Report
TESC Master of Public Administration Summer Institute
July 13, 2020
Prepared by Mike Craw, MPA Director

The 2020 Evergreen Master of Public Administration Program hosted its 2020 Summer Institute on July 13th from 1:30 – 3:30 via Zoom. The Summer Institute brings together community and College stakeholders to provide feedback on program performance and input on program curriculum, community engagement, and other elements of strategic planning. The goals of this year's institute were to:

- Identify knowledge, skills, and abilities most critically needed for public and nonprofit professionals today\

- Identify opportunities for the Evergreen MPA program to better serve Washington's public and nonprofit sectors

This year's institute included 23 participants representing the College units and the communities that the MPA program serves, such as on tribal nations, state government, and local governments and nonprofits in Thurston and Pierce counties. Appendix A gives a full list of participants.

This year's institute focused on three key questions central to the program's curriculum planning in the upcoming academic year:

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

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

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

Participants addressed these three questions in one of four breakout groups lead by MPA program staff and faculty (Mike Craw, Meghan Doughty, Dhara Katz, Puanani Nihoa, and Marcia Zitzelman).

In addition, the meeting opened with participants sharing one thing that has surprised them or that they have learned from working in public service as result of the Covid-19 pandemic or the Black Lives Matter movement. This report summarizes the ideas generated in the discussion of each of these questions.

Introductory Discussion Question

To open the meeting, each participant identified themselves and their organization and to answer the following question:

> *What is one thing that has surprised you or that you have learned about public service during the Covid-19 pandemic and/or Black Lives Matter?*

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 Group Questions

Following introductions, participants moved to one of four breakout groups to discuss the three breakout group questions. Summary comments on each question were as follows:

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

Breakout Group 1 (Facilitators: Craw and Katz)

Participants: Mike Craw, John Doan, Logan Bahr, Dhara Katz, Jeremy Mohn, Toby Sawyer, and Wen Wang

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.

Breakout Group 2 (Facilitator: Zitzelman)

Participants: Miriam Barnett, Cali Ellis, Linda Moon Stumpf, Marcia Zitzelman

1) Skill sets around communication, negotiation, and communication matter in significant ways:

   - Communication, listening is important. How to listen is something we need to consider. Intent/Impact. Nonviolent communication. How to leverage your strengths, strengths of others. Everything revolves around how you do or do not communicate effectively.

   - Sessions on communication should be incorporated into curriculum.

   - Team-building efforts in current core classes. ITP Metrics for assessment – self reflection and how do they bring that into teams. Negotiation courses – active listening, being present, what am I trying to accomplish, getting to "yes."

   - Communication through negotiation, collaboration. Collaborative skills are necessary to build systems.

2) Data analysis skills are much needed:

   - Data is a huge emphasis for tribes, getting data right. Bad data can hurt you. Asking the right questions is important. Example: Tulalip has high degree of unemployment in Census – in part due to timing, asking the right question (fishing).

   - Grant writing: Data is important for storytelling. How to find the story in the numbers.

   - Data is never neutral. How you approach questions is critically important.

3) Cultural competence skills are essential:

   - Another course suggestion: Broader cultural understanding in tribal, black, and other communities. Maggie Walters' book on indigenous knowledge.

4) Feminist principles can be helpful:

   - Applying feminist principles: ask good questions, what happens when the right people are not at the table.

5) Helpful concept: think about what it looks like/feels like to be in abundance, not in scarcity. Scarcity is fear-based. Better decision making happens from a place of abundance.

   Q: Where do you look for abundance in these times?

A: Was in the arts prior to this position, everything incorporates art. Beauty has a value. Stay in your values, and how to live them out. Example: Make time to do art - it is their way of being in abundance.

Breakout Group 3 (Facilitator: Nihoa)

Participants: Marika Barto, Meagan Darrow, Camille Goldy, Puanani Nihoa, Tyrus Smith

1) A need exists for cultural competence among professional public administrators

- The two strains of focus during the breakout rooms were essentially on diversity and BLM issues affecting communities across the country. The non-native participants commented on how much they didn't know about minority populations and why many people of color are not able to pursue higher education are not the same reasons majority populations can pursue this opposed to people of color.

- Comments were made about how much they still have to learn in working within diverse populations, those present admitted they want and need to learn now how they can change; how they need to change and how they communicate across all populations.

2) Advocacy is another important skill set to consider

- How can community leaders advocate for change, implement solid connections among people of color and stand/support diversity in the workplace.

- How do we learn to 'Be the Change'

Breakout Group 4 (Facilitator: Doughty)

Participants: Lucky Anguelov, Kelly Croman, Amanda DeShazo, Meghan Doughty, Nicole Peters, Ulysses Martin

1) Cultural competence and other soft skills are important: how to work together and get along with those who different view points than your own.

2) Grantwriting and fundraising skills are highly valued. This was echoed and emphasized throughout all levels of discussion and seconded by all participants

3) Nonprofit management needs to play a bigger role in the curriculum. Alumni recall having to seek out coursework in this area

- A focus on systems thinking and structures, particularly the nonprofit world

- Role of a board of directors for a nonprofit and how to be a good board member

- Writing grants

- Importance of data in a nonprofit

4) Change management and organizational resiliency are key skill areas needed

5) In general, professionals need more specific skills and less of a "broad overview"

Summary

Some common themes are evident across the breakout groups that speak to the knowledge, skills, and abilities employers are seeking in public administration staff:

1) Change management and organizational resilience

2) Cultural competence: not just individual competence, but an ability to lead organizations through a process of enhancing its cultural competence as an organization

3) Communications skills, including negotiation, conflict management, and meeting facilitation,

4) Capacity to work collaboratively

5) Data presentation and analysis skills

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

Breakout Group 1 (Facilitators: Craw and Katz)

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.

Breakout Group 2 (Faciliator: Zitzelman)

1) Internships can be leveraged in ways that are more supportive of the needs of the community:

- Typically use a lot of different interns from colleges in Tacoma, Seattle. Have ended up hiring a number of them post-internship. Fundraising, counseling, etc. Mostly pull from Seattle University. Expanding counseling center in new building, it is a practicum site. 18-22 month placement. Understanding the dynamics of domestic violence.

- If there is a social work program, can make connections there. Has a full-time volunteer coordinator that meets with people. Try to incorporate interns as if they are staff, embrace them in that capacity.

- MPA specifically: would love someone to help with advocacy efforts. Helping students understand that advocacy, phone calls matter. Domestic violence has many intersections.

- Internships: MES example – number of internships, special contracts that agencies do every year. Easier to administer, set expectations for students and agency. Students can make real contributions to the agency, especially in research. Helps students with predictability, degree planning. Exchanges with different agencies are also something to consider.

Breakout Group 3 (Facilitator: Nihoa)

No report

Breakout Group 4 (Facilitator: Doughty)

1) The program can go further in leveraging alumni as a resource

2) Organizations need more clarity about the expectations for internships

3) Greater transparency needed

Summary

1) Capstone projects can be redesigned in a way that serves community stakeholders better

2) Organizations need more information and clarity about how to benefit from internships and capstone projects and about the timeline for participating in these options.

3) Alumni represent an important resource for connecting the program to community needs

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

Breakout Group 1 (Facilitators: Craw and Katz)

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

Breakout Group 2 (Facilitator: Zitzelman)

1) Nonprofit Administration – can we develop a more robust offering? Going forward, we can create required classes in nonprofit. Recommend: fundraising courses.

2) Environmental policy and management. State has many climate change issues, land management, water and distribution of water. Concern with cross-over into MES, not necessarily true.

3) Micro-credentials. Example: Training for legislative assistants. Many programs are doing things like this to raise funds, recruitment tool.
4) Fundraising certification (helps with job searches).

<u>Breakout Group 3 (Facilitator: Nihoa)</u>

No report

<u>Breakout Group 4 (Facilitator: Doughty)</u>

1) Very excited by the prospect of certificate programs that focus on specific skill sets

2) Development

3) Communications

4) HR

5) Budget and finance, specifically NP financial management

<u>Summary</u>

Some ideas for companion certificate programs that came up across groups include:

1) Nonprofit management
2) Local environmental sustainability (e.g. urban sustainability, local water and land management)
3) Communication and conflict management
4) Fundraising and grant development

Conclusions

The comments from participants in the Summer Institute point to a number of considerations that the MPA faculty and staff should consider in developing program curriculum:

1) "Soft" skills remain important: Professionals in public administration need cultural competence both to serve a diverse public and to lead organizations in serving a diverse public. In addition, interpersonal communication skills, such as conflict management, meeting facilitation, and negotiation, are crucial, particularly in light of organizational changes resulting from Covid-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement. These changes more often emphasize collaboration over hierarchy, increasing the need for strong communication skills and cultural competence.

2) Skills and abilities in selected technical areas of public administration have high demand and are of increasing importance. These include:

- Data management, analysis, and presentation
- Grant-writing and fundraising
- Nonprofit management

3) Service learning remains important, and capstone projects and internships represent important ways to accomplish learning in this way. Two issues, though, need more attention:
   - Capstone and internship experiences need to be crafted in ways that better meet the needs of community partners
   - Community organizations supporting capstone projects and internships need more information about how to leverage these opportunities and about what the MPA program needs and when they need it to arrange capstones and internships.

4) Interest in ancillary graduate certificate and professional development certificate programs exists in particular areas. These may be programs worth further consideration such as market analysis:

   - Nonprofit management
   - Local sustainability
   - Conflict management
   - Fundraising and development

Appendix A --- Participants in the 2020 MPA Summer Institute

Last Name	First Name	Organization	Position
Anguelov	Lucky	TESC	Faculty
Bahr	Logan	Association of Washington Cities	Government Relations Advocate
Barnett	Miriam	YWCA	Chief Executive Officer
Barto	Marika	WA OMWOBE, Minority Women Owned Businesses	Assistant Director of Workforce Development
Craw	Michael	TESC	MPA Director
Croman	Kelly	Marine Ventures, Puyallup Tribe	Attorney
Darrow	Meagan	Thurston Together	Deputy Director
DeShazo	Amanda	Tacoma Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium	Executive Director
Doan	John	City of Tumwater	City Manager
Doughty	Meghan	TESC	Faculty
Ellis	Cali	TESC	Faculty
Goldy	Camille	WA OSPI, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction	Director of Student Support
Katz	Dhara	TESC	MPA Program Assistant
Martin	Ulysses	Tacoma Pierce County Health Department	Health Promotion Coordinator
Mohn	Jeremy	TESC	Government Affairs
Moon-Stumpff	Linda	TESC	Faculty
Nihoa	Puanani	TESC	MPA Assistant Director
Peters	Nicole	Nature Nurtures Farm	Executive Director
Sawyer	Toby	TESC	Native Pathways Program
Seaquist	Larry	Retired WA State House of Representatives	Representative
Smith	Tyrus	TESC	Faculty
Wang	Wenhong	TESC	Faculty
Zitzelman	Marcia	TESC	MPA Assistant Director