

Academic Program Assessment Data Report (2018)
Ph.D. degree program in Public Policy (PUBPPH)
Submitted by Brinck Kerr, Director

Introduction

This report includes the presentation of (1) PUBP student learning outcomes; (2) how learning outcomes are assessed; (3) timelines for data collection and analysis; and (4) guidelines for use of results. Assessment data for calendar year 2018 are presented below each learning outcome or set of outcomes in the section “Assessment of Student Learning.” All data are in bold.

Student Learning Outcomes

(Student Learning Outcomes are defined in terms of the knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will know and be able to do as a result of completing a program. These student learning outcomes are directly linked to the accomplishment of the program goals.)

Students near the end of their coursework should be able to:

- (1) conduct research in a collaborative (or team) setting that will inform some aspect of policy making on a community issue;
- (2) apply policy recommendations to a real world problem or issue;
- (3) demonstrate that they have the requisite policy core, specialization, and methods skills necessary to progress to the dissertation stage;
- (4) demonstrate the ability to do independent research;
- (5) expand upon or “test” public policy and/or specialization area theories;
- (6) contribute to new scholarly/academic knowledge; and
- (7) contribute to policy relevant knowledge.

Assessment of Student Learning

(A process must be defined and documented to regularly assess student learning and achievement of student learning outcomes. The results of the assessment must be utilized as input for the improvement of the program.)

All educational/learning outcomes (i.e. outcomes 1 through 7 in section 2 above) are evaluated by program faculty.

Outcomes 1 and 2 are primarily evaluated in PUBP 6134, the Capstone Seminar. In their last semester of coursework, policy students participate as team members in a capstone service project. The service project is designed to (1) inform some aspect of policy making—usually relating to a community issue—and (2) apply policy recommendations to a real world policy

problem or issue. Students receive a grade for the seminar and they make a public presentation on their project [meeting program goals 2 and 3].

Summary of from spring 2018 report --- In this research project, we seek to understand the impact of the Breakfast in the Classroom program on student achievement, as measured by academic performance, behavior, and health, from 2013 to 2017. Specifically, we focus on the Breakfast in the Classroom program at Daisy Bates Elementary within the Pulaski County Special School District in Little Rock, Arkansas. This study builds upon previous research into both education and food insecurity policy as a means to address childhood nutritional needs, narrow the achievement gap between students from low-income households and their classmates, and increase student achievement. Using quantitative methods, the researchers found that the Breakfast in the Classroom program has a positive effect on students' performance, behavior, and health. The researchers offer policy suggestions and implications for school districts seeking to strengthen their policies and practices to address food insecurity by expanding the Breakfast in the Classroom program.

No students enrolled in the capstone seminar during fall 2018.

Outcome 3 is primarily evaluated during the qualifying exam process. The exam process serves as an opportunity for discussion between the faculty and the student as the student integrates core/specialization classes and academic activities across subject areas and disciplinary approaches. The exam committee, under the leadership of the student's advising chair, writes four questions relevant to the student's class work, career goals, and dissertation agenda. Students are given guidance by the specialization and program faculty to help them prepare for these questions. One question addresses competencies in *research design and methods*. One question addresses the discipline of *public policy* and is written and graded in cooperation with the program faculty who teach the core policy courses. One question addresses *specialization* competencies. An additional question is written by the *specialization faculty and will cover another area* that the committee feels is important; this is often referred to as the wildcard question. If the quality of the written answers is acceptable, the advising chair will schedule the oral exam with the student's exam committee. Oral exams cover only material from the written exams. Students may be asked to expand on their written responses; however, they may not be asked to cover material that is not addressed in the written exam questions. If the quality of answers is unacceptable, the exam committee shall propose remedies. This may include retaking of portions of the qualifying exam, assigning another written paper, taking an additional course/independent study, or perhaps, assigning some other option. If the student completes the written and oral portions of the exam, s/he is admitted to Ph.D. candidacy [meeting program goal 3].

The following eight PUBP students were admitted to candidacy during 2018:

**Meredith Adkins
Teresa Garcia
Rachael Moyer
Larra Rucker
David Tolliver
Clayton Tumblison
Grant West**

Outcomes 4 through 7 are evaluated during dissertation process. Upon admission to candidacy, the student selects a dissertation chair and at least two other committee members. The dissertation chair and committee will direct the student's research so that the project is consistent with the following goals: (1) demonstration of the ability to do independent research; (2) expand upon or "test" theory; (3) contribute to new scholarly/academic knowledge; and (4) contribute to policy relevant knowledge. These goals are also pursued by students through the writing and submission of manuscripts for conference presentation and publication [meeting program goals 1, 2, and 3].

The following four PUBP students defended their dissertations during 2018:

**Benton Brown
Lance Cheramie
Richard Moss
Leslie Yingling**

During 2018, PUBP students presented 22 papers at professional conferences.

During 2018, PUBP students published or had accepted for publication 13 peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters.

During 2018, PUBP graduates were placed in the following jobs:

Head of Initial Teacher Education, Bath Spa University, Institute for Education, Bath, UK

Director, STEM Success, Pulaski Tech, North Little Rock, AR

Associate Dean of Students (AVC-SA), University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

Timelines for Data Collection and Analysis

(Specific timeline for collection and analysis of assessment data.)

Data on capstone projects, admissions to candidacy, dissertation defenses, student conference presentations, student publications, and job placements will be collected for the calendar year. The data analysis will be presented in the PUBP's Annual Academic Assessment Report. The report will be transmitted to the GSIE Dean's Office by May 15 of the following year. Parts of the analysis will be presented/reproduced in the PUBP annual report, which is generally due in the GSIE Dean's Office on July 1.

Use of Results

Feedback from student performance is continuously reviewed by the program administration and is used both to assess individual student performance and to review the program requirements. The results are included in the annual report of the program, submitted to the Graduate School, and in the seven-year program review.