

Description

Faculty: Larry Seaquist, Adjunct, Former Washington State Legislator

KEY PROFESSIONAL GOAL: LEAD STRATEGIC CHANGE. Our goal was to enable each student to equip her/himself with a personal repertoire of ready-to-use strategic planning leadership skills across a broad range of public policy issues.

This first-of-its-kind class in Strategic Planning enabled graduate students in the first Tacoma cohort of Evergreen's Master of Public Administration program to prepare for strategic leadership in the public sector of tomorrow. Recognizing that rapidly evolving political, economic, and social dynamics will continue to transform our society and challenge public sector organizations, students explored a wide range of the complex strategic planning issues and leadership opportunities which lie ahead in the working careers of our MPA graduates.

Seminar work used real-world problems to develop a core repertoire of the strategic planning principles and methods needed to tackle our society's next-generation problems. Senior guest practitioners augmented that repertoire with personal illustrations of major strategic planning projects underway today. To gain familiarity working with community leaders and subject matter experts on our most complex public policy issues, the class ran a lengthy simulation of a real-world problem. The students capped their experience with personal presentations of their proposed solutions to a specific, personally-compelling public sector problem.

More than half the class time was invested in student presentations, case study clinics, and the strategy lab simulation. Overall, students explored more than thirty different strategic policy problems now gripping public sector organizations across the full spectrum of issues facing state and local government, non-profits, and the new hybrid, whole-community organizations being created to tackle our most urgent public policy needs.

KEY LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The seminar classwork aimed to enable each student to develop the art and craft of organizing, directing, and completing strategic planning efforts in public-sector agencies and in community-based organizations. Through their active participation, students developed a personal repertoire for leading change in public sector organizations. To that end, seminar participants:

- Practiced the diagnosis of real world strategic planning problems and the design and leadership of rapid, effective strategic planning responses;
- Considered the constantly changing dynamics likely to require strategic plan resets by public sector leaders in the years ahead;
- Learned from the experiences and advice of selected public service leaders directly involved in current strategic change problems;
- Explored a variety of strategic planning methods across a range of looming public problems, including lessons from recent planning successes and failures;
- Planned and conducted, with participants invited from the community, a live strategic planning exercise on an urgent public policy problem; and
- Refined their ability to translate the diagnosis of a strategic planning problem into oral and written presentations of the problem and a proposed plan of practical, concrete action.

Evaluation

Written by: Larry Seaquist, Adjunct, Former Washington State Legislator

SUMMARY. Through her applied strategic planning project, her contributions to in-class clinical case studies, and her participation in seminar discussions, **Sherwanda Beck-Atkinson more than fully**

demonstrated outstanding creative thinking skills and strategic planning capabilities. Her work showed she is ready now to design and lead public sector strategic planning efforts in public agencies, in community-based organizations, and in the hybrid collaborations which increasingly deliver key public services.

STRATEGIC PLANNING MASTERY. Through her active class participation and her ability to connect the theories of the course materials to real-world problems, Sherwanda consistently demonstrated the capabilities of an unusually strong public sector leader. In her culminating class project she completed an exceptionally strong examination of the need for rapid changes in middle class housing. Connecting her own experiences with recent national policy changes she made a powerful case for new approaches to creating housing opportunities for the working middle class.

Sherwanda was actively engaged in all the class discussions and clinics dissecting real-world strategic planning problems. She showed excellent collaborative skills across a wide range of public policy issues and a valuable capacity to work with a broad spectrum of colleagues and citizens. Of special note was her remarkable ability to communicate complex ideas orally, in writing, and with presentation graphics. In this class Sherwanda showed truly standout strategic planning capabilities.

In sum, Sherwanda showed that she is fully ready right now to thrive as one of our most capable strategic planners, to lead major strategic planning efforts, and to emerge as one of our strongest future community leaders.

Credits Attempted	Credits Earned	Graduate Course Equivalencies
4	4	4 - Strategic Planning, Leading Strategic Change