
MPA Accreditation Survey Report

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Executive Summary

The purpose of this survey is to assess current attitudes and perceptions of the university’s Master of Public Administration program. The results of this survey are based on telephone interviews of a purposeful sample of 114 predominately non-profit organizations and 30 graduates of the University of North Dakota’s MPA program. The interviews were conducted from September 30 through October 16, 2015.

GRADUATE SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

MPA Program Skills and Abilities Ratings

Graduates were asked how well the MPA program equipped them with specific skills and/or abilities using a Likert scale that ranged from excellent¹ to poor. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Graduates Skills & Abilities Ratings of MPA Program

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Ethical Behavior | 27 | 4.70 | .465 |
| Critical Thinking Skills | 29 | 4.59 | .568 |
| Ability to Conduct Policy Analysis | 29 | 4.55 | .632 |
| Ability to Perform, Use, Understand Research | 29 | 4.52 | .688 |
| Concern for Public Interest | 28 | 4.46 | .693 |
| Problem Solving | 29 | 4.38 | .677 |
| Decision Making | 29 | 4.34 | .769 |
| Overall Personal & Professional Development | 29 | 4.28 | .649 |
| Work Effectively with Others | 29 | 4.24 | .689 |
| Ability to Evaluate Programs | 29 | 4.21 | .675 |
| Oral Communications | 28 | 4.18 | .905 |
| Written Communications | 28 | 4.18 | .819 |
| Adaptation to Change/Flexibility | 29 | 4.07 | .799 |
| Working in a Political Context | 28 | 4.07 | .858 |
| Understanding Budget Processes | 27 | 4.07 | 1.072 |
| Ability to Plan | 29 | 4.07 | .799 |
| Being an Effective Leader | 29 | 4.03 | .731 |
| Innovative and Creative Thinking | 29 | 4.00 | .756 |
| Managing People and Relationships | 29 | 3.97 | .680 |
| Managing Resources (Money) | 28 | 3.79 | 1.197 |
| Computer Applications | 28 | 3.79 | .995 |
| Working with Elected Officials | 26 | 3.69 | 1.011 |
| Working with Clients from Diverse Groups/Populations | 27 | 3.67 | .961 |

Graduates skills and abilities ratings mean scores ranged from 3.67 to 4.70. The lowest mean score value was for working with clients from diverse groups/populations (3.67) and the highest value was for ethical behavior (4.70).

¹ Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor”.

GRADUATE SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

MPA Program Skills and Abilities Ratings

Besides written communications skills, graduates believe the MPA program does an above average job of equipping students with ethical behavior skills (4.70), critical thinking skills (4.59), ability to conduct policy analysis (4.55) perform, use, understand research (4.52) and concern for public interest (4.46). In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable managing resources (money) was the highest with a value of 1.197, while the lowest value was .465 for the variable ethical behavior.

Skills and Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

Graduates were also asked to rate the importance of these specific skills and/or abilities for public administrators based upon their professional experience using a Likert scale that ranged from extremely important² to not important at all. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Skills & Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Written Communications | 29 | 4.86 | .441 |
| Oral Communications | 29 | 4.86 | .351 |
| Ethical Behavior | 29 | 4.86 | .441 |
| Problem Solving | 29 | 4.83 | .384 |
| Critical Thinking Skills | 29 | 4.79 | .412 |
| Work Effectively with Others | 29 | 4.76 | .435 |
| Decision Making | 29 | 4.72 | .528 |
| Adaptation to Change/Flexibility | 29 | 4.62 | .561 |
| Managing People and Relationships | 28 | 4.57 | .790 |
| Concern for Public Interest | 27 | 4.56 | .641 |
| Overall Personal & Professional Development | 29 | 4.52 | .829 |
| Being an Effective Leader | 28 | 4.46 | .693 |
| Ability to Plan | 29 | 4.45 | .736 |
| Managing Resources (Money) | 29 | 4.38 | .728 |
| Ability to Conduct Policy Analysis | 25 | 4.36 | .810 |
| Working with Clients from Diverse Groups/Populations | 29 | 4.34 | .721 |
| Working with Elected Officials | 24 | 4.33 | .963 |
| Working in a Political Context | 23 | 4.30 | .822 |
| Ability to Evaluate Programs | 28 | 4.29 | 1.013 |
| Innovative and Creative Thinking | 29 | 4.28 | .591 |
| Understanding Budget Processes | 28 | 4.18 | .819 |
| Ability to Perform, Use, Understand Research | 27 | 4.11 | .801 |
| Computer Applications | 28 | 3.79 | .876 |

Graduates skills and abilities importance ratings mean scores ranged from 3.79 to 4.86. The lowest mean score value was for computer applications (3.79) and the highest values were for written communications, oral communications and ethical behavior (all at 4.86).

² Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “extremely important” and 1 being “not important at all”.

GRADUATE SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

Skills and Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

Excluding computer applications (3.79) graduates believe all of these skills/abilities (means ranging from 4.86 to 4.11) are very important for public administrators. In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable ability to evaluate programs was the highest with a value of 1.013, while the lowest value was .351 for the variable oral communications.

Quality of Instruction

Graduates rated the overall MPA quality of instruction using a Likert scale that ranged from excellent³ to poor. The majority of graduates (90%) rate the overall MPA quality of instruction as “excellent” or “very good”. The mean score value was 4.47 with a standard deviation score value of .628.

Suggested Curriculum Changes

Nine graduates offered the following MPA curriculum suggestions:

- Include a health care program track
- More emphasis on statistics and analysis/research based courses
- Create more flexibility in selecting classes that are available in groupings of the general track
- Hardwiring excellence-book-health administration class, including employee engagement
- Some classes were not part of the curriculum. More leadership and theory skills
- Government internship/working opportunities
- Additional legislative process hands on learning experiences
- Include sociology courses

Program Strengths

Twenty-three graduates shared their opinion concerning the best accepts of the MPA program. Ten graduates (44%) believe the faculty is the most beneficial asset, nine graduates (33%) indicate the curriculum and four graduates (13%) report the learning environment is the program’s major strength.

Suggested Program Improvements

Ten graduates offered the following MPA program improvement suggestions:

- Too much emphasis on theory should concentrate more on practical experience
- Cycle of classes was difficult at times
- Instructors: Some did not have adequate classroom skills (oral communication)
- Information Technology Support: Some instructors had support others did not
- Expand program awareness/ use past students to promote program based upon their experiences
- Less classroom experience and more hands on opportunities
- More diversified faculty
- More computer science courses

³ Respondents were asked to rate the MPA quality of instruction on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor”. For graphing purposes, 4 was assigned the value “very good” and the value 3 “good”.

GRADUATE SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

MPA Mission Statement Feedback

Graduates were read the MPA mission statement and asked for their comments.

The mission of the MPA Program at the University of North Dakota is to instill public service values and to prepare people to enter into or advance in government and related fields.

Three-fourths of graduates (n=23) believe that the mission statement is “satisfactory”, “good” or as one respondent stated it “captures the experience of the mission statement”. Five graduates did not have a comment, one was neutral and one believed the statement was “too vague and overly broad”.

EMPLOYER SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

MPA Program Awareness

Over half of the employers (n=63 or 55%) surveyed were aware of the existence of the MPA program.

Skills and Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

Employers were asked to rate the importance of these specific skills and/or abilities for public administrators based upon their professional experience using a Likert scale that ranged from extremely important⁴ to not important at all. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Skills & Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Ethical Behavior | 114 | 4.96 | .228 |
| Oral Communications | 114 | 4.89 | .336 |
| Written Communications | 114 | 4.82 | .426 |
| Work Effectively with Others | 114 | 4.81 | .418 |
| Critical Thinking Skills | 114 | 4.75 | .437 |
| Problem Solving | 114 | 4.74 | .481 |
| Managing People and Relationships | 114 | 4.74 | .481 |
| Being an Effective Leader | 113 | 4.73 | .482 |
| Decision Making | 114 | 4.72 | .489 |
| Concern for Public Interest | 114 | 4.66 | .577 |
| Working with Clients from Diverse Groups/Populations | 113 | 4.63 | .585 |
| Adaptation to Change/Flexibility | 114 | 4.51 | .627 |
| Ability to Plan | 114 | 4.51 | .655 |
| Managing Resources (Money) | 112 | 4.47 | .629 |
| Innovative and Creative Thinking | 113 | 4.42 | .594 |
| Overall Personal & Professional Development | 112 | 4.41 | .637 |
| Understanding Budget Processes | 113 | 4.40 | .662 |

⁴ Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “extremely important” and 1 being “not important at all”.

EMPLOYER SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

Table 3. Skills & Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators (continued)

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Ability to Evaluate Programs | 114 | 4.15 | .668 |
| Working with Elected Officials | 113 | 4.11 | .760 |
| Ability to Conduct Policy Analysis | 112 | 4.01 | .765 |
| Working in a Political Context | 110 | 4.00 | .867 |
| Ability to Perform, Use, Understand Research | 112 | 3.96 | .722 |
| Computer Applications | 113 | 3.94 | .838 |

Employer’s skills and abilities importance ratings mean scores ranged from 3.94 to 4.96. The lowest mean score value was for computer applications (3.94) and the highest value was for ethical behavior (4.96). Following ethical behavior, other highly rated public administrator skills include oral communications (4.89), written communications (4.82), working effectively with others (4.81), critical thinking skills (4.75), problem solving (4.74), managing people and resources (4.74), being an effective leader (4.73) and decision making (4.72). In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable working in a political context was the highest with a value of .867, while the lowest value was .229 for the variable ethical behavior.

Past Supervision of MPA Graduates

Employers aware of the existence of the MPA program (n=63 or 55%) were asked if they had ever supervised or worked with graduates of the MPA program. Only seven of the employers who were aware of the MPA program had previously supervised a MPA graduate.

Employer Skills and Abilities Ratings of MPA Graduates

Employers were asked to rate MPA graduates they had worked with in regards to specific skills and/or abilities using a Likert scale that ranged from excellent⁵ to poor. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Graduates Skills & Abilities Ratings of MPA Program

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Oral Communications | 7 | 4.86 | .378 |
| Problem Solving | 7 | 4.86 | .378 |
| Ability to Perform, Use, Understand Research | 7 | 4.86 | .378 |
| Written Communications | 7 | 4.71 | .488 |
| Innovative and Creative Thinking | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Concern for Public Interest | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Ethical Behavior | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Work Effectively with Others | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Working with Clients from Diverse Groups/Populations | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Working in a Political Context | 6 | 4.50 | .548 |
| Managing Resources (Money) | 6 | 4.50 | .548 |

⁵ Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor”.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---|------|------|
| Computer Applications | 7 | 4.43 | .787 |
|-----------------------|---|------|------|

EMPLOYER SURVEY MAJOR FINDINGS

Table 4. Graduates Skills & Abilities Ratings of MPA Program (continued)

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Overall Personal & Professional Development | 7 | 4.43 | .535 |
| Working with Elected Officials | 5 | 4.40 | .548 |
| Ability to Conduct Policy Analysis | 6 | 4.33 | .516 |
| Critical Thinking Skills | 7 | 4.29 | .756 |
| Decision Making | 7 | 4.14 | .690 |
| Managing People and Relationships | 7 | 4.14 | .900 |
| Ability to Plan | 7 | 4.14 | .690 |
| Adaptation to Change/Flexibility | 6 | 4.00 | .894 |
| Being an Effective Leader | 7 | 4.00 | .577 |
| Understanding Budget Processes | 7 | 4.00 | .577 |
| Ability to Evaluate Programs | 7 | 4.00 | .577 |

Employer skills and abilities ratings of MPA graduates mean scores ranged from 4.00 to 4.86. The lowest mean score values were for adaptation to change/flexibility, being an effective leader, understanding budget processes, and ability to evaluate programs, (all at 4.00) and the highest values were for oral communications, problem solving and ability to perform, use and understand research (all at 4.86). Other highly rated skills of MPA graduates include innovative and creative thinking, concern for public interest, ethical behavior, working effectively with others and with clients from diverse groups or populations (all at 4.57). In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable managing people and relationships was the highest with a value of .900, while the lowest value was .378 for the variables oral communication, problem solving and ability to perform, use and understand research.

Other Important Skills for Public Administrators

Employers suggested listening skills, time management, knowing your mission, having a knowledgebase concerning community needs/issues, marketing, people skills (face-to-face communication as compared to electronic media), understanding how the social structure impacts individuals, program planning, perseverance, confidentiality, media training, prioritization, honesty/integrity, understanding the impact of your organization globally, understanding of other cultures and empathy for those served.

MPA Mission Statement Feedback

Employers were read the MPA mission statement and asked for their comments.

The mission of the MPA Program at the University of North Dakota is to instill public service values and to prepare people to enter into or advance in government and related fields.

Over two-thirds of employers (n=79 or 69%) believe that the mission statement is “satisfactory”, “appropriate” or as one employer stated it is “straight to the point and makes me interested in the program”. Two employers (2%) did not have a comment, and the remaining employers (n=33 or 29%) made various suggestions and or comments.

2015 MPA Accreditation Survey Report

Introduction

The Masters of Public Administration (MPA) is the only MPA program in North Dakota. It was established in 1976 and serves students on the main campus in Grand Forks and students in other locations through internet-assisted live classrooms. The MPA Accreditation survey was sponsored by the University of North Dakota's Department of Political Science and Public Administration.

Purpose

The purpose of this survey is to assess current attitudes and perceptions of the university's Master of Public Administration program from an employer and graduate student perspective.

Methodology Overview⁶

The results of this survey are based on telephone interviews of a purposeful sample of 114 predominately non-profit organizations and 30 graduates of the University of North Dakota's MPA program. The interviews were conducted from September 30 through October 16, 2015.

Report Format

The report is divided into four sections.

- Section I presents the MPA graduate students summary of the major survey findings.
- Section II presents the employer summary of the major survey findings.
- Section III presents skills/abilities importance comparison analysis between employment sectors (public vs. non-profit).
- Section IV presents demographic crosstab banners (survey type, gender, employment city population size, years of professional experience, and number of employees supervised) by the skills/abilities importance measures (this is a stand-alone Excel file).

⁶ Survey instrument is located in Appendix A.

Section I. Graduate Survey Major Findings

MPA Program Skills and Abilities Ratings

Graduates were asked how well the MPA program equipped them with specific skills and/or abilities using a Likert scale that ranged from excellent⁷ to poor. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Graduates Skills & Abilities Ratings of MPA Program

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Ethical Behavior | 27 | 4.70 | .465 |
| Critical Thinking Skills | 29 | 4.59 | .568 |
| Ability to Conduct Policy Analysis | 29 | 4.55 | .632 |
| Ability to Perform, Use, Understand Research | 29 | 4.52 | .688 |
| Concern for Public Interest | 28 | 4.46 | .693 |
| Problem Solving | 29 | 4.38 | .677 |
| Decision Making | 29 | 4.34 | .769 |
| Overall Personal & Professional Development | 29 | 4.28 | .649 |
| Work Effectively with Others | 29 | 4.24 | .689 |
| Ability to Evaluate Programs | 29 | 4.21 | .675 |
| Oral Communications | 28 | 4.18 | .905 |
| Written Communications | 28 | 4.18 | .819 |
| Adaptation to Change/Flexibility | 29 | 4.07 | .799 |
| Working in a Political Context | 28 | 4.07 | .858 |
| Understanding Budget Processes | 27 | 4.07 | 1.072 |
| Ability to Plan | 29 | 4.07 | .799 |
| Being an Effective Leader | 29 | 4.03 | .731 |
| Innovative and Creative Thinking | 29 | 4.00 | .756 |
| Managing People and Relationships | 29 | 3.97 | .680 |
| Managing Resources (Money) | 28 | 3.79 | 1.197 |
| Computer Applications | 28 | 3.79 | .995 |
| Working with Elected Officials | 26 | 3.69 | 1.011 |
| Working with Clients from Diverse Groups/Populations | 27 | 3.67 | .961 |

Graduates skills and abilities ratings mean scores ranged from 3.67 to 4.70. The lowest mean score value was for working with clients from diverse groups/populations (3.67) and the highest value was for ethical behavior (4.70). Besides written communications skills, graduates believe the MPA program does an above average job of equipping students with ethical behavior skills (4.70), critical thinking skills (4.59), ability to conduct policy analysis (4.55) perform, use, understand research (4.52) and concern for public interest (4.46). In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable managing resources (money) was the highest with a value of 1.197, while the lowest value was .465 for the variable ethical behavior.

⁷ Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor”.

Skills and Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

Graduates were also asked to rate the importance of these specific skills and/or abilities for public administrators based upon their professional experience using a Likert scale that ranged from extremely important⁸ to not important at all. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Skills & Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

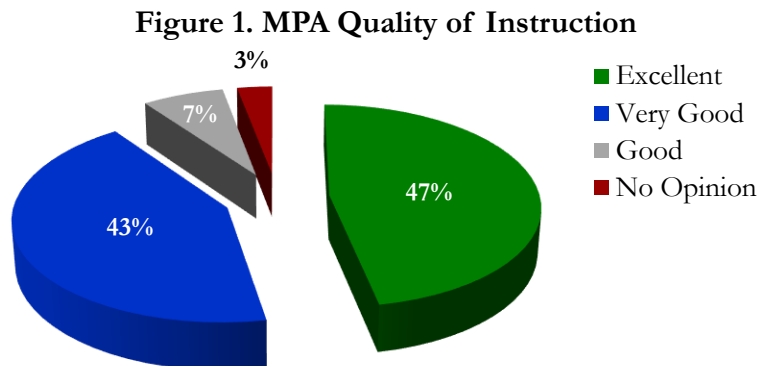
| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|--|-----------------|------|--------------------|
| Written Communications | 29 | 4.86 | .441 |
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| Decision Making | 29 | 4.72 | .528 |
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| Concern for Public Interest | 27 | 4.56 | .641 |
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| Innovative and Creative Thinking | 29 | 4.28 | .591 |
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Graduates skills and abilities importance ratings mean scores ranged from 3.79 to 4.86. The lowest mean score value was for computer applications (3.79) and the highest values were for written communications, oral communications and ethical behavior (all at 4.86). Excluding computer applications (3.79) graduates believe all of these skills/abilities (means ranging from 4.86 to 4.11) are very important for public administrators. In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable ability to evaluate programs was the highest with a value of 1.013, while the lowest value was .351 for the variable oral communications.

⁸ Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “extremely important” and 1 being “not important at all”.

Quality of Instruction

Graduates rated the overall MPA quality of instruction using a Likert scale that ranged from excellent⁹ to poor. The majority of graduates (90%) rate the overall MPA quality of instruction as “excellent” or “very good” (Figure 1). The mean score value was 4.47 with a standard deviation score value of .628.



Suggested Curriculum Changes

Nine graduates offered the following MPA curriculum suggestions:

- Include a health care program track
- More emphasis on statistics and analysis/research based courses
- Create more flexibility in selecting classes that are available in groupings of the general track
- Hardwiring excellence-book-health administration class, including employee engagement
- Some classes were not part of the curriculum. More leadership and theory skills
- Government internship/working opportunities
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- Include sociology courses

Program Strengths

Twenty-three graduates shared their opinion concerning the best accepts of the MPA program. Ten graduates (44%) believe the faculty is the most beneficial asset, nine graduates (33%) indicate the curriculum and four graduates (13%) report the learning environment is the program’s major strength.

Suggested Program Improvements

Ten graduates offered the following MPA program improvement suggestions:

- Too much emphasis on theory should concentrate more on practical experience
- Cycle of classes was difficult at times
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⁹ Respondents were asked to rate the MPA quality of instruction on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor”. For graphing purposes, 4 was assigned the value “very good” and the value 3 “good”.

MPA Mission Statement Feedback

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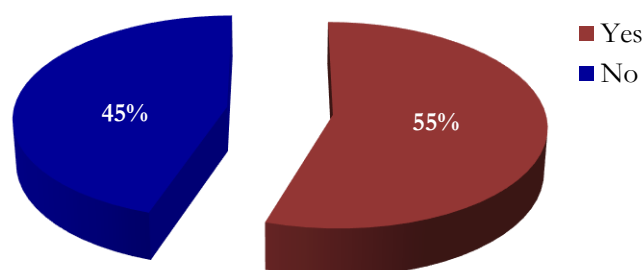
Three-fourths of graduates (n=23) believe that the mission statement is “satisfactory”, “good” or as one respondent stated it “captures the experience of the mission statement”. Five graduates did not have a comment, one was neutral and one believed the statement was “too vague and overly broad”.

Section II. Employer Survey Major Findings

MPA Program Awareness

Over half of the employers (n=63 or 55%) surveyed were aware of the existence of the MPA program (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Employer Awareness of the MPA Program



Skills and Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators

Employers were asked to rate the importance of these specific skills and/or abilities for public administrators based upon their professional experience using a Likert scale that ranged from extremely important¹⁰ to not important at all. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 3.

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| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
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| Overall Personal & Professional Development | 112 | 4.41 | .637 |
| Understanding Budget Processes | 113 | 4.40 | .662 |

¹⁰ Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “extremely important” and 1 being “not important at all”.

Table 3. Skills & Abilities Importance Ratings for Public Administrators (continued)

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
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Employer’s skills and abilities importance ratings mean scores ranged from 3.94 to 4.96. The lowest mean score value was for computer applications (3.94) and the highest value was for ethical behavior (4.96). Following ethical behavior, other highly rated public administrator skills include oral communications (4.89), written communications (4.82), working effectively with others (4.81), critical thinking skills (4.75), problem solving (4.74), managing people and resources (4.74), being an effective leader (4.73) and decision making (4.72). In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable working in a political context was the highest with a value of .867, while the lowest value was .229 for the variable ethical behavior.

Past Supervision of MPA Graduates

Employers aware of the existence of the MPA program (n=63 or 55%) were asked if they had ever supervised or worked with graduates of the MPA program. Only seven of the employers who were aware of the MPA program had previously supervised a MPA graduate.

Employer Skills and Abilities Ratings of MPA Graduates

Employers were asked to rate MPA graduates they had worked with in regards to specific skills and/or abilities using a Likert scale that ranged from excellent¹¹ to poor. The mean and standard deviation scores are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Graduates Skills & Abilities Ratings of MPA Program

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
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| Ability to Perform, Use, Understand Research | 7 | 4.86 | .378 |
| Written Communications | 7 | 4.71 | .488 |
| Innovative and Creative Thinking | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Concern for Public Interest | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Ethical Behavior | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Work Effectively with Others | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Working with Clients from Diverse Groups/Populations | 7 | 4.57 | .535 |
| Working in a Political Context | 6 | 4.50 | .548 |
| Managing Resources (Money) | 6 | 4.50 | .548 |
| Computer Applications | 7 | 4.43 | .787 |

¹¹ Respondents were asked to rate each skill/ability on a scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “excellent” and 1 being “poor”.

Table 4. Graduates Skills & Abilities Ratings of MPA Program (continued)

| Skills | Valid Responses | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| Overall Personal & Professional Development | 7 | 4.43 | .535 |
| Working with Elected Officials | 5 | 4.40 | .548 |
| Ability to Conduct Policy Analysis | 6 | 4.33 | .516 |
| Critical Thinking Skills | 7 | 4.29 | .756 |
| Decision Making | 7 | 4.14 | .690 |
| Managing People and Relationships | 7 | 4.14 | .900 |
| Ability to Plan | 7 | 4.14 | .690 |
| Adaptation to Change/Flexibility | 6 | 4.00 | .894 |
| Being an Effective Leader | 7 | 4.00 | .577 |
| Understanding Budget Processes | 7 | 4.00 | .577 |
| Ability to Evaluate Programs | 7 | 4.00 | .577 |

Employer skills and abilities ratings of MPA graduates mean scores ranged from 4.00 to 4.86. The lowest mean score values were for adaptation to change/flexibility, being an effective leader, understanding budget processes, and ability to evaluate programs, (all at 4.00) and the highest values were for oral communications, problem solving and ability to perform, use and understand research (all at 4.86). Other highly rated skills of MPA graduates include innovative and creative thinking, concern for public interest, ethical behavior, working effectively with others and with clients from diverse groups or populations (all at 4.57). In regards to standard deviation scores, the variable managing people and relationships was the highest with a value of .900, while the lowest value was .378 for the variables oral communication, problem solving and ability to perform, use and understand research.

Other Important Skills for Public Administrators

Employers suggested listening skills, time management, knowing your mission, having a knowledgebase concerning community needs/issues, marketing, people skills (face-to-face communication as compared to electronic media), understanding how the social structure impacts individuals, program planning, perseverance, confidentiality, media training, prioritization, honesty/integrity, understanding the impact of your organization globally, understanding of other cultures and empathy for those served.

MPA Mission Statement Feedback

Employers were read the MPA mission statement and asked for their comments.

The mission of the MPA Program at the University of North Dakota is to instill public service values and to prepare people to enter into or advance in government and related fields.

Over two-thirds of employers (n=79 or 69%) believe that the mission statement is “satisfactory”, “appropriate” or as one employer stated it is “straight to the point and makes me interested in the program”. Two employers (2%) did not have a comment, and the remaining employers (n=33 or 29%) made various suggestions and or comments.

A sampling of suggested improvements include:

- It's dry and a little longer than it needs to be.
- I think it's a little mediocre. Why does government exist? Needs to be more helpful, more specific and more helpful.
- I feel that a mission needs to be measurable. It isn't about feeling good, it would be if you plan to do it and measure your success. It would be difficult to come up how you quantify how you accomplish your mission.
- Should have something relating to "Community," as private or public sector relates to the community.
- Doesn't say anything about non-profit organizations and agencies.
- Why is government isolated? What about non-government? Statement is too restrictive. Societal Sectors. Very limiting, ever changing, global changes. Open the definition to open up that we are a multi-society with various sectors.
- Sounds a little sterile - public service, community service, instead of just "government"
- Why the emphasis on government? It should refer to wider range of services -it isn't just about preparing people for government.

Section III. Analysis

Public and Non-profit Sector Comparisons

A comparison analysis was conducted of responses in regards to the importance of specific skills and/or abilities¹² and sector of employment. Respondents were asked what sector (public, non-profit or private) they were currently employed. Overall¹³, 56 respondents indicated they were in the public sector (39%), 79 in the non-profit sector (56%) and seven in the private sector (5%). To conduct the comparable analysis this variable was recoded to exclude the private sector responses.

An independent sample t-test was computed using the public and non-profit sectors as the grouping variable and the skills/abilities as the test variables. Out of 23 measured skill/ability areas only three skills were found to be statistically significant between the groups.

Working with Elected Officials

The public group had a mean score of 4.40 with the non-profit sector having a mean score of 3.99. In other words, public employees believe working with elected officials is more important than employees in the non-profit sector, which is to be expected.

Ability to Evaluate Programs

The non-profit sector had a mean score of 4.29 with the public group having a mean score of 4.02. Basically, non-profit employees place more importance on documenting program effectiveness compared to the employees in the public sector.

Working with Clients from Diverse Groups and Populations

The non-profit sector had a mean score of 4.66 with the public group having a mean score of 4.44. Therefore, non-profit employees place more importance on the ability to work with diverse populations groups compared to the employees in the public sector.

¹² Skills/abilities were measured on a Likert scale of 5 to 1, with 5 being “extremely important” and 1 being “not important at all”.

¹³ Two respondents did not indicate their sector of employment due to the fact they were currently not employed.

Appendix A

Survey Instrument

2015 MPA Accreditation Survey (Graduate & Employer)

Question E1

E1. Are you a graduate of the UND Master of Public Administration (MPA) program?

1. Yes
2. No
3. REFUSED

Logic Instructions (flow only):

If (ans = 1) SKIPTO E3

If (ans = 2) SKIPTO E2

If (ans = 3) SKIPTO TYPE

Question E2

E2. Are you aware of the existence of the UND Master of Public Administration (MPA) program?

1. Yes
2. No
3. REFUSED

Logic Instructions (flow only):

If (E2 > 1) SKIPTO Q24

Question E3

E3. Have you ever supervised or worked with graduates of the UND Master of Public Administration (MPA) program?

1. Yes
2. No
3. REFUSED

Logic Instructions (flow only):

If (E1 > 1 & E2 > 1 & E3 > 1) SKIPTO Q24

If (E3 > 1) SKIPTO Q24

Question E4

E4. Next I'm going to read a list of skills and/or abilities. For each, please rate the UND MPA graduates you have worked with on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Excellent and 5 being Poor.

1. Press any key to continue

Logic Instructions (flow only):

If (ans = 1) SKIPTO Q1

Question G1

G1. Next I'm going to read a list of skills and/or abilities. For each, how would you rate the UND MPA program at training and/or educating students with these on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Excellent and 5 being Poor.

1. Press any key to Continue

Question Q1

The first, written communications?

1. EXCELLENT
2. -
3. -
4. -
5. POOR
6. Not Applicable / No Opinion

Question Q2

How about - Oral communications?

Question Q3

Critical Thinking Skills?

IF NEEDED: How would you rate . . .

EMPLOYER: . . . the UND MPA graduates you have worked with . . .

GRADUATES: . . . the UND MPA program at training or educating students with this skill . . .

. . . on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Excellent and 5 being Poor.

1. EXCELLENT
2. -
3. -
4. -
5. POOR
6. Not Applicable / No Opinion

Question Q4

Problem Solving?

Question Q5

Decision Making?

Question Q6

Ability to perform, use, and understand research.

Question Q7

Next, Innovative and creative thinking?

IF NEEDED: How would you rate: (same as Q3)

Question Q8

Adaptation to change/flexibility?

Question Q9

Working in a political context, such as the legislatures or Councils?

Question Q10

Being an effective leader?

Question Q11

Working with elected officials?

IF NEEDED: How would you rate: (same as Q3)

Question Q12

Managing people and relationships?

Question Q13

Understand budget processes?

Question Q14

Ability to plan?

Question Q15

Managing resources (money)?

IF NEEDED: How would you rate: (responses same as Q3)

Question Q16

Ability to evaluate programs?

Question Q17

Ability to conduct policy analysis?

Question Q18

Computer applications?

Question Q19

Concern for the public interest?

IF NEEDED: How would you rate: (responses same as Q3)

Question Q20

Ethical behavior?

Question Q21

Ability to work effectively with others?

Question Q22

Working with clients from diverse groups and populations?

Question Q23

Overall personal and professional development?

IF NEEDED: How would you rate: (responses same as Q3)

Question Q24

Next, based upon your professional experiences, how important are the following skills for public administrators?
Please use a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Extremely Important and 5 being Not at All Important.

1. Press any key to Continue

Question Q25

The first, written communications?

Question Q26

How about - Oral communications?

Question Q27

Critical Thinking Skills?

Question Q28

Problem Solving?

Question Q29

Decision Making?

IF NEEDED: Based upon your professional experiences, how important is "Decision Making" skills for public administrators?

Question Q30

Ability to perform, use, and understand research.

Question Q31

Next, Innovative and creative thinking?

Question Q32

Adaptation to change/flexibility?

Question Q33

Working in a political context, such as the legislature or Councils?

Question Q34

Being an effective leader?

IF NEEDED: Based upon your professional experiences, how important is "being an effective leader" for public administrators?

... on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Extremely Important and 5 being Not at all Important.

Question Q35

Working with elected officials?

Question Q36

Managing people and relationships?

Question Q37

Understanding budget processes?

Question Q38

Ability to plan?

Question Q39

Managing resources (money)?

IF NEEDED: Based upon your professional experiences, how important is "Managing resources (money)" for public administrators?

... on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Extremely Important and 5 being Not at all Important.

Question Q40

Ability to evaluate programs?

Question Q41

Ability to conduct policy analysis?

Question Q42

Computer applications?

Question Q43

Concern for the public interest?

IF NEEDED: Based upon your professional experiences, how important is "Concern for the public interest " for public administrators?
... on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Extremely Important and 5 being Not at all Important.

Question Q44

Ethical behavior?

Question Q45

Ability to work effectively with others?

Question Q46

Working with clients from diverse groups and populations?

Question Q47

Overall personal and professional development?

Question Q48OPN

Are there any other skills not mentioned that are important for public administrators to have?
TYPE IN RESPONSE

Question Q49OPN

We would like your feedback on the UND MPA mission statement. READ STATEMENT:
The mission of the MPA Program at the University of North Dakota is to instill public service values and to prepare people to enter into or advance in government and related fields.

Question Q50

How would you rate the UND MPA overall quality of instruction on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being Excellent and 5 being poor.

- 1. Excellent
- 2. -
- 3. -
- 4. -
- 5. Poor
- 6. Not Applicable / Refuse

Question Q51

Would you have curriculum changes you would like to share for the UND MPA program?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. REFUSED

Logic Instructions (flow only):

if (ans = 1) SKIPTO Q51OPN

if (ans = 2 or ans =3) SKIPTO Q52AOPN

Question Q51OPN

UND MPA Curriculum suggestions:
TYPE IN RESPONSE

Question Q52AOPN

What are the best accepts of the UND MPA program?
TYPE IN RESPONSE

Question Q52BOPN

How could the UND MPA program be improved?
TYPE IN RESPONSE

Question Title

Finally we have a few questions concerning your professional career experience?

What is your current job title?
TYPE IN RESPONSE

Question Sector

Would you consider yourself an employee of the public, nonprofit or private sector?

1. Public
2. NonProfit
3. Private
4. No Response

Logic Instructions (flow only):

if (ans = 1) SKIPTO Public

if (ans = 2 or ans = 3) SKIPTO Years

Question Public

Do you work for local, state or federal government?

1. Local
2. State
3. Federal Government
4. No Response

Question Years

How many years of professional experience do you have?
ENTER NUMBER

Question Super

How many people do you currently supervise?
ENTER NUMBER

Question Popu

What is the population of the town/city where you are employed?

1. 1 to 4,999
2. 5,000 to 9,999
3. 10,000 to 15,000
4. 15,001 or Larger
5. Refused

Question GENDER

Thank you very much for your time - those are all the questions we have. Have a pleasant afternoon.
RECORD GENDER

1. Male
2. Female