Doreen Swetkis, MPA Director

Observation of adjunct MPA faculty member, Melissa Beard, Ph.D., presenting to MPA PNAPP 1st Year Core on May 16, 2019, from 6-8:10pm.

The lecture topic was school funding in WA State.

This topic is very much in Melissa’s wheelhouse, given Melissa is Chief of Finance and Operations at Steilacoom Historical School District. Melissa was completely prepared and well informed about the nuances of funding for schools in the State. Melissa did an excellent job of taking a complicated topic and making elements of it understandable to the audience.

Her PowerPoint slides were well done without too much text, and mainly included visuals such as graphs and charts. Melissa related her lecture to the previous week’s topic of public budgeting as well as to the legal basis for constraints on the way in which Washington funds its schools, presented a useful overview of the subject matter for the evening, clearly stated the objectives of the talk, and placed the night’s topic fit into the larger themes of the quarter, namely public policy, finance and budgeting.

Melissa moved through the content of the lecture well, taking the audience from some easier concepts to more difficult items, so that by the time she was explaining the detailed handouts of school funding for Steilacoom and Tumwater SDs, we in the audience could follow along. Indeed, the students were engaged throughout the lecture and asked many relevant questions. The lecture was followed by a budgeting workshop that was a carry-over from the previous week.

My only recommendation for improvement is to have a 10-minute break half-way through the lecture, especially given that it lasted over two hours. It became distracting as people kept getting up to leave the room.