Master of Public
Administration Program

UNF-MPA student learning outcomes and program assessment

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UNF MPA program assessment includes a number of elements:
1. An alumni survey (page 2)
2. Student and alumni skills self-assessment (page 3)
3. Student skills direct assessments (page 6)
4. Program diversity (page 10)
5. Student completion and employment outcomes (page 11)

The University of North Florida Master of Public Administration program graduated its first student in 1978. Over forty years later the number of alumni has reached over 750. The program was first accredited in 1999 by what was then the National Association of Schools of Public Policy, Affairs and Administration, and recently received its fourth reaccreditation, valid through 2026. This makes UNF-MPA the only accredited graduate program in public policy, public administration, and related fields offered in northeast Florida.[1]

Assessment, and public accountability regarding that assessment, is both a requirement of accreditation, and central to the fields of public policy and administration. This report combines the results of the program's ongoing assessment plan, along with a summer 2018 survey of program alumni, carried out every 4-5 years.

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[1] Nova Southeastern has facilities in Jacksonville, and offers an accredited online and hybrid degree (link).
Jacksonville University's Master of Public Policy program is not accredited (link, and link).

1. Alumni survey

A third alumni survey of the UNF-MPA program was conducted in summer 2018. The survey received 132 responses. This was about 19% of the then 700 total graduates of the program, and a response rate of about 30% of the over 400 alums we have email addresses for. The UNF-MPA program saw an almost complete change of faculty from Fall 2010, and so many of the results below are presented separately for the years 2011 and beyond (n = 74), with the previous years (n = 58) also serving as a benchmark for current performance.

Table 1
Overall alumni impression of MPA

	Yes 1978-2010	Yes 2011-2018
Improvement in life satisfaction	79.3%	93.3%
Worth the investment in time and money	89.7%	96%

More specifically, the survey gathered information regarding increased income after the MPA. These data are presented in Table 2. The data indicate a strong return on investment.

Table 2
Increase in income after MPA graduation

AY	Statistic	Increase in annual salary one year after	Increase in annual salary five years after
1978-2010	N	50	51
1978-2010	Mean ($)	11,320	29,541
1978-2010	Median ($)	7,500	25,000
2011-2018	N	67	53
2011-2018	Mean ($)	12,552	23,987
2011-2018	Median ($)	9,000	20,500
Total	N	117	104
Total	Mean ($)	12,026	26,711
Total	Median ($)	8,000	21,000

The summer 2018 alumni survey also asked broader questions regarding faculty teaching, research, service, and advising. Results are presented in Table 3, on the next page.

Table 3
Overall alumni program assessment

Faculty…	Percent poor/ fair	Percent Good/ very good	Percent excellent	Mean score (0-5 scale)
…instruction 1978-2010	1.7	69.0	29.3	4.03
…instruction 2011-2018	0.0	48.6	51.4	4.43
…research 1978-2010	3.5	77.2	19.3	3.74
…research 2011-2018	5.6	52.8	41.7	4.15
…public service 1978-2010	12.3	70.2	17.5	3.56
…public service 2011-2018	0.0	57.0	43.1	4.25
Program management '78-2010	18.9	55.1	25.9	3.69
Program management 2011-'18	0.0	27.0	73.0	4.68

The results are clearly positive, with 90%+ assessing faculty teaching, research and public service, as well as program management, as good, very good or excellent throughout its 40 year history. Post 2010 program assessments have improved on previous efforts, with 100% of respondents rating the faculty good, very good or excellent in terms of teaching and public service, as well as program management.

2. Student and alumni skills self-assessment

Capstone students have been surveyed regarding perceptions of their professional development every year since 2011[2]. Skills assessed are those identified in the program's mission and competencies.

The questions were coded as follows:
0 – Unchanged
1 – Unchanged, as prior experience left little room to improve
2 – Improved
3 – Improved significantly

Results are presented in Table 4 (Table 4a on the next page, then continued on 4b and 4c on the page after that). A large portion of students report improvement, or significant improvement in skill levels. Table 5 presents alumni self-assessments of improvements in skill levels.

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[2] 2021 Capstone exist surveys were not submitted, due to pandemic complications.

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Table 4a
Student skill self-assessment: post-test (Capstone PAD6066)

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	Class	Skills were Unchanged	Skills were Unchanged (prior exp.)	Skills were Improved	Skills were Improved significantly	Mean score
Communication: writing	2015-17	0.0	0.0	46.3	53.7	2.54
Communication: writing	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	57.1	42.9	2.43
Communication: writing	Spring '19	0.0	5.6	55.6	38.9	2.33
Communication: writing	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	35.7	64.3	2.64
Communication: speaking	2015-17	12.2	7.3	56.1	24.4	1.93
Communication: speaking	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	71.4	21.4	2.14
Communication: speaking	Spring '19	5.6	5.6	72.2	16.7	2.00
Communication: speaking	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2.50
Communication: listening	2015-17	4.9	4.9	68.3	22.0	2.07
Communication: listening	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	64.3	28.6	2.21
Communication: listening	Spring '19	0.0	5.6	61.1	33.3	2.28
Communication: listening	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	2.57
Local governance	2015-17	2.4	2.4	34.1	61.0	2.54
Local governance	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0	2.80
Local governance	Spring '19	5.6	0.0	50.0	44.4	2.33
Local governance	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	2.57
Problem solving	2015-17	2.4	0.0	56.1	41.5	2.37
Problem solving	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2.50
Problem solving	Spring '19	5.6	0.0	50.0	44.4	2.33
Problem solving	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2.50
Professional ethics	2015-17	4.9	0.0	51.2	43.9	2.34
Professional ethics	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	2.57
Professional ethics	Spring '19	0.0	0.0	44.4	55.6	2.56
Professional ethics	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2.50
Management theory	2015-17	2.4	0.0	39.0	58.5	2.54
Management theory	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	21.4	78.6	2.79
Management theory	Spring '19	0.0	0.0	44.4	55.6	2.56
Management theory	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	2.57
Economic constraints	2015-17	2.4	2.4	24.4	70.7	2.63
Economic constraints	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	28.6	64.3	2.57
Economic constraints	Spring '19	5.6	0.0	55.6	38.9	2.28
Economic constraints	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	14.3	85.7	2.86

Table 4b
Student skill self-assessment: post-test (Capstone PAD6066)

	Class	Skills were Unchanged	Skills were Unchanged (prior exp.)	Skills were Improved	Skills were Improved significantly	Mean score
Quantitative skills	2015-17	12.2	2.4	61.0	24.4	1.98
Quantitative skills	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	85.7	14.3	2.14
Quantitative skills	Spring '19	5.6	5.6	61.1	27.8	2.11
Quantitative skills	Spring '20	7.9	0.0	50.0	42.9	2.29
Diverse workforce	2015-17	0.0	2.5	60.0	37.5	2.35
Diverse workforce	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	57.1	35.7	2.29
Diverse workforce	Spring '19	0.0	0.0	55.6	44.4	2.44
Diverse workforce	Spring '20	7.1	0.0	42.9	50.0	2.36
Public policy	2015-17	7.3	2.4	41.5	48.8	2.32
Public policy	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	35.7	64.3	2.64
Public policy	Spring '19	0.0	0.0	44.4	55.6	2.56
Public policy	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	35.7	64.3	2.64
Globalization	2015-17	4.9	2.4	39.0	53.7	2.42
Globalization	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	35.7	57.1	2.50
Globalization	Spring '19	0.0	0.0	55.6	44.4	2.44
Globalization	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	28.6	71.4	2.71
Role of public service	2015-17	2.4	0.0	46.3	51.2	2.46
Role of public service	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	35.7	64.3	2.64
Role of public service	Spring '19	0.0	0.0	44.4	55.6	2.56
Role of public service	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	14.3	85.7	2.86
Concentration expertise	2015-17	2.4	0.0	31.7	65.9	2.61
Concentration expertise	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	30.0	70.0	2.70
Concentration expertise	Spring '19	0.0	0.0	38.9	61.1	2.61
Concentration expertise	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	35.7	64.3	2.64

Table 4c
Program culture

		Very poor	poor	good	Very good	
Faculty culture of diversity/ inclusion	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	3.57
Student culture of diversity/ inclusion	Spring '20	0.0	0.0	57.1	42.9	3.43

Table 5
Alumni skill self-assessment: Whole sample

	Alumni skills were Unchanged	Alumni skills were Unchanged (prior exp.)	Alumni skills were Improved	Alumni skills were Improved significantly	Mean score* 1978-2010	Mean score* 2011-2018
Communication:						
Communication: writing	2.2	2.3	55.3	40.2	2.16	2.51
Communication: speaking	6.9	6.8	59.5	26.7	2.05	2.19
Communication: listening	4.5	7.6	56.8	31.1	2.16	2.22
Local governance	0.7	0.8	38.6	59.8	2.50	2.65
Critical thinking/ analysis	1.5	0.8	53.8	43.9	2.38	2.45
Professional ethics	7.6	5.3	49.2	37.9	2.21	2.28
Management theory	1.5	0.8	43.2	54.5	2.47	2.57
Economic constraints	2.4	4.5	45.8	47.3	2.33	2.47
Quantitative skills	3.0	0.8	50.8	45.5	2.38	2.45
Diverse workforce	7.6	7.6	53.0	31.8	2.10	2.22
Public policy	1.5	0.8	51.5	46.2	2.45	2.43
Globalization	3.9	0.8	31.3	64.1	2.38	2.74
Role of public service	2.3	3.0	45	49.6	2.35	2.51
Concentration expertise	2.3	-	52.7	45	2.33	2.50

* To maintain comparable results, this is calculated using a 0-2-3 scoring system, with 0 for both unchanged categories, 2 for improved, and 3 for improved significantly.

Alumni results are strong across the board, with 85%+ indicating their skills had improved in all categories. Especially impressive are the results for writing skills and critical thinking, and the results for understanding of local governance, management theory, and public policy. Mean scores also show improvement from the 1978-2010 period, to the 2011-18 period.

3. Student direct assessments

Quantitative analysis assessment

We have had a quantitative analysis assessment exercise since 2015, in which students interpret, in written form, statistical data presented to them.

We have worked on a second assessment for this competency presented in Table 6, next page, in large part due to the mixed results in Table 6. In spring 2018 we piloted a quiz dealing with central concepts in statistical analysis. Results have been promising. On the one hand, an improvement was identified, Capstone students answering 7.9 correct, compared to 5.3 in the introductory class (p = .002). This exercise still leaves ample room for improvement in the Capstone class. More important, the format allows easy identification of key concepts that Capstone students have not understood.[3]

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[3] For example, Capstone students were especially weak understanding the concept of the unit of analysis (17%), a dummy variable (13%), the unstandardized regression coefficient (21%), and the regression adjusted r^2. This was a multiple choice quiz, with five answers for each, so guessing should have yielded 20% right.

Table 6a
Quantitative analysis exercise, by Capstone learning outcomes
(%, and on 0-3 scale for mean score)

	Insufficient major	Insufficient minor	Prof. Adequate	Prof. Mastery	Mean Score
Statistical interpretation: Spg '15-17	11.5	38.5	26.9	23.1	1.62
Statistical interpretation: Spg '18	11.8	52.9	29.4	5.9	1.29
Statistical interpretation: Spg '19	6.7	60.0	20.0	13.3	1.40
Statistical interpretation: Spg '21	18.9	31.3	43.4	6.3	1.38
Critical analysis: Spg '15-17	15.4	36.5	25.0	23.1	1.56
Critical analysis: Spg '18	11.8	64.7	11.8	11.8	1.24
Critical analysis: Spg '19	6.7	53.3	20.0	20.0	1.53
Critical analysis: Spg '21	18.9	25.0	50.0	6.3	1.56
Table presentation: Spg '15-17	1.9	5.8	32.7	59.6	2.50
Table presentation: Spg '18	5.9	17.6	47.1	29.4	2.00
Table presentation: Spg '19	0	13.3	53.3	33.3	2.20
Table presentation: Spg '21	6.7	6.7	43.4	43.4	2.00

Table 6b
Frequency distribution, average score

Combined:	0 – 0.5	0.75 – 1.25	1.5 – 2.25	2.5 – 3.0	
Table presentation: Spg '15-17	13.4	15.3	48.2	23.0	1.89
Table presentation: Spg '18	17.6	52.9	17.6	11.8	1.53
Table presentation: Spg '19	6.7	53.3	20.0	20.0	1.71
Table presentation: Spg '21	6.3	25.0	50.0	18.9	1.65

Public management essay

Table 7 presents overall results for our 'public management essay'. In this component of the program's assessment, incoming students (PAD6060 Public Administration in Modern Society) write an essay on a prominent historical article about American public administration. In the Capstone class students write a second essay, this one on a similar article. The table combines the scores from 2010 to 2021 (Intro n = 181; Capstone n = 227) for all classes for which results are available. Capstone students score both substantively, and statistically higher than incoming MPA students.

Table 7
Intro and Capstone compared, public management essay

Assessment item	Class	Mean score	Probability
Discipline knowledge	Intro	1.83	.000
	Capstone	2.43	
Critical analysis	Intro	1.78	.000
	Capstone	2.50	
Research	Intro	1.85	.000
	Capstone	2.29	
Writing	Intro	2.17	.001
	Capstone	2.50	
Combined	Intro	1.91	.000
	Capstone	2.42	

Table 8 breaks down the public management essay results by learning outcomes. In a change from previous reports, the results are presented as a three year running average. Sample size from Intro classes was 47, and Capstone 56. Results remain consistent with recent trends, and show improvement through the program.

Table 8
Public Management essay, by learning outcomes (%)

	Class	Insufficient major	Insufficient minor	Prof. Adequate	Prof. Mastery	Mean Score
Discipline knowledge (%)	Intro-AY 2018-20	11	32	9	49	1.96
Discipline knowledge (%)	Caps-Spg 2019-21	4	11	36	50	2.32
Critical analysis (%)	Intro-AY 2018-20	13	30	30	28	1.72
Critical analysis (%)	Caps-Spg 2019-21	2	7	29	63	2.52
Research (%)	Intro-AY 2018-20	21	17	13	49	1.89
Research (%)	Caps-Spg 2019-21	5	20	23	52	2.21
Writing (%)	Intro-AY 2018-20	4	19	19	57	2.30
Writing (%)	Caps-Spg 2019-21	4	4	16	77	2.67

Concentration assessment

Finally, Table 9 presents the results for the cumulative, through AY2020-21, Concentration assessment. The exercise consists of an essay in which students are asked to discuss the major challenges facing their concentration area. Generalist Option students are asked to discuss major challenges facing the UNF-MPA mission competency of "understanding local governance in a global context." Students are assessed on their critical policy thinking, and on their knowledge of the literature in their concentration area.

Given the relatively small sample sizes for each academic year (the AY2020-21 graduates included 3 nonprofit, 9 local government, 3 public policy, 1 health administration, and no national security or generalist graduates), we have presented these results cumulative. A clear trend of solid learning outcomes can be seen. To compare AY 2020-21 results with the cumulative results to date, the overall numbers are presented in parentheses in the final column.

Table 9
Concentration assessment exercise, by Spring 2013-19 Capstone competency
(with Capstone 2021 in parenthesis)

	Insufficient major	Insufficient minor	Prof. Adequate	Prof. Mastery	Mean (Caps '21)
Nonprofit (n = 60)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	1	4	5	50	2.73
(%)	1.7	6.7	8.3	83.3	(3.00)
Management literature (#)	2	3	6	49	2.70
(%)	3.3	5.0	10.0	81.7	(2.67)
Combined (%)	2.5	5.8	9.1	82.5	2.71
Local government (n = 36)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	3	2	6	25	2.47
(%)	8.3	5.6	16.7	69.4	(2.22)
Management literature (#)	2	1	10	23	2.50
(%)	5.6	2.8	27.8	63.9	(2.33)
Combined (%)	7.0	4.2	22.2	66.6	2.48
Health admin (n =13)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	2	1	4	6	2.08
(%)	15.4	7.7	30.8	46.2	(n/a)
Management literature (#)	0	3	3	7	2.31
(%)	0.0	23.1	23.1	53.8	(n/a)
Combined (%)	7.7	15.4	26.9	50.0	2.19
Public Policy (n = 17)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	2	1	2	12	2.38
(%)	11.8	5.9	11.8	70.6	(2.67)
Public policy literature (#)	0	2	3	12	2.54
(#)	0	11.8	17.6	70.6	(3.00)
Combined	5.9	8.8	14.7	70.6	2.46
National Security (n=1)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	0	0	1	0	2.00
Management literature (#)	0	0	1	0	2.00
Generalist option (n = 35)					
Critical thinking (#)	0	10	5	20	2.29
(%)	0.0	28.6	14.3	57.1	(n/a)
Literature	2	10	3	20	2.17
(%)	5.7	28.6	8.6	57.1	(n/a)
Combined	2.8	28.6	11.5	57.1	2.23

4. Program diversity

We added two new items to the student exit survey in Table 4: student perceptions of MPA faculty culture of diversity and inclusion, and student perceptions of MPA student culture of diversity and inclusion. This, incidentally, was added to our assessment plan in fall 2019. Both indicators show that all students felt the program culture of diversity and inclusion was good or very good.

Tables 10-12 present student diversity data. Gender diversity is about normal for US MPA programs, with a moderate over-representation of women. Racial diversity in admissions broadly reflects the NE Florida region, with 22 (northeast Florida) to 30% (Jacksonville) of the region being African-American, and just under 10% Hispanic.

Table 13 presents faculty diversity. We have added the three adjuncts to the 2021-22 tally, as this more accurately reflects faculty students are exposed to.

Table 10
Student diversity: admissions (%)

Year	Female	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Total #
2010-15	56	22	8	7	245
2015-16	52	29	3	6	31
2016-17	59	38	6	3	34
2017-18	64	32	5	2	44
2018-19	52	30	11	0	27
2019-20	49	40	11	3	35
2020-21	74	47	5	3	38

Table 11
Student diversity: completion (%)

Year	Female	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Total #
2010-15	55	18	9	5	134
2015-16	68	23	9	0	22
2016-17	30	10	2	1	10
2017-18	41	24	12	0	17
2018-19	44	19	13	0	16
2019-20	58	11	0	5	19
2020-21	63	50	0	0	16

Table 12
Student diversity: currently enrolled (%)

Year	Female	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Total (#)
Fall '20	54	36	8	4	50
Fall '21*	62	25	8	5	63

* Fall 2021 data for 'active' students.

Table 13
Faculty diversity

Year	Female	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Total
2010-11	2	2	0	1	5
2011-18	4	1	0	1	6-8
2018-20	4	1	0	0	6-7
2020-21	6	2	0	0	8
2021-22	6	1	1	0	10

5. Student completion and employment outcomes

Beyond the student satisfaction and income data presented above in Section 1, we also provide to our accrediting body the following data on student completion rates, and employment data by sector.

Table 14
Student time to completion (cumulative years)

AY	Enroll	2 years	3 years	4 years	6 years	6+ years	Total	Continuing
2010-15	32.8	16.8	3.8	1.2	0.4	0.4	22.6	0
2015-16	23	8	13	14	15	0	15	0
2016-17	23	10	15	0	0	0	15	1
2017-18	34	13	22	24	0	0	24	1
2018-19	18	9	15	0	0	0	15	0
2019-20	26	14	15	0	0	0	15	5
2020-21	25	5	0	0	0	0	5	14
2021-22	20	0	0	0	0	0	0	17

Table 15
Placement data by field of employment, six months after graduation, by AY

	2016	2017	2018	2020	2021
National or central government	1	0	0	1	0
State government	4	3	1	3	1
City, county, or other local government	6	3	3	2	4
Overseas government	0	0	0	1	0
Domestic nonprofit	6	8	3	4	3
International nonprofit	0	0	0	0	0
Private sector – research/ consulting	0	0	2	1	1
Private sector – not research/ consulting	6	4	4	2	6
Obtaining further education	1	1	0	0	0
Military service	0	0	3	0	1
Unemployed (not seeking employment)	0	0	0	0	0
Unemployed (seeking employment)	0	0	2	2	0
Status unknown	5	1	2	0	2
Total	29	20	20	16	18