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Accountability in Public Administration Education: Assessing the Martin School

Natalie Schneider
University of Kentucky

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Accountability in Public Administration Education:
Assessing the Martin School

Natalie Schneider
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Accountability is required for programs to maintain accreditation and is essential to the overall success of graduate programs like the Martin School. To show that it is meeting the stated goals, the Martin School has put tracking measures in place to gauge the success of the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program. These measures include pre and post skills assessments and an alumni survey among others. Analysis of the results is used to determine where goals are being met as well as areas where improvement is possible, and make necessary and appropriate adjustments.

The pre-test is given at orientation and the post-test is given during the capstone course. Students are asked to rate their skill level in several areas, then asked to do the same at the end of the program. These tools can be used to determine how helpful students have found the curriculum in giving them the skills necessary for success in the workforce.

Another mechanism for assessment is the alumni survey. The instrument asks alumni a number of questions regarding their experience at the Martin School and how this education has or has not helped in their professional lives. The data from this survey may be useful in determining weaknesses graduates see in the program in terms of professional development.

The final method for assessing the program is through a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis which is conducted during the capstone course. Students are asked to critically evaluate the MPA program and complete the SWOT matrix. Responses are combined and examined by the Martin School.

This paper primarily deals with analysis of the data obtained by the skills assessment and alumni survey, but also examines the assessment tools themselves. Recommendations have been made regarding possible adjustments to the program and changes to the assessment tools. Several general statements can be made from the data collected. First, the data shows that the Martin School has been successful in increasing the confidence level of its students in all of the 19 areas currently measured. Second, the data from the alumni survey shows a general satisfaction with the education provided by the Martin School. Finally, the information gathered through the SWOT analysis mirrors, in large part, the results obtained from the alumni survey.

With respect to the assessment tools, the combination of surveys of various stakeholders, including alumni and internship supervisors, SWOT analysis and the pre/post testing appears to be gathering the information desired by the Martin School. While the language on some of the tools could be improved and the tools could be changed to better align with one another, drastic changes are not needed.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the fall of 1999, the Martin School conducted a survey of the Master of

Public Administration (MPA) 1998 & 1999 alumni as part of the National

Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA)

accreditation process. This process generally requires programs to consult inside and

outside the program to develop a mission statement, set program objectives, use

appropriate assessment instruments to see whether the objectives have been achieved,

and then feed back what has been learned from the assessment tools into improving

the program. (www.naspaa.org/accreditation/seeking/first/faq.asp, last accessed April

6, 2005)

The 1999 survey had a response rate of 46.67% (14 of 30 surveys completed)

and provided a glimpse into the opinions alumni had on a variety of matters

pertaining to the MPA program. Summary charts are contained in Appendix A.

While the data showed that alumni were generally satisfied with their MPA

experience, some areas for improvement were identified. These included developing

a budget proposal, analyzing revenue issues, using tools of statistical analysis, and

using decision theory. All of these categories received a rating of 1 or 2 on a 4 point

scale from more than 50% of the responding alumni.

The Martin School began conducting pre-test skill assessments with the

incoming students in the fall of 2000. The skill assessment (see Appendix B) is

designed to determine the confidence level of students in 19 different areas covering

various aspects of the MPA curriculum. The same assessment is given to students at

the end of the capstone course. In the first two years of the survey, students were asked to identify their comfort with the same set of skills. In 2002, however, a second section was added to the post-test. This section asked students to complete a retrospective assessment of skill gain in the skill areas examined by both the pre and post test (See Appendix C).

On the 1999 survey, alumni generally indicated that the Martin School was "doing a very good job developing cognitive, analytical, communication, and behavioral skills" (Martin School, 1999). Alumni also generally reported strong ability in areas such as written and oral communication and the ability to work without supervision. Areas that showed room for improvement appear to fall mainly within support services. Students reported a lack of satisfaction in obtaining internships, finding a job, and with academic advising. With respect to the general body of knowledge, the "vast majority of the students are fairly, very, or completely satisfied with the body of knowledge and practical skills they gained." (Martin School, 1999)

Based on the information obtained thus far using the assessment tools, the Martin School has implemented changes. Some of the more recent changes include altering the core curriculum to include courses in information management, ethics, and strategic planning.

In February 2005 the process of surveying the over 400 Martin School MPA alumni was undertaken. An advance letter was mailed on February 18th (see Appendix D) to notify recipients of the upcoming survey. Over 50 of these advance

letters were returned as having bad addresses. Appropriate changes were made to the address labels for future mailing and to the database maintained by the Martin School. Current addresses could not be obtained for 15 alumni and two alumni had asked not to be contacted, bringing the number of alumni who could be contacted to 392.

On February 25, 2005 the survey packets were mailed to 392 alumni. The packet (see Appendix E) included a cover letter, the survey, a business reply envelope, and a postcard for alumni to update their contact information. This postcard also asked alumni three questions: first, if they would be willing to send information about MPA-related job openings in their organization; second, if they would be willing to accept MPA interns; third, if they would be willing to serve as a mentor to an MPA student. To preserve anonymity, the decision was made to ask for address information on a postcard rather than directly on the survey.

Alumni were asked to return the survey by March 4th. By the deadline, less than 100 alumni had returned surveys. A reminder postcard was mailed on March 11, 2005 to alumni who had not returned their survey. March 22nd was selected as a cut off date for inclusion in the data set to allow time to analyze the data. A second copy of the survey was sent on April 5th to the alumni who had not yet responded by that date.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on the area of accountability in public institutions in general, and public administration programs specifically, is in wide agreement – public institutions should be held accountable. Accrediting bodies and state governments are requiring public institutions to assess their success. Some state governments have even gone so far as to threaten budget cuts for programs not assessing success.

While the consensus is that assessment must be linked to the program's mission statement, how to best link the two is in dispute. Debate has existed for years, within the field, over which tools will best fit the assessment needs of public administration programs and a variety of approaches have been taken by the various institutions across the country. Several articles in the major journals have discussed the struggle to find the right assessment tool and have highlighted the attempts made by several MPA programs, including West Virginia University and the University of Baltimore. All the literature stresses the need for assessment mechanisms and agrees that the process of developing the necessary tools may be at least as important, and potentially more important, than the actual tools themselves. It is suggested that any assessment process, because it requires an in-depth look at the program and its goals, could reveal weaknesses or areas for improvement which the data gathered by the tools may then reinforce.

The mid to late 1980s brought a tremendous increase in literature on the topic of accountability in public administration programs. An article by Edward Jennings promoted the use of outcome measures in assessing the success of MPA programs.

Two main methods of assessment are discussed – the outcome approach and the comparison approach (Jennings, 1989). The outcome approach basically looks at the outcomes of the program in measuring success, while the comparison approach looks to what other programs are doing to determine success.

The article favors the outcome approach to the comparison approach because too many factors can influence a comparison between programs and it is difficult to measure these factors. However, several of the tools most often used in outcome measures have weaknesses that may be problematic for MPA programs. Graduate surveys, while being easy to develop, inexpensive to administer, and providing direct evidence of the experience, can provide data biased by neutral or negative interpersonal experiences.

Surveys were the method of choice for assessment at Farleigh-Dickinson as it attempted to gauge how well the program was meeting its stated goals (Roberts, 2001). They opted to utilize a combination of student, exit, alumni, and supervisor surveys to make up its assessment mechanism. This group was selected after an examination of what aspects were important to the program. Data from completed surveys, as expected, resulted in a number of curricular changes.

Another mechanism that has been suggested but has not come into wide use, is testing. The article suggests that testing, to provide effective results, must "go beyond testing of individual courses." (Jennings, 1989) Jennings goes on to suggest that NASPAA may be the appropriate body to develop the device, and that the testing device, if shared by many institutions nationwide, could provide useful comparative

data. The data collected would provide national norms that institutions could use as benchmarks to measure their success. Problems exist, however, regarding what such a standardized test should measure.

In a 2002 article in the *Journal of Public Affairs Education*, David Williams suggests that there is no perfect way to assess outcomes in MPA programs. Rather, he proposes that by combining a number of measuring devices, MPA programs can obtain a relatively complete assessment process (Williams, 2002). His article highlights the approach West Virginia University (WVU) has taken in developing an assessment model. After developing a mission statement, WVU decided to use a combination of tools including exit questionnaires of students, course evaluations, reports from faculty committee, feedback from internship supervisors, and examination of grades and statistics (such as number of credit hours and number of students in joint programs). This has provided WVU with a diversified look at the program, one the author feels has been a success for the program. The approach taken by WVU was reminiscent of the approach the Martin School has adopted.

Another approach, this one implemented by the University of Baltimore (UB), was to utilize the capstone course as a way to assess the MPA program (Durant, 2002). Rather than simply using the capstone course as a review of the curriculum or a time to work on the students' oral presentations, UB opted to include case studies as well as reviews of the past curriculum and general reviews of the program itself. UB, through student and faculty input, used the capstone, initially, as a way to develop a

new mission statement and later as a way to gauge whether the program was meeting its mission.

Based on the literature it seems clear that program assessment is crucial, but how to best go about assessing the program is unclear. Each program should examine its mission and goals, and through a combination of methods the individual programs deem most appropriate, periodically evaluate the program. The disagreement concerning the best assessment tools for MPA programs can be good for programs as it provides them with a certain amount of freedom in determining how their program can best be measured based on its unique characteristics.

III. METHODOLOGY

While the Martin School uses other assessment methods to gain a holistic view of the success of the MPA program, the focus of this paper is on the survey tools used. The pre-test, post-test, and alumni survey are all utilized in reaching conclusions about the assessment methods in the MPA program as well as the success of the program itself.

A. SKILL ASSESSMENT

The skill assessments measure student confidence in 19 skill areas when they first enter the program, and then again shortly before graduation. The skill areas examined are:

- Effectively analyze management problems
- Effectively analyze policy issues
- Develop a budget proposal

- Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report
- Make an effective oral presentation to a group
- Work independently without supervision
- Work effectively in a team
- Evaluate a program
- Analyze revenue issues
- Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict
- Assess economic dimensions of an issue
- Critically analyze competing policy claims
- Identify the values at stake in an issue
- Resolve disputes among people
- Provide leadership in an organization
- Identify and understand legal issues in administration
- Use tools of statistical analysis
- Use decision theory
- Use computers for information gathering and analysis

The following is a summary of the data included in the analysis of the pre and post-test information. The years below are calendar years rather than academic years.

Pre-Test	Post-Test	Post-Test Retrospective
2000		
2002	2002	2002
2003	2003	2003
2004	2004	2004

i. PRE-TEST

With the incoming class of 2000 the Martin School began conducting a skill assessment (See Appendix B).   Results from pre-tests in 2000 and 2002 through 2004 were coded and analyzed using SPSS. The pre-test from 2001 could not be located. Queries were run to determine the mean score reported for each of the

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questions. From these mean scores, the three areas with the highest and the three areas with the lowest scores were identified.

ii. POST-TEST

Beginning in the spring of 2002, post-tests were given to students during the capstone course. This post-test used the same questions students had answered on the pre-test and was attempting to determine how confident students were with the particular skills after completing the MPA degree program. Data from 2002 through 2004 was coded and analyzed using SPSS. The same queries run on the pre-test data were run on the post-test data.

Additionally, comparisons were made between pre and post test data to determine the amount of increase in confidence with certain areas. This was done in two ways: first by using the retrospective portion of the post-test and also by comparing increase in confidence of those students with both pre and post-test data on file.

B. 2005 ALUMNI SURVEY

While a survey tool existed (and had been previously used), the decision was made to examine other tools used by competing institutions before reusing the survey from 1999. NASPAA had several sample surveys available on their website (www.naspaa.org/accreditation/institute/alum.asp, last accessed March 31, 2005), including two that stated they drew heavily from a tool NASPAA had created. The

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NASPAA survey was the model for the new instrument used by the Martin School, with only minor changes being made.

A total of 141 surveys were completed, or a response rate of just over 35%, and returned by March 22, 2005. All surveys received after March 22nd were coded and included in the database given to the Martin School so a complete data set would be available for future analysis. Demographics of the respondents were as follows:

- 52% of respondents were female
- 66% graduated after 1990
- 60% were enrolled as full-time students during the MPA program
- 95% are currently employed full-time
- 94% classify their race/ethnicity as White
- Alumni are currently employed in the following:
    - 18% by a state government agency/state legislature
    - 17% by a school district, college, or university
    - 14% by a non-profit agency/"Third Sector" organization
    - 11% in private industry non-consulting
    - 11% by a U.S. federal government agency/Congress

The survey data were coded into an Access database, converted into Excel format, and analyzed using SPSS. Initially, descriptive statistics were run on all the numerical responses to the survey questions. The data were then further analyzed for trends based on gender, race, and length of time since graduation. Additionally, the responses to questions regarding faculty (question 23) and internships (question 25) were indexed and analyzed as an entirety as well as individually.

IV. RESULTS

The results from the various assessment tools are overwhelmingly positive. While there are always areas for improvement, no area received a mean score low enough to raise concern. Occasionally a student or alumni did report a low score; however, these appear to be extraordinary situations, and while they should not be ignored, they are not cause for panic.

A. SKILL ASSESSMENT

i. PRE-TEST

The pre-test asked students to use a scale from 1-4, with 1 being "not at all confident" and 4 being "very confident", to report their confidence in 19 areas. The instructions on the pre-test were as follows:

"Please indicate: (1) which of the following activities you ARE NOW ABLE TO DO and (2) HOW CONFIDENT you are that you can do it. For each activity, circle Yes or No and circle a confidence rating."

Overall, results on the pre-test, which used data from 2000, 2002, 2003, and 2004, show that students were most comfortable effectively advocating ideas in a written report (3.04), working effectively in a team (3.27), and working independently without supervision (3.38). Students felt least comfortable using decision theory (1.19), analyzing revenue issues (1.20), and critically analyzing competing policy claims (1.41) prior to entering the MPA program. See Appendix F for a complete table of descriptive statistics.

Table A: Pre-test Descriptive Statistics Summary

Skill Areas	N	Mean
Use decision theory	80	1.19
Analyze revenue issues	80	1.20
Critically analyze competing policy claims	81	1.41
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	81	1.44
Use tools of statistical analysis	81	1.53
Develop a budget proposal	80	1.64
Effectively analyze policy issues	81	1.79
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	81	1.81
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	81	1.84
Effectively analyze management problems	80	1.92
Evaluate a program	80	1.93
Identify the values at stake in an issue	81	2.32
Resolve disputes among people	80	2.51
Provide leadership in an organization	81	2.68
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	81	2.74
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	81	2.93
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	81	3.04
Work effectively in a team	81	3.27
Work independently without supervision	81	3.38

Little can be done to alter the confidence rankings students give to the different skill areas on the pre-test. The pre-test data seems to simply function as a benchmark to note the confidence levels of entering students, making discussion of how to improve the scores unimportant. If, however, the Martin School desired to increase the starting scores of students, there are several options. These options include changing the admissions standards to give preference to certain undergraduate majors, requiring certain classes for admission, or shifting to primarily recruiting students with a certain amount of work experience in public administration. Because the Martin School prides itself on the diversity of backgrounds its students bring with them, it is unlikely that these changes will be made, and the benefit of making them is

not known. Also, in assessing success of the program, the exit data and data regarding the change in confidence are the areas of focus rather than pre-test scores.

ii. POST-TEST

Using post-test data from 2002, 2003, and 2004, students generally reported the greatest comfort in the areas of working independently without supervision (3.90), effectively advocating ideas in a written report (3.75), and working effectively in a team (3.70). Students were least comfortable in the areas of developing a budget proposal (2.78) and analyzing revenue issues (2.84). A complete table of descriptive statistics is available in Appendix G.

Table B: Post-test Descriptive Statistics Summary Table

Skill Areas	N	Mean
Develop a budget proposal	63	2.78
Analyze revenue issues	63	2.84
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	63	2.92
Use tools of statistical analysis	63	2.92
Use decision theory	63	2.92
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	63	2.95
Resolve disputes among people	63	3.16
Critically analyze competing policy claims	63	3.24
Evaluate a program	63	3.33
Effectively analyze management problems	63	3.35
Effectively analyze policy issues	63	3.51
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	63	3.52
Identify the values at stake in an issue	63	3.57
Provide leadership in an organization	63	3.57
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	63	3.62
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	63	3.65
Work effectively in a team	63	3.70
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	63	3.75
Work independently without supervision	63	3.90

Students reporting the lowest confidence as being developing a budget proposal and analyzing revenue issues provides room for discussion regarding the role of these areas in the curriculum. One option is to stress budgeting and revenue more than the current curriculum does. Another option is to simply consider the topic areas and question whether changes would actually increase confidence in these areas.

First, the Martin School could stress budget proposals and analyzing revenue issues more heavily. Doing so would require some other area to receive less attention or the number of hours in the curriculum to be increased. Because the areas receiving the highest confidence ratings (working independently without supervision, effectively advocating ideas in a written report, and working effectively in a team) were areas that are addressed throughout the MPA curriculum through practical exercises, it is not possible to shift time spent on these areas to time spent on budget and revenue. Rather, it would be necessary to retool existing courses or implement new courses.

An entire course on budget proposals and analyzing revenue issues would be an option, but demand would need to be evaluated prior to implementing such a course. Alternatively, it may also be possible to introduce projects into existing courses that would allow students to have experience with budget proposals and revenue issues.

However, the general topics of budgeting and revenue already receive a good deal of attention in the MPA curriculum. The reasoning for the lower scores given to

these two areas may be simpler than a lack of focus in the curriculum. It may be that students simply are less confident in these areas because of the nature of the material. Often times students are less comfortable working in areas where there can be a definite right and a wrong answer rather than just competing approaches, as is the case with more theory based courses and subjects. The MPA faculty should examine the actual skills in these areas, as demonstrated through coursework, and determine whether there is an actual lack of knowledge involved, or if they are simply areas in which students will naturally be less confident.

iii. COMPARISON BETWEEN PRE-TEST AND POST-TEST SCORES

Comparing the mean scores from the pre-test to those on the post-test shows which areas presented the largest change in confidence. For this comparison, only students who had both pre and post test data were used, creating a population size of 21. Because the data was missing from 2001 and post-test data is not available for students starting in 2003, the number of students with both pre and post test data was limited.

Students reported the greatest increase in the following areas: use decision theory (increase of 2.62), analyze revenue issues (increase of 2.48), and critically analyze competing policy claims (increase of 2.19). The smallest increase was reported in the following areas: provide leadership in an organization (increase of 0.05), use computers for information gathering and analysis (increase of 0.34) and working independently without supervision (increase of 0.52).

It is encouraging to note that students reported increased confidence in all 19 measured skill areas from the pre-test to the post-test. Several of the areas showing the smallest increase were also the areas that students reported higher confidence in upon entering the program, meaning there was less room for increase. All areas were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, with 18 of the 19 areas being statistically significant at the 0.005 level.

Table C: Pre-Test/Post-Test Confidence Increase Comparison

Skill Areas	Change in Means	Stat. Signif.
Provide leadership in an organization	0.05	0.004
Use computers for information gather and analysis	0.34	0.000
Work independently without supervision	0.52	0.001
Work effectively in a team	0.57	0.002
Identify values at stake in an issue	0.62	0.000
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	0.66	0.000
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	0.85	0.000
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	0.90	0.000
Resolve disputes among people	0.95	0.024
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	1.04	0.000
Evaluate a program	1.05	0.000
Develop a budget proposal	1.05	0.001
Effectively analyze management problems	1.29	0.000
Use tools of statistical analysis	1.43	0.000
Effectively analyze policy issues	1.86	0.000
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	2.14	0.000
Critically analyze competing policy claims	2.19	0.000
Analyze revenue issues	2.48	0.000
Use decision theory	2.62	0.000

iv. RETROSPECTIVE

In the retrospective portion of the post-test, students were asked to use a 4-point scale with 1 being "ability has not increased at all" and 4 being "ability has increased a great deal", to answer how much their ability to do each of the 19 areas

had increased. Based on their responses the largest increase in ability came in the

areas of effectively analyzing policy issues (3.70), evaluating a program (3.56), and

identifying stakeholders in a policy conflict (3.41). The least amount of increase was

reported in resolving disputes among people (2.61), working independently without

supervision (2.63), and identifying and understanding legal issues in administration

(2.70). Complete descriptive statistics are available in Appendix H.

Table D: Retrospective Table

Skill Areas	N	Mean
Resolve disputes among people	64	2.61
Work independently without supervision	64	2.63
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	64	2.70
Work effectively in a team	64	2.78
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	64	2.94
Provide leadership in an organization	64	2.95
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	64	3.02
Develop a budget proposal	64	3.05
Analyze revenue issues	64	3.14
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	64	3.17
Effectively analyze management problems	64	3.22
Use decision theory	64	3.28
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	64	3.31
Identify the values at stake in an issue	64	3.34
Critically analyze competing policy claims	64	3.36
Use tools of statistical analysis	64	3.38
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	64	3.41
Evaluate a program	64	3.56
Effectively analyze policy issues	64	3.70

It is interesting to note that the two methods of comparison lead to different

results. None of the three categories rated by students on the retrospective portion of

the post-test as having the greatest increase was among the three identified by

comparing pre-test and post-test scores. Of the categories showing the least increase,

only one of the three (working independently without supervision) was the same under both methods of comparison.

Another interesting point is the difference in change as reported by the retrospective versus when means from the pre and post tests are compared. While the reason for this difference is not clear, it could be explained by the nature of the comparison methods used. The retrospective is asking students to think back to the beginning of the program and state how much their confidence has increased while the comparison method is simply measuring where students rated their skill level at the beginning versus the end of the program.

B. 2005 ALUMNI SURVEY

Because of the length of the survey, this paper will only discuss the results of the questions that focus on the MPA program, faculty/administration, and internship. Questions regarding career choices, job satisfaction, and salary may be useful to the program in other areas, and should be analyzed at a later point.

In examining the usefulness of the MPA program, it is heartening that 66% of alumni stated that the MPA degree was either extremely important or very important in obtaining a job immediately after completing the program.

The MPA program itself is the first major area to be examined. To obtain a more in-depth look at the skills targeted by the MPA program, alumni were asked to rate, using a 5 point scale with 5 being the highest score, how much they had gained from the MPA experience in 20 different categories. With respect to correlation, the

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categories had a Cronbach's alpha score of 89.2%. These categories closely mirror

the categories discussed on the skills assessment. Overall, the responses reflect that

alumni gained at least a moderate amount in almost every area. The only three areas

falling below the moderate standard were computer applications (2.84),

personnel/human resources management (2.90), and information management (2.90).

The highest score was given in the area of written communication (3.93). Descriptive

statistics can be seen in their entirety in Appendix I.

Table E: Alumni reported "gain" in skill areas through MPA Program

Skill Areas	N	Mean
Computer applications	135	2.84
Personnel/Human resources management	136	2.90
Information management	136	2.90
Legal institutions and processes	136	3.12
Ethics and democratic values	136	3.17
Leadership	135	3.33
Economic institutions and processes	136	3.37
Decision making	134	3.49
Organizational design and management	134	3.54
Political institutions and processes	136	3.67
Problem solving	135	3.67
Oral communication	136	3.68
Budgeting	136	3.70
Financial management	135	3.74
Economic analysis	136	3.76
Organizational behavior and group processes	136	3.76
Program planning and evaluation	135	3.83
Quantitative and statistical techniques	135	3.83
Policy analysis and implementation	136	3.89
Written communication	136	3.93

Alumni were asked to rate how important they found each of the above categories in their career. The areas noted as being the least important were economic institutions and processes (3.03), economic analysis (3.38), and legal institutions and processes (3.41). The areas rated as the most important were problem solving (4.50), oral communication (4.63), and written communication (4.71). The categories had a Cronbach's alpha score of 84.5%. See Appendix J for complete descriptive statistics.

Table F: Most important areas as reported by alumni

Skill Areas	N	Mean
Economic institutions and processes	131	3.03
Economic analysis	131	3.38
Legal institutions and processes	131	3.41
Quantitative and statistical techniques	131	3.47
Political institutions and processes	130	3.50
Personnel/Human resources management	131	3.61
Organizational design and management	131	3.63
Budgeting	131	3.72
Financial management	131	3.76
Information management	131	3.79
Policy analysis and implementation	131	3.82
Organizational behavior and group processes	131	3.90
Ethics and democratic values	131	3.91
Program planning and evaluation	131	3.97
Computer applications	131	4.15
Leadership	131	4.31
Decision making	131	4.37
Problem solving	131	4.50
Oral communication	131	4.63
Written communication	131	4.71

Another major area of analysis dealt with the faculty. The faculty received

mean scores of "average" or higher in every category. The two categories receiving

the lowest mean score were assistance in gaining employment (3.00) and quality of

career advising (3.00). This may be attributable to lack of funding within the

program to provide for a designated employee to focus on career services. Alumni

gave the professors their highest rating for class preparation (4.19) and knowledge of

their respective subjects (4.49). A complete table of descriptive statistics is available

in Appendix K.

Table G: Faculty Questions

	N	Mean
Assistance by the faculty in gaining employment	124	3.00
The quality of career advising	127	3.00
Effective use of practitioners in the classroom	134	3.22
Opportunity to interact socially with the faculty	134	3.42
The quality of academic advising	135	3.45
Exposure to a variety of points of view	134	3.97
Accessibility of the faculty outside the classroom	136	4.00
Ability to communicate clearly in class	136	4.07
The fairness of grading systems used	134	4.07
Preparation of your professors for class	136	4.19
The faculty's knowledge of their respective subjects	136	4.49

Indexing these 11 variables shows that on a scale from 11 to 55 with 55 being

the best possible score, the faculty received a mean score of 40.86. This has a

Cronbach's alpha reliability rate of 86.6%

With respect to the internship experience, the results were once again largely

positive. The areas receiving the lowest mean scores dealt with direction and support

by the MPA program and gaining a new awareness of the professional obligations in the field. These two areas received scores of 3.66 and 3.90 respectively, placing them well into the upper half of the 1-5 rating scale. The highest scores were in the areas of receiving experience which I found valuable later in my career (4.26) and my internship exposed me to real-world politics (4.20). See Appendix L for complete descriptive statistics.

Table H: Internship Questions

	N	Mean
I was given good direction and support by the MPA program	91	3.66
I was left with a new awareness of the obligations of a professional in the field and to the public	91	3.89
I had an interesting variety of assignments during the internship	91	3.92
My internship related classroom theory to real-world practice	91	3.98
My internship helped me decide upon a career	91	3.99
I was given good direction and support by the agency	91	3.99
My internship exposed me to real-world politics	91	4.20
I received experience which I found valuable later in my career	91	4.26

Combining the above areas into an index shows that the internship experience as a whole received a rating of 31.89 on a scale of 8-40 with 40 being the best possible score. This had a Cronbach's alpha reliability rating of 85.2%.

The data collected by this survey was also examined by groups. First, satisfaction with faculty and internships was examined based on graduation year. The chart below shows the reported mean satisfaction level for years 1978 through 2004. Faculty could receive a maximum score of 55 while the maximum score for

internships was 40. The difference in means relating to faculty was statistically

significant at the 0.05 level, but not for the difference in means relating to internships.

Internship Rating by Graduation Year

Faculty Rating by Graduation Year

Program Assessment in the Martin School
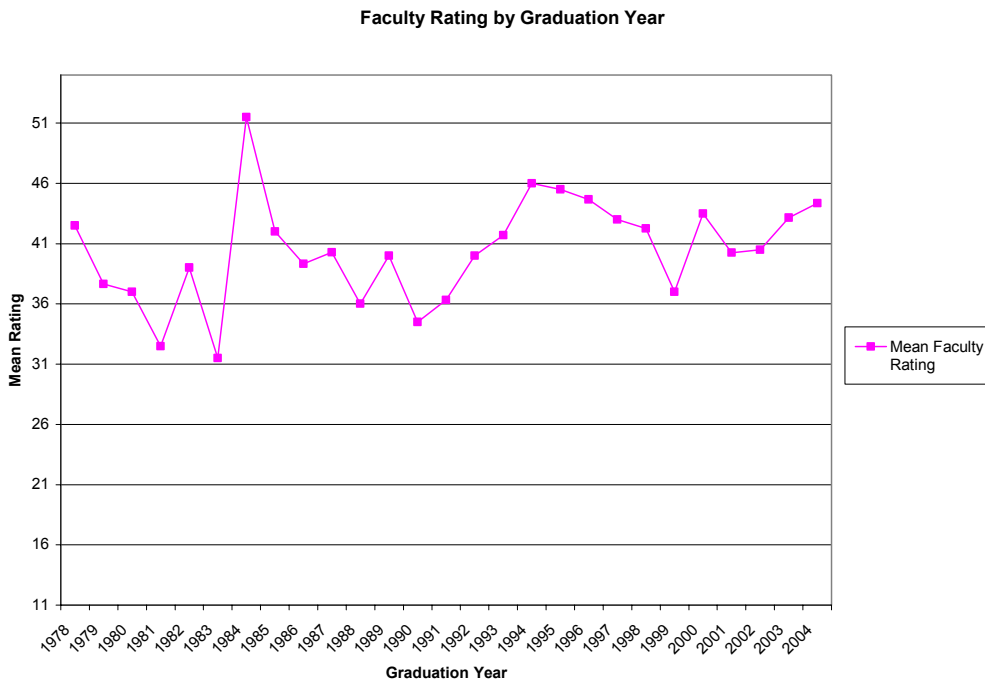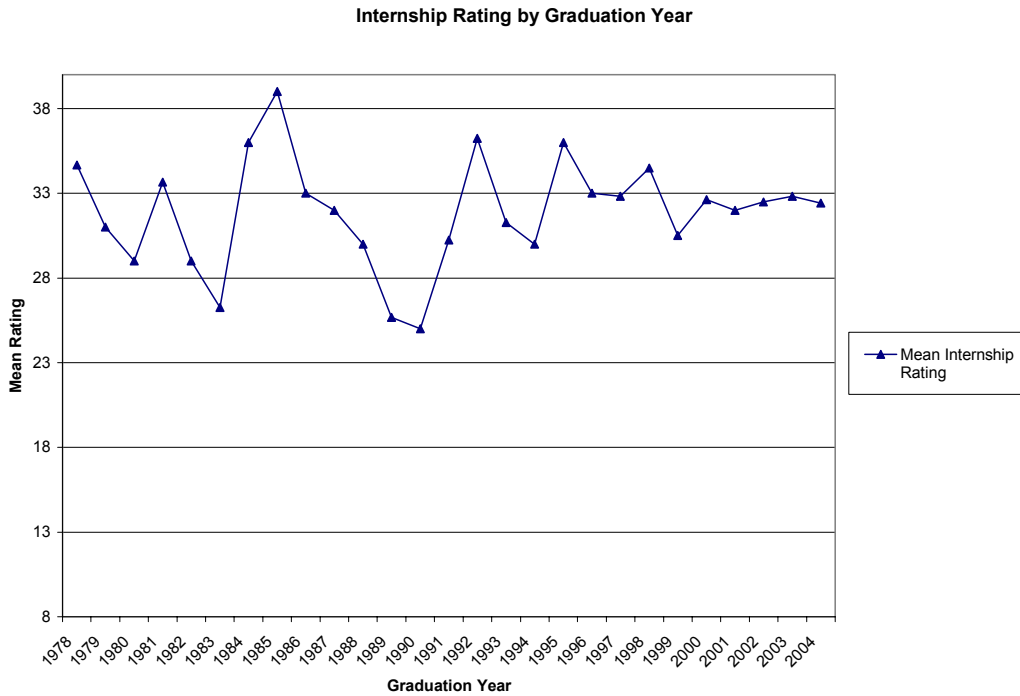
Internship and faculty ratings were also examined based on the status of the student during the MPA program. Student status was divided into three categories, full-time, part-time, or a mixture of full-time and part-time. Full-time status students gave faulty the highest rating, followed by part-time students. Students who were a mixture of full-time and part-time status gave faculty the lowest rating. With respect to internships, part-time students gave the highest rating, followed by full-time students, and then students using a mixture to complete the program. However, the difference in means was not statistically significant at the 0.10 level for either faculty responses or internship responses.

Internship and faculty were also examined by race/ethnicity of the responding alumni. This examination was only conducted between Black and White alumni because the number of alumni falling into the other categories was too small to provide useful information. Higher ratings for both faculty and internships were given by black alumni, but statistical significance was not found for responses relating to either indexed category.

Gender was used to examine the indexed categories of internship and faculty satisfaction. Males rated both internships and faculty higher than women. The responses regarding faculty were statistically significant at the 0.05 level, the

responses regarding the internship were not statistically significant at the 0.10 level.

Faculty Rating by Gender

Internship Rating by Gender

Program Assessment in the Martin School
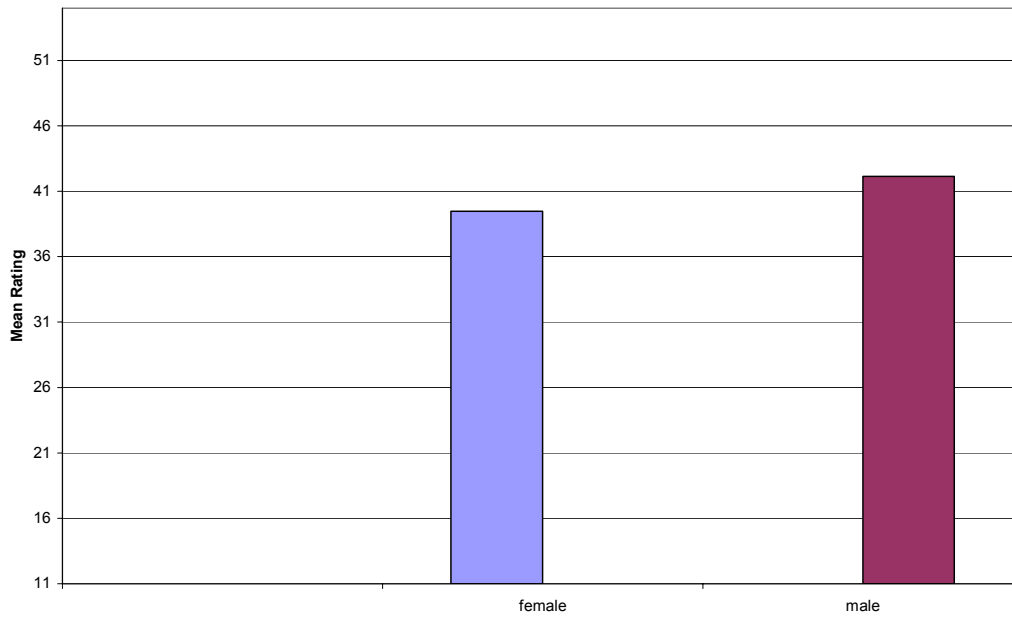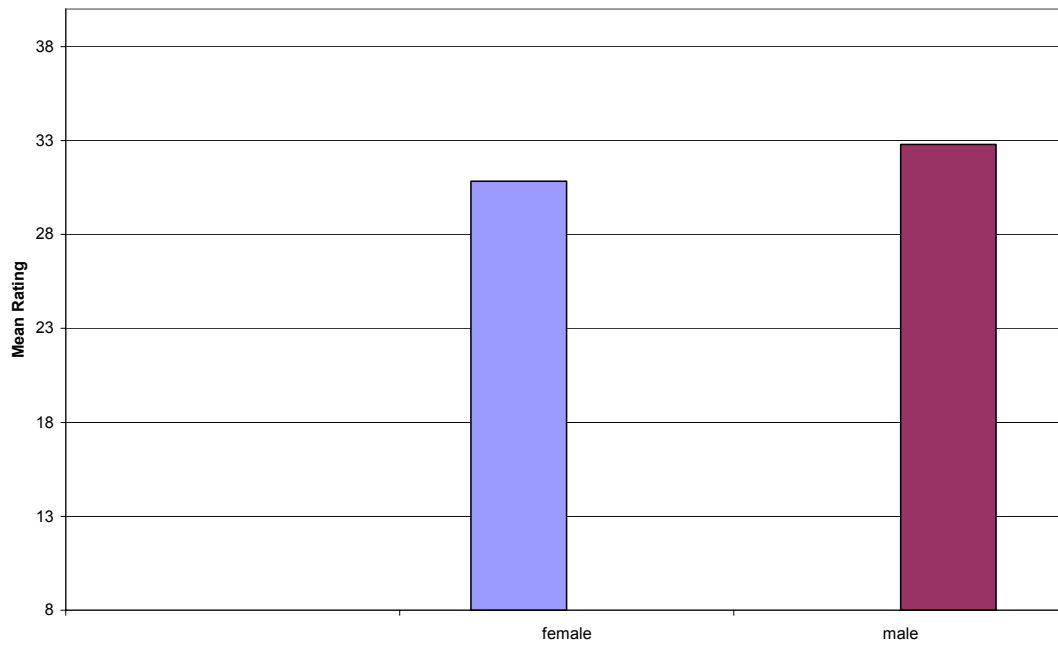
One final examination involved computer facility rating by graduation year. Breaks in the line are a result of data not being available for all graduation years. As expected, scores have generally improved over time.

Mean Computer Score

C. COMPARISON TO DATA FROM 1999 ALUMNI SURVEY

Comparing the results of the new survey to the survey conducted in 1999 is difficult in some areas because of changes in question format or scale. For example, the previous alumni survey asked students how satisfied they were with each of the core courses offered by the Martin School, but the new survey asks about their satisfaction in skill areas, rather than particular courses. Because of overlap in material, it is difficult to compare the data from the two surveys in this area.

Program Assessment in the Martin School

However, there are several areas that allow for comparison. For example, the previous survey asked alumni about the 19 skill areas that were later used as questions on the pre and post tests. The 1999 survey showed that the lowest comfort levels were in the areas of: developing a budget proposal, analyzing revenue issues, using tools of statistical analysis, and using decision theory. All of these categories received rating of 1 or 2 on a 4 point scale from more than 50% of the responding alumni. Several of these areas were confirmed as more problematic by receiving lower scores from students on the post-test data.

Also, comparisons can be made between the academic advising, internship and career advising, accessibility of instructors. Fifty-one percent of those responding to the 1999 survey reported being not at all, slightly, somewhat, or moderately satisfied with the academic advising. Fifty percent reported being not at all or slightly satisfied with the assistance they received in obtaining an internship. Fifty percent reported being not at all satisfied with the help they received in obtaining a job, and the other 50% reported being either somewhat or moderately satisfied. The 2005 survey did not measure all the same areas, but of those measured, alumni reported being less satisfied in the areas of academic advising (3.45) and assistance in obtaining a job (3.00).

V. LIMITATIONS

This paper has several limitations, none of which render the data unusable, but rather provide room for improvement and/or further analysis. First, the data analysis conducted has barely scratched the surface. A much more in-depth analysis could and should be done, particularly with respect to the survey data, to provide a clearer picture of the strengths and weaknesses of the MPA program, as well as which sectors are employing the most graduates.

Similarly, while the survey gathered useful information, there is room for improvement in the instrument itself. Several survey questions, particularly those dealing with facilities, may not provide useful data because of the drastic advances in technology since the Martin School opened its doors. Additionally, because the alumni participating in the survey span nearly 30 years of graduates, data must be considered as covering a number of administrations, many faculty changes, and potentially different theoretical approaches to the MPA program. Data could be segmented by graduation year or into groupings of several years to determine if certain time periods report weaker scores, which might skew the results, or if there has been an improvement in reported scores over time.

As a practical matter, several typographical errors in the survey document itself may have lead to incomplete information on some surveys. One question instructed those alumni who had not participated in an internship to skip to Section C, but should have told the alumni to skip to Question 26. While many respondents caught the error, several did not, and therefore did not answer Question 26.

Additionally, an error in the instructions on question 13, the word "let" was typed instead of the word "left", may have distracted from the actual question. Many respondents noticed this error, and even corrected it on their survey. It is possible that they were distracted by the error, misunderstood the question, or had a lessened opinion of the instrument itself because of the error.

Another potential problem with the survey instrument is its length. While the questions only number 33, when all the subparts are counted, the actual number of items to respond to is over 130. In a similar vein, several of the questions that provide some of the more interesting information contain the most subparts. While the length may not have been an issue, it is possible that respondents were burdened by the length because of time, concentration of information, or other issues, and took less care in answering the later questions or those using longer lists of related subparts.

The addition of one question to the survey may provide a good deal of useful information. The survey never specifically asked the respondents to quantify their overall satisfaction with the MPA program. Including this one question would allow for additional analysis of the data gathered by the rest of the instrument. The score on this question could be analyzed using any number of other variables, including race, student status (full-time vs. part time), gender, age, recent graduates versus less recent graduates, career type, or many others. Additionally, it would be useful to have an overall satisfaction rating from the respondents to serve as a marker rather than using statistical maneuvering to reach a similar mark.

Program Assessment in the Martin School

One further limitation lies with a lack of depth in components of the analysis. This paper gives only a cursory review to certain areas and no review to other connections between assessment tools. In the interest of length, comparisons were not drawn between all the assessment models. The major links have been discussed but a deeper analysis could reveal additional useful information.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data gathered from the surveys and the skills assessments, several recommendations can be made. These recommendations have been divided into two major areas; first, the structure of the measuring instruments and second, programmatic recommendations based on data from the measuring instruments.

I. INSTRUMENTS

A. SURVEY

Recommendation 1.1 - The survey tool has room for improvement. Before conducting the next round of alumni surveys the questions should be evaluated for relevance and to determine if the data gathered is actually what was intended by the question.

Recommendation 1.2 - Several questions should either be eliminated or reworded to make a better instrument. These questions include the section regarding computers, classroom space, and meeting rooms, and specifically stating the unit being measured with Question 6 regarding the number of

employees. The questions regarding computers, classroom space, and meeting rooms do not gather useful information from less recent grads.

Recommendation 1.3 – A typographical error on the survey should be corrected to avoid alumni who did not complete an internship from skipping the question regarding program administration.

Recommendation 1.4 – While the return rate for on-line surveys is not high, offering that as an option to alumni should be examined. On-line surveys could make the coding process easier and may attract some alumni to respond who would not have done so on the paper copy. The on-line survey should include a "save" feature to allow alumni the option of completing the survey in several parts.

Recommendation 1.5 – A more accurate database of alumni information should be maintained. Utilize periodic contact with alumni to help ensure that the address information in the database is the correct information. This could be done through more frequently mailed newsletters or by utilizing email contact such as an electronic newsletter or periodic emails reminding alumni to update their contact information.

Recommendation 1.6 – The survey should be reexamined with respect to the other assessments currently used and altered as appropriate. For example, it may be useful to utilize the skill assessment categories on the survey.

B. SKILL ASSESSMENT

Recommendation 2.1 – Faculty members should examine the skill areas and attempt to determine realistic, acceptable confidence scores in each skill area. Doing so will help put the data gathered by the instrument into context because it is reasonable to expect confidence in areas used more often, such as written and oral communication, to be higher than those in areas students have less experience with such as statistical tools.

Recommendation 2.2 – To obtain more accurate data, clearly indicate whether students stating they cannot do a certain skill should also circle a number indicating confidence or not. Students took different approaches to this, causing data to not be uniform.

II. PROGRAMMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the data collected from the skill assessment and the alumni survey, the following programmatic changes are recommended.

Recommendation 3.1 – Attempts should be made to ascertain why students are reporting less confidence in the areas of developing a budget proposal and analyzing revenue issues. Appropriate changes should be made if the analysis of the scores indicates they are necessary.

Recommendation 3.2 – Develop a stronger, more cohesive system for assisting with internship and career placement. Possible courses of action include holding resume writing seminars, producing a list of agencies students have interned with

Program Assessment in the Martin School

in the past, and hosting an on-campus career fair targeted at organizations MPA students have typically been drawn to, both for internships and careers.

Recommendation 3.3 – Inform students of what they should expect from the faculty and administration in terms of internship and career searches. Helping the students have a realistic view of what is available to them may help them feel better about the assistance they receive.

Recommendation 3.4 – Review assessment tools more often. Pre and post test data should be input into a database and analyzed periodically, possibly yearly.

Recommendation 3.5 – The alumni survey should be conducted on a set schedule so that updated data is collected on a regular basis. A three-year or four-year schedule may be helpful to keep current data for accreditation purposes.

Recommendation 3.6 – Review the areas alumni indicate are most important to their careers to ensure that the Martin School is addressing them appropriately.

Recommendation 3.7 – The areas measured by the skill assessment should be reexamined to determine if they fit with the careers chosen by graduates, and the areas they have found most important in these careers, as reported on the alumni surveys.

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APPENDIX A: 1999 Alumni survey

The Martin School
University of Kentucky
MPA Degree

Survey of 1998 and 1999 Grads

This spring we carried out a survey of 1998 and 1999 graduates of the MPA program to measure their levels of satisfaction with various aspects of the program and obtain self-reports on what they had learned. Only 14 of the 30 graduates responded to the survey. The results were decidedly mixed.

On the plus side, the results indicate that we are doing a very good job developing cognitive, analytical, communication, and behavioral skills that we want our graduates to possess. When asked whether they can do each of nineteen analytical, organizational, and leadership tasks, the students were generally very positive. They indicate in percentages ranging from 71 to 100 percent that they could accomplish the activity. Their confidence in their abilities to do these things varied, with responses in the top two categories of confidence ranging from 23 percent to 93 percent. For most items, they indicated significantly higher levels of competence than they felt they had before they entered the program. For example, the percentage indicating they could use tools of statistical analysis increased from 29 percent to 79 percent. The percent who believed they could use decision theory increased from 21 percent to 71 percent. Those believing they could effectively analyze management problems increased from 62 percent to 86 percent. Those who felt they could develop a budget proposal increased from 14 percent to 71 percent.

In some areas, there was not much room for improvement, based on the students' self-reported capabilities. For example 100 percent reported that they could effectively advocate an idea in written report before they entered the program, 93 percent said they could work independently without supervision, make an effective oral presentation, and work effectively on a team before entering the program. While that does not leave much room for the MPA program to have an impact, confidence levels went up in each of those areas. For example, those who were very confident that they could make an effective oral presentation went from 25 percent to 64 percent. While most of the students felt they could provide leadership for an organization prior to entering the MPA program, the percentage who were very confident in their ability to do so increased from 8 to 50 percent. Although the percentage who reported they could do the task went up substantially for assessing the economic dimensions of an issue, using tools of statistical analysis, developing a budget proposal, and using decision theory, those are the area in which the smallest number of graduates report being very confident in their capabilities.

The general pattern, then, is that students are reporting high levels of ability to perform important policy analytic and managerial tasks at the conclusion of the program, that in some areas these represent dramatic increases in capabilities, and that confidence levels increase substantially. Confidence levels are lowest in statistical and economic areas.

There is another way to look at the numbers to get a gauge of the program's impact. Multiplying the percentage of students who say they can do the task by the percentage who express the two highest levels of confidence yields an adjusted measure

of self-perceived confidence. Subtracting the scores from before enrollment from those after completing the program yields a perceived educational impact measure. The results of that analysis are interesting. Four competencies receive a score of 48 or higher: identify stakeholders in a policy conflict, assess economic dimensions of an issue, critically analyze competing policy claims, and identify the values at stake in an issue. Five other competencies receive scores in the thirties: effectively analyze management problems, effectively analyze policy issues, develop a budget proposal, analyze revenue issues, and provide leadership in an organization.

With the exception of quantitative tools of analysis, these competencies are the ones that we most emphasize and most want our students to acquire. As a program that emphasizes policy analysis and financial management, we are getting the message across and students perceive that they are developing an appropriate set of skills. While they perceive that they can use quantitative analysis tools, confidence levels are low, so the value added is not as great.

When we look at satisfaction with the body of knowledge and practical skills acquired in MPA classes, the most significant finding is that vast majority of the students are fairly, very, or completely satisfied with the body of knowledge and practical skills they gained. The lowest levels of satisfaction are with the courses in the quantitative analysis sequence and public policy economics. This is not surprising since we know that these are the courses that students have the most fears about and have the most difficulty mastering.

Some significant problems turn up on other items in the survey. Of those responding, 50 percent were not at all or slightly satisfied with the help they received in obtaining an internship, 50 percent were not at all satisfied with the help they received finding a job, and 30 percent were either not at all or only slightly satisfied with academic advising they received.

On the other hand, the students were highly satisfied with the accessibility of faculty and the quality of their classmates.

Staff changes over the last couple of years may have contributed to problems with support for internships, job placement, and academic advising, but it is clear we should be doing more in those areas. And, in fact, we are. In recognition of placement problems, an adjunct faculty member was hired this past year to assist with internships and job search. We began to beef up the jobs component of our web page. And we hired a new staff member to work on student affairs and provide support for student recruitment, advising, record keeping, and placement.

During the coming year, we have to beef up our support for internship and job placement activities and strengthen the academic advising component. We should do the following:

Martin School
Alumni Survey
February 20, 2000

1. How satisfied are you with the **BODY OF KNOWLEDGE** you gained in the MPA courses? (14 responses)

	PA 621	PA 622	PA 623	PA 631	PA 632	PA 641	PA 642	PA 651	PA 652	PA 795
Not At All	14%	21	21	0	0	7	7	0	0	0
Slightly	0	14	21	0	0	7	7	14	14	8
Somewhat	21	7	7	14	14	14	0	0	14	8
Moderately	21	7	0	14	14	0	0	0	7	23
Fairly	7	36	29	7	0	29	29	36	7	0
Very	36	7	21	43	50	29	50	29	43	31
Completely	0	7	0	21	21	14	7	21	14	31

2. How satisfied are you with PRACTICAL SKILLS you obtained in the MPA courses? (13 responses)

	PA 621	PA 622	PA 623	PA 631	PA 632	PA 641	PA 642	PA 651	PA 652	PA 795
Not At All	15%	31	23	8	8	15	8	0	15	0
Slightly	15	8	15	8	8	0	8	15	15	0
Somewhat	8	15	15	15	15	8	0	0	0	15
Moderately	15	0	23	8	0	23	15	23	8	15
Fairly	0	23	8	15	23	15	8	15	23	8
Very	23	15	8	15	15	23	46	38	31	31
Completely	23	8	8	31	31	15	15	8	8	31

3. How RELEVANT TO YOUR CURRENT JOB were MPA courses? (12 responses)

	PA 621	PA 622	PA 623	PA 631	PA 632	PA 641	PA 642	PA 651	PA 652	PA 795
Not At All	17%	17	17	25	17	8	8	8	25	0
Slightly	17	25	25	8	8	25	8	17	8	17
Somewhat	17	8	8	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
Moderately	8	8	17	8	17	25	17	17	8	25
Fairly	8	8	17	25	25	8	8	33	42	17
Very	25	8	17	25	25	17	33	25	8	8
Completely	8	25	0	8	8	17	17	0	8	25

4. Please indicate whether each of the following TIMES OF DAY that courses in the MPA program were SCHEDULED was convenient or not convenient for you? (14 responses)

	3:00PM	4:30PM	5:00PM	5:30PM	6:00PM
Convenient	21%	57	86	93	93
Not Convenient	79	43	14	7	7

5. How satisfied were you with the ACADEMIC ADVISING in the MPA program? (13 responses)

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
15%	15	8	15	31	8	8

6. How satisfied were you with the HELP you received in obtaining an INTERNSHIP in the MPA program? (8 responses)

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
25%	25	0	0	13	38	0

7.   How satisfied were you with the HELP you received from the MPA program to obtain a JOB? (10 responses)

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
50%	0	30	20	0	0	0

8. Which of the statements below best describes how ACCESSIBLE YOUR INSTRUCTORS were to you? (14 responses)

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
0%	0	0	7	21	57	14

9. How satisfied were you with the EXTRACURRICULAR/SOCIAL ACTIVITIES in the MPA program? (11 responses)

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
9%	27	9	27	18	9	0

10. This question asks you to make an overall judgment about the group of students who took the capstone courses with you. Which statement describes their POTENTIAL to become SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC ADMINISTRATORS? (13 responses)

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
0%	0	0	8	31	46	15

11.	These 3 questions ask you to evaluate your SATISFACTION with the computer resources in the Martin School's computer lab? (14 responses)

11a. Quality of the computing equipment:

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
0%	0	7	14	14	36	29

11b. Adequacy of student access to the computers:

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
0%	0	14	0	0	36	50

11c. Support staff in the computer lab:

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
7%	14	0	7	29	21	21

12. How satisfied are you OVERALL with the MPA program? (14 responses)

Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Fairly	Very	Completely
0%	14	7	7	36	36	0

13. As a result of COMPLETING the MPA program, please indicate:
(1) which of the following activities you ARE NOW ABLE TO DO and
(2) HOW CONFIDENT you are that you can do it. For each activity, circle
YES or NO and circle a confidence rating? (14 responses)

ACTIVITIES	CAN DO IT		HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU?			
	YES	NO	NOT AT ALL			VERY
Effectively analyze management problems	86%	14%	7%	21%	50%	21%
Effectively analyze policy issues	93	7	0	36	43	21
Develop a budget proposal	71	29	23	31	38	8
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	100	0	0	14	21	64
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	100	0	0	7	29	64
Work independently without supervision	100	0	0	7	14	79
Work effectively in a team	100	0	0	8	46	46
Evaluate a program	93	7	0	50	29	21
Analyze revenue issues	79	21	23	38	23	15
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	100	0	0	7	50	43
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	79	21	8	38	54	0
Critically analyze competing policy claims	86	14	8	15	69	8
Identify the values at stake in an issue	93	7	7	7	64	21
Resolve disputes among people	100	0	0	43	36	21
Provide leadership in an organization	100	0	0	21	29	50
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	86	14	14	36	21	29
Use tools of statistical analysis	79	21	31	38	23	8
Use decision theory	71	29	23	54	23	0
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	100	0	0	29	21	50

14. Now think about BEFORE you entered the MPA program. Please indicate (1) which of the following activities you WERE ABLE TO DO and (2) HOW CONFIDANT AT THAT TIME you were that you could do them well. For each activity, circle Yes or NO and circle a confidence rating? (14 responses)

ACTIVITIES	CAN DO IT		HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU?			
	YES	NO	NOT AT ALL			VERY
Effectively analyze management problems	62%	38%	27%	36%	36%	0%
Effectively analyze policy issues	57	43	42	17	42	0
Develop a budget proposal	14	86	73	27	0	0
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	100	0	8	25	25	42
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	93	7	17	0	58	25
Work independently without supervision	93	7	17	8	8	67
Work effectively in a team	93	7	17	8	25	50
Evaluate a program	71	29	50	17	25	50
Analyze revenue issues	14	86	67	25	0	8
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	86	14	25	42	33	0
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	43	57	50	42	8	0
Critically analyze competing policy claims	71	29	27	64	9	0
Identify the values at stake in an issue	86	14	17	58	25	0
Resolve disputes among people	100	0	25	33	42	0
Provide leadership in an organization	86	14	17	33	42	8
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	71	29	50	25	17	8
Use tools of statistical analysis	29	71	58	33	8	0
Use decision theory	21	79	82	18	0	0
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	79	21	25	17	8	50

APPENDIX B: Pre/Post Test

Date: _____   Social Security Number __ __ __ -__ __-__ __ __ __

Please indicate: (1) which of the following activities you ARE NOW ABLE TO DO and (2) HOW CONFIDENT you are that you can do it. For each activity, circle Yes or No and circle a confidence rating.

ACTIVITIES	CAN DO IT?		HOW CONFIDENT ARE YOU?			
	YES	NO	NOT AT ALL CONFIDENT			VERY CONFIDENT
			1	2	3	4
Effectively analyze management problems	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Effectively analyze policy issues	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Develop a budget proposal	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Work independently without supervision	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Work effectively in a team	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Evaluate a program	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Analyze revenue issues	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Critically analyze competing policy claims	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Identify the values at stake in an issue	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Resolve disputes among people	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Provide leadership in an organization	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Use tools of statistical analysis	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Use decision theory	YES	NO	1	2	3	4
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	YES	NO	1	2	3	4

Program Assessment in the Martin School

APPENDIX C: Post-Test Retrospective Section

Date: _____   Social Security Number __ __ __ - __ __ - __ __ __ __

Please indicate the degree to which your ability to do each of the following has increased as a result of the MPA program (1) which of the following activities you ARE NOW ABLE TO DO and (2) HOW CONFIDENT you are that you can do it. For each activity, circle Yes or No and circle a confidence rating.

ACTIVITIES	How much has your ability to do these activities increased?			
	NOT AT ALL	SOME	MODERATELY	A GREAT DEAL
	1	2	3	4
Effectively analyze management problems	1	2	3	4
Effectively analyze policy issues	1	2	3	4
Develop a budget proposal	1	2	3	4
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	1	2	3	4
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	1	2	3	4
Work independently without supervision	1	2	3	4
Work effectively in a team	1	2	3	4
Evaluate a program	1	2	3	4
Analyze revenue issues	1	2	3	4
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	1	2	3	4
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	1	2	3	4
Critically analyze competing policy claims	1	2	3	4
Identify the values at stake in an issue	1	2	3	4
Resolve disputes among people	1	2	3	4
Provide leadership in an organization	1	2	3	4
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	1	2	3	4
Use tools of statistical analysis	1	2	3	4
Use decision theory	1	2	3	4
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	1	2	3	4

Program Assessment in the Martin School

APPENDIX D: Advance Letter

Date: February 18, 2005

TO: Martin School MPA Alumni

FROM: Ed Jennings

The Martin School is undertaking a survey of its MPA graduates as part of an ongoing process of program assessment. I hope you will help us by completing and returning the survey, which you will receive in the next few days. It asks about your career experiences and the education you received in the Martin School. The information you provide will help guide our decisions with respect to curriculum, teaching, and program management.

We are committed to providing the highest quality educational experience possible. We want to challenge our students to think critically, ground them to the latest thinking in the profession, and prepare them for careers of leadership in public service. Your participation in the survey will help us achieve these goals.

Sincerely,

Edward T. Jennings, Jr.
Director

APPENDIX E: 2005 Alumni Survey Packet

Date: February 23, 2005

TO: Martin School MPA Alumni

FROM: Edward T. Jennings, Jr.
             Director

As I indicated in my letter of February 18, the Martin School is undertaking a study of its MPA graduates as part of an ongoing process of program assessment. I hope you will help us by completing and returning the enclosed survey in the business reply envelope provided.

Your participation in the survey is completely voluntary. We will protect the anonymity of your responses. The data will be analyzed in the aggregate.

Separately, I hope you will return the enclosed post card to update our information about you and indicate your willingness to participate in Martin School activities.

If you have any questions, you may contact Natalie Schneider at (859) 257-5741 or natschneider@hotmail.com

Sincerely,

Edward T. Jennings, Jr.
Director

SECTION A: EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

We would like to begin by asking you, as a graduate of our MPA program, to reflect upon your career, both prior to and after receiving your MPA degree.

QUESTIONS 1-11 PERTAIN TO YOUR CURRENT JOB

1. How would you describe your current job situation?

   [ ] Employed full-time   [ ] Employed part time, but seeking full-time employment
   [ ] Employed full-time, but seeking new position   [ ] Unemployed, but seeking employment
   [ ] Employed part-time by choice   [ ] Unemployed, but not seeking employment
   [ ] Other (please specify): _____

2. What is your current job title and place of employment?

   Job Title:_____

   Employer:_____

3. Which of the following best describes the type of organization in which you are currently employed?

   [ ] U.S. federal government agency/Congress   [ ] County government
   [ ] State government agency/State legislature   [ ] City government
   [ ] Regional government   [ ] Other local jurisdiction
   [ ] Non-profit agency/"Third Sector" organization   [ ] International organization
   [ ] School District, College or University   [ ] Judiciary
   [ ] Public interest group   [ ] Military Service
   [ ] Private industry – non-consulting   [ ] Law firm
   [ ] Consulting – primarily government/non-profit   [ ] Foundation
   [ ] Consulting – private sector clients
   [ ] Other (please specify):_____

4. How long have you held your current position? _____ years

5. Which of the following characteristics describe your current job responsibilities? Check all that apply.

   [ ] have supervisory responsibility   [ ] develop programs
   [ ] prepare or administer a budget   [ ] implement programs
   [ ] manage an agency or work unit   [ ] evaluate programs
   [ ] policy specialist/advocate   [ ] research
   [ ] budget/policy/program analyst   [ ] teaching
   [ ] direct service provision   [ ] contract management
   [ ] personnel/human resources management   [ ] lobbying or legislative work
   [ ] Other (please specify):_____

6. How many employees are in the organization for which you work? _____

7. What is your current annual salary?

   [ ] $24,999 or less   [ ] $55,000 to $64,999
   [ ] $25,000 to $34,999   [ ] $65,000 to $74,999
   [ ] $35,000 to $44,999   [ ] $75,000 or more
   [ ] $45,000 to $54,999

8. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your current job?
> 1=very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3=neutral; 4=satisfied; 5=very satisfied
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Work environment
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Promotional opportunities
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Salary
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Job challenge
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Degree of autonomy
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Meaningfulness of work
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Variety of job tasks
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Level of responsibility
>> 1 2 3 4 5   Value to society

QUESTIONS 9-10 PERTAIN TO THE JOB YOU HELD THE YEAR PRIOR TO YOUR ENTRY INTO THE MPA PROGRAM

9. During the year prior to your entry into the MPA Program, what was your employment status?

[ ] Employed full-time
[ ] Employed full-time, but seeking new position
[ ] Employed part-time by choice
[ ] Attending school
[ ] Other (please specify): _____

[ ] Employed part time, but seeking full-time employment
[ ] Unemployed, but seeking employment
[ ] Unemployed, but not seeking employment

10. How many years of MPA-related professional work experience did you bring as you entered the MPA program?
_____years

QUESTIONS 11-13 PERTAIN TO THE FIRST JOB AFTER COMPLETING YOUR MPA DEGREE.

11. Please check the item that **BEST** represents your first job as a result of your MPA education.

[ ] Did not change jobs
[ ] A "big break" or a large step in your career
[ ] A major shift to a new type of organization
[ ] A major shift to a new policy area
[ ] A natural progression from your previous work or other position
[ ] A temporary detour from an otherwise smooth career path
[ ] A move made to accommodate family demands
[ ] A step backwards from your previous job
[ ] Enrolled in an additional degree program
[ ] Other (please specify):_____

12. How important do you feel your MPA degree was in your obtaining this job?

[ ] Extremely important
[ ] Very important
[ ] Somewhat important
[ ] Not too important
[ ] Not at all important

13. If you have let this job, which of the following best describe your reason.
       [ ] Have not left this job/Not applicable
       [ ] Promotion to more responsibility
       [ ] Received job offer in preferred agency, department or location
       [ ] Received job offer more in line with professional interests
       [ ] To start a family, or spend more time at home with family
       [ ] Position had a specified term/assignment was completed
       [ ] Unsatisfactory management practices or environment
       [ ] Dissatisfied with field
       [ ] Was fired or asked to resign
       [ ] Incumbent left office
       [ ] Spouse/significant other relocates
       [ ] Burned out
       [ ] Want to experiment with different career path
       [ ] Other

QUESTIONS 14-15 PERTAIN TO YOUR OVERALL CAREER

14. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your current career:
       1=very dissatisfied; 2=dissatisfied; 3=neutral; 4=satisfied; 5=very satisfied
            1 2 3 4 5   Overall direction of your career
            1 2 3 4 5   Level of responsibility you have attained
            1 2 3 4 5   Your earnings level
            1 2 3 4 5   The substantive content of your work
            1 2 3 4 5   The impact of your work in your field
            1 2 3 4 5   Prestige associated with your profession
            1 2 3 4 5   Other aspect (please specify):_____

15. Considering your career since you received your MPA degree, how important do you consider each of the following to success?
       1=unimportant; 2= not very important; 3=somewhat important; 4=important; 5=very important
            1 2 3 4 5   MPA education
            1 2 3 4 5   Other advanced degrees/education/training
            1 2 3 4 5   Undergraduate education
            1 2 3 4 5   Network and personal contacts
            1 2 3 4 5   Work experience
            1 2 3 4 5   Hard work
            1 2 3 4 5   Personal competence
            1 2 3 4 5   Opportunity/luck

SECTION B: ASSESSMENT OF CURRICULAR AREAS

In this section we ask you about the content of your MPA program and the importance of each of these areas to your career.

16. How much did you gain in each of these areas from your MPA experience

1= Nothing at all
2= A little
3= A moderate amount
4= Quite a bit
5= A great deal

17. How important have you found each of these areas to be in your career?

1= Not important at all
2=Not very important
3=Somewhat important
4=Very important
5=Extremely important

1 2 3 4 5	Decision making	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Problem solving	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Budgeting	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Financial management	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Economic analysis	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Personnel/Human resources management	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Program planning and evaluation	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Organization design and management	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Information management	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Policy analysis and implementation	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Political institutions and processes	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Legal institutions and processes	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Economic institutions and processes	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Organization behavior and group processes	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Ethics and democratic values	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Leadership	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Oral communication	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Written communication	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Quantitative and statistical techniques	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Computer applications	1 2 3 4 5

18. Which parts of your studies in the program were most important to your career as a whole?

19. Which parts of your studies in the program were least important to your career as a whole?

20. What non-curricular aspects of your experience in the program were most important for your later career?

21. What curricular or non-curricular revisions of the program might have made your experience more important for your career?

EVALUATION OF MPA PROGRAM SUPPORT FACILITIES

22. Please rate the adequacy of support facilities for the MPA program using the following scale:
        1=very poor; 2=poor; 3=adequate; 4=good; 5=very good
Please circle one.

1 2 3 4 5	Computer
1 2 3 4 5	Classrooms
1 2 3 4 5	Meeting Space

EVALUATION OF THE MPA FACULTY

We would also like to know something about your impressions of the MPA faculty as a group. Please rate the faculty as a whole on each of the following dimensions.

  1=inadequate; 2=below average; 3=average; 4=good; 5=outstanding

23. Please circle one.

  1 2 3 4 5   Exposure to a variety of points of view
  1 2 3 4 5   Preparation of your professors for class
  1 2 3 4 5   The faculty's knowledge of their respective subjects
  1 2 3 4 5   Ability to communicate clearly in class
  1 2 3 4 5   Accessibility of the faculty outside the classroom
  1 2 3 4 5   Opportunity to interact socially with the faculty
  1 2 3 4 5   Assistance by the faculty in gaining employment
  1 2 3 4 5   Effective use of practitioners in the classroom
  1 2 3 4 5   The quality of academic advising
  1 2 3 4 5   The quality of career advising
  1 2 3 4 5   The fairness of grading systems used

EVALUATION OF THE MPA INTERNSHIP

24. Did you serve an internship in the MPA program?
  [ ] No (If "No", please proceed to Section C.)
  [ ] Yes

25. If you served an internship, please respond to the following regarding your internship experience.

  1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree

  1 2 3 4 5   My internship related classroom theory to real-world practice
  1 2 3 4 5   My internship exposed me to real-world politics
  1 2 3 4 5   My internship helped me decide upon a career
  1 2 3 4 5   I had an interesting variety of assignments during the internship
  1 2 3 4 5   I was given good direction and support by the agency
  1 2 3 4 5   I was given good direction and support by the MPA program
  1 2 3 4 5   I was left with a new awareness of the obligations of a professional in the field and to the public
  1 2 3 4 5   I received experience which I found valuable later in my career.

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

26. Please respond to the following about program administration using the scale provided.

  1=strongly disagree; 2=disagree; 3=neutral; 4=agree; 5=strongly agree 6=not applicable

  1 2 3 4 5 6   MPA classes were scheduled at times convenient for me.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   Courses were scheduled with adequate frequency while I was in the program.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   There was sufficient flexibility in scheduling to allow me to take courses suitable to my career interests.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   I had adequate contact with women faculty and/or women in the public sector.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   I had adequate contact with minority faculty and/or minority public sector practitioners.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   The MPA program was responsive to the needs of women students.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   The MPA program was responsive to the needs of minority students.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   The MPA program was responsive to the needs of disabled students.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   Sexual harassment is not tolerated in the MPA program.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   Racial and ethnic discrimination is not tolerated in the MPA program.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   There was a proper balance of theory and practice in the MPA program.
  1 2 3 4 5 6   Overall, the course content of the MPA program met my needs.

SECTION C: A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOU
Finally, we need some information about you and your status while you were in the MPA program.

27. In what year were you born? 19_____

28. What is your sex?
     [ ] Male
     [ ] Female

29. What is your race or ethnic background?
     [ ] Asian-American   [ ] Hispanic
     [ ] Black   [ ] White/Caucasian
     [ ] Other (please specify):_____

30. In what year did you graduate from the MPA program? 19_____

31. What was your undergraduate major? _____

32. What was your student status while you were in the MPA program?
     [ ] Full-time   [ ] Part-time   [ ] A mixture of full-time and part-time

33. What best describes your employment status while you were in the MPA program.
     [ ] Employed full-time (35-40 hours per week)
     [ ] Employed 20 to 35 hours per week
     [ ] Employed fewer than 20 hours per week
     [ ] Employed only as a teaching or research assistant
     [ ] Not employed

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE

Address Update postcard

Name:_____

Address:_____

       _____

Phone:_____   Email:_____

Are you willing to send us information about MPA-related job openings in your organization?

     _____Yes   _____No   _____Not Applicable

Would you be willing to accept MPA interns at your agency?

     _____Yes   _____No   _____Not Applicable

Would you be interested in serving as a mentor to help a current MPA student or recent graduate?

     _____Yes   _____No   _____Not Applicable

Appendix F: Pre-Test Descriptive Statistics

Pre-Test Descriptive Statistics

Skill Areas	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Use decision theory	80	0	4	1.19	1.02
Analyze revenue issues	80	0	4	1.20	1.04
Critically analyze competing policy claims	81	0	3	1.41	0.95
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	81	0	4	1.44	1.00
Use tools of statistical analysis	81	0	4	1.53	0.95
Develop a budget proposal	80	0	4	1.64	1.14
Effectively analyze policy issues	81	0	4	1.79	1.16
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	80	0	4	1.81	1.06
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	81	0	4	1.84	1.03
Effectively analyze management problems	80	0	4	1.92	1.05
Evaluate a program	80	0	4	1.93	0.94
Identify the values at stake in an issue	81	0	4	2.32	0.89
Resolve disputes among people	80	0	4	2.51	1.09
Provide leadership in an organization	81	0	4	2.68	1.18
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	81	0	4	2.74	1.10
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	81	0	4	2.93	1.01
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	81	0	4	3.04	0.89
Work effectively in a team	81	0	4	3.27	0.85
Work independently without supervision	81	0	4	3.38	0.90

Appendix G: Post-Test Descriptive Statistics

Post-Test Descriptive Statistics

Skill Areas	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Develop a budget proposal	63	0	4	2.78	1.04
Analyze revenue issues	63	0	4	2.84	0.94
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	63	0	4	2.92	0.89
Use tools of statistical analysis	63	1	4	2.92	0.83
Use decision theory	63	0	4	2.92	0.75
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	63	0	4	2.95	0.87
Resolve disputes among people	63	1	4	3.16	0.79
Critically analyze competing policy claims	63	1	4	3.24	0.71
Evaluate a program	63	2	4	3.33	0.70
Effectively analyze management problems	63	2	4	3.35	0.63
Effectively analyze policy issues	63	2	4	3.51	0.59
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	63	0	4	3.52	0.78
Identify the values at stake in an issue	63	2	4	3.57	0.59
Provide leadership in an organization	63	2	4	3.57	0.59
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	63	0	4	3.62	0.71
Use computers for information gathering and analysis	63	1	4	3.65	0.63
Work effectively in a team	63	3	4	3.70	0.46
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	63	3	4	3.75	0.44
Work independently without supervision	63	3	4	3.90	0.30

Appendix H: Retrospective Descriptive Statistics

Retrospective Descriptive Statistics

Skill Areas	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Provide leadership in an organization	64	1	4	2.61	0.83
Use computers for information gather and analysis	64	1	4	2.63	0.95
Work independently without supervision	64	1	4	2.70	0.92
Work effectively in a team	64	1	4	2.78	0.84
Identify values at stake in an issue	64	1	4	2.94	0.87
Effectively advocate your ideas in a written report	64	1	4	2.95	0.79
Make an effective oral presentation to a group	64	1	4	3.02	0.81
Identify stakeholders in a policy conflict	64	1	4	3.05	0.92
Resolve disputes among people	64	1	4	3.14	0.87
Identify and understand legal issues in administration	64	2	4	3.17	0.83
Evaluate a program	64	0	4	3.22	0.83
Develop a budget proposal	64	0	4	3.28	0.90
Effectively analyze management problems	64	2	4	3.31	0.75
Use tools of statistical analysis	64	2	4	3.34	0.62
Effectively analyze policy issues	64	1	4	3.36	0.70
Assess economic dimensions of an issue	64	2	4	3.38	0.81
Critically analyze competing policy claims	64	1	4	3.41	0.75
Analyze revenue issues	64	1	4	3.56	0.64
Use decision theory	64	2	4	3.70	0.52

Appendix I: Alumni Reported Gain in Areas

Alumni Reported Gain Descriptive Statistics

Skill Areas	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Computer applications	135	1	5	2.84	1.13
Personnel/Human resources management	136	1	5	2.90	1.09
Information management	136	1	5	2.90	1.17
Legal institutions and processes	136	1	5	3.12	1.03
Ethics and democratic values	136	1	5	3.17	0.98
Leadership	135	1	5	3.33	0.99
Economic institutions and processes	136	1	5	3.37	0.93
Decision making	134	1	5	3.49	0.85
Organizational design and management	134	1	5	3.54	0.93
Political institutions and processes	135	1	5	3.67	0.85
Problem solving	136	1	5	3.67	0.87
Oral communication	136	1	5	3.68	1.07
Budgeting	136	1	5	3.70	0.98
Financial management	135	1	5	3.74	0.93
Economic analysis	136	1	5	3.76	0.92
Organizational behavior and group processes	136	2	5	3.76	0.82
Program planning and evaluation	135	1	5	3.83	0.83
Quantitative and statistical techniques	135	1	5	3.83	0.94
Policy analysis and implementation	136	2	5	3.89	0.80
Written communication	136	1	5	3.93	0.97

Appendix J: Alumni Reported Importance of Skill Areas

Alumni Reported Importance of Skill Areas

Skill Areas	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Economic institutions and processes	131	1	5	3.03	1.10
Economic analysis	131	1	5	3.38	1.13
Legal institutions and processes	131	1	5	3.41	1.11
Quantitative and statistical techniques	131	1	5	3.47	1.17
Political institutions and processes	130	1	5	3.50	1.16
Personnel/Human resources management	131	1	5	3.61	1.23
Organizational design and management	131	1	5	3.63	1.01
Budgeting	131	1	5	3.72	1.08
Financial management	131	1	5	3.76	1.12
Information management	131	1	5	3.79	1.10
Policy analysis and implementation	131	1	5	3.82	1.05
Organizational behavior and group processes	131	1	5	3.90	0.96
Ethics and democratic values	131	1	5	3.91	0.96
Program planning and evaluation	131	1	5	3.97	1.00
Computer applications	131	1	5	4.15	0.94
Leadership	131	1	5	4.31	0.92
Decision making	131	1	5	4.37	0.85
Problem solving	131	2	5	4.50	0.70
Oral communication	131	1	5	4.63	0.67
Written communication	131	2	5	4.71	0.56

Appendix K: Faculty Ratings by Alumni

Faculty Ratings

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
Assistance by the faculty in gaining employment	124	1	5	3.00	1.24
The quality of career advising	127	1	5	3.00	1.12
Effective use of practitioners in the classroom	134	1	5	3.22	1.03
Opportunity to interact socially with the faculty	134	1	5	3.42	1.03
The quality of academic advising	135	1	5	3.45	1.02
Exposure to a variety of points of view	134	2	5	3.97	0.74
Accessibility of the faculty outside the classroom	136	1	5	4.00	0.89
Ability to communicate clearly in class	136	2	5	4.07	0.67
The fairness of grading systems used	134	1	5	4.07	0.75
Preparation of your professors for class	136	2	5	4.19	0.68
The faculty's knowledge of their respective subjects	136	3	5	4.49	0.57

Appendix L: Internship Ratings by Alumni

Alumni Internship Ratings

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev.
I was given good direction and support by the MPA program	91	1	5	3.66	1.05
I was left with a new awareness of the obligations of a professional in the field and to the public	91	1	5	3.89	1.06
I had an interesting variety of assignments during the internship	91	1	5	3.92	0.99
My internship related classroom theory to real-world practice	91	2	5	3.98	0.92
My internship helped me decide upon a career	91	1	5	3.99	1.11
I was given good direction and support by the agency	91	1	5	3.99	0.97
My internship exposed me to real-world politics	91	1	5	4.20	1.00
I received experience which I found valuable later in my career	91	1	5	4.26	0.94

Program Assessment in the Martin School