

**Texas A&M International University
Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review (AIER)
for Academic Programs**

Program: Masters in Public Administration

Assessment Period Covered: March 1, 2008 – January 31, 2009

Program Coordinator (Preparer of Report): W.W. Riggs

List Other Program Faculty:

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The Annual Institutional Effectiveness Review for Academic Programs is directed at Goal 1: Academics of the Texas A&M International University 2006-2010 Strategic Plan:

Develop, maintain, assess, and improve academic programs, administrative/educational support services and student services, to admit, retain, and graduate students who achieve established learning outcomes designed to prepare them for success in their chosen careers.

Institutional Mission

Texas A&M International University, a Member of The Texas A&M University System, prepares students for leadership roles in their chosen profession in an increasingly complex, culturally diverse state, national, and global society ... Through instruction, faculty and student research, and public service, Texas A&M International University embodies a strategic point of delivery for well-defined programs and services that improve the quality of life for citizens of the border region, the State of Texas, and national and international communities.

Academic Program Mission

The MPA program was created to serve state, federal, and international needs by preparing students for managerial and leadership positions in public service and advancing research in discovering, sharing, and applying knowledge of public administration. In support of this mission, MPA program faculty are committed to: 1) teaching and providing continuing education and professional and intellectual development to students; 2) facilitating professional and intellectual discourse on public issues; 3) contributing to public administration scholarship; and 4) fostering a future generation of public administration scholars and practitioners.

Provide summary of the last cycle's use of results and changes implemented

Program faculty should evaluate the former cycle. This statement should specify if the outcomes addressed were a continuation of previous ones, new outcomes, or modified versions of previous outcomes. In addition, the statement should include a concise analysis of the assessment data collected

during the previous year, a brief explanation of actions taken to address specific outcomes, an evaluation of how these actions contributed to the improvement of the program, and any recommendations formulated. Assessment data—including actual samples of student work—must be viewed and discussed by program faculty during this process.

During the last cycle, our assessment results indicated a pattern in the comprehensive exam. Students who attempt to take the exam while taking a core course depict a higher rate of failing the exam. We implemented a policy change regarding the comprehensive exam. Students have to successfully finish all core courses before they take their comprehensive exam. With only one testing period, it is too early to assess the effects of this policy change. Elimination of "tracks" has been replaced with students taking any three 5000 level electives. Our program review resulted in identifying a need for a second methodology course. This course will be made a required "elective" and will not increase SCH of the program. The course is planned to be implemented in Spring 2010. Also, as a result of our program review and a review of NASPAA accreditation guidelines, the Health track will be eliminated, but it will become a stand alone certification program after NASPAA accreditation. Again, the SCH will not be affected. An administrative change was implemented to identify an MPA Director as part of our accreditation strategy. Dr. Momen served as interim director during this assessment period and Dr. Riggs has been named the new program director.

Selected list of program-level intended student learning outcomes: *It is recommended that programs rotate through their entire set of outcomes over a multi-year period. Programs may focus on one or two outcomes each year, as deemed appropriate.*

1. Students completing the MPA program will demonstrate an ability to apply research and statistical methods techniques/tools in solving public problems.
2. Graduating MPA students will demonstrate theoretical knowledge and an understanding of how to administer publicly defined programs in a representative democracy.
3. Graduating MPA students will have acquired the skills and reasoning capabilities needed by public agencies in a continually changing environment.

Section I: Planning and Implementation

Outcome(s): *Identify the outcome(s) that will be focused upon this year.*

Students completing the MPA program should demonstrate the ability to apply research and statistical methods/techniques/tools in solving public problems.

Please indicate if the outcome(s) is (are) related to writing (QEP).

Methods of assessment to be used: *The explanation should identify and describe the type of assessment(s) that will be used (e.g., survey, questionnaire, observation instrument, test, rubric to evaluate performance, standardized examination, action research, interviews, etc.), who will provide the information, and how the data will be obtained.*

Graduating MPA candidates will take a locally-generated comprehensive exam that assesses their ability to apply research and statistical methods/techniques in solving public problems.

Indicate when assessment(s) will take place:

Comprehensive exams are administered during November and April of each academic year.

Criteria/Benchmark(s): *Specify, if deemed appropriate to assess outcome(s). Criteria/ benchmark(s) may be optional, especially if qualitative measures are used for data collection.*

At least 80 percent of the MPA candidates will score 75 percent or more in the research and statistical methods question of the comprehensive exam.

Section II: Analysis of Results

What were the results attained? *Describe the primary results or findings from your analysis of the information collected. This section should include an explanation of any strength(s) or weakness(es) of the program suggested by the results.*

Nine students took comprehensives with a 78 % pass rate; 10 students applied to take comprehensives in fall '08 but only 9 students took the exam with a 67% pass rate. Reviewing the results indicated a reinforcement of the decision to add a second methodology course. There was faculty consensus regarding a tendency for students to not manage their time sufficiently in answering all of the questions; to remedy this, all faculty members will ensure that either the mid-term exam, final exam, or both will be “in class” exams rather than “take home.” The original intention of “take home” exams was to enhance research skills by providing another research assignment. Also, the comprehensive exam has been edited to reduce ambiguity, enhance clarity, and add more specificity to each of the questions.

What were the conclusions reached? *Should include a brief description of the procedure used for reaching the conclusion(s) based on the evidence collected and describe the process used to disseminate the information to other individuals. For example, if the discussion took place during the annual spring retreat, include a summary from those deliberations using the Meeting Minutes template found at <http://www.tamtu.edu/integrate/docs/Minutes-Template.doc>. Once completed, submit the minutes to [assessment @tamtu.edu](mailto:assessment@tamtu.edu).*

Assessment of the comprehensives is a multi-stage process beginning with a general orientation for Master’s candidates. This occurs within the first month of each new semester and allows students to interact with faculty regarding the best practices to follow in preparation for taking the comps; students are then advised to work with their respective faculty committees as they complete their preparations. After comprehensives are administered each faculty member grades every student exam and the results compiled; the MPA faculty then convenes as a group to discuss the results. Students who failed have their

results reviewed again and a second evaluation is taken. If a student is still considered to have failed, a faculty member may advocate for an individual student and another vote will be taken. At the conclusion of this process, the final results are tabulated and the department chair informs the Dean and the students by letter of the results.

Describe the action plan formulated. (The plan may be multi-year in nature.) *Based on the conclusion(s), describe the action plan to be implemented to improve or maintain student learning, including a timeline for implementation.*

The action plan formulated includes immediate implementation of the policy that a student be core complete before applying to take comprehensives; to implement a second methodology course beginning in spring 2010; ensuring students take mid-terms and finals in class; revise student handbook to reflect these changes to the program.

Section III: Resources

Resource(s) to implement action plan: *Describe the resources that will be needed to implement the action plan. Also indicate if the resources are currently available, or if additional funds will be needed to obtain these resources.*

Funding

New Resources Required:

- Reallocation of current funds

Physical

- New or reallocated space

Other

- Primarily faculty/staff time
- University/rule procedure change only

Provide a narrative description and justification for requested resources (include linkage to Strategic Plan)

Identify proposed outcomes for the next assessment cycle:

Continuation of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for continuation):

We will continue assessing the present outcome for the academic year and maybe one more year in order to evaluate the results of implementing a second methodology course.

New Outcome(s) – (List outcomes below):

Graduating MPA students will demonstrate theoretical knowledge and understanding of how to administer publicly defined programs in a representative democracy.

Modification of present outcome(s) – (Indicate reason for modification):