

PLS 595—Capstone Seminar in Public Administration

Fall 2010

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Course Description: *This course integrates knowledge from the curriculum and uses this core knowledge to complete an applied research project that demonstrates mastery of key concepts, methods, and skills in the MPA program. Public Administration as a profession and career are discussed and students develop a career plan for their future.*

The Meaning of Capstone:

In the past and in other countries, the Capstone means the highest point of achievement in your professional training. Many programs still require a Master's Thesis but our program requires an applied research project that illustrates the ability of the student to integrate knowledge from across the curriculum. An outline for the applied research project will be handed out in class so students can begin work on the project early in the semester. Some examples of possible projects are listed below.

Goals:

- ✓ *To integrate core knowledge across the MPA curriculum*
- ✓ *To develop a career plan for the next five years in Public Administration*
- ✓ *To complete an applied research project that integrates materials from the curriculum, internship and/or practicum*
- ✓ *To sharpen oral competency by making a series of professional presentations*

Class Grade:

30% *Class Assignments and Participation*
20% *Career Plan, Portfolio, and Presentation*
50% *Applied Research Project*

Book Ordered:

(2003) H. George Frederickson and Kevin Smith, *Public Administration Theory Primer*, Boulder, CO: Westview Press

Exemplars for Applied Research Projects: Students may work individually or as a group. It is your choice. However, remember in groups/teams the expectations for the final product are higher.

Write a “Position Paper” or “White Paper” on one aspect of the Quality of Life in the Region---The project could be aimed at completing a regional report on the Quality of Life in the 8 county region surrounding Wilmington area. However each project would focus on a different dimension of the Quality of Life---economic development and employment, the environment, civic participation, physical health, community social and physical health, crime and law enforcement, transportation, infra-structure, culture and the arts, etc. A “Position Paper” or “White Paper” would be produced for each selected area. This paper would give a background on the problem, a theory about the problem, statistics documenting the problem, obstacles to solving the problem, options for solving the problem, and recommendations for the future. There will be a 15 page limit on the paper and it will be aimed at decision makers. One section of the paper must be focused on what “peer” communities are doing and how this area can borrow from “best practice”. The instructor will review how to select “peers” for comparison. Re-engineering is usually focused on identifying “best practice” among peers and trying to use their experiences to change your organization or jurisdiction.

Community or Organizational Problem Solving Project. The Instructor has issued a call for applied research projects in the community. These are most likely to be organizational and policy problems that need a solution----based on analysis and research. The Village of Carolina Shores has already asked us for assistance. Students in essence would become project consultants since the nature of the problem or issue would be driven by the client not the student. The finished report would be written specifically for the client. Students will also be asked to include comparisons with “peers” as part of the analysis. Students are free to contact their former internship site or contacts in the community and have them identify a project.

Format for problem solving paper:

Define problem

Causes

Review the literature on problem

Summarize best practice on this problem and who is doing it

Alternatives for solving problem

Criteria for analyzing problem

Apply criteria

Recommendations, at least three

Projects that have no external audience are discouraged. Projects should be directed at problems and issues at any level where there is concern and a constituency for change. Applied research projects have an audience. Please do not select a project of interest mainly to you.

Career Plan, Portfolio, and Presentation:

- ✓ *Complete a Meyers Briggs Indicator Instrument*
- ✓ *Complete A Career Anchors Inventory*
- ✓ *Write a cover letter and an attached resume for a desired position*
- ✓ *Complete a professional portfolio with cover sheets*
- ✓ *Develop and present a career strategy to class using power point and include feedback from a mentor in the community*

Class Assignments and Schedule:

August 23

Goals of the Course

Tentative Discussion of possible projects and career goals

Important professional organizations in Public Administration: ASPA, SECOPA, APAAM, or organizations from your concentration

Common Themes in Public Administration in the US and Abroad

Skim:

Harvey Averch and Milan Dluhy, "Teaching Public Administration, Public Management, and Policy Analysis: Convergence or Divergence in the Masters Core," Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Volume 11, No. 3, 541-551 (1992).

Harvey Averch and Milan Dluhy, "Teaching Public Administration, Public Management and Policy Analysis: Some International Comparisons," International Journal of Public Administration, 20(2), 497-511 (1997).

August 30

*Utilizing knowledge from previous MPA courses
How to utilize knowledge to improve decision-making
Developing a Management Style that utilizes knowledge*

Read: Frederickson, chapters 1-5. Look at the web sites for three professional associations and report on power point what information is available for professionals on those sites. For each course taken in the MPA program, identify five of the most critical themes, theories or set of practice principles that you think will influence your management style in the future. Put the information on each course on a power point presentation. Also turn in a hard copy to the Instructor. Samples will be handed out.

September 13

*Theory and Practice
Converting knowledge into Action
Agenda Setting Strategies
Political Advocacy vs. Professional Testimony*

Read: Frederickson, chapters 6-10.

Assignment: Make a power point presentation evaluating which three theories discussed in the Frederickson text make the most contributions to the practice of Public Administration. Make sure you indicate clearly why each theory is so useful. Applied examples or the use of these theories in your experience would be helpful. Turn in hard copy to Instructor.

September 20

SWOT Analysis of MPA program (in class)

*Self-Assessment
Identifying Strengths and Weaknesses of Management Styles
Illustrations of Careers, which match your strengths*

Assignment: Complete the Meyers Brigg and bring the results to class. In two pages indicate at least three career paths that match your strengths. Also in a power point presentation indicate a tentative selection of your applied project.

September 27

Completing a Portfolio

Writing a Resume

Contacting an Employer and writing a letter

Selecting a Mentor

Developing a Career Strategy

Assignment: Bring old resume to class. Get on the internet and develop a list of ten currently available jobs in the marketplace that you currently qualify for. Make a matrix for power point comparing these ten jobs in terms of salary, opportunities for career advancement, quality of life or life style considerations, access to other careers and jobs, and probability of securing the position. Present on power point and hand in hard copy.

October 11

Career Strategy Presentations

Assignment: Using Power Point present three different career strategies for the future and indicate which strategy is most desirable and why. Also turn in your resume, letter to an employer, and portfolio for the class and Instructor to review. Indicate in your presentation, your Mentor's feedback on your career strategy.

October 18

Initial Project Selection

Assignment: In three pages and with a power point presentation, give an overview of your project. Turn in a hard copy. Outline for project design will be handed out.

October 25

Project update and consultation

November 1

Project update and consultation

November 8

Project update and consultation

November 15

Project update and consultation

November 22

Project update and consultation

November 29

Project update and consultation

The date of the Final Presentation may be modified to allow students and faculty to attend but notice by the Instructor will be given at least one month ahead of time.

Project Presentations
