



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/alumni skills self-assessment (page 3)
3. Student skills direct assessments (page 6)
4. Student completion and employment outcomes (page 10)

The University of North Florida Master of Public Administration program graduated its first student in 1978. Nearly forty years later the number of alumni has reached over 700. 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 third reaccreditation, valid through 2020. 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.

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 is about 19% of the 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.

	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. This data is presented in Table 2. The data indicates strong return on investment.

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

	Percent responding			Mean score (0-5 scale)
	Poor/Fair	Good/Very good	Excellent	
Faculty instruction				
1978-2010	1.7	69.0	29.3	4.03
2011-2018	0.0	48.6	51.4	4.43
Faculty research				
1978-2010	3.5	77.2	19.3	3.74
2011-2018	5.6	52.8	41.7	4.15
Faculty public service				
1978-2010	12.3	70.2	17.5	3.56
2011-2018	0.0	57.0	43.1	4.25
Program management				
1978-2010	18.9	55.1	25.9	3.69
2011-2018	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. 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 on the page after that). A large portion of students report improvement, or significant improvement in skill levels.

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

	Class	Student skills were...				Mean score
		Unchanged	Unchanged (prior exp.)	Improved	Improved significantly	
Communication:						
-- writing	2010-15	3.4	4.2	52.5	39.8	2.29
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	62.5	37.5	2.38
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	30.0	70.0	2.70
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	57.1	42.9	2.43
-- speaking	2010-15	6.8	14.4	53.4	25.4	1.97
	Spring '16	12.5	12.5	62.5	12.5	1.75
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	90.0	10.0	2.10
	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	71.4	21.4	2.14
-- listening	2010-15	6.0	12.8	58.1	23.1	1.98
	Spring '16	6.3	6.3	75.0	12.5	1.94
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	60.0	40.0	2.40
	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	64.3	28.6	2.21
Local governance	2010-15	3.4	0.8	41.5	54.2	2.47
	Spring '16	0.0	6.3	37.5	56.3	2.50
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0	2.80
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	21.7	78.6	2.78
Problem solving	2010-15	3.4	3.4	59.3	33.9	2.24
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	56.3	43.8	2.44
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2.50
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	2.57
Professional ethics	2010-15	4.2	5.1	46.6	44.1	2.31
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	56.3	43.8	2.44
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	40.0	60.0	2.60
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	42.9	57.1	2.57
Management theory	2010-15	1.7	0.0	55.6	42.7	2.39
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	31.3	68.8	2.69
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0	2.80
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	21.4	78.6	2.79
Economic constraints	2010-15	1.7	2.6	45.3	50.4	2.43
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	43.8	56.3	2.56
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	3.00
	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	28.6	64.3	2.57

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

	Class	Student skills were...				Mean score
		Unchanged	Unchanged (prior exp.)	Improved	Improved significantly	
Economic constraints	2010-15	1.7	2.6	45.3	50.4	2.43
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	43.8	56.3	2.56
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	0.0	100.0	3.00
	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	28.6	64.3	2.57
Quantitative skills	2010-15	9.3	3.4	51.7	35.6	2.14
	Spring '16	6.3	6.3	68.8	18.8	2.00
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	80.0	20.0	2.20
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	85.7	14.3	2.14
Diverse workforce	2010-15	4.3	5.2	58.6	31.9	2.18
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	62.5	37.5	2.38
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	60.0	40.0	2.40
	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	57.1	35.7	2.29
Public policy	2012-15	3.8	1.3	50.0	45.0	2.36
	Spring '16	6.3	0.0	31.3	62.5	2.50
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2.50
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	35.7	64.3	2.64
Globalization	2010-15	3.4	1.7	53.4	41.5	2.33
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	37.5	62.5	2.63
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	40.0	60.0	2.60
	Spring '18	0.0	7.1	35.7	57.1	2.50
Role of public service	2012-15	1.3	0.0	42.5	56.3	2.54
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	50.0	50.0	2.50
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	20.0	80.0	2.80
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	35.7	64.3	2.64
Concentration expertise	2010-15	0.8	0.8	39.0	59.3	2.57
	Spring '16	0.0	0.0	37.5	62.5	2.63
	Spring '17	0.0	0.0	30.0	70.0	2.70
	Spring '18	0.0	0.0	46.2	53.8	2.54

As indicated, the survey was also presented to alumni in Summer 2018. Respondents were asked to assess their skill development as a result of the MPA program. Alumni self-assessment results are presented in Table 5, using the 0-3 coding system used in the annual student surveys.

Table 5
Alumni skill self-assessment
Whole sample

	Alumni skills were...				Mean score*	
	Unchanged	Unchanged (prior exp.)	Improved	Improved significantly	1978- 2010	2011- 2018
Communication:						
-- writing	2.2	2.3	55.3	40.2	2.16	2.51
-- speaking	6.9	6.8	59.5	26.7	2.05	2.19
-- 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 (n=64)	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

* This is calculated using a 0-2-3 scoring system, with 0 for both unchanged categories, 2 for improved, and 3 for improved significantly.

The results are strong across the board, with over 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

Public Management essay

The Public Management essay assesses students on their knowledge of the discipline of public administration, their critical analytical ability, their research skills, and writing ability. Each learning outcome is scored for each student on a standard rubric, as shown:

- 3 – Mastery: above normal requirements for professional work.
- 2 – Adequacy: at a level appropriate for professional work.
- 1 – Insufficient Minor: inadequate for professional work, requires minor improvement.
- 0 – Insufficient Major: inadequate for professional work, requires major improvement.

Table 6
Intro and Capstone compared,
public management essay

Assessment item	Class	Mean score	Probability
Discipline knowledge	Intro	1.79	.000
	Capstone	2.46	
Critical analysis	Intro	1.80	.000
	Capstone	2.50	
Research	Intro	1.85	.000
	Capstone	2.31	
Writing	Intro	2.13	.003
	Capstone	2.45	
Combined	Intro	1.89	.000
	Capstone	2.44	

Table 6, on the previous page, 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 2018 (Intro n = 136; Capstone n = 171) for all classes for which results are available. Key take-away, again, is that results remain strong: historically, Capstone students score both substantively and statistically higher than incoming MPA students.

Table 7 breaks these scores down by year, and by learning outcome. The 2018 Capstone class did less well than the last three years, but comparable to results from 2011-14, and still much better than the mean scores for the combined introductory, PAD 6060 classes.

Table 7
Public Management essay, by learning outcomes

Class		Insufficient major	Insufficient minor	Prof. Adequate	Prof. Mastery	Mean Score
Discipline knowledge (%)	Intro-	21.3	20.6	16.2	41.9	1.79
	Caps-Spg ‘11-14	6.9	14.7	16.7	61.8	2.33
	Caps-Spg ‘15	5.6	5.6	16.7	72.2	2.56
	Caps-Spg ‘16	0	4.8	9.5	85.7	2.81
	Caps-Spg ‘17	0	0	14.3	85.7	2.86
	Caps-Spg ‘18	6.3	6.3	31.3	56.3	2.38
Critical analysis (%)	Intro-	23.5	18.4	12.5	45.6	1.81
	Caps-Spg ‘11-14	8.8	7.8	18.6	64.7	2.39
	Caps-Spg ‘15	0	11.1	11.1	77.8	2.67
	Caps-Spg ‘16	0	4.8	0	95.2	2.90
	Caps-Spg ‘17	0	7.1	14.3	78.6	2.71
	Caps-Spg ‘18	6.3	6.3	25.0	62.5	2.44
Research (%)	Intro-	16.9	21.3	22.1	39.7	1.85
	Caps-Spg ‘11-14	9.8	14.7	19.6	55.9	2.22
	Caps-Spg ‘15	0	5.6	38.9	55.6	2.50
	Caps-Spg ‘16	0	14.3	19.0	66.7	2.52
	Caps-Spg ‘17	0	0	28.6	71.4	2.50
	Caps-Spg ‘18	12.5	12.5	31.3	43.8	2.06
Writing (%)	Intro-	9.6	15.4	27.2	47.8	2.13
	Caps-Spg ‘11-14	8.8	6.9	23.5	60.8	2.36
	Caps-Spg ‘15	0	5.6	22.2	72.2	2.67
	Caps-Spg ‘16	0	9.5	14.3	76.2	2.77
	Caps-Spg ‘17	0	0	50.0	50.0	2.70
	Caps-Spg ‘18	6.3	6.3	18.8	68.8	2.50

Quantitative analysis exercise

In this assessment exercise students are presented with county level raw data on education and income. Students were also presented with SPSS correlation and regression output using that data, asked to interpret the data, and present a table with education and income figures for a small number of northeast Florida counties. Students were assessed on their knowledge of quantitative analysis, their critical analytical skills, and their tabular presentation of data, again using the 0-3 standard rubric presented above. Table 8 presents results for the exercise.

Table 8
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					
2015	5.6	55.6	27.8	11.1	1.44
2016	15.0	30.0	15.0	40.0	1.80
2017	15.4	38.5	30.8	15.4	1.46
2018	11.8	52.9	29.4	5.9	1.29
Critical analysis					
2015	11.1	38.9	38.9	11.1	1.50
2016	15.0	35.0	10.0	40.0	1.75
2017	23.1	46.2	15.4	15.4	1.23
2018	11.8	64.7	11.8	11.8	1.24
Table presentation					
2015	0.0	11.1	44.4	44.4	2.33
2016	0.0	5.0	25.0	70.0	2.65
2017	0.0	0.0	30.8	69.2	2.69
2018	5.9	17.6	47.1	29.4	2.00
Combined					
2015	11.1	44.4	38.9	5.6	1.76
2016	10.0	35.0	10.0	45.0	2.07
2017	12.8	28.2	25.7	33.3	1.80
2018	17.6	52.9	17.6	11.8	1.53

Key take-away: despite positive student self-assessments of the development of their quantitative analysis skills, still no breakthrough in terms of developing a direct assessment tool that shows similarly positive results. In the last two Capstone classes, some quantitative data, of the type used in the assessment exercise, were introduced as a refresher prior to this assessment item being assigned. This has not been successful in improving results, at least in the small sample sizes we are working with (with a Capstone 2017 sample of 10, and 14 in 2018).

In 2018 we also piloted a second quantitative assessment item: a quiz dealing with central concepts in statistical analysis. The mean score for the pilot was 6.3/10. With refinement, and the addition of a pre-test in PAD5700, this may prove a useful supplement to the current assessment of the development of quantitative analysis skills among UNF-MPA graduates.

Finally, Table 9 presents the results of an assessment of student development in their concentration areas. 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.

Table 9
Concentration assessment exercise, by Spring 2013-18 Capstone competency

	Insufficient major	Insufficient minor	Prof. Adequate	Prof. Mastery	Mean score
Nonprofit (n = 40)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	0	2	4	34	2.80
(%)	0	5.0	10.0	85.0	
Management literature (#)	2	2	3	33	2.68
(%)	5.0	5.0	7.5	82.5	
Combined (%)	2.5	5.0	8.8	83.8	2.74
Local government (n = 20)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	2	0	4	14	2.50
(%)	10.0	0.0	20.0	70.0	
Management literature (#)	1	1	6	12	2.45
(%)	5.0	5.0	30.0	60.0	
Combined (%)	7.5	2.5	25.0	65.0	2.48
Health admin (n=10)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	2	0	3	5	2.10
(%)	20.0	0	30.0	50.0	
Management literature (#)	0	3	1	6	2.30
(%)	0.0	30.0	10.0	60.0	
Combined (%)	10.0	15.0	20.0	55.0	2.20
Public Policy (n = 12)					
Public policy literature (#)	0	2	2	8	2.50
(%)	0	16.7	16.7	66.7	
Critical policy thinking (#)	2	1	0	9	2.33
(#)	16.7	12.5	0	75.0	
Combined	8.3	14.6	8.3	70.9	2.42
National Security (n=1)					
Critical policy thinking (#)	0	0	1	0	2.00
Management literature (#)	0	0	1	0	2.00
Generalist option (n = 25)					
Critical thinking (#)	0	8	2	15	2.28
(%)	0.0	32.0	8.0	60.0	
Literature	1	7	3	14	2.20
(%)	4.0	28.0	12.0	56.0	
Combined	2.0	30.0	10.0	59.0	2.24

4. Student completion and employment outcomes

Beyond the student satisfaction and income data presented above in Section 1, we also provide to our accrediting body data on student completion rates, and on employment data by sector. Table 10 presents program completion outcomes, formatted as required of our accrediting body.

AY	Enroll	Completion in...					Total	Continuing
		2 years	3 years	4 years	6 years	6+ years		
2010-11	31	14	6	1	2	0	23	0
2011-12	40	16	4	0	3	0	23	0
2012-13	43	30	2	2	0	0	34	0
2013-14	26	19	2	1	0	0	22	0
2014-15	23	7	5	0	0	0	12	3
2015-16	26	8	6	0	0	0	14	4
2016-17	21	7	0	0	0	0	7	10
2017-18	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	28

‘Program completion’ is a measure designed to monitor how long it takes a student to graduate. In many graduate programs serving mid-career students who work a full-time job, there is no set program length. Some students will take three classes per semester and so, with two summer classes, finish in two years. Many students who work full-time take only two classes per semester, and so finish in 3-4 years. As can be seen, despite being a program with mostly working students, a strong majority of students finish the program two years after entering.

Unlike Table 10, which reports the outcomes of students who *entered* the program in the Academic Year shown, Table 11 looks at what happened to students *who graduated* in Academic Year 2017-18. The table is a good reflection of the wide range of opportunities available to UNF-MPA graduates, with state government, local government, nonprofits, and business all prominently featured.

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