America. The first phase is qualitative and examines the employer's view of ITSM competencies and skills present in public administration education in Mexico.

**FIGURE 1.**  
United Nations Online Service Index (OSI) (2003–2014)



The second phase is quantitative and, using a survey and content analysis of curricular information published on school and program websites, contrasts the competencies identified in the first phase.

#### **EVOLUTION FROM COMPUTER LITERACY AND IT SKILLS TOWARD AN ITSM COMPETENCIES MODEL**

ICT curricula in public administration programs first focused on computer literacy and IT skills for critical management processes such as accounting, finance, budgeting, planning, and personnel. In the mid-1980s, the then-named National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) promulgated general guidelines for a curriculum in computers and information systems in public management. Kraemer and King (1986) examined the opinions of schools about this curriculum, which consisted of a three-course sequence: (a) management of computers and information systems; (b) analysis and design of information systems; and (c) organizational and social impacts.

NASPAA first published “Curriculum Recommendations for Public Management Education in Computing” in 1986 (Kraemer & King, 1986; NASPAA, 1986). Kraemer and Northrop (1989, p. 448) updated these guidelines, again from schools’ point of view, and concluded with four additional management-oriented recommendations: (1) computer appreciation, (2) computer applications for management, (3) computer use and information systems knowledge, and (4) a specific information management concentration for technology assessment, purchasing implementation, and evaluation, among other managerial issues.

In the early 1990s, scholars expanded the curricular managerial focus by incorporating organizational issues and project management of ICT projects (Baker, 1997; Bretschneider, 1990; Cats-Baril & Thompson, 1995; Caudle, 1990), such as interorganizational boundaries, red tape, criteria for IT evaluation, and public sector planning and leadership. Lan and Cayer (1994) found deterioration of the role of

public administration graduates in ICT projects in government, where people from other professional backgrounds (mostly business graduates) have overtaken these functions in the public sector. Interestingly, the authors identified specific competencies demanded by employers: data analysis skills<sup>4</sup> and formulating information policies.

Brown and Brudney (1998) examined legislation<sup>5</sup> that addressed the risks associated with poor IT adoption in US government, looking at 106 MPA programs affiliated with NASPAA. The authors related rising rates of IT failures to lack of skills and knowledge among public administration graduates. Some issues identified were poor ICT investment and integration across organization boundaries, the need for a chief information officer, inadequate ICT policies and evaluation, legal implications, and more active role for graduates in managing ICT. The authors' findings suggest that a limited number of students are exposed to critical areas for advancing ICT in the public sector. They recommended a core curriculum for information resource management specialization in MPA programs, using a three-course sequence and an internship: (1) strategic information resource management, (2) information resource management planning methodologies, and (3) information policy. This IT curriculum became the standard for professional master's degree programs in public administration education.<sup>6</sup>

Other scholars have extended the study of ICT curricula in public administration education but remain biased toward the supply side. Some argue that ICT curricula should move away from a management orientation to be more citizen-centered, adding institutional, organizational, and individual aspects (Scavo & Shi, 2000). Others discuss the challenges of teaching these new topics with existing faculty, resources, and institutional settings and outreach (Jennings, 2002; Northrop, 1999). Still others promote inclusion of contemporary public management issues and information policy in ICT curricula (Brown & Brudney, 1998; Dawes, 2004; Kim & Layne, 2001; Kraemer & King, 1986; Jennings, 2002). During the mid-2000s, discussion of

public administration ICT curricula turned on determining competencies for devising strategies and managing ICT projects in government. Dawes (2004) reviewed practical experience and academic research on information systems in government and identified five groups of competencies for IT-savvy public managers: strategic thinking and evaluation, system-oriented analytical skills, information stewardship, technical concepts, and complex project management skills. Each of these five groups involves specific skills and capabilities. Most efforts to date for defining ICT curricula also reflect US cases and experiences (see the appendix).

In 2005, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA), in partnership with the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), initiated a series of studies in preparation of the volume *Excellence and Leadership in the Public Sector: The Role of Education and Training* (Rosenbaum, 2007; Rosenbaum & Kauzya, 2007; UNDESA, 2008). One of the studies compared international experiences from developed countries to identify critical competencies for the "Information management, new technology applications, and policy" dimension of public service (Rosenbaum & Kauzya, 2007). This effort identified five sets of competencies for public administration curriculum that are widely adopted across programs, schools and countries. In 2006, NASPAA's Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) revised these five competencies. Other international accreditors also revised their guidelines and adopted these five competencies (European Association for Public Administration Accreditation [EAPAA], 2006; European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [ENQA], 2005; European Foundation for Management Development [EFMD], 2006). In 2009, COPRA revised and approved the standards for public administration higher education using this competency model (NASPAA, 2014). These standards were again revised and updated in 2011 and 2012, this time into three categories of competencies: universal required, mission-specific required, and mission-specific elective (last two defined by each institution).

The *Atlas of Public Policy and Management* is a SharePoint platform at the University of Toronto's School of Public Policy and Governance; it is an online database of pedagogy in public administration, public policy, and public affairs higher education (Clark, Eisen, & Pal, 2015). The atlas presents a competencies map<sup>7</sup> that organizes curricular content among master's-level public policy and public administration programs using three combined competency frameworks: that of NASPAA, UNDESA/IASIA, and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS). Table 1 describes the competencies map. The map is aspirational for any program. The spectrum of competencies is wide and varies according to school strategy and mission. Competency models have helped schools and programs define their orientation by aligning curricula with the external needs of employers and the individual career goals and learning opportunities of students (Getha-Taylor, Hummert, Nalbandian, & Silvia, 2013). Recent studies have extended the competencies model perspective and discussed appropriate ICT curricula by including new competencies. Table 2 summarizes the latest literature that focuses on building new ITSM competencies.

According to these studies, the new context in which governments are embedded forces public administration schools and programs to consider the competencies model for building ICT curricula congruent with the needs and perspectives of employers and graduates. Emergent issues in digital government—such as social media, mobile technology, smart cities, big data, and open data—represent challenges in building new competencies for public administration education. Different competencies have been designed and developed across countries to assess and improve public sector competencies in general (CIO Council, 2012; Op de Beeck & Hondeghem, 2010), but few have been designed for regions like Latin America and Africa that have demonstrated context-specific challenges (Al-Wohaibi et al., 2002; Araya Moreno, 2007). The various models have differences and similarities depending on the strategies, missions and specific contexts of each country, but in general the competencies

model provides a useful framework for defining public administration ICT curricula (Op de Beeck & Hondeghem, 2010). Also important, the majority of these studies were conducted with a supply-side bias that may influence how schools and programs are designed. Most of these studies looked at schools, programs, students, and graduates but neglected the practical experience and needs of employers and the learning opportunities for graduates in terms of their professional careers.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

This study used a multiple methods design with a qualitative-quantitative sequence. The first phase included 37 unstructured interviews with local and state government officials in Aguascalientes, Mexico, during February and March 2015. The interviewees included chief information officers, ICT staff, finance and budgeting staff, social programs staff, police and security staff, water management staff, environment protection staff, and economic and business development staff. The interviews enabled identification of two groups of competencies: *soft competencies* and *hard competencies*. A list of courses was also codified in two types: *generic courses* and *ICT-related courses*.

The conceptual categories retrieved from the first phase were used for codification in the second phase, involving two methods: (1) a survey of NASPAA members in the region; and (2) content analysis of curricular information published on official program websites. Invitations were sent to 275 programs in 19 countries of Latin America. Table 3 describes survey responses and the number of websites reviewed, by country. The survey included two questions based on a NASPAA's Annual Data Report survey and classified answers into five categories.<sup>8</sup> The instrument was available in three languages: English, Spanish, and Portuguese. The content analysis reviewed 247 official program websites and coded 8,087 courses according to competencies identified in the interviews. Only 3,214 courses were clearly coded as corresponding to one or multiple competencies,<sup>9</sup> resulting in a total of 4,102 answers. The data collected from the survey include 375 answers from 48 participants.

Both instruments capture two types of courses: mandatory and elective. The survey and content analysis were conducted during May–August 2015. The actual data collected represent 15 countries in Latin America. The survey response rate for all levels of education was 17.5%. The coverage of program websites was 89.8%.

**RESULTS**

The results of the first phase of this investigation reveal two groups of ITSM competencies in public administration programs: soft versus hard ITSM competencies (see Table 4).

Interview participants said that soft competencies involve the following dimensions: values, individual characteristics, teamwork, general and specific knowledge, leadership, and collaboration. Each of these dimensions involves specific competencies. For example, participants associated leadership, human orientation, building trust, reciprocity, creation of vision, and ethical behavior as necessary for performing any public service or for working in any government agency. These concepts were associated with the soft category of *values*. Participants also agreed that *general knowledge* is essential for carrying

**TABLE 1.**  
Competencies in the *Atlas of Public Policy and Management*

Competency	Analysis and skills	Institutions and context	Management functions	Policy sectors
To lead and manage in public governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy and management analysis</li> <li>• Leadership skills</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and technology management</li> <li>• Local government management</li> </ul>	
To participate and contribute to the policy process		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Democratic institutions and the policy process</li> <li>• Global context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public financial management</li> <li>• Evaluation and performance measurement</li> <li>• Regulatory policy and management</li> <li>• Nonprofit management and advocacy</li> </ul>	
To analyze, synthesize, think critically, solve problems, and make decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic analysis</li> <li>• Quantitative methods</li> <li>• Analytic methods</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socioeconomic and political context</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public financial management</li> <li>• Human resource management</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Macroeconomic policy</li> <li>• International development</li> <li>• Health</li> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment, labor and immigration</li> <li>• Science, technology and innovation</li> <li>• Others</li> </ul>
To articulate and apply a public service perspective		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ethics, rights and accountability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public financial management</li> </ul>	
To communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leadership skills</li> <li>• Communication skills</li> </ul>			

*Note.* Adapted from Clark, Eisen, & Pal, 2015. Elements directly related to technology are in italics.

**TABLE 2.**  
**Information Technology Strategy and Management (ITSM) Competencies in the Literature**

Source(s)	ITSM competencies
<b>Araya Moreno (2007)</b>	Focus on ICT-related competencies (e-competencies) in public administration education should be oriented to the concept of public value creation according to 12 competencies: (1) professional or technical competence; (2) propensity for continual learning to deal with new problems, technological developments, and technical applications; (3) ability to interpret problems presented by stakeholders and the public as a whole and to respond appropriately with technologically enabled measures; (4) ability to innovate in the search for answers, to diagnose entirely new problems, and to move the institutions toward efficacious responses; (5) ability to gather whatever information is needed for such decision making; (6) ability and willingness to undergo professional formation and develop capacities and abilities on a continuing basis; (7) ability or capacity to work with a great deal of independence, and to make decisions autonomously, in response to citizen and stakeholder demand, consistent with the role attributes and expectations of public office; (8) ability to work in teams empowered by the application of new technologies; (9) ability to exercise self-restraint consistent with managerial controls in the use of resources at the public official's disposal, in particular technological resources; (10) ability to understand and apply the concepts and tools of the information society in the process of government reforms and political development; (11) ability to appreciate the importance of e-government for the reform and modernization of the state; and (12) ability to deploy new technologies for electronic governance consistent with new or emergent conceptions of the role of the state and of public administration
<b>Cox et al. (2010)</b>	Focus on ICT curriculum at state and local levels of government
<b>Mergel (2012)</b>	Focus on social media and informal practitioner learning experiences in public affairs programs in higher education according to five competencies: (1) digital literacy and competency by teaching the use of technology to enable complementary learning process of MPA students to mitigate online risks, increase social and technological awareness, and understand online privacy issues; (2) inclusiveness and accessibility through teaching the ability to select the adequate technology that provides equal access or acceptable alternatives; (3) plain writing through teaching government audiences with clear, understandable, and useful information and the effectiveness of citizen communication; (4) records management through teaching what constitutes a government record and the social updates to government records; and (5) collaborative capacity building through teaching change in government information paradigms and cross-boundary collaboration
<b>Dugal (2012)</b>	Focus on program and information management competencies: (1) domain-specific data management, (2) data quality management, (3) customer data information (CDI), (4) master data management, (5) work effort management, and data architecture.
<b>Getha-Taylor et al. (2013)</b>	Focus on three competencies: (1) information system management, (2) continuous technology improvement, and (3) creativity and innovation
<b>Jalocha et al. (2014)</b>	Focus on three categories of competencies of public sector and project managers: (1) contextual (role of systems, production, and technology in public affairs); (2) behavioral (accountability, openness, creativity, efficiency, consultation, among others); and (3) technical (management of projects, processes, information and documentation, communication, technological resources and assets, cross-boundary collaboration, among others)

**TABLE 3.**  
Survey Responses by Country and Program Type

Country	Programs	Survey responses (Websites reviewed)					Total
		Certificate	Undergrad	Graduate	Doctoral		
Argentina	46	1 (5)	0 (10)	11 (19)	0 (1)	12 (35)	
Bolivia	2	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Brazil	10	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (3)	0 (1)	0 (5)	
Chile	26	0 (1)	1 (14)	4 (5)	0 (0)	5 (19)	
Colombia	32	0 (0)	0 (13)	12 (7)	0 (0)	12 (20)	
Costa Rica	2	0 (0)	1 (0)	0 (1)	0 (1)	1 (2)	
Cuba	1	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Ecuador	6	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (0)	0 (3)	
Guatemala	5	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (2)	0 (1)	0 (3)	
Jamaica	3	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
México	122	0 (0)	2 (68)	12 (68)	1 (8)	15 (144)	
Panamá	1	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (1)	
Paraguay	2	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (1)	
Peru	5	0 (0)	0 (0)	3 (3)	0 (1)	3 (4)	
Puerto Rico	1	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (0)	
Dominican Republic	3	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (2)	0 (0)	0 (3)	
Surinam	1	0 (0)	0 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (1)	
Uruguay	2	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (2)	0 (0)	0 (2)	
Venezuela	5	0 (0)	0 (3)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0 (3)	
<b>Total</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>1 (6)</b>	<b>4 (114)</b>	<b>42 (114)</b>	<b>1 (13)</b>	<b>48 (247)</b>	

out public service; this category included acquaintance with public administration, public sector law and regulations, ICT applications and new technologies, finance and budgeting, and project management. Interviewees also noted specific competencies for the categories of *individual characteristics, teamwork, leadership, and collaboration*.

Similarly, participants identified these categories of hard competencies: ICT project management; data analysis skills; computing and information systems (IS) basic knowledge; design, ICT infrastructure, and software; and

best practices and new ICT tools. As an example, ICT project management involves proficiency in managing ICT projects, implementation expertise, process knowledge, technical knowledge, basic administrative skills, and an understanding of procurement regulations and management. Regarding computing and IS knowledge, participants identified IS project development knowledge, IS strategic planning, and ability to introduce ICT or e-government. In all, participants associate soft and hard competencies with possible curricular content in public administration programs (see Table 5).

**TABLE 4.**  
Soft and Hard Competencies for ITSM in Public Administration Graduate Programs

Soft competencies	Hard competencies
Values	ICT project management
Individual characteristics	Data analysis skills
Teamwork	Computing and IS basic knowledge
General knowledge	Context-specific knowledge
Leadership	Design
Collaboration	ICT infrastructure
	Software
	Best practices and new ICT tools

**TABLE 5.**  
Competencies and Type of Course

	Type of Course	
	Generic	ICT-related
<b>Soft Competencies</b>		
Values	Ethics	
Individual characteristics	Public service values	
General knowledge	Human resources	Transparency and accountability
Specific knowledge	Nonprofit organizations	Knowledge management, managing innovation
Teamwork		Working in groups, social networks
Leadership	Intercultural competencies, emotional intelligence, diversity and equity	Leadership
Collaboration	Intergovernmental relations, public-private partnerships	Collaboration, public and citizen participation
<b>Hard Competencies</b>		
ICT project management		ICT project management
Data analysis skills	Economics, program evaluation, research methods, statistics and probability, quantitative and qualitative methods, and math	Decision-making methods and models
Computing and IS knowledge		Management of knowledge and IS
Context-specific knowledge	Public policy analysis	Regulations for ICT investment
Design, infrastructure, and software		ICT project management, knowledge management and IS, innovation, computing skills
Best practices and new ICT tools		ICT project management, knowledge management and IS, innovation, computing skills

**TABLE 6.**  
Soft Competencies across Public Administration Courses in Latin America

Type of Course	Course with soft competencies	Content Analysis						Survey					
		number			percentage			number			percentage		
		Mandatory	Elective	Total	Mandatory	Elective	Total	Mandatory	Elective	Total	Mandatory	Elective	Total
	<b>Total courses with soft competencies</b>	<b>1245</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>1313</b>	<b>30.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>32.0</b>	<b>188</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>50.1</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>57.6</b>
Generic	<b>Total generic courses</b>	<b>668</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>17.4</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>23.5</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>27.2</b>
	Ethics	183	3	186	4.5	0.1	4.5	15	1	16	4.0	0.3	4.3
	Human resources	138	4	142	3.4	0.1	3.5	12	2	14	3.2	0.5	3.7
	Intergovernmental relations and public-private partnerships	107	9	116	2.6	0.2	2.8	12	—	12	3.2	—	3.2
	Intercultural competencies	103	12	115	2.5	0.3	2.8	9	3	12	2.4	0.8	3.2
	Diversity and equity	47	11	58	1.1	0.3	1.4	11	3	14	2.9	0.8	3.7
	Public services values	53	4	57	1.3	0.1	1.4	12	1	13	3.2	0.3	3.5
	Nonprofit organizations	23	3	26	0.6	0.1	0.6	11	—	11	2.9	—	2.9
	Emotional intelligence	14	—	14	0.3	—	0.3	6	4	10	1.6	1.1	2.7
ICT-related	<b>Total ICT-related courses</b>	<b>577</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>599</b>	<b>14.1</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>14.6</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>30.4</b>
	Collaboration	143	4	147	3.5	0.1	3.6	12	1	13	3.2	0.3	3.5
	Transparency and accountability	141	4	145	3.4	0.1	3.5	15	1	16	4.0	0.3	4.3
	Leadership	79	—	79	1.9	—	1.9	14	2	16	3.7	0.5	4.3
	Managing innovation	69	4	73	1.7	0.1	1.8	9	3	12	2.4	0.8	3.2
	Public and citizen participation	67	5	72	1.6	0.1	1.8	16	1	17	4.3	0.3	4.5
	Knowledge management	42	1	43	1.0	0.0	1.0	10	3	13	2.7	0.8	3.5
	Working in groups	33	2	35	0.8	0.0	0.9	12	2	14	3.2	0.5	3.7
	Social networks	3	2	5	0.1	0.0	0.1	12	1	13	3.2	0.3	3.5

**TABLE 7.**  
**Hard Competencies across Public Administration Courses in Latin America**

Type of Course	Course with hard competencies	Content Analysis						Survey					
		number			percentage			number			percentage		
		Mandatory	Elective	Total	Mandatory	Elective	Total	Mandatory	Elective	Total	Mandatory	Elective	Total
	<b>Total courses with hard competencies</b>	<b>2694</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>2789</b>	<b>65.7</b>	<b>2.3</b>	<b>68.0</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>36.5</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>42.4</b>
Generic	<b>Total generic courses</b>	<b>2182</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>2267</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>27.2</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>29.3</b>
	Economics	574	25	599	14.0	0.6	14.6	16	1	17	4.3	0.3	4.5
	Public policy analysis	524	50	574	12.8	1.2	14.0	18	—	18	4.8	—	4.8
	Research methods	383	4	387	9.3	0.1	9.4	15	—	15	4.0	—	4.0
	Quantitative methods	222	2	224	5.4	0.0	5.5	12	1	13	3.2	0.3	3.5
	Statistics and probability	165	1	166	4.0	0.0	4.0	12	1	13	3.2	0.3	3.5
	Program evaluation	137	2	139	3.4	0.0	3.4	16	1	17	4.3	0.3	4.5
	Math (calculus and algebra)	136	1	137	3.3	0.0	3.3	3	2	5	0.8	0.5	1.3
	Qualitative methods	41	—	41	1.0	—	1.0	10	2	12	2.7	0.5	3.2
ICT-related	<b>Total ICT-related courses</b>	<b>512</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>522</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>0.2</b>	<b>12.7</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>13.1</b>
	Knowledge management, IS, innovation, and computing skills	218	5	223	5.3	0.1	5.4	9	4	13	2.4	1.1	3.5
	ICT project management	137	2	139	3.3	0.0	3.4	10	2	12	2.7	0.5	3.2
	Decision-making methods and models	128	—	128	3.1	—	3.1	10	4	14	2.7	1.1	3.7
	Regulations for ICT investment	29	3	32	0.7	0.1	0.8	6	4	10	1.6	1.1	2.7

Tables 6 and 7 comparatively map the results from the survey and content analyses for soft and hard competencies, respectively, with the aim of analyzing generic and ICT-related courses. According to survey responses, 57.6% of courses are dedicated to soft competencies

(50.1% are mandatory courses) and 42.4% to hard competencies (36.5% are mandatory courses). These results contrast with the content analysis, which reveals that courses with hard competencies dominate at 68% (65.7% are mandatory courses) versus courses with soft

competencies at 32% (30.4% are mandatory courses). This finding indicates that the opinions of those who chair and coordinate public administration programs do not correspond to the formal curricular structure published on official websites.

Based on the content analysis, hard competencies dominate the curricular structure at 68% of courses. Within this group, generic courses (55.3%) prevail over ICT-related courses (12.7%). In other words, courses with content dedicated to economics (14.6%), public policy analysis (14%), research methods (9.4%), and quantitative methods (5.5%), among other areas, are more central than ICT-related ones, such as ICT project management (3.4%); and knowledge management, IS innovation, and computing skills (5.4%). In a second tier of competencies, the content analysis identified that 32% of courses are dedicated to soft competencies. Within this group, generic and ICT-related courses have a similar level of importance. Generic courses for soft competencies represent 17.4%; ICT-related courses, 14.6%. Soft competencies in generic courses include ethics (4.5%), human resources (3.5%), inter-governmental relations and public-private partnerships (2.8%), and intercultural competencies (2.8%). Among the soft competencies in ICT-related courses are collaboration (3.6%), transparency and accountability (3.5%), leadership (1.9%), and managing innovation (1.8%).

Based on the survey analysis, soft competencies dominate curricular content at 57.6% of all courses. Within this group, generic and ICT-related courses present similar weights at 27.2% and 30.4%, respectively. Among the generic courses, the most common soft competencies are ethics (4.3%), human resources (3.7%), diversity and equity (3.7%), and public services values (3.5%). Among ICT-related courses, the most present soft competencies are public and citizen participation (4.5%), transparency and accountability (4.3%), leadership (4.3%), working in groups (3.7%), collaboration (3.5%), knowledge management (3.5%), and social networks (3.5%). In a second tier of competencies, the survey analysis identified hard

competencies in 42.4% of all courses. Within this group, generic courses dominate at 29.3%, including competencies for public policy analysis (4.8%), economics (4.5%), program evaluation (4.5%), and research methods (4%). For ICT-related courses, the more frequent hard competencies are decision-making methods and models (3.7%); knowledge management, IS, innovation, and computing skills (3.5%); ICT project management (3.2%); and regulations for ICT investment (2.7%). (See Tables 6 and 7.)

The content analysis indicates that mandatory courses for hard competencies are more numerous than courses for soft competencies (65.7% over 30.4%). Similarly, generic courses dominate over ICT-related courses (72.7% over 27.3%). In contrast, the survey analysis indicates that mandatory courses for soft competencies are more numerous than for hard competencies (50.1% over 36.5%). Clearly, the distribution of soft and hard competencies across mandatory and elective courses indicates different priorities across programs. In general, mandatory courses predominate (elective courses include fewer hard and soft competencies). Mandatory courses with generic competencies have higher levels of offerings (53.2% and 16.3% for hard and soft competencies, respectively) than ICT-related competencies (12.5% and 14.1% for hard and soft competencies, respectively). Courses with hard and soft competencies in ICT-related courses have similar levels of offerings, but they are still lower than generic competencies (16.3% and 14.1%, respectively). This is an indication that ICT-related content in public administration curricula is not a priority, possibly because of lack of faculty and/or adequate pedagogic tools specialized in these areas of knowledge.

These results suggest that programs should look at their curricula and perform a competency analysis with the aim of defining ICT-related competencies. For demonstration purposes and using the competencies found in the content analysis, Figures 2 and 3 present sequences for hard and soft competencies across generic and ICT-related courses. The goal of these sequences

is to synchronize curricular content between generic and ICT-related courses for each set of competencies over time. The proper sequence may depend of the level of the program (undergraduate, master's, or doctoral) and the human and material resources available in the institution. The purpose would be to endow public administration students with these competencies according to the mission and design of a particular program.

Figure 2 shows a possible sequence for hard competencies that may start in the first tier with basic math and computing skills in order to balance introductory generic and ICT-related

courses. In the second tier, the program may advance students to statistics and probability and quantitative and qualitative methods as generic competencies; ICT-related competencies for ICT project management and regulations and decision-making methods and models would also be introduced. In the third tier, the curriculum may synchronize more advanced content between generic and ICT-related courses. For generic competencies, the curriculum may include economics, public policy analysis, research methods, and program evaluation; while for ICT-related competencies, the curriculum may include knowledge management, information systems, and innovation.

**FIGURE 2.**  
Three Tiers of Hard Competencies for ICT-Related Courses

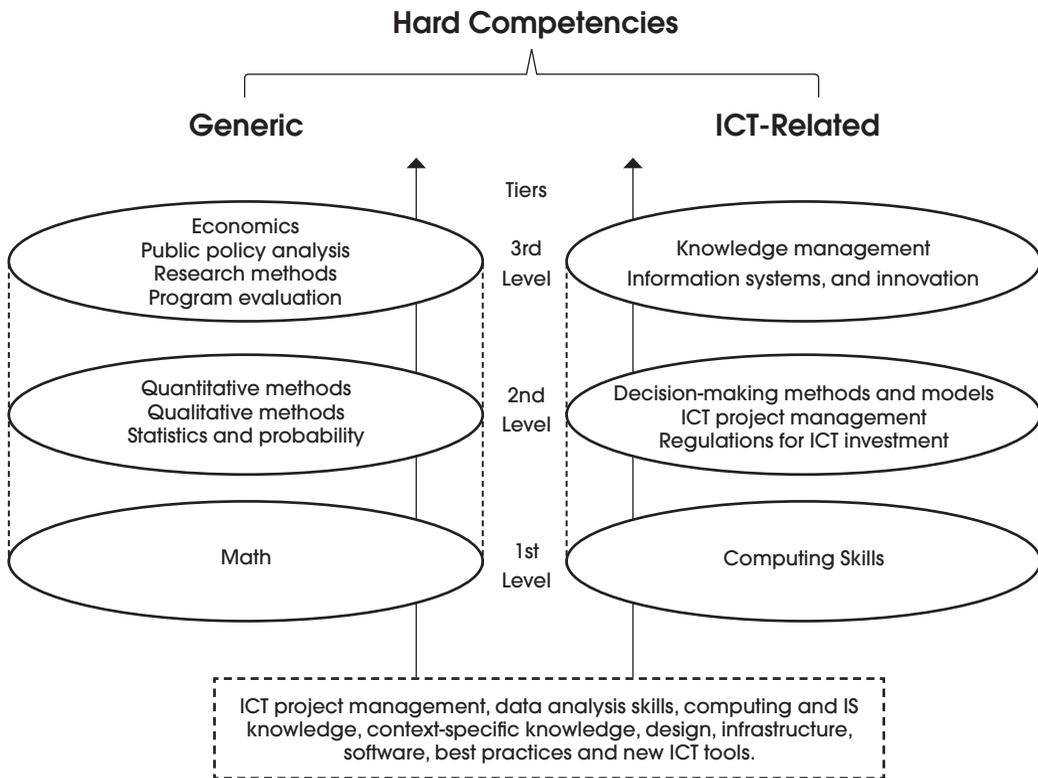


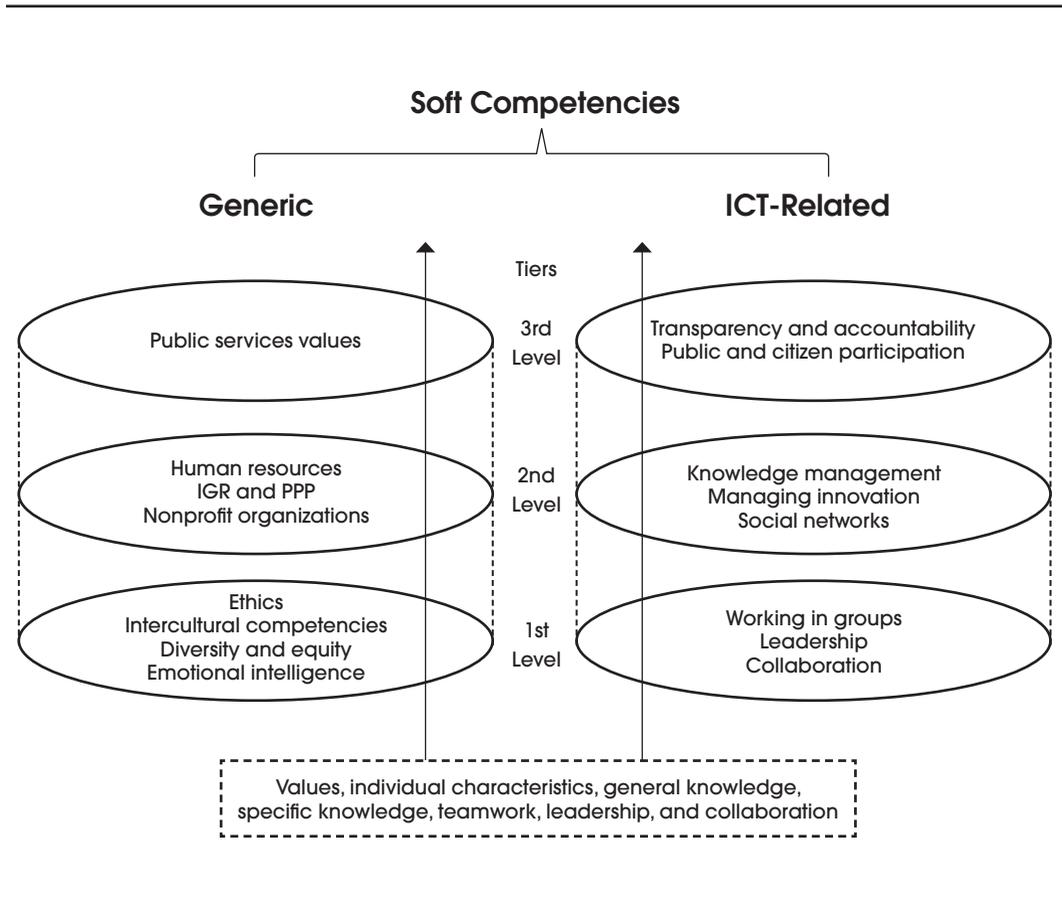
Figure 3 shows a possible sequence for soft competencies that may introduce ethics, intercultural competencies, diversity and equity, and emotional intelligence in the first tier. These generic competencies may be matched with ICT-related courses that teach competencies associated with working in groups, leadership, and collaboration. In the second tier, generic courses may include skills and knowledge for human resource management, intergovernmental relations and public-private partnerships, and nonprofit organization management. These generic courses may be accompanied by ICT-related courses that include knowledge management, managing innovation, and social

networks. Finally, in the third tier, generic courses focused on public service values may be associated with ICT-related courses in the areas of transparency and accountability and public and citizen participation.

**CONCLUSION**

A study conducted by the McKinsey Global Institute (Manyika et al., 2011) shows that there will be a shortage of talent necessary for organizations to take advantage of big data and technology known initiatives. By 2018, the United States alone could face a shortage of 140,000 to 190,000 people who have deep data analysis skills and technological competencies,

**FIGURE 3.**  
Soft Competencies for ICT-Related Courses



as well as 1.5 million managers and analysts with the know-how to use analytical tools to crunch data in order to make effective decisions. In government, this shortage could be accentuated by the highly competitive wages and benefits that the private sector offers to such talented people (Purón-Cid et al., 2012).

Previous studies concentrated on the supply side of defining ITSM competencies. The present study aims to understand the supply side as well as the demand side of ITSM in public administration graduate programs in Latin America. This research used a two-phase strategy of qualitative and quantitative methods. This research design was useful because the first phase (qualitative) revealed a set of categories for different competencies from chief information officers and executives in the public sector that the second phase (quantitative) subsequently explored. Although results of the first phase are not representative, they are still useful for building a framework for further assessment. The second phase involved a survey and a content analysis. Although the response rate was low, the results are useful for examining the competencies framework built in the previous phase. Limited familiarity with NASPAA possibly contributed to the low response rate. The content analysis was more representative of programs and countries and resulted in a useful technique for assessing curricular content of public administration programs.

The results of the first phase revealed soft and hard competencies for ITSM curricula relevant to the demand side (employers). These competencies were assessed using a survey of chairs and representatives of Latin American public administration programs and content analysis of official websites. The first finding suggests that the opinions of these representatives do not correspond to the curricular structure of their programs. The second finding of the content analysis is that ICT-related courses represent 12.7% of hard competencies and 14.6% of soft competencies. This indicates that ITSM is a moderate priority in the region. The survey analysis confirmed this finding.

The survey analysis found that ICT-related courses represent 13.1% of hard competencies and 30.4% for soft competencies. In other words, for both analyses, hard competencies dominate over soft competencies in ICT-related courses. This is a critical limitation to building strong ITSM curricula in the region and eventually preparing well-trained professionals for managing government ICT projects in an era of smart innovations, open platforms, and potential big data initiatives.

Among ICT-related courses, the most critical hard competencies are management of knowledge and information systems, ICT project management, and decision-making methods and models. Regarding ICT-related courses, the most critical soft competencies are collaboration, transparency and accountability, leadership, managing innovation, and public and citizen participation. Those responsible for designing public administration curricula should balance hard and soft competencies across generic and ICT-related courses in order to endow students with the proper skills, knowledge, and experience. Thus study suggests a set of hard and soft competencies for ITSM that may be useful curriculum design. The goal of any competencies model in public administration higher education should be to balance adequate specialized competencies—like ITSM—with generic competencies necessary in the field.

Future studies may want to further investigate competencies in public administration higher education as well as how ICT-related curricula align with real-life duties and responsibilities in government. The aim is to devise instruments that improve the alignment among public sector needs, graduates' professional careers, and program curricula. NASPAA may replicate this study for graduate programs in the United States, Asia, and Europe. However, Latin America and Africa present distinctive paths for digital government development that may require specific attention in order to improve our understanding of what inhibits and facilitates ITSM education in these regions.

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**NOTES**

- 1 Schools of public policy, public administration, and public affairs vary depending on their core fields, such as political science and economics, or on their level of interdisciplinarity. This article examines general aspects of ICT standards and competencies across all types of public administration education. For discussion of the various differences in such education, see De Soto, Opheim, & Tajalli (1999); Elmore (1986); Hur & Hackbart (2015); Lowery & Whitaker (1994); Stokes (1986).
- 2 Some authors and organizations refer to ICT or information systems (IS) standards. This study refers all such standards under the rubric of ITSM.
- 3 The dimensions assessed by OSI are: whole-of-government approach, online service delivery, multi-channel service delivery, bridging digital divide, increasing usage, open government, and e-participation.
- 4 Data-analysis skills include word processing, using financial calculation software, database designing, using records retrieval software, use of networks, using statistical analysis packages, using geographic information systems (GIS), programming abilities, and data-sharing capability.
- 5 US laws enacted include Additional Responsibilities of Chief Information Officers of 1998, the Clinger-Cohen Act (CCA) of 1996 (formerly the Information Technology Management Reform Act), the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, the Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994, the Government Performance and Results Act of 1993, and the Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990. Other regulations were enacted after the CCA: the E-Government Act of 2002 and the Open Government Directive in 2011.
- 6 NASPAA issued this standard, numbered 4.2, at its 2002 annual business meeting. It was revised in 2004 and described as the standard for information management, technology applications, and policy.
- 7 For more detail, see <https://portal.publicpolicy.utoronto.ca/en/Maps/CompetenciesMap/Pages/default.aspx>.
- 8 The five categories are (1) content covered in complete mandatory class, (2) significant content covered in mandatory class, (3) content covered in optional class, (4) significant content covered

in optional class, and (5) no content covered. For NASPAA's Annual Data Report survey, see <http://naspaa.org/DataCenter/index.asp>.

- 9 Of the courses, 4,267 were discipline-related—finance, management, law, history, political science, sociology, among others; and 606 were not identified because the title was general—for example, seminar, workshop, or elective.

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## APPENDIX

### ICT Curriculum Over Time in the United States

#### **CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS IN NASPAA (1986)**

##### ***Basic course in management of computers and information systems with the following content:***

- Centralization vs. decentralization
- Charging policy
- User involvement
- Technology transfer
- Sources of computing services
- Social and economic effects

##### ***Course in analysis and design of information systems with the following content:***

- Formal tools for analyzing and designing information systems

##### ***Laboratory cases and field projects***

##### ***Course in organizational and social impacts with the following content:***

- Computing's broad effects
- Practical skills in assessing impacts during design and throughout operations

##### ***Practical course: Information Systems Projects***

- Other specialized courses

#### **CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS IN BROWN & BRUDNEY (1998)**

##### ***Basic course for strategic information resource management with the following content:***

- Role of information in strategic planning and goal attainment: technology transfer, knowledge diffusion, business model
- Capitalizing on information resources
- Understanding the role of information in government operations: productivity and performance, decision making, customer service
- Analytical tools for aligning technology with government operations
- The role of information in process improvement and reorganization
- New technology directions: technological innovations
- Minimizing risk and maximizing benefits: selecting technology and evaluating its effects

##### ***Courses in information resource management planning methodologies with the following content:***

- Information system analysis and design: local-area networks, wide-area networks, software applications
- Alternative implementation strategies: joint ventures and partnerships
- Privatizing and outsourcing
- Financing technology projects
- Minimizing risk and maximizing benefits: project planning and implementation methodologies

##### ***Course in information policy with the following content:***

- Organizational policies affecting work operations and data sharing and ownership rights
- State and local mandates
- Federal mandates: privacy protection, freedom of information, data sharing, ownership, liability
- Internship: to obtain firsthand knowledge of the interrelationships between IT and government operations

## CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS IN DAWES (2004)

**Foundational course in the strategic value of IT in government and the dynamic interplay among policy, management, and technology, with the following topics:**

- IT uses
- Information policies,
- Management strategies
- How to align IT use with mission goals
- Importance of focusing on needs and abilities of system users
- How to assess and improve business processes
- Ways to recognize and manage interagency and intergovernmental considerations
- What to look for in a business case for IT spending
- How to recognize policy tensions in information-related decisions

**Multiple courses in a specialty ITSM concentration with the following content:**

- IT strategies for public services
- Making a case for government IT investments
- Government information policy
- Government information resource management concepts
- Specialized courses in other departments
- Planned field experiences, internships, and research opportunities

**Related topics across existing MPA courses, such as:**

- Policy analysis courses that cover information policy issues pertaining to privacy, access, and free expression
- Budgeting courses focused on factors that influence funding for IT initiatives
- Various courses focused on federalism topics that look at information systems, processes, and data flow that link multiple organizations and jurisdictions together
- Program evaluation courses that consider how technology decisions and system designs affect program performance
- Courses in specific policy domains (e.g., health care, education, environment) that examine IT topics
- Courses in particular policy domains or within a certain program that examine any policy, technology, or management topic in the context of that domain or program

**Practical learning in field projects with the following content:**

- Students' designing and building systems through faculty-led projects or internships, to learn lessons of design, project management, contracting, user involvement, change, and complexity
- Sharing courses or entire programs with other departments, whether in traditional MPA format or as certificates, to gain a multidisciplinary perspective and integrate various theories and frameworks. For example:
- Project management training offered by professional adjuncts or a through shared course with a business administration program
- Information policy courses offered in public administration or in an information science or library school
- Fundamentals of IT and networking taught in business schools and information science or computer science programs

## CURRICULUM RECOMMENDATIONS IN CIO COUNCIL (2012)

**Basic courses:**

- Policy and Organization: mission, organization, functions, policies, and procedures; governing laws and authorities; decision- and policy-making processes; linkages and interrelationships between agency heads and chief executive officers; intergovernmental programs, policies, and processes; IT governance
- Leadership and Human Capital Management: key leadership attributes; professional development and career planning; competency performance and management; partnerships and team building; personnel performance management; attracting, motivating, and retaining IT personnel
- Process and Change Management: organizational development; process management and control; quality improvement models and methods; business process redesign, reengineering models and methods; cross-boundary process collaboration
- Capital Planning and Investment Control (CPIC): CPIC best practices; cost-benefit, economic, and risk analysis; risk management models and methods; weighting benefits of alternative IT investments; capital investment analysis models and methods; business case analysis; investment review process; IT portfolio management

- Acquisition: acquisition strategy, models, and methodologies; post-award IT contract management; IT acquisition best practices; software acquisition management; supply chain management in acquisition

**Advanced courses:**

- Information Resources Strategy and Planning: information resources management baseline assessment analysis; interdepartmental and interagency IT functional analysis; IT planning methodologies; contingency and continuity of operations planning (COOP); monitoring and evaluation methods and techniques
- IT Performance Assessment (Models and Methods): Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) and IT; system development decision making; measuring IT success; defining and selecting effective performance measures; evaluating system performance; managing system performance; managing IT reviews and oversight processes
- Technology Management and Assessment: network, telecommunications, and mobile device technology; spectrum management; computer systems; Web technology; data management technology; software development technology; cloud computing; special use technology; emerging technology
- Enterprise Architecture: enterprise architecture functions and governance; key enterprise architecture concepts; enterprise architecture interpretation, development, and maintenance; use of enterprise architecture in IT investment decision making; enterprise data management; performance measurement for enterprise architecture

**Specialized courses:**

- Cybersecurity and Information Assurance: CIO roles and responsibilities; legislation, policies, and procedures; strategies and plans; information and information systems threats and vulnerabilities; risk management; enterprise-wide program management; information security reporting compliance; critical infrastructure protection and disaster recovery planning
- Information and Knowledge Management: privacy, personally identifiable and protected information; information accessibility; records and information management; knowledge management; social media; Web development and maintenance strategy; open government; information collection

**Courses in IT project and program management with the following content:**

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- Project integration management
- Project time, cost, and performance management
- Project quality management
- Project risk management
- System life-cycle management
- Software development, testing, and implementation
- Vendor management
- IT program management leadership

# A Presidential Civil Service: FDR's Liaison Office for Personnel Management

by **Mordecai Lee**

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FDR, Progressive era, executive branch, civil service merit versus management

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It is all too rare today to find books about public administration that are enriched by historical archival research and that address specific events in the evolution of the modern administrative state. Most textbooks in the field offer only glimpses of historical upheavals in public policy and concentrate on the current state of affairs, rather than how we arrived at that state. Long gone are the 1940s and 1950s classics of Leonard D. White, who wrote about the complex and nuanced political processes that formed the administrative state, managed as it is by trained, professional administrators. That this system has evolved is perhaps taken for granted by both public administration students and their professors. Lacking such a historical understanding, students may not realize the potential conflicts that can occur between Congress and various presidents in the process of formulating and implementing policy to guide the administrative state. Mordecai Lee's *A Presidential Civil Service: FDR's Liaison*

*Office for Personnel Management* helps remedy that gap, reminding us that modern public administrators can learn from history.

Lee painstakingly traces the complex evolution of the Progressive-era ideology of merit versus management, beginning with the foundation of the Civil Service Commission, created by law to eliminate political patronage from public administration. He then takes readers through the creation of President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Liaison Office for Personnel Management all the way to what America has today, the Office of Personnel Management. As Lee explains, "This book recounts and examines the political conflict between the ideals of merit and management during FDR's presidency, including the origins of the idea of executive-oriented personnel management, the fight over the Brownlow Committee's recommendation, and the subsequent activities of the president's Liaison Office for Personnel Management"

(p. xi). Lee reveals some very real limitations over presidential power and authority relative to Congress in making new public law, while demonstrating how a determined, influential, creative, and inventive president such as FDR found a way to implement his desired policies despite congressional objections.

Lee is both an academic and a former Wisconsin state legislator, both a historian and practitioner of public administration. His rich scholarship in *A Presidential Civil Service* relies on classics in the field, such as White's work, and delves into a wealth of archival sources. This is no hagiographic study of FDR's presidency and personality. Rather, Lee clearly discusses FDR's success in managing executive branch personnel and how he accomplished his goals both ethically and legally, even without the consent of Congress.

FDR adopted the early Progressive-era belief in management over merit, and he wanted to hire professional administrators. But Congress objected to his reorganization of the executive branch to include more executive control over government personnel. Congress was not ready to surrender the Civil Service Commission, whose original intent had been to remove the problems associated with political patronage. And FDR was unwilling to surrender control of personnel staffing in his administration. What Lee so brilliantly illuminates is that FDR found a way to get what he wanted and did so legally. Historically, not all presidents or executive branch public administrators have thought so clearly and acted so creatively to get a policy they wanted, working in the way they wanted it to work, without resorting to violations of law, ethics, or their own professional integrity.

The book is likely too narrow in scope to be used as a primary course text, and it does not come with the usual textbook elements of chapter objectives, questions for class discussion, or instructor support materials. But it could serve as a background reader for graduate courses in public personnel administration, especially if adopted by a seasoned professor able to elicit

and present relevant teaching points. Lee clearly intended *A Presidential Civil Service* to be used in advanced courses in public administration. Each chapter provides extensive descriptive notes, which, along with the comprehensive bibliography, point professors and students toward further areas of inquiry.

Lee's book also presents a hopeful possibility: perhaps, given both the early work of White and now Lee's own contributions, a few more PhD students will be inspired to choose public history as their concentration both in their doctoral work and in their academic career.

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## REFERENCE

Lee, Mordecai. (2016). *A presidential civil service: FDR's Liaison Office for Personnel Management*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Michael W. Popejoy** is the Book Series Editor for Nova Science Publishers, New York; Assistant Editor and Book Review Editor for White House Studies; and a frequent contributor to *Public Health* (UK) and *Perspectives in Public Health* (UK). He received a PhD in public administration from Florida Atlantic University. He serves on editorial boards for many international academic journals in public administration, public health, qualitative research, and medicine. His forthcoming book *Emerging Global Crises in Public Administration and Public Health* is expected in print in 2018. The numerous unexplored interdisciplinary crosswalks between public health, population medicine, and public administration partnership initiatives constitute one of his major areas of scholarly interest today.