

**Academic Program Assessment Data Report (2020)**  
**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 2020 are presented below for 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].

**Spring 2020 – Summary of Capstone Report:**

**Policy Report Prepared for the University of Arkansas Office for Sustainability**

*Report Submitted April 30, 2020*

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The University of Arkansas has defined its core policy goals in several official reports dating back to at least 2005, including parking efficiency goals and sustainability goals to better serve its campus community. Faced with geographical and logistical challenges due to varied land-use strategies across time, the current mélange of parking policies includes a class-based permitting system that incentivizes single-occupant transportation among university patrons.

**This policy analysis reviews the university’s current parking paradigm with consideration for university sustainability and parking efficiency goals, along with salient policy goals such as equity to campus patrons. Considering these interrelated yet competing university goals, we identify four policy alternatives for their projected capacity to concurrently address these goals:**

- **Status quo**
- **Disallow all first-year student parking on campus**
- **First-year student remote parking only**
- **FlowBird and metered parking expansion**

**This policy analysis finds that the greatest net total benefits – \$7,297,301 over 20 years – and overall social utility rests with an expansion of cash/card and FlowBird metered parking to centrally located parking lots. This policy alternative is projected to enhance equity among university patrons, while encouraging the incremental enhancement of campus sustainability.**

**With regard to an incremental approach to policymaking, this report recommends an expansion of cash/card and FlowBird metered parking, which aims to strike a delicate balance among the varied interests of key stakeholders. This satisficing approach to addressing the clear need for enhanced sustainability and parking efficiency on campus is not intended as a fix-all solution, but rather an opportunity to transform competing interests into collaborative solutions.**

**No students were enrolled in the capstone seminar during fall 2020.**

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 five PUBP students were admitted to candidacy during 2020:**

**Eric Button  
Chris Bryson  
Dennis Felton  
Briana Huett  
Melissa Taylor**

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 eight PUBP students defended their dissertations during 2020:**

**Alfred Dowe  
Erika Gamboa  
Teresa Garcia  
Ella (Angela) Nwude  
Larra Rucker  
David Tolliver  
Clayton Tumlison  
Deidre NeCol Whitehead**

**During 2020, PUBP students presented 13 papers at professional conferences. By comparison, PUBP students presented 30 papers in 2019 and 22 papers in 2018.**

**During 2020, PUBP students published or had accepted for publication 13 peer-reviewed journal articles. By comparison, PUBP students published or had accepted for publication 24 peer-reviewed journal articles in 2019 and 13 in 2018.**

**During 2020, PUBP graduates and candidates were placed in the following positions:**

**Senior Director of Development-Corporate Engagement, United Way of Greater Atlanta, Atlanta, GA**

**Director for NWA Industry & Community Engagement, Office of Corporate and Foundation Relations, Walton College, University of Arkansas**

**Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Arkansas (2020-2023)**

**Visiting Assistant Professor of Public Affairs, School of Public Affairs, University of Arkansas at Little Rock**

**Assistant Director of Student Services, Southwest Minnesota State University**

**Grants Officer, Arkansas PBS Foundation, Conway, AR**

### **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.