Notes

2020 MPA Summer Institute

Monday, July 13, 2020

**General discussion question: What is one thing that has surprised you or that you have learned from working in public service as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic or the Black Lives Matter movement?**

Common responses that came up:

1. Many people saw both circumstances as an opportunity rather than a barrier: providing a chance to exercise leadership and become more proactive in their organization in addressing challenges.
2. Others saw the importance of relationship-building and informal structures to governance, since formal structures were not working or adapting well to the new circumstances.
3. Collaboration: many people saw the importance of collaboration as a means for getting things done under new circumstances.
4. Value of online meetings and working from home: makes it easier to include more people in meetings and hear from more voices. Cuts down on commuting time and time spent in traveling to meetings.
5. Reframing of racial equity: opportunity to directly address racial equity in the workplace, re-examine long-standing practices and policies. It is no longer OK to be neutral, but rather organizations need to be pro-active in examining processes through a racial equity lens.
6. Greater interest in public service: more people are recognizing the importance of acting collectively

Not directly related, but one person teaching for MPA mentioned how Tacoma represents a very different place to offer an MPA than Olympia. Tacoma students represent smaller local and community organizations, while Olympia is more state government employees. There is a big opportunity to be more engaged with the community in Tacoma, and to serve as a teaching and research resource for Pierce County.

**Breakout session questions: Group 1**

**What knowledge, skills, and abilities do new professional hires in your agency or organization need that they currently do not possess?**

1. Academic advising is a need not being met in the program: The MPA program has a lot of flexibility to it, including internship and ILC opportunities that students do not always understand. The program can also be intimidating for some incoming students. It might help for incoming students to meet with a faculty member before they begin the program to discuss their goals and to map out a strategy for how to meet those goals while they are in the program.
2. Change management and organizational resilience are important content needs today, particularly in light of the Covid-19 pandemic.
3. Cultural competence is another important skill set. Not so much in the sense of individual cultural competence, but having the skills to lead an organization into becoming more culturally competent while minimizing resentments and conflict.
4. Conflict management and mediation are becoming important skill sets, particularly at the individual level. New professionals are often scared of conflict and avoid it rather than managing it effectively.
5. A more streamlined ILC process would be helpful
6. How to promote and manage collaboration and collaborative governance are important needs
7. Public health is a substantive policy area that is becoming more important.

**In what ways can the faculty and student expertise be better leveraged to serve the needs of Evergreen's community partners?**

1. Re-think the capstone model. Ten weeks is not enough time to carry out a project. Too often the projects do not really meet the needs of the client organization, or fill any significant need. May want to think about a model that carries a project forward over a year rather than one quarter. More needs to be done to market the opportunity for capstones with the community, and it should be done on a regular timeline when organizations and agencies know they will be contacted about interest in working on a capstone. The Evans School operates a consultancy model for its capstones that put out a call for capstone proposals at the same time every year.
2. An important need exists to facilitate the use of data in decision making for agencies and nonprofits. How to more effectively use open data resources. Urban informatics.

**What professional training and development needs exist that can be filled by a new ancillary graduate program to MPA?**

1. Certificate program in Indian Law
2. Analytic and technical skills are important: data management, statistical analysis, and visual presentation of data
3. Conflict resolution
4. Project management
5. Sustainability and economic development (perhaps urban sustainability)?
6. Public management certification for IT professionals: lots of IT people work in the public and nonprofit sectors, but too many are unfamiliar with the particular needs of government and with how to manage their own teams.
7. Master of Social Work program

**Key Ideas from Wrap-Up Discussion**

Communication is a key skill set, along with negotiation and collaboration

The Oklahoma case in the Supreme Court has important implications for Indian Law that need more analysis

Important of data management and analysis as skill sets

Writing skill sets are critical and need more development

Might want to consider assessing incoming students…what can they do? How can those skills be used on capstone projects?

Nonprofit management needs to play a bigger role in the curriculum. Alums recall having to search to find good coursework in this area.

Streamlining the internship process

Fundraising is an important skill set