

MASTER IN URBAN AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

ASSESSMENT REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR 2018 – 2019
Submitted Oct 31, 2019

I. LOGISTICS

1. Please indicate the name and email of the program contact person to whom feedback should be sent (usually Chair, Program Director, or Faculty Assessment Coordinator).

Rachel Brahinsky, Associate Professor, Faculty Director, rbrahinsky@usfca.edu

2. Please indicate if you are submitting report for (a) a Major, (b) a Minor, (c) a Major and Minor aggregated report (in which case, each should be explained in a separate paragraph as in this template), (d) a Graduate or (e) a Certificate Program

MA in Urban and Public Affairs

3. Please note that a Curricular Map should accompany every assessment report. Have there been any revisions to the Curricular Map?

No changes. See attached.

II. MISSION STATEMENT & PROGRAM LEARNING OUTCOMES

1. Were any changes made to the program mission statement since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current mission statement below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current mission statements of both the major and the minor programs

- **Mission Statement (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

No changes. Current mission statement:

Mission Statement: The Master of Arts in Urban & Public Affairs prepares students for employment in various policy-related fields by educating them in fundamental concepts of public policy, urban history and planning, community organizing and advocacy, and community-engaged research, while developing a policy specialization through an independent capstone project. The program serves the broader Bay Area community by engaging students with community in multiple ways, in service of the common good.

- **Mission Statement (Minor):** N/A

3. Were any changes made to the program learning outcomes (PLOs) since the last assessment cycle in October 2018? Kindly state “Yes” or “No.” Please provide the current PLOs below. If you are submitting an aggregate report, please provide the current PLOs for both the major and the minor programs.

Note: It is expected that PLOs will vary in level of mastery between different programs in the same discipline (e. g., a major and minor in the same subject area). Major revisions in the program learning outcomes need to go through the College Curriculum Committee (contact: Professor Joshua Gamson, gamson@usfca.edu). Minor editorial changes are not required to go through the College Curriculum Committee.

- **PLOs (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

No changes.

UPA Program Learning Outcomes

At the end of the program, students will be able to:

1. Demonstrate a theoretical, practical, and ethical understanding of community change, through practices including public policy advocacy, campaigns, and/or political/community organizing;
2. Critically analyze problems in urban and regional policy and politics using a variety of research methods;
3. Demonstrate the capacity for effective oral and written communication;
4. Evaluate and develop urban and regional policy, while learning to situate models of social change within historical and regional contexts;
5. Contribute to informed public discourse around contemporary political and urban policy issues through addressing issues in public policy, advocacy, community organizing, politics, and public service.

- **PLOs (Minor): N/A**

4. State the particular program learning outcome(s) you assessed for the academic year 2018-2019. What rubric did you use?

We are utilizing the same format for our rubric as in previous years. The PLO we are assessing has its own rubric with subcategories to assess how different components of a given assignment support our selected PLO. We offer an assessment for each student in the course, marking whether their work on the assignment linked to this PLO was Incomplete, Satisfactory, or Outstanding.

- **PLO(s) being assessed (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

For the current year's report, we continue to build on one of the PLOs assessed last year in order to gauge any changes in student performance outcomes across multiple student cohorts. We once again assessed PLO #2: *critically analyze problems in urban and regional policy and politics using a variety of research methods*. We drew on student work for an assignment for the Leadership for the Common Good course as a means of charting progress or change in student engagement with the PLO and selected assignment from year to year.

- **PLO(s) being assessed (Minor): N/A**

III. METHODOLOGY

Describe the methodology that you used to assess the PLO(s).

- **Methodology used (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

The program assessed one key assignment that reflects the PLO noted below. A committee of two faculty created the rubric, and we entered our assessment data without student names or other identifying information.

Using direct methods, we assessed student outcomes for PLO#2: *Critically analyze problems in urban and regional policy and politics using a variety of research methods.*

The assignment assessed is a research development assignment, in which students develop a revised research question for their capstone thesis projects. The assignment asks students to move from three initial broad questions developed one week earlier to a more focused and researchable question under the umbrella of urban affairs and public policy. Our rubric analyzes student outcomes and offers a chance to draw data-based conclusions on the assignment, student progress, and to develop insights for building on this analysis in coming years.

- **Methodology used (Minor): N/A**

IV. RESULTS & MAJOR FINDINGS

What are the major takeaways from your assessment exercise?

This section asks you to highlight the results of the exercise. Pertinent information here would include:

Results (Major/Graduate/Certificate):

PLO #2:

We evaluated student research questions as outstanding, satisfactory (student meets all major course competencies) or incomplete (for those students who were unable to finalize the assignment). The assessment was taken from the UPA 651, Leadership for the Common Good course that had 12 students enrolled, all in their third semester in the two-year program. For this assignment, nobody received an incomplete in any category.

This assessment gauges to what extent they are able to produce a research problem that articulates an issue in urban and public affairs and chose methods that are appropriate for the capstone timeframe. In this analysis, we compare data from 2018 with the same assignment with the previous cohort in 2017.

Results for question 1 of the rubric show that 58% of students who completed the assignment scored satisfactory in their ability to identify an urban or public affairs issue, this was slightly lower than the previous year of 61%.

This year there was significant improvement for question 2 (ability to move from broad to more specific area of inquiry), with 42% of students scoring outstanding, compared to only 15% during the previous year's assessment.

The strongest outcomes were seen with questions 3 and 4; for this year's analysis, 75% of students scored outstanding in their ability to identify a case study for their research and in choosing a topic that lends itself to available material.

Students also improved with respect to question 6 (contribution to field), with 66% of the students marked as outstanding compared to 30% of students from the previous year. This year, question 5 scored the lowest, with 75% of students scoring satisfactory in their ability to identify methods that are manageable within the existing research timeline.

We are pleased to see improvement in most of these categories when compared to the previous year's results and hypothesize that this may reflect general improvements in curriculum and coordination across core and elective classes. The categories that showed a greater number of satisfactory designations indicate the areas where we can continue to strive to improve our curriculum and practices: construction of coherent research questions, consideration of existent

scholarship and policy on a given topic, use and emphasis of appropriate methodologies across the curriculum, and better support for students in developing and expressing insights for solutions to urban and public affairs issues.

Results (Minor): N/A

V. CLOSING THE LOOP: ACTION PLAN BASED ON ASSESSMENT RESULTS

1. Based on your analysis in Section 4, what are the next steps that you are planning in order to achieve the desired level of mastery in the assessed learning outcome? This section could also address more long-term planning that your department/program is considering and does not require any changes to be implemented in the next academic year itself.

- **Closing the Loop (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

In the above assessment, we have noted some areas in which we will focus on strengthening the curriculum and this has been noted across relevant courses. We have maintained this strategy for assessment for several years but we are now planning to shift in a new direction, based on a change in leadership and new understanding about assessment best practices.

We will begin a new set of assessment practices in 2019-2020, which will be reflected next year in our Fall 20 submission. To date, we have assessed a small number of courses in order to compare the work being done in the first and second year for PLO 2 and PLO 4. We are currently in year two of a new curriculum (which merged two prior programs). As we have now settled into its new curriculum, we will undertake an assessment program across the next five years that will produce a more comprehensive picture that illuminates how well our core courses in the program are meeting all the PLOs. We borrow our strategy from other programs on campus, particularly Communications, which has been acknowledged as well-organized around assessment strategy.

We will begin in 2019-20 by assessing PLO3: Students will demonstrate the capacity for effective oral and written communication.

Steps of the plan:

1. Each instructor teaching a core course will be asked to collect an assignment from three randomly assigned students.
2. The Assessment Committee will develop rubrics for PLO3.
3. The Assessment Committee will apply the rubrics in the fall of 2020 to the papers collected across 2019-20.

Courses being assessed in 2019-2020

Course	Professor	Assignment	Students on Roster from whom to Collect Assignments
UPA 630: Urban Power Seminar	Brahinsky	Analytical Brief	1, 6, 11
UPA 631: Rhetoric of Social Controversy	Burgess	Analysis Paper	2, 7, 12
UPA 650: Community-engaged Public Policy Research	McBride	TBD	3, 8, 13
UPA 651: Leadership for the Common Good	Negrín	Thick Description	4, 9, 14
UPA 652: Masters Capstone Project	Redmond, Negrín, and Brahinsky	Capstone Presentation	2, 5, 8

- **Closing the Loop (Minor): N/A**

2. What were the most important suggestions/feedback from the FDCD on your last assessment report (for academic year 2017-2018, submitted in October 2018)? How did you incorporate or address the suggestion(s) in the more recent assessment discussed in this report?

- **Suggestions (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

We were happy to receive very positive feedback last year, and note that the feedback did not contain major suggestions. We decided to continue our strategy of comparing rubrics from year-to-year, to continue to understand the ways that one important course has evolved, if at all.

- **Suggestions (Minor): N/A**

VI. BIG PICTURE

What have you learned about your program from successive rounds of assessment? Is a picture of the whole program starting to emerge? For example, what areas of strength have emerged? What opportunities of improvement have you identified?

- **Big Picture (Major/Graduate/Certificate):**

We continue to recognize that we need to strengthen our research methods training along with general research-honing skills. We have added new assignments in the first-year curriculum that are strategically designed to offer this support and we look forward to a better understanding of how these assignments may indeed achieve this goal.

- **Big Picture (Minor): N/A**

VII. Feedback to your Assessment Team

What suggestions do you have for your assessment team (the Faculty Directors of Curriculum Development and the Associate Dean for Academic Effectiveness)? What can we do to improve the process?

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

(Any rubrics used for assessment, relevant tables, charts and figures should be included here)

Rubric for PLO #2 attached.