Summer 2015 to Spring 2016 UCCS MPA Assessment Review April 26, 2016

The UCCS MPA assessment activities are on schedule and continue to reflect a growing culture of assessment among MPA faculty and staff. In addition to MPA faculty and staff input on the creation and maintenance of these tools, the MPA Student Advisory Board, UCCS Assessment Program, UCCS Institutional Research, and capstone third readers (community members) have provided input on program assessment plans and instruments, and interpretation of results.

Fall 2016 marks the end of our first completed assessment of all five competencies and the implementation of all assessment tools. The SPA alumni survey launched in August 2016, and faculty will review survey results on September 27, 2016 during the annual MPA assessment meeting. At the end of our two-year assessment cycle, the program improved assessment tools, used assessment data to improve key program functions including our capstone experience, professional development offerings, student advising, and core course curriculum.

The full MPA program met to formally discuss program assessment results on the following dates:
- September 22, 2015 MPA Annual Assessment Review
- October 27, 2015 Assessment Review Follow-Up
- April 26, 2016 Assessment Update
- September 27, 2016 MPA Annual Assessment Review

Outside of assessment review, assessment data is incorporated into faculty program decisions throughout the year. Key examples include:
- Curriculum Revision of the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Certificates Graduate Certificate Curriculum Review September 24, 2015 and Faculty Meeting October 5, 2015
- Discussion of Capstone Credit Hour Changes School of Public Affairs Council Meeting October 15, 2015

Our program offers a complete map of our assessment strategy in our planning tool in Chart 3. This planning tool illustrates how student competencies align with specific course and assessments. In addition, Chart 3 denotes program mission, program goals, and defines our core student competencies.

The following narrative reflects our progress and explains how assessment data is collected and utilized to review program goals and student competencies. These documents will reflect our continued progress and mark changes in our thinking regarding the reporting and use of data to improve the MPA program.

In addition to scheduled assessment activities, as noted in the Program Evaluation section of the NASPAA Annual Data Report, other program changes will likely occur as a result of the faculty reviewing assessment information in its Sept 27 MPA meetings at which time the faculty will review data collected from Spring 2016. An update of the Assessment plan will begin in Fall 2016 to continue our assessment strategy beyond the current planning document that retires in Spring 2017.

Below is a list of faculty decision and program changes that are rooted in SPA's assessment between Summer 2015 to Spring 2016:

Summer 2014
1. The Results of the Spring 2014 rubric were collected from Institutional Review including the capstone rubric, reflective journal exercise, and student exit survey

Summer 2015:

1. Communication of Competencies in elective courses

    Evidence- As part of the assessment strategy agreed upon by faculty to ensure SLOs are being adopted by adjunct faculty teaching electives

    Action: Faculty conversations about the use of SLOs on syllabi and as part of learning modules. In addition, the Educational Technologist is working hard to help faculty developing electives to appropriately place SLOs into their course information.

2. 2-Year Course Plan created to aid students

    Evidence- Spring 2015 Student Exit Survey Data for both MPA and MCJ note difficulty for students to plan for courses as well as the desire for more regular offerings of electives

    Action: Program Directors met July 30, 2015 to create a 2-year course rotation document to share with students and faculty advisors to helps students engage in degree planning.

Fall: 2015
1. Discussion of key Capstone Course Operation Questions
    Evidence: Using data collected from Fall 2014-Spring 2015, Dr. Donald Klingner presented a "White Paper" on capstone issues to the joint School of Public Affairs Council on August 12, 2015

    Action: Faculty discussed these findings and then used them to create more explicit language regarding capstone reader roles as well as to generate faculty led projects that would result in more secondary data based capstone projects.

    Follow-Up: The effect to include more faculty led projects has resulted in a service learning MOU for capstone projects with the 4th Judicial Court District from Fall 2016 to Spring 2018. These projects will help address student concerns with finding a client for their project as well as IRB bottle necks that continue to concern faculty and student perceptions regarding the capstone experience, noted in the Spring 2015 assessment review documents (Notable student Feedback, Capstone Reflection Papers, and Student Exit Survey question regarding the capstone experience).

2. Annual Assessment Results Presented and Discussed at September 22, 2015
3. Annual Assessment Results Presented and Discussed at October 27 2015 MPA Committee Meeting (Continued from previous month)
    See Supplemental Material for data and discussion points

4. Increase student confidence in their demonstration and applied knowledge of Competency Three: Analysis, Solving Problems, and Making Decisions
    Evidence- As noted in student exit data, more students hoped to engage in careers related to data analysis and research than the previous year. In addition, the comparison between pre-program student confidence scores and student exit scores of confidence in data confidence did not show adequate movement between students who felt confident in their treatment of data to graduates who felt highly confident in their ability to deal with data.
    Action- Faculty requested more information on research methods and capstone course practices and material. Faculty discussed the strengths and weaknesses of current pedagogy and content in both courses. Additional

information on quantitative methodological choices was asked to be included in the research methods course. (November 14, 2015 MPA Committee Meeting)

5. Increase overall student program satisfaction

    Evidence: Although student exit survey data noted that over 80% of graduating students were very satisfied with the program that number had slightly dropped from the year before. In addition, student exit information noted that at least one student felt that the program did not meet their expectations.

    Action: Faculty requested further exploration of this finding through informal discussion groups with advisory board members as well as information from Crista Hill, SPA Graduate Recruitment and Retention Specialist on how the faculty could better meet student expectations.

6. Increase course offerings

    Evidence: Student exit survey information noted that graduating students wished to have more elective offerings in additional formats like Weekend University.

    Action: Dr. Edin Mujkic explored options to host regional courses, courses held on military bases, and additional format options.
    Follow-Up: Student Exit responses noting the need for specific courses or modalities of instruction are critical to changes in elective offerings and rotations. (July 2015; May 2016; August 2016)

Spring 2016

1. Thesis option Revision

    Evidence- Student Exit Survey data noted a desire among 3 respondents for additional research opportunities and a clearer alternative to the capstone project for theory based questions.
    Action- Dr. Robert Wonnett presented a comprehensive update to our SPA Thesis Option Guidelines February 21, 2016

2. International Student Engagement

Evidence: Faculty Identified a need for greater understanding and focus on international students through their review of capstone scores and student exit information in the September 2015 MPA Committee Meeting and Spring assessment Review May 13, 2014.

Action: A faculty meeting hosted by the UCCS Global Engagement Office visitation with focus on faculty resources for International Students February 23, 2016

3. MPA and MCJ Faculty helped revise the capstone preview to include more online content and to have more emphasis on starting to connect with second and third readers as part of the PAD 5003 content and as summer/winterium work as well.

Evidence: September 2015 MPA Committee Meeting review of capstone scores, student exit information, and capstone reflection essays on student experiences in the capstone process.

Action: Online Capstone Information Available at http://www.uccs.edu/spa/programs/graduate/capstone-seminar.html

4. Increase the level of Student Competency Five: Communication and Interaction

Evidence: According to the assessment data for capstone rubrics between Spring 2014 to Spring 2015. 20% of capstone reviewers viewed the final paper as only proficient. Likewise only 18% of reviewers viewed the capstone presentation and proficient. Assessment Data Presented on April 26, 2016

Action: To move students from proficient to above proficiency, faculty discussed how changes in PAD 5005 and 5002 regarding written and oral communication may have changed as instructors have changed. Faculties have asked for additional monitoring student competency in communication assignments and in assessment information.

Action: In capstone, additional sessions with the writing center on data visualization, literature review development, and presentation skills were requested for the Fall 2016 semester.

5. Increase the level of Student Proficiency in Competency Two: Contribution to Public Policy Process

Evidence: A 20% decrease in the level of advanced capstone rubrics in this competency area from Spring 2014 to Fall 2015, as well as the decline student confidence in their ability to lead and manage in governance context lead faculty to discuss how public discourse and debate are being discussed in the program.

Action: Dr. Mark McConkie and Dr. Michael Landon-Murray noted that faculty members need additional pedagogical training on student expectations for public issue debate. Faculty agreed to do a joint book study in the Fall 2016 to respond to improve knowledge and skills in this area.

Summer 2016
1. The Results of the Spring 2016 rubric were collected from Institutional Review including the capstone rubric, reflective journal exercise, and student exit survey
2. Faculty and Assessment Coordinator roles reviewed and communicated to the UCCS Assessment Office July 7, 2016
3. SPA Alumni Survey Launched August 15, 2016 and Collected September 15, 2016

Fall 2016
Faculty Assessment Meeting September 27, 2016

Assessment Results Discussed April 26, 2016

Data Summary:

In our Spring 2014 –Fall 2015 assessment cycle, the MPA program assessment does not reveal any major changes in program quality or perceptions of quality. Student Exit Survey results and reflection papers, denote that students still feel that the MPA program is doing a very good job of providing quality courses and support programming. Further, capstone rubric responses reveal that the majority of graduates are exiting the program with the ability to demonstrate proficiency in our five competency areas. As you review the percentage changes from Spring 2014 to Fall 2014, please note that we have finally had better rubric compliance (1st and 3rd reader rubrics, and attendance at oral presentations) that may account for much of the difference that we see in the overall levels of proficiency and advanced proficiency scores.

62.5% of student exit survey participants (N=24) are very satisfied with the education they received from SPA. 16.7% stated that they were somewhat satisfied with the education they received. Only 5 individuals or 20.9% of survey respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the overall MPA educational experience.

As one student summed up their educational experience in their reflection essay,

> *"In conclusion the analytical skills, the knowledge attained and the insight that I have been able to disclose through this rigorous process was overwhelming though well worth it because I am a better researcher because of it. And due to this experience, I will take what I have learned throughout this program, and apply it for the rest of my life, through many opportunities. Because the truth is, as I continue to learn, all the things that I have learned along the way has help developed me into the person that I was destined and created to be. My future is not my past, for I am the author of my fate, and this experience alone with so many others have only enriched, enlarged and increased my territory (physically, socially, emotionally, financially politically and so forth). I have a lot to be thankful for, and strangely enough, this project as well as this program has helped me realized that nothing is impossible and that all things are relevant if those very things matter to you." (Essay 6, Fall 2015)*

Summary of Faculty Action as a result of Key Action Items Discussed by Faculty:
- Continue to revise Capstone
- Continue to revise Research Methods

- Consider how to provide greater confidence in leadership within public governance settings
- Revisions to the Assessment Process

Student Learning Outcomes	Key Finding	Action
Competency One: To Lead and Manage in Public Governance	When scores of the PAD 5001 Pre-Test were compared with cohort scores from the Spring 2014 to Fall 2015, the median confidence level was unchanged from the start and beginning of the program. Further, this median score was lower than the previous assessment cycle. The break of the scores included 8 students reporting being highly confident, 9 students reporting they were somewhat confident in the area, 3 students reporting they minimally confident, and 1 student communicating no confidence.	Faculty discussed course level techniques to move students to a high level of confidence in this area for PAD 5005.
	Comparison of Capstone rubric scores in this area from Fall 2015 to (Spring 2014) revealed: Lacking Proficiency: 0 (2.5%) Proficient: 33.3 (15%) Above Proficient: 43.3(32.5%) Advanced: 23.3(50%)	
Competency Two: To Participate and Contribute to the Public Policy Process	When scores of the PAD 5001 Pre-Test were compared with cohort scores from	Expectation for this competency are being met.

	the Spring 2014 to Fall 2015, the median confidence level increased from somewhat confident to highly confident.	
	Comparison of Capstone rubric scores in this area from Fall 2015 to (Spring 2014)revealed: Lacking Proficiency: 2.5 (3%) Proficient: 23.3 (20%) Above Proficient: 43.3(27.5%) Advanced: 30(50%)	
Competency Three: To Analyze, Synthesize, Think Critically, Solve Problems, and make Decisions	Student Reflection Essays *"In conclusion the analytical skills, the knowledge attained and the insight that I have been able to disclose through this rigorous process was overwhelming though well worth it because I am a better researcher because of it. And due to this experience, I will take what I have learned throughout this program, and apply it for the rest of my life, through many opportunities. Because the truth is, as I continue to learn, all the things that I have learned along the way has help developed me into the person that I was destined and created to be. My future is not my past, for I am the author of my fate,*	Expectations for this competency are being met and improvement from previous assessment cycle including changes in PAD 5003 connection to Capstone Course via proposal development and workshops; case study emphasis in PAD 5002 and 5006; and the infusion of research methods information across the core curriculum via course discussion boards and journal article based assignments.

and this experience alone with so many others have only enriched, enlarged and increased my territory (physically, socially, emotionally, financially politically and so forth). I have a lot to be thankful for, and strangely enough, this project as well as this program has helped me realized that nothing is impossible and that all things are relevant if those very things matter to you." (Essay 6, Fall 2015)

"It is no secret that PAD 5003 prepares students for the Capstone Seminar probably more than any other required core course in the MPA Program. In PAD 5003, for the final course assignment we were required to "pretend" as if we were conducting real research on a social problem of our choice had to produce a problem statement, literature review, analysis section and conclusion section. This final assignment was almost like a "mini" practice Capstone Research Project, which helped me prepare for the Capstone Seminar greatly

	and helped me develop my own research style."	
	Comparison of Capstone rubric scores in this area from Fall 2015 to (Spring 2014) revealed: Lacking Proficiency: 3 (2.5%) Proficient: 30 (15%) Above Proficient: 32.5(30%) Advanced: 36.7(50%)	
Competency Four: To Articulate and Apply a Public Service Perspective	The median competency score for student exist perceptions of their ability to listen, reflect upon, synthesize and articular diverse values and perspectives finally reached "highly confident" at the end the program. This was an overall improvement in the scores from the previous assessment cycle. The break of the scores included 65.2% of students reporting being highly confident, 30.4% students reporting they were somewhat confident in the area, and 34.3% students reporting they minimally confident	Expectation for this competency are being met. Faculty suggestions made during the last assessment cycle regarding additional public service engagements on campus (ex. UCCS Mayor Debate held March 29, 2015), additional online discussions in online courses, and emphasis on civil discourse in PAD 5001 appear to be working to move more students to feel higher levels of confidence in this area.
	Comparison of Capstone rubric scores in this area from Fall 2015 to (Spring 2014) revealed:	

	Lacking Proficiency: 26.7 (2.5%) Proficient: 26.7 (5%) Above Proficient: 40(32.5%) Advanced: 40(30%)	
Competency Five: To Communicate and interact productively with a diverse and changing workforce and citizenry **The mission of the UCCS School of Public Affairs is to improve the quality of life for people and their communities, here and abroad, through collaborative governance, public service innovation, community engagement and research.**	Comparison of Capstone rubric scores in the demonstration of this area for the final presentation from Fall 2015 to (Spring 2014) revealed: Lacking Proficiency: 0 (5.4%) Proficient: 35.7(10.8%) Above Proficient: 28.6(24.3%) Advanced: 35.7(27.3%)	Faculty have determined that before we make additional changes we want to see if changes made during the last assessment cycle will take affect in the next year to help raise more students into the Above Proficiency level. Current program changes include: • Additional professional development preparation courses in the capstone course including literature review preparation • Oral presentation professional development opportunities both in core course (PAD 5005 & PAD 5002) and sessions that are part professional development series available throughout a student's MPA program tenure
	Comparison of Capstone rubric scores in the demonstration of this are for the final paper this area from Fall 2015 to (Spring 2014) revealed: Lacking Proficiency: 0 (2.6%) Proficient: 40(21.1%) Above Proficient: 33.3(28.9%) Advanced: 21.1 (47.7%)	
	Student Reflection Paper *"One of my biggest struggles within the capstone was the paper itself. I called upon past course work,*	

	library resources, and peer experiences for guidance where I felt helpless otherwise. My educational background assisted me with the knowledge and skills to research, an understanding of whom to reach out to for assistance, and how to conduct the individual pieces. Learning how all the units come together for the research methodology seemed as though it was a seemingly endless endeavor. I found that my biggest weakness was not only in stringing everything together but having the capability to make the connections among the literature review, data analysis, and future recommendations. I was able to do this through my slides and presentation, but not so easily done through out the written paper. It ended up requiring a lot of feedback mixed with trial and error to get my thoughts across to the reader." (Reflection Essay 4, Fall 2015)	

For full data reviewed, please see faculty Blackboard website for Assessment Dashboard 4_25_2106 .